

**Shwe U Daung and the Burmese Sherlock Holmes:
To be a modern Burmese citizen living in a nation-state,
1889 – 1962**

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources has been acknowledged.



Yuri Takahashi 

2 April 2017

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I came across Shwe U Daung's name quite a long time ago in a class on the history of Burmese literature at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. At that time, I knew him only as a name in my textbooks, but in 1995 I noticed his name again. In that year, when I was doing research on the latest trends in popular literature in Myanmar, I became aware of Shwe U Daung's significant influence on today's Burmese literature. I would like to thank first of all Mr. Min Thein Kha who drew my attention to Shwe U Daung's significance. The results of my 1995 research showed Mr. Min Thein Kha was the most popular author in Myanmar at that time. He was not only well-known as a novelist and short story writer but also an experienced fortune teller. When I asked him about his literary works, he confessed how much he had been inspired by Shwe U Daung. Without this event my interest in Shwe U Daung would never have been aroused and this thesis would not have been written. As I have always been interested in the topic of the acceptance of modernity by non-Western countries, this research also began with that approach. In furthering my investigation, I have been supported by many people with a variety of expertise.

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NOTES

In 1989 the Burmese government changed the official international name of the country from Burma to Myanmar, a term based on the name of the country in the local language. A change in the names of some cities, such as from Rangoon to Yangon and from Moulmein to Mawlamyine, was also made at this time and according to the same principle. Since this thesis mainly deals with the period before 1989, the old terms 'Burma' and 'Moulmein' are applied in the historical discussion. The term 'Myanmar' is used in discussion of the period after 1989.

All translations from Burmese and other languages into English are my own, unless otherwise noted.

There is no single rule for the Romanisation of Burmese words. In this thesis I apply the style most commonly used since the colonial period, especially for the names of people and places. Other words and expressions are adjusted, if necessary, to bring them into closer alignment with their Burmese pronunciation.

Some parts of this thesis were first published as articles before they were further developed in the form they appear here.

Part of Chapter Four is based on Yuri Takahashi, "Mr. San Shar, the Burmese Detective—A brief look at the acceptance of the Sherlock Holmes stories in Myanmar (Burma)". *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, Vol. 39-40 (Part 2), 2007-2008: 451-467.

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ABSTRACT

Shwe U Daung and the Burmese Sherlock Holmes: To be a modern Burmese citizen living in a nation-state, 1889 – 1962

Yuri Takahashi

After the fall of the last Burmese kingdom and the coming of British rule, how did the Burmese come to accept modern notions of the 'nation-state'? This thesis investigates Burmese nationalist discourse from the perspective of a bilingual intellectual who was not part of mainstream elite politics, through the writing of a biography of Shwe U Daung. Shwe U Daung was a novelist, short story writer and translator, well-known as the creator of 'San Shar the Detective', a Burmese adaptation of the Sherlock Holmes stories. He spent nearly half a century writing more than 160 episodes, encouraged by their popularity.

In historical studies of Burmese nationalism, the dominant approach has used a secular paradigm focusing on political and economic analysis. After 1930, the Dobama Asiayone or the Thakin Party, influenced by socialism and communism, developed increasing political power. Their ideas eventually came to function as the country's mainstream nationalist narrative and contributed to the formation of a grand narrative of today's Myanmar. The role of religion and language have not been widely explored. However, to understand the nature of Burmese nationalism, it is important to examine the historical roles and inter-relationship of Buddhism and Burmese literature.

The 'San Shar the Detective' stories began to appear in 1917 and were promoted by publishing organs linked to the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), which was at the forefront of the development of Burmese nationalism up until the mid-1930s. The establishment of the YMBA was inspired by the Theosophical Society and the development of Burmese literature was one of the YMBA's objectives. In the Dobama-dominated grand narrative, the YMBA's political and publishing heritage has been largely overlooked.

In 1961, at seventy-two years of age, Shwe U Daung also published a comprehensive autobiography entitled *Record of Life and Thoughts (Tathetta Hmattan hnint Ahtweakhawmya)*. This was written at a time when the writing of autobiography writing was still unusual among the Burmese. This thesis combines analysis of this autobiography with a study of Shwe U Daung's creative writing to

understand the development of his perception of the Burmese nation-state from his childhood up until the time he wrote his autobiography. I will show how episodes of the 'San Shar' stories reflected Shwe U Daung's changing ideas on nationalism, as he moved from being a supporter of colonialism to one of independence. Crucial to his views on nationalism was the development of the concept of the 'Burmese gentleman' as the ideal Burmese citizen. In the period after 1947 he became a critical commentator on the government, in a way that was consistent with his understanding of how citizens should relate to the independent Burmese state.

This research shows that the style of Burmese nationalism fostered by the YMBA was an important step in the acceptance of modernity in Burmese history and a transformational cultural movement that was deeply connected to two aspects of traditional Burmese identity: Buddhism and literature. It also shows the dynamism and flexibility in the way Burmese identity was accommodated with the idea of the nation-state. The thesis demonstrates that the long-lasting popularity of the 'San Shar' stories is evidence of the continuity of YMBA culture and the unique voice of Shwe U Daung as an expression of it. His ideal of the 'Burmese gentleman' reflects his long-term exploration of English literature and his commitment to a form of Buddhist practice focusing on individual effort. The San Shar stories represented a major arena for the expression of a modern Buddhist critical spirit in the search for an ideal nation-state. The fact that Shwe U Daung's ideas continue to resonate with today's readers is also an indication of the diverse layers that underlie the grand narrative of 'Buddhist Burmese' identity.

SHWE U DAUNG



1889 - 1973

Introduction

The Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1927) are loved worldwide, including in Myanmar. Although the stories were introduced through local adaptation in many countries, the huge popularity of the hero of the local adaptation, rather than Sherlock Holmes himself, appears to be unique to Myanmar. ‘San Shar, the Detective,’ the Burmese adaptation of Sherlock Holmes stories written by Shwe U Daung (1889-1973), became popular immediately after its first publication in 1917.¹ Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, Doyle was aware of the popularity of his works, not only in England, France and other European countries but also in Japan. However, it is likely that he never imagined Sherlock Holmes would become a special hero in the Burma province of British India.²

The introduction of the Sherlock Holmes stories in Myanmar through adaptations was promoted by the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA), which led Burmese nationalism at the time.³ The San Shar stories were originally published in the YMBA’s monthly magazine, *Thuriya*,⁴ The founding of the YMBA was inspired by the Theosophical Society, as will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five, and the development of Burmese literature was one of YMBA’s objectives.⁵ ‘San Shar, the Detective’ was a successful example of their activities and the popularity of the stories encouraged Shwe U Daung to keep writing new episodes for nearly fifty years, until 1961. These almost 160 episodes contain aspects of Shwe U Daung’s autobiography, as they often reflect his own experiences and also changes in his thoughts about nationalism. Shwe U Daung is still well respected as a significant writer/novelist/translator and the San Shar stories are loved by Burmese readers today. In this century, the series has already been reprinted several times, and in 2011

¹ The romanisation of ‘Shwe U Daung’ is based on his autobiography published in 1953, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung). Today there are several romanisations of his name used in paper and digital media, such as ‘Shwe U Daung’, ‘Shwe Uu Daung’ and ‘Shwe Oo Daung’. See Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung), Mandalay: Kyipwayay Press, 1953.

² The fifty-six short stories and four novels in the Sherlock Holmes series written by Doyle, which is often called ‘the Sherlock Holmes canon’, include mention of numerous places outside England, such as India, Ceylon and China, but not Myanmar (or British Burma).

³ The YMBA’s original Burmese name is ‘Boukda Badha Kalyana Yuwa Athin’. They are still active and celebrated their centenary in 2006.

⁴ The English name was ‘Sun Press’.

⁵ Emmanuel Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution* (Dordrecht: Springer-Science + Business Media, B.V. 1965), 128. (Originally published by Martinus Nijhoff in 1965.)

a new collection of the stories, entitled *Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories*, in two large volumes, was published.⁶

Shwe U Daung and his perception of a nation-state, Buddhism and literature

This thesis is an attempt to write a biography of Shwe U Daung as a writer and proponent of Burmese ideas, mainly drawing on his extensive autobiography entitled *Record of Life and Thoughts*, published in 1962, but also making use of *Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories*.⁷ Through the writing of his biography, I intend to explore and analyse Shwe U Daung, an English-Burmese bilingual intellectual, and in particular his perception of a nation-state and the development of his ideal image of a modern Buddhist Burmese.

Being born after the fall of the Burmese kingdom, and having experienced poverty, wars and repeated changes of polities from the colonial period to Japanese occupation and independence, how did Shwe U Daung understand what it meant to live in a nation-state? He established his career as an author in the current of literary culture generated by the YMBA. What made 'San Shar the Detective' a hero for Burmese people for a century, in spite of the frequent political changes the country underwent during this time? My hypothesis is that the YMBA's nationalist narratives, and the associated literary culture which pervaded Shwe U Daung's writing, appealed deeply to contemporary readers, especially as 'San Shar the Detective' represents an ideal figure of a modern Buddhist Burmese. This appeal is still alive and attractive to today's readers.

This research is based on my long-term interest in the acceptance of modernity in Myanmar. The nation-state form of polity and the ideology of nationalism first developed in Europe in the late eighteenth century.⁸ How have non-western countries understood the idea of a nation-state? After the fall of the Burmese kingdom, from the colonial period to independence, how did the Burmese form an image of their own country?

I became especially interested in nationalist narratives in modern Burmese literature and undertook research on the short story writer and essayist Sein Tin (well

⁶ Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjouk-thit* (Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories). Vol.1 & 2. Yangon: Seikku Cho Cho Saouk, 2011.

⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts). Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982.

⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge & Malden, Polity Press, 2010), 5. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 5; Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism* (Hampshire N.Y.: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006), 13-15; Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*. Fourth, expanded edition. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), xi.

known by his pseudonym 'Theikpan Maung Wa').⁹ Sein Tin became successful as an author in the first half of the 1930s, but after Burma's independence he was often criticised as a supporter of the British government, as he was a member of the Indian Civil Service (ICS). On the other hand, many of his short stories that vividly described rural life and villagers' joys and sorrows, were highly regarded as prominent works in the history of modern Burmese literature, and were designated as compulsory reading in the school curriculum. However these stories are only a part of his numerous works. Under many pseudonyms hiding his identity as a high ranking official in the colonial government, Sein Tin kept publishing his opinions and criticism on contemporary society until the day of his accidental death in the turmoil of war in 1942. Through this research I learned that he was a very politically-minded person who supported the YMBA from his early life. I also found that he was a thinker who was seeking an ideal-nation state for the future Burma. As an employee of the colonial bureaucracy, he pursued knowledge about the formation of a nation-state for the sake of the future independence of Burma and expressed his hope that someday a President of Burma would arise from among village children. He satirised abuses of democracy at the time, discussed the possibility of the application of Buddhism to democracy and bitterly criticised corrupt politicians who originated from the YMBA. The last half of the 1930s was the period when the 'Dobama Asiayone', which was also known as the 'Thakin Party' among the English, rapidly expanded their political presence and eventually played a major role in the country's struggle for independence.¹⁰ Inspired by communism and socialism, they aimed at the full independence of Burma. Sein Tin's view was that the Burmese should aim first for dominion status, as this had been suggested by the British government, then move towards the attainment of full independence, which was a common narrative in the colonial parliament. Like him, for the generation who grew up under the YMBA political culture, entering the colonial parliament or government did not seem to contradict their nationalism. Keeping up with English people at work was a way of expressing their Burmese nationalism.

⁹ Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa) (1899?–1942). This research was submitted for my M Phil degree (University of Sydney, 2005). Before this I conducted research mainly focused on Sein Tin's short stories and obtained my M.A. degree from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in 1990.

¹⁰ *Thakin* means 'master'. The party claimed that the master of Burma should not British, but Burmese. As the members of the party addressed each other with the title *Thakin* instead of a Burmese traditional honorific title such as 'U' (for an adult man) and 'Daw' (for an adult female), they also became known as the Thakin Party. The Thakin Party's original Burmese name was 'Dobama Asiayone' (Our Burman Association). This suggested a distinction between Burmese people who stood on the side of the Burmese ('Our Burman') and those who stood with the British colonial government ('Their Burman'). However the Party's English name became the 'We Burmans Association' since the time of colonialism, among both Westerners and Burmese.

However in the eyes of the new generation, those who belonged to the Dobama Asiayone were regarded as Burmans on the side of British. Sein Tin was also aware of the change in political current brought about by disappointment with the deadlocked colonial parliament, and published an essay expressing his hopes for the Dobama Asiayone.

Sein Tin's works frequently commented on his notions of Buddhism. However, my MPhil thesis did not discuss the relationship between Burmese nationalist narratives and Buddhism. Neither did it investigate the features of the YMBA. Sein Tin sometimes described himself as an 'ordinary person', which was a very unusual form of self-identity, as a member of the ICS belonged to the elite in colonial society. The extent to which nationalist ideas circulated among ordinary people was also not addressed in my MPhil thesis. Since 1995 I also have continued a study of Burmese popular literature from the colonial period to the present. Through this research I came across the enduring popularity of Shwe U Daung and became interested in exploring his life and thoughts. Shwe U Daung also became popular in the YMBA publishing culture, just as Sein Tin did, and he was much respected by Sein Tin as an outstanding modern Burmese author.¹¹

This thesis aims at deepening the understanding of Burmese ethnicity through an approach to nationalism as culture, and an analysis of modern Burmese intellectual history. For this purpose I intend to analyse the conception of a nation-state for the Burmese from a viewpoint which has been largely neglected in studies of Burmese nationalism. It focuses on the relationship between nationalism and religion, and also literature as a space where traditional Buddhist ideas and changes to them are expressed. I believe it is becoming more important to study Burmese nationalism in conjunction with religion. In general, mainstream studies of Burmese nationalism have seen nationalism in terms of political history. Although some of these studies have benefited from research into economic history, they have largely focused on analysis of narratives delivered by political elites and ideologues or arguments about the struggle for power and politics. However it is widely known that Burmese nationalism originated from Buddhist movements which arose in many places between the end of 19th century and the early 20th century, after the fall of the Burmese kingdom in 1886, followed by full annexation by the British. These movements gave the Burmese people

¹¹ Takahashi, Yuri, "Myanmar Misruteri Jijoh - Doiru mo shiranakatta 'Hohmuzu' nettai jikenroku to sonogo" (Mysteries in Myanmar (Burma) — 'Holmes's Tropical Case-books' and their Sequels, which even Doyle Never Imagined) (in Japanese), *Misuteri Magajin* (Mystery Magazine). Feb. (2012); Takahashi, Yuri (translation from Burmese to Japanese), *Manusahrii* (Manusari) by Min Thein Kha. Yokohama: Terainku, 2004; Takahashi, Yuri, "Shuppan Bunka - Gendai Bungaku to Sakkatachi" (Publishing Culture - Modern Literature and Novelists) (in Japanese), *Kurashi ga Wakaru Ajia Tokuhon - Biruma* (Reader of Asian Lifestyle - Burma), ed. Tamura Katsumi & Nemoto Kei, Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 1997, and others.

a focus for their identity as Buddhists and their endeavours to maintain Buddhism and Burmese literature, after the encounter with the West.

As its name indicates, the YMBA, established in 1906, had Buddhism as its basic identity. The obvious reference to the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) was an indication that its interest in Buddhism was expressed in the framework of a culture of modern organisations. YMBA activists established the politically-focused force GCBA (General Council of Burmese Associations) in 1920 and sent many representatives to the colonial parliament, but their movement became ineffective towards the end of the 1930s. After 1930, the radical nationalist the Dobama Asiayone or Thakin Party, influenced by socialism and communism, developed increasing political power and became the dominant force in the anti-colonialist movement, eventually bringing independence to the country. Buddhism was also a crucial issue for the Thakin Party, and after independence, the Prime Minister U Nu, a former member of the Party, declared Buddhism the state religion in 1961.¹² Moreover, the military junta which followed the period of U Nu's democratic leadership abandoned its policy of the 'Burmese way to Socialism' in 1988 and began expressing its intention to treat Buddhism as the nation's basic principle after the controversial 1990 general election.¹³

In the study of Burmese nationalism, the strong attachment to Burmese language and literature should not be overlooked. The slogan of the YMBA was 'Race, Language, Religion and Education', where 'Language' referred to the preservation, diffusion and development of Burmese.¹⁴ The YMBA established a publishing house called Thuriya (The Sun) Press and published newspapers, magazines and books in Burmese. They also promoted the publication of Burmese literary works which attracted numerous readers and contributed to an increase in the membership of YMBA, eventually transforming it into a nationwide organisation. The slogan of the Dobama Asiayone was 'Burma is our County, Burmese is Our Literature, Burmese is Our Language, Love Our Country, Cherish Our Literature, Uphold Our Language.'¹⁵ Influenced by

¹² In Burma, U Nu's original name is Nu, but he became well known overseas as 'U Nu', with his honorific title.

¹³ Tosa Keiko, "Myanmar Gengunji Seikenka no Shuhkyoh Seisaku to Shuhkyoh o meguru Shojohkyoh," (Burmese current military government and its religious policies and other religious related situations), ed. Kudo Toshihiro, *Myanmar Gunji Seiken no Yukue* (The Destination envisaged by the Burmese military government) (Tokyo: Ajia Keizai Kenkyūsho (Institute of Developing Economics), 2010), 4-16.

¹⁴ The slogan 'Race, Language, Religion and Education' ('Amyo, Badha, Thathana, Pyinnya' in Burmese) seems to have emerged at the time of the YMBA's establishment. See Waing am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye 75 Hnit Khayi* (75 Year Journey of YMBA) (Yangon: Pyinnya Beikman Pohnneik Taik, 1982), 14.

¹⁵ In Burmese, 'Bama Pyi thi Do Pyi, Bama Sa thi Do Sa, Bama Zaga thi Do Zaga, Do Pyi ko Chit par, Do Sa ko Chi Hmyint par, Do Zaga ko Lezar par.' This was originally written on the title page of 'Reform Series No.1' (Naingngan Pyu Sar Zu 1.), published in 1930 or 1931 as the Thakin Party's motto.

communism and socialism, the Dobama Asiayone founded the 'Nagani (Red Dragon) Book Club' and made an effort to translate communist and socialist books into Burmese. Members also wrote and published fiction based on leftist ideology in Burmese. Burmese literature is an important aspect of Burmese nationalism, and I believe that the contents of these literary works, the authors and their environment are worth much deeper investigation.

Focusing on the roles of religion and literature in Burmese nationalism will encourage us to reconsider modern Burmese history from two new perspectives which have so far not been widely explored. The first perspective is a reconsideration of the history of Burmese nationalism from the viewpoint of the YMBA movement and its cultural heritage. Mainstream studies of Burmese nationalism are based on modern Burmese political history centred on the Dobama Asiayone. This historical narrative is the history of Burma's independence as led by the Dobama Asiayone. It developed in the period from the end of World War II to the early 1960s and it was spread through school education. Now it is widely accepted as national history, as will be discussed in Chapter One. In this historical description, the activities of the YMBA and their influence on later generations are regarded as the pre-history of the emergence of the Dobama Asiayone and have not been examined in detail. In view of its importance for the biography of Shwe U Daung, however, the history of the YMBA is central to this thesis, and as such, their activities and their cultural legacy in today's Myanmar will be discussed in some detail. Thus I intend to look at modern Myanmar from a different viewpoint from that of the country's official national history centred on the Dobama Asiayone.

The second perspective is an investigation of the roles of people other than the political elite. My research focuses on intellectuals, as represented by authors, musicians (song writers and lyricists), editors, publishers and monks. This involves a consideration of the activities of readers of publications including magazines, newspapers and books and also lay people who supported the monasteries and pagodas, in other words, it also pays attention to the ties between intellectuals and their readers. To overcome the so-called 'elite-mass' gap in studies on Burmese nationalism, Robert Taylor investigated the role of the Burmese middle class and explained the mechanism that produced many members of the modern political elites through political and economic analysis.¹⁶ Intellectuals do not necessarily belong to the middle class in terms of their financial status. Some may be categorised under the middle class; however through their texts they can be influential on the whole society,

¹⁶ Robert Taylor, *The State of Myanmar* (London: Hurst & company, 2009), 124-125, 134-135, 163-164.

from the elites to the masses. My approach does not see the people, including intellectuals and the masses, as mere followers of the elite political nationalists, but attempts to understand how the masses understood the political elites' narratives and how they related to the political elites. This represents an opportunity to understand the way people outside the political elite perceived the idea of a nation-state and Myanmar identity. Through this study it will be seen that Burmese nationalism was also a social movement which regarded cultural identity as important. Shwe U Daung spent his life as an author and was never a politician. His narratives about an ideal nation-state expressed in his autobiography *Record of Life and Thoughts* and many episodes of 'San Shar, the Detective' often show different viewpoints from those of the political elites, and so are valuable material for exploring the concepts of Myanmar identity as they were understood by the middle class and the masses. It is also important that around 1960, when *Record of Life and Thoughts* was published, it was still unusual in Myanmar for someone who was not a member of the political elite to write an autobiography. Through an analysis of Shwe U Daung's autobiography, therefore, I will attempt to understand his life and thoughts as they were, reliving the times that he actually experienced.

These two perspectives frame my counter narrative to the dominant approaches in historical studies of Burmese nationalism. The modernist approach applied in these studies, which derives from a secular paradigm focusing on political and economic analysis, produced many valuable analyses. Through applying my approach I also intend to make a contribution to deepening our understanding of Burmese culture. The paradigm of my study, based on an analysis of nationalism and its relation to religion and literature, owes much to Anthony D. Smith's 'ethno-symbolic approaches.' Throughout the 1980s Smith deepened his studies in this area and since the 1990s has described his framework of analysis 'ethno-symbolism' or 'ethno-symbolic approaches'.¹⁷ As currently no researchers have attempted to apply this methodology in Burmese historical studies, it is necessary to begin with an outline of Smith's 'ethno-symbolic approaches.' In the following section I will discuss Smith's definition of nationalism, his views on the importance of the role of religion in nationalism, and also the significance of studies of non-political elite nationalist narratives. I also intend to argue the possibilities of applying this approach to Burmese studies.

¹⁷ Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism*, 172. In Smith's publications in book form, the term 'ethno-symbolism' is first used in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998).

‘Ethno-symbolism’

How did nationalism emerge? The term nationalism and its ideology first emerged in the late 18th century in Europe. This was the period in which the divine right of kings and the privileged clergy who supported it began to give way to the rise of the bourgeoisie and their desire to create a new polity, a nation-state which would guarantee their participation in the governing order. In the discussion of a new way of life as a citizen and the relationship between the citizen and the state, the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau were important. Rousseau stated that a citizen should obey the law, not because it was his duty, but because by doing so the citizen would give the law ‘the internal assent of their will’. He also insisted on the virtue of absolute loyalty in the citizens. It is widely accepted that this thoughts influenced Immanuel Kant and also the emergence of German Romanticism. However Rousseau himself did not use the term ‘nationalism’. The earliest uses of this term were by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder and the French counter-revolutionary cleric, Abbé Augustin de Barruel in the late eighteenth century. In English the term first appeared only in 1836.¹⁸ Ernest Renan’s lecture entitled ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?’ (What is a Nation?), given in 1882, is another well-known source of the ideology of nationalism. It includes the words ‘A nation’s existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as the individual’s existence is a perpetual affirmation of life’.¹⁹ This statement is often used to illustrate the contrast between French and German nationalism, in that the former has a liberal and voluntarist ideology and the latter has more organic and deterministic features. Smith notes that the statement is without context and argues that Renan surely intended neither organic aspects nor determinism in his ideology. Rather, he stressed the individual’s connection to the past, through a ‘cult of the ancestors’ and a ‘heroic past’.²⁰

After World War II the emergence of many Asian and African nations drew attention to forms of nationalism different from the Western mode. More recently the expansion of the superpowers and the growth of vast multi-national companies have influenced in many ways the existence of nation-states. The term ‘nationalism’ has been understood in different ways since the eighteenth century even in European languages and the definition of nationalism is still not fixed today, as can be seen in its study from the point of view of different academic disciplines. However, as the history of the rise of nationalism illustrates, the spirit of individual sacrifice to the nation is everywhere seen as a virtue in this ideology. It is also a belief system that reflects the human desire to go beyond death.

¹⁸ Smith, *Nationalism*, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid. 39-40.

²⁰ Ibid. 39-40.

Smith expressed his interest in studies of nationalism at the beginning of his representative work *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986):

Why are men and women willing to die for their countries? Why do they identify so strongly with their nations? Is national character and nationalism universal? Or is the 'nation' a purely modern phenomenon and a product of strictly modern social conditions? And what, in any case, do we mean by the concepts of the 'nation' and 'national identity'?²¹

These questions show Smith's recognition that nationalism may make an individual citizen devote his/her life to the cause of the nation to which the individual belongs. They also raise Smith's principal question, whether nations are modern or not.

Since the 1970s, studies of nationalism have been divided into two major approaches, primordialism and modernism. Primordialists focus on the analysis of ethnicity and tend to view nationalism as an expression of continuity from pre-modern ethnic communities. Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz are considered representative of this approach.²² However modernists see nationalism and the establishment of a nation-state as modern phenomena, through the lens of their political and economic studies.²³ Smith studied with Ernest Gellner, a representative of the modernist scholars, commenting that his theory was 'the most cogent exposition of the view that nations and nationalism are purely modern phenomena.'²⁴ Gellner argued that 'pre-modern 'agro-literate' societies were unable to give rise to nationalism, as their elites had no contact with the masses. In contrast, modern societies in tandem with industrialisation evolved a mass education system, produced a highly skilled workforce and created cultural homogeneity where the masses were able to generate their own ideology.'²⁵ Amongst the modernists, Smith highly valued the work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson also understood the significance of the ideology of nationalism, seeing that the nation-state could be an object of love and death for its citizens and studied the mechanism whereby nationalism established its hold over particular populations.²⁶ He argued that 'print-capitalism' was the medium that spread this ideology among the citizens in a nation-state after the decline in the prestige of religion. Through the distribution of publications, 'print-capitalism' formed an

²¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 6.

²² Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism*, 7, 49.

²³ Ibid. 7.; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 9-10.

²⁴ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 10.

²⁵ Ibid. 10.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised and extended edition (London: Verso, 1996), 9. 'No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers.' This statement shows the common interest between Anderson and Smith.

'imagined community' among readers, which created a sense of immortality as a citizen in the nation.²⁷ Smith, however, does not entirely agree with Gellner and Anderson because they consider nationalism as a purely modern phenomenon. In contrast, Smith argues that although nationalism as an ideology and a movement began in the late eighteenth century in Europe, some national sentiment can be traced back a few centuries earlier.²⁸ Accepting the modernity of a nation-states, Smith insisted that a nation-state is established on the basis of pre-modern culture, including ethnic and religious elements. For this reason Gellner and other scholars of nationalism labelled him a primordialist, but Smith himself describes his position as 'ethno-symbolism' or an 'ethno-symbolic approach', to distinguish himself from primordialists.

Smith also clarified his position in relation to 'Perennialism' and its contrast with 'Modernism'. He was critical of the perennialists, historians who pay a great deal of attention to the continuity of history, and do not admit the importance of modernity, nation-states and nationalism.²⁹

Smith considered that the interpretation of nationalism could not be undertaken in purely political terms, but also required disciplines such as history, sociology and anthropology. He also regarded nationalism as being profoundly connected to cultural, intellectual and psychological matters.³⁰ He defined nationalism in terms of the struggle for national identity, arguing that this was more fundamental than the pursuit of political independence, and stating that 'the ideal of national identity, in particular, relates to cultural issues that other ideologies neglect – and every nationalism pursues the goal of national identity in varying degrees. But, always, they come back to the ideal of the nation.'³¹ Importantly, Smith sees nationalism as expressed through culture:

...it is not enough to see nationalism as a secular political ideology like liberalism and socialism. Certainly, at the level of official ideology, it is undoubtedly secular, a doctrine of purely human autoemancipation. But nationalism also operates on other levels. Here it is best seen as a form of culture and a type of belief-system whose object is the nation conceived as a sacred communion. That in turn suggests the need for a different kind of analysis of its forms and contents, one that focuses on the cultural resources of ethnic symbol, memory, myth, value, and tradition, and their expression in texts and artefacts –

²⁷ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 10.

²⁸ Ibid. 11.

²⁹ Ibid. 12-13.

³⁰ Ibid. 1-2.

³¹ Ibid. 10.

scriptures, chronicles, epics, music, architecture, painting, sculpture, crafts, and other media.³²

Smith's idea of examining nationalism as seen in culture, including literary and art/craft works, opens the way to exploring the nationalist narratives of figures outside the political elite. It also gives us an opportunity to investigate the relationship between political elites and other members of the community, including the extent to which they shared common nationalist narratives.

Smith's conception of nationalism as a cultural phenomenon and his ethno-symbolic approaches as a way of investigating them are presented comprehensively in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986). Here Smith states that the modern world is a 'world of nations,' a description of both a reality and an aspiration.³³ He then asserts that 'the legitimate principle of politics and state-making today is nationalism; no other principle commands mankind's allegiance'.³⁴ In relation to studies of the origin of the nation-state and its later forms, Smith questions both primordialism and modernism, the two main schools, and places himself between them. He disputes the former as it regards a nation as merely an extension of a primordial social existence. As for the modernist approach, he agrees with the opinion that a nation is a modern phenomenon which appeared in conjunction with the revolutions of industrial capitalism, the bureaucratic state and secular mass-education. However, he argues that pre-modern culture and identity did not fade and in fact even thrived after the beginning of the modern period.³⁵ That is, Smith questions the widespread narrative, dating back to Kant's thought, which saw the modern period as a departure from religion and a pursuit of secularism. In its place, he proposes nationalism as a secular ideology replacing religion.³⁶

Smith considered it important to recognise that pre-modern culture continued to operate in various ways, even in a modern nation-state. He called the ethnic community which had a cultural identity and had been established in the pre-modern era an *ethnie*, using a French loan-word because of the lack of an appropriate word in English.³⁷ He argued that religion played a crucial role in the preservation and maintenance of the *ethnie*.³⁸ Furthermore, he pointed to many examples of the use of

³² Smith, Anthony D., *Chosen Peoples*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, 18

³³ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 129.

³⁴ Ibid. 129.

³⁵ Ibid. 3-4.

³⁶ Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 9-11.

³⁷ Ibid. 9-11.

³⁸ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 3-4.

various features of the *ethnie* by nationalists engaged in the process of nation-making, showing that sometimes they transformed them in order to fit them to their cause.³⁹

Smith defined the core of an ethnicity as something that ‘has been transmitted in the historical record and as it shapes individual experience, resides in this quartet of “myths, memories, values and symbols” and in the characteristic forms of styles and genres of certain historical configurations of populations’.⁴⁰ In the formation of an *ethnie*, in cases where the *ethnie* had a religion which closely connected to politics, a community consisting of religion and ethnic sentiments was formed. As examples of the formation of ethnic communities in response to the rise of religious sectarianism, he pointed to the Pagan dynasty in Myanmar, relying on Emanuel Sarkisyanz’s *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*, together with the Armenian kingdom, the Sikh community and other older entities.⁴¹

In Burma, Theravada Buddhism provides the emblem and identity-content for a sense of Burmese ethnicity, which harks back to the halcyon days of the Pagan dynasty in the Middle Ages, when Buddhism became a quasi-state religion, differentiating the community from neighbours.⁴²

Smith also stated that in a community where ethnicity and organised religion are closely combined, priests and scribes (they were almost the only literate class in pre-industrial society) became engaged in preserving their myths and symbolism and took charge of recording, editing and transmitting them.⁴³ Smith did not mention Myanmar, but as illustrations, he referred to England, Russia and the Jewish community. However, his analysis can also be applied to the Burmese ethnic community from the time of the Pagan Dynasty (849-1297) because during this period the Theravada Buddhist kingdom was formed and written Burmese was also established. I would argue this was the origin of the Burmese *ethnie*, in that it was at this time that religion and language (particularly written language which has a ‘text culture’ involving literary works) came to be regarded as important aspects of Burmese cultural identity.

Although few of Smith’s publications have discussed the case of Myanmar, his analyses are still relevant to the history of Burmese nationalism. In his discussion of the progression from an *ethnie* to a nation in the modern period, Smith mentions the U Nu era in Myanmar, Ireland and Pakistan as nations where ethnic characteristics continued and religion flourished, and where a state religion became part of a modern

³⁹ Ibid. 18, 129-130.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 15.

⁴¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 34-36.

⁴² Ibid. 36

⁴³ Ibid. 36-37.

nation-state.⁴⁴ In relation to the ‘nationalisation’ of these religions, Smith comments that ‘such “nationalization” inevitably means a new focus for the religious organization and its local priesthoods; they become political weapons and national mobilizers, over and above their traditional role as ethnic repositories and transmitters’.⁴⁵ However, the failure of the U Nu state’s legitimation of Buddhism as a state religion in Burma in 1961 needs careful discussion. The state’s legitimation of Buddhism evoked strong criticisms from counterforces in the country, which resulted in the collapse of the government within a year. Fundamentally, a key issue for Burmese nationalism from the late 1930s was the acceptance of communism and socialism. When the U Nu government supported American policy in the 1950s, clearly rejecting communism and lessening its socialist characteristics, it instead sought its national principle in Buddhism in association with an ideal social welfare state.⁴⁶ However this brought strong criticisms from non-Buddhist citizens, including minorities. It is also necessary to explore the complexity of Buddhist teachings in modern Myanmar as shown in the disunity among the ‘Sangha’ (Buddhist monkhood) at this time. Sarkisyanz’s study discussing the historical relationship between Buddhism and Burmese nationalism is very valuable in this respect. His description of U Nu’s narrative of Buddhist socialism is a rare historical document. However it is also important to investigate a variety of Buddhist narratives in modern Burma, making use of some recent studies.⁴⁷

In the same section, Smith also points out that as a result of the decline of religion and the spread of mass education, a new literate intellectual class was created; thus the record of ethnic memories and experiences shifted from temples and priesthood to the university and its scholarly community, and artists (including authors), musicians and painters.⁴⁸ For modern Myanmar, this is reflected in the rise of many lay authors alongside the traditional authorship of priests. This increased authorship, together with the development of ‘print capitalism’ in Burma, gave rise to a rich Burmese publishing culture which was highly developed by the 1910s and 1920s. This was the era in which Shwe U Daung established himself as an author, and in which his literary world, combining Buddhist ethics with inspiration from English literature, became popular nationwide. As part of this process, an ‘imagined community’ was forming among modern Burmese readers. These developments illustrate the efficacy of

⁴⁴ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 159.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.159-160.

⁴⁶ Robert Taylor, *The State of Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 290-292.

⁴⁷ Two valuable recent studies discussing modern Burmese Buddhism are Braun, Erik. *The Birth of Insight*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013 and Turner, Alicia. *Saving Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014.

⁴⁸ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 160-161.

Anderson's twin insights, the 'imagined community' backed by 'print capitalism', as a guide to the evolution of modern Burmese society. At the same time, however, it is questionable how far the modernists' identification of the 'decline of religion in a modern society' as a precondition of nationalism is applicable to Myanmar, because from its earliest stages Burmese nationalism was closely connected to the movement for revitalising Buddhism.⁴⁹ It is now important to analyse more precisely the contents of Burmese publications circulating in the colonial and post-colonial period to discover what sort of imagined community and national consciousness was in the process of formation.⁵⁰

Observing today's numerous ethnic conflicts and movements aimed at establishing separate nations, Smith claimed that looking for the reasons for these conflicts in politics and economics is not enough; it is also important to understand the *ethnie's* myths, symbols, memories and values.⁵¹ This statement is important for the situation of Myanmar, as the country has numerous ethnic minorities. Smith also mentioned Myanmar as an example of a nation-state 'where one *ethnie* seeks to dominate the rest and mold the state in its image', which raises the problems of Burman-centred nationalism.⁵² The ethnic minority issues in Myanmar stem in part from the 'divide and rule' policies of the British colonial era, which became a key issue for Burma's independence when some minorities, including Karens and Shans, claimed their autonomy. The narrative of Burman-centred nationalism is usually attributed to the Thakin Party in the 1930s. If this is the case, we may ask why these ideas evolved. What were their historical origin? I argue that the features of Burman-centred nationalism have so far not been sufficiently investigated. This thesis aims to make a contribution to filling this gap.

Based on extensive research Smith proposes Buddhism as a distinctive feature of Burmese ethnicity. In a recent publication entitled 'Nationalism' he again discusses the Pagan dynasty in Myanmar and shows the deep connection between religion and ethnic identity, noting that the dynasty also had its own language and literature.⁵³ Although further studies are required, Smith's suggestion that Burmese ethnic identity

⁴⁹ Through observation of the close relationship between nationalism and religion often seen in Asian and African nations, studies of 'religious nationalism' that question the modernist ideology of secularism have been undertaken in recent years by some scholars. For example Partha Chatterjee discussed this issue through his investigation into Hindu nationalism: Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

⁵⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 9-46.

⁵¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 224-225.

⁵² Ibid. 219-220.

⁵³ Smith, *Nationalism*, 107.

was formed with a strong bond to religion is convincing and his 'ethno-symbolic approaches' are helpful for studies of Burmese nationalism.

It is also interesting to see that in the same section of the book, Smith refers to Japan together with Myanmar. Here he criticises Adrian Hastings, a scholar who argues for the perennialist approach. Smith argues that the formation of nations is not limited to the West, saying that nations may also arise in non-western states with solid polities:

For Hastings, nationalism came to Asia from Europe through Christianity and colonialism. He does not appear to consider the possibility that, on his own criteria, Japan, Korea and China, as well as Pagan Burma and Safavid Persia, already constituted nations in the medieval epoch. After all, they possessed vernacular languages and literatures, as well as myths of unique origins and common descent. Moreover, their polities were supported by powerful religious institutions and ideals.⁵⁴

Besides England, the colonial mother country, Burmese nationalists gathered around the YMBA saw modern Japan as an ideal nation-state, because they found much similarity between Burma and Japan. Both had a traditional religion and their own language, conditions which should not be overlooked.⁵⁵ To analyse the nature of the YMBA's nationalism, it is necessary to understand the features of nationalism during the time of Imperial Japan. Among studies of this area, the research of Bunzo Hashikawa is distinctive.⁵⁶ As Hashikawa's approaches have some similarities with Smith's ethno-symbolic approaches, they are useful to consider briefly here.

Hashikawa was a student of Japanese nationalism at Tokyo University who became sceptical towards the modernist approach of his teacher Masao Maruyama, the advocate of democracy in post-war Japan. In this regard he was similar to Smith, who was a student of Ernest Gellner, the modernist, and who also became sceptical of his teacher's approach. Hashikawa was intent on investigating the topic post-war Japan tried its best to ignore, i.e. Japan's nationalism before World War II, especially the ultra-nationalist narratives of non-political elites. In his research he paid much attention to the relationship of nationalism and religion – the Emperor [Tenno] system and Shintoism, and also Buddhism. The people whom Hashikawa studied included many Japanese nationalists who supported nationalist movements in other Asian countries. He argued that when Meiji Japan, which applied the Emperor [Tenno] system as its control principle, was established, 'various elements of ancient myths

⁵⁴ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 107.

⁵⁵ This issue will be discussed more in the later chapters.

⁵⁶ I took his course of Modern Japanese Intellectual History when I was a student at Meiji University, where Hashikawa was a professor at the time.

and fairly new traditions and customs were utilised for forming a nation and a nation-state', based on David Apter's narrative of 'political religion' for Asia and Africa's new nation-states.⁵⁷ There is a similarity here with Smith's ethno-symbolic approaches, which suggest that features of an *ethnie* are often utilised in the making of a nation and Smith also valued Apter's narratives.⁵⁸ Hashikawa's work remained unfinished because of his early death, but his achievements have been re-discovered in recent years in Japan.⁵⁹

Thesis aims and structure

In the past several decades, under the influence of feminism and other disciplines, the field of historical studies has questioned 'grand narrative' writings. As a counter-argument to 'grand narratives,' the writing of history from the point of view of oppressed and marginalised peoples has become common, as will be discussed in more depth in Chapter One. In the light of this trend, Smith clarified the purpose of his 'ethno-symbolic approaches' as not a criticism of established theories, but one that made it possible 'to move away from the heavily elite-oriented analysis characteristic of most modernists, [...] to emphasize the reciprocal relationship between "elites" and "the people", the non-elites or middle and lower strata of the population.'⁶⁰

Are Smith's ethno-symbolic approaches regarded as a paradigm or theory in today's nationalism studies? In his recent book, Smith himself presents four paradigms for the study of nations and nationalism: primordialism, perennialism, ethno-symbolism and modernism, and reaches the following conclusion:

The debates between adherents of the four paradigms have taken place on two levels: theory and history. Put baldly, of the four paradigms, the modernists have been strong on theory, but rather weak on history, whereas perennialists have been rather stronger on history, but weak on theory. Premordialism has either a flawed theory or none, and little or no history, being reductionist (sociobiology) or largely speculative or ahistorical (cultural premordialism). As for the ethno-symbolists, they have evolved no theory, only approaches. But, as one might expect, they are concerned with macro-history and its

⁵⁷ Hashikawa Bunzo, *Nashonarizumu* (Nationalism) (Tokyo: Kinokuniya-Shoten, 1968), 172.

⁵⁸ Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, 17.

⁵⁹ Takeshi Nakajima, a researcher of modern Indian political history was inspired by Hashikawa's publications for his studies on Indian nationalism and religion. He also edited Hashikawa, Bunzo. *Hashikawa Bunzo Serekushon* (Selected essays by Bunzo Hashikawa). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005. In 2015 his representative book 'Nashonarizumu' (Nationalism) (1968) was reprinted from Chikuma Shobō, Tokyo. I also heard from a professor at Meiji University on 5th of September 2015 that a collection of books once owned by Hashikawa, which had been sent to Keio University after his death, is currently considered to be acquired by Meiji University.

⁶⁰ Smith, *Nationalism*, 61.

sociocultural elements, and, as such, they provide, in my view, a necessary corrective to the often sweeping claims of adherents of the other main paradigms.⁶¹

Smith's 'ethno-symbolic approaches' were originally developed from modernism, and offered a viewpoint from culture and history, particularly from a non-elite standpoint, to complement the modernists' elite and political/economic-centred studies. His approach also functioned as a constructive criticism of premordialist and perennialist research. Ethno-symbolic approaches are also highly interdisciplinary. Many of my arguments in this thesis also owe a great deal to the achievements of numerous previous researchers of Burmese nationalism like Robert Taylor, Michael Charney and Kei Nemoto, mainly working in the modernist paradigm. Through applying ethno-symbolic approaches, I aim to make a reciprocal contribution to little known areas so far untouched by the modernist paradigm. In this way, my research aims to broaden our understanding of the nature of Burmese nationalism as a whole.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I present a review of the literature concerning the two main themes in my discussion. Firstly, in relation to the history of Burmese nationalism I examine the features of Dobama Asiayone-centred national history and the place of the YMBA and its political successor, the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA) in this version of history. Secondly I discuss the effectiveness of biography as historical study and its application to Burmese history. In this chapter I also analyse the unique features of Shwe U Daung and his literary works in modern Burmese literature, focusing on an analysis of the two main sources for this research, *Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories* and *Record of the Life and Thoughts*.

Chapters Two to Six present a biography of Shwe U Daung, mainly focusing on the development of his nationalist narratives and their vision of an ideal nation-state, often referring to his 'San Shar' stories. Chapter Two describes Shwe U Daung's childhood, from his birth to his graduation from high school. His parents were both former servants at the Burmese palace in Mandalay, but after annexation by the British his father became a slipper maker to support his family. After the birth of Shwe U Daung his parents took great pains over their son's education and sent him to a prestigious English high school. How did his parents adapt themselves to the new colonial era? This chapter argues Buddhism played an important role in his parents' adaptation to the new colonial era, not only for material reasons or as a result of external pressures. Through their study of a new Buddhism his parents were able to overcome the disruptive effects of large-scale social change and acquire a new vision

⁶¹ Smith, *Nationalism*, 64.

for their son's future education. His parents' religious experience also greatly influenced the young Shwe U Daung.

Chapter Three deals with Shwe U Daung's life as a petty clerk in several offices of the colonial government before he resigned to become a professional author. During this period he and his parents experienced hard times as a result of Shwe U Daung's series of unsuccessful marriage arrangements. In such times of trouble, reading English popular literature was his great joy. This was also the time when the Burmese publishing industry began flourishing. Through his work Shwe U Daung was also able to travel frequently throughout the country in the company of his English employers. This chapter discusses the way these experiences helped Shwe U Daung imagine the Burma Province of British India as the community where he belonged, which contributed to the creation of 'San Shar the Detective', the hero who maintained law and order in this territory.

Chapter Four discusses Shwe U Daung's move to Rangoon in 1917 to take up a position as an editor at *The Sun* (Thuriya) Press and also the beginnings of his career as a successful author through the publication of a series of 'San Shar the Detective' stories. However three years later, because of a scandal at the Thuriya Press, he resigned from the company and moved to Upper Burma, where he continued to publish his stories with other publishers and also deepened his interest in Buddhism. The reasons for the success of the San Shar stories was not only their intrinsic quality but also Thuriya Press's nationwide network of the YMBA. This chapter discusses the nature of the YMBA, especially focusing on its relationship to the Theosophical Society. Shwe U Daung was not interested in politics, but through reference to some of the San Shar stories, I argue that various ideals of the Society, such as its image of the modern Buddhist, inspired him.

Chapter Five begins with the 1929 Great Depression which caused economic crisis in colonial Burma. It was also the time of emergence of the Dobama Asiayon and a period when GCBA's parliamentary politics began to add to the problems. This chapter deals with Shwe U Daung's move to Pegu where he was hired as a translator at the office of the American Baptists, followed by his second appointment at the Sun (Thuriya) Press, where he published a series of books containing the San Shar stories. This chapter analyses the shifts in his political thought, an acceptance of future dominion status for British Burma, plus his strong scepticism towards Japan, unlike other nationalists. The chapter also discusses Shwe U Daung's life under the Japanese army's occupation of Burma during World War II. Fleeing from Rangoon at war he returned to Mandalay, but had no opportunity for publication during the war years. He lived in poverty and often suffered from ill health throughout this period. In 1947 he resumed publishing the San Shar stories in the Ludu newspaper in Mandalay. He made almost no comment

on the issue of independence at this time. Through an analysis of several episodes of the San Shar stories, I argue that the reason for this was that the immediate concern for himself and his readers was the search for a peaceful life, rather than the issue of political change.

Chapter Six examines Shwe U Daung's studies of socialism and communism and also his further studies of Buddhism including spiritualism. In the mid-1950s the U Nu government conducted a ruthless crackdown on the Ludu newspaper where Shwe U Daung was working as an editor and held him under arrest for some time. This bitter experience made him sceptical of the politics of the new independent Burma. The San Shar stories remained set in the colonial period, which allowed Shwe U Daung to express his criticism of the government in a metaphorical way. This chapter analyses Shwe U Daung's narratives of an ideal nation-state supported by socialism and communism blended with Buddhism. In 1961 Shwe U Daung released his lengthy autobiography.

The final chapter summarises Shwe U Daung's nationalist narratives as seen in the San Shar stories. In 1962, the year of the emergence of the Ne Win government, Shwe U Daung published the last episode of the San Shar stories. The stories show that in spite of the changes in his political stance, a sense of justice based on a modern Buddhist critical spirit was important to Shwe U Daung. The chapter argues that this was one reason for the long-lasting popularity of the San Shar stories, which still resonate with today's readers. He was not a political person, but I conclude that the idea of seeking an ideal nation-state through modern Buddhist thinking was the YMBA's original narrative and that this idea was kept alive in Shwe U Daung's literary works. In Anthony D. Smith's terms, this is an example of the Burmese *ethnie's* strong historical attachment to Buddhism and its place in the Burmese community, and an illustration of literature as a vital expression of Burmese 'myth, memories, values and symbols'

Chapter 1

Biography Writing as History and Shwe U Daung

Through the lens of biography, this thesis aims to analyse Shwe U Daung's perceptions of a nation-state, the formation and nature of his nationalist narratives, and how they changed. In this chapter I discuss the rationale for my biographical approach, the place of biography in the contemporary study of history, and also the meaning of biography in the context of Burmese studies.

In the past few decades there has been a trend towards the writing of biography by historians. The main influences on this tendency were the rise of feminism movements from the late 1960s and the decline in the application of Marxist approaches from the 1980s. These philosophical currents made a contribution to the spread of awareness of human rights and the consciousness of individuality, eventually leading to academic interest in the narratives of 'marginalised people' in contrast to 'grand narratives', the stories of the dominant voices in society. Biography writing as historical study emerged in line with the rise of the 'new social history' and my attempt to write a biography of Shwe U Daung is also based on this school of thought. What is a 'grand narrative' in the Burmese context? As many recent publications indicate, one of the common notions is the narrative of the Burmese government which often overlaps with the narrative of Buddhist Burmans, in contrast to those of ethnic minorities.¹ This chapter will examine the narrative of Buddhist Burmans in order to define the place of Shwe U Daung's works in this narrative.

The chapter first provides a brief history of biography and autobiography in the West and their relationship to history as an academic discipline. I will then analyse the formation of the Burmese grand narratives and the acceptance and evaluation of Shwe U Daung's works in Myanmar. Lastly I will discuss two representative works by Shwe U Daung which provide the main source materials for this thesis, *Record of Life and*

¹ Selth, Andrew. *Burma (Myanmar) since the 1988 uprising: A select bibliography* (Second Edition), Brisbane: Griffith University Asia Institute, 2015, lists 90 items under the category of 'Population and Ethnic minorities,' which is fewer than 'Politics and Government' (155 items) and 'History' (150 items), but much bigger than 'Defence and National Security' (59 items), 'Culture, Arts and Craft' (50 items), 'Burmese Literature' (22 items) and 'Language' (18 items). Ito, Toshikatsu, ed., *Myanmar Gaisetsu* [An Outline of Myanmar], Tokyo: Mekon, 2011 is a unique book, a collection of narratives of self-identity by representatives of Myanmar's nine 'official' ethnic groups (Burman, Mon, Karen, Kayah, Shan, Kachin Chin and Rakhine).

Thoughts (1982) and *Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories* Vol. 1 & 2 (2011).²

Biography Writing as History

Although biographies have been written for many centuries in many parts of the world, 'biography' – stories about people's lives — is a term that was introduced in the late seventeenth century. It emerged in a new wave of writing about the lives of individuals that spread through Western countries during this period. Before the end of the sixteenth century, biographical subjects were mainly limited to rulers and military leaders. After the Civil War and the Restoration in Britain, the range of biographical subjects was expanded, and a large number of people who had been involved in the war wrote biographies to commemorate someone they had known or to honour a special person. The scientific revolution brought a fresh viewpoint to biographies, the observation and analysis of people's lives as natural phenomena, and in the late seventeenth century a new form of writing, in the form of autobiographies, diaries and journals also became popular.³ During the eighteenth century, patriotic and national biography emerged, supported by the expansion of modern European nation states, and by the end of the nineteenth century the role of national heroes in the making of a nation became increasingly emphasised.⁴ In France a canon of 'great men' emerged as the subjects of biography, and by the early 1880s the idea of the importance of ancestors and heroic figures in the making of a nation was widely disseminated. Following France, collections of significant national lives were published in other European countries, including Germany, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands. Finally in Britain the editing of a *Dictionary of National Biography* was begun in 1896 and completed in 1912.⁵ A strong relationship between modern biographical writing and nationalism can be seen in these developments. Anthony D. Smith describes the significance of the use of heroes in historical perspective as follows: 'The cult of golden ages and heroes can only be grasped in the context of nationalist mythologies of communal pasts, in which they serve as focal points of comparison with the present, and with Significant Others, within the framework of an evolutionary reconstruction of ethnic history.'⁶

² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* [Record of Life and Thoughts]. Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982.; Shwe U Daung. *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* [Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories]. Vol. 1 & 2. Yangon: Seikku Cho Cho Sape, 2011.

³ Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 29-30.

⁴ Ibid. 50.

⁵ Ibid. 50-51.

⁶ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 200.

It is also important to note that nationalism had a close connection with the development of history as an academic discipline. As modern nation-states are territorial states, history was developed as a profession dealing with the record of the past in and out of national territories. Modern history was established in Germany during the period between 1820 and 1840 at Berlin University, where Leopold von Ranke applied his new scientific approach for the analysis of documents which had been written over the past several hundred years. Von Ranke is now recognised as 'probably the most important historian to shape the historical profession as it emerged in Europe and the United States in the late 19th century.'⁷ His main interest was political history in Europe, including religious conflicts. His studies did not cover histories of individuals, only of states.⁸ Although its profile was low at the beginning, this new academic discipline gradually gained recognition in other countries and spread all over Europe. By the twentieth century, historical studies in Britain focused on political and legal history, along with the history of religious institutions. At the same time, several history professors at Cambridge University raised the possibility of biography as an aid to the teaching of history. At the beginning of the 1850s, Sir James Stephen, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University suggested that historical education should include moral training, and during the 1880s at the same university, J.R. Seeley, then Regius Professor of Modern History, stated that history teaching had the duty to impart 'public feeling and patriotism,' to young people.⁹ Studying an individual and writing his/her biography was not recognised as a proper academic exercise, but this new positive attitude towards biography became influential among non-academic authors. In this way biography became accepted as 'the concern to provide appropriate memorials and extol the virtues of significant people, while passing over any aspects of their lives which might suggest personal failings'.¹⁰

Questioning these Victorian values from the early twentieth century some biographers began applying new approaches, focusing more on the inner life or personality of their subject, not only their significant actions. This trend in biography, which Virginia Woolf, one of its practitioners, called 'new biography' often caused controversy in the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹ The re-emergence of the feminist movement in the late 1960s and 1970 and the decline of Marxism in the 1980s focused attention away from the study of class divisions in society. In its place came an interest in the

⁷ Caroline Hoefferle, *Essential Historiography Reader* (Boston: Pearson, 2011), 68.

⁸ Caine, *Biography and History*, 14-15.

⁹ *Ibid.* 15-16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 38-40.

concept of 'grand narratives' which contrasted the history of the dominant group with the histories of silent or suppressed marginal groups.¹² Barbara Caine explains the application of this new approach to biography since the 1970s:

This new approach to biography accompanied the rise of the new histories which have become so prominent since the 1970s, including the 'new social history' microhistory, women's history, black history, and post-colonial history. All of these forms of history share a concern to explore the activities, experiences and historical agency of groups with relatively little political and economic power or social status and to locate and listen to the voices of those who had been silenced in earlier historical writing.¹³

Studies of an individual life based on the 'new history' approaches contributed to the acceptance of the writing of biography as a valid part of the study of history.

In Southeast Asian studies some attempts to explore nationalist narratives through analysis of autobiographies written in local languages by people from various social background have been undertaken in Indonesian studies.¹⁴ The development of oral history in Southeast Asia from the 1970s should also be noted as a valuable approach to nationalism, as this approach has focused on marginalised voices in contrast to official histories or nation-state grand narratives.¹⁵ To deepen our understanding of Burmese history, especially the nature of colonial and post-colonial Burmese culture and society, it is becoming increasingly important to listen to indigenous peoples' voices widely and understand how they viewed the worlds in which they lived. So with studies of Burmese nationalism, oral history is a valuable approach. It is also crucial to analyse Burmese publications in local languages, not only relying on English materials such as colonial official report documents. Studies of Shwe U Daung have not been given the same priority as studies of political elites, but he was a highly regarded author in Myanmar who left numerous writings which serve as a guide to his thoughts. I would argue that Shwe U Daung and many other Burmese intellectuals have been generally overlooked or marginalised by most overseas academics because of language barriers. In view of the richness of Burmese text culture and the flourishing publishing industry in the country for more than a century, there should be much more time and attention paid to Burmese writers/novelists' thoughts and lives.

¹² Ibid. 2.

¹³ Ibid. 3.

¹⁴ Watson, C. W. *Of Self and Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.

¹⁵ Loh, Kah Seng, Dobbs, Stephen and Koh Ernest, eds., *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Memories and Fragments*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

The 'Grand Narrative' of Myanmar

Studies of marginalised groups in a society are often concerned with the relationship between state power and those who are excluded from it. In today's Myanmar ethnic minorities are often described as marginalised groups in a state which is governed by and for Buddhist Burmans. Many of the ninety publications listed in *Burma (Myanmar) since the 1988 uprising: A select bibliography* by Andrew Selth are discussions of serious civil conflicts, delayed democratisation and human rights issues reflecting the problematic conditions of border areas where many ethnic minorities reside. In these narratives the Burmese military government¹⁶ is often regarded as dominated by 'Buddhist Burmese' and some publications clearly see the military government as responsible for these problems.¹⁷ Similar standpoints are often seen in journalism, publications by NGOs and also foreign policies.¹⁸ Some publications dealing with Rohingya issues discuss aspects of the problems facing a Muslim minority in a country dominated by the 'Buddhist Burman' majority.¹⁹ These trends reflect questions and criticisms related to the principles adopted by the Burmese government since the time of independence, which have led to many unsolved ethnic conflicts, civil wars and economic problems. The notion of the 'Buddhist Burmans' character of the Burmese government originates from the Dobama Asiayone in the late 1930s. In the post-independence period it was particularly disseminated after Ne Win took power. It is also deeply connected to the development of the official national history. However, the formation of this Burmese 'grand narrative', should be explored in a wider context.

The version of modern Burmese history widely accepted inside and outside of Myanmar now is mainly based on the historical narrative of the Dobama Asiayone which led the country's independence movement. The spread of this narrative through school education began after 1962, with the establishment of the Burmese Socialist Party government. Before this time a major Burmese history textbook from 1929 was used throughout the 1950s, in the era of independence. It tells of the different historical perceptions and values among the Buddhist Burmese according to their age groups.

¹⁶ Myanmar established a civilian government on 10 March 2016, although one quarter of the seats in parliament are still allocated to the military.

¹⁷ For example: Amnesty International. *Myanmar: Ethnic Minorities: Targets of Repression*. London: 2001; Human Rights Watch: *"The Government Could Have Stopped This": Sectarian Violence and Ensuring Abuses in Burma's Arakan State*. New York: 2012.

¹⁸ Burma Campaign UK, a major human rights and democracy organisation, publishes details of the Burmese military's mistreatment of ethnic minorities on their website. <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/about-burma/>

¹⁹ Selth, *Burma (Myanmar) since the 1988 uprising: A select bibliography* (Second Edition) lists 90 items under the category of 'Population and Ethnic minorities. Fourteen of the 90 items are grouped under the category of 'The 'Rohingya' Question'.

The 1929 school textbook of Burmese history, the first history to include the colonial era of Burma written by a Burmese, is entitled *Myanma Yazawin [History of Burma]*. It tells Burma's history with a focus on the lineage of the dynasties of Burmese kings from a mythical king's establishment of Burma in Tagaung in Upper Burma, in the distant past to the Konbaung era and the early twentieth century. This book originated from the YMBA nationalist movement and was used in many English-Burmese schools and Burmese schools. Especially at 'national schools' teaching all subjects in Burmese from primary to university levels, Burmese history was normally taught with this textbook. Ba Than, the book's author, was a journalist from Bassein (today's Patheingyi) in the Irrawaddy delta, who had been involved in the nationalist movement from his early days, and was particularly concerned with the development of Burmese literature. As Ba Than was a common name for a Burmese male, he is often remembered as 'Ba Than, the history teacher'. The youngest of three brothers, Ba Than's eldest brother Sein was the editor-in-chief of *Myanma Alin (New Light of Myanmar)* magazine, a top popular magazine at the time, which also had close connections with the YMBA and its Thuriya Press. The second brother, Ba Gyan, worked for the colonial parliament. Ba Than taught at Shin Maha Gawtha Buddhist high school, a centre of the nationalist movement in Moulmein, where he had established strong links with the YMBA and the Theosophical Society, and Sein Tin (who later became well known as Theikpan Maung Wa) was his student there.²⁰ After Ba Than's death in 1930, his eldest brother Sein kept editing the textbook, responding to ongoing change in Burma until 1938. In 1951 the textbook underwent its seventh printing.²¹

Myanmar Yazawin (History of Burma) was one example of writing by a Burmese based on the discipline of modern history. At a time when several history books on Myanmar had already been written, such as G.E. Harvey's *History of Burma*, A.R. Phayre's *History of Burma*, John Nisbet's *Burma under British Rule and Before* and were being used in lectures given at Rangoon University. Ba Than, mainly referring to Harvey's *History of Burma*, studied the main historical documents compiled during the era of the Burmese kingdom. These documents were *The Great Chronicle (Maha Yazawin Daw Gyi)* and *The Glass Palace Chronicle (Hman-nan Maha Yazawin Daw Gyi)*, and they were central to his *Myanmar Yazawin*.²² The concept of the Buddhist Burmans as the majority of the population and the idea of their lost territory or

²⁰ Ba Than (Yazawin Saya). Than Win Hlaing. *Ahnitchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidan* (Encyclopaedia of Myanmar History). Vol. 2. (Yangon: Pyinnya Shwedaung Sape, 2010), 84-85.

²¹ Ba Than. *Myanma Yazawin* (History of Burma). (Yangon: Pyankyay Wungyi Htana, 1991), Nidann (Introduction). This book was published as part of the series of books entitled 'Myochit seik dat Htetthanye pyinna pyantpwaye Sazin' (Patriotism Education Series). The Burmese government began publishing these books in 1991 and more than ten books were issued by the Ministry of Information.

²² Theikpan Maung Wa. *Sape Yinkyehmu* (Literary Culture). (Mandalay: Kyipwaye Saouktaik, 1976), 185.

territory which should be regained owed much to Harvey's *History of Burma*.²³ Ba Than's book included an image drawn from Harvey of a map of the Konbaung Dynasty territory overlapping with the territorial line of British Burma. The use of this map imprinted on the minds of readers a territorial image of modern Burma as a future nation-state.²⁴ For the British who fought against the Kingdom of Burma the history of Burma meant above all the history of the Burmese kingdom headed by a Buddhist king. The contents of Harvey's *History of Burma*, which defines the lineage of a Burmese dynasty, contributed to the formation of a self-image as Buddhist Burmans among the Burmese. I argue that together with Harvey's book, Ba Than's school textbook encouraged readers to foster the consciousness of being a Buddhist Burman.

The last chapter of Ba Than's *Myanmar Yazawin* analyses the colonial period and comments that the British colonial government brought economic growth and also gave appropriate respect to Buddhism as well as Christianity.²⁵ The British government's maintenance of peace, including the suppression of the Saya San rebellion (1930-1931) is highly valued. The book also states that the 'awakening' of Burmese began with the YMBA, a group of young western-educated Buddhists, which was the source of major nationalist activities till the late 1930s. Ba Than valued the large scale strikes led by the Rangoon University Students' Union but made no mention of the Dobama nationalists.²⁶

After independence, members of the Thakin Party gradually gave form to a national history of newly-born Burma. The earliest attempt was Nu's *Burma in Five Years* which reflected on the author's vivid memories of Japan's occupation of Burma and his fight against the Japanese Army. It also expresses his regret at his, and the Thakins', trust in Japan on the eve of independence.²⁷

In 1954 Nu, the prime minister, asked his secretary Thant to write a history of the independence movement in Burma. Thant undertook this project along with his other duties and in 1961, after he took up his position as Secretary General of the United Nations, finally published the results of his research.²⁸ This intensive work was the first national history written for Burma after independence. It was also the beginning of a historical narrative centred on the Thakin Party. In this book the YMBA and related

²³ Ba Than, *Myanma Yazawin*, 'Nidan' (Preface).

²⁴ Ibid., 148.; Harvey, G.E. *History of Burma*. (London: Frank Cass, 1967 [1925]), 152.

²⁵ Ba Than, *Myanma Yazawin*, 177-179.

²⁶ Ibid. 180, 184-185

²⁷ Nu, U. *Ngahnit Yathi – Bama Pyi*, (Burma in Five Years). Yangon: Myanmar Pyi Saouk Taik, 1946.

²⁸ Thant, U, *Pyidawtha Khayi* (Journey of the Pleasant Land), Vol. 1&2. (Yangon: Myanma Naingngan Bardharbyan Sape Athin, 1961), Zaga Palin (Preface). See also Thant Myint-U. *The River of Lost Footsteps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 272-273 and 280 for comment on this author's view of history and his relationship to U Thant's view of the Thakin Party.

movements were treated as the pre-history of the emergence of the Thakin Party. Interestingly, Thant describes the changes in hegemony over the nationalist movement from the YMBA and GCBA to the Thakins as a generational change. It is clear that in the 1930s the Thakin Party members and supporters had a strong competitive spirit against the older GCBA politicians who were clinging to the colonial parliament.²⁹

Another history reflecting the Thakin Party-centred narratives, Dr. Maung Maung's *Nation's Journey and General Ne Win* [Myanmar Naingnganye Khayi hnint Bogyoke Ne Win], is also a well-known work. This book consists of twenty-one chapters, beginning with the fall of the Burmese kingdom followed by annexation by the British and ending with the rise of the Socialist Revolutionary government. It also describes the YMBA (and GCBA) as the pre-history of the Thakins. Chapter Three, entitled 'Patriotism Again', describes the history from the capture of King Thibaw in 1885 to 1930, before the Saya San Rebellion, and also discusses the YMBA and GCBA. Dr. Maung Maung writes that the members of these organisations were highly educated in English and their identity as Buddhists encouraged their patriotism, which appears to follow Ba Than's narrative of the YMBA in his history textbook.³⁰ In Chapter Six he discusses the generation gap between the YMBA supporters and the Thakins and stresses that those who supported the Thakin Party were young men and women, also following Thant's *Journey of the Pleasant Land* (Pyidawtha Khayi).³¹ From around this time, the narratives of a national history of modern Myanmar centring on the Thakin Party and the YMBA as Thakin's pre-history became common, also in some historical writing by non-Burmese.³² It is also important that Dr. Maung Maung's book allocated one chapter to the Saya San rebellion, which was not mentioned at all in Thant's book, but which is presented in a positive light here as a mass movement by farmers.³³

One of the reasons why the Thakins emphasised the generation gap between themselves and the nationalists of the YMBA/BCBG was social changes. Robert Taylor has argued that the YMBA/GCBA generation grew up during a time when the Burmese economy was flourishing and those who were highly educated had access to professional occupations in the higher layers of society, such as high-ranking officials., However, the world was totally different for the young Thakins. The harsh conditions

²⁹ U Thant, *Pyidawtha Khayi*, Zaga Palin (Preface).

³⁰ Maung Maung, Dauktar. *Myanmar Naingnganye Khayi hnint Bogyoke Ne Win* (The Nation's Journey and General Ne Win) (Yangon: Bagan Saouk, 1969), 26-28.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

³² This was the case in some academic writing as well as in travel guide books before the 1988 Uprising. See 'Foreword' by Robert Taylor, in Khin Yi, *The Dobama Movement Burma (1930 -1938)*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1988.

³³ Maung Maung, Dauktar. *Myanmar Naingnganye Khayi hnint Bogyoke Ne Win*, 49-74.

of the 1929 world depression made it difficult for university students to gain access to proper jobs, a situation which rapidly politicised them.³⁴ I would argue that an ideological gap existed as well. The Thakins were the first major group to be influenced by communism and socialism and the first to accept these ideologies in Myanmar. From the YMBA to the Thakins two grand narratives of modern Burmese history as the story of the Buddhist Burmese emerged. What was the response to these narratives among Buddhist Burmese outside the political elite? How did these grand narratives influence Shwe U Daung's perception of a nation-state?³⁵

Shwe U Daung's Status in Burmese Literature

Not only did Shwe U Daung establish a profile as a popular writer/novelist/translator during the colonial period, he also won the country's most prestigious literary prize, the Sarpay Beikman Award, three times. His Burmese translations of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Upton Sinclair's *Jungle* won the Sarpay Beikman Translation Awards in 1952 and 1955 respectively, while his autobiography, *Record of Life and Thoughts*, won the 1961 Sarpay Beikman General Knowledge Award.

This Award was inaugurated in 1949 by the Burma Translation Association (*Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin*) a non-profit organisation formed in 1947 with the goal of developing Burmese literature and education, as well as promoting Burmese translations of foreign books. The Association set up an office in the Sorrento Villa on Prome Road, Rangoon in 1948, changing the name of the building to 'Sarpay Beikman' (Edifice of Literature).³⁶ From this time they became known as 'Sarpay Beikman' and under the patronage of Prime Minister Nu they organised many significant activities. In 1963, a year after General Ne Win's 1962 coup, the association was dissolved and re-organised as a governmental organisation under the Ministry of Information's Sarpay Beikman Management Council. The Sarpay Beikman Award was renamed the 'Artistic Literary Award' and in 1965 it was again renamed the National Literature Award (*Amyodha Sarpay Hsu*), which is still the most prestigious prize for literature in Myanmar today.³⁷

Since the time of the socialist regime the Burmese government has encouraged the cataloguing of publications by significant modern Burmese novelists and writers. This work has been undertaken by the Department of Library Science at Rangoon

³⁴ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 205.

³⁵ In 1988 the Burmese government renounced the elements of socialism and communism and promoted Buddhism as the nation's ethical principle instead.

³⁶ Prome Rd. is today's Pyay Rd.

³⁷ Than Win Hlaing. *Ahnitchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidan*. Vol.2, 269-273. 'Sapay Beikman Management Council' and 'Artistic Literary Award' are my translations. Their original names are 'Sarpay Beikman Oukchoukye Aphwe' and 'Anupyinnya Hsaing-ya Hsu.'

University. Most of these catalogues were compiled by research students who submitted them to the Department for their diplomas or library science degrees.

Besides his long-term career as an author, Shwe U Daung was also editor-in chief for *Louktha Pyidhu Nezin (Working People's Daily)* from 1964 to 1968. For this reason, it was natural for the socialist government to choose him a subject for cataloguing. In 1978 a 'Bibliography of Shwe U Daung' was submitted by Khin San Nwe for her library science diploma.³⁸ This 229-page bibliography consisting of four chapters is very comprehensive. Chapter One contains a short biography of Shwe U Daung, while Chapter Two consists of three sections, beginning with a list of novels and short stories written by Shwe U Daung. This is followed by a list of his essays and a list of his publications in book form. Chapter Three is an index of his publications and Chapter Four is a supplement, which includes essays published in the 1960s and 1970s about Shwe U Daung by other writers.

The bibliographies compiled in the Department of Library Science at Rangoon University, are very useful resources for researchers. Many students at major universities in Myanmar have used these resources in their research on modern Burmese literature and history. In a discussion with teaching staff from the Department of Burmese at Yangon University in 2006 I was informed that authors such as Thein Pe Myint and Thakin Kodaw Hmaing were popular subjects for research students, while Shwe U Daung's literary works had never been the subject of academic research in Myanmar.³⁹ A librarian from the National Library commented that this was probably because Shwe U Daung's detective stories were considered 'popular literature', not 'serious literature.'⁴⁰

What does 'serious literature' mean in the Burmese context? On 2 March 1962 a coup led by General Ne Win brought down Prime Minister Nu's civilian government. The following month, the new government published a policy statement entitled 'The Revolutionary Council's Manifesto: The Burmese Way to Socialism'.⁴¹ This booklet states: 'In order to encourage the idea that through working for the benefit of all, the benefit for individuals will also be fulfilled, we must undertake to disseminate this idea

³⁸ Khin San Nwe, Ma. *Shwe U Daung Sazu Sayin* (Bibliography of Shwe U Daung). Yangon: Waikza hnin Theikpan Tekkatho Yangon, Sakyitdaik Pyinnya Htana, 1978.

³⁹ This discussion was with Prof. Khin Aye and Mr. Ko Ko Than, lecturer (now Dr. Ko Ko Than, Associate Professor at Mandalay University of Distance Education). When I interviewed Dr. Ko Ko Than in September 2013 about the changes in research after 2006, I learned that some authors who wrote significant works at the time of the Burmese Way to Socialism were selected as a thesis subject, for example, Ma Sandar and Chit Oo Nyo.

⁴⁰ A comment by Mr. Myint Kyaing, who was Chief Librarian for the National Library in Yangon when I interviewed him in 2006. He is now retired and is active as a freelance writer.

⁴¹ In Burmese: *Myanma Hsoshelit Lanzin Naingngandaw Tawhlanye Kaungsi i Warda Thabawhtar Kyenyajet*

by means of education, literature, performing art, music, movies and so on.⁴² This socialist policy influenced literary activity in the country for several decades and socialism is an important characteristic of the history of modern Burmese literature. Socialist and communist ideas were largely introduced by the Nagani Book Club (Nagani Saouk Athin) which was organised in 1937 by Nu and Than Tun along the lines of the Left Book Club in England. Both Nu and Than Tun were members of Dobama Asiayone and Nu later became the Prime Minister of independent Burma. Than Tun, brother-in-law of Aung San, became the leader of the Burma Communist Party, which fought against the Burmese government. The writers who gathered around the Club, such as Nu, Thein Pe Myint and Maung Htin, depicted the hardships of life for farmers and the tragic condition of proletariat in Burma in realist writing, suggesting the solution lay in a future socialistic society. This club was a part of the Dobama Asiayone (Our Burman Association), the major political group in the struggle against the British colonialism from 1930.

Although the Nagani Book Club became inactive when the Japanese Army invaded Burma, after the war Sarpay Beikman, the Burma Translation Association, was formed as its successor.⁴³ Nu and Ne Win were members of the Dobama Asiayone and as many constituents of both the civilian and military governments originated from Dobama Asiayone and the Nagani Book Club, socialist ideas came to play a major role in independent Burma's mainstream literature.

This style of literary work became categorised as 'Depicting Life' (*Bawa Thayoukpaw*) during the time of the socialist government. Other more entertainment-oriented literary works such as love stories, mysteries, humorous tales and martial arts, were all categorised as 'Romance' (*Achit*). This created a division between 'Depicting Life', seen as serious literature, and 'Romance', seen as popular literature, an illustration of the contrast between 'high culture' and 'low culture' in the narrative of Burmese socialism. Many works awarded the National Literature Award were selected from the category of 'Depicting Life'. Thesis topics on Burmese literature at Burmese universities were also largely chosen from 'Depicting Life' authors or their works. However as the Burmese way to socialism lost its allure and its problems deepened considerably by the late 1970s, 'Depicting Life' literature became increasingly critical of the government. Depicting the daily lives of Burmese people, with their joys and sorrows in novels and short stories, the authors presented various kinds of social problems such as poverty, incompetent bureaucracy and the endless

⁴² Myanmar Hsoshelit Lanzin Parti Baho Kawmati Htanajouk. *Myanma Hsoshelit Lanzin Parti Hpwesibon Akhaygan Simyin* (Burmese Socialist Programme Party: The Basic Rules) (Yangon: Myanmar Hsoshelit Lanzin Parti Kawmati Htanajouk, 1979), 109.

⁴³ Than Win Hlaing. *Ahnitchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidan*. Vol.2, 564.

civil wars. Avoiding the strict censorship that was introduced in 1962, many authors skilfully expressed their messages through a range of satire and metaphor.⁴⁴ This ongoing dilemma between the socialist cause and the reality of socialism discouraged the publishing of 'Depicting Life' literature and the National Literature Novel Award did not nominate any work from 1979 to 1987. Many authors stopped writing in this genre, as it became increasingly politically risky to do so.⁴⁵

On the other hand a wide variety of popular literature was published in Myanmar during those years, and Shwe U Daung's works were reprinted many times. Even in 1984 a full translation of Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was also published. The translator of this book, Mya Than Tint, was a famous writer who published many works in the field of 'Depicting Life' literature. His novel *Across the Mountain of Swords and the Sea of Fire* [*Dataung ko Kyaw ywe Mee Pinle ko Hpyat Myi*] was awarded the 1973 National Literature Award.

Although the socialist government was replaced by a military junta in 1988, the concepts behind 'Depicting Life' literature and 'Romance' literature did not change immediately, for either the government or the readers.⁴⁶ However one important change was that from the 1990s the military government began to give positive support to Buddhism by repairing many pagodas and donating to religious institutions. This attitude was clearly supported by some writers and educators.⁴⁷ Even after 1988 the National Literature Award was seldom given to fiction, except for some short story collections, which reflects the strict censorship of 'Depicting Life' literature and also shows the tendency of many authors to begin exploring their abilities in other fields, including 'Romance' literature.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ It should be noted that in spite of censorship, Myanmar had a large variety of publications, both in the government and private sectors. Under the regime of Burmese socialism and the military dictatorship, reading books and magazines was a major form of entertainment for the Burmese people. Popular magazines featuring fiction in the 1970s and 1980s included 'Shumawa,' 'Sitpyan,' 'Ngwetayi,' 'Mahethi,' 'Moe Wai,' 'Cheri,' and 'Sape Loukthar'. Most of these publications were later discontinued. ('Mahethi' is an exception.) Their popularity has now been supplanted by other new magazines and weekly newspapers.

⁴⁵ Minamida Midori, "Genjitsu to Kyokoh no Hazama" (Between Reality and Fiction) in *Motto Shiritai Biruma, Dai Nihan* (The Burma I Want to Know More) (Second Edition), ed. Ayabe, Tsuneko & Yoneo, Ishii (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1994), 176-181.

⁴⁶ In my research on rental book shops in Yangon conducted in 1995, 2000 and 2005 some informants used the term 'Depicting Life' and 'Romance.'

⁴⁷ Khin Khin Ma, "Changing Insights from Myanmar Novels", 9. Paper presented to the Universities Historical Research Centre Conference on 'Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia', University of Yangon, Myanmar, 17-19 December 2003.

⁴⁸ The practice of censorship for novelists and short story writers by the military junta at the time of the 1988 democratic movement is well documented in Allot, Anna J. *Inked Over, Ripped Out*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994.

This strict censorship encouraged good writers, editors and publishers to work in the area of 'Romance' literature, contributing to the development of this genre and raising its quality. As we will see in the next section, several comprehensive collections of the San Shar stories have been published since 1997, all of them well edited and based on professional research. This has had the effect of educating readers and convincing them of Shwe U Daung's literary value.

In 2012 the first thesis on Shwe U Daung was submitted for the award of a degree. It was a PhD dissertation by Nwe Nwe entitled 'The Writing Style of Shwe U Daung's *Record of Life and Thoughts*', and was submitted to the Myanmar Department at Yangon University.⁴⁹ The abstract of this thesis states:

This thesis is aimed at presenting the characteristics of the writing style of *Record of Life and Thoughts*, an outstanding Burmese prose work, through the methodology of stylistic analysis. The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One: Shwe U Daung's life and literary works, Chapter Two: Characteristics of Shwe U Daung's writing style, Chapter Three: His usage of vocabulary, Chapter Four: His sentences, Chapter Five: His paragraphs and Chapter Six: His modifying expressions.⁵⁰

This type of linguistic analysis of a Burmese author's works has often been applied in theses submitted to the Myanmar Department at Yangon University in the past few decades. Nwe Nwe's comments on *Record of Life and Thoughts* were that this was a work demonstrating Shwe U Daung's remarkable literary achievements in both fiction and non-fiction.⁵¹ She also pointed out the changes that occurred in Shwe U Daung's writing style under the influence of his interest in English writers, from Lord Macaulay to Somerset Maugham.⁵²

The selection of Shwe U Daung as a thesis subject is an indication that the existing concepts of 'serious literature' and 'popular literature' have begun to merge in Myanmar in recent years. There is now the possibility that more novelists/writers who have been categorised as writers of 'Romance' will be chosen as future thesis subjects. In March 2011 President Thein Sein became the head of a new Burmese government and in August 2012 media censorship was abolished. In September of the same year internet access became more freely available, and in April 2013 the publication of private daily newspapers was permitted, after almost half a century of censorship.

⁴⁹ Nwe Nwe. *Shwe U Daung i Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya Yehan* [Writing Style of Shwe U Daung's *Record of Life and Thoughts*]. PhD Dissertation submitted to the Department of Myanmar. Yangon: Yangon University, 2012.

⁵⁰ Translation from Burmese.

⁵¹ Nwe Nwe. *Shwe U Daung i Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya Yehan*, 18.

⁵² *Ibid.* 23- 25.

Although the government still retains the authority to cancel or take any other action against a publication at any time, since the lifting of the ban the country's media activities have been vigorously expanding.⁵³ It is not yet clear how much the current situation has influenced literature and its publication, but this environment is certain to encourage people to re-think the boundaries between 'Depicting Life' and 'Romance' literature.

In September 2013 I asked Nu Nu Yi (Inwa), one of the top 'Depicting Life' authors, whether the perception of 'Depicting Life' literature had changed in the past few decades in Myanmar.⁵⁴ She answered that it had not yet changed much for either authors or readers and commented that she had difficulty knowing what to write, as she was always conscious of the need not to offend the censorship board. She saw 'Romance', including detective stories and supernatural fantasies, as a literary genre for entertainment, although she admitted that some works were very creative and conveyed meaningful messages beyond just being for pleasure. In relation to Shwe U Daung she claimed that she had never come across a modern Burmese writer who was more talented in the artistry of Burmese writing than Shwe U Daung, referring to his *Record of Life and Thoughts*, and saying that he was a major contributor to the development of modern Burmese writing through his rich knowledge of English literature.

So far there have been very few academic studies on Shwe U Daung outside of Myanmar. In 2011 a study entitled "Material on Shwe U Daung, *What Hitler has Done*" by Kyaw Hoe, Shwe Sin Aung and Arthur Minsat was published. This is a chapter of *Myanmar Literature Project Working Paper No. 10:15, Material on Four Books about Germany*. The main part of this chapter is an essay by Shwe Sin Aung (English translation: Moe Moe Kun), introducing the contents of Shwe U Daung's *What Hitler has Done* (*Hittalar Loukkhedhahmya*), an abridged translation of an English book (the title is not mentioned), which was originally published by the Nagani Book Club in 1939-1940.⁵⁵ He also reminds the reader that the purpose of this publication was to

⁵³ Takahashi, Yuri, "Shuppan Jijoh — Ken'etsu Zenpai to Jahne" (The Publishing Industry in Myanmar — After the abolition of censorship and 'Jarneh,' weekly newspapers) in *Myanmaa o Shiru Tame no Rokujusshoh* [Sixty Chapters to Understand Myanmar] ed. Katsumi Tamura & Masahiko Matsuda. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten Co. Ltd., 2013.

⁵⁴ This interview was conducted on 15 September 2013 in Sydney.

⁵⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Hittalar Loukkhedhahmya* (What Hitler has Done). Yangon: Yadanabon Saouk Taik, 2001.

condemn the spread of Hitler's power in Europe in the late 1930s.⁵⁶ I have published several discussions of Shwe U Daung and his literary works.⁵⁷

Biography in Myanmar

As we have seen, in the late seventeenth century in Europe a new term 'biography' was created in response to an increase in writing about the lives of individuals, including autobiographies, letters, diaries and journals. The emergence of biographies and life writings was connected to the growing recognition of the individual's importance in Western society.⁵⁸ It is now time to investigate the development of Burmese biography and autobiography, and to assess the significance of Shwe U Daung's *Record of Life and Thoughts* in the history of modern Burmese text culture.

In Burmese tradition there are two terms for history: one is *Yazawin*, the lineage of kings, and the other is *Thamaing*, which refers to any other kind of history. U Kala's *Maha Yazawin Daw Gyi (The Great Chronicle)* written in the first half of the eighteenth century and *Hman-nan Maha Yazawin Daw Gyi (The Glass Palace Chronicle)* compiled in 1832 by the Royal Commission, are representative works of *Yazawin*. *The Great Chronicle* describes the lineage of the Burmese kings from the time of their ancient mystical origins to 1730. *The Glass Palace Chronicle* is more concerned with the accuracy of historical facts and recorded history up till 1822. As both works are chronicles of the Burmese royal dynasties, they contain some biographical information about Burmese kings. Another type of historical document, called 'Record of Royal Campaigns' (*Ayedawbon*), for example *Rajadirit Ayedawbon (King Rajadirit's Campaigns)* written in the sixteenth century, also contains some personal information

⁵⁶ Kyaw Hoe, Shwe Sin Aung, and Arthur Minsat. "Materials on Shwe U Daung, What Hitler has Done." in *Myanmar Literature Project Working Paper No. 10:15, Material on Four Books about Germany*, ed. Hans-Bernd Zöllner (Passau: Passau University, 2010), 12-27.

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/mlp10.15-op.pdf>, Shwe U Daung. *Hittalar Loukkedhamya (What Hitler has Done)*. Yangon: Yadanabon Saouk, 2001.

⁵⁷ In 2008 I published an essay in *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* entitled "Mr. San Shar, the Burmese Detective Appears — A brief look at the acceptance of the Sherlock Holmes stories in Myanmar (Burma)" In the same year I also published an essay discussing Shwe U Daung's nationalist identity entitled "The Case-book of Mr. San Shar: Burmese society and nationalist thought in the 1930s as seen in the Burmese Sherlock Holmes stories" in *Proceedings of the 17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA)*, Melbourne (2008). In 2012, in response to an invitation by Japan's prestigious mystery-oriented publisher Hayakawa Shobo Co.'s 'Misteri Magajin' (Mystery Magazine), I published an essay "Myanmah Misuteri Jijoh – Doiru mo shiranakatta 'Hohmuzu nettai jikenroku to sonogo'" (Holmes's Tropical Cas-books' and their Sequels, which even Doyle never imagined). This essay discusses the history of detective stories in Myanmar, focusing on Shwe U Daung and his literary successor Min Thein Kha.

⁵⁸ Caine. *Biography and History*, 29 & 66.

about the kings.⁵⁹ At that time Myanmar did not generally record a person's date of birth and death and life activities, unless the person was of royal lineage.⁶⁰

In 1816 the first Burmese book was printed in Yangon. Since then, and during the annexation of the Burmese kingdom by the British between 1826 and 1885, Burmese writing gradually changed under the influence of Western literature and printing technology.⁶¹ From the end of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century several biographies were published in Myanmar, for example Saya Taing's *Shwegyin Sayadaw Phayagyi ei Htaylorkepati kahta Sardan (Record of Abott Shwegyin: The Great Monk and his Biography)* (1899) and the anonymously published *Athotokepatti Htu (Distinguished Lives)* (1906). The *Record of Abott Shwegyin: The Great Monk and his Biography* gives a summary of the life of U Zagara, the founder of the Shwegyin Sect. *Distinguished Lives* is a collection of anecdotal accounts of eleven famous individuals, several Burmese kings and ministers and Ba-me Sayadaw, a monk who was believed to possess supernatural powers.⁶² The choice of monks as biographical subjects reflects the influence of the Buddhist revival and early nationalist sentiment after the fall of Mandalay.

Western style biography became popular in Myanmar from the 1920s, at the same time as the rise of nationalism. A major activity of the nationalist movement was the establishment of National Schools in 1920. This was a voluntarily organised school system, protesting against the colonial educational law, which provided education from primary school to university level, with all levels of schooling taught in Burmese. Po Kya, a leader of the National School movement, compiled a history reader entitled *Myanma Gone-yi (The Glory That was Myanmar)* containing biographical accounts of distinguished men and women that aimed to enhance the 'intellectual, moral and physical advancement of the young'.⁶³ Together with this moral intention, Po Kya included in this book descriptions of national heroes who contributed to the making of the nation. This book can be considered the first attempt in Myanmar to write a national biography. This reflects the biographical approach which had become common in Western society by the end of the nineteenth century. In England *The Dictionary of National Biography* was completed in 1912 after a process lasting

⁵⁹ Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), "Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century", in *Selected Writings of U Thaw Kaung*, ed. Myanmar Historical Commission Golden Jubilee Publication Committee (Yangon: The Universities Press, 2004), 187.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 188.

⁶¹ Ibid. 188.

⁶² Ibid. 188-189.

⁶³ Ibid. 189.

sixteen years.⁶⁴ There is a strong possibility that Po Kya came across this book and was inspired to write his *The Glory That was Myanmar*.

Modern biographical writing which began in the colonial period depicted some significant individuals from the time of the Burmese kingdom (such as members of the royal family, monks, generals, writers) as Burmese heroes. Through national schools and biographies published by Thuriya Press, these figures became known to a broad audience of literate Burmans. In the 1950s those who were involved in the anti-British movement from the early stages, including monks, regional lords and leaders of the YMBA, were often chosen as subjects for biographies, as they were considered heroes who had contributed to the making of the nation. From the 1960s many biographies of General Ne Win and other political leaders who originated from the Thakin Party were published. A cross-section of the population, including novelists, performing artists and others in various kinds of occupations, also became subjects for biographies. This was because the country's socialist policy encouraged biographers to look at workers' lives more closely. However, the writing of biography in Myanmar still seems to be plagued by many problems, for example insufficient research and the distortion of facts which tend to make these stories a form of hagiography.⁶⁵

Unlike biography, autobiography is a totally new genre in Burmese writing. It was introduced along with Western-style biographical writing in the 1920s, but it took a while for Burmese to start writing about themselves. In his essay 'Biography' (1929) Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa) stated that autobiography was an unknown form of writing in traditional Burmese literature and there was no particular Burmese term indicating 'autobiography'.⁶⁶ The term *Koye athtoke-patti* meaning 'autobiography' in English became popular after World War II, but *Kodaing yetha dhaw Athotok-patti* ('biography written by oneself') was still widely used.⁶⁷ In the Burmese Buddhist tradition, a Buddhist should behave modestly, so writing about oneself was perceived

⁶⁴ Caine, *Biography and History*, 50-51

⁶⁵ Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), "Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century", 191 & 196.; Than Htut (Taik Soe), "Biography, True & False – Athtoukepatti Ahma Ahman", in *Selected Writings of U Than Htut (Taik Soe)*, ed. Myanmar Historical Commission Golden Jubilee Publication (Yangon: The Universities Press, 2005, 9)3.

⁶⁶ Sein Tin wrote this essay under the penname of 'Maung Mya Thwin' (Thuriya Newspaper, 7 February 1929). It is included in Theikpan Maung Wa. *Sape Yinkyehmu* (Literary Culture) (Mandalay: Ludu Saouk Taik, 1976), 65. See Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut). 'Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century', 197.

⁶⁷ Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), "Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century", 197. Shwe U Daung never used the term 'Koye Athtoke-patti' in his autobiography *Record of Life and Thoughts* (1961) and described his work as just 'Athtoke -patti'.

as self-oriented and self-assertive, an attitude which contributed to the slow development of autobiographical writing in Myanmar.⁶⁸

Sein Tin stated in his essay that Maung Myaing's *The Story of Mr. Ba Lwin, B.A.*, published around 1920, was one of the earliest autobiographies written in Myanmar, although he explained that this work featured a fictitious hero.⁶⁹ Sein Tin himself wrote a series of autobiographical short stories featuring a fictitious hero, 'Maung Lu Aye' (Mr. Calm Person) from 1930 to 1941 under the penname of Theikpan Maung Wa, which immediately attracted a wide readership. Paragu, a well-known writer and researcher claimed that the first authentic biography in Myanmar was written in 1927 by Adicca Wuntha, a monk living in London at the time who contributed a series of writings to the *British Burma Magazine*. Unfortunately this serialised autobiography has never been published in book form. The first autobiography published in Myanmar was written by a contemporary popular writer P. Monin (1883-1940) and was titled *Pi Monin i Pi Monin* (P. Monin's P. Moin) (1941). As the author died in a 1940 traffic accident before the book's completion, it was edited and finished by journalist Janaykyaw Chit Maung.⁷⁰

Towards the end of the tumultuous period of World War II, the Japanese military occupation and independence, many autobiographies (including memoirs and diaries) were written. These works described the authors' vivid memories of wartime experiences and importantly, many of them were written by political activists who were involved in the anti-British independence movement. Representative works written at this time were Aung San's unfinished autobiography and his *Burma's Challenge* (both written in English). The latter includes autobiographical accounts together with the record of his speeches.⁷¹ *Ngahnit Yadhi Bamar Pyi (Burma in Five Years)* (1946) written by Nu, who became Prime Minister in independent Burma and *A Wartime Traveler (Sit Atwin Khayi-dhe)* by Thein Pe Myint, a writer and politician, which was published in 1952 after being serialised in the *Shumawa Magazine*, are also representative works of the era.⁷² By this time autobiographies written by former

⁶⁸ Theikpan Maung Wa. *Sape Yinkyehmu*, 66. Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), 'Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century', 197-198.

⁶⁹ Than Win Hlaing confirmed this book was published from Mandalar Waddy Saouk Taik in 1919. Than Win Hlaing. *Ahnitchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidan*. Vol.2, 89.

⁷⁰ Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), "Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century", 198 - 199.

⁷¹ Aung San. *Burma's Challenge*. Rangoon: Daily Gazette Press, 1968 (First printing: 1946).

⁷² Nu, Thakin. *Ngahnit Yadhi Bamar Pyi* (Burma in Five years). Yangon: Myanma Alinn Thadinza Taik, 1946.; Thein Pe Myint. *Sit Atwin Khayi-dhe* (A Wartime Traveler). First Volume. Yangon: Shumawa Saouk Taik, 1952.; Thein Pe Myint *Sit Atwin Khayi-dhe* (A Wartime Traveler). Second Volume. Yangon: Khit Myanmar Saouk Taik, 1963. Thein Pe Myint's *Sit Atwin Khayi-dhe* [A Wartime Traveler] was edited and translated into English by Robert Taylor and published as *Marxism and Resistance in Burma 1942 - 1945* in 1984.

members of ICS and by some well-known novelists and writers had also been published.

In 1953 Shwe U Daung published his first autobiography, entitled *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung (Mr. Pe Thein's Shwe U Daung)* (with English title: *Autobiography of Shwe U Daung*).⁷³ A small book of 184 pages, this was written as an aid to high school students, because his earlier novel *Yadanabon (The City of Jewels)* (1917) had been made compulsory reading in the school curriculum.⁷⁴ Later Shwe U Daung was encouraged by Hla and Amar, the owners of Kyipwaye Press which published his compact autobiography, to write a more detailed autobiography.⁷⁵ After its serialisation in their *Ludu* Newspaper for two years, Shwe U Daung published a set of four autobiographical volumes titled *Record of Life and Thoughts*. In relation to autobiographical writings and their publication after the 1962 military coup d'état, Taw Kaung commented in 2004 that 'autobiographies which cover the period 1962 to the end of the century are much fewer in number compared to the earlier two decades, i.e. the 1940s and 1950s. This is probably due to the difficulties faced by authors to get official sanction for publishing their works.'⁷⁶ The pre-censorship system which was introduced in 1964 was abolished in August 2012. Now there are increasing possibilities in Myanmar for a variety of autobiographical accounts to be published.

Shwe U Daung, *Record of Life and Thoughts* (1961)

Shwe U Daung's *Record of Life and Thoughts* won the 1961 Sarpay Beikman Literary Award (General Knowledge Award). The prize was actually awarded to the set of three volumes published in 1961 but the work is widely remembered as a set of four volumes that included an additional volume published in 1962 containing Shwe U Daung's account of his travel to the Soviet Union. These books were reprinted as a single volume in 1968 which was made compulsory reading for college and university students in Myanmar. Reprinted again in 1982, it was further reproduced as a set of two volumes around 2000. My analysis is based on the 1982 publication.⁷⁷ A substantial volume of 690 pages, it represents Shwe U Daung's recollections of his life, from childhood to the age of seventy-two.

⁷³ Shwe U Daung. *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung (Mr. Pe Thein's Shwe U Daung)*. Mandalay: Kyipwayay Press, 1953.

⁷⁴ Shwe U Daung. *Yadanabon (The City of Jewels)*. Yangon: Thuriya Press, 1917.

⁷⁵ Kyipwaye Press changed its name to Ludu Press sometime in the 1970s. It still publishes under this name.

⁷⁶ Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), "Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century," 207. Hla and Amar are well-known as 'Ludu U Hla' and 'Daw Amar'.

⁷⁷ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hattan hnint Atweakhawmya [Record of Life and Thoughts]*. Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982.

It is clear from his writing style that Shwe U Daung, who turned seventy while writing the book, was actively targeting young readers. His vivid descriptions of life and nature in Mandalay, Rangoon and other towns and rural areas before World War II are a valuable historical record. Covering the period from the colonial era until the end of the 1950s, just before the emergence of the socialist revolutionary government, *Record of Life and Thoughts* is a valuable guide to the rapid social changes the country underwent at this time. It can be seen as a record of 'how people thought and valued in a certain period in the past'.⁷⁸

One of the significant features of this book is its inclusion of many of Shwe U Daung's failures, not only his successful experiences. This honesty was uncommon in Burmese autobiographical writing at the time. Another important feature of the book is its Buddhist spirit. It shows Shwe U Daung's stormy lifestyle at the time he was achieving fame as a writer and translator, and also includes his narratives of the great shift of his interests in the direction of Buddhism as he grew older. Thaw Kaung comments that:

as a good Buddhist he had spent much time musing on the Buddhist philosophy of life of success and failure, from a roguish youth to a thoughtful writer, a serene elderly gentleman smoking a pipe as befitting the author who made Sherlock Homes popular in Myanmar.⁷⁹

The autobiography suggests that Shwe U Daung created an ideal through his knowledge of Western literature and Buddhism, an ideal which could be described as 'a modern Burmese gentleman'.

In relation to his acknowledgement of his mistakes and weak points, not only focusing on his successes, Shwe U Daung stated in the preface to *Record of Life and Thoughts* that he learned much from James Boswell, the author of *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, which was considered a masterpiece of biography in the West during the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Shwe U Daung also seems to have been influenced by a favourite writer from his young days, Lord Macaulay, whose writings praised Boswell's

⁷⁸ This approach was inspired by Robert Darnton's approach to cultural history. See Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*. New York and Toronto: Random House, 1984.

⁷⁹ Thaw Kaung (jointly written with Than Htut), "Myanmar Biographical Writings in the Twentieth Century", 200.

⁸⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hattan hnint Atwe-akhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts) (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 'Preface to the First Edition' (Pahtama hneikchin ahmar) p. 3 and 'Preface to the Second Edition (Dutiya Hneikchin Ahmar) p.1-2. James Boswell (1740 – 1795) published *The Life of Samuel Johnson* in 1791. While winning great acclaim, some readers remained critical of Boswell's approach as they felt he emphasised Johnson's private life and personal weakness too much. See Caine, Barbara. *Biography and History, Theory and History Series*. (Hampshire (UK) & NY (US): Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 33-34.

biography.⁸¹ It is likely that his decision to include his failures and weak points was also influenced by the Sherlock Holmes stories, which he had been writing Burmese adaptations of for nearly half a century. From their early episodes Shwe U Daung created Thein Maung, the Burmese version of Dr. Watson, as his alter ego. Thein Maung, who came from the old city of Mandalay was often laughed at for his unrefined manners and ignorance by San Shar the detective who was a smart up-to-date person living in the modern city of Rangoon. I would suggest that Shwe U Daung's long term engagement with his series of Holmes adaptations also helped deepen his self-analysis. The Sherlock Holmes stories are often seen as a biography of Holmes written by Dr. Watson, and in 'Scandal in Bohemia' Doyle has Holmes call Dr. Watson 'my Boswell'.⁸² In Shwe U Daung's adaptation of this episode, entitled "An Affair of a Maharaja" (1949), this expression is omitted, but Shwe U Daung must have read the word 'Boswell' in Doyle's original work.⁸³

Record of Life and Thoughts presents various aspects of Buddhism in colonial and post-colonial Burma through Shwe U Daung's personal experiences. Shwe U Daung wrote about many of his past experiences associated with Buddhism and analysed numerous historical events occurring in modern Burma from a Buddhist viewpoint. For example, he wrote about his parents' involvement in the new Buddhist movement, his temporary monkhood plus his growing interest in Buddhism and supernaturalism. He also criticised Prime Minister Nu's decision to make Buddhism the state religion. This autobiography also details Shwe U Daung's strong interest in the anti-nuclear and world peace movements. He concluded the preface to the first edition with an emphasis on the Buddhist message of his book:

In writing the record of my lifetime, I would like to express my greatest wish. That is, that my readers will see that even a young man who was seeking pleasure and was easily attracted by novelties eventually came to reach awareness and began to practise the way of Gautama Buddha's teachings. As he observed and controlled his mind, which is called the practice of 'mind culture', he became capable of writing and publishing a Buddhist book which caused a surprise among intellectuals. If my readers remember that the young

⁸¹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 'Preface for the First Edition' (Pahtama hneikchin ahmar) p. 3.

⁸² Klinger, Leslie S. ed., *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Vol. 1. (NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), 12.

⁸³ *An Affair of a Maharaja* [Maharaza Ta-oo Ahmu]. See. Shwe U Daung. *Sondaug U San Shar Paungjouk* (Collection of Mr. San Shar, the Detective Stories) (Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 1997), 124. See also Shwe U Daung. *Shwe U Daung: Sondaug Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* [Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories]. Vol. 2. (Yangon: Seikku Cho Cho Sape, 2011), 1263-1264. The latter has a printing mistake and shows confusion in the conversation between San Shar and Thein Maung because of a missing line.

man's book was also acknowledged by the Buddhist leaders in Burma, it would be a great pleasure to me.⁸⁴

The Buddhist book Shwe U Daung refers to here is his popular work published in 1960 under the title *Di-Htay Di-Hta Mattan Let-twe Kyintzin (Practice of Contemplation)*.⁸⁵ In *Record of Life and Thoughts* he also revealed his sympathy with communism by calling himself 'a revolutionary Buddhist'.⁸⁶ What did Buddhism mean to Shwe U Daung and how did he develop his narratives on the relationship between Buddhism and the state? This question should be carefully analysed. During Shwe U Daung's lifetime Myanmar underwent a huge transition from a monarchy to a modern state. This caused many changes in Burmese Buddhism which are also closely related to the changes in Shwe U Daung's narratives on the state, Buddhism and his Burmese nationalism. *Record of Life and Thoughts* is a valuable resource for exploring these issues.

Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories

The other main source of materials for this thesis is the 'San Shar the Detective' stories which Shwe U Daung wrote between 1917 and 1961. This series of Burmese Sherlock Holmes stories reflects many of Shwe U Daung's experiences and thoughts and also has an autobiographical aspect. The stories have been republished many times in various kinds of magazines and in book form in Myanmar, but since the late 1990s they have been more systematically researched and archived. This trend started with a set of two volumes published by Yanet Mandalay Press in 1997 and 1998.⁸⁷ They were entitled *Sondaug U San Shar Paungjok (Collection of Mr. San Shar, the Detective stories)* and included 52 episodes. As this set was originally published by Bagan Press in 1974 (printed twice), then by San Hla Press in 1985, the 1997-1998 version was recorded as the fourth printing.⁸⁸

Following the publication of this set, another set of two volumes entitled *Sondaug Maung San Shar Paungjok (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective stories)*, which included 88 episodes of mainly early works, was published by Yanet Mandalay Press in

⁸⁴ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 4.

⁸⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Di-Htay Di-Hta Mattan Let-twe Kyintzin (Practice of Contemplation)*. Yangon: Shu Ma Wa Taik, 1960.

⁸⁶ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 488.

⁸⁷ Shwe U Daung. *Sondaug U San Shar Paungjok (Collection of Mr. San Shar, the Detective stories)*. Vol. 1. Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 1997. Shwe U Daung. *Sondaug U San Shar Paungjok (Collection of Mr. San Shar, the Detective stories)*. Vol. 2. Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 1998.

⁸⁸ Shwe U Daung: *Sondaug U San Shar Paungjok (Collection of Mr. San Shar, the Detective Stories)*. Vol. 1. Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 1997 & 1998.

2000 and 2002.⁸⁹ Tin Swe Moe, who took responsibility for the research and editing for these volumes, was a former librarian holding a Diploma of Library Science who once worked for a government library and became a freelance editor after 1988. He visited the Universities Central Library and the National Library and examined old magazines and books published in the colonial period. He also read all sixty episodes of Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes stories plus some popular pastiches to check which episodes were used for Shwe U Daung's adaptations in the San Shar stories.⁹⁰ Through his efforts it has been shown that the San Shar stories comprised more than 160 episodes, most of which are included in the four volumes published between 1997 and 2002.

In 2010 another collection of the Shan shar stories, *Sondauk Maung San Shar Paungjouk (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective Stories)* (Volume One), was published by Khon Hnint Shon Press.⁹¹ This includes the earliest 29 episodes and a preface written by Myint Swe Oo (perhaps a penname of Tin Swe Moe), the same as the book published by Mandalay Yanet Press in 2000, but it also lists 166 episodes of the San Shar stories, which seems to reflect the latest research. I was told, however, that because this publisher had financial problems the project was transferred to Seik Ku Cho Cho Press, famous for its publication of literary works.⁹² Seik Ku Cho Cho Press published *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit (Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories)* by selecting 135 episodes from the complete set of stories, as their twelfth anniversary project.⁹³ This showed the continuing popularity of the San Shar series among today's Burmese readers. It was a set of two thick, oversized hardcover volumes showing the silhouette of a man's head wearing a deerstalker hat with a pipe in his mouth. This cover design was apparently inspired by *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* published in New York in 2005 and 2006 in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Sherlock Holmes's birth (Sherlockians believe he was born in 1854 and some claim his birthday is 15 May).⁹⁴ *Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories* is a remarkable example of the

⁸⁹ Shwe U Daung. *Sondauk Maung San Shar Paungjouk* (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective Stories). Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, Vol. 1 (2000) & Vol.2 (2002).

⁹⁰ Research contrasting Doyle's Holmes stories and Shwe U Daung's San Shar stories was previously undertaken at Bagan Press, but Tin Swe Moe corrected and developed this earlier work.

⁹¹ Shwe U Daung. *Sondauk Maung San Shar Paungjouk* (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective Stories). Vol.1. Yangon: Khon Hnint Shon Saouk Taik, 2010.

⁹² Based on a discussion in February 2011 with my friends Ms. Hla Hla Win and Mr. Zaw Maw who investigated this.

⁹³ Shwe U Daung. *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* (Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories). Vol. 1 & 2. Yangon: Seikku Cho Cho Sape, 2011.

⁹⁴ Leslie S. Klinger, ed., *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Vol. I & II. NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005; Leslie S. Klinger, ed., *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Vol. III. NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006. Regarding Holmes's birthday, see Kobayashi, Tsukasa & Higashiyama, Akane, ed., *Shahrokku Hohmuzu Daijiten* (Encyclopaedia of Sherlock Holmes) (Tokyo: Tokyodo Shuppan, 2001), 462-463.

interpretation of English literature in the more than 100 year history of the Burmese publishing culture. For this thesis I mainly draw on this set of books for my discussion of the San Shar stories.

Conclusion

Biography writing based on the 'new social history' is an approach which has been developed in response to changes in the philosophical current, the spread of feminism from the late 1960s and the decline of Marxism since the 1980s. This approach focuses on studies of marginalised minorities or individuals in society in contrast to the dominant group and their 'grand narratives'. Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolic approaches, paying attention to narratives of people outside the political elites is useful in studies of nationalism, to fill in the gap which politics and economics-centred modernist approaches have not explored in detail. This illustrates the commonality of interest between 'new social history' and 'ethno-symbolic approaches'.

The 'grand narrative' discourse in Burmese studies is often discussed as a contrast between 'Buddhist Burman' and marginalised 'ethnic minorities.' As we have seen the notion of 'Buddhist Burmese' is connected to a traditional identity and also has a modern aspect, as it was shaped in discourses of the Burmese nationalist movement over a century. To understand the socio/cultural features of modern Burma it is important to investigate the formation of the narrative of 'Buddhist Burmese' from a much wider historical perspective. My attempt to write a biography of Shwe U Daung is an exploration of a marginalised Buddhist Burman voice in political elite-oriented Burmese nationalism and an examination of changes in his understanding of a nation-state as expressed in his writings. To conduct this analysis Shwe U Daung's autobiography *Record of Life and Thoughts* and numerous episodes of the San Shar detective stories written over nearly half a century are essential materials.

Chapter 2

A Family after the Fall of Mandalay: Shwe U Daung's Childhood and School Life

In his *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya (Record of Life and Thoughts)*, Shwe U Daung wrote about some of his earliest memories:

I was the first child and had a sister three years younger. In the West babies are only breastfed until some time between the age of seven and ten months, but I had the pleasure of sucking my mother's breast even after two years of age because my parents allowed me to do so, calling me 'a little boy with a lack of milk'. It did not yet seem to be common to feed from a nursing bottle. They also fed me the best food, such as fried prawn cakes, barbecued pork and deep fried chicken thigh fillet, eating the chicken bones, some lard and pork skins themselves.¹

This passage suggests us that Shwe U Daung's family was not wealthy, but the young Shwe U Daung was much loved by his parents and well taken care of. This was in 1892 or 1893, when he was three years old, in a house in Mandalay where he was living with his parents and younger sister, and was being looked after by his many aunts, who often visited his home. His father was a Burmese-style slipper maker, and both of his parents were still in their twenties.² It was seven years after the fall of Mandalay, the last capital of the Burmese kingdom, which ended with the displacement of King Thibaw.

This chapter examines how Shwe U Daung's parents struggled and eventually changed their world view during the transition from a monarchy to a colonial state. It also explores the school education they arranged for Shwe U Daung and his experiences at this time which later contributed to making him an author.

After their first victory in the 1825 Anglo-Burmese War, the British kept extending their power over the Burmese kingdom, a process that continued until the Japanese Army's invasion of British Burma in 1942. This transitional period, which saw Burma change from a monarchy to a colonial state, has been described by the political historian Robert Taylor as 'the rationalisation of the state'. It brought major changes to Myanmar, including changes to the country's education system.³ Shwe U Daung, as a Burmese-English bilingual intellectual, is undoubtedly a result of a colonial English

¹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya (Record of the Life and Thoughts)* (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 24.

² The Burmese-style slippers which Shwe U Daung's father produced were called 'Peindan' or 'Peindan Phanat'. They are thong-style slippers covered with velvet, a specialty of Mandalay.

³ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 67.

education. However, it is worth examining the extent to which these features of a modern school education were established when Shwe U Daung was young. How did his parents negotiate the widespread changes the society was undergoing and take the decision to educate their son in the new Western-style education system?

Shwe U Daung's parents took great pains to educate their son in English. It appears to be a developing pattern during the colonial period for Burmese parents to send their children to Western-style schools instead of traditional monastic schools, hoping to secure better job opportunities for them, typically as clerks in the colonial government. However, was it only economic incentives that made these parents do so? How important did Buddhism remain to them in the colonial period? There must have been a motive for them to make this change in their values. Especially for residents in Mandalay, like Shwe U Daung's parents, the loss of the Burmese king brought a drastic shift in their values. This chapter describes the role of new waves of Buddhism in helping them accept the new colonial society. The chapter will also describe some aspects of the cultural gap between Mandalay and Rangoon caused by the different periods of annexation and the richness of Burmese literature in Mandalay, which also contributed a unique feature to Shwe U Daung's writing.

The End of the Monarchy and Shwe U Daung's Parents

When the Burmese court in Mandalay was occupied by the British Army in 1885, Shwe U Daung's father, Aye Yar, was working at the Council of Ministers for the Burmese Kings (*Hluttawgyone*) as a low level clerk (*Saye Kalay*). His date of birth is unknown, but as he started in his position at the Council before his twentieth birthday, and finished as a petty clerk. His period of service was probably not long, maybe only four or five years. At the time of the fall of Mandalay, he was perhaps younger than twenty-five years old. After King Thibaw was sent into exile in Ratanagiri (a small town near Goa in India), Aye Yar, like other court officials, was offered a colonial government position by the British authorities. Many of his colleagues accepted the offer and took positions as low-level clerks in the new colonial administration.⁴ However Aye Yar was one of those who refused the opportunity. He told Shwe U Daung this was because he and his

⁴ After taking over the Burmese court, the British authorities ordered the court officials to assist them in administration and offered them positions in the colonial government. The responses among the officials varied. Mr. Aung Gyi, former Officer for Long Distance Communication at the court (*Awai Yauk Min*) was one of those who did not accept the offer and returned to his native Shwebo, making a living as a landlord for the rest of his life. He stated later that British authorities were thinking of securing a position for him as a mayor or a British Army Officer. See "*Awai Yauk Min U Aung Gyi*" (Mr. Aung Gyi, the Officer for Long distance communication) in Theikpan Maung Wa. *Khitsan Yazawinyemya* (Historical Essays from the '*Khitsan*' Viewpoint). Yangon: Kyemon Sape Phyantchiye. 1955.

family believed King Thibaw would return to the throne in the near future and was afraid the king would find him working for the British government on his return.⁵

In 1826, after its defeat in the first Anglo-Burmese War, Burma lost its western and eastern coastal regions, Arakan and Tenasserim (today's Rakhine and Tanintharyi respectively). After a further defeat in the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852, the southern part of the land, or Lower Burma, was annexed by the British. Upper Burma was the last territory remaining in the kingdom. The annexation of Upper Burma, however, took place without mutual agreement between London and the colonial administration based in Calcutta. Lord Randolph Churchill, the Secretary of State for India, was a hard-liner who insisted on proceeding with the annexation, while the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, was hesitant. As they did not have a clear vision of colonial policies on Burma after annexation it took some time to establish the colonial administration of the region. Meanwhile discussions were held to create a British puppet ruler by placing a Burmese prince on the throne. Prince Pinyinman and Prince Mingun were candidates.⁶ King Thibaw also requested that the Viceroy send him back to Burma as ruler on behalf of the British, but none of these ideas were accepted.⁷ King Thibaw never returned to Burma. It is likely that Aye Yar began slipper-making as a temporary job, waiting until the day of King Thibaw's return and did not expect to continue in the business for many more years.

Aye Yar originated from the village of Magyidone in the southern part of Shwebo, two hours' drive from today's Mandalay. Southern Shwebo was once a region that produced many personnel for the successive Burmese kings' cavalries and Magyidone itself became well-known as the birthplace of Letwe Thonedara, a famous court writer and high ranking official in the eighteenth century.⁸ His major poem, entitled 'At the Foot of Mayzar Hill', was written when he was under house arrest in Mayzar, far away from the capital Ava, because of a misunderstanding by King Hsinbyushin (the third king of the Konbaung Dynasty). The king was so moved by Letwe Thondara's appeal for justice in his poem that he was released, and ever since then his verse has been widely

⁵ Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung) (Mandalay: Kyipwayay Press, 1953), 2. Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 37.

⁶ Thant Myint-U. *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 190-194.

⁷ Thant Myint-U. *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

⁸ Letwe Thonedara's original name is Myat San. His 'At the Foot of Mayzar Hill' (*Mayzar Taung jai*) is also regarded as a masterpiece in 'Thachin Gyi' or 'Maha Gita' (Burmese classical music), being sung in a rhythm and melody called the 'Yadu' style.

regarded as a masterpiece.⁹ In his autobiography, Shwe U Daung proudly introduces Magyidone village, famous for this historical figure.¹⁰

Nothing is known about Aye Yar's parents, but he had many relatives across the southern Shwebo, some of whom were quite wealthy. Aye Yar spent time in his teens at a monastery in Magyidone as a novice, but before he reached the age of twenty and could be ordained as a monk, his father took him away from the monastery and through a friend's connections, sent his son to the court in Mandalay. Shwe U Daung commented on his grandfather's actions with a little irony, saying 'he showed considerable acumen' in making this arrangement for his son to acquire a position at court.¹¹ Shwe U Daung described his father's nature as 'too honest and naïve', as a result of his being a country man who had spent years at the monastery.¹² His father also never consumed alcohol.¹³

Shwe U Daung's mother Shwe was eighteen years old at the time of the fall of Mandalay. She was in service to King Thibaw as a young *Sadawbat*, an official who read literary works aloud for the royal family's education and entertainment, and for this position the king granted her the title *Thaninkathi Ywazar*, which meant she was entitled to a portion of tax revenue collected from the village of Thaninkathi.¹⁴ Her father was in service to both King Mindon and King Thibaw, working as a chef in the royal kitchen (*Sardawge*), which gave her access to the court. To become a *Sadawbat* required considerable study of Burmese classical literary works including various styles of verse, such as *Pyo* (Buddhist narratives), *Yadu* (three stanza poems), *Yagan* (satirical poems), *Eejin* (lullabies for a royal child extolling the glory of the ancestors) and *Aingjin* (folk songs). These verses were read aloud using certain rhythmic patterns and pitches. King Thibaw formally appointed four *Sadawbat* and Shwe was studying under these senior officials.¹⁵ Through this training she developed a beautiful voice. Shwe U Daung wrote, 'When I was very young and sleeping in a cradle, my mother sang verses to me and my father's slipper-making workers would listen to her. They told me later this

⁹ Maung Thuta (Bohmu Ba Thaug), *Sazodawmya Athtoupatti* (Biographies of Writers and Novelists) (Yangon: Zwe-Sape Yeik Myone, 1968), 215-228.

¹⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 36.

Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung*, 1-2.

¹¹ Ibid. 37.

¹² Ibid. 37.

¹³ Ibid. 36.

¹⁴ Ibid. 37.

¹⁵ Aung Gyi, Than Taing, Kyaw Mya and Ohn (all male officials). See. 'Mr. Aung Gyi, the Officer for Long Distance Communication' (*Awaiyauk Min U Aung Gyi*) in Theikppan Maung Wa. *Khitsan Yazawinyemya* (Historical Essays from the 'Khitsan' Viewpoint), 20. Aung Gyi was promoted to the Officer for Long Distance Communication from a *Sadawbat* by King Thibaw. He is also remembered for his explanatory essay on Letwe Thonedara's 'At the Foot of Mayzar Hill.'

was why they looked forward to the time I went to bed.¹⁶ In 1888 Shwe married Aye Yar. At first Shwe's father did not approve of this marriage, as in his eyes, Aye Yar was too naïve, but because of his honesty, her father finally accepted him.¹⁷ Perhaps a reason the couple were attracted each other was their mutual interest in literature, as Aye Yar had a good knowledge of Buddhist texts and Burmese classical literature through his study at the monastery. In the second year of Aye Yar and Shwe's marriage, a boy was born on 24 October 1889 in a house on Mandalay's Dah Lane (Ayechaint ward).¹⁸ He was named Pe Thein. Twenty-seven years later he began writing, under the pen-name of 'Shwe U Daung'.¹⁹

When Shwe U Daung was ten years old, his mother's father died. Shwe U Daung wrote in a recollection of his grandfather that he was a hot-blooded man who sometimes showed a fiery temper. One day when Shwe U Daung was small, a younger brother of his mother was insulted by another man. Upon hearing of this incident, his grandfather became furious and armed himself with a knife. When this news reached the man concerned and his father, they hurried to grandfather's place to make an apology. Shwe U Daung commented:

I understood that the reason the father and son rushed to my grandfather was not just because of his temper, but also because they were aware of his former status as a chef in the royal kitchen. When I was small, even in the British period, officials of the Burmese king were still widely respected.²⁰

I presume this incident happened around 1895, which means it was almost a decade after the fall of Mandalay. This statement tells us that the traditions of the court and its customs did not disappear easily from the mind of residents in Mandalay.

¹⁶ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 37.

¹⁷ *Idib.*, 37.

¹⁸ Thursday, 2nd of the waxing month of Tazaungmon, Myanmar Year 1251.

¹⁹ Burmans do not have family names and names for a male, a female and their child are all individual names. Some names are masculine and some are feminine, but there are many names used for both sexes. Traditionally one or two syllable names were common such as 'Sa,' 'Nu' 'Chone', 'Aung Zeya', and 'Sein Tin'. Three syllable names such as 'Thaw Thar Swe' and 'Khin Myo Chit' became popular in the twentieth century and it is now common to use longer names such as 'Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein' and 'Hay Mar Nay Win'. In Burmese society appropriate honorific titles are used before a person's name, depending on the situation: U for a respected man, Ko for a man of the same level as the speaker and Maung for a younger man than the speaker. Daw is used for a respected woman, and Ma for a younger woman or a woman on the same level as the speaker. Mr. Kan Thein could be called 'U Kan Thein' by his subordinates, but 'Ko Kan Thein' by his friends or his wife.

²⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 38

First Schooling

Pe Thein began his education in 1893 when he was four years old, at a school run by a Buddhist nun (*Thirashin*).²¹ The school was an example of the traditional educational style that was practised outside the country's monasteries. He was sent to this particular school to escape bullying by a neighbour's boy three years his senior. Once, while being bullied by this boy, Pe Thein was pushed down a flight of stairs (luckily with no lasting injuries). His mother smacked the boy, which led to a fierce exchange between herself and the boy's mother, a fishmonger. Although she had been groomed at court, Shwe U Daung described his mother as a fighter who had inherited her father's temper.²² It was after this incident that she took the decision to send Pe Thein to the Buddhist school.

Another reason for this arrangement was that Pe Thein's father, Aye Yar, always 'put much value on education'.²³ For him education meant the learning of Buddhist texts and through this practice, improving one's sense of morality. He often walked with Pe Thein sitting on his shoulders, making him memorise phrases from Buddhist scriptures such as 'The Three Characteristics of Existence' (Impermanency, Suffering and Insubstantiality) and the opening paragraph of the *Thinjo* (the compendium of Buddhist doctrine embodied in the third 'basket' of the *Tipitaka*, the Buddhist scriptures), even before Pe Thein learned how to write the Burmese alphabet.²⁴

Pe Thein attended this Buddhist school with his aunt (one of his mother's younger sisters) who was eight years his senior and who helped protect him from other pupils. He did not stay long at the school as not long after, he and his family travelled to Kyaik Padaing village, near Pegu in Lower Burma, where Aye Yar's uncle was living. As the slipper-making business was not prospering at the time, Aye Yar and Shwe brought a large amount of gold and jewellery with them, because their uncle had offered to sell these valuables on their behalf. The trip ended up a very bitter experience for Pe Thein's parents. While staying in Kyaik Padaing village, Aye Yar fell seriously ill and meanwhile, the gold and jewellery mysteriously disappeared from their uncle's possession and never reappeared. After the family returned to Mandalay, Aye Yar resumed his slipper-making business and rented a workshop near the Zay Cho Market,

²¹ The contribution of Buddhist monasteries to Burma's high literacy rates has been widely recognised since the arrival of Europeans in Lower Burma in the early nineteenth century. Numerous small schools run by religious or lay persons, supported by donations from parents, provided local children with basic literacy skills from this time. See, L.E. Bagshawe, 'The "Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the People" – Western Education in Burma to 1880', in *Études birmanes*, ed. Pierre Pichard and François Robinne. (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1998), 275.

²² Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 26.

²³ *Ibid.* 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 52. Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung*, 3.

the main market in Mandalay, as his home/ workshop in Me Oe Lane was too far for retailers to come and make purchases from him.²⁵

When Pe Thein was five years old, he joined a school run by a former lady of court whom his mother had known a long time. She was a spinster who supported herself by running the school, assisted by two female teachers.²⁶ Located east of the Eing Tawyar Monastery, the school was very close to Pe Thein's father's workshop. For two years, he travelled to the school with his father and also returned home with him.²⁷ This school was similar to the monastic schools and the schools run by Buddhist nuns that provided basic literacy knowledge for the neighbourhood children.

The young Shwe U Daung's experiences at these two schools illustrate some aspects of the high level of female involvement in Mandalay's traditional education system at the time. According to figures obtained by the 1891 Census, the literacy rate among females in Mandalay was much higher than other regions of British Burma. The literacy rate in Burma Province as a whole was 39.5% for males and 2.4% for females.²⁸ In Mandalay, the female literacy rate was 4.2%, the third highest in the Province after Rangoon (15.4%) and Pegu (5.1%). The male literacy rate in Mandalay was 43.8%, which was similar to other regions with a large population of Buddhist Burmese, such as Mandalay and its vicinity and the Ayeyarwadi delta, and even higher than Rangoon's 38.1%.²⁹ It was not only Buddhist institutions, but also the Burmese court that produced elite female intellectuals in that era, such as Shwe U Daung's mother and the school mistress.

How did Shwe U Daung remember his days at these two schools? Neither left him with many pleasant memories. At the Buddhist nun's school he was bullied by other children whenever his aunt was unable to attend. When the bullies were caned by the nun, they took their revenge on him later. Through these experiences he became a child who did not cry and distrusted other children.³⁰ Bullying continued at the secular school as well, as he was the youngest and the only child who attended the school with a lunch box, because of the distance from his home. Seeing Pe Thein fighting against the older boys, the school mistress, who was unable to control the bullying, began to think of him as a difficult boy.³¹ Shwe U Daung wrote about his experience of

²⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 29-32.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 32-33.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 32.

²⁸ After the abolition of the monarchy Upper Burma was attached to the Burma Province, a part of British India, on 26 February 1886.

²⁹ C. Morgan Webb. *Census of India, 1911, Volume IX, Burma Part I. – Report, Office of the Superintendent*. (Rangoon: Government printing. 1912), 179.

³⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 27.

³¹ *Ibid.* 35 – 36.

being bullied. It seems to have been the beginning of the critical standpoint he displayed in his literary works, as he commented:

Recalling the memories of my childhood, I compare myself with a hedgehog. I heard that even though the hedgehog does not have any hostility to others, sometimes he raises the needles on his body to show his intention, 'Don't get close to me or I'm going to attack you'. I raised my first spikes to him (a neighbour's boy) and the second to the boys at the Buddhist nun's school. They were my first two spikes and later in my life much sharper spikes have sprung up.³²

A New Start

In 1896, when he was seven years old, Pe Thein entered the Dekkhina Wuntaik Monastery School, where he remained for five years. His time at this school had a major influence on him for the rest of his life, as can be seen in his comment that 'if I had not been to this school, I would have become a slipper-maker, or maybe been sitting at a slipper shop in the Zay Cho Market waiting for a customer'.³³ He entered this school through a series of circumstances that affected his parents.

After selling their house Shwe U Daung's parents bought a small house on Yaing Lane on the west side of the Zay Cho Market and the family moved in shortly after. His parents became friendly with an old man living in the neighbourhood who was a former high-ranking court official (a ceremonial officer called *Layzedaw*). This man began visiting Pe Thein's house every evening to discuss Buddhist ideas with his parents. The teachings they discussed included the path to Nirvana through the renunciation of desire, an idea which was very unusual in Mandalay at that time. His parents soon discovered that these teachings came from Abbot Beik, the abbot of Dekkhina Wuntaik Monastery.³⁴ The Abbot's official title was U Nanda, but as he originated from Beik (Mergui in English) in Tenasserim he was known as 'Abbot Beik'. About him Shwe U Daung wrote:

Abbot Beik once practised meditation based on the 'Dhadi Pahtan' (a method written in the Abhidhamma) at the famous Abbot Htutkhaung's monastery.³⁵ He preached 'the era' when the path to Nirvana would come and even offered to teach those who wished to strive for it how to attain Nirvana. [...] At the time all members of the Sangha in Burma

³² *Ibid.* 27.

³³ *Ibid.* 39.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 39.

³⁵ 'Abhidhamma' (Pali) is Buddhist doctrine embodied in the third 'basket' of the Tipitaka, meaning 'philosophy of an individual'.

thought that 'the era' enabling people to reach the way to Nirvana was already over and humanity would be gone by the time monks disappeared from this world.³⁶

Outside Mandalay, some groups, such as the force led by Prince Myinzaing, continued to resist the British, although many of these attempts had been brutally suppressed.³⁷ The Sangha despaired deeply after the loss of their main patron, the Burmese king, who had been the source of their authority. It was in these circumstances that Abbot Beik's new interpretation of Buddhism, stressing the importance of individual effort, gave hope to the former court servants who had lost the source of their identity. Shwe U Daung remembered his father had had a fear of meeting people, but after meeting with Abbot Beik, Aye Yar gradually developed enough confidence to make his own decisions and began embracing more unconventional ideas.³⁸ Pe Thein's parents thanked the abbot, believing him to be a saint (an idea that Shwe U Daung also came to accept).³⁹

Abbot Beik's monastery was not only imparting Buddhist knowledge to its pupils. It was also teaching Western-style arithmetic, hiring assistant teachers and being financially supported by the colonial government. The monastery did not aim to teach boys to become monks particularly, but aimed to teach them to be able to support themselves in the secular society. This idea of a new social role for monasteries was proposed by Western educators such as G.H. Hough in Moulmein, who was appointed a Director of Public Instruction in 1866, as a means of disseminating primary school education in Lower Burma. The idea ran into strong opposition from monks and it took several more decades for it to be accepted by locals in the region.⁴⁰ This is an indication that Abbot Beik's ideas on education in Mandalay at that time were very advanced, and it was for this reason that Shwe U Daung declared Abbot Beik and his monastery to be 'modern' (*khithmi*).⁴¹ The monastery gained popularity among 'modern' parents in Mandalay and many were keen to send their sons to this

³⁶ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 43.

³⁷ One of the last major acts of resistance was the 1897 incursion into the Mandalay Palace where British troops were garrisoned. The incursion was led by U Kelatha, a former monk, and after the attempt failed the palace was converted to 'The Upper Burma Club', an exclusive British social club. Sarkisyanz commented that after 1897 'the Old Burma became rapidly submerged'. See E. Sarkisyanz. *Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Revolution* (Dordrecht : Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V., 1965), 106. Originally published by Martinus Nijhoff, 1965.

³⁸ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 37 & 59.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 43.

⁴⁰ L.E. Bagshawe, "The "Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the People" – Western Education in Burma to 1880", 275-278. Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi* (75 Year Journey of the YMBA) (Yangon: Pyinnya Beikman Pohnneik Taik, 1982), 19-20.

⁴¹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 43.

monastery school.⁴² Pe Thein's parents also felt this way. On 6 July 1897 the followers of Abbot Beik formed a new Buddhist group called the Noggaha Athin and support the Abbot and his monastery.⁴³ The conventional monks hated Abbot Beik, but his monastery kept attracting pupils and while Pe Thein was there the monastery had the largest number of pupils in Mandalay (sixty four pupils).⁴⁴

The teaching style employed in the teaching of Buddhism at Abbot Beik's monastery was also unique. Although learning mainly through memorisation was the same as in other traditional monasteries and schools run by Buddhist nuns or secular persons, instead of using the conventional Buddhist texts this monastery used original texts compiled by the Abbot, written in question and answer form. For example:

- Q: How would you spell 'human'?
- A: Write 'La' (a Burmese character) and add 'Hna Chaung Ngin' (a tonal symbol).
- Q: What can you call a human?
- A: A human consists of both material and spirit, the two elements.
- Q: How many aspects does the material world have?
- A: Twenty eight aspects are designated.
- Q: What are the spiritual elements?
- A: The spiritual elements mean 'Mind' and 'Morals'.⁴⁵

Not much known about Abbot Beik. However, his Buddhist teachings appear to have been inspired by Theosophist ideas. He was probably familiar with Colonel Henry Steel Olcott's *A Buddhist Catechism*, which expresses the Theosophical Society's understanding of Buddhism.⁴⁶ The book's question and answer form is based on the catechisms formerly used in Christian religious teaching, and it appears that Abbot Beik applied this technique in his teaching of Buddhism. The book talks about the importance of individual effort and the relevance of the traditional teaching's concept of 'cause and effect' in modern Western science.⁴⁷ This teaching was part of a new wave of Buddhism that began in Ceylon at that time and was widely regarded as a

⁴² Ibid. 43.

⁴³ Tekkatho Sein Tin. *1945 Myanma Naingngan Phet Hsit Tawhlanye Thamain* (History of Anti-fascist movement in 1945, Burma) (Yangon: Khain Sape Taik, 1969), 45.

⁴⁴ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 43.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 39-40.

⁴⁶ A core member of the Myanmar Theosophical Society commented that this style of teaching indicated that there was a possibility that Abbot Beik had been influenced by *A Buddhist Catechism* (Interview, May 2014).

⁴⁷ See, for example, the Question 69 and 88 in 'A Buddhist Catechism' (1881)

<http://www.e-torredebabel.com/buddhism/buddhist-catechism/abuddhistcatechism.htm>

modernised form of Buddhism.⁴⁸ In early 1885 Colonel Olcott visited Lower Burma to establish branches of the Theosophical Society there and distributed 10,000 copies of the Burmese translation of *A Buddhist Catechism*.⁴⁹ Abbot Beik had possibly heard about Buddhist schools in Ceylon founded by the Theosophical Society through a network of monks.⁵⁰ He came from Tenasserim where British rule had been established in 1825, and the presence of many missionary schools, both in this region and Lower Burma as a whole must also have given him some ideas on how to operate a religious school.

For Pe Then and his parents, Abbot Beik's teaching was the first interpretation of Buddhism from Lower Burma they had come into contact with. In many ways the differences between Upper and Lower Burma at that time were significant. British expansion began from Tennaserim, where Abott Beik originated, and Arakan, then spread over the entire territory of Lower Burma after 1852, transforming the vast Irrawaddy delta to a rice plantation and bringing prosperity to the region. The area's economy also attracted different cultural groups, including Indians, Chinese, Europeans and in-migrant Burmese.⁵¹ This change also gave the Burmese population in Lower Burma more exposure to Western modernity and gave rise to new socio-cultural-intellectual narratives. Thant Myint-U points out that the complexity of Burmese history in the nineteenth century has not been adequately explored in either English or Burmese language historiography, and stresses the importance of the influence of nineteenth century developments on post-1885 Burma.⁵² The experience of Pe Tein's family is an indication of the cultural connection of Upper and Lower Burma, and also the birth of a modern notion of Burmese identity.

⁴⁸ It is often pointed out that Colonel Olcott's interpretation of Buddhism is close to American Protestantism. For example, see Anne M. Blackburn. *Location of Buddhism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 107.

⁴⁹ *A Buddhist Catechism* was revised several times after its first publication in 1881. I assume the Burmese translation was based on the 1881 version.

⁵⁰ Some Burmese monks staying in Ceylon became friendly with Colonel Olcott after his arrival there in 1880. See Anne M. Blackburn. *Location of Buddhism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 96. Hikkaduwe Sumangala, a leading monk in Ceylon who led the revival of Buddhism movement and was influential on the Theosophical Society, developed monastic and diplomatic connections with the royal court of Burma as well as Thailand and Cambodia (Blackburn, *Location of Buddhism*, 163). His youngest brother was a doctor for 'the King of Burma' (Blackburn, *Location of Buddhism*, 8), possibly King Mindon or King Thibaw or both.

⁵¹ Michael Adas. *The Burma Delta* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 164.

⁵² Thant Myint-U. *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 190-194.

Around 1900, many new Buddhist groups were formed in Burma.⁵³ They were a reflection of the Burmese people's thinking about the non-Buddhist government which had taken over the entire territory of the Burmese kingdom. Abbot Beik's activity can be seen as part of this new reinterpretation of Buddhism. E. Sarkisyanz describes Buddhism during the transition from the monarchy to British colonisation as a time when 'the Wheel of Kamma was losing its meaning as a rationale of social hierarchy. Kamma could now be reinterpreted "in terms of each man's power to change his future."' ⁵⁴ Inspired by the Theosophical Society's Buddhism, Abbot Beik also interpreted Buddhism in this way, and his teachings attracted parents who understood the power-shift from the Burmese king to the British authorities and looked for a new way to live as good Buddhists.

At Abbot Beik's Monastery School

In the late nineteenth century in Myanmar a boy was usually enrolled at a monastery when he reached eight or nine years of age.⁵⁵ Entering a monastery at seven years of age, as Pe Thein did, was considered a little too early. When Pe Thein joined Abbot Beik's monastery the other boys were at least ten years old, making him the youngest pupil.⁵⁶ However, helped by his previous study at the secular school, he easily memorised all the 'question and answer' texts (he admitted that he memorised without knowing the meaning much of the time).⁵⁷ Soon he became the school's top pupil and the abbot's favourite. He showed no fear of older boys and was the best marble player at the monastery.

In the early 1960s Shwe U Daung wrote to his Burmese readers on the subject of his school life that 'that era was very different from today as it was common for school boys to fight and scuffle every day'.⁵⁸ Boys of that time grew up in close proximity to

⁵³ Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 19-20.; Than Win Hlaing. *Achikchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidan, Dutira Twe* (Encyclopaedia of Myanmar History, Volume 2) (Yangon: Pyinna Shwedaung Sape Taik, 2010), 46-47.

⁵⁴ E. Sarkisyanz. *Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Revolution*, 107.

⁵⁵ Shway Yoe. *The Burman* (Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1989. First published in 1882, reprinted from the revised 1910 Macmillan edition), 16. Although today's Myanmar does not have a compulsory education system, both boys and girls generally enrol in kindergarten at five years of age for one year and then primary school. Many boys attend a monastery only for religious occasions such as 'Shinbyu' (a ceremony to be ordained as a novice), but some in the countryside enter a monastery to gain a basic education equivalent to primary school. Some monasteries function as boys' orphanages, providing them with a secular education as well as religious education. These boys are allowed to stay in the monastery until they graduate from high school. They take their primary school education and then go on to middle and high school outside the monastery.

⁵⁶ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 39-40.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 41.

violence. Upper Burma was a major battleground for anti-British resistance and the fierce suppression under the British pacification campaign had not long ended.⁵⁹ Magyidone village, where Shwe U Daung's father originated, had experienced these conditions as recently as five years earlier.⁶⁰ Even after the campaign concluded, large numbers of British and Indian troops remained in many areas in Burma.⁶¹ The experience of wartime violence differed greatly depending on the region. When Pe Thein was studying at Abbot Beik's monastery, the battles of the first Anglo-Burmese War in Tenasserim and Arakan had ended more than seventy years earlier and Lower Burma had enjoyed peace for more than three decades. For residents in Mandalay and Upper Burma the war and lawless conditions were still fresh in their memories, and may have influenced some local schoolboys' aggressive behaviour.

Shwe U Daung also remarked to his readers that when he was a child the abbot of a monastery had stronger authority than in the 1960s. For example, a boy being bullied at the monastery was reluctant to inform the abbot about it, explaining, 'you might think "Why didn't he inform the abbot?"', but only a novice in that era would know the fear that telling his abbot something could arouse'.⁶² Some older pupils at the monastery school who were jealous of Pe Thein repeatedly bullied him. It was not only physical abuse, but also they stole his small change. Making him bet on a game of marbles, they often deprived him of the money he had saved for buying snacks. Pe Thein sometimes summoned his courage and informed Abbot Beik about his troubles. Although the Abbot caned these bullies in response to Pe Thein's report, they later took their revenge on Pe Thein. At first his father continued to give him money, as he knew his son was the youngest pupil, but after he repeatedly lost money, his father finally beat him. Pe Thein eventually stopped reporting this bullying to the adults. He

⁵⁹ Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 24-26. E. Sarkisyanz. *Buddhist Background of Burmese Revolution*, 105.

⁶⁰ Some relatives of Shwe U Daung still living in Magyidone village told me that they heard from their ancestors that just before the turn of the twentieth century security conditions in the village were very bad, because of many roving bandits, which sometimes compelled their ancestors to take refuge at friends' houses. (Interviews in December 2005). Stubborn resistance against British invasion in the Shwebo area during the Burma Pacification campaign left strong memories among British authorities, leading them to believe that Shwebo could be a volatile area at any time. The official gazetteers and a statement in 'Carey's manual' that a "favourite place for such risings in Lower Burma is the Tharrawaddy District and in Upper Burma the Shwebo District," much influenced the members of ICS. after that, including Burmese members. See Mairii Aung-Thwin, *The Return of the Galon King* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 62 and 'Sein Tin' in Myanmar Nnaingngan Badhabyan Athin. *Myanma Swe zone Kyan* (Myanmar Encyclopedia), Vol. 4 (Yangon: Sapay Beikman Pohnheik Taik, 1962), 60.

⁶¹ Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies*, 24-26.

⁶² Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 41.

later observed that he spent days when ‘wherever I was, at school or at home, I could not relax even for one hour’.⁶³

These observations suggest that the young Shwe U Daung was aware of how difficult it was to behave honorably, something which exposed the gap between Buddhist teachings and reality. His experience of bullying made him more aware of the complexity and diversity of human nature and also seeded in his mind an attitude geared towards a sense of justice. These childhood memories must have resonated in Shwe U Daung’s response to Sherlock Holmes many years later, seeing him as an icon of the search for justice beyond the authorities.

English Classes

When Pe Thein was nine years old (1898), Abott Beik decided to introduce an English class at his monastery school, a decision that caused confusion among the students’ parents. Even many ‘modern’ parents thought the teaching of *Sabyu* (white people’s texts, or English) at a monastery was inappropriate, as there was still lingering anti-British sentiment in Mandalay. As a result some pupils left the school, but new pupils came in accordance with their parents’ wishes to give their sons an English education. For this reason, the student numbers remained almost the same.⁶⁴ Aye Yar and Shwe kept their son at the monastery studying English, a sign of their loyalty to the Abbot.⁶⁵ Around this time Pe Thein’s family moved from Yaing Lane to Yanhnin Dagar Ward. Many of Shwe’s relatives were living in the ward and as Pe Thein’s brother was born that same year, it is likely that Shwe was in need of family support.⁶⁶ This move made Pe Thein’s journey to school much longer, from one ‘block’ to seventeen ‘blocks’, but he walked every day in spite of the long distance, although sometimes he played truant from school with his cousin, a fellow pupil.⁶⁷

In the previous year (1897), twelve years after of the fall of Mandalay, Upper Burma was merged into the same administrative region as Rangoon. The headquarters of the administration for Upper Burma was set up in Maymyo (now Pyin Oo Lwin).⁶⁸ Aye Yar must have thought his son’s future happiness would depend on his obtaining a position under the British colonial government, the new ‘King’, and for this he would need an English education. His former colleagues at court who had accepted the offer of colonial government positions twelve years earlier, had since built stable lives for

⁶³ Ibid. 40-42.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 44.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 46.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 46-48. The original word for ‘block’ is ‘Pya’ which is used in Mandalay to express distance in the city.

⁶⁸ Robert H. Taylor. *The State in Myanmar*, 75.

themselves and their families (some were later promoted to the level of Assistant Township Officers).⁶⁹

The English teacher was a monk called U Ti Lawka, recently arrived in Mandalay, who originated from Kawkareik Village near Moulmein. The textbooks he chose for the class were *The Royal School Primer* (from Year 1 to 3) and J.C. Nesfield's *Manual of English Grammar and Composition*.⁷⁰ The latter was used widely in colonial India at both Mission and Anglo-Vernacular schools.⁷¹ U Ti Lawka probably came across these books through missionary schools in Moulmein. Abbot Beik and U Tilawka seem to have come into contact through their shared belief in modern Buddhism.

Memorisation was an integral part of U Ti Lawka's teaching, and pupils had to be able to recite the entire contents of these textbooks. This was the traditional learning style used at monasteries for the study of Buddhist texts. Shwe U Daung recalled that this training formed a solid basis for his knowledge of English, and was an aid to him for the rest of his life.⁷² U Ti Lawka gave an examination every three months to select the top group of ten pupils. Aye Yar offered prizes for the successful pupils in these examinations such as fountain pens, notebooks and sweets, purchasing these items from his own tight budget. First prize was the fountain pen. As Shwe U Daung always came second or third he asked his father to give him a fountain pen. The answer was 'If you want one, work harder and get first prize.'⁷³

U Ti Lawka was a stern teacher, often caning them when they made a mistake. In the system of Burmese monastery education, a cane was indispensable for stopping or starting a noisy recitation chorus by a group of novices by tapping on the floor, and it was also used for punishment. This sort of corporal punishment was quite common in Burmese classrooms in those days, but teachers were usually aware of the difference between proper punishment and abuse.⁷⁴ Pe Thein and his classmates were used to U Ti Lawka's punishments and when U Ti Lawka was sick, while happy about the cancellation of the class, they were concerned about their teacher's health.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 37. Assistant Town Officer in the colonial government appears to be the highest promotion available to a former petty clerk at the court. Officers at the court were immediately offered positions as Township Officers or Assistant Township Officers. See. "Awaiyauk Min U Aung Gyi" (Mr. Aung Gyi, the Officer for Long Distance Communication) in Theikppan Maung Wa. *Khitsan Yazawinyemya* (Historical Essays from 'Khitsan' Viewpoint), 25.

⁷⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 46.

⁷¹ Information from Associate Professor Tim Allender, Dept. of Education, the University of Sydney. According to Associate Professor Allender, some colleges in India used the book while pretending to teach at a higher level.

⁷² Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 46.

⁷³ Ibid. 52.

⁷⁴ Information from Mr. Carl Ba Phyu who, at the age of 94, was able to recall life in Mandalay during the colonial period (Interview, March 2013).

⁷⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 49.

In 1900 the Dekkhina Wuntaik Monastery moved to Hsaing Dann Lane with their one hundred students and opened there as a governmental school, the Buddha Thathana Noggaha Anglo-Vernacular (Burmese) School. Kyaw Yan took up the post of Principal. In December that year the ten students, including Pe Thein, sat for the government Year Four exam. They all passed, which became big news in Mandalay, attracting more students to the school. Shwe U Daung and his classmates were grateful for U Ti Lawka's devoted teaching, and could not forget it even many years later.⁷⁶ This school was one of the earliest government Buddhist schools in Mandalay and it no doubt came as a big surprise for the city's residents to find that a modern education was possible at a monastery, not only at an expensive missionary school. The school went on to have such an impact that it is no exaggeration to say that the parents and students gathered around the Dekkhina Wuntaik Monastery, later the B.T.N. School, were the origin of Mandalay's middle class in colonial Burma.⁷⁷

In 1901 Pe Thein and his classmates proceeded to Year Five, but as the school was unable to hire a proper geometry teacher, six of the students, including Pe Thein, failed the end of year examination. In the following year, with the help of a newly arrived teacher who had graduated from the School for Teachers, Pe Thein passed his Year Five exam.⁷⁸ During this period U Ti Lawka composed a curriculum of Buddhism for Kyaw Yan the principal in 1901. However U Ti Lawka soon stopped teaching because of a disagreement with the school's new administration, eventually quitting the school and leaving the monkhood.⁷⁹ Kyaw Yan, a former school inspector, was a capable school administrator and educator. He also published many books on Buddhism for Burmese youth, which made him well known and developed a reputation for the B.T.N. school as a prominent nationalist school.⁸⁰ Shwe U Daung made an ironic comment on this, saying that Kyaw Yan the principal became famous, but Abbot Beik and U Ti Lawka were gradually forgotten.⁸¹

Studying at the American Baptist Mission School

Pe Thein had never seen anything like the grounds inside the gates of the Mandalay American Baptist Mission School, when he enrolled there in 1903 at the age of

⁷⁶ Ibid. 54-55.

⁷⁷ Robert H. Taylor. *The State in Myanmar*, 124-125.

⁷⁸ The School for Teachers was established in Rangoon in 1871 by Mr. W. S. Sandy, who seems to have been a Christian Burmese adopted by an English family. See L.E. Bagshawe, 'The "Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the People" – Western Education in Burma to 1880', 288.

⁷⁹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 70-71.

⁸⁰ Alicia, Turner. *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014, 68-69.

⁸¹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 54.

thirteen.⁸² He moved to this school at this time because the B.T.N. Anglo-Vernacular School did not have the facilities to teach beyond the Year Five class. He wrote of his first impressions of the school as follows:

The Buddhist school where I previously studied was a local school with around one hundred students, but this American school had three hundred students and also huge buildings, a chapel with a lofty pointed roof, a vast compound, a football ground and so on. These looked so grand, magnificent and dignified, that local people were afraid to cross the school ground. As a new student coming from a small school and enrolling in such a big school, I was so scared I felt my knees begin to shake and could not step onto the school's land wearing slippers.⁸³

He also wrote about his experience attending service, a daily routine at the school:

For me, as a person who had never ever heard of hymns, the tunes sounded awesome and touching. My mother once sang a long and great verse about Buddha beginning with 'The golden Bodhi tree; Oh, Lord Buddha sits underneath; The throne flashing lights; The extraordinariness has happened; This event is truly momentous.' I remembered my mind was filled with delight, listening to the verse sung in her sweet and dignified voice, and listening to the Christians' hymns, I also felt some kind of solemnity. In the school there were some young students who had come from a long way away and had never experienced the joy of listening to verses about Lord Buddha's glory sung by a good performer. They had only heard limited phrases such as 'Boukdan Tharana Gitsharmi' ('The three jewels we believe in, Buddha is the first'). It's not surprising that they should be so delighted by listening to a hymn and come to believe in Christianity as the truth, eventually converting to it.⁸⁴

Although he admired the musical beauty of the hymns, Pe Thein did not seem to be impressed enough to convert to Christianity. In his *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* neither did he mention any attempts at forced conversion, throughout his five-year stay at this school. Unlike in Ceylon, the forced conversion of

⁸² This school was known as the 'Kelley School' in Mandalay, named after E.D. Kelley or E. W. Kelley, a missionary from the American Baptist Mission, who was the major contributor to the establishment of this school. See also *Guide to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society records, 1813-1961* (Collection Number: 4424, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library) <http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/html/docs/RMM04424.html>.

⁸³ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 59. The Burmese take off their footwear and walk barefoot inside the compound of monasteries and pagodas.

⁸⁴ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 61.

locals by government and the churches, was not practised in Myanmar.⁸⁵ From the time of the arrival of the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson in 1812, the ABM established many missionary schools, in both Tenasserim and Lower Burma.⁸⁶ The Baptist College in Rangoon (later known as Judson College) became recognised as an affiliated college of the University of Calcutta in 1878, along with Rangoon College. It is not known when the ABM established their boys' high school in Mandalay, but it was probably shortly after the fall of Mandalay in 1885, because many documents written by American Baptist missionaries in Mandalay between 1886 and 1937 are still available.⁸⁷

Pe Thein was one of the youngest of the three hundred students at the school. He spent much time by himself, as he was scared of the new environment and wanted to avoid being bullied, although no major violence occurred. For two years he did not have any friends. However, at the oral test for the Year Six examination, Pe Thein answered with much confidence, which surprised the teachers, including the principal, Mr. Tribolet, and Mr. Wedderspoon, the educational officer and examiner. The entire school recognised his outstanding ability in English, and the teachers put him into the selected students group to prepare for the governmental high school scholarship examination.⁸⁸ From Year Seven to Year Nine, Pe Thein was the top English student at the school.⁸⁹ However:

While my school life grew more and more successful, my situation at home became increasingly worse. Hearing that my school performance was improving, my father treated me with good food and clothes, but he also practised on me his motto, 'A good hen should be kept on a string' and became stricter than ever, forcing me to concentrate on study.⁹⁰

Around the time of Pe Thein's enrolment at the ABM his family moved to Hsay Yoe Win in Gondan Ward, which was close to the school. Pe Thein and his younger sister

⁸⁵ <http://www.ymba-colombo.org/index.htm>, 'Its Genesis'; Ba Than's *Myama Yazawin*, one of the representative history textbooks written by Burmese historians, states that the British colonial government did not practise forced conversions. See Ba Than. *Myanma Yazawin* (History of Burma) (Yangon: Pyankyaye Wungyi Htana, 1991. Originally published in 1930 and based on the 22nd printing in 1951), 177-178.

⁸⁶ L.E. Bagshawe, 'The "Moral and Intellectual Improvement of the People" – Western Education in Burma to 1880', 273.

⁸⁷ <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/RMM04424.html>. The ABM was not the first missionary school in Mandalay, as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) headed by Dr. J.D. Marks of the Anglican Church had opened a school there in 1868 with financial support from King Mindon, where many of King Mindon's sons and other court officials' sons studied. St. Peter's Roman Catholic high school was also opened in 1897.

⁸⁸ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 62-63.

⁸⁹ Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung*, 5.

⁹⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 65.

were strictly prohibited by their father from playing with the neighbourhood teenagers after school. With their mother's permission, they could play only when their father was away from home.

When he was fifteen years old (Year Seven), Pe Thein had his first experience of falling in love, with a girl from the neighbourhood who was a student at the Normal School. However he later found out that she seemed to have another boyfriend. As soon as they discovered his feelings for the girl, Pe Thein's parents took drastic action to dampen his interest in her. With the help of the craftsmen in their slipper-making workshop, his parents stripped him naked and tied him up with a rope, leaving him outside the house in public view. They then called a barber and had Pe Thein's Western-style hair shaved. Being laughed at by neighbours, he felt a new 'spike' of the hedgehog springing up in his mind against his parents.⁹¹ Shwe U Daung later commented that this extreme punishment was a failing on the part of his parents, saying they were insensitive to a young adult's sense of self-respect.⁹²

Often when Pe Thein's father was away, the craftsmen in his slipper-making workshop would spend time gambling. As his father restricted him from associating with other young boys, Pe Thein became close to these workers and joined in their gambling, probably as an expression of rebellion against his father, and also his youthful curiosity. Pe Thein soon became addicted, repeatedly stealing money from this father's wallet, which the adult Shwe U Daung greatly regretted⁹³ Although Pe Thein stopped gambling before his father found out, this experience seems to have left him with a gambling habit, as we will see in the following chapters.

The Joy of Reading English Literature

Year Eight (1905) turned out to be the 'Year of Windfall' for Pe Thein, because in this year he had three good friends attending his school at the same time. These three, Pe, Yi and Set Khway, were selected along with Pe Thein for the previous year's government scholarship examination and had studied together for it. After they all passed the Year Seven examination, they sat for the highly competitive scholarship examination. Successful applicants would receive sixteen rupees per month for their high school tuition (Years Eight and Nine). This was a scholarship intended for the colonial elites; at that time a policeman's monthly salary was only twelve rupees.⁹⁴ Pe Thein failed to win a scholarship, but he and his friends proceeded to the Year Eight

⁹¹ Mr. Carl Ba Phyu, my 94 year-old informant who was able to recall life in Mandalay during the colonial period, commented that he had never heard of this form of punishment in Burmese tradition and considered it a form of abuse of Shwe U Daung by his parents (Interview, March 2013).

⁹² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 67-70.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 75-76.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 71 & 77.

class together and continued to strengthen their friendship. Pe and Yi were Burmese and Set Khway was of mixed Burmese and Chinese ethnicity. Yi and Set Khway were the same age as Pe Thein and Pe was four years older, but all three of them were happy to accept Pe Thein's leadership.⁹⁵ As Pe was living near Pe Thein's house, they became close and remained good friends even after they graduated from high school. The following year (1906) all four successfully proceeded to Year Nine. Before the summer holidays their Burmese teacher Shwe Hman invited some of his students to his home to introduce them to his collection of English books. Pe Thein and his three friends were among those who went, attracted through their mutual interest in studying English. Pe Thein borrowed from Shwe Hman Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* but found it too difficult for him and exchanged it for another book, *Arabian Nights*, which fascinated him. In spite of the language barrier he was enchanted by the dazzling stories centred on princes and princesses.⁹⁶ This book was probably a volume of *The Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night* which consists of ten volumes translated by Sir Richard Francis Burton.⁹⁷ Upon seeing Pe Thein engaged in seriously reading these books, his father thought he was studying hard and rewarded him by buying him a harmonica. After the forty-five day long summer holidays, everybody was surprised at the remarkable development of Pe Thein's English ability.⁹⁸

In Year Nine Pe Thein received added encouragement from a class teacher by the name of Mr. Inglis, an Indian who had lived in England and had a superb command of English. Through an invitation from his teacher, Pe Thein experienced a Western-style breakfast for the first time in his life. At the Vienna Hotel he was overwhelmed by the setting of white linen with a flower vase on the table and the three Anglo-Burmese waitresses in long skirts. The occasion impressed him very much because eating Burmese food in public in those days involved sitting on a simple dirty bench.⁹⁹

Towards the end of the year, shortly after the Prince of Wales' visit to British Burma, Mandalay was struck by an outbreak of plague. Both Set Khway and his mother died of the disease. Pe Thein was devastated and asked his parents to evacuate the family from Mandalay. By this time numerous people had fallen victim to the plague and Aye Yar decided to send his three children to his home town, Magyidone village,

⁹⁵ Ibid. 72.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 85.

⁹⁷ The original title of the book is *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Now Entitled The Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night; With Introduction, Explanatory Notes on the Manners and Customs of Moslem Men and a Terminal Essay upon the History of the Nights by Richard F. Burton*; Benares, Printed by the Kamashastra Society for Private Subscribers Only. *The Book of The Thousand Nights and a Night* Supplementary series consisting of six volumes was also published during 1886-88.

⁹⁸ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 85.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 87.

to stay with relatives for two or three months. This visit, Pe Thein's first long stay in Magyidone, inspired his curiosity about rural life. When Aye Yar visited the village to see how his children were doing, he was upset to see Pe Thein driving a bullock cart, apparently enjoying the life of a farmer.

In May 1907 Shwe U Daung sat the Year Nine examination, which was also the matriculation examination for Calcutta University. He failed the exam as he had spent too much time in Magyidone and indulging his interest in reading English novels. That year, the geography examination was also extremely difficult.¹⁰⁰ Yi passed this exam and left for Rangoon to attend Judson College. Pe and some other students also failed. At that time the standard of the Year Nine examination was very high and the ABM usually produced only one successful candidate for every four or five who sat, which made these English-educated graduates a social and educational elite in Upper Burma. During the rest of the summer holidays, Pe Thein worked as an assistant at Steel Brothers and Company Ltd, under an arrangement between his father and his father's friend, who was the head clerk of the office.¹⁰¹ The following year (1908) both Pe Thein and Pe passed the exam and soon after Pe moved to Rangoon to enter Judson College. In that era those who passed Year Eight or Nine customarily wrote in English to each other. Pe Thein exchanged numerous letters with Pe, later calling him his 'bosom friend'.¹⁰²

Pe Thein wanted to develop his knowledge of English and become an English writer. However, since his father's slipper-making business was not doing well financially there was no way he could afford to send his son to Rangoon. That year his parents closed their business and moved to Wetlet (a small town around two hours by train from Mandalay, the nearest major town to Magyidone village) and began a new business selling scale weights. Pe Thein was left in Mandalay with a new bicycle and began working as a teacher at the Boukda Thathana Noggaha Anglo-Vernacular (Burmese) School where he had once studied.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The story of Shwe U Daung's life from his birth to nineteen years old (1889-1908) illustrates an aspect of the large cultural gap that the process of colonisation in Myanmar opened up between Rangoon and Mandalay, or Lower Burma and Upper

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 91.

¹⁰¹ Steel Brothers and Company Ltd was a famous trading company in colonial Burma. It was originally established in 1870 in England and from 1890 was mainly involved in the milling and shipping of rice and teak in Burma and India.

http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cgibin/vcdf/detail?coll_id=18226&inst_id=118&nv1=search&nv2=

¹⁰² Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 84.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 93, 98.

Burma, leaving the capital of the former Burmese kingdom as a small town. The 1911 'Census of India' recorded that the number of candidates who sat for the Matriculation Examination in Burma in 1900 was 204, of whom 107 passed. The number of candidates in 1910 was 138, of whom 93 passed.¹⁰⁴ It is likely that in 1908, the year Pe Thein passed this examination, there were also around one hundred successful candidates. As the population of the Burma Province in 1910 was roughly 12 million, young Shwe U Daung's academic achievements truly made him part of an elite in colonial Burmese society. The 1911 Census also recorded that the percentage of English literates in Mandalay District in 1911 was 2.49% for males and 0.68% for females (Rangoon was 12.12% for males and 7.36% for females).¹⁰⁵ This tells us that a person well educated in English was exceptional at that time in Upper Burma. However, Rangoon was still a long way from Mandalay during this period, so many talented young people like Shwe U Daung had to give up their ambitions for higher education, due to financial and other reasons.

Shwe U Daung's accounts of his parents are valuable records showing how former servants at the royal court, supporters of King Thibaw, had to adjust to the harsh wave of socio-political changes. As part of this process, a new ideology coming from Lower Burma encouraged them to seek a new direction for their lives, educating their son in English so that he would be able to find work in the English colonial government. This was the teaching of Abott Beik, a new interpretation of Buddhism which was probably inspired by the Theosophists' neo-Buddhist ideas. This story also serves as an example of how former courtiers accepted the new British administration and the important role of Buddhism in the shift in their world view, showing that this change was not only because of financial incentives. The Burmese middle class identified themselves by adopting a new interpretation of 'Kamma', 'the law of cause and effect' as a guide to living in a modern state. Although little is known about Abott Beik's thinking on Buddhism, his teaching apparently contributed to creating a middle class in Mandalay at a very early stage.

As his accounts tells us, in spite of his high achievements in education, Shwe U Daung's childhood memories were filled with much violence, especially the experience of being bullied. This appears to be a reflection of the unrest following the annexation of Upper Burma at this time. His accounts of this period also vividly describe the struggles and tensions between his teenage self and his father, suggesting that these harsh experiences made Shwe U Daung take an interest in deeper aspects of human

¹⁰⁴ C. Morgan Webb. *Census of India, 1911, Volume IX, Burma Part I. – Report, Office of the Superintendent*, 180.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 172. The Census defined Mandalay District as the place 'containing Mandalay City and the administrative centre of Maymyo, each with a large European and Anglo-Indian population'.

psychology. His serious approach to the learning of English also led him to the joy of reading novels and developed his interest in humanity. His appreciation of literature must have been nurtured by his family environment, as both his parents were admirers of Burmese literature in the tradition of the Burmese court. When he passed the Year Nine examination, Shwe U Daung had already acquired the basis for his future career as an author, being familiar with both English and Burmese literature.

CHAPTER 3

Education, Occupation and Marriage

In 1908 Pe Thein became a teacher at the Buddha Thathana Noggaha Anglo-Vernacular (Burmese) school and began living with the family of his father's younger brother. Freed from the restrictions of his parents, Pe Thein, at nineteen years of age, was able to enjoy the taste of freedom for the first time in his life. He explored every suburb of Mandalay with his bicycle, a luxurious possession at the time:¹

When I worked as a school teacher after graduation from high school, I made so many new friends. During my high school life, I had friends only in the same school and after graduation, my close friend Pe returned to his home-town, Minkin. I then became friendly with young people such as shopkeepers in the Zay Cho Market, senior students from my school or other schools, junior clerks and spoiled sons of wealthy families. Among them I was the only person who had passed the Year Nine examination and very few of these boys had learned English. They happily accepted me as their hero and listened to what I had to say, as I knew a lot about many things, except girls.²

Pe Thein worked for the school for two years, but the fact that he does not mention his teaching in *Record of Life and Thoughts* suggests that he took little interest in his job. His parents thought about sending their son to Rangoon University, as he had passed the entrance examination, but their precarious financial situation meant that Pe Thein's dream of continuing his study of English and English literature was shattered. This was a bitter experience for him and his family, confronting them with the harsh realities of life in the new nation-state. Anthony D. Smith has described the features of the modern education system introduced to Burma through British colonialism:

The modern education system is a large, complex system — a public, standardized, academy-supervised and diploma-conferring institution for the inculcation of the skills, techniques and values of modernity. Only a large and complex system could educate great numbers of people to be 'clerks', and only clerks can be useful citizens of a modern state. This means that the size of the mass public education system sets the lower limit for the scale of nations.³

¹ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts) (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 98.

² Ibid., 99. Minkin is a town located in the western part of Sagaing Division, along the Chindwin River.

³ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 31.

This suggests the mass public education system is closely connected to employment opportunities. In British Burma the new education system functioned as a mechanism for producing personnel for the administration of the colonial state. It offered higher positions in the colonial government to those with higher levels of education and a superior command of English, which created a new social hierarchy topped by university graduates. For Pe Thein, it was a personal tragedy to be denied a place on the path leading to a position in the colonial elite. The modern education system overwhelmingly influenced young people's lives, because it determined not only their employment opportunities but also their marriage prospects. Pe Thein's life from nineteen to twenty-six years of age was very stormy because his level of schooling complicated his prospects for marriage. Through an examination of Pe Thein's work and marriage, this chapter analyses Burmese society in the 1910s, the transitional period between direct experience of the monarchy and the spread of the colonial administration. As I have suggested above, many Burmese, particularly in Upper Burma, understood the colonial state as a continuation of the monarchy, seeing it as now headed by a new British king. This chapter will also examine Pe Thein's experiences of reading in both English and Burmese, as this was one of the factors which encouraged him to explore the possibilities of life as a Burmese writer.

A fascination with literature describing the prosperity and vice of London

During this period, Pe Thein spent most of his nights out on the town with the young men of Mandalay. He was introduced to the pleasures of drinking beer, and together with his friends he often went to traditional theatrical performances of *Zat* (Burmese Opera with much dance and music) and *Youk Thay* (puppet theatre). In fact, he saw so many performances that he later recalled 1908 as the 'Show Time Year'.⁴ Many of the performers he watched, such as Po Sein, Sein Gadone and Aung Bala (all male singers/dancers), Pu and Phu Nyo (puppeteers) are now remembered as legendary masters of traditional Burmese art forms.⁵ Some of these artists had performed at the Burmese court and retained a connection to the rich and sophisticated Burmese literary and musical heritage. Some songs presented in these shows also expressed political messages. In 1900 Pu sang a song titled *Pyi Konbaung* (The Land of the

⁴ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 99. *Pwe Kyi Hnit* (Show Time Year) literally means 'a year of show watching'. *Pwe* means 'an event', and can also be translated as 'show', 'festival', 'ceremony', or 'function'.

⁵ Ibid. 99. Gone Ban, *Myanma Gita Ayadha* (Taste of Burmese Music) (Yangon: Sape Lawka Pohnneik Taik, 1972), 153-158. Myanma Nnaingngan Badhabyan Athin. *Myanma Swe zone Kyan* (Myanmar Encyclopedia), Volume 6 (Yangon: Sapay Beikman Pohnneik Taik, 1962), 330. Maung Khin Min (Danubyu). *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing* (Colonial Period: History of Burmese Literature) (Yangon: Seik Ku Cho Cho, 2014), 87-88.

Konbaung Dynasty) commemorating the Konbaung Dynasty and expressing a wish for its continuation as part of his *Youk Thay* performances. It became the first song subjected to censorship by the British authorities, and its writer, Nyan, was forced to change the lyrics. In 1908 Pu was arrested because of his performance of this song, an act that shows the British authorities' sensitivity to the Burmese people's strong attachment to the King of Konbaung.

Watching shows of this kind was a great joy for Pe Thein, and it momentarily allowed him to forget his broken dreams. However his main interest was still in English literature. He was particularly attracted to George William MacArthur Reynolds' *Mysteries of London* and its sequel *Mysteries of the Court of London*. These stories were originally published in the form of penny weeklies, a style of literature that was widely read by the working class in mid-nineteenth century in Victorian England; later they became best-selling novels. They were so popular that Reynolds kept writing episodes from 1844 to 1856, and they were eventually published as a set of twelve volumes.⁶ The story was the saga of two brothers, Richard and Eugene Markham, living in contemporary London, a prosperous modern city, but full of vice. The younger brother Richard eventually married a daughter of an upstanding ruler in Italy, but his elder brother Eugene became a swindler and a seducer of wealthy women. In spite of his success in becoming a member of parliament, he was finally murdered by one of his subordinates.

Shwe U Daung later commented that 'if I commend novels which make young men and women want to have their own lovers, I definitely have to mention *Mysteries of London* and *Mysteries of the Court of London*.⁷ As a young man Pe Thein obviously enjoyed these long novels featuring supernatural characters and humans in plots built around a love story. These books also must have increased his knowledge of contemporary English society, his awareness of the complexity of human nature and his understanding of the basic structure of administration in a nation-state. He also must have realised that a similar form of administration was being implanted in Burma after British annexation, one outcome of which was the formation of new social classes that excluded him and his family from the higher levels of the social hierarchy.

At the time these novels were written the Chartist movement was spreading in England. This working class movement called for better working conditions and universal male suffrage, drawing inspiration from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Reynolds supported this movement through his publishing activities, but in spite of the

⁶ G.W.M. Reynolds, *The Mystery of London* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996). The original full set of twelve volumes was published in London by John Dicks. The publications were undated but they appeared at least twice between 1856 and the end of the century.

⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 99.

popularity of his novels, Reynolds failed to win the respect of all his peers. Marx saw him as ‘a rich and able speculator’ and Charles Dickens regarded him as a businessman focused on attracting more readers.⁸ However, the ‘anti-establishment republicanism’ in *Mysteries of London* and *Mysteries of the Court of London*, which may have been related to Reynolds’ sense of morality, were loved by his readers.⁹ There is a possibility that some of the working class-oriented sentiment in these novels influenced Shwe U Daung and encouraged his interest in socialism and communism some decades later, after Burma’s independence.

Was this a case of the young Shwe U Daung indulging himself in working class pulp fiction? Reynolds and his works do not feature prominently in the history of English literature, but recent studies have found value in *Mysteries of London* and *Mysteries of the Court of London*. Maureen Moran lists them as representative works of a popular genre which reworked features of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction such as supernatural elements and romantic plots, paralleling mainstream novels such as those of Dickens. She also notes that ‘[w]hile today we tend to make a distinction between “literary” fiction and popular “genre” fiction, nineteenth-century writers and readers did not draw such sharp boundaries’.¹⁰ Another recent study also shows that *Mysteries of London* and *Mysteries of the Court of London* were widely read, not only by the working class, but also by the middle class and aristocratic society.¹¹ These observations indicate that Pe Thein’s reading was in line with the tastes of Victorian readers in general, and not just an indulgence in ‘penny dreadful’-type novels. Eight years later Pe Thein began his own writing, greatly inspired by these novels. It is also likely that these two novels oriented him towards the genre that later became known as popular literature in the Burmese context.

Pe Thein related the stories he read in *Mysteries of London* and *Mysteries of the Court of London* to his friends. His memoirs describe one particular moonlit night when more than ten young men surrounded Pe Thein lying on a bench outside his house, listening to his stories. Pe Thein told the stories by summarising them in Burmese, which would last three to four nights.¹² Interestingly, Trefor Thomas states that a similar type of ‘collective reading’ was widely practised among the working class in mid-nineteenth century of London, with popular novels like Reynolds’ works being related by a literate person to illiterate listeners.¹³ In much of the non-Western world

⁸ Reynolds, *The Mystery of London*, xiii.

⁹ Maureen Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2006) 89.

¹⁰ Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 88-89.

¹¹ Reynolds, *The Mystery of London*, xvii.

¹² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 100.

¹³ Reynolds, *The Mystery of London*, xvi. Benedict Anderson states in his *Imagined Communities* (1991) that as ‘as late as 1840, even in Britain and France, the most advanced states in Europe, almost half the

at this time, oral story-telling was also a widely-practised art. *Pon pyaw de* (narrating stories) was a part of Burmese life, so Pe Thein's practice of 'collective reading' can be seen as a blend of Burmese tradition and an aspect of literary culture in London that conveyed some aspects of contemporary English literature to audiences in colonial Burma. Where Pe Thein obtained the set of twelve volumes is unclear, but on a visit to a pagoda in Sagaing (across the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay), he met a Burmese girl who was a former high school classmate who also enjoyed reading *Mysteries of London*.¹⁴ As this anecdote suggests, the novel seems to have been quite well known among English-speaking Burmese in Mandalay. It had been popular in British India since much earlier times and translations were published in Urdu and Marathi.¹⁵

Pe Thein's marriage

For three years after he was a student in Year Eight, Pe Thein was in love with a girl living in his neighbourhood. She was eighteen years old then, beautiful, quiet and modest, according to his account. She appears to have been from a very wealthy family, but it seems that her father had passed away and the household was under the control of her mother. To conceal her identity in his *Record of Life and Thoughts* Shwe U Daung calls her 'San Dewi', a modification of 'Sandar Dewi', the title of a mystery novel he had written which became popular in the 1930s.¹⁶ Pe Thein, then twenty-one years of age, was too shy to talk to her and also refrained from approaching her before he had a proper job. One day her elder sister informed him that a fellow school teacher was planning to propose to her with a gift of jewellery and money, but the girl actually loved Pe Thein, even though she was very shy and obedient to her mother. The girl's sister also conveyed to him a message from her mother, asking Pe Thein's parents to come to their home, as she was aware of daughter's feelings. Pe Thein hesitated, as he had no money, but the girl's sister encouraged him by saying 'a Year Nine graduate doesn't need to offer any money'.¹⁷

Responding to Pe Thein's request, his father promptly travelled up to Mandalay. He was no longer the strict father of Pe Thein's childhood, but a strong supporter of his son's intentions. He had Pe Thein resign from the school, and through his connections found him a new job as an assistant in the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Shwebo. In this way, he not only avoided a conflict between his son and a fellow

population was still illiterate (and in backward Russia almost 98 percent), 'reading classes' meant people of some power. (p. 75-79).

¹⁴ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 99.

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._M._Reynolds

¹⁶ Shwe U Daung. *Sandar Dewi* (Sandar Devi). Yangon: Hnalone Hla Sape, 1965 [1940]. The title of the novel, and its modification as 'San Dewi', is a reference to a goddess.

¹⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 108.

teacher, but also attempted to secure his son's future financial status vis-à-vis the daughter of a rich family. As a former servant of the court, he also must have calculated that his son would be accorded a degree of respect through his status as a government employee. At that time Pe Thein was the only Year Nine graduate in Shwebo. His parents met San Dewi's mother and made arrangements for the marriage.¹⁸ However some months later Pe Thein found out that the girl's mother was making plans to marry her daughter to rich businessman. This brought an end to his engagement and made him angry towards the mother, but he was unable to blame San Dewi herself, since she had behaved as a dutiful daughter towards her parent.¹⁹ The news of the end of Pe Thein's engagement spread all over Mandalay. His young male friends so sympathised with him that they wrote a satirical song about a mother who was blinded by money and sang it in front of San Dewi's house. Pe Thein himself ran back to Shwebo as he was embarrassed by the whole affair.²⁰

Pe Thein's relatives in Shwebo comforted him and introduced him to girls from good families in the town. However he was unable to forget San Dewi.²¹ One day he received a letter from her elder sister, telling him that the marriage between San Dewi and the rich businessman had not gone ahead, as San Dewi would not agree to it. In response, Pe Thein wrote to her mother, expressing his regret at the loss of face suffered by himself and his parents through the cancellation of the engagement, but informing her that he still loved San Dewi with a pure heart.²² This letter so moved the girl's mother that she sent a messenger to Pe Thein's parents in Wetlet to invite them to Mandalay to re-make plans for the wedding. San Dewi's mother offered them two choices: she would either pay for Pe Thein and his parents to move to Rangoon so that he would be able to study at Rangoon University or arrange a good job for Pe Thein in Meiktila (a town located between Mandalay and Rangoon), where her younger brother was Town Officer (*Myo Ok*). In the colonial administration, Town Officer was a high-level position open to Burmese, ranked below the Deputy Commissioner and Sub-Divisional Officer who were English officers in the Indian Civil Service (ICS), and very influential in local politics. This position replaced the Burmese kingdom's hereditary positions of *Myo-thugyi* or *Taik-thugyi* (head of township) and *Ywa-thugyi* (village head), which were positions of a similar level of authority in the local community.²³

Both sets of parents met again and the marriage plans went ahead. Pe Thein resigned from the Deputy Commissioner's office and travelled to Mandalay with his

¹⁸ Ibid. 109-110.

¹⁹ Ibid. 110-111.

²⁰ Ibid. 111-113.

²¹ Ibid. 113.

²² Ibid. 114.

²³ Robert H. Taylor. *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 86.

parents to meet San Dewi's family. Everything went well, but Pe Thein was too shy to talk to San Dewi, and it was left to his sister to keep up a conversation with her. One day San Dewi's mother suggested that the families should consult a fortune teller about the proposed marriage, through an examination of the couple's *Zata*. *Zata* is a rectangular card normally made of dried palm leaf with the record of one's birth date and time, together with the position of the planets at the time of birth. Many Burmese still make a *Zata* when a baby is born. Pe Thein's parents did not believe in this type of horoscope, but for their son's sake they had his *Zata* prepared. The result of the fortune telling was a disaster. Paying no heed to Pe Thein's insistence that he be allowed to go ahead with the marriage because he did not believe in fortune telling, San Dewi's mother cancelled the marriage.²⁴

After this depressing incident Pe Thein and his parents returned to Wetlet. After briefly working for the Forestry Office in Shwebo, in 1910 Pe Thein began working for the Ministry of Agriculture in Mandalay.²⁵ Maybe both Pe Thein and San Dewi had been too naïve about their prospects for the future. Pe Thein still did not feel any hatred towards her, but the double cancellations of his engagement had a traumatic effect on him. Shwe U Daung recalled that after these experiences he became sceptical and sarcastic towards others, that his tendency towards introversion during his childhood was intensified, and he lost his interest in promotion and social success.²⁶ Almost ten years later, in 1919, when Pe Thein was living in Rangoon, he received a letter from his father telling him San Dewi had passed away, twenty-nine years old, and never married.²⁷

In 1928 Shwe U Daung published an episode of 'San Shar the Detective' entitled 'Why is Mr. San Shar a bachelor?'²⁸ This was an original story by Shwe U Daung, not an adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's work, presenting San Shar as a man originating from Mandalay, even though he normally plays the role of a modern man from Rangoon. San Shar tells the story of his hidden past to Thein Maung 'the Burmese Watson', saying that his beloved was shot and killed by a criminal at the age of nineteen. As he had failed to save her life, he had forsworn any intention to marry someone else. As the main settings for the stories are in Mandalay, Wetlet and Shwebo, it is apparent that this episode is based on Shwe U Daung's own experiences.

²⁴ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 116.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 123.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 120.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 117, 123.

²⁸ Shwe U Daung, 'Why is Mr. San Shar a bachelor?' (*Maung San Shar the abetgyaung lubyogyi louk ywe ne parthane*) in Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudoe Paungjoukthit* (Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories) (Yangon: Seikku Cho Cho Sape, Vol. 1, 2011) 537-568.

When he wrote this episode, he was in his third marriage, so he was perhaps using his alter ego, San Shar, to place a seal on his memories of San Dewi through the device of story-telling.

Pe Thein then met with another misfortune. Making use of her connections, Pe Thein's mother prepared a marriage for her son to the daughter of a close friend of the former Burmese royal family. Pe Thein was also promised a position as Town Officer through this marriage, but the arrangement did not go ahead after the girl showed no interest in him at their meeting.²⁹ In 1910, however, Pe Thein was introduced to Hla Hmu, the daughter of a teacher at the Surveying Engineering School, and they married within a few days. He does not seem to have been enthusiastic about the marriage, but after a series of unsuccessful engagements, he probably wanted to settle down.³⁰ Hla Hmu was sixteen years old and a daughter was born, but the relationship between Pe Thein and his wife proved to be a difficult one.³¹

Pe Thein's story reveals the close connection between Western-style education and both employment and marriage in colonial Burma. At elite levels of society, greater value was placed on a groom with a high level of education, although this value was not absolute. It was often conditioned by other factors as well, such as financial means and the traditional belief system. Pe Thein's painful experiences of the preparations for marriage is an indication of the misfortunes that could befall a Western-educated youth in the modern Burmese landscape. Another aspect of social life in the 1910s that we can observe through his experiences is that the close relationship between the lower levels of the colonial administration and the local community was largely the result of the personal networks of former aristocrats. While they retained their adherence to the cultural heritage of the court, these former courtiers accepted the English king and became the mainstays of the new system of administration. They and their sons and daughters formed the upper echelons of Burmese society in the colonial social hierarchy. Pe Thein's experience shows he harboured considerable doubts about the the ideal of 'colonial happiness' achieved through English education that led to employment as a clerk and married life among the elite of colonial society.

Touring with English Officers

At the Ministry of Agriculture Pe Thein was hired as a clerk, on a monthly salary of 75 rupees. This office had many staff with a good command of English, including some Year Nine graduates, and these local staff were supervised by an Anglo-Burmese Head

²⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 12

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

Clerk. Soon after he began work, Pe Thein distinguished himself as an able clerk, as he could read the very difficult handwriting of his English boss, a member of the ICS, and type a clean copy. In 1911 he was promoted to a position as a member of staff on the ICS officer's tour of duty. Besides his monthly income, he was also paid a special allowance for expenses on the tour. In all, his salary amounted to 200 rupees per month, a high income at the time.³²

The Ministry of Agriculture in Mandalay concurrently managed the Ministry of Co-operatives and the Ministry of Handicraft Industry. Pe Thein's boss, Mr. Clayton, toured monthly to visit the offices of the three ministries located all over the Burma Province of British India. Pe Thein accompanied him as assistant and organised a group of support staff including a butler, Indian servants, waiters and a chef, spending nearly a month on tour. Shwe U Daung recalled that there were 'almost no towns in Burma I did not visit if they were accessible by railway or waterway'.³³ This experience must have helped Pe Thein form a territorial image of colonial Burma in his mind. Travelling from Mandalay, a part of Burma proper, he was amazed at the diversity of natural and cultural landscapes in Upper Burma and in the Shan States and frontier areas he felt as though he were in foreign countries. He later used these experiences as motifs in his adaptations. The Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland appeared in an episode of the Sherlock Holmes stories as a waterfall in Shan State in one of his San Shar the Detective stories.³⁴ An exploration deep into the jungle in Africa in Henry Rider Haggard's *She* appeared as a journey into the deep forests of Kachin State in *Yupanandi (The Appearance of Delight)*. The major factor that struck him on these tours was the socio-economic gap between Upper and Lower Burma.³⁵

Pe Thein visited Rangoon for the first time with Mr. Clayton to attend a trade fair, a symbol of the commercial success and material abundance of Lower Burma. Rangoon had a large business community that included major British companies like the Irrawaddy Flotilla, the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation, Burmah Oil and Gillanders Ogilvy & Co., which had all become established by the 1870.³⁶ These big companies made huge profits, mainly through rice cultivation in Lower Burma and before annexation they had urged the Burmese court to open up Upper Burma, in the interests of further profits.³⁷ The economic conditions in Upper and Lower Burma at this time were totally different. Shwe Yoe (George Scott) commented on the general

³² Ibid. 124.

³³ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 124.

³⁴ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Final Problem' (1893), Shwe U Daung, 'San Shar the Young Detective Caught in a Criminal's Territory' (*Sonedauk Maung San Shar The Luzoe dot Setkwin thot Thethsin Ya Pon*) (1933).

³⁵ Henry Rider Haggard, *She* (1888). Shwe U Daung, *Yupanandi (Appearance of Delight)* (1919).

³⁶ Than Myint-U. *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 139.

³⁷ Ibid. 187.

level of poverty in Upper Burma around 1910 by contrasting the marriage customs of the two territories. In Upper Burma, 'where food is scarce and working hands more valuable, the husband is brought to the girl's parents' house and made to do his share towards supporting the household', while in Lower Burma, parents were often able to feed a son-in-law who had not yet found a job.³⁸ Pe Thein was so impressed by a group of English high-ranking officials and owners of big companies he met in Rangoon that he had a natural respect for them, although Shwe U Daung's retrospective comment on this incident was that at the time, he had not yet read Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and had no idea of human rights. Pe Thein also realised Rangoon was now the centre of the country, and as someone from Mandalay, he felt like a country bumpkin.³⁹

How did those who were living in colonial Burma during the 1910s understand their state? The introduction of English-style education and administration to Burma long pre-dated the rise of Burmese nationalism. Mary Callahan describes the way colonial status was established in the former Burmese kingdom as a rapid extension of British power in India: '[I]n a sense, the British-Indian state hit Burmese territory running.'⁴⁰ In 1877 the Viceroy (Governor-General) of India, Lord Lytton, held a 'Proclamation Durbar' and Queen Victoria became Empress of India. Less than a decade later, the same symbolism appears to have been used in the extension of British sovereignty over Burma. After the exile of King Thibaw, in February 1886 Lord Dufferin, Viceroy of India arrived at Mandalay and 'sat on Thibaw's throne, dressed in a scarlet tunic and with the white plumed helmet of empire' in front of the former king's officials.⁴¹ This was the moment when the entire former Burmese kingdom came under British rule.

It is not known if Pe Thein's parents attended this ceremony, but it is not surprising that on hearing this news, many Burmese accepted British administration as a new monarchy replacing the Burmese king with a British queen, and later king. Neither is it surprising that many English colonialists who gained enormous power and privilege in colonial Burma saw the situation in a similar way, as George Orwell describes in his *Burmese Days*.⁴² At the time no Burmese was appointed to the ICS; it was another ten

³⁸ Shway Yoe, *The Burman* (Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1989), 55.

³⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 124-125.

⁴⁰ Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 23.

⁴¹ Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 27.

⁴² It is important to be aware that this novel is set in the 1920s after the rise of nationalist sentiment, which made English residents feel uneasy. However, the conversations and lifestyle Orwell depicts are redolent of the heyday of empire.

years before the first Burmese officer was accepted into the ICS in 1921.⁴³ Most members of the ICS were drawn from the middle class in England, since, as Anderson states, ‘the overwhelming power that high capitalism had given the metropole’ allowed ‘sizeable numbers of bourgeois and petty bourgeois to play aristocrat off centre court: i.e. anywhere in the empire except at home’.⁴⁴

Pe Thein’s boss, Mr. Clayton, was a difficult single man. Local staff were scared of him and called him ‘Mingyi’ (Great King).⁴⁵ Once, during a tour, Pe Thein was scolded by Mr. Clayton for leaving his favourite pillow behind in a town they had passed through, and had to buy a new one at a market. Mr. Clayton kept talking in English, but Pe Thein had to answer in Burmese in the manner of a retainer talking to the Burmese king, saying ‘*Hman parde, Ashin Paya*’ (Yes, your Majesty) or its variation.

‘How old are you?’

‘I am 22 years old, *Ashin Paya* (Your Majesty).’

‘Our relationship is I am your master and you are my follower, is that right?’

‘*Hman parde, Ashin Paya* (Yes, your Majesty).’

‘So in our relationship, when a master scolds his follower, the follower should not be angry with his master, right?’

‘*Hman hla par, Paya* (Oh, yes, your Majesty).’

‘I always praise a person who takes care of his duty and works hard.’

‘*Hman par, Paya* (Yes, your Majesty).’

‘Work harder, don’t get depressed. How much did you pay for the pillow?’

‘I heard it cost eight rupees, *Paya* (your Majesty).’

‘Don’t pay from the official fund, take it out of my private budget.’

‘*Hman Par, Paya* (Certainly, your Majesty).’

‘Work harder. Go.’⁴⁶

Through a series of troublesome incidents like this, Pe Thein gave up any ambition for promotion. He could not stand being scolded in this way, and as he did not get along with Mr. Clayton’s butler, he resigned from the office.⁴⁷

Soon after, Pe Thein found a new job in the office of the Deputy Minister for Agriculture in Mandalay. His new boss, Deputy Minister Mr. Thomson, was an agricultural expert, not a member of the ICS. Mr. Thomson was a gentleman and

⁴³ Nemoto Kei, *Teikō to Kyōryoku no Hazama: Kindai Birumashi no Naka no Igrisu to Nihon* (Between Resistance and Cooperation: England and Japan in modern Burmese History) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), 196.

⁴⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1996), 150.

⁴⁵ This is not an official term for Mr. Clayton’s position, but an informal expression among the local staff reflecting their perception of him.

⁴⁶ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 131-132.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 135-136.

working with him was a pleasant experience for Pe Thein. After a month Pe Thein was promoted to Head Clerk, in charge of the office safe when Mr. Thomson went on tour. Playing billiards was in fashion in colonial Burma at that time, and Pe Thein also often played for money and made a loss. He used 1,000 rupees from the office safe to clear his debts and tried to retrieve the amount, but luck kept running against him.⁴⁸ In desperation, Pe Thein finally made an honest confession of his fault to Mr. Thomson. Mr. Thomson looked at Pe Thein with benevolent eyes and told him he would repay the amount, but Pe Thein should accompany him on his tour so that he would be able to repay the debt from his special allowance for the tour. Pe Thein instantly knelt down on the floor and thanked his boss for saving him from going to gaol. In 1961 Shwe U Daung wrote that he was still grateful to Mr. Thomson, and sent him his goodwill at daily prayers.⁴⁹

By the beginning of 1914, Pe Thein had almost finished repaying his debt, but his marital life was becoming more difficult and his wife moved to her father's home in Yenangyaung with their daughter. Pe Thein felt as though he had totally lost direction in his life. After work he spent his time meaninglessly, playing billiards and wandering from one friend's house to another. When Mr. Thomson went on long leave and left the office, Pe Thein felt as if his mind was beset by 'a sudden storm' and completely lost the incentive for work. One Monday morning he started playing billiards instead of going to work and could not stop. His father-in-law and a member of staff from the office came in search of him, but he kept rejecting their advice to return to the office. After four or five days he received a notice from the office saying 'Removed'. He read it without emotion. It was not 'Dismissed' and he still could work at another government office, but he never again applied for a position in the colonial administration.⁵⁰

Looking for a new life in literature

In July 1914 Pe Thein travelled to Twante, a town in the Irrawaddy Delta where his brother-in-law (his wife's elder brother) lived. He stayed with his brother-in-law, a land register inspector, for three to four months. The relationship between the two men was close, as Pe Thein's brother-in-law was warm and friendly, and he respected Pe Thein's higher academic status and greater knowledge of English. On 4 August the two men heard a news of the outbreak of World War I. Pe Thein immediately expressed his belief that the British would be victorious, as he shared the pro-British sentiments of

⁴⁸ According to the 1907 payment rates for government officials in British Burma, 1,000 rupees was equivalent to Mr. Thompson's monthly salary.

⁴⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 136-138.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 150-151.

almost all English-speaking Burmese at the time.⁵¹ His brother-in-law urged him to restore the relationship with his wife, and in response Pe Thein decided to travel to Yenangyaung to see her.

At the home of his parents-in-law communication with his wife was at first pleasant, but unexpectedly she became suspicious about the relationship of Pe Thein and a female guest from Rangoon, who was staying in the house with her mother. This woman showed an interest in Pe Thein's talk of literature. One night his wife repeatedly attacked Pe Thein as a jobless seducer. The following night, around midnight, Pe Thein and the female guest left the house together in their nightwear. Making use of the woman's cash they bought tickets for a steamer travelling to Rangoon along the Irrawaddy River. When they arrived in Rangoon they visited Pe Thein's friend to borrow some money, and then set out by train for Wetlet, where Pe Thein's parents lived.⁵² This incident marked the end of Pe Thein's first marriage and the beginning of his second. Shwe U Daung wrote that he felt especially sorry for his brother-in-law for what had happened, but he recorded the event to honour his promise to his readers not to hide his misdeeds.⁵³

A new life began. Pe Thein's wife helped her mother-in-law to run her small shop and took responsibility for cooking and housekeeping. Pe Thein had a younger brother, Ba Zan, whom Pe Thein supported financially on behalf of his parents. Although Ba Zan had not continued his education beyond Year Three he was a good assistant to his elder brother and opened a literacy class at home for local children. After teaching his classes Pe Thein spent all his time reading the classics of English literature, later describing 1915 as the year of his life when he had read most. He was especially inspired by the works by Thomas Babington Macaulay and was an avid collector of his books. In the evening Pe Thein often talked about the English books he was reading to his wife and brother. One evening they asked Pe Thein to write his own novel. At the same time, Pe Thein's father suggested that he should also read more Burmese, as Pe Thein had been reading only English for the past seven years. As a former monk, his father had a rich knowledge of Burmese classics in both religious and secular genres. His mother also had extensive knowledge of the Burmese classics through her experience as a narrator at the court. In response, Pe Thein read the Burmese classics including the Ten Jatakas, *The Nine chapters of Pyo Poems (Kogan Pyo)*, *A Drama of the Court (Einda Wunta Pyatzat)* and *A Drama of Prince Wizaya's Life in the Court*

⁵¹ Ibid. 150-151.

⁵² Ibid. 154.

⁵³ Ibid. 152. Shwe U Daung nowhere records the name of his second wife. They were divorced six years later in 1920.

(*Wizaya Kari Nandwin Pyatzat*).⁵⁴ From his childhood Pe Thein was also used to listening to the sophisticated conversations spoken in the court, as members of the former royal family and the court servants and their children frequently visited his home.⁵⁵

It is interesting to learn that even thirty years after the British annexation the Burmese court language was being maintained. Pe Thein was reluctant to speak much in that style because he was aware that the elegant expressions used in court language were a reflection of aristocratic identity and the language included many words indicating a sense of superiority towards the common people. As the son of a former aristocratic family in the period before annexation, Pe Thein had by this time developed a sense of fellow feeling with the ordinary people, an important influence on the creation of Shwe U Daung's literary works. It was at this time and in this context that Pe Thein decided to try his hand at writing imaginative literature. He decided to write in Burmese because as an avid reader of the English classics, he was aware that a non-native speaker would never be able to match the level of good English authors:

I don't mean I did not think about writing in English, of course I did. I believe I could write to a certain standard, if I chose to do so. However the level of my English is not high enough, is not of the international standard, to enable my writing to be sold overseas. I was aware that my works would be sold inside Myanmar[...]If an English novel were published targeting readers in Myanmar it would have to compete with other English novels coming from overseas, so it would be better to write in Burmese, as not many good novels in Burmese have been published in today's Burma. My novels are highly likely to become beneficial trees, like the *Jatropha curcas* producing oil.⁵⁶

On 8 November 1915, the day his daughter was born, Pe Thein began writing a novel.⁵⁷ This was also the time when Burmese literature was undergoing a major change. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Burmese literature as entertainment became accepted among Burmese readers. One popular style at this time was *Pyatzat*, a play script for Burmese opera. It was not only enjoyed through reading, but some works were also performed by actors and actresses or in the form of *Youk Thay* (the Burmese puppet show). Around 1915, however, the popularity of *Pyatzat* had waned and *Wuttu*, a new style learned from Western novels, had begun attracting

⁵⁴ Ibid. 154-155. *The Nine Chapters of Pyo Poems (Kogan Pyo)* was written by Shin Maha Rahtathara in the early sixteenth century. *A Drama of the Court (Einda Wunta Pyatzat)* and *A Drama of Prince Wizaya's Life in the Court (Wizaya Kari Nandwin Pyatzat)* were written by a female author at the court, Hlaing Hteik Khaung Tin, around 1850.

⁵⁵ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 155-156.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 156.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 156-158.

readers. The development of this form, along with the growth of the Burmese print media, are important keys to the success that Shwe U Daung's literary endeavours enjoyed.

Changing Currents: Burmese literature around 1915

The modern print technology that came from the West produced a new Burmese word, *saouk*, for 'book'.⁵⁸ Traditionally written texts were etched onto neatly trimmed palm leaves with a steel pen, and a set of these leaves with a thin wooden cover on the top and bottom was called a *gyan*. Although they were sometimes privately copied, these documents were usually kept in temples, monasteries and palace archives. The dissemination of printing technology and the development of the print media brought not only the new word *saouk*, but also changed the attitude of Burmese towards their language, literature and even their own society.

The first printed text incorporating Burmese was a Burmese-Italian dictionary printed by an Italian monk between 1721 and 1728, but this dictionary is no longer in existence. The oldest existing printed Burmese book was printed in Rome in 1776. It was entitled *Alphabetum Burmanum* (Burmese Alphabet), and was written by an Italian monk who had been engaged in missionary work in Burma for thirty years.⁵⁹ In 1810 in a town near Calcutta the American Baptists published an English-Burmese-Malay dictionary compiled by the Orientalist Dr. John Leyden, for language training.⁶⁰ The first Burmese book to be printed in Burma was *Kaungin Bon dhot Thwaya Lan* (*The Way to Heaven*) by Dr. Adoniram Judson, which was published in 1817.⁶¹ The American Baptists continued to develop their printing technique, and by 1837 had they had created a new type of typesetter using Burmese letters in round shapes, which are still widely used today.⁶²

In 1864 King Mindon set up a printing section in the palace in Mandalay and published his first publication, *Ubadedaw* (*The Enacted Law*).⁶³ From this time, the royal court published various official documents, including royal orders and minutes of the Council of Ministers, along with printed religious texts, historical records and literary works, which had previously been kept as palm leaf manuscripts or folding papers. In

⁵⁸ Tin Tun Oo, *Saouk, Sanezin, Sakyidaik hnint Myanmar Sape* (Books, Periodicals, Libraries and Burmese Literature) (Yangon: Thuta Swezon Saouk Taik, 1999), 55.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 69-70.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 71.

⁶¹ Ibid. 71. Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), 196-197.

⁶² Tin Tun Oo, *Saouk, Sanezin, Sakyidaik hnint Myanmar Sape* (Books, Periodicals, Libraries and Burmese Literature), 71-72.

⁶³ Ibid. 72

1874 King Mindon published 'The Yadanabon Nepyidaw Newspaper.'⁶⁴ King Mindon also appears to have produced the earliest best sellers in book form. Ponnya, a monk who served King Mindon as a royal writer, wrote a series of *pyatzat* plays largely based on episodes from the Jataka, which delighted contemporary readers.⁶⁵ Two of his *pyatzat* scripts, *Drama of Wizaya (Wizaya Pyatzat)* and *Drama of a Water Seller (Ye The Pyatzat)* were published in 1872 and 1873 respectively.⁶⁶ These *pyatzat* texts were full of contemporary wit and sophisticated rhetoric, and were intended for reading rather than for performance. Plays for reading were a favourite genre of literature among courtiers at the time and eventually they became popular with the common people as well. Ponnya's works were regularly reprinted for more than twenty years.⁶⁷

Writing and publishing activities by and for a mass population were underway in Lower Burma from the time of annexation in 1852. The growth of English newspapers stimulated the establishment of newspapers in other languages such as Chinese, Indian, Burmese and the languages of minorities, such as Karen and Mon.⁶⁸ In Rangoon a variety of Burmese newspapers appeared earlier than in Mandalay, including *The Myanmar Thandawsin (Burman Herald) Newspaper* (1871), *The Myanmar Gayzet Newspaper* (1872), the *Lawkithu Pyinnya Newspaper* (1873).⁶⁹ Theatrical troupes and puppet theatre performers frequently travelled from Mandalay to Lower Burma for performances, which inspired many scriptwriters there to produce further texts in these genres. Hsataing Hmot U Ku, who originated from Kungyangone in the Irrawaddy Delta, published his *pyatzat* entitled *Drama of Human-Monkey Brothers and Sisters (Lu Wun Maung Hnama Pyatzat)* in 1875. He was a former monk and a former puppet theatre director who was working as an editor for *The Myanmar Thandawsin (Burman Herald) Newspaper* when this book was published.⁷⁰ The story is a tragedy about celestial monkey brothers and sisters who descended to an imaginary kingdom in the human world. As in many other *pyatzat*, this story has many supernatural aspects, but it also reflects aspects of contemporary life in Lower Burma such as the growth of rice production businesses and the new lifestyle including of the popularity of luxurious silk

⁶⁴ Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Myanma Swezongyan* (Myanmar Encyclopaedia) (Yangon: Sapay Beikman, Vol. 10, 1966), 231.

⁶⁵ Pe Maung Tin, *Myanma Sape Thamaing* (History of Burmese Literature) (Yangon: Zabe-U Sape Phyanchiye, 1987), 318

⁶⁶ Maung Khin Min (Danubyu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing* (Colonial Period: History of Burmese Literature) (Yangon: Seik Ku Cho Cho, Second print, 2014), 100.

⁶⁷ Tin Tun Oo, *Saouk, Sanezin, Sakyidaik hnint Myanmar Sape* (Books, Periodicals, Libraries and Burmese Literature), 196-197

⁶⁸ Ibid. 118

⁶⁹ Ibid. 229.

⁷⁰ Maung Thuta (Bo Hmu Ba Thaug), *Sahsotawmya Ahtoukpati* (Biographies of Authors) (Yangon: Hanthawadi Pohnneik Taik, 1966), 417-421.

garments and the consumption of brandy. This book was reprinted many times and sold thousands of copies.⁷¹ *Pyatzat* are valuable resources for information about Burmese culture in the nineteenth century and their scripts also record a number of new loan words from English, such as 'champagne', 'captain', 'parliament' and 'bomb'.⁷² *Pyatzat* remained popular until around 1920, but their quality gradually declined along with the decrease in the number of scriptwriters who had a good knowledge of the classical literature and traditional music which flourished under the patronage of the Burmese court.⁷³ After 1920 no more books of *Pyatzat* appeared.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, some writers who had been educated in English began publishing their works. Around 1902, a Burmese translation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* appeared, the name of the translator being recorded as Po Saw. Today this publication is widely seen as the beginning of '*Kalabaw Wuttu*' (modern literature) a new trend in Burmese literature that was inspired by modern English writings.⁷⁴ After this book, further Western works were introduced to Burmese readers, but rather than direct translations, there was a trend towards local adaptations, which were more appealing for many readers. Jaime Hla Gyaw's *A Story of Mr. Yin Maung and Miss Me Ma* (*Maung Yin Maung Ma Me Ma Wuttu*) (1904), a shortened adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*, was popular with readers at the time. Wunsaye U Kyi's *A Roselle Seller, Mr. Hmaing* (*Chinbaung Ywethe Maung Hmaing*) was written with the encouragement of the managing director of Hanthawadi Press, when he saw the success their rival company, the British Burma Press, had with *A Story of Mr. Yin Maung and Miss Me Ma*.⁷⁵ The period of almost four decades after the 1886 collapse of the kingdom marks a major change of patronage in Burmese literature, from the exclusivity of the court to a mass population of readers who emerged with the development of the print media.⁷⁶

In this changed context of the writing and reading of literature, Pe Thein's parents became strong supporters of his literary work. They also appear to have been exhausted by the struggle to gain access to the 'colonial aristocracy' for their son through marriage.

⁷¹ Maung Khin Min (Danupyu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing* (Colonial Period: History of Burmese Literature), 101-103.

⁷² Hla Pe, *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 21-22. Than Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 153

⁷³ Maung Khin Min (Danupyu). *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing* (Colonial Period: History of Burmese Literature), 114. Hla Pe, *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism*, 24.

⁷⁴ Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Hnit Ngaze Yinkyehmuyeya* (Cultural Affairs in Fifty Years) (Yangon: Myanma Naingngan Sape Athin, 1956), 148.

⁷⁵ Tin Tun Oo, *Saouk, Sanezin, Sakyidaik hnint Myanmar Sape* (Books, Periodicals, Libraries and Burmese Literature) 198.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 196-197

While he wrote, they often gave Pe Thein their opinions and made suggestions as readers.⁷⁷ On 21 January 1916 Pe Thein completed the writing of a novel entitled *A Victory against Big Enemies (Yan Kyi Aung)*.⁷⁸ Although the setting of the story was the Burmese kingdom, it was written in the style of a Western novel, describing the love of four young men for the same princess. This novel included natural conversations, but it also employed sophisticated court expressions and descriptions of court culture. Shwe U Daung later said that the novel was inspired by an episode in *The Mystery of London* that told of four young men who loved the same girl.⁷⁹

Pe Thein mailed the manuscript of the novel to Thuriya (The Sun) Press in Rangoon. The reason he chose this publisher was that he remembered the name of Ba Pe, the Managing Director, from a conversation he had once had with a colleague at the Ministry of Agriculture.⁸⁰ The press's five-year-old newspaper *Thuriya* had dramatically expanded the number of its subscribers nationwide through daily reports of World War I, liberally illustrated with photographs. The Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) network also supported this newspaper.⁸¹ Through his association with Tun Shein, a key member of the YMBA whom Pe Thein had known when he was working as the headmaster of the B.T.N. school, it appears that Pe Thein felt some familiarity with *Thuriya*.⁸² During the war another major Burmese newspaper *Myanma Alin (New Light of Myanmar)* was also established in 1915.⁸³ Maung Khin Min (Danubyu) states that during World War I the custom of reading a newspaper spread among the Burmese because of their interest in the progress of the war and their increasing interest in international affairs and politics.⁸⁴ In this regard, the role played by *Thuriya* newspaper was remarkable. It was also at this time that the newspaper and the press were making preparations for their next step, political involvement.

After waiting more than three months, on 6 May 1916 Pe Thein received a letter from Thuriya Press saying they wished to purchase his manuscript for the sum of 100 rupees.⁸⁵ At the end of the month Pe Thein and his wife moved to Rangoon, as they thought that continuing to live in a rural town like Wetlet would disadvantage his

⁷⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 158.

⁷⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Yan Kyi Aung (A Victory against Big Enemies)*. Yangon: Mingalar Ponhneik Taik, 1961.

⁷⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 158.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 159.

⁸¹ Myanmar Naingngan Badhabyan Sapay Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Encyclopaedia of Burma). Volume 10 (Yangon: Myanmar Naingngan Bardharbyan Sape Athin, Sape Beikman Saouk Taik, 1966), 233-234.

⁸² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 142-143.

⁸³ Myanmar Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Hnit Ngaze Yinkyehmu yeya* (Cultural Affairs in Fifty Years), 177-178.

⁸⁴ Maung Khin Min (Danupyu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing* (Colonial Period: History of Burmese Literature), 194.

⁸⁵ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 159.

chances to work as an author. They moved in with his wife's parents, who lived as a big family with her eight siblings, and received a warm welcome.⁸⁶

When Pe Thein met Ba Pe, the Managing Director of Thuriya Press, he received an invitation to write more, and was given a book to adapt into Burmese. This was Ellen Wood's *East Lynn* (1861), a very popular novel in the latter half of the nineteenth century in England, which is now regarded as representative of the genre of 'Sensation' fiction. The readership of 'Sensation' fiction was more sophisticated than that of 'penny dreadfuls' and the elements of Gothic imagery and stereotyped plots and characters were presented in more realistic everyday terms and with regard to scientific explanations. Typically they 'capitalized on curiosity and anxiety about the respectable Victorian home and institution'.⁸⁷ Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* are also representative works in this genre, which is often seen as having aspects in common with detective stories.⁸⁸

In *East Lynn*, Isabel Carlyle marries a rich and educated husband, but leaves her home after being seduced by another man. After he deserts her, she returns home as governess to his son, unknown to anyone in the household because her beauty has been destroyed in a train crash. A few months after receiving the book, Pe Thein recreated the story as *The City of Jewels (Yadanabon)* set in contemporary Mandalay. It tells the tragic story of Khin Sein Kyi, who deserts her husband and leaves her home in the 'Civil Line', the colonial elite suburb where many English officers and wealthy Burmese were living.⁸⁹

Pe Thein must have been delighted by his new job. Before he wrote *A Victory against Big Enemies*, he could see that the handful of Burmese novels published in the past few decades needed more sophisticated story lines, and he also wanted to introduce more variety to the new fiction, including romance, adventure and suspense.⁹⁰ In this regard 'Sensation' fiction was one of the genres that gave him fresh ideas. Like many English-educated young men in Burma at the time, both Pe Thein and Ba Pe were curious about what sort of books were being read in England. It is significant that they became enthusiastic about creating a new type of Burmese literature based on their knowledge of English, although many English-educated Burmese lost interest in Burmese texts as a result of their fascination with English

⁸⁶ Ibid., 159-160.

⁸⁷ Moran, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 90.

⁸⁸ John Peck and Martin Coyle, *A Brief History of English Literature* (N.Y. Palgrave, 2002), 197-201.

⁸⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Yadanabon (The City of Jewels)*. Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 2000.

'Yadanabon' was a poetic name for Mandalay. The 'Civil Line' was called 'Si Bi Laing' in Burmese. According to Dr. Than Yin Mar, a resident of Mandalay, the suburb is now known as 'Patkone Pyawbwe' (Interview, April 2016).

⁹⁰ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts), 156.

literature. Until 1920 Rangoon University did not have a Department of Burmese and in the early 1930s when some graduates of the department began writing fiction and poems in Burmese (the '*Khitsan Sape*' movement), this was seen as an unusual act for university students.⁹¹ However Pe Thein and Ba Pe moved outside the boundaries of typical English educated intellectuals in colonial Burma. Ba Pe graduated from Rangoon University and became the founder of both Thuriya Press and the YMBA. In this way Pe Thein became part of the YMBA nationalist movement, a wide-ranging movement in search of a modern Burmese identity.

Conclusion

A quarter of a century after the fall of Mandalay, British administration was developing in Upper Burma with the support of many of former Burmese aristocrats and their family members who worked in the colonial administration, as was the case with Pe Thein. Although they seem to have seen British rule as the new monarchy, the imposition of colonial authority was responsible for disseminating the model of a nation-state style bureaucracy throughout the region. English-style school education also became more accessible. The modern education system created a new narrative of the ideal life for a young Burmese man, based on English education and employment as a good clerk in support of the administrative system of the state. This narrative implies that by following this path, a young man is assured of a happy married life at the higher levels of colonial society. It was Pe Thein's unfortunate lot to have missed out on entering Rangoon University and to have had to go through a series of unsuccessful arrangements for marriage in combination with the pursuit of academic degrees, elite jobs, financial power and the intrusion of traditional beliefs. He finally quit his government job and left his parents-in-law's home with his future wife, in other words, he stopped pursuing the narrative of colonial happiness. Having worked for the government, he accepted the colonial administration but he began to seek another way of life, using his English ability within the boundaries of the colonial state. This also represented the formation of a new identity. Soon he discovered the value of his mother tongue Burmese and developed the idea of writing in Burmese with the inspiration of English literature. For the birth of the author Shwe U Daung the meeting with Ba Pe, the Managing Director of Thuriya Press, was also a key factor. Ba Pe was also an English-educated Burmese intellectual who was seeking a life beyond

⁹¹ '*Khitsan Sape*' means 'Literature for testing contemporary taste.' I was given this interpretation of the meaning of '*Khitsan Sape*' by U Wun, one of the major authors involved in the movement, who is also the father of today's President of Myanmar, U Htin Kyaw (interview, July 1989). For the responses to '*Khitsan Sape*', see the numerous essays by Theikpan Maung Wa, for example Theikpan Maung Wa, *Sape Yinkyehmu* (Literary Culture) (Mandalay: Kyipwaye Saouktaik, 1976), 165-167.

the ideal of 'colonial happiness'. The YMBA movement he led was on the same quest, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

'San Shar the Detective' and Burmese Society between 1917 and 1930

Pe Thein's first novel *Yadanabon (City of Jewels)* appeared as a daily serial story in the *Thuriya* newspaper from October 1916. After completion of the story, in early 1917 it was published in book form by Thuriya Press. This was Pe Thein's debut as the writer Shwe U Daung, the 'Golden Peacock'. He chose this penname in association with the publisher's name 'Thuriya' ('The Sun' in Pali).¹ In Burmese traditional iconography, the peacock and the sun are closely associated.² The peacock is an important symbol in the Burmese context, as it expresses power and authority, as in the Konbaung Dynasty's flag which depicts a peacock spreading its tail. After the separation from India in 1937, British Burma's flag featured a combination of the Union Jack and the peacock.³ Today the National League for Democracy's flag also has the image of the peacock (called 'the fighting peacock'), an adaptation of the flag of the Rangoon University Student Union formed in 1931. In February 1917 when Shwe U Daung began working as an editor for Thuriya Press, *City of Jewels* had already become a best-seller. As Shwe U Daung later recalled:

I heard office clerks and workers talking about my book on a tram car (at that time we did not yet have buses), which made me feel contented.⁴ (The position of novels and authors in Burmese society at the time seems to have been replaced by movies and actors and actresses in the later period.)⁵

This episode reveals the popularity of the latest wave of Burmese literature, novels (*wuttu*), among Burmese readers in the 1910s. The task Shwe U Daung was assigned at Thuriya Press was to edit the company's new monthly *Thuriya meggazin (Thuriya Magazine)* which was to be published from March 1917, and to write adaptations of English fiction. His boss, Hla Pe, suggested that he write adaptations of Conan Doyle's

¹ Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung) (Mandalay: Kyipwayay Press, 1953), 29-30.

² The image of the moon often appears with the rabbit.

³ The peacock depicted with the Union Jack is almost identical to the peacock in the flag of the Konbaung Dynasty.

⁴ Rangoon had a tramway network from 1906 to 1922. On 11 January 2016 Yangon again inaugurated a single tram line along Strand Rd, funded by Japanese investment, but it was abolished in June in the same year because of too little numbers of passengers.

⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts) (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 161.

Sherlock Holmes stories for the magazine.⁶ Since the publication of the first of these stories, *Study in Scarlet*, in 1887, Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories had gained popularity worldwide, including in British Burma. Yet although Shwe U Daung had read numerous works of English fiction, there is no evidence that he had read any episodes of the Sherlock Holmes stories at this time. Nevertheless, he appears to have become emotionally involved in this task of literary adaptation, eventually making it his life work.

The Sherlock Holmes stories are often considered an accurate reflection of the Victorian Era, many readers finding that the stories acquaint them with the society and ideas of the time.⁷ Similarly, Shwe U Daung appears to have attempted to rewrite the Sherlock Holmes stories as a mirror of British colonial society in the Burma of his day. The first episode of 'San Shar the Detective' was published in the April 1917 issue of the *Thuriya* magazine under the title "Joja Kan Luthathmu" (Murder in Crain Lake Village).⁸ The setting of the story presents a contrast of Upper and Lower Burma, and reflects Shwe U Daung's unique position at Thuriya Press as the only member of the editorial team not to have originated from Lower Burma. As will be discussed below, this first episode expresses the personal thoughts of the author as a newcomer to the big modern city Rangoon from the quiet old town of Mandalay. This must have given the story a fresh and attractive feel for readers throughout the Burma Province.

Benedict Anderson has argued that novels and newspapers played an important role in contributing to the development of the notion of a nation-state by explaining the change of notion of time, from 'the mediaeval conception of simultaneity-along-time' to a modern idea of 'homogeneous, empty time'.

Why this transformation should be so important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for 're-

⁶ Ibid. 161, 166. The first publication of the *Thuriya* magazine was the March 1917 issue.

⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005), pp. xix-xxii. Some readers enjoy the Sherlock Holmes stories as a guide to the culture of Victorian society rather than reading them as detective stories. The website of the Sydney Passengers (Incorporating The Sherlock Holmes Society of Australia) says, for example, 'What does it take to join us? What qualifications are required? Our members are of all ages and backgrounds, and a great knowledge of the stories is not needed – rather a love of the Victorian atmosphere of foggy cobble-stoned streets, hansom cabs, deerstalker caps, and the immortal scene of Holmes and Watson interviewing a client before a crackling fire in their sitting room at 221b Baker Street' [emphasis in the original].

⁸ Shwe U Daung. *Sondauk Maung San Shar Paungjouk* (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective Stories) Vol. 1. (Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 2000), 1-13.

presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.⁹

Anderson summarises the common structure of novels as “a device for the presentation of simultaneity in ‘homogeneous, empty time,’ or a complex gloss upon the word ‘meanwhile’ and has ‘the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation’”.¹⁰ For all their disagreements in approach, Anthony D. Smith respected Anderson’s analysis and agreed that there was a relationship between the novel and the growth of nationalism:

We are induced to identify with such general individuals through certain conventions of the novel: notably the depiction of a homogeneous chronological and empty time. This corresponds to the linear conception of history which nationalism espoused, and through which it seeks collective immortality.¹¹

Thuriya Press was one of the major proponents of the novel in colonial Burma. It introduced Western novels to Burmese readers, mainly through adaptations, and it also encouraged the writing of original Burmese novels. The press and its associated organisation, the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA) and are today regarded as the leading proponents of Burmese nationalism from the early twentieth century to the 1930s, so it is important to investigate the concept of the nation that was presented to readers in the novels published by the press in the 1910s and 1920s. I suggest that these novels disseminated the notion of the rights of the Burmese as citizens of imperial Britain, which was the core of the YMBA’s nationalist narrative. In this connection, Shwe U Daung’s ‘San Shar the Detective’ stories gave readers an understanding of the administrative framework of a nation-state and the relationship between the state and the individual, especially the individual’s contribution to the nation. However the San Shar stories were not purely didactic, but also incorporated aspects of Shwe U Daung’s autobiography and reflected many of his personal opinions. In this chapter I first discuss the basic nature of the YMBA as influenced by the Theosophical Society and then analyse the relationship between Shwe U Daung’s life and the San Shar stories written during this period.

The formation of the YMBA

Thuriya Press was established by Ba Pe and his friend Hla Pe, with Ba Pe working

⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised and extended edition (London, New York: Verso, 1996), 24-25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 25-26.

¹¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 168.

mainly on financial administration and Hla Pe taking responsibility for matters related to publication. Ba Kalay was hired as editor-in-chief for the newspaper and Shwe U Daung took responsibility for the magazine and for writing fiction, under the supervision of Hla Pe. When Shwe U Daung began his work, Thuriya Press was located in Creek Street (today's Bo Myat Tun Street) in downtown Rangoon, on the ground floor of a four-storey building. It began publishing in 1911 as the voice of the YMBA, issuing the *Thuriya* newspaper and other publications.¹² The YMBA brought a new dimension to the history of Burmese nationalism, as a movement focusing on the establishment of a nation-state.

The origin of the YMBA's nationalism and its application of modern Western political thought owes much to two major factors, as Maung Khin Min (Danubyu) has clearly summarised: the influence of India and of Japan, specifically the advent of the Indian National Congress and Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).¹³ Two key people acted as channels for these events, May Oung and U Ottama. They played an important role in the establishment of the YMBA, as did also the international network of nationalists and the Theosophist ideas which influenced nationalism in a number of South and Southeast Asian countries, including India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and Burma.

May Oung, a British-trained barrister, was born in Akyab (today's Sittwe) in Arakan. He was educated in Calcutta and also had a family connection to Moulmein. He published *The Burman* newspaper (in English) and when the dyarchy system, first introduced in India in 1919, was introduced to Burma in 1923 as a tutelary democracy for future dominion status, he took up the position of Minister for Home Affairs, serving in this role from 1924 until his death in 1926. While studying at Cambridge University between 1904 and 1907 May Oung became close to members of the Indian National Congress.¹⁴

U Ottama, a well-known political monk, also originated from Akyab. He was a frequent visitor to Calcutta, where he too became close to the Indian National Congress.¹⁵ There is a strong possibility that he also met Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sinhalese nationalist who led the Maha Boddhi Society in Calcutta. As Dharmapala had

¹² Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi* (75 Year Journey of the YMBA) (Yangon: Pyinnya Beikman Ponhneik Taik, 1982), 43.

¹³ Maung Khin Min (Danupyu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing* (Colonial Period: History of Burmese Literature), 36.

¹⁴ Myanmar Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Encyclopaedia of Burma). Volume 9 (Yangon: Myanmar Naingngan Bardharbyan Sape Athin, Sapay Beikman Saouk Taik, 1964), 92-94.

¹⁵ Sarkisyanz describes U Ottama's connection with the Indian National Congress and Tilak. See E. Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Revolution* (Dordrecht: Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V., 1965), 126-127.

an established connection with Japan, U Ottama probably also became familiar with the nature of modern Japan.¹⁶ The Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed in 1902 must have also drawn U Ottama's interest. In England U Ottama and May Oung discussed the politics of the movement for a future Burmese state, and in 1907 U Ottama left for a period of residence in Japan. May Oung and U Ottama were two amongst many supporters of the YMBA when it was established in 1906.¹⁷

The YMBA was formed by three Rangoon University graduates, Ba Pe, Ba Yin and Maung Gyi. It was a product of the Buddhist revival movement combined with various cultural and social reform programs such as the temperance movement and the movement for compulsory education and it drew support from young English-educated city dwellers.¹⁸ The organisation's slogan *Amyo, Badha, Thathana, Pyinnya* (Race, Language, Religion and Education) became the key motto of Burmese nationalists before World War II.¹⁹ Studying the history of the YMBA in Myanmar is difficult, because most of the official documents recording the association's activities from its formation in 1906 through to 1938 were lost in fires during World War II, except for the journal and newspapers. Partly for this reason, the YMBA has often been described wrongly in historical studies as an organisation founded on the model of the popular Rangoon YMCA, which had been established in 1899.²⁰ It is possible that the popularity of the YMCA contributed to the action taken by Ba Pe and his friends, but more crucial to the establishment of the Rangoon YMBA was the influence of the Colombo YMBA and the Theosophical Society in Ceylon.

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott. Both moved to Ceylon in 1880 and converted to Buddhism. The Society's three declared 'Objects', which have remained unchanged to the present day, are:

¹⁶ Anagarika Dharmapala travelled to Japan four times between 1889 and 1913. See Sato Tetsuro, *Dai-Ajia Shisoh Katsugeki: Bukkyoh ga musunda mohhitotsu no kindaishi* (Great Intellectual Drama of Pan-Asia: Another Modern History of Buddhist Connections) (Tokyo: Sanga, 2008), 587 – 592.

¹⁷ Myanmar Naingngan Badhabyan Sapay Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Encyclopaedia of Burma). Volume 9 (Yangon: Myanmar Naingngan Bardharbyan Sape Athin, Sapay Beikman Saouk Taik, 1964), 93. Myanmar Naingngan Badhabyan Sapay Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Encyclopaedia of Burma). Volume 15 (Yangon: Myanmar Naingngan Bardharbyan Sape Athin, Sapay Beikman Saouk Taik, 1976), 363-365.

¹⁸ Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 102-103. Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 24.

¹⁹ Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 14. Later this slogan was often used without 'Education', as 'Race, Language and Religion' and in recent years this expression seems to have re-surfaced, especially in the context of efforts to preserve Buddhist culture.

²⁰ E. Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Revolution*, 128 – 129. Dauktar Maung Maung. *Myanmar Naingnganye Khayi hnint Bogyoke Ne Win* (Burma's Political Journey and General Ne Win) (Yangon: Bagan Saouk, 1969), 28.

- To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
- To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
- To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.²¹

The Society's cosmopolitan ideas, which included flexible views towards non-Western cultures, acquired a considerable following among Western intellectuals in the period before World War II and also influenced nationalists in the colonies. The official website of the Colombo YMBA in Sri Lanka states that the organization was formed to preserve Buddhism and indigenous culture under British rule and acknowledges the support of Olcott, who was then president of the Theosophical Society. The Colombo YMBA began its activities in 1898, originated from the Buddhist Theosophical Society which was formed by Olcott and Blavatsky in 1880, the year they arrived at Ceylon. The Colombo YMBA's website contains an introduction to the Buddhist revival movement, which eventually led to the formation of the Colombo YMBA, together with the names of the key persons who led the movement, Ven. Migettuwatte Gunananda, Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala Thera and Anagarika Dharmapala.²² Although Dharmapala later changed his beliefs and opinions, he was at this time Olcott's pupil.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the Theosophical Society first arrived in Myanmar in 1885. In February and March of that year, Col. Olcott and Charles Webster Leadbeater travelled from Ceylon to British Burma and formed Burmese, Hindu and European branches of the Society there.²³ Through the Society's branches in Rangoon and English publications by the Maha Boddhi Society, Ba Pe and other young Burmese intellectuals obtained information about the new Buddhist movement in Ceylon inspired by the Theosophist ideas.²⁴ It appears to have inspired Ba Pe to found the Rangoon College Buddhist Association in 1904, before the establishment of the YMBA. Today some Burmese talk about the similarity of Buddhism and science, an idea that derives from Olcott's interpretation of Buddhism as discussed in his *Buddhist Catechism*.²⁵ This Buddhist logic appears to have attracted young intellectuals gathered around the Rangoon College Buddhist Association and the YMBA at the time, and it has contributed to the shaping of part of today's Burmese culture.

²¹ <http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/objects-and-freedom>

²² <http://www.ymba-colombo.org/about-ymba> 'About YMBA' Its Genesis

²³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophist*, Part Six, 1884-1885 (Madras: The Theosophical Society, Adyar, 1884-1885) 169 - 170. [Reprinted by La Vergne: Kissinger Publishing, 2010].

<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=JNxp4JEp0BwC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

²⁴ Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism*, 18.

²⁵ Olcott, *Buddhist Catechism* (1881) has a chapter titled "Buddhism and Science". See also Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 104.

The English monk Ananda Metteyya (Charles Henry Allan Bennett), who was well-known in colonial Burma for his propagation of Buddhism in the West, was another person who made a connection between Burma and the Theosophical Society. Born in 1872, he joined the Theosophical Society in England in 1893, attracted by his interest in Buddhism. In 1900 he went to Ceylon to study Buddhism, Pali and Yoga and in 1901 moved to Akyab in Burma, where he was ordained as a novice in December of the same year.²⁶ He settled in Rangoon and in 1902 he received higher ordination and started the International Buddhist Society (*Buddhasasana Samagama*). In 1907 'the Buddhist Society in UK and Ireland' was formed as a branch of the Rangoon Society. Ananda Metteyya's stay in Ceylon appears to have been arranged through his connections to the Theosophical Society, and he also had some involvement with the YMBA in Colombo. Even after he moved to Burma he maintained his relationship with the Colombo YMBA. The year he moved to Akyab coincided with the formation of the YMBA there and today the Colombo YMBA's official website states that their magazine *The Buddhist* (published in 1902) 'was very useful in providing [...] the fund to aid the Ven. Ananda Metteyya.'²⁷

Another well-known English monk, U Silacara, published two books about Buddhism. The first appeared in 1911 from the Buddhist Theosophical Federation, Burma, and the second in 1912 from Thuriya Press.²⁸ Both of these Western monks were close to the YMBA and the Rangoon University Buddhist Association. On 14 September 1912, the *Thuriya* newspaper published an invitation to a meeting of the Rangoon College Buddhist Association featuring 'The English monk, Ananda Metteyya' as a guest speaker.

The influence of the Theosophical Society in Burma was actually limited, as Alicia Turner has argued: 'By the late 1890s the influence of international organizations like Theosophy and the Maha Bodhi Society would fade in Burma in favour of locally organized Buddhist associations'.²⁹ However I would suggest that Theosophist ideas again became influential after 1908 through their adoption by the Rangoon YMBA. The Theosophical Society itself admitted that after the 1885 visit by Olcott and Leadbeater, Theosophy did not spread widely among Burmese because most of its members in Burma were non-Burmese and English presented language barriers for the majority of Burmese.³⁰ Those Burmese who did become interested in Theosophist Buddhist ideas were no more than a handful of English-educated intellectuals, including some supporters of the YMBA. The death of Blavatsky in 1891 and Olcott in 1907 also

²⁶ *Lotus-Journal of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara*, Issue No. 27, Autumn 2008: 1.

²⁷ The YMBA in Akyab was mentioned in an English document but it seems to have been short-lived. See E. Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*, 128; <http://www.ymba-colombo.org/about-ymba> 'The Buddhist Renaissance'

²⁸ Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism*, 209.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 30.

³⁰ Maung Saw Hla Pru, *Theosophy and Buddhism* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1917).

weakened the influences coming from Ceylon. However Theosophist ideas regained their influence once Annie Besant took over leadership of the Society from Adyar, and they had a significant impact on the YMBA. *Wain Amm Bi Aye 75 Hnit Khayi* (YMBA's 75 Year Journey) states that, '[i]n 1908 with the help of Mr. 'Musol-Aing-yar,' an official in the Department of Health, Accounting Section, and also Secretary of the Theosophical Society, YMBA published a booklet containing their objectives together with the articles of the association.'³¹ No further information is given about Mr. 'Musol-Aing-yar' in this book, but it appears that 'Musol-Aing-yar' is in fact 'Mosur Subramania Iyer'. A booklet entitled *Golden Jubilee Burma Section Theosophical Society* records that when the organisation was originally chartered in 1912 by the head office of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, 'Mosur Subramania Iyer', one of the executive committee members, was appointed as Treasurer.³² His surname 'Iyer' suggests that he belonged to a Hindu Brahmin caste of South Indian Tamil origin.³³ The official website of the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar states that '[f]rom 1895 to 1906 was a period of vigorous and steady growth for the Society'. In 1907 the Society appointed Mrs Annie Besant as its new President, after the death of Col. Olcott. According to the official website, '[w]ith Mrs Besant a new era began. She gave a great lead in making Theosophy practical, urging members to apply the light of Theosophy to the various fields of human activity: religious, social, economic, political, etc.'³⁴ Significantly, Besant was also later to become deeply involved in the Indian independence movement.

In October 1908, the three branches of the Theosophical Society in Burma became one section and were chartered as the Burma Section by Annie Besant in Adyar.³⁵ Thus the shift of Theosophical activity from Colombo to Adyar and the emergence of Besant coincided with the Society's support for the YMBA and its growing links with the Indian National Congress. This opened the way to a more politicised future for the YMBA and the role the Association would play in the development of Burmese nationalism.

The Thuriya Press

As an author and a new member of the editorial staff, Shwe U Daung initially shared a desk with another staff member, Pi Monin. Lun (penname 'Mr. Hmaing') also worked in

³¹ *Waing Am Bi Aye, Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 41. The spelling of his name is in Burmese transliteration.

³² Theosophical Society, Burma Section, *Golden Jubilee, Burma Section T.S. 1919-62* (Rangoon: Theosophical Society, Burma Section, 1962), 17.

³³ I thank Prof. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay for this suggestion in July 2010. 'Iyer' is also spelled 'Ayyar', 'Aiyar', 'Ayer' and 'Aiyer'.

³⁴ <http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/early-history>

³⁵ Theosophical Society, Burma Section, *Golden Jubilee, Burma Section T.S. 1919-62*, 15-23.

the same room. Both Pi Monin and Lun were top authors at the time. Pi Monin, almost the same age as Shwe U Daung, had an outstanding command of French and English. He spent his childhood at a Catholic monastery in Thonze, Irrawaddy Delta and also studied at a Catholic school in Moulmein.³⁶ He was once ordained as a Buddhist monk by Ledi Sayadaw, a well-known charismatic monk in early twentieth century Burma, and for some time he was a translator for Ananda Metteyya.³⁷ Later he joined Thuriya Press as a translator of war reports. He was also a successful author, known for his *Bi Aye Maung Tint hnint Kachaydhe Me Myint (Mr. Tint, B.A. and Ms. Myint, the dancer)*.³⁸ Lun was a veteran writer in the traditional Burmese style who became popular as a *pyatzat* (play) writer under another penname, Shwedaung Saya Lun. One of his *pyatzat*, *Shwedagon Paya Ahmu ko Kyar Aphu Tet thaw Pyatzat (Drama of a Tiger Climbing up to the Shwe Dagon Pagoda)* (1903) was based on an actual incident of 1903, when a wild tiger that strayed into the pagoda was shot and killed on the order of the British authorities. It was so successful that other writers produced many imitative *pyatzat*.³⁹ After the establishment of the *Thuriya* newspaper Lun became a regular contributor of essays written in a sophisticated traditional verse form. Lun was also the person who named the newspaper *Thuriya*. Shwe U Daung soon became friendly with both Lun and Pi Monin and maintained the friendship for many years.⁴⁰ The presence of these three authors among the press's staff is an indication of Thuriya's commitment to the production of good quality Burmese literary works in both traditional style and modern forms.

Aiming to contribute to the development of Buddhism and the introduction of Western knowledge, an ambition which appears to have been associated with the Victorian ideal of 'moral improvement', the YMBA saw the novel as a means of promoting the organisation's cause and building a sense of common community among its readers. The leading article in the 14 September issue of the *Thuriya* newspaper welcomes the recent emergence of Burmese novels and comments that 'in major Western countries works of fiction especially contributed to the development of

³⁶ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 163.

³⁷ Taik Soe, *Gandawin Sazo Pinnyashin Lay-Oo (The Four Sages of Classical Literature)*, (Yangon: Sittthetaw Sape taik, 2003), 78-80. Maung Thuta (Bohmu Ba Thaug), *Sazodawmya Athtoupatti (Biographies of Authors)*, (Rangoon: Zwe Sape Yeikmyone, 1966), 564.

³⁸ Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung*, 32. Although even contemporary readers and critics thought Shwe U Daung's San Shar stories were the first detective stories in Burma, Maung Khin Min (Danubyu) recently discovered Pi Monin wrote a detective story (an adaptation?) earlier than Shwe U Daung, entitled *Sondauk Maung Shwe Ya i Sunsargan (Adventure of Mr. Shwe Ya, the Detective)* under the penname of 'Maung Kyaw' in 1915. However further details are unknown. See Teikpan Maung Wa, *Sape Yinkyehmu (Literary Culture)* (Mandalay: Ludu Saouktaik, 1976), 101; Maung Khin Min (Danu byu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing*, 61.

³⁹ Maung Khin Min (Danu byu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing*, 111-114.

⁴⁰ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 163.

peoples' intelligence and imagination. As various kinds of ideas were put together in fiction, writing and publishing novels is an issue concerned with people's education.⁴¹ This article also enumerates six beneficial aspects of western fiction: firstly, it helps readers gain geographical, historical and scientific knowledge; secondly, it helps them avoid incorrect or unlikely information; thirdly, it provides a source of graceful expressions; fourthly, it shows that it is not necessary to include information unrelated to the main plot; fifthly, it is not lengthy without good reason; and sixthly, it provides information about historical and cultural events. The article is hopeful of improvement in Burmese fiction and even advocates censorship on the part of the British colonial government as a way of overcoming poor quality in Burmese novels.⁴²

Like the newspaper *Myanma Alinn (The New Light of Burma)*, which was established in 1914, the *Thuriya* newspaper was set up as a voice of the YMBA. The founder of both the YMBA and the *Thuriya* newspaper, Ba Pe, wrote that these newspapers were published to promote the YMBA's activities among the wider society.⁴³ Before World War I the YMBA was only a small cultural group made up of English-educated intellectuals, but during the war years the YMBA expanded into a nationwide organisation.⁴⁴ The leadership recognised the need to reach out to the mass of the population outside of Rangoon and the effectiveness of print media as a means of communication between its ever-increasing number of members. To advance their cause, the Burmese required a common language. The first (1911) and second (1914) conferences of the YMBA held in Rangoon were conducted in English, but later conferences switched to Burmese in response to the expanding membership and the shifting conference venues in major cities and towns throughout Burma.

The *Thuriya* newspaper was a major source of information about modern Japan at this time, presenting Japan as the model of a modern Buddhist country headed by its own Emperor. U Ottama included information from Japan right from the newspaper's first edition, which reported on Japan's success in applying modern technology to the needs of agriculture and also featured a news item about the charity provided by the Emperor for poor people.⁴⁵ The newspaper's positive image of Japan was partially influenced by the Theosophists' approach to Japan, a country visited twice by Olcott

⁴¹ *Thuriya Dhadinza (The Sun)*, 26 August 1912, 12.

⁴² *Ibid.* 12-13.

⁴³ Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 14.

⁴⁴ Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism*, 19.

⁴⁵ *Thuriya Dhadinza (The Sun)*, 6 July 1911, p. 9, 18. This is the second edition of the *Thuriya* newspaper. The first edition (4 July 1911) is no longer extant. The newspaper was published three times a week at this time.

and also viewed positively by Annie Besant.⁴⁶ In fact the ruling principle of modern Japan is the 'Tenno' emperor system and Buddhist ideology has never been applied as a ruling policy of the nation-state.⁴⁷ The perception of Japan as a Buddhist country seems to have originated with Olcott, who was close to Japanese monks studying in Ceylon.⁴⁸

Thuriya aimed to help Burmese readers to accept the British king as their head of state and disseminated the notion of the citizen's duty to the British Empire. The editorial in the 29 August 1912 issue, entitled *The Sun Press Limited. Thuriya Dhadinza Akyauung*, looks back on the newspaper's first year in the following terms:

Since we began this newspaper we have always been thinking of how we could work for the people, the king and the state, and the Buddha's teaching. We do not think we need to repeat these words because together with you, the native people of our land, even the government authorities are now aware of us.⁴⁹

Who were *Thuriya's* readers? This column includes the line 'We, native peoples including Rakhine, Mon, Myanmar and other many groups'.⁵⁰ In general the *Thuriya* newspaper does not rigidly describe the common identity shared by the newspaper and its readers but seems to imagine a commonality between those who were born and grew up in Burma (*Myanma Pyi* or *Myanma Naingngan*) and Buddhists.

World War I gave momentum to the spread of an identity as citizens of the British Empire among the Burmese. *Thuriya* reported daily on the war situation, a decision which certainly encouraged the people's cooperation with the British war effort. Burmese soldiers fought in Mesopotamia, in four battalions of the Burma Rifles formed as part of the expansion of the Indian Army during the war.⁵¹ According to U Ba Than,

⁴⁶ Olcott's connection to Japan and his Japan tours (1889 and 1894) are discussed intensively in Tetsuro Sato, *Dai-Ajia Shisoh Katsugeki: Bukkyoh ga musunda mohhitotsu no kindaiishi* (Great Intellectual Drama of Pan-Asia: Another Modern History of Buddhist Connections). Tokyo: Sanga, 2008. Annie Besant discussed the modern administration system of Japan as a way of connecting the rural village to the national parliament. See Annie Besant, *Wake Up, India: A Plea for Social Reform* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1913), 121-122.

⁴⁷ Tetsuro Sato, *Dai-Ajia Shisoh Katsugeki*, 345.

⁴⁸ In 1886 Kozen Shaku arrived in Colombo as the first Japanese monk to study in Ceylon. In the following year two other Japanese monks, Soen Shaku and Hogen Kichiren, also arrived in Colombo. Tetsuro Sato, *Dai-Ajia Shisoh Katsugeki*, 208- 211. Soen Shaku attended the 1893 World Parliament of Religion in Chicago and is also remembered as the first monk to teach 'zen' outside of Japan.

⁴⁹ *Thuriya Dhadinza (The Sun)*, 26 August 1912, 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 13.

⁵¹ Kyaw Zaw Win, "A History of the Burma Socialist Party (1930-1964)" PhD dissertation, Wollongong University, 31. After the war the opportunity for Burmese (strictly Burmans) to participate the Indian army was narrowed. Kyaw Zaw Win states that '[a]fter the war, the colonial government reduced the armed forces and, in 1925, terminated the recruitment of Burmese. The senior Burmese unit, the

'World War I, which broke out in 1914, was a noteworthy event. During the war the Burmese organised fundraising events and even joined the army to fight. In 1918 the Burmese celebrated victory in the war on a large scale.'⁵² Pyone Cho, a famous song writer and researcher on *Maha Gita* (Burmese classical songs) who later joined *Thuriya* as an editor, also organised traditional theatrical shows for fundraising during the war.⁵³

The debut of San Shar the Detective

The first episode in the 'San Shar the Detective' stories, "Joja Kan Luthathmu" (Murder in Crain Lake Village), was published in the April 1917 issue of *Thuriya* magazine.⁵⁴ Although the main story is an adaptation of "The Boscombe Valley Mystery", the introduction is based on *A Study in Scarlet* and introduces the Burmese detective hero San Shar and his friend Thein Maung, who plays the role of Dr Watson. *A Study in Scarlet* is the first episode in the Sherlock Holmes stories, which was originally published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887. It begins with the meeting of Holmes and Dr Watson.

A Study in Scarlet records that after being injured on the frontline in Afghanistan, Dr Watson comes back to England and is introduced to Holmes as his potential roommate at a hospital laboratory. Watson is surprised that Holmes knows he is just back from Afghanistan, and even after moving into Holmes's place in Baker Street, he is constantly surprised at Holmes's many eccentricities. For example, although he has a wide knowledge of poisonous substances, Holmes does not know the earth revolves around the sun. A few weeks after moving in he becomes aware that Holmes is a private detective.

This episode is recreated in the presentation of Thein Maung as a journalist who has recently come down to Rangoon from Mandalay and has gained a position at a newspaper company. Looking for a flatmate, he visits San Shar's flat on 40th Street, in the heart of downtown Rangoon. While visiting San Shar's room with all its strange laboratory items, he is surprised that San Shar already knows he has come from Mandalay and is currently staying at a hotel in Rangoon. San Shar tells Thein Maung

Sappers and Miners, was disbanded in 1927. The only opportunity for Burmese to serve was in the military police. In 1939, the Burma Defence Force contained only 472 Burmans as against 3,197 Karens, Chins and Kachins.' (Ibid. 31)

⁵² Ba Than, *Myanma Yazawin* (History of Burma) (Yangon: Pyankyaye Wungyi Htana, 1991), 180.

⁵³ Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Myanma Swezongyan* (Myanmar Encyclopaedia) Vol. 7 (Yangon: Sapay Beikman, 1963), 167. *Maha Gita* is also called *Thachingyi*.

⁵⁴ Shwe U Daung. *Sondaug Maung San Shar Paungjouk* (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective Stories) Vol. 1. (Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 2000), 1-13.

Were you surprised at what I said? It shouldn't be surprising at all. Anyone who was just a little bit observant would understand. When I saw your style of dressing, I knew you were not from Rangoon. And then there's your way of wearing a turban...not neat like Rangoon people, it looks a bit untidy or bit like Mandalay style. So I assumed you would be from Mandalay. Also, as your cotton jacket is very thin, I can see the letter addressed to you, inside your pocket. I read your name and understood you were staying at the hotel.⁵⁵

Thein Maung is highly impressed with San Shar's intelligence and decides to share the flat. He is even more surprised at San Shar's eccentricities. For example, even though he has a wide knowledge of poisonous substances, San Shar does not know if Turkey was on the side of England or Germany during World War I. It is notable that Shwe U Daung presents this adaptation not as a simple dramatisation, changing the setting from England to Burma, but as a reflection of his personal thoughts and experiences. Thein Maung, who comes from Mandalay and is dazzled by the modernity of Rangoon is clearly modelled after Shwe U Daung himself. The statement that San Shar does not know if Turkey is an enemy or friend of British Burma is also an interesting piece of adaptation, because it contextualises the story in contemporary events that must have been familiar to readers of *Thuriya* at this time. In his autobiography, Shwe U Daung confesses that he was not much interested in politics at the time, an indication that San Shar gives expression to Shwe U Daung's own voice, which adopts a different standpoint from that of the political elites of the day.⁵⁶ Thein Maung asks San Shar to permit him to accompany the detective when he goes out on his cases. The first opportunity to do so is the murder case in Crain Lake Village, which is based on Doyle's "The Boscombe Valley Mystery". This story was originally published in the October 1891 issue of *The Strand* magazine, as the sixth episode in the Holmes series. In this story Holmes travels with Watson to a village in West England to help a young lady called Alice, whose friend from childhood, James, has been arrested for the murder of his father. The father, Charles McCarthy, died uttering a mysterious message, 'a rat', which Holmes realises is actually the word 'Ballarat'. It turns out that Alice's father, John Turner, a wealthy landlord in the village, had been a member of gangs who targeted gold miners when he lived in Australia, and he was the person who had killed Charles McCarthy. Charles McCarthy had known John Turner since their time in Australia and had been blackmailing Turner to keep his shameful past secret. Eventually James is declared innocent and released, and he and Alice begin their new life without knowing of the problematic relationship between their fathers.

The Burmese adaptation relocates the original setting to a village in Zigone, Lower

⁵⁵ Ibid. 3.

⁵⁶ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 165.

Burma. San Shar and Thein Maung make a train trip to the village to help a young lady called Saw Khin. Other major personalities in Doyle's original story also appear as Burmese characters: Paw Lar as James, Pyi Zone as Charles McCarthy, and Thar Paw as John Turner. Pyi Zone and Thar Paw had known each other through their involvement in a robbery case in Upper Burma. Both had later come down to Lower Burma and settled in the village. The victim's last word, 'a rat', is expressed in Burmese as 'Yetagaung', which eventually turns out to be 'Tagaungbin', the name of a village located in Upper Burma where the criminal had originated. A secret expression used between the victim and his son, 'Ti-du-kha-kha', also turns out to be used among hunters in Upper Burma.

The relationship between the young couple in the story is described more positively in the Burmese adaptation, as they are already in love when the story begins. A secret love affair between young James and another woman is also omitted in the Burmese adaptation. However the story basically follows the original structure and some parts, such as the interrogation of Paw Lar by police, are a direct translation from English to Burmese. The adaptation gives a convincing description of its Burmese setting and the distance between England and Australia in the Victorian era is skilfully recreated in the socio-cultural contrast between Upper and Lower Burma, which was the result of developments in an earlier period of British colonisation. The story's description of the contrast between Upper and Lower Burma clearly reflects Shwe U Daung's own thoughts and experiences. This motif is repeated in "Phatamazon Sondaukkhedhaw Wuttu" (The Story of San Shar's First Criminal Case) (1919), based on "The Gloria Scott", and in "Hwetsa go Kyit ywet Luthathmu dwin Maung San Shar Sondaukpon" (San Shar Investigates a Murder Case of Coded Messages) (1923), based on "The Dancing Men". As these examples illustrate, the 'San Shar the Detective' stories, which eventually became Shwe U Daung's life work, contained autobiographical aspects from their first episodes.

In 1917 Shwe U Daung published another three episodes in the San Shar series in *Thuriya* magazine. These were "Myet Tabet Athin" (One Eye Club), "Chejo Nga Kyaing" (Kyaing the Cripple) and "Myopat Lan Luthathmu" (Murder on the Loop Road), which are based on "A Study in Scarlet", "The Man with the Twisted Lip" and *A Study in Scarlet* respectively. For the March 1917 issue of the magazine he contributed an original piece of fiction entitled "Maung Thein Tin hnin Ma Thein Shin" (Mr. Thein Tin and Miss Thein Shin), which is now remembered as the first short story in Burmese published in modern Myanmar.⁵⁷ Reading this story, Hle Pe, the owner of *Thuriya*

⁵⁷ Thaw Kaung, U, "Mirrored in Short Stories: Some Glimpse of Myanmar Life and Society in the 20th Century" (Unpublished manuscript, 2005), p.4

Press, must have been impressed by Shwe U Daung's talent, because he suggested that from the next issue of the magazine, Shwe U Daung should write Burmese adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes stories for ongoing publication.⁵⁸ This was the origin of his first adaptation, "Murder in Crain Lake Village".

Before 1917 three collections of Sherlock Holmes stories, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1893), and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905), were already in circulation. Four Sherlock Holmes novels, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), *The Sign of Four* (1890), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and *The Valley of Fear* (1915) were also available by this time. It is probable that Shwe U Daung had come across these books and possibly some copies of *The Strand* magazine among the works of English literature he had read for enjoyment by this time. In 1917 another collection appeared under the title *His Last Bow: Some Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes*, providing Shwe U Daung with another source of inspiration for his Burmese Sherlock Holmes stories. He obtained further material from *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927) and by 1930 he had published almost forty stories based on Doyle's sixty original episodes in those collections.

Contemporary readers welcomed this new genre of the detective story in Burmese literature and its hero, San Shar. Many readers seemed to think the stories were original works by Shwe U Daung, rather than adaptations.⁵⁹ The author himself did not claim these stories were original works of fiction, and some English-educated readers were aware that they were adaptations of Doyle's works. One English-educated writer, 'Theikpan Maung Wa' Sein Tin, acknowledged this, but still claimed the San Shar stories were the first detective stories in Myanmar.⁶⁰ He praised the quality of Shwe U Daung's Burmese writing and commented positively on the authenticity of the stories in a Burmese setting, saying adaptation was more suitable than translation as a way of introducing foreign stories to Burmese readers at that time.⁶¹ However, some readers also criticised the stories as 'fake'.⁶²

Why adaptation, not translation? Shwe U Daung appears to have thought adaptation was more effective than translation as a way of conveying the message of the originals to Burmese readers at that time. In an essay entitled "Works of

⁵⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*.166

⁵⁹ Burmese readers have often made this comment in my discussions with them.

⁶⁰ Maung Khin Min (Danubyu) discovered that the earliest adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes stories, *Sondauk Maung Shwe Dar (Shwe Dar the Detective)*, were published in *Kawzawthit* magazine in 1912, but they did not gain the popularity of Shwe U Daung's San Shar stories. See Maung Khin Min (Danupyuu), *Koloni Khit Myanmar Sape Thamaing*, 67.

⁶¹ Theikpan Maung Wa, *Sape Yinkyehmu (Literary Culture)* (Mandalay: Kyipwaye Taik, 1976), 101-102.

⁶² Even today I sometimes hear such comments from Burmese who were educated in English in the 1950s or 1960s in Myanmar.

Adaptation” (‘Hmi’ dhaw Wuttumya), he wrote:

Some people who were proficient in English bitterly criticised me, accusing me of ‘plagiarism’ or stealing ideas. Stealing ideas means an act of taking someone’s ideas secretly and this is severely criticised in Western society. The Mr. San Shar stories and some of my other works are just a form of translation. I knew that if I translated directly, the new readers in Burma would lose interest in the story, which convinced to write in an adaptive style.⁶³

This comment evokes the environment at the time of the rise of mass publication of popular literature in Myanmar. It also reflects some of the realities of British colonisation, in that apart from a handful of English-educated elite Burmese, the majority of the people had very limited knowledge of England. According to the census conducted in 1921, the Burmese population was 7,800,000, with the percentage of ‘Literate in any language’ (normally Burmese) 34.5%. However ‘Literate in English’ was only 0.6%.⁶⁴

The Thuriya Press was one of the major publishing houses in the colonial period, and its establishment of the *Thuriya* newspaper in 1911 is remembered as ‘the seeding of political activities by a newspaper’⁶⁵ in today’s Myanmar. The Thuriya Press also published *Thuriya* magazine (from 1917) and *Thuriya Weekly* (from 1918) and advocated raising the awareness of Burmese pride.⁶⁶ It is likely that readers were intended to see San Shar as a hero representing Burmese pride, but whatever the case, the fact that the San Shar stories were adaptations of Sherlock Holmes never detracted from the growing popularity of San Shar.

Multicultural Society as seen in the San Shar stories

After the publication of the first story in the series in April 1917, Shwe U Daung kept writing San Shar stories for another three years, publishing twenty-three episodes in *Thuriya* magazine up until the November 1920 issue. This secured his fame as an author. In 1919 he also published two successful novels, *Yan Kyi Aung (A Victory against Powerful Enemies)* and *Yupanandi (The Appearance of Delight)*. A serialised novel entitled *Yadanapura (Ratanapora)*, published in the *Thuriya* newspaper in 1918, also brought him huge success. (Shwe U Daung later recalled that he repeatedly heard

⁶³ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 166.

⁶⁴ S. G. Grantham, *Census of India, 1921, Volume X Burma Part I. Report* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, 1923), 130.

⁶⁵ Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Myanmar Encyclopaedia) Vol. 10 (Yangon: Sape Beikman, 1966), 233.

⁶⁶ Dr. Tin Tun Oo, *Saouk, Sanezin, Sakyidaik hnint Myanmar Sape* (Books, Periodicals, Libraries and Burmese Literature) (Yangon: Thuta Swezon Saouk Taik, 1999), 122, 125.

commuters talking about this novel on the local train between Rangoon and Insein.⁶⁷) He received additional payment for his manuscripts, alongside his monthly salary of around 200 rupees. *Ratanapore* was a lengthy novel, and he received 600 rupees for it. He also published the first *Jarnay* (weekly newspaper) in Burma, the *Myanma Byuha Jarnay* (Myanma Byuha Journal), in support of his friend Khin Maung Tint. He was a former colleague at Mandalay's Ministry of Agriculture, who had been educated in England and who also ran a successful souvenir shop for foreigners, 'Burma House' on Marchant Street in Rangoon⁶⁸

At Thuriya Press there were some members of staff who became jealous of Shwe U Daung's popularity. In August 1920 he took a month's leave for the first time and travelled to Wetlet with his wife and children to spend some time with his parents. While there, he arranged for his parents to follow him back to Rangoon, to live with him and his family. The family enjoyed the return boat trip along the Irrawaddy River, but a small incident delayed their return to Rangoon by a day, which meant that Shwe U Daung was one day late returning to work. When he appeared at the office, his boss Hla Pe told him he was dismissed. Hla Pe also raised several acts of misconduct by Shwe U Daung. They were all small matters and Lun tried to defend Shwe U Daung, but as Hla Pe had believed the information supplied by Shwe U Daung's enemies, his efforts were of no avail. On the day his parents arrived in Rangoon Shwe U Daung had lost his job and was bereft of any savings, as he had expected to work for Thuriya Press for years to come.⁶⁹ Much of his salary had been spent on drinking beer at café bars and pool tables, often in the company of Khin Maung Tint, as the two friends explored multicultural modern life in Rangoon. These escapades were obviously a source of inspiration and information for the San Shar stories.⁷⁰

Suddenly finding themselves struggling with poverty, Shwe U Daung and his wife's relationship also changed. He could not forgive his wife for selling his parent's teak bed without his permission and she refused to apologise. One day in September when Shwe U Daung was seeing his parents and younger brother off at Kungyangone station (today's Rangoon station) he decided to return to Wetlet with them and jumped aboard the train heading for Mandalay. On the train he was in tears remembering his two children, but he never returned to his wife's house, and in this way his second

⁶⁷ Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung*, 39- 40. *A Victory against Powerful Enemies* (Yan Kyi Aung) is an original work by Shwe U Daung and the first novel he sent to the Thuriya Press in 1917. *The Appearance of Delight* (Yupanandi Yupanandi) is an adaptation of Henry Rider Haggard's *She* (1888) and *Ratanapore* (Yadanapura) is an adaptation of G. W. M. Reynolds's *Bronze Statue, or, the Virgin's Kiss* (1849 – 1850).

⁶⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 167.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 173-175.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 167-168.

marriage also came to an end.⁷¹ In October he and his brother moved to Myadaung village near Katha in Sagaing Division, Upper Burma, on the invitation of Wint Maw, a former classmate at high school who was working for the Ministry of Forestry there.⁷²

In the following year (1921) the relationship with Thuriya press was restored, no doubt as a result of the popularity of the San Shar stories, and Shwe U Daung began contributing new episodes in the series as a freelance writer from Upper Burma. After his dismissal from Thuriya Press he had written two further adaptations, based on Wilson Barrett's *The Sign of the Cross* (1896) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). When he contacted Ba Pe, the co-founder of the press, Ba Pe expressed an interest in purchasing these works and paid half the fee for them, though did not accept the scripts at that time. In the end, they were never published, as the manuscripts were lost in the 1930 earthquake in Pegu. Ba Pe, unlike Hla Pe, apparently wanted to keep Shwe U Daung as a representative author for the company. The details of the relationship between Ba Pe and Hla Pe are unknown, but by 1926 Hla Pe had resigned the press and he died around 1937.⁷³ Shwe U Daung appears to have been comfortable working with Hla Pe and left no critical account of him, commenting only that Hla Pe was a bit naïve but a respectable intellectual.⁷⁴

From 1927, besides contributing to *Thuriya* magazine, Shwe U Daung also began to publish his San Shar stories in three other magazines, *Buritisha Barmar* (British Burma), *Duwun* and *Kawi Myethman*. By the end of 1929 he had published a total of around eighty-five episodes, a clear indication of the popularity of the stories among contemporary Burmese readers.⁷⁵

One of the distinctive features of the stories written in the 1910s and 1920s is their depiction of the multicultural society of colonial Burma and Shwe U Daung's sense of justice beyond the confines of ethnicity, religion and social class. This is directly attributable to Shwe U Daung's experience of life in Rangoon at the time.

Since the late 19th century Rangoon's wealth had attracted many fortune-hunters from overseas, including Europeans, Chinese and Indians. Migration from India increased after the annexation of the Burmese kingdom in 1885, with many white collar Hindu workers who failed to find jobs in Calcutta moving to Rangoon and many Moslem men coming from Chittagong to work as servants in the towns and cities of Burma. South Indian Tamils migrated to rural areas in Lower Burma and became known

⁷¹ Ibid. 175-177.

⁷² Ibid. 177.

⁷³ Ibid. 258.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 174.

⁷⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Sondaunk Maung San Shar Paungjouk* (Collection of San Shar, the Young Detective Stories) Vol. 1. (Mandalay: Yanet Mandalay Saouk Taik, 2000), "Sondaunk Maung San Shar Wuttudomya hnint patther ywe" (About a series of short stories about San Shar, the Young Detective), 12-21.

as 'Chettiers' (Tamil money lenders).⁷⁶

In the first half of the twentieth century, Rangoon rapidly became a city with a large population of non-Burmese residents. The 1921 census recorded Rangoon's population at 340,000, with the Buddhist population, representing the Burmese, only 33% of the total. Other major groups were Hindus (42%), Moslems (23%) and Christians (7%).⁷⁷ In contrast, Mandalay's Buddhist population was 84%.⁷⁸

The San Shar stories include descriptions of many crimes which involved non-Burmese. It is true that neither do all Sherlock Holmes stories deal exclusively with English issues. Some feature Italian residents in London, some feature aristocrats from continental Europe and others explore the differences between Britain and America. However non-Burmese elements in the San Shar stories were more frequently featured than were foreign elements in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Although his main clients are Burmese, San Shar is also fluent in English, and the stories often describe his welcoming of non-Burmese clients and his conversations with them in English. He is also often visited by Indian clients, reflecting the large Indian population in Rangoon.

For example, in "Maharaja Ta-Oo Ahmu" (The Case of the Maharaja) (1918) based on "A Scandal in Bohemia", San Shar is visited by a maharaja who has come from India, desperately wanting to hush up his scandalous affair with an attractive English dancer. In "Thuwari Thone Yauk Thesonhmu" (The Death of the Son, Father and Uncle) (1919), which is based on "Five Orange Pips", a nervous young Bengalese comes to San Shar's flat one rainy night asking for help. In "Pansoe Dan Luthathmu" (Murder on Pansoe Street) (1919), based on "The Resident Patient", a young Bengalese doctor who is upset with his secretive Bengalese sponsor appears at the flat. In "Taingye Pyiye Sajoukkyi Takhu Pyauksonhmu" (The Disappearance of an Important Political Document) (1923), which is based on "The Second Stain", Chief Minister of a province in India, accompanied by his Parsi secretary, visits San Shar's home.

Through his cases in Rangoon San Shar deals with many different non-Burmese people. He saves a European professor from an accusation of losing exam papers in "Sameibwe Meigun Saywet Pyauksonhmu" (The Case of the Lost Exam Papers) (1919) based on "The Three Students", and at the end of the story, the Professor's Bengali servant turns out to be a former servant of the Burmese student who stole the exam paper. In "Bazundaung Mya Pyaukhmu hnaik Maung San Shar Sondaukpon" (A Case of the Lost Emerald in Bazundaung Quarter) (1919), based on "The Blue Carbuncle", an alcoholic Anglo-Burmese gentleman visits San Shar's flat to retrieve his lost duck (not a

⁷⁶ I obtained this information in December 2006 from Professor Soumyen Mukherjee, University of Sydney, and Professor Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Victoria University of Wellington.

⁷⁷ S. G. Grantham, *Census of India, 1921, Volume X Burma Part I, Report*, 102.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 118.

goose as in the original). In “Zagabyan Tayauk Pyauksonhmu hnaik Maung San Shar Sondaukpon” (The Disappearance of the Interpreter) (1918), based on “The Greek Interpreter”, San Shar’s elder brother San Htwa introduces him to a Jewish interpreter who is in the employ of criminal Bengalese. “The Norwood Builder” was recreated as a story of the revenge exacted by an evil-hearted Chinese builder on his former Burmese lover and her son in “Tayoukkyi Tayauk Pyauksonhmu” (The Disappearance of a Chinese Gentleman) (1920).

When San Shar appears in the Mandalay area, all the people involved in the stories are Burmese and some Burmese traditions are effectively used in the plot, such as the silk weaving industry and the timber rafts that travelled along the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay. We see them again in “Htuzandhaw Ahtouk Takhu Yauklarhmu” (The Delivery of a Strange Parcel) (1927) and “Mandalay Myo Seinban Yat Luthathmu” (A Murder in the Seinban Quarter, Mandalay) (1920), which are based on “The Cardboard Box” and “The Adventure of Black Peter” respectively.

While describing the prosperity of Rangoon, the San Shar stories also point out the dark side of this modern city. This seems to be a response to the notorious high crime rate in British Burma. Mary Callahan states that ‘Burma was “consistently the most criminal province in the Empire” throughout the twentieth-century’ and Thant Myint-U also wrote that ‘by the 1930s its rate for thefts alone was nearly four times that of the average for India. In 1940, of a population of around ten million, there were over seven hundred murders, comparable to the homicide rate of a major American city in the 1990s.’⁷⁹ For the Burmese people at the time, life in the modern city of Rangoon where nobody knew their neighbours may have given rise to some mysterious and uncomfortable feelings, which attracted them to mysteries like the San Shar stories. Although Doyle never knew of San Shar, the Burmese Sherlock Holmes, his popularity was equal to that of Sherlock Holmes in England. Kate Jackson explains the success of *The Strand* magazine, which featured the Holmes stories in the following terms:

In many respects, the 1890s was a period of considerable anxiety for the middle class, preoccupied with Britain’s economic position in the world (under threat from competitors such as Germany and the U.S.), with the social and psychological effects of the Industrial Revolution, and with the failure of existing institutions to ameliorate the poverty that underpinned nineteenth-century progress. [...] Crime fiction, a characteristic feature of *The Strand*, was central to the project of providing readers with a sense of security.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 29; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Gioux, 2008), 192.

⁸⁰ Kate Jackson, *George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880-1910 – Culture and Profit*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2001), 89, 91.

Towards the end of the 1920s, rapid change also began to trigger social unrest in colonial Burma, not only in big cities but also in rural areas. Michael Adas argues that between 1911 and 1930 rice exports, a symbol of prosperity in British Burma, decreased along with the spread of control by the 'Chettiar' Indian money lenders and the growth of the Indian labourer population. He describes the status of impoverished Burmese peasants in the Irrawaddy Delta as 'indigenous landless labourers who live in villages in the circles where they worked'.⁸¹ He also comments that another source of racial problems in the Irrawaddy Delta during this period was that 'the divisions which separated them were further emphasized by the growth of nationalism in India, China, and Burma'.⁸²

The *Thuriya* magazine featuring the San Shar stories provided a sense of security for Burmese readers who were living in an unstable society with a high crime rate, under the shadow of uncertainty about the end of colonialism and the emergence of the nationalist movement. This suggests that in the multicultural colonial society of the time, the assistance San Shar gives to any member of the community in need of help was part of Shwe U Daung's efforts to construct an ideal ideology of the nation-state for his readers.

A Burmese hero working for law and order in colonial society

Throughout Shwe U Daung's stories San Shar is described as being Burmese, Buddhist, single, eccentric and a lover of freedom. He is also depicted as a man of justice willing to work for anybody who is in trouble, regardless of their social standing. He has no racial biases and in "The Case of the Lost Emerald in Bazundaung Quarter", he criticises a Burmese servant who has stolen an emerald from his master and tricked the police into arresting a Bengali plumber. Some stories, however, reflect Shwe U Daung's critical views of some Chinese people at the time. In "The Disappearance of a Chinese Gentleman" the Chinese builder obviously plays the role of the villain. The second episode of the San Shar stories, "Kyaing the Cripple" (1917) exposes opium dens run by Chinese in Rangoon and drug addiction problems. In "The Case of the Lost Emerald in Bazundaung Quarter", Shwe U Daung writes that Thein Maung was worried about his Burmese friend becoming an opium addict again. Most importantly, San Shar is never described a drug addict, quite different from the way Sherlock Holmes is portrayed. These negative perceptions towards some Chinese seems to be a response to the British authorities' view. In early twentieth century Rangoon almost quarter of all criminal activity took place in Chinatown. The British authorities and the Rangoon Town Police (RTP) were concerned

⁸¹ Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852 -1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 169.

⁸² *Ibid.* 166.

about the problem in Rangoon, as well as the potential for the spread of Chinese-related crimes to the Irrawaddy Delta. In 1918 the new Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Craddock, also expressed his concerns about the growing Chinese population of the region.⁸³

Another distinctive feature of the San Shar stories written in the 1910s and 1920s was the absence of any criticism of the British colonial government. Episodes published after Burma's independence often include sarcastic comments directed at the colonial government, but paradoxically some of these stories also express clear support for the government. At the end of "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez", for example, Holmes and Watson are planning to rush to the Russian Embassy to submit a letter left by a lady with connections to the Nihilists, which could save her imprisoned brother. In the Burmese adaptation "Inya Kan Luthathmu" (Murder at Inya Lake) (1918), San Shar and Thein Maung are left a letter by a female Indian activist who was aligned with the Nihilists, who were responsible for acts of anti-British terrorism in Bengal in the early 20th century. Although they understand the lady's viewpoint, they appear reluctant to give her any further support.

"The Five Orange Pips" is a well-known Sherlock Holmes story featuring the KKK movement in America. This work was recreated as "The Death of the Son, Father and Uncle" (1920) and the KKK was replaced with the Nihilists in Bengal. Unlike the original story, San Shar bravely follows the criminals, boarding a ship travelling to Mandalay and disguising himself as an Indian labourer.

It is widely accepted that Sherlock Holmes's sense of justice was predicated on the maintenance of law and order in Victorian society in England, a reflection of Doyle's own beliefs.⁸⁴ I believe that San Shar was created as a reflection of a similar belief and see him as a new hero contributing to the maintenance of a stable and peaceful environment where all residents can enjoy freedom in colonial society. Like Sherlock Holmes in England, he is a modern Burmese hero working in the interests of the British Empire. Thus Shwe U Daung's narratives share the same ideals embodied in the Theosophical and cosmopolitan outlooks of the YMBA, as well as their political standpoint at this time. Britain's victory in World War I seems to have strengthened two attitudes among the politically-conscious Burmese middle class: pride in being citizens of the British Empire and also pride in their Burmese identity, which was bolstered by the post-war ideal of 'the self-determination of peoples'. In this environment, San Shar's emergence was a

⁸³ Osada Noriyuki, "Discovery of 'Outsiders': The Expulsion of Undesirable Chinese and Urban Governance of Colonial Rangoon, Burma, c. 1900-1920" *The Journal of Sophia Asian Studies* No. 32 (2014): 79-96.

⁸⁴ Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes Vol. 1* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2005), xxxiv-xxxv.

timely representation of Burmese pride in a multicultural colonial society.

From around the time of the British government's 1915 announcement of future dominion status for India, the YMBA became politicised, aiming to extend dominion status to the Burma Province as well.⁸⁵ YMBA became involved in politics after the 1917 statement delivered by the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford, which recommended creating a future Indian self-government under British rule. At the time Burma was a province of British India and it was often an issue as to whether Burma should be granted autonomy the same as other parts of India. As one of representatives of the YMBA, Ba Pe travelled to Calcutta in 1917 and London in 1918 for negotiations over this issue with the British authorities. In 1920 political minded members of the YMBA reorganized themselves as the General Council of Burmese Association (GCBA), which became known as the most formidable political force in colonial Burma. In 1920 protests and rallies were held repeatedly to counter the problematic 'Craddock schemes' advocated by the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Craddock, in place of a diarchy system.⁸⁶ Shwe U Daung basically supported the YMBA, but he does not appear to have been actively involved in the organisation's political activities. In 1919 U Ottama returned from Japan and lived for some time at the Thuriya Press.⁸⁷ As he enjoyed Shwe U Daung's novels and short stories, he often visited the editorial room, but Shwe U Daung did not know who he was and at first treated him as just another dubious political monk. Shwe U Daung later admitted that 'at the time I had no interest other than literature, so politics was not my concern'. Later he invited U Ottama to his home and went to see him in the middle of a political rally.⁸⁸ However, Shwe U Daung does not seem to have been impressed by Ottama's fierce criticism of the colonial government, nor his positive view of Japan. His accounts hardly mention Japan at all. His interest was more directed to understanding England and its culture and literature.

The politicised YMBA lost some members who were not interested in politics and government employees who were unprepared to engage in political activity. However the majority of the members were keen to participate in politics. In October 1920 it transformed itself into a bigger political force, the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA, *Myanma AthinKyouk Kyi*).⁸⁹ It was in this same month that Shwe U Daung settled in Myadaung village in Katha district, Upper Burma. After its establishment, and under the YMBA's slogan of 'Race, Language, Religion and Education' the GCBA set its goal as future dominion status, but the organisation soon became

⁸⁵ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 120.

⁸⁶ Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 44-51.

⁸⁷ Myanmar Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Encyclopaedia of Burma). Volume 15, 364.

⁸⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 164 -166.

⁸⁹ Waing Am Bi Aye, *Waing Am Bi Aye Khuhnithse Nga Hnit Khayi*, 50.

hindered by serious factionalism within its ranks.

The San Shar stories written in this era do not broach particular political agendas. Why did the San Shar stories hardly comment at all on particular political views and continue to promote the image of a harmonious multicultural colonial society, in spite of the crucial changes to the YMBA? One reason is that Shwe U Daung was leading a relatively peaceful life during this period. He met his third wife, Soe, a young local woman in Myadaung village, and married there on 10 December 1920. They did not have children, but they stayed together for the rest of their lives.⁹⁰ The couple moved to Kanni village, where for three years Shwe U Daung taught children at a small school, before eventually moving to Katha district, where they lived till 1926. Shwe U Daung enjoyed the rural life, riding a horse and once joining a tiger hunt (he saw a panther, but no tigers). He also became close to an elephant trainer who was hired by the Bombay Burma Trading Company. Although it was located in the jungle, Katha was a centre of the colonial timber trade, home to a sizable European community as well as a number of major British companies engaged in the teak business. One of its residents was George Orwell, and it was from Katha that Orwell drew the inspiration for his *Burmese Days*.⁹¹ To work for the European community, a substantial number of English-educated Burmese, government employees as well as wealthy timber merchants and their families, also lived there. During his stay Shwe U Daung does not seem to have established friendships with European residents, but while he was living in Kanni village he met his long-term friend Thein Pe, a forest ranger who was a second generation Christian Burmese. Life in this environment encouraged Shwe U Daung to think about the importance of peace and freedom in a multicultural society, which confirmed his support for the colonial regime and the British Empire.

Nanpaung Forest in Katha district was a habitat for a large variety of animals. It was called 'the hunters' paradise' and during the Christmas holiday, the then Governor of Burma, Sir Spencer Harcourt Battler, and other dignitaries visited the district to take part in hunting expeditions. One day Shwe U Daung's friend Wint Maw, who took responsibility for the care of the official guests, showed Shwe U Daung the guesthouse where the governor stayed. Wint Maw talked about the cruelty of their hunting that had changed the surroundings of the guesthouse into 'a cemetery for animals' but Shwe U Daung felt honoured to be visiting the place where the VIPs stayed.⁹² Later, he analysed his psychology at the time, asking why he was not interested in politics and accepted the

⁹⁰ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 173-175.

⁹¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/world/asia/orwells-house-links-myanmar-to-its-burmese-days.html?_r=0 According to this site, George Orwell was assigned to Katha as a policeman in the Indian Imperial Police and lived there from the end of 1926 to July 1927. As Shwe U Daung moved to Rangoon in March 1926, there was little possibility that the two men might have met in Katha.

⁹² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 196-197.

actions of the colonial government without much criticism.

I read a number of good literary works written by eminent English authors including Dickens, Scott and Thackeray and learned of many respectable aspects of the British people. Besides this, my parents also always taught me in many ways about the power of kings and governments so that I would hold them in awe and respect them. These experiences made me overestimate the authority of the imperial rulers and their bureaucracy. Even though I understood that I should resist, my mind remained submissive to them. Only when I was around forty years old, I read a book titled *Rights of Man* written by Thomas Paine, and then I experienced an intellectual enlightenment which totally obliterated my attitude of subservience to the bureaucracy and kings and the feelings of awe and admiration for them.⁹³

The acceptance of the framework of the British Empire and its colonialism was not only a part of Shwe U Daung's narrative, it was also a basic standpoint of the YMBA and was shared by many Burmese of the time. I see this as an explanation for why contemporary readers saw San Shar as an ideal Burmese hero who defended peace and freedom in everyday life, and the vision of a harmonious multicultural society free from social unrest. However Shwe U Daung's own account also suggests that after he left Katha his reading in the area of human rights brought about an important turn in his thoughts. The influence of this change on the San Shar stories will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Shwe U Daung's sense of justice as expressed in the San Shar stories was commensurate with the Rangoon YMBA's blend of Theosophy and the new Buddhism. The cosmopolitanism and humanist outlooks of the YMBA appear to have had wide support this time, particularly among those who were educated in English and took an interest in international relations. His impartial standpoint towards matters of race, religion and class also relates to the notion of equality embodied in the Theosophical Society's basic doctrine of 'Universal Brotherhood'. The stories written in the 1910s and 1920 presented an ideal modern Burmese hero committed to the maintenance of law and order in the face of various kinds of crimes. Beyond the appeal of the stories as popular entertainment reading, San Shar's persona also reinforced the YMBA's view that individuals should be encouraged to make a contribution to the British king and the colonial state. The acceptance of the British Empire and the dissemination of the notion of citizenship among the masses was a necessary part of the YMBA's nationalism and its goal of dominion status. However during World War I the YMBA became rapidly

⁹³ Ibid. 197.

politicised and in 1920 its move into the GCBA (General Council of Burmese Associations) marked its shift towards a new and more radical nationalist agenda.

Resonating with some of the YMBA/GCBA's political outlooks, the San Shar stories also reflect much of Shwe U Daung's personal thoughts and experiences of the time. San Shar devises a variety of solutions for the restoration of peace and freedom in daily life in contemporary British Burma, which must have endeared him and his author to Shwe U Daung's readers at a time of spreading social unrest. The popularity of the stories, which were published in a variety of magazines apart from *Thuriya*, is also an indication of their contemporary relevance.

The San Shar stories published at this time represent a successful example of fiction which created an imagined community among Burmese readers, not only promoting some of the YMBA's political ideas but also creating a sense of personal familiarity among readers from all backgrounds. This understanding also indicates Shwe U Daung's individuality in the YMBA publishing culture in the 1910s and 1920s and the variety of narratives being pursued by intellectuals gathered around the YMBA during this era.

CHAPTER 5

'San Shar the Detective' and Burmese Society between 1930 and 1945

Political historians have characterised the 1930s as the period of the rise of Burmese nationalism under the leadership of the Dobama Asiayone and its struggle against British colonial power. This perception was emphasised and disseminated after the former Thakins came to power in independent Burma and still continues. As we saw in Chapter One, however, the actual landscape of Burmese nationalism during this period was more complex. The GCBA's colonial parliamentary politics, aimed at achieving dominion status for Burma, and its influence on society at that time needs more analysis. What did nationalism actually mean to Burmese during the 1930s? Shwe U Daung became a significant author in the wake of the cultural wave created by the YMBA/GCBA, but how much did his nationalist ideas have in common with those of the GCBA political elites? Some episodes of the San Shar stories written in this period, for example, express explicit sympathy for Indian residents of Burma, in contrast to the Dobama Asiayone's anti-Indian approach. Where did this difference come from? To answer this question, it is important to remember that from the late 1920s Shwe U Daung strengthened his interest in Buddhism and was also inspired by Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*.

In his discussion of the formation of a modern nation, Anthony D. Smith points out the nature of *ethnie* as a 'sacred communion' and states that 'a sacred community requires a cult, and central to most *ethnies* has been a separate public cult that unites its adherents into a single moral community'.¹ He goes on to discuss the moral-legal component of the ideology of the nation-state:

This idea of sacred communion based on a common cult may be reinforced by a third mode of communal self-understanding, that of a union of equals who compose a moral community whose members are possessed, at least theoretically, of common rights and duties.[...] Modern nationalism has taken the moral and legal understanding of community much further. Indeed, it has become the most common way of thinking about national community in which the shared values and common laws of a moral community increasingly encompass earlier ethnic and cultic conceptions of sacred communion.

[...]In most other cases, the three ways of thinking about the nation as a sacred community – ethnic, cultic and moral-legal – have become fused to all practical intent. This was apparent already in late antiquity and in some medieval cases, but it became widespread and salient in the nineteenth-century nationalist revivals, when the nation came to be viewed as a sacred communion of the people and of a people, at once popular and culturally unique.²

¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 32.

² *Ibid.* 33.

In this chapter, I argue that Shwe U Daung's deepening thoughts on Theosophy as influenced by Buddhism and the inculcation of the ideology of human rights during the 1930s contributed to the development in his narratives of the search for an ideal society of modern Burma as a sacred community – aimed not only at the anti-colonialist struggle but also valuing equality and individual freedom among members of the society. To illustrate this argument I will analyse his life between 1930 and 1945, together with some of the episodes of the San Shar stories published before 1941, the year of the Japanese Army's invasion.

Buddhism and Thomas Paine

During his stay in Myadaung village in Katha district from the mid-1920s Shwe U Daung developed a strong interest in Buddhism. This interest was apparently influenced by his parents. From 1924 Shwe U Daung's parents became more focused on Buddhist practice. His mother, Shwe, led a meditation practice and his father, Aye Yar, who was trained as a monk when he was young, became a lay *Dhammakatika* (Buddhist preacher) who preached the Buddha's teachings to the local people.³ British colonial authorities saw *Dhammakatika* as a grouping of political monks associated with the General Council of Sangha Sammeggi (GCSS), which was established in 1920 to cooperate with the GCBA. These monks toured villages and organised peasants, but Shwe U Daung's autobiography "Record of Life and Thoughts" does not mention any political involvement on the part of his father.⁴ His mother, following the teaching of Abbot Beik, had practised meditation seriously for years. This meditation was based on the Abbot's Buddhist teaching intended to guide not only monks but also lay people into *Met-taya pho-taya* (the way that leads to *Nirvana*). Erik Braun argues that meditation among lay people is a fairly new practice in Myanmar, which began to spread during the reign of King Mindon (from 1853 to 1878), and mentions Abbott Htut Kaung as an important monk who trained more than three hundred pupils in meditation.⁵ One of these pupils was Abbot Beik.⁶ Shwe U Daung's mother began meditation when she was around thirty years of age, the time young Shwe U Daung was attending Abbot Beik's school. Shwe U Daung stated that many people believed his mother had gained spiritual powers such as prophecy and healing through her diligent practice of meditation which enabled her to control her mind, although he himself did not endorse this belief, merely explaining that he was

³ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts) (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 244.

⁴ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 183-184, 546.

⁵ Erik Braun, *The Birth of Insight* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), 30.

⁶ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 43.

‘scientifically minded’.⁷

Shwe U Daung intended to become a monk and was ordained at a monastery in his wife Soe’s native place, Myadaug village, Katha district, on 23 May 1925, with the title U Buddha Gawtha. This was probably the first time he wore the monk’s robe, as his autobiography does not record his undergoing the *shinbyu* ceremony, the ordination of Burmese men as novices during their boyhood. It is likely that as modernised Buddhists in Mandalay, Shwe U Daung’s parents wanted their son to focus on his schooling at this time.⁸ At the monastery where he stayed Shwe U Daung was rather disappointed with the abbot, as his Buddhist teaching was ‘old style’ and did not value the idea of ‘the way leading to *Nirvana*’ for lay people.⁹ Soon after he entered the monastery Shwe U Daung caught malaria and had to leave the monkhood.

As we have seen, Shwe U Daung’s family’s Buddhism originated from Abbot Beik’s Theosophist-influenced Buddhism. Although he never joined the Theosophical Society, Shwe U Daung appears to have accepted this new style of Buddhism, which stressed individual effort. After his close friend Wint Maw was transferred to Kyaukpadaung, Shwe U Daung established a good friendship with Wint Maw’s subordinate Thein Pe, a second generation Burmese Christian. As a way of introducing him to Buddhism, Shwe U Daung gave Thein Pe Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*.¹⁰ This was one of the books on Buddhism circulating at this time that were influenced by Theosophy. Arnold was a friend of Olcott and Blavatsky and together with Anagarika Dhammapala was the co-founder of the Maha Bodhi Society. Shwe U Daung must have become familiar with this book when he was still working for the Thuriya Press.

After living in Katha district for three years, in 1926 Shwe U Daung and his wife Soe moved to Rangoon, as he was offered a position as Secretary at the New Burmar Press. His younger brother moved to Rangoon with them, since he was looking for a job at the time. Shwe U Daung decided to take up this position to earn the money he needed at

⁷ Ibid. 240.

⁸ In Myanmar many men are ordained as novices when they are young and spend some time in a monastery studying Buddhist teachings. The ceremony to ordain young men as novices, which is called *shinbyu*, is a very auspicious occasion for the parents of the novice and his family. Today many young boys undergo *shinbyu* particularly during the summer school holiday (from March to May) and spend around a week in a monastery. Under traditional Buddhist Law the age for *shinbyu* was fifteen and the novices spent around four months in a monastery during the *wa* (Burmese Lent) from around July to October. Shway Yoe states that this tradition had changed by the early twentieth century: ‘This regulation has almost entirely lapsed in Lower Burma among other reasons chiefly because that is just the most important age for the boy to be learning English and arithmetic, with a view to getting situations under Government or in English merchants’ offices. Therefore in the vast majority of cases *shin-pyu thi* takes place at the age of twelve, or perhaps even a year earlier.’ See Shway Yoe, *The Burman* (Stirling: Kiscadale Publications, 1989), 22-23.

⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 253.

¹⁰ Ibid. 234.

this time to support his parents.¹¹ With his old friend Khin Maung Tint's help, he soon found accommodation in the city. Khin Maung Tint, who had studied in England, ran a successful souvenir shop for foreigners in Yangon.¹² Shwe U Daung worked for the administration of the New Burmar Press for two years and returned to Magyidone village in 1928 as by then he thought he had established connections with a number of publishers that would regularly publish his San Shar stories and other writings. He wanted to live with his elderly parents, discussing Buddhism and literature with them. He did not have any ambitions for financial success.¹³

The worldwide economic depression of 1929 cast a dark shadow over the prosperity of the region, which relied so heavily on rice production. Being affected by the depression, the Burmese publishing industry also declined and the publication of some Burmese periodicals became irregular or was discontinued altogether. Although Shwe U Daung was a well-known author by then, this was not entirely an easy time for him. The San Shar stories survived by being published in several different magazines, such as *Britisha Barmar*, *Duwun* and *Kawi Myet-hman*, but he had to compete for manuscript fees with up-and-coming writers/novelists like Maha Swe and Zawana.¹⁴ The decline in his income led him to accept an offer for a position as translator at the Christian Literature Society, a Baptist organisation, and in March 1930 he and his wife moved to Pegu where the Society's office was located. (They were relocated to Rangoon in 1933.)¹⁵ His job description was to translate non-religious publications aimed at spreading the habit of reading among Burmese, but he was also often asked to translate religious propaganda promoting conversion from Buddhism to Christianity. He later commented on his discomfort with this, as it conflicted with his Buddhist beliefs.¹⁶ He also felt his American bosses were too cold and businesslike, unlike his former British bosses who had made a favourable impression on him. In September 1933 he left the position and returned to Magyidone village with his wife, when his request for a modest pay rise was turned down, the reason given being the effects of economic depression in America.¹⁷

His comments about work at the C.L.S. are not so positive, but there is a possibility that Shwe U Daung came across Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* while he was working for this Society. In the previous chapter I referred to his statement that Paine's book had a major impact on him, freeing him from a submissive attitude towards authorities and

¹¹ Ibid. 257.

¹² Ibid. 257.

¹³ Ibid. 244.

¹⁴ Ibid. 294. Maha Swe became popular through his historical novels and Zawana was successful as a comic writer.

¹⁵ Ibid. 279, 286.

¹⁶ Ibid. 284.

¹⁷ Ibid. 277-286.

enabling him to start thinking critically about feudalism and the colonial government. He did not describe how he came across this book and what parts impressed him, but he did later record that he read it when he was around forty years of age. In 1930 he was 41, so if *Rights of Man* was part of the C.L.S.'s library, Shwe U Daung may have read it during his period of employment with the Society.¹⁸

'Whatever is my right as a man is also the right of another; and it becomes my duty to guarantee as well as to possess.'

'Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good.'

'The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.'¹⁹

Paine's ideology of individual rights and an internationally open modern society where citizens have equal rights based on a religious-based morality must have captured Shwe U Daung's attention. His existing commitment to the importance of individualism as contained in the Theosophy-influenced new Buddhism would have predisposed him towards an acceptance of Paine's ideology. In the 1930s, the GCBA became more focused on their campaign to win dominion status for Burma as soon as possible. Partially sharing the GCBA's concerns, Shwe U Daung developed his anti-colonial narratives, paying much attention to individual rights and freedom, as some episodes of the San Shar stories analysed below clearly reveal.

After leaving the C.L.S., Shwe U Daung and his wife returned to Magyidone village. They also spent some time in Myadaung village, where Shwe U Daung enjoyed a reunion with Thein Pe, who by that time had become a forest officer. Thein Pe was one of Shwe U Daung's very few close friends, someone with a good command of English and a great interest in adventure and reading. Shwe U Daung joined Thein Pe's field tours, including a raft trip along jungle rivers, an experience that provided him with the inspiration for his adaptations of the adventure novels of Henry Rider Haggard and other authors.²⁰ However living in Magyidone village again meant that he found it difficult to make contact with publishing circles and he ended up returning to Rangoon.

¹⁸ Ibid. 197.

¹⁹ <http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1667726-the-rights-of-man>

²⁰ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 286-289. Shwe U Daung published several adaptations/translations based on Henry Rider Haggard's five novels: *Yupa Nadi* (The Appearance of Delight, 1919, an adaptation of *She*), *Yupa Kalyani* (Beautiful Young Lady, 1938, an adaptation of *Ayesha: The Return of She*), *Sawlamon Taik* (1941, a translation of *King Solomon's Mines*), *Hsinzwe Minthamee* (1952, a translation of *Ivory Child*) and *Yan Aung Mingalar hnin Thu Taw Kaunggyi* (Auspicious Victory against the Enemy and the Great Hero, 1941, an adaptation of *Cleopatra*).

In 1936 Shwe U Daung was invited back to his old workplace, the Thuriya Press, where he took up a position as a political commentator.²¹ In the following year, he published his first collection of San Shar Stories in book form. These four volumes, comprising eighteen episodes, were published by the Daw Ohn Thin hnin Thamya Publishing House, which had a close relationship with Thuriya. This anthology remained very popular, even in the post-colonial period, and these episodes were often included in newer anthologies.²² In these stories Shwe U Daung appears to have been making a conscious attempt to attract new readers. Most of the stories were re-written versions of earlier adaptations under new titles. They also included three new episodes, *Letphyat inginniya* (An Engineer Who Lost His Finger), *Hle Dhagyi U Moe Thi Ahmu* (The Case of Mr. Moe Thi the Captain) based on “Black Peter” and *Yizar Pyauk Sharbonedaw* (In Search of the Missing Lover) based on “Case of Identity”. *Baungdali Lan Luthathmu* (Murder on Boundary Road) was his second adaptation of *A Study in Scarlet*, following his original adaptation entitled *Myopat Lan Luthathmu* (Murder on the Loop Line), which was published in 1917.²³ Originally, Shwe U Daung only used the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet* to describe the first meeting between San Shar and Thein Maung in the first San Shar episode, “Murder in Crain Lake Village”, in 1917. The beginning of “Murder on Boundary Road” introduces a new setting for the first meeting of San Shar and Thein Maung, much closer to Doyle’s original.²⁴ In this version, Thein Maung was introduced to San Shar in a laboratory at Rangoon General Hospital instead of San Shar’s residence on 40th street, just as Dr. Watson originally met Holmes at St. Bartholomew Hospital. The plot detail that has Thein Maung coming from Mandalay to Rangoon to look for an opportunity to become a novelist shows a similarity with the first episode in 1917, but there is no comment on any cultural gap between Rangoon and Mandalay. After moving into San Shar’s home, Thein Maung had breakfast with San Shar, a cup of coffee and pieces of toast with butter prepared by a male servant. This menu reflects the fact that knowledge of the Western-style breakfast had spread among readers by this time, almost twenty years after the publication of the first episode. It also shows that Shwe U Daung had already comfortably fitted into the lifestyle of Westernised Rangoon.

San Shar Stories written from 1930 to 1941

Between 1930 and 1941 Shwe U Daung published forty-six episodes of the San Shar

²¹ Ibid. 304.

²² During 1960s and 1970s both Myanmar Pyi Press and Hnalone Hla Press published major anthologies of the San Shar stories.

²³ ‘Thuriya’ magazine, Vol. 1, No. 4, October/ November 1917.

²⁴ The first meeting of San Shar and Thein Maung appears in the first episode of the story, “Murder in Crane Lake Village” (Gyogyagan Ywa Luthathmu) published in The *Thuriya* magazine, Vol.1, No.2, April 1917.

stories. Of these, the analysis in this chapter mainly deals with fifteen episodes and one novel. Many of them are adaptations of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, although some are original works. The titles of the episodes and their sources of publication are as follows.

1. *Thiksabauk Kinmyigauk* (The Scorpions' Traitor) *²⁵
Thuriya, February 1930, Vol. 13, No. 12
2. *Htuzandhaw Myebouk Balu Ahmu* (The Case of a Strange Earth Ogre) *
Thuriya, March 1930, Vol. 14, No. 1
3. *Htuzandhaw Letsagyehmu* (A Strange Revenge) *
Thuriya, April 1930, Vol. 14, No. 2
4. *Htuzandhaw Luthathmu* (The Case of a Strange Murder)
 Based on "The Crooked Man"
Kawi Myethman, February 1930, Vol. 3, No. 11
5. *Eindwinpon kalama Ahmu* (An Indian Woman Hiding in her House)
 Based on "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger"
Kawi Myethman, December 1931, Vol. 5, No. 9
6. *Sondauk Maung San Shar Luzo Setkwin Thethsin-yabon* (Mr. San Shar Ensnared by the Villains' Hand)
 Based on "The Final Problem"
Kawi Dagun, September or October 1932
7. *Sondauk Maung San Shar ar Loukkyangyabon* (The Assassination of Mr. San Shar)
 Based on "The Adventure of the Empty House"
Kawi Dagun, September 1933, Vol. 1, No. 12
8. *Thahte Gadaw Ta-oo* (The Wife of a Rich Man)
 Based on "The Problem of Thor Bridge"
Toetetye, November, 1933
9. *Sondauk Maung San Shar i Phuza Hnit khaing* (Mr. San Shar the Detective's Two Flowers of Love) *
Thuriya Dhadin-za (Thuriya Newspaper), from 19 December 1935 to 16 January 1936 (except Sundays).
10. *Baungdari Lan Luthathmu* (Murder on Boundary Road)
 Based on *A Study in Scarlet*
Sondauk Maung San Shar (Young Detective, San Shar) Vol. 1
 published by Daw Ohn Thin and hnin Thamyia Publishing House, 1936
11. *Megon Pouksa* (The Examination Paper)

²⁵ * indicates that the episode is not based on the Sherlock Holmes stories.

- Based on “Three Students”
Sondauk Maung San Shar (Young Detective, San Shar) Vol. 2
 published by Daw Ohn Thin hnin Thamya Publishing House, 1936
12. *Ta-gu-ku-ku* (The Secret Word is ‘Ta-gu-ku-ku’)
 Based on “Boscombe Valley Mystery”
Sondauk Maung San Shar (Young Detective, San Shar) Vol. 2
 published by Daw Ohn Thin hnin Thamya Publishing House, 1936
13. *Chyejo Nga Kyaing* (Kyaing the Cripple)
 Based on “The Man with the Twisted Lip”
Sondauk Maung San Shar (Young Detective, San Shar) Vol. 2
 published by Daw Ohn Thin hnin Thamya Publishing House, 1936
14. *Letphyat inginniya* (An Engineer Who Lost His Finger)
 Based on “Engineer’s Thumb”
Sondauk Maung San Shar (Young Detective, San Shar) Vol. 2
 published by Daw Ohn Thin hnin Thamya Publishing House, 1936
15. *Asoeya Sajoukmya Pyaukson* (The Disappearance of a Government Treaty)
 Based on “The Bruce-Partington Plans”
Tetlu Lanpya Wuttu Sazaung, Circa Nov. 1936
 Or *Met Ma-pye Wuttu Sazin*, Circa 1937²⁶
16. *Kyawlaw Lulaw* (Human or Tiger?) *
Kyipwaye, August 1941

In these episodes, there are several features which reflect the socio-cultural situation at the time, along with Shwe U Daung’s nationalist thinking. Some episodes, especially those written in the first half of the 1930s, suggest the high crime rate in Burmese society after the 1929 worldwide depression and show Shwe U Daung’s strong sense of justice based on Buddhism. Other episodes written in the late 1930s show Shwe U Daung’s changing attitude towards the British government, gradually revealing his defiance of the authorities in anticipation of Burma’s future dominion status. However, he remained very suspicious towards Japan, unlike some major GCBA nationalists like ‘Galon’ Saw. In this regard he shared the view of the British government. Some episodes reflect Shwe U Daung’s thoughts on racial issues and Burmese identity, suggesting a future harmonious multicultural society in modern Burma, which must have attracted many contemporary readers.

In the following discussion, each of these points will be analysed in detail. Firstly,

²⁶ The original publisher is uncertain. This was also the first ‘San Shar’ episode based on “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plan”.

however, it is important to discuss Shwe U Daung's interest in Buddhism, as it appears in the Shan Shar stories.

Sense of justice based on Buddhism

In the 1930s Burma experienced numbers of social unrests. In May 1930 the first Indo-Burmese riot occurred in Rangoon. It originated from a protest by some 2,000 Burmese dock workers who had been made redundant and whose jobs had been taken over by Indian workers. More than 250 Indians and some Burmese lost their lives in this rioting. In January 1931 in Rangoon the first Sino-Burmese riot occurred, instigated by a Chinese shop owner's insult of a Burmese monk.²⁷ In December 1930, in the Tharrawaddy district, one of the rice-producing rural areas affected by the falling price of rice as a result of the 1929 world depression, a large-scale peasant rebellion led by Saya San broke out, leading to attacks on landlords and Indian money lenders. This rebellion continued for more than a year before the British colonial government was able to bring it under control. The 1931 census stated that data collection was disturbed in Tharrawaddy because of the rebellion.²⁸

During this time San Shar became the subject of a major incident. In the 1932 September (or October) issue of *Kawi Dagon* magazine, San Shar was killed by villains and the series was concluded. This final episode was entitled "Mr. San Shar Ensnared by the Villains' Hand", based on Doyle's "The Final Problem", which is a well-known episode describing Sherlock Holmes's death and which marks the conclusion of the earlier stories.

Thein Maung, who plays the role of Dr. Watson, starts this sad episode by referring to the Buddhist teaching of impermanency, 'everything changes'.

The natural rule of this world is it eventually ends with loss, no matter how successful one may become. No matter how rich and prosperous we are, we finally end up with nothing. My friend San Shar has been famous for his investigation of crimes and his victories over all sorts of criminals. He was not only frequently visited by celebrities and high ranking officials in Burma asking for his help, but was also well-known by the Thai royal family and Indian maharajas, who asked him to work secretly for them. If he had kept his certificates of commendation plus the many expensive gifts he received from them in a cabinet, it would be filled to capacity. However my friend San Shar was not interested in certificates, medals and those sort of things.... Through dealing

²⁷ Khin Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1988), 4-5, 13.

²⁸ Bennison, J.J., I.C.S., *Census of India, 1931, Volume XI, Burma, Part I. – Report* (Rangoon: Office of the Supdt., Government Printing and Stationery, 1933), ix.

with crimes which related to celebrities in various countries, San Shar terrified many criminals. However even he could not resist the nature of this world and unfortunately fell into the claw of villains, eventually losing his life.²⁹

Just as Sherlock Holmes died at the hands of the criminal mastermind Professor Moriarty at Switzerland's Reichenbach Falls, San Shar also disappeared into a waterfall in Shan State, after a fierce fight with Professor Tun Pe. Professor Tun Pe was described as an extremely talented Burmese man who was once a chemistry professor at Rangoon University, who was dismissed for misconduct and became a criminal mastermind in Rangoon. Doyle often described London as a major shame of modern society in the Sherlock Holmes stories. In the first episode *A Study in Scarlet* Dr. Watson states that 'I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained'.³⁰ In "The Adventure of the Empty House" Doyle wrote of 'the dark jungle of criminal London'.³¹ Shwe U Daung must have seen Rangoon in a similar way and expressed his criticism of it through the death of San Shar and reference to the Buddha's teaching.

Nevertheless, just as Sherlock Holmes readers did not allow Doyle to end the story, readers of the San Shar stories also did not permit Shwe U Daung to kill off the Burmese national hero. A year after this intended final episode, San Shar turned up again in a story in which he gave Thein Maung such a shock that he almost fainted. This episode was entitled "The Assassination of Mr. San Shar" and was published in the 1933 September issue of *Kawi Dagon* magazine. It was based on "The Empty House", which told of the return of Sherlock Holmes after his disappearance at the Reichenbach Falls. In a major difference between the original story and the Burmese version, San Shar reappeared by disguising himself as a Buddhist hermit (*Yathe*), not an old book dealer. In the original story Holmes explained his three-year disappearance to Dr. Watson and told of his two-year stay in Tibet, which included a meeting with the head Lama.³² This episode reflects Doyle's interest in spiritualism and non-Christian religions, which apparently struck Shwe U Daung and persuaded him to include his sense of justice against crimes, based on Buddhist ethics. Shwe U Daung's belief that Buddhism could reach and save anybody, regardless of their race and original religion, is also clearly depicted in *Ein hma Phone ne dhe Kalar Amyodhami* (An Indian Woman Hiding in Her

²⁹ Shwe U Daung, *Sondaug Maung San Shar Baungjouk Dutiya Ouk* (San Shar the Young Detective, The collection Vol. 2) (Yangon: Yane Mandalay Saouk Taik, 2002), 577-578.

³⁰ Klinger, Leslie S. (edited with notes), *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. III (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 14

³¹ Klinger, Leslie S. (edited with notes), *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. II (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 798

³² *Ibid.* 794.

House) (1931). This episode conveys a Buddhist message together with Shwe U Daung's hope for a harmonious colonial society. At the end of the story San Shar stops a lonely female Indian migrant from killing herself by repeating a teaching of the Buddha.

Anti-colonialism and human rights

Although not himself a political activist, since the late 1910s Shwe U Daung had been close to the centre of the Burmese nationalist movement led by the YMBA/GCBA and their major voice the Thuriya Press, which published many of the San Shar stories. Although the YMBA/GCBA eventually came to be dogged by political corruption and sectarianism, in the 1930s GCBA politicians were a major force in the colonial parliament and Thuriya was one of the major newspapers. Some San Shar stories published in the mid-1930s reveal Shwe U Daung's changing views on nationalism, some of which he shared with GCBA and Dobama Asiayone and some of which he held independently. This section will discuss two of these episodes.

"An Engineer Who Lost His Finger" (1936) presents a typical image of a young nationalist of that time. This story is based on "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb" and revolves around a young Burmese engineer, Ba Sein. After studying engineering in England, Ba Sein returns to Burma and joins a company, but resenting control by his English superiors, he resigns from the firm and opens his own engineering consulting office. His late parents had been wealthy enough to educate him in England and he is also very nationalist-minded. This scenario portrays a typical (upper) middle class family who support the nationalist movement, a phenomenon which emerged in modern Burma from the beginning of the 20th century. Owning one's business also appears to symbolise Burma's future independence. Just as in the original Sherlock Holmes story, Ba Sein's business does not go well and he loses his thumb in a criminal attack. In the original story the criminal was a German colonel, but in the San Shar version he is described as a secretive Burmese citizen. This suggests Shwe U Daung thought that the main obstacles to Burma's future independence would lie among Burmese society rather than foreign powers, and ultimately in individuals, which reflects Shwe U Daung's belief in Paine's individuality and human rights.³³ As a result of continuing factional strife and

³³ Shwe U Daung learned the idea of a nation's full independence through Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. The idea of perfect independence of Burma beyond dominion status was discussed in the late 1920s in Myanmar. An editorial of *Gandalawka* (The World of Books), a magazine circulated mainly among Burmese students and graduates of Rangoon University, reveals this. An editorial of the magazine entitled *Thekkarit 1390 Pyit* (Burmese Year 1390) published in April 1929 issue urges the readers to work harder towards the perfect independence of Burma targeting the Burmese year of 1390 (2028 in the western year). Year 2028 does not necessarily mean the certain targeted year, but the author's message that it will take much time to attain the full independence after gaining dominion status. The editor-in-chief of the magazine then was Thakin Ba Thoung, who founded the Dobama Asiayone in 1930, but he soon withdrew from the Do Bama Asiayone. See: Yapyit Sape Apwetwin Ta-oo,

corruption among GCBA politicians, in 1936 the name of GCBA disappeared from the Burmese political scene. On the other hand the Dobama Asiayone strengthened their integrity based on socialist/communist ideas and towards the end of the 1930s focused on full independence as their goal. They became very critical towards GCBA politicians parliamentary politics, saying it was perpetuating colonial rule.³⁴ Because of this Dobama Asiayone condemned CGBA politicians, calling them *Thudobama* (Burman/Burmese on 'their' side) to distinguish the meaning of their party *Dobama* (Burman/Burmese on 'our' side).³⁵

"The Disappearance of a Government Treaty" (1936 or 1937) is an episode based on "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans". The original story begins with the arrival of Sherlock Holmes's elder brother Mycroft on a foggy day, while the Burmese version begins with the arrival of Shan Shar's elder brother San Win on a very wet day during the rainy season. San Win brings news of the death of a young Burmese officer working for the Secretariat Office and the disappearance of important political documents. Eventually it turns out that the culprit was a younger brother of a Burmese high ranking official. He was burdened by a huge debt as a result of gambling on horse races, a widespread social problem in colonial Burma, and had been approached by a rich Japanese businessman called Mr. Kalawa (although this does not sound like a Japanese name) who was actually a political spy blacklisted by the colonial police.³⁶

In the late 1930s in an attempt to cut British lines of support for Chang Kai-shek through Burma, Japanese military services often attempted to establish links with Burmese nationalists, a cause of grave concern to the British authorities. Japan also approached Galon Saw, a major GCBA politician who became the Prime Minister of British Burma in 1940 and who, by the mid-1930s, with financial support from Japan, had become the biggest shareholder in Thuriya Press.³⁷ Although he was working for Thuriya at that time, this episode clearly shows Shwe U Daung's suspicion towards Japan as well as his support for the policies of the British colonial government. Perhaps because of Shwe U Daung's critical viewpoint towards Japan, this episode was issued by a publisher with no connections to Thuriya. The original story ends with Sherlock Holmes's receiving a gift from Queen Victoria, but nothing similar occurs in the Burmese version. Shwe U Daung must have felt that receiving a gift from the British authorities

Gandalawka Letywezin Gaungyibainmya 1928 - 1935 (The selected editorials of the Gandalawka) (Yangon: Yabyit Sape, 2010), 45-46.

³⁴ Khin Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)*, 37.

³⁵ Nemoto Kei, *Aun San* (Aung San) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 46.

³⁶ Horse racing remained popular even after Burma's independence and gambling problems continued until the 1962 Ne Win revolutionary government abolished horse racing in the country.

³⁷ Nemoto Kei & Katsumi Tamura (ed.), *Kurashi ga wakaru Ajia Tokuhon – Biruma* (Reader for Asian Lifestyle - Burma) (Tokyo: Kawade Shoboh Shinsha, 1997), 77-78.

was no longer appropriate for a Burmese national hero.

Dobama Asiayone's socialist approach produced a new literary trend in the late 1930s which was represented by the foundation of the Nagani (Red Dragon) Book Club in 1937. Shwe U Daung published three books with 'Nagani' between 1939 and 1940. Two of these were translations, the first a criticism of Hitler's totalitarianism and racism *Hittalar Loukkhedhahmya (What Hitler Has Done)*, and the second a biography of Abraham Lincoln. The third was a detective story entitled *Dauktar Thaung Htaik (Dr. Thaung Htaik)*, adapted from Richard Austin Freeman's "Dr. Thorndyke's Case." Shwe U Daung did not give any indication of a commitment to socialism at this time and he appears to have been more attracted by the emergence in modern Burma of parliamentary democracy blended with Buddhist ethics. Also, through his translation of works dealing with Hitler and Nazism, and the biography of Abraham Lincoln, he must have deepened his awareness of the importance of freedom and human rights.

Burmese identity and racial issues

What was Shwe U Daung's vision of the ideal society, as it emerged in the San Shar stories? The stories suggest that he was developing an ideal of a future harmonious multicultural society in modern Burma and promoting Buddhist ethics. Christopher Bayley and Tim Harper cite a colonial source describing Rangoon as not representative of Burma as a whole: 'Rangoon isn't Burma really. It's more an Indian city, with a bit of China thrown in, run by Scots and Irishmen.'³⁸ It was probably as a result of having lived in Rangoon, a modern city with a larger population of Indians than Burmese and many residents of different ethnicities, including Chinese, English, Jewish and Armenians, that Shwe U Daung came to believe in the importance of disseminating Buddhist ethics. Right from the beginning of the series, Shan Shar always plays the role of a hero, helping people in modern Burmese society regardless of their ethnicity, religion and social rank.

For example, "The Scorpion's Traitor" (1930) and "Murder on Boundary Road" (1936) are stories about Indian criminal gangs and Indian victims whom San Shar tries to save from their enemies. "San Shar the Detective's Two Flowers of Love" (1935 – 1936) describes an attempt by San Shar and his Burmese friends, including policemen and two students of Rangoon University, to save a wealthy Indian businessman from extortion by a Burmese criminal gang. In this action novel Shwe U Daung openly demonstrates the political views he shared with Ba Pe and his Thuriya Press, supporting Burma's separation from British India, but still seeking harmony with Indian residents of Burma. It is also interesting that in this story San Shar, now middle-aged, falls in love with a female client and marries her at the end of the story, a possible allusion to Shwe U Daung's happy

³⁸ Christopher Bayley and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 87.

marriage with his third wife, Soe.

In “The Examination Paper” (1936) based on “The Three Students” San Shar saves an English professor at Rangoon University who is accused of losing his students’ examination scripts. This story also includes the description of a friendship between an old Bengali servant and a young Burmese student.

Anti-Indian sentiment began spreading from the 1930s, partially because of propaganda by the Dobama Asiayone, and the distinction between ‘Burmese’ and ‘Indian’ later appears to have become a major component of Burmese identity and nationalism.³⁹ However, in the 1930s this idea had not yet taken deep roots in Burmese society, as the popularity of Shwe U Daung’s works shows.

“Murder on Boundary Road” (1936) was Shwe U Daung’s second adaptation of *A Study in Scarlet* following his first work, *Myopatlan Luthathmu* (Murder on the Loop Line) published in 1917.⁴⁰ *A Study in Scarlet* is a tragic love story which begins in a Mormon community in the American wilderness (today Doyle’s lack of understanding of Mormonism is often pointed out) and which is maintained through to London. This storyline was dramatically transformed into a story set in a secretive community in India. Subsequently, a final act of revenge takes place in Rangoon. Shwe U Daung describes the nature of the community by saying that although they looked like Buddhists, they did not in fact adhere to Buddhist ethics.⁴¹ The community has also failed to implement modern legal systems and the residents live constantly with the fear of dictatorial control by their leaders:

The town of Pataliputra’s administration was truly strange. There were very few courts, judges and policemen in the city. Unlike other towns there were no arrests, no confinements, no interrogations and no punishments either. If a person was even slightly suspected of having committed a crime, that person immediately disappeared and nobody knew where he/she had gone. When a neighbour disappeared in this way people would look at each other, but nobody spoke about it and remained silent. Imagine what might happen if someone spoke a word of complaint about their condition. As soon as someone who heard of it informed the authorities, that person, no doubt, would vanish the following night. Therefore residents became extremely suspicious and remained silent regarding any such matter. Everyone they saw was considered a spy. Under these conditions, how could Waithaka and Phalika, the grandfather and granddaughter, live happily? The outspoken Phalika had already caused trouble.⁴²

³⁹ After coming to power in 1962 General Ne Win expelled foreign capital from Burma as part of the implementation of his nationalist ‘Burmese way to socialism’ policy and many Indian and Chinese merchants were obliged to leave the country.

⁴⁰ *Thuriya* magazine, Vol. 1, No. 4, October/ November 1917.

⁴¹ Shwe U Daung, *Sondaug U San Shar paungjouk sadoutta Akyeing* (San Shar The Detective, The Collection), Fourth Impression (Mandalay: Yane Mandalay Saouk Taik, 1997), 60.

⁴² *Ibid.* 64-65. ‘Pataliputra’ is originally the name of an ancient Indian capital of the Maurya Empire, well-known for their King Ashoka.

In the story colonial Burma is presented as a civilised constitutional state. San Shar works closely with his police friends Than Tin and Ohn Pe, showing his sympathy for an Indian man, Dathaka, who has travelled from India in pursuit of the son of the secretive society's leader who has killed his lover Phalika. This story also depicts the help given to San Shar by a group of homeless Indian boys, similar to the way Holmes sometimes relies on 'the Baker Street Irregulars,' a group of London street urchins. In this episode Thein Maung is introduced as a stranger who comes to Rangoon hoping to become a writer/novelist, just as Indian migrants arrived in the city looking for new opportunities. This reflects Shwe U Daung's own experience as a migrant to Rangoon from Mandalay, struggling to maintain himself as a writer.

One of the features of the Dobama Asiayone movement in the 1930s was its strong notion of what it was to be 'Burman'. The biography of Pe Maung Tin, a professor at Rangoon University at that time, shows that Dobama Asiayone's Burman-oriented political activities at Rangoon University intimidated many non-Burmese students, such as Shans.⁴³ Since the early 20th century, Burmese language, together with Buddhism, had always been major features of Burmese nationalism, a notion promoted by the YMBA/GCBA, although their view of a Burmese 'race' was not as strict as that of the Dobama Asiayone. The early leaders such as May Oung and Ottama were Arakanese not Burmans.⁴⁴ The Dobama Asiayone's definition of Burmeseness suggests that modern race theory had spread among young intellectuals at this time.⁴⁵ There is wide acknowledgement of the influence of eugenics on nationalism between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s in many countries, including European (Germany and Hungary), Asian (Japan and Vietnam) and South and Central American, especially Mexico. In association with social Darwinism this narrative shaped the nationalist notion of the members of a nation. How did Burmese nationalists, especially those who studied at and graduated from Rangoon University, become familiar with eugenics? One source was the activities of the British civil servant and colonial economist John Sydenham Furnivall, who in 1924 established a bookshop in Rangoon called the Burma Book Club. The shop made available the latest Western publications and their English/Burmese bilingual magazine *The World of Books* published a Burmese translation of an essay entitled "About 'Eugenics' Written by G. B. Shaw" in the September 1928 issue.⁴⁶ In 1928

⁴³ Ma Lay Lone, *Pe Maung Tin thoukmahouk Ba Thetshai*, (Pe Maung Tin or Mr. Longevity) (Yangon: Swe Tin Sape, 1975), 262-263.

⁴⁴ Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Steps: A Personal History of Burma* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 204.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 194-195

⁴⁶ Burmese title is "Amyogaun Paukphwa aung Siman-ni hnint Satshinywe Je Bi Shaw i Tinmyinjet". This was translated by Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa). He seems to have been asked by Furnivall or his

Furnivall also founded the 'Burma Education Extension Society', to encourage the reading and development of modern Burmese literature including translation. Although Furnivall left Burma in the early 1930s, the Burma Book Club's magazine *The World of Books* soon became well-known under its Burmese name *Gandalawka* and was a popular publication among Burmese students and alumni of Rangoon University. Shwe U Daung had some personal connection with the magazine's editors such as Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa) but he never contributed to it. From the time of YMBA up to the Dobama Asiayone, as he himself admitted, Shwe U Daung was not part of the elite circles of Rangoon University.⁴⁷ It is not known whether he was familiar with the theory of eugenics, but his San Shar stories do not show any support for the chauvinistic Burman identity promoted by the Dobama Asiayone.

In 1938 the second anti-Indian riot occurred, brought about by the publication of an Indian Muslim resident's denouncement of Buddhism. Rioting spread rapidly and attracted many Burmese who had been economically disadvantaged by Indians. While this was happening, the Dobama Asiayone distributed more than 100,000 copies of a booklet that appealed to the Burmese rioters' anti-Indian views, saying many Indian migrants were capitalist invaders exploiting Burmese people, much like the British.⁴⁸ This booklet was published by the Nagani Book Club and was written by Thein Pe, an up-and-coming writer at the time who later became one of the significant novelists in post-colonial Burma, when he was known as Thein Pe Myint.⁴⁹ For Shwe U Daung, Burmese identity was much broader than the notion promoted by Dobama Asiayone. The San Shar stories also reflect the differences between Shwe U Daung's view of Indian migrants and those of the Dobama Asiayone.

As we have seen, Shwe U-Daung's long-term series the San Shar stories are not only a unique example of Burmese popular literature but also illustrate the variety of nationalist thinking in colonial Burma. Under British rule, which designated English as the official language, Burmese language was a key element of Burmese identity and Burmese publishing activities helped the spread of nationalism.

The San Shar stories reflect the relationship between Shwe U Daung's changing approach to nationalism and the social and political changes of the era. In the 1930s, the role of San Shar as a nationalist hero is somewhat different from his depiction in the 1920s, such as the shift from 'a Burmese making a major contribution to the British

friend Professor Pe Maung Tin (Burmese Department at Rangoon University), Sein Tin's supervisor at his postgraduate course.

⁴⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 145-148.

⁴⁸ Hans-Bernd Zoellner, *Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper 10:12 Material on Thein Pe 'Indo-Burman Conflict'*. <http://www.phil.uni-passau.de/lehrstuehle-professuren/suedostasien/suedostasien-gemeinsam/forschung/myanmar-literature-project.html>

⁴⁹ This Thein Pe is not Shwe U Daung's old friend Thein Pe, forest officer in Katha.

Empire' to 'a Burmese working for independence.' This corresponds both to the political currents of the time and also to public opinion, which partially explains the long-term popularity of the San Shar stories. Buddhism was also a major element in Burmese nationalism. In the social unrest in the 1930s, the San Shar stories' sense of justice based on Buddhism must have resonated with many Burmese readers. Other ideas expressed in the stories, such as support for a constitutional state and the building of a harmonious society that incorporated the participation of immigrants, must have also appealed to many readers.

Shwe U Daung's nationalist thinking reflects the common perceptions of Burmese nationalism, but it also shows several differing perspectives from those of Dobama Asiayone. In the 1930s, as Dobama Asiayone rapidly gained supporters, some of its tactics propagated the idea of Burmeseness through an endorsement of anti-Indian and anti-Chinese riots. The organisation also contributed widely to the introduction of socialism and communism in Burma. Shwe U Daung's narratives largely reflect the outlooks of the GCBA, especially Ba Pe and his Thuriya Press, from the 1910s.

The decline of the YMBA/ GCBA and Theosophy

In 1936, the year in which Shwe U Daung took up his position at Thuriya Press, the political parties that had named themselves 'GCBA' dissolved the organisation after repeated splits. I argue that the demise of the GCBA also marked the end of direct influence of Theosophy on Burmese nationalism, and in turn facilitated an expansion of the political power of Dobama Asiayone. What were the problems that led to factionalism within the GCBA? This section will analyse the role of the Theosophical Society and the YMBA's connections with the Society as a partial explanation for those problems. Two key persons in this context were Ba Pe and Chit Hlaing.

As we saw in the previous chapter Ba Pe, born in 1883 in Tharrawaddy district to a landowner family, was a founder of the Rangoon College Buddhist Association, the YMBA and also the Thuriya Press. Ba Pe had personal contact with some Theosophists, but he does not seem to have joined the Society. However, from the time he established the Rangoon College Buddhist Association, his study of Theosophy and his exposure to Colonel Olcott's ideas of the International Buddhistic League perhaps led Ba Pe to accept the Theosophical Society's objective of 'universal brotherhood', which must have appeared an attractive ideal in the then cosmopolitan city of Rangoon.

Chit Hlaing was an ardent member of the YMBA from its early days and one of the Association's major financial supporters. In 1922 an antagonism between him and Ba Pe began to develop, after Ba Pe accepted the British proposal for a dyarchy system, leading to a split within the GCBA. Ba Pe formed his own political group called the Twenty-One

Party and Chit Hlaing also formed his own group, the 'Hlaing-Pu-Gyaw' GCBA.⁵⁰ With this development, the *Thuriya* newspaper changed direction and became the voice of the Twenty-One Party GCBA.⁵¹

Chit Hlaing most likely represents the strongest link between the Burmese nationalist movement and the Theosophical Society. A member of the Society as well as one of the key persons in the YMBA, Chit Hlaing was born into a wealthy timber merchant family from Moulmein. He was educated in England between 1899 and 1902 and became a barrister. It is not known when he joined the Theosophical Society, but his name is recorded as president of the Buddhist Lodge in Moulmein, one of seventeen branches of the society in Burma in 1917. He was also well known for his generous donations to the YMBA and Buddhist schools.⁵² In 1917 he was appointed Chairman of the Moulmein YMBA.

Chit Hlaing was also a member of the Indian National Congress and under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi he advocated the tactics of *Swaradeshj* for the YMBA's *Wunthanu* movement, favouring the use of boycotts.⁵³ Gandhi visited Burma three times, in 1902, 1915 and 1929, and on his third visit, Chit Hlaing greeted Gandhi with his Indian supporters in Rangoon.⁵⁴

In 1917 Annie Besant was elected President of the Indian National Congress. Her strong social reform narratives and strategies greatly influenced Chit Hlaing and the YMBA. In the same year the Theosophical Society in Burma published a book entitled *Theosophy and Buddhism* to explain the Society's basic thinking and their interpretation of Buddhism as compared to conventional Burmese Buddhism.⁵⁵ This book outlines the Society's perception of Buddhism, which put value on an individual's action in this world as something that would improve himself and his nation.

[...] Theosophy can shed some light. He (a Burman) will learn that not by harmlessness alone, not by abstention alone can the great work be accomplished, but by the exercise only of those great qualities which go to make a man great, whatever his walk of life may be. The

⁵⁰ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 186.

⁵¹ Than Win Hlaing (ed.), *Ahnikchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidhan'* (Encyclopaedia of Burmese History), Vol. 2, (Yangon: Pyinnya Shwedaung Saouk Taik, 2010), 529.

⁵² Maung Saw Hla Pru, *Theosophy and Buddhism* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1917). Theosophical Society, *General Report of the Theosophical Society 1917*, Adyar, 99.
http://books.google.com.au/books?id=QrV5pzHjQgQC&pg=PA99&lpg=PA99&dq=c.g.s.+pillay,+mandalay&source=bl&ots=jY4MSXcOMQ&sig=XBpe_CqVrhA6SoMOPr9g3C5gXS8&hl=en&ei=9J3QTOaMNI8vQO3uly2Bg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CBsQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=c.g.s.%20pillay%2C%20mandalay&f=false

⁵³ Penny Edwards, "Gandhiji in Burma, and Burma in Gandhiji" in *Rethinking Gandhi and Nonviolent Relationality*, ed. Debjani Ganguly and John Docker (Oxon and NY: Routledge, 2007), 165.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 169.

⁵⁵ Maung Saw Hla Pru, *Theosophy and Buddhism*, (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1917).

same qualities which go to make a great man go to make a great nation, and when national ideals are high then will be found the individual that will achieve spiritual greatness. The ordinary teaching of Buddhism in Burma has tended to obscure this, the Burman has not been taught that, in order to become that flower of humanity, the Arahant, many lives of the severest effort are required.⁵⁶

This interpretation suggested a picture of a new Buddhist in a modern sovereign state and leadership of other Burmese Buddhists. Chit Hlaing attempted to implement these ideas in rural areas, following Besant's rural development campaigns in India, and showed strong leadership in the nationalist movement. As a result Chit Hlaing's 'Hlaing-Pu-Gyaw' GCBA won strong support among the peasantry and in 1924 Chit Hlaing attained the post of president of the GCBA, while Ba Pe's Twenty-One Party GCBA was supported by the educated middle class.⁵⁷

It was widely known that Chit Hlaing received major financial support from several Indian firms, especially the Scindia Steam Navigation Company. Scindia's Rangoon agent, S.N. Haji, was probably a member of the Theosophical Society; he donated a copy of his book on shipping economics to the Society's head office in Adyar.⁵⁸ Haji was also 'notorious in the 1920s and 1930s for the use of political funding to 'buy' Burmese politicians.'⁵⁹ Eventually, during the spread of the anti-Indian riots of the early 1930s and the emergence of the Dobama Asiayone, Chit Hlaing's Indian connections diminished his political influence in the Burmese nationalist movement.⁶⁰ This was also the beginning of the Theosophical Society's waning influence on Burmese nationalist politics. With the death of Annie Besant in 1933 the Society's involvement in Indian politics changed direction. Although Chit Hlaing and Ba Pe remained politicians in the colonial parliament, the GCBA was dissolved in 1936 after repeated schisms and internal strife.

The influence of the Theosophical Society on Burmese nationalist identity can be seen in a number of areas. In Chapter Four I showed how the perception of Japan as a Buddhist country was related to Theosophist ideas, particularly Olcott's perceptions of Japan. Another example is the foundation of the national school (*Amoydha Kyaung*) movement in 1920. This movement was a response to boycotts on government education caused by the University Act of the same year, which was seen as restricting educational opportunities for Burmese students because of its tightening of financial obligations. In protest, the *Amoydha Kyaung* movement established an educational

⁵⁶ Ibid. 32.

⁵⁷ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, 186.

⁵⁸ Theosophical Society, *General Report of the Theosophical Society 1917*, Adyar, 99.
<http://books.google.com.au/>

⁵⁹ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, 171.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 171.

system teaching from primary school to university levels in Burmese. Eventually some of these voluntary schools were recognised as government schools. The Hindu College in Benares, which was affiliated with the Hindu University in 1916, became a model for Burma's national school movement.⁶¹

There is also the possibility of Theosophical influence on the Saya San Rebellion. Saya San presented himself as 'Min Laung' (The Future King, often translated as 'pretender king'), in an attempt to restore the monarchy based on Buddhism. The Saya San rebellion is generally accepted as being driven by traditional Buddhist Messianic beliefs, but it is likely that Saya San was influenced by Theosophist ideas in some ways. A former monk and traditional herbalist, Saya San was a district leader of the GCBA who in 1927 was appointed by the GCBA to head a committee surveying the living conditions of the Burmese peasantry.⁶² As he was an Upper Burma (Shwebo) born man who lived in Moulmein from 1908 till the late 1920s, he probably established a relationship with Chit Hlaing there and became involved in the YMBA movement.⁶³ From 1909 the Theosophical Society took on the ideas of Messianism, through Besant's adoption of the Indian boy Krishnamurti as a 'World Teacher associated with Maitreya'. When Chit Hlaing toured rural areas, he was often attired in the costume of a Burmese king and was accompanied by subordinates holding a golden parasol, the symbol of the Burmese monarchy. This was intended to cast him in the role of *Min Laung*, the Burmese Messiah who restored the Buddhist monarchy. Although he was a supporter of modern parliamentary democracy, this suggests that Saya San was also perhaps inspired by Besant's idea of the 'Messiah'. It is also possible that Saya San derived his inspiration to become the 'Messiah' from observing Chit Hlaing's activities. He also seems to have enjoyed the San Shar stories. When he published a book on Burmese herbal medicine entitled *Lekkhanuuzu Kyan* (Book of Shining Records) in 1927, he recorded in the preface that his childhood name was 'San Shar'.⁶⁴ He appears to have used this coincidence in an attempt to promote his book. On the day Saya San was sent to the scaffold in 1931, his last words were 'I have acted for the sake of the future prosperity of 'Amyo, Badha, Thathana, Pyinnyaye' (Race, Language, Religion and Education), so I accept even this moment as a form of happiness.'⁶⁵ Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa) bitterly criticised the

⁶¹ A member of today's Myanmar Theosophical Society described this as an example of the influence of the Theosophical Society on Burmese nationalism (interviewed on 28 January 2012 in Yangon).

⁶² Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, 199.

⁶³ Than Win Hlaing. *Ahnikchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidhan* (Encyclopaedia of Burmese History), Vol. 1 (Yangon: Pyinnya Shwedaung Saouk Taik, 2010), 294-295.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 294-295.

⁶⁵ Than Win Hlaing refers to this episode on the basis of an article in the *Loukthar Pedhu Nezin* (Working Peoples' Daily) newspaper dated 2 May 1965. This article is an interview with a person called Sein, who witnessed the execution of Saya San on 28 November 1931 as Assistant Director (Lethtauk Hmu) of

violence of Saya San's peasant rebellion in some of his short stories.⁶⁶ For his part, however, Shwe U Daung did not make any comment about the rebellion in his 'Record of Life and Thoughts'. Saya San, Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa) and Shwe U Daung are all voices of the different cultural currents that circulated through the YMBA/GCBA. The nationalist slogan that originated from the YMBA, 'Race, Language, Religion and Education', gathered together people with many different nationalist narratives.

As we have seen, through Ba Pe's and Chit Haling's activities and narratives, Burmese nationalism in the first three decades of the twentieth century maintained a connection with the Theosophical Society and Theosophists. On the reasons for the acceptance of Theosophy by Indian nationalists, Mark Bevir explains:

Theosophy and neo-Hinduism helped to provide Indian nationalists with an ideology that described India as a unified entity that had a common heritage and also popularized a belief in a golden age when India had been a paradise free from the spiritual and social problems of modernity.⁶⁷

Burmese nationalists also tried to apply this idea through neo-Buddhism, which encouraged the spread of ideas associated with the revival of an idealised Buddhist monarchy. However these ideas were not easily brought into a unified whole, and this contributed to the complexity of YMBA/GCBA politics. From the last half of the 1930s, the ideas of socialism and communism introduced by the Thakins became influential as nationalist narratives. Although the YMBA/GCBA failed to incorporate Theosophical ideas into Burmese politics, I would argue that Theosophical ideals such as universal brotherhood and the Theosophical interest in spiritualism are kept alive in Shwe U Daung's works.⁶⁸ In addition, and outside the arena of nationalist politics, from the 1930s the Theosophical Society in Myanmar continued their activities as a cultural organisation promoting vegetarianism.⁶⁹

Tharawaddy prison. See Than Win Hlaing. *Ahnitchouk Myanma Thamaing Abidan* (Encyclopaedia of Myanmar History). Vol. 1. (Yangon: Pyinnya Shwedaung Sape, 2010), 308-309.

⁶⁶ For example, *Dhabon Ange* [Heat of Rebels], *I Khit Hsoe* [This bad era]

⁶⁷ "Theosophy as a Political Movement" by Mark Bevir, in *Gurus and their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, ed. Antony Copley (Oxford, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁸ Shwe U Daung's adoption of the spirit of universal brotherhood and his interest in spiritualism have been passed down to the best of today's popular novelists and fortune tellers, Min Thein Kha (1938 – 2005). He was deeply influenced by Shwe U Daung's detective stories and adventure novels and later himself became a member of the Theosophical Society in Myanmar. I intend to discuss his life and works on another occasion.

⁶⁹ At the age of 94, Mr. Carl Ba Phyu told me that the Theosophical Society was accepted as an organisation promoting vegetarianism and that he often saw their bills posted on electric poles in Mandalay in the 1930s (personal discussion, March 2013).

From the colonial regime to the Japanese Occupation

While deepening his interest in Buddhism, Shwe U Daung was also serious about enjoying life. After returning to Yangon in 1934, he stayed for a while at the residence of Pi Monin, an old friend and colleague at the Thuriya Press in 1917. There, in the heart of downtown Rangoon, and joined by Thein Pe who was visiting from Katha, Shwe U Daung and his friends enjoyed the taste of Indian naans and Chinese roast duck and kept talking till morning with the aid of marijuana cigarettes.⁷⁰ Eating out with his friends Thein Pe and Khin Maung Tin was also a source of enjoyable moments for Shwe U Daung. Taking the evening breeze, drinking *Kaungye* (Burmese liquor) from a chipped coconut shell accompanied by grilled chicken and beef jerky at a street stall, or beer with cheese sandwiches at a table covered with pure white linen under a ceiling fan in a hotel, Shwe U Daung enjoyed life in the cosmopolitan city Rangoon and relished his experiences there.⁷¹

While Shwe U Daung was indulging in the pleasures of urban life in the mid-1930s, the political landscape was undergoing an important shift brought about by generational change in the leadership of Burmese nationalism. In the year Shwe U Daung returned to the Thuriya Press, the majority of shares in the company were bought by Saw, a formidable politician, who, in the following year, took up the position of Managing Director of the press. Saw became a well-known politician under the name of 'Galon' Saw after serving as Saya San's defence lawyer and he eventually became the third Prime Minister of British Burma, from 1940 to 1942. Similarly, Dr. Ba Maw, who also worked as a lawyer for Saya San, became a formidable politician and British Burma's first Prime Minister in 1937. Both of these men were GCBA politicians who tried to develop their own political power in the colonial parliament with the aim of achieving dominion status for Burma. Both were also more than ten years younger than Ba Pe and Chit Hlaing, who were born in the 1880s. Their emergence as prominent politicians marked the waning of the first generation of nationalist politicians associated with the YMBA and the influence of the Theosophical Society.⁷² It is unclear how much these new younger leaders Saw and Dr. Ba Maw were influenced by Theosophy. They do not seem to have been influenced by Gandhi's pacifism either because both organised private armies (volunteer corps) for their own political parties.⁷³ It has been often pointed out that the 1930s saw the emergence of a younger generation in the Thakins, who regarded the

⁷⁰ At that time marijuana cigarettes were openly sold in street shops in Rangoon.

⁷¹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 300.

⁷² Ba Pe and Chit Hlaing were born in 1883 and 1879 respectively. Galon Saw and Dr. Ba Maw were born in 1900 and 1893 respectively.

⁷³ Robert H. Taylor. *The State in Myanmar*, 207.

GCBA politicians as the old generation.⁷⁴ However, the fact that a change of generation among GCBA nationalists also took place at this time is an important aspect of Burmese nationalism at the time and its influence on subsequent developments.

Shwe U Daung carefully recorded his observations of Galon Saw as he was a controversial figure and hated by Burmese when Shwe U Daung was writing his autobiography in the late 1950s. In the 1930s, Galon Saw expanded his political power as an anti-British nationalist with financial support by Japanese government and military authorities. He then changed his attitude as pro-British and was appointed to the third Prime Minister of British Burma between December 1940 and January 1942. During this period, he betrayed the British and made contact with the Japanese government. As a result he was arrested by the British authorities and detained in Africa for four years. After he was released he was arrested again in 1947 as the mastermind behind the assassination of General Aung San and eventually executed, even though many aspects of the assassination remained unclear.

Shwe U Daung stated that his editorials for the *Thuriya* newspaper were always written from an anti-colonialist standpoint.⁷⁵ His autobiography also reveals that he appears to have been held in high regard by Galon Saw. He was satisfied with the editorials written by Shwe U Daung and never dismissed him, even after Shwe U Daung took repeated leave in 1938 and campaigned strongly for a pay rise, protesting the extremely high payment Galon Saw gave himself compared with other staff in the company.⁷⁶ Shwe U Daung also remarked that Galon Saw was a tactful politician who gave priority to the maintenance of good human relationships, even if he did not know much about the newspaper business.⁷⁷

Regardless of their social status, the network of YMBA/GCBA nationalists seems to have shared a sense of the common community. One day in 1941 an editorial written by Shwe U Daung provoked discontent on the part of the colonial government. Being mixed with his anti-British tendency at the time his editorial described satirically about the timing of a recent German air-raid in England which occurred when people were eating ice cream on the street, quoting an English newspaper's report. The editorial was seen as taking a mocking attitude towards British authorities. When he was summoned to the Secretariat Office to be cautioned, his friend the author Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa), who was the Second Secretary to the Ministry of Defence happened to be there, and his

⁷⁴ Ibid. 203-206. Nemoto Kei, *Teikoh to Kyohryoku no Hazama – Kindai biruma-shi no naka no igirisu to nihon*, (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010) 127-128.

⁷⁵ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 453.

⁷⁶ The monthly salary for Galon Saw was 750 Rupees and for Shwe U Daung was 135 Rupees. See. Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 306.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 359.

presence ensured that no punishment was given to Shwe U Daung.⁷⁸

In the first half of 1941 Shwe U Daung's mother Shwe passed away at seventy-four years of age. His father did not come to the funeral, having now been living with a woman around thirty years his junior for three or four years. Shwe U Daung respected his father's freedom, but partly because of his father's conduct, his descriptions of his mother are more favourable than those of his father. He described his parents and himself as 'unusual parents and son' because when he was thirty-five years of age, both of his parents, former aristocrats at the palace in Mandalay, became Buddhist seekers after the truth in a rural area. Especially his mother inspired Shwe U Daung to follow the practice of Buddhism, which meant adopting the teaching of individual effort for good will.⁷⁹

In the same year Shwe U Daung published the last San Shar episode before the war, entitled *Kyawlaw Lulaw* (Human or Tiger?) in the August issue of *Kyipwaye* magazine. This was also his first publication with Kyipwaye Press. This story was an original work by Shwe U Daung based on his experience of a tiger hunting expedition in Katha district in 1923 or 1924. His close friend Thein Pe, who was also a good hunter, invited Shwe U Daung on the expedition. They waited for hours for the tigers to appear, positioned on a deck built in a big tree, but a panther was the only animal they saw. They shot the panther, but it ran away into the jungle.⁸⁰ From this experience, Shwe U Daung created a story of the murder of a man who fell from a deck in a tree while tiger hunting, which was the result of a plot by the man's wife and one of his friends who were having an affair. The storyline is rather stereotyped and not very successful, but the writing vividly describes the contrast between people's greed for money and the rich timber-producing environment of Katha.

Suddenly war broke out. On 23rd and 25th of December 1941 Rangoon was subjected to a Japanese air raid and the Japanese Army invaded Burma from Thailand. Together with the Burma Independence Army (BIA), Japanese forces occupied Rangoon in March 1942, and held the city until August in the same year. In the turmoil the Thuriya Press was obliged to cease publication in early 1942 and came under the control of the Japanese Army. Shwe U Daung lost his job at the press and for four years derived almost

⁷⁸ Ibid. 339.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 334-337.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 235-242. In today's thoughts Buddhists enjoy hunting sounds against Buddha's teaching, however some English educated Burmese in the colonial period often practiced sport hunting. They were keen to learn life style of western style masculinity including hunting. Probably because Thein Pe was a second generation of Christian, he was more familiar with hunting. Shwe U Daung also recorded his memories that when he returned from the hunting late at night, his mother asked him if he obtained any tiger. He answered 'no' and then his mother told him that she had kept praying so that any tigers would not be killed. See: Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 247.

no income from publishing. Neither did he have a house or savings. He often had to risk travelling between Rangoon and Mandalay to buy and sell goods such as medicines to ensure his family's survival. He stayed in Katha with his family for some time, but the area was subjected to Japanese air raids and eventually they sought refuge in Magyidone village. During the war, Shwe U Daung's father and his close friend Thein Pe also passed away. His autobiography does not contain any expression of support for the Japanese military administration and the BIA. He recalled 1 August 1943, the day of which the Japanese military gave independence to Burma under the government of Dr. Ba Maw with no joy at all because he was unemployed and had great difficulty in finding transportation.⁸¹ In Magyidone village he was the only person proficient in English, but as he was afraid of being taken for a British spy, he kept this fact secret and lived like an old man outside the village until the retreat of the Japanese Army.⁸² In the month of 'Pyadaw' (November or December) in 1945 he had a chance to talk with an officer from a Scottish Highlander unit that occupied the village. The officer apologised to Shwe U Daung for the destruction of the fence in front of his house when his unit entered the village. This was the first time he had spoken English for almost three years.⁸³ In early 1946 the publishing industry in British Burma resumed its activities and Shwe U Daung received offers of employment from several publishers. The time to write again had come.

Conclusion

Christopher Bayley and Tim Harper have described the popularity of the San Shar stories and the distinctive cultural influence of publications by the Thuriya Press towards the end of the colonial period in Burma in the late 1930s:

The exploits of the 'Burmese Sherlock Holmes', Maung San Shar, were particularly popular. The radio was careful to broadcast Burmese music and popular songs along with Judy Garland and Operetta Selection, introduced by Noel Coward. *Sun Magazine* printed stories about the doings of an idealized Burmese family. Unfortunately, though, not all manifestations of Burmese nationalism were so harmless. Much of its energy was directed outward against the Indians.⁸⁴

I question their statement that much of the energy of Burmese nationalism was directed outward against the Indians. It is true that anti-Indian sentiment generated by the Thakin party at the time was significant and their tactics eventually brought

⁸¹ Ibid. 391.

⁸² Ibid. 421, 440.

⁸³ Ibid. 440-443.

⁸⁴ Bayley and Harper, *Forgotten Armies*, 90.

independence to Burma, but as we have seen in previous Chapters, in the late 1930s the Thakin Party was not the dominant force of Burmese nationalism yet. The popularity of the San Shar stories and *Sun or Thuriya* magazine, in other words the YMBA/GCBA culture should not be overlooked. It tells us that there were another opinions which were not directed at Indians, which shows us that another type of nationalism existed, one which accepted Rangoon as a cosmopolitan city with a big Indian population, and sought the possibility of living together and building a modern Burmese identity. Among the YMBA nationalists Shwe U Daung was the main proponent of individual freedom and equality in a multicultural society, which indicated that he valued the importance of human rights. His narrative sought an ideal Burmese society based on a Buddhist sense of justice, a modern 'sacred communion'. There is a need for further discussion of the extent to which this ideology was practised among the Burmese political elite of the time. Under the circumstances of World War II, both the Thakin party and the young generation of the GCBA, including Galon Saw and Dr. Ba Maw, applied the strategy of military power and violence. Such an approach always contained the possibility of a shift to ultra-nationalism, putting excessive priority on national interests. Shwe U Daung's nationalist narrative based on human rights and a Buddhist sense of justice represented an ongoing alternative. As we will see in the next chapter this narrative was revived in the San Shar stories published after the war and again gained wide support among readers.

CHAPTER 6

San Shar the Detective and Burmese Society (1946 – 1962)

After Japan's surrender and acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration by America, Britain and the Republic of China in August 1945, the government of British Burma returned to Rangoon after three years in Simla, India, in October of the same year. Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor-General of Burma, declared the restoration of the war-torn society to be the most urgent challenge confronting the government and the question of dominion status was postponed indefinitely. Aung San and the former Thakin force, the AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League), began negotiations with the British aimed at achieving full independence (in the form of a Burmese Republic) as soon as possible. On 4 January 1948, six months after the assassination of Aung San, Burma attained its independence and Nu became the new nation's first Prime Minister. Seen retrospectively from the experience of Ne Win's unsuccessful experiment with socialist economics and military rule, the Burmese people often regard the Nu era (1948 to 1962) as a time of democratic governance and material affluence. Independent Burma, however, immediately faced a number of serious insurgencies. As leading historian Michael Charney has pointed out, the supposed prosperity of the U Nu era was in fact a myth; the country's economic status was in a precarious condition from the early independence period.¹

Nemoto states that one of the difficulties faced by newly independent Burma was that the state was established first and attempts to mobilise support from the people followed, as was common among other new nations established in the post-war period.² In this connection, Anthony D. Smith analyses the features of mass-mobilisation of the people in nations such as Burma:

under 'mass-mobilizing' regimes which commonly lack a credible unifying past to under-pin the new polyethnic states in Africa and Asia, the Party and State must 'make history,' and through its activities and symbols galvanize the citizenry into collective self-sacrifice for the common good. Here, the dependence of the generally small state-nation, combined with its internal heterogeneity, tends to throw up more restrictive and mass mobilizing regimes, particularly where one *ethnie* seeks to dominate the rest and mould the state in its image, as in Burma and Ethiopia, and, to some extent, Kenya and Zimbabwe.³

¹ Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 81.

² Nemoto Kei, *Monogatari Biruma no Rekishi* (The Story of Burmese History) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2014), 265.

³ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 219-220.

Leaving aside the question of ethnic minorities, it is pertinent in this context to ask how ordinary members of the major ethno-religious group, Buddhist Burmans experienced independence and the society it engendered during the Nu era. Shwe U Daung's autobiography *Record of Life and Thoughts* and many of the San Shar stories written and published during this period are valuable guides to the views of the non-political elite of this era. Although they supported and shared some of the independent state's own narratives, these people were also looking for peace and freedom in their daily lives. Amid the instability of life at this time, I argue that Shwe U Daung, with the help of Buddhist and Western philosophies, deepened his commitment to the values of individuality, which in his view was often neglected by the government of post-independence Burma.

The resurgence of the Burmese publishing industry

By the end of 1945, the year British power returned to Burma, more than ten Burmese newspapers were in circulation. These included major newspapers from the colonial period such as *Thuriya*, *Myanma Ain*, *Thandawsin* and *Hanthawaddy*.⁴ In the same year the *Ashedaing Lazin* (The Asia Monthly) magazine began publication and in 1947 it was followed by the *Dagon* magazine and the *Shumawa* magazine. *Shumawa* became one of the most representative literary magazines of post-colonial Burma. In 1949 the *Sondaik* (Detective) magazine was published and within a few years Burmese literature and publishing activities rapidly regained their vitality.⁵ By early 1946 Shwe U Daung received invitations to contribute to three Rangoon newspapers, *Thuriya*, *Bamar Khit* and *Hanthawaddy*. He was most attracted by the offer from *Hanthawaddy*, which was a publication of the Buritisha Burmar (British Burma) Press where he had once worked as an administrator. Before sending his letter of acceptance, he travelled from Magyidone village to Mandalay.

Shwe U Daung remembered this journey in connection with an aspect of the social conditions of post-war Burma. In March of the same year he, his wife Soe and their beloved puppy Bobby set off for Mandalay. As the railway line between Mandalay and Wetlet had not yet been restored after its destruction by the Japanese Army, people had to travel by truck. On the crowded truck bed Shwe U Daung had a small quarrel with some other passengers, rural women.

'Wow, this old man is travelling with a big dog. I'm sure this dog will bite other people,' the

⁴ Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin, *Myanma Swezone Kyan* (Encyclopaedia of Myanmar), Vol. 10, Sapay Beikman, Rangoon, 1966, 235

⁵ Tin Tun Oo, Dr., *Saouk, Sanezin, Sakyidaik hnin Myanmar Sape* (Books, Periodicals, Libraries and Burmese Literature), Thuta Swezon Saouk Taik, Yangon, 1999, 128-129

woman said in a loud voice. 'Please, look at him, he's only a puppy.' I begged their pardon. But another woman kept complaining, 'Hey you, sit on the other side. This dog is so smelly.' 'I wash this dog every day. He smells sweeter than you.' As I made this sharp retort, the group of women stared at me unhappily. What I said was not to just rebut what they had said, but the truth. One of my nephews took Bobby to a pond built near the fence on our property to wash him.⁶

Shwe U Daung explains that these outspoken women thought he was a poor country man because he was poorly dressed. During the Japanese occupation, the loss of contact with the international market caused serious inflation and a lack of goods, especially textiles.⁷ Regarding this experience he also stated that many people (obviously not only those of the middle class) had unpleasant experiences at that time because of their poor clothes; this was also associated with his negative perception of communism.

At that time, everybody was wearing coarse cotton *longyi* [sarongs] and when they went out they were often ill-treated by others, those who judged someone they met only by appearances. As I had not yet read any leftist literature at that time, I was also scared of communism that makes everybody a part of one and the same class.⁸

Communism was one of the influential factors in Burma's independence struggle. As Taylor states, 'the Communists were the most visible political force in the three years between the end of the war and the formal grant of independence'.⁹ The Burma Communist Party (BCP), had split into two rival sects (Thakin Soe's 'Red Flags' and Thakin Than Tun's 'White Flags') in January 1946. In March of the year when Shwe U Daung travelled to Mandalay, an American diplomat recorded that 'the Communist programme was the most appealing to the peasantry'.¹⁰ Shwe U Daung's comment about communism appears to reflect the spread of communism in rural areas near Mandalay. Britain was concerned about the spread of communism in Burma and chose Aung San, a democratic socialist, as their negotiating partner in talks aimed at formalising Burma's independence. This caused discontent among the Communists, whose leaders were also old Thakins. When the Communists did not gain any positions in the independent government in 1948, they began a series of insurgencies.

In Mandalay, Shwe U Daung visited his late father's old friends, Tin and his wife Su. Their daughter Amar was running Kyipwaye Press with her husband Hla and they were

⁶ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts) (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 450.

⁷ Nemoto Kei, *Monogatari Biruma no Rekishi*. 205.

⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 450.

⁹ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 243.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 242.

preparing to re-launch their weekly newspaper '*Ludu Journal*' as a daily, under the title '*Ludu*'.¹¹ The family offered Shwe U Daung the position of editor-in-chief of their paper and he accepted. He refused the offer from the *Hanthawaddy* newspaper and moved to Mandalay to start his new job on 1 April 1946.

Some Rangoon-based publishers kept up their attempts to bring Shwe U Daung to Rangoon. One of these was the right-wing politician Galon Saw, the former prime minister who had been detained in Uganda because of treason against the British government. He was a great admirer of Shwe U Daung's writings and translations, and in early 1947 he sent his secretary to Mandalay to try to persuade Shwe U Daung to return to his *Thuriya* newspaper, working as editor-in-chief. Galon Saw was condoned and had returned to Burma in 1946 after four years' detention, reorganising his Myochit party and winning a ministerial position in parliament.¹² In his autobiography, Shwe U Daung expresses his attachment to Thuriya Press, where he had first gained success as an author, and confesses that although he was attracted by the position of editor-in-chief for the *Thuriya* newspaper, he refused the offer. He says that he could not trust Saw's shrewd personality and also that his main interest had shifted to the Mandalay-based *Ludu* newspaper which had become successful within a year.¹³ British authorities had first discussed future independence with Saw, but in 1946 they made Aung San their negotiating partner. When Aung San and nine other members of the AFPFL, mainly ministers, were assassinated in July 1947, more than 1,500 suspects were arrested. Eventually Galon Saw was judged responsible for the assassination and he was executed in the following year. Shwe U Daung recalls this incident as an indication that 'if I had followed Saw, and accepted his invitation, I also would have been arrested and placed under suspicion'.¹⁴

The Japanese occupation hastened the retirement of the GCBA politicians who looked to the colonial parliament as their main arena. The new conditions supported the Thakins and their group the AFPFL as the major force in the anti-Japanese and anti-British movement. Nemoto argues that 'in short the Japanese occupation [...] dramatically pushed the change of generation of political elites in Burma'.¹⁵ The collaboration between the GCBA and the Thakin generation was in evidence for example, in Aung San's visit to London in January 1947 for the Aung San-Attlee Treaty to confirm Burma's choice of future status: full independence or dominion. Ba Pe, a veteran GCBA politician who negotiated on numerous occasions with the British government,

¹¹ In Myanmar a weekly newspaper is called 'Jarneh', a term derived from the English 'Journal'.

¹² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 453-454.

¹³ *Ibid.* 453-454.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 454.

¹⁵ Nemoto Kei, *Monogatari Biruma no Rekishi*. 220.

accompanied Aung San as a member of the delegation. However Galon Saw's execution strongly diminished the presence of GCBA politicians by association, and also diminished the importance of the cultural heritage of the Thuriya Press. The *Thuriya* newspaper kept losing readers and discontinued publication in 1952.

The Return of San Shar the Detective

Despite the unstable socio-political situation, freedom of publication was restored in post-independence Burma. Readers of this time were starved for knowledge and entertainment, so the climate was favourable for a return of Shwe U Daung the writer. After a six-year hiatus, the San Shar stories began to reappear in the *Shumawa* magazine, which published most of the thirty-three episodes produced in the post-independence era up until 1962. Through analysis of these episodes, this section will explore Shwe U Daung's thoughts about the newly independent society as well as his recollections of the colonial era. The features of these thirty-three episodes can be summarised as follows.

First of all, there are some new adaptations based on pastiches of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Secondly, many episodes were re-written as different versions of adaptations of Doyle's original stories. Thirdly, aspects of Burma's independence movement, such as political incidents and the question of Burmese identity, are expressed in some episodes. And finally, in conjunction with the third feature, these San Shar stories were not set in the post-colonial era, but in the colonial period. Taking these features into account, the following discussion analyses the stories listed below:

1. *Wundauk Lulein Ahmu* (A Case of Fraud Involving a Sub-Divisional Officer) *¹⁶
Shumawa, August 1947
 Based on Ronald A. Nox's pastiche "The Adventure of the First Class Carriage" in *The Apocryphal Sherlock Holmes*
2. *Bo Kabya Magalay Tayauk Ahmu* (The Case of an Anglo-Burmese Girl)
Shumawa, November 1947
 Based on "The Adventure of the Copper Beaches"
3. *Amwe mapelodhaw pahtwe Ahmu* (The Case of the Stepfather Who Did Not Wish to Inherit the Property)
Shumawa, January 1948
 Based on "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"
4. *Pinle Kanchey hnaik Gyansathin Kyaungdha Maung Ba Oo Athat Kan-yahmu*
 (The Murder of Ba Oo, a Theological Student, on the Beach)
Shumawa, August 1948

¹⁶ * indicates that the episode is not based on the Sherlock Holmes stories.

- Based on "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane"
5. *Maharaja Ta-oo Ahmu* (The Case of a Maharaja)
Shumawa, March 1949
Based on "A Scandal in Bohemia"
 6. *Htuzandhaw Naywet Pyat Hna-hku Ahmu* (The Strange Case of the Severed Ear)
Shumawa, July 1949
Based on "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box"
 7. *Bonnan Yeikthar Eingyi hnint Patthetthaw Ahmu* (The Case of the Magnificent Mansion)
Shumawa, Septemer 1949
Based on "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge"
 8. *Phahtamazone Sondaukkedhaw Ahmu* (Mr. San Shar's First Case)
Shumawa, April 1953
Based on "The Gloria Scott"
 9. *Bingali Zagarbyan Ahmu* (The Case of the Bengali Interpreter)
Shumawa, July 1953
Based on "The Greek Interpreter"
 10. *Thaik Hsaya Tayauk Ahmu* (The Case of the Fortune-hunter)
Shumawa, December 1954
Based on "The Musgrave Ritual"
 11. *Htuzandhaw Gazar dhamar Tayauk Ahmu* (The Case of a Strange Athlete) *
Shumawa, December 1954
 12. *Sheinmakar Ywa Lu That Hmu* (Murder in Shein-ma-kar Village)*
Shumawa, February 1955
 13. *Tainkat Nayimya Yaikkhwehmu* (Destroyed Clocks)
Thwedauk, Septemer 1961
Based on "The Adventure of the Seven Clocks"¹⁷
 14. *Ingaleik Sitbo Linmaya Ahmu* (The Case of the British Army Officer and his Wife)
Thwedauk, October 1961
Based on "The Adventure of the Black Baronet"
 15. *Le-Wun U Thar Lu hnint Zani Ma Khin Tint Ahmu* (The Case of the Land Officer Mr. Thar Lu and his wife Khin Tint)
Thwedauk, June 1962
Based on "The Adventure of the Sealed Rooms"

¹⁷ An episode from a pastiche collection, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* (1954), written by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr. Items 15 and 16 are also from this book.

New San Shar Stories Around the Time of Independence

The return of the San Shar stories was inaugurated with an episode entitled “A Case of Fraud Involving a Sub-Divisional officer” (Wundauk Luleinhmu) in 1947. This episode was an adaptation based on a pastiche by Ronald A. Knox, “The Adventure of the First Class Carriage”, which was published before 1937. The original story’s main mystery, the disappearance of a man in a moving railway carriage is recreated in a story about a man who acted as if he had disappeared in a carriage travelling from Rangoon to Pegu by disguising himself. After the death of Conan Doyle in 1930, a number of new mystery writers, including Agatha Christie, emerged in *The Strand Magazine*; at the same time, American pulp fiction magazines also began publishing a raft of new detective stories. Shwe U Daung appears to have been keen to explore this new development in the writing of detective stories in Britain and America.

In “A Case of Fraud Involving a Sub-Divisional Officer” San Shar and Thein Maung appear again in their old flat located on 40th Street in downtown Rangoon. At the beginning of the episode, San Shar’s eccentric but impartial attitude is again introduced to readers:

I have written many times that San Shar the detective is a person who does not care at all about people’s social status, whether they are high or low, in his discussion of cases he is dealing with. For San Shar, a criminal is just a criminal and the person’s social rank means nothing. San Shar listens with great care to everyone who brings him unusual and curious cases. No matter whether the person is of high social status, when San Shar finds a person is dishonest, he relentlessly speaks out.¹⁸

San Shar’s attitude is a reflection of Shwe U Daung’s ideals as a writer of newspaper editorials during a time of drastic change in power and authority.

Between 1947 and 1949, besides “A Case of Fraud Involving a Sub-Divisional Officer” Shwe U Daung wrote three new adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories, namely “The Case of the Anglo-Burmese Girl” (1947), “The Murder of Ba Oo, a Theological Student, on the Beach” (1948), and “The Case of the Magnificent Mansion” (1949). Among these stories, “The Case of the Anglo-Burmese Girl” is an episode clearly reflecting post-war social conditions in Burma. A young Anglo-Burmese, Miss Norma, with no immediate family or relatives supports herself as a governess, until her employer, an English army officer and his family, return to Britain, leaving her jobless. When she falls into debt in order to pay her daily living costs, she is offered a position as governess by a wealthy Anglo-Burmese family. The wages are unusually good, but apart from teaching their little

¹⁸ Shwe U Daung. *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* (Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories). Vol. 2. (Yangon: Seikku Cho Cho Sape, 2011), 1186.

son, the job includes the strange duties of getting her hair cut short, and wearing their daughter's clothes. Eventually San Shar and Thein Maung save Miss Norma from the house and reveal the family's secret. The wife and husband have said their daughter was away travelling but in fact she is trapped in a secret room in the house. She is the wife's daughter by her former husband, and her husband was attempting to appropriate the property of his step-daughter.

The establishment of new government by the AFPFL made many Anglo-Burmese uncomfortable, as this government of former Thakins was critical of the Anglo-Burmese, and around this time many families left Burma for other countries such as Britain, Australia and New Zealand.¹⁹ This episode suggests the vulnerable status of Anglo-Burmese in post-war Burma and Shwe U Daung's sympathy for those who faced difficulties as a result. The episode also clearly shows aspects of the contemporary time setting. When San Shar and Thein Maung spend an afternoon in the garden of a friend's house in a suburb of Rangoon, it is described as, 'the house of Mr. Po Mya, who had passed away during the recent time of war.'²⁰ The description of a peaceful garden with flowers and domestic animals seems to be associated with Shwe U Daung's experiences at a country house in a village of Katha owned by his late friend Thein Pe. Being influenced by Western novels, Shwe U Daung was interested in life in a country house with domestic animals such as dogs and horses, but it was difficult for him to maintain such a place himself. He often visited Thein Pe's spacious house with its big garden in Zalit Chaung village near Katha.²¹

The time setting of "The Murder of Ba Oo, a Theological Student, on the Beach" could be contemporary or during the colonial period. This episode is based on "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" which is famous for being the only episode among the canon of the forty Sherlock Holmes stories to be written in the style of a monologue by Holmes himself. It is set during a period when Holmes has retired to a coastal area in Sussex and is living as a bee keeper. "The Murder of Ba Oo, a Theological Student, on the Beach" is also presented as a monologue by San Shar, but unlike the English detective, San Shar does not retire until the last episode in 1962. In this episode, being directed by a doctor to take a prolonged rest, San Shar visits a beach resort in Tavoy with two servants and rents a beach cottage.²² He becomes close to an American Baptist missionary Mr. Kelly who is also staying there with his Burmese theological students. The plot follows the original episode, where the mysterious death of a theological student turns out to be an

¹⁹ Nemoto Kei, *Monogatari Biruma no Rekishi*. 270-273.

²⁰ Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* Vol. 2. 1202.

²¹ Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung) (Mandalay: Kyipwayay Press, 1953), 72-73, 97.

²² Tavoy is located in the south-eastern part of Myanmar. It is today's Dawai in Thanindayi Division.

accidental death caused by a poisonous jellyfish, which has drifted in from the open sea during a recent storm.²³ The name Mr. Kelly must have originated from Shwe U Daung's English high school in Mandalay, which was well-known as the 'Kelly school'. Through writing "The Case of the Anglo-Burmese Girl" and "The Murder of Ba Oo, a Theological Student, on the Beach" Shwe U Daung probably intended to show his sympathy for the English-speaking Christian communities in Burma that became increasingly vulnerable around the time of the country's independence.

"The Case of the Maharaja" (1949) is not a new work, but a third version of a Sherlock Holmes story. It is significant as an indication of Shwe U Daung's unchanged cosmopolitan attitude. The setting is in the colonial period, as San Shar and Thein Maung are staying at their other flat on Brocken Street, and the story revolves around San Shar's efforts to save an Indian Maharaja from a scandal brought about by his love affair with the English dancer Lucy White.²⁴ The famous introduction to Doyle's original story, beginning with the words "For Sherlock Holmes, she is always *the* woman", a statement of Holmes's strong attraction to the female protagonist in his story, is omitted in the San Shar story. Nevertheless, the ending of the story shows how San Shar and Lucy White were very attracted to each other.

Another new episode "The Case of the Magnificent Mansion" (1949) is adapted from an original story about an unfortunate Englishman who became involved in a conspiracy involving a former Spanish dictator in a country in South America. In the San Shar story, the Englishman becomes a Burmese man who makes a connection with a corrupt rich man (also Burmese). The episode begins with Thein Maung's statement that this is one of the cases that San Shar dealt with during the colonial period. After progressing through layers of mystery the story focuses on two Burmese couples from Shwebo.²⁵ A man who left Shwebo a long time ago becomes a successful businessman and a regional warlord somewhere in Burma, but is involved in crime. Thousands of people working for him live under harsh conditions. Another couple from Shwebo go to this region in search of their fortune, but the husband is killed by the regional warlord. Since that time the wife has been seeking revenge for her husband. The story line skilfully follows Doyle's original. Why are these Burmese killing each other? Why are all these people being exploited? I suspect that Shwe U Daung was using this story to highlight some aspects of contemporary Burmese social conditions such as civil war, warlords and the exploited people. He was careful in his attitude towards the Nu government, because in

²³ Following Doyle's original, the San Shar story relates that the jellyfish has come from 'the Atlantic Ocean' (See Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* Vol. 2. 1247) but this sounds unlikely in relation to a beach in Myanmar.

²⁴ San Shar's flat was first presented as located on Brooking Street (today's Bogalay Zay Street), but later episodes are often on 40th Street.

²⁵ Shwebo is located in Upper Burma.

April of the same year (1949) he experienced his first interrogation by the army regarding his writings published in the *Ludu* newspaper. This newspaper was one of the Nu government's strongest critics.

Kyipwaye Press and their *Ludu* Newspaper

What kind of publishing house was Kyipwaye Press, the publisher of the *Ludu* newspaper, and what were its relations with the U Nu government? The relationship between Shwe U Daung and Kyipwaye Press dates back to before the war and his first publication with the press was "Tiger or Human?", published in the *Kyipwaye* magazine in 1941. Kyipwaye Press was first established by Hla in Rangoon around 1933 and it published many expressions of opinion on social reform. Sein Tin (Theikpan Maung Wa) was close to Hla and he published much of his socio/political criticism in the form of essays and plays in *Kyipwaye* under numerous different pen-names.²⁶ This was before the establishment of the Nagani Book Club (1937) and the attraction of Hla and his fiancée Amar, both of whom were young journalists, to communism and socialism. Kyipwaye Press appears to have moved to Mandalay during the war. In 1945 it offered Shwe U Daung a job translating Dr. Hay's *Health via Food*, which was published as *Ahaya phyint Kyanmar Nyi* in 1946.

After Shwe U Daung joined Kyipwaye Press, three translated books by Shwe U Daung were published within two years, *Akya Nyan phyint Kyipwaye (Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hills) (in 1946), and *Gamon-net (The Black Tulip* by Alexander Dumas) and *The Hound of Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle (both in 1947).²⁷

Kyipwaye Press eventually changed its name to Ludu Press. When this change occurred is not known but it seems to have been after 1962, during the Ne Win 'Burmese Way to Socialism' era. The name given to their newspaper, 'Ludu', first sounded peculiar to Shwe U Daung. Hla and Amar explained that it was a translation of 'the people' in English, which made Shwe U Daung more aware of the spread of the new ideology of communism/socialism, although he was not interested enough at this time to pursue knowledge of this ideology for himself. As he was writing for the *Thuriya* newspaper in a spirit of anti-colonialism, for *Ludu* he tried to keep writing on the side of the oppressed people, which was also in line with his beliefs as a journalist.²⁸

²⁶ The secret of Sein Tin's pen-names other than 'Theikpan Maung Wa' was kept by Hla and Amar and only finally revealed in *Thu Samya ga pyawgede Theikpan Maung Wa Akyauung* (Theikpan Maung Wa as Told by his Writings) published by their Ludu Saouk taik Press in 1966 to commemorate Sein Tin's twenty-fifth anniversary.

²⁷ Shwe U Daung published an adaptation of *The Hound of Baskervilles* entitled "Pweli Inn-ghwe-gyi Ahmu" (The Case of the Big Burmese Hound in Pweli) as an episode of the San Shar stories during the colonial period, but the date and place of publication are not known.

²⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 452.

Shwe U Daung did not make any comment on Burma's Independence Day, 4 January 1948, in either of his autobiographies. The reason for this is unknown, but it is possible that just as at the time of Dr. Ba Maw's declaration of independence during the Japanese occupation, Shwe U Daung was not so impressed by the event. Immediately after independence, the Burma Communist Party (Red Flag sect) began to wage an insurgency and some forces of the People's Voluntary Organisation (PVO), the pocket army of the AFPFL, rebelled and joined the Communists. Moreover, the Karens were also preparing to fight against the Burmese government at this time. In the previous year, after the KNU (Karen National Union)'s claim for the establishment of a Karen state was rejected by the AFPFL, the KNU formed the militant body, the KNDO (Karen National Defence Organisation), and in January 1949 war broke out between the KNDO and the Burmese government.

After a massacre of Burmese residents of the town of Maymyo near Mandalay by the Karen Army, residents of Mandalay began to fear for their lives.²⁹ When the Karen Army invaded Mandalay, the Tatmadaw (Burma National Army) launched an air raid on the city, just as the British and American army had done against the Japanese Army during World War II. On 13 March the Karen Army took Mandalay and the Tatmadaw retreated to Sagaing, a town across the Irrawaddy River.³⁰ Shwe U Daung published an editorial in the *Ludu* newspaper criticising the Tatmadaw's strategy of air raids over Mandalay, which had failed to take into account the security of the city's residents. He also published an article expressing hopes for the establishment of a peaceful relationship between the Burmese and the Karens.³¹ On 24 April the Tatmadaw successfully regained Mandalay. In the evening some Tamadaw personnel set dynamite charges in the office of the *Ludu* newspaper and blew up the building. Hla and Shwe U Daung were immediately taken to Army headquarters in the former Mandalay Palace.

On the way to Army headquarters Shwe U Daung was at first unable to understand what had caused such violent action directed at the newspaper. Under interrogation, Shwe U Daung was told that the Army was not happy with the articles he had written criticising the Army and advocating friendship with the Karens. In the face of the Army's threats against the press, something he had not previously experienced even during the colonial period, Shwe U Daung wrote that he 'felt a chill go up my spine'.³² Hla and Shwe U Daung were allowed to go home that same night but the *Ludu* newspaper was forced to cease publication.

²⁹ Ibid. 460.

³⁰ The Irrawaddy Rive is now called the Ayeyarwaddy River.

³¹ Ibid. 460-461.

³² Ibid. 462-463.

The Nu government was ultimately responsible for the destruction of the building of the *Ludu* newspaper, but it is doubtful to what extent Nu was in control of the Army at that time. Kyaw Zaw Win has described the nature of the Tatmadaw at the country's independence. Ne Win and the Tatmadaw were not content with the appointment of Nu as Prime Minister, since Nu was not really active in the resistance against the Japanese during the occupation. In their eyes Nu was too weak in his actions against the Communists.³³ Ne Win and a number of prominent members of the Army were socialists who eventually became the core of the Burma Socialist Party. 'In fact the Tatmadaw was the military wing that was used to support BSP political aims. [...] They implemented BSP policy and having become the holders of the revolutionary flag, they put down both civilian and pro-communist army rebellions'.³⁴ After the fall of Mandalay, Nu visited the Tatmadaw in Sagaing. He admitted his incompetence with his statement, 'Since the prime minister was ignorant of military tactics he was of no help at all in the campaign to retake Mandalay. All he could do was to sit outside the Ponnyashin Pagoda and recite ritual verses.'³⁵

The Communists and the Karens were weakened after 1950, but from the end of 1949 the Kuomintang (KMT) began invading the Shan State after being forced to withdraw in the face of the establishment of the PRC (People's Republic of China), setting up a base to continue their battle against the PRC. Under these tensions the Nu government tightened control over the press and also applied various kind of propaganda strategies.³⁶

As the *Ludu* newspaper was suspended, Shwe U Daung had to support himself at this time through translations and other writings. Realising that opportunities were likely to be more forthcoming in Rangoon, he and his wife Soe left Mandalay in September 1950 by boat (the Rangoon-Mandalay railway had not yet been restored). In Rangoon he renewed his old friendships. Nyunt, the owner of the *Hanthawaddy* newspaper, offered him the opportunity to publish his articles on Buddhism under the pen-name of 'Buddha Gawtha (2)'.³⁷ Although there were some problems over payment for Shwe U Daung's translations, the Shumawa Press also continued to offer him opportunities for publication, including the San Shar stories.³⁸ Nevertheless, at some point during his stay

³³ Kyaw Zaw Win, "A History of the Burma Socialist Party (1930-1964)", PhD dissertation, University of Wollongong, 286.

³⁴ Ibid. 278.

³⁵ Nu, U, *U Nu Saturday's Son* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 180.

³⁶ Michael W. Charney, "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", in Christopher Goscha and Christian Ostermann, (eds.), *Imperial Retreat and the Cold War in South and Southeast Asia, 1945 – 1962*. (Washington D.C.: Stanford University Press, 2009) 9. <http://eprints.soas.au.uk/id/eprint/795/>

³⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 468.

³⁸ Ibid. 489.

in Rangoon, he received a letter from Amar informing him that Kyipwaye Press had resumed operations, and decided to return to Mandalay.

Learning Communism/Socialism

During the summer of 1951 (between March and May in Myanmar) Shwe U Daung spent time reading books related to communism and socialism. Under the influence of Hla and Amar he wanted to learn more about these leftist ideologies. He took leave from the Ludu Press and rented a house in Maymyo, a cool hill resort area, staying there for two months. Tawda Swe, an emerging writer who respected Shwe U Daung, went with him. In his autobiography, Shwe U Daung acknowledged a book written by Nu entitled *Meksi-zein* (Marxism) which greatly increased his understanding of communism. He also read a part of Karl Marx's *Capital* and was very impressed by its potential as an economic strategy for a nation. He also could not help feeling distrustful of Nu's shift from communism to anti-communism after he came to power.³⁹

As Buddhists, Shwe U Daung and Nu still shared a common viewpoint in rejecting materialism. Nu was attracted by communism when he was a student of Rangoon University, but according to his autobiography, he eventually became a socialist because socialism enabled him to maintain his religious beliefs.⁴⁰ Also, unlike his late colleague Aung San who advocated a division between politics and religion, when Nu took power, "his personal devotion to Buddhism combined with politically more calculated efforts to strengthen Buddhism as a defence against communism."⁴¹

Shwe U Daung was deeply influenced by communist attempts to relate thinking about the economy to the interests of the people. 'Although I could not entirely accept the materialism of Marxism', he wrote, 'economics, in other words projects for the healthy daily life of the majority of the people, strongly attracted me. I totally agree with these ideas. After returning from Maymyo I began to devote all my energy to writing editorials for *Ludu* and other writings that described the problems created by capitalism.'⁴² These writings were well received by readers and but made some businessmen, including his friend Nyunt, uncomfortable as they thought he had become a communist.⁴³ However, one important point in Shwe U Daung's understanding of communism was his rejection of communism's attacks on capitalists and the authorities. In this, he was influenced by his Buddhist perspectives:

³⁹ Ibid. 490-491.

⁴⁰ Richard Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 27; Than Myint-U. *The River of Lost Footsteps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 268.

⁴¹ Than Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 269.

⁴² Shwe U Daung, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung) (Mandalay: Kyipwayay Press, 1953), 92-93.

⁴³ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 498.

I, as a person who has devoted myself to learning Buddhism, believe that in an oppressed people's struggle of liberation, we should not harbour the intention of attacking the rulers. I also think the rulers should display goodwill in the way they exercise control, putting priority on the social welfare of the people. Maybe Marx and his people would say my narratives are complicated, but it is quite simple and clear for me. This is the only way to be free from any sin.⁴⁴

Although under the continuing civil war, the defence of the state was an urgent matter for the government, Shwe U Daung appears to have sought a compromise between the government and the people. It was an appeal for the rights of the people to decent living conditions and freedom of expression, and a warning against the shift to a form of ultra-nationalism that valued national interests more than the nation's people.

Shwe U Daung and the Nu government

Shwe U Daung wrote that he did not have a personal relationship with Nu.⁴⁵ However as a veteran author and a popular journalist, he was obviously someone the Nu government could not ignore. As a Buddhist Burmese, Shwe U Daung also shared some common values with Nu, and he was chosen as a Burmese representative to the Asia and Pacific Rim Peace Conference held in Beijing from 2 to 12 October 1952. This event was an attempt by Mao Zedong to oppose the Korean War and the spread of the Cold War, and it involved delegations from many countries including representatives of communist parties in Western countries such as America and Canada. It was Shwe U Daung's first trip overseas, at sixty-four years of age. The experience convinced him of the importance of the world peace movement, but he later became aware of the many different narratives among the participants. The most enjoyable aspect of this trip was the re-establishment of his friendship with his old friend Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing), who was the leader of the delegation.⁴⁶

Nu, who was also a writer, was keen to promote education and Burmese literature. He was the main benefactor supporting the re-establishment of the Nagani Book Club as the *Myanma Naingngan Badhabyan Sape Athin* (Burma Translation Association) formed in 1947. From 1949 this association offered the annual Sarpay Beikman (Edifice of Literature) Award. In the 1950s Shwe U Daung won the Award twice for his Burmese translations of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, in 1952 and 1955 respectively. These books were published under the titles *Hmyo Ta Lin*

⁴⁴ Ibid. 491.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 614.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 502. It is likely that this trip was the first trip overseas for Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing) as well. He was seventy-eight years old then.

Lin (Great Expectations) and *Thwe Souk Mye* (Blood Sucking Soil).⁴⁷

Shwe U Daung's first autobiography, *U Pe Thein i Shwe U Daung* (Autobiography of Shwe U Daung) (1953) and his first successful novel *Yadanabon* (*The City of Jewels*) (1917) were selected as compulsory reading for high school students. The first book was written at the suggestion of Hla and Amar and published by their Kyipwaye Press. It is a combination of a compact autobiography and several essays based on Shwe U Daung's memories of the colonial period and World War II.

U Daung's Buddhist Socialism as seen in a San Shar Story

After the trip to China, and probably in part because he became more realistic about the ideology of communism, Shwe U Daung grew tired of writing editorials for the *Ludu* newspaper. He resigned from Kyipwaye Press at the end of 1952, commenting in his autobiography on his habit or bad luck of not being able to stay in a full-time position for more than three years.⁴⁸ Hla and Amar understood this tendency and kept in contact with him as a freelance writer.

From 1947 the *Shmawa* magazine published several episodes of the San Shar stories every year, but after his resignation from Kyipwaye Press, Shwe U Daung's contributions to *Shmawa* became more frequent. Between April 1953 and February 1955, he published a total of fourteen episodes in the magazine. Except for the last two episodes, these were all different versions of earlier adaptations based on Doyle's originals. All the stories were set in the colonial period. Interestingly, together with "The Case of the Maharaja" (1949), sixteen of the San Shar episodes published in the post-War period were based on the episodes included in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Four episodes were adaptations of episodes which had been published in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* and a new adaptation "The Disappearance of a Government Document" was also based on an episode in this book. He also wrote a new adaptation of *A Study in Scarlet*. I suspect that Shwe U Daung re-read the early Sherlock Holmes stories and attempted to create new adaptations from them. Many Sherlockians think the earlier episodes of the Sherlock Holmes stories were better written than the late episodes.⁴⁹ As

⁴⁷ Both books were published by the Shumawa Press.

⁴⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 507.

⁴⁹ In 1927 *The Strand Magazine* asked Arthur Conan Doyle to make a list of what he considered to be the twelve best Sherlock Holmes stories. Among the twelve episodes, he chose four episodes each from *The Adventures of the Sherlock Holmes* (1892) and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905), the first and the third books. A ranking of the Sherlock Holmes stories by today's readers also shows the popularity of episodes from these two books. Both Doyle himself and today's readers ranked the same episodes first and second, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" and "The Red-Headed League" respectively. *A Scandal in Bohemia* was rated third by readers and fifth by Doyle. For details of the rankings see <http://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-12-best-sherlock-holmes-stories-handpicked-by-creator-dir-arthur-conan-doyle-1945910> and <http://www.bestofsherlock.com/story/storyhm.htm>.

a Burmese Sherlockian, Shwe U Daung appears to have agreed, since it was these earlier episodes that he returned to as the source of new adaptations.

Shwe U Daung also re-published episodes written in the colonial period that were not based on Doyle's originals. *Murder in Sheinmakar Village* is an important example, since in this story Shwe U Daung reflected on of the relationship between Buddhism and socialism. The episode was originally published in the September and November 1927 issues of the *Thuriya* magazine, and whether or not it was reprinted without changes is unknown. It describes San Shar's struggle and victory over the criminal mastermind Min Han in the style of a 'hard-boiled' crime story. This type of crime fiction became hugely popular after World War I, especially through American pulp magazines, and re-developed during World War II, under the influence of wartime disasters and growing evidence of the connections between crime and business and politics.⁵⁰ In *Murder in Sheinmakar Village* San Shar is presented as a 'tough guy' crime fighter rather than simply the solver of a riddle in the manner of Sherlock Holmes.

Sheinmakar village, the scene of the crime, is described as a hamlet near Shwebo. In the story San Shar is invited by Thein Maung to Magyidone village where Theing Maung's parents live. As the setting was a region familiar to Shwe U Daung, his descriptions of ill-fated villagers impoverished by repeated epidemics and the lack of economic development, along with the desolate scenery of upper Burma in the cold dry season, are rich and authentic. Min Han is introduced as a man who is equipped with virtues respected by the Burmese. He is a role model of a Buddhist gentleman, generously donating to pagodas and monasteries, holding a position in the colonial government through his excellent English skills and also with a good knowledge of traditional herbal medicine and divination as means of healing. He often appears in white with a Buddhist rosary around his neck, the attire of a *Phothudaw* (Buddhist ascetic) and regularly observes periods of abstention. In fact, however, he is only pretending to be a good Buddhist, and after he is dismissed from his government job as a result of misconduct, he becomes active as the mastermind of all sorts of crimes happening in Burma.⁵¹ He also attempts to kill San Shar a number of times, as in this episode.

Why did Shwe U Daung choose to re-publish this episode in the mid-1950s? I argue that his intention was to criticise those who were taking advantage of the Nu government's promotion of Buddhism and to warn readers against those profiting from poor people. At the end of the story San Shar appears with a crowd of peasants. Under his direction they successfully capture Min Han and take him to the police. He is eventually executed and the Sheinmakar villagers are awarded a large amount of money

⁵⁰ Lee Horsley, *Crimeculture – American Hard-boiled Crime Fiction, 1920s-1940s*.
<http://www.cribeculture.com/Contents/Hard-Boiled.html>

⁵¹ Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* Vol. 2. 1453.

by the government.

In his understanding of communism/socialism and the notion of the mass of the people as an agent of class struggle, Shwe U Daung appears to have drawn on his experiences at Magyidone village and the surrounding region. Through a proper application of leftist ideas by the government he believed that the lives of the ordinary people could be developed and improved. For Shwe U Daung, who did not own his own house, and moved from place to place on numerous occasions, Magyidone village was also a source of shelter. Whenever he found himself without a place to live he always returned his parents' house in the village.

Anthony D. Smith has argued that praise of rural life is a feature of nationalism:

In most analyses of nationalism 'the people' are generally treated as recipients of ideas, messages, and orders of often manipulative elites. [...] But we do have glimpses of tradition in which the 'people', or segments thereof, take a more active role; and the nationalists, with their ideals of autonomous, unified, and distinctive nations, found in these traditions powerful support and a ready-made framework for popular mobilization. The stage was set for that 'elevation of the people' characteristic of ethnic nationalisms, and for their belief in 'the people', and especially the peasantry, as the repository of truth and virtue.⁵²

As was the case in Myanmar, in many Asian and African nations which attained independence through the establishment of the state prior to the nation, the immediate need was to include as many people in the nation as possible. Marxism was appealing to the political elites as an ideology which placed great value on the role of the masses. Smith also points out that the identification of the nation with the people, especially peasants, has been widely observed in modern Western nationalism as well, as part of a narrative that praises the nation's landscape and its traditional values:

there is the fascinating phenomenon of the intelligentsia's attempts to return to 'nature', and hence 'the people', themes that are so pervasive in nationalist ideologies. These are often explained in terms of archaizing and backward-looking tendencies in the face of delayed industrialization, but, considering their origins in some of the more advanced capitalist societies of the West, this is at best a partial account. Similarly, the oft-noted 'populism' of intellectuals who are so often bent on rapid industrialization must be seen in the wider context of the movement of a 'return to nature' and to 'roots', rather than merely in terms of the narrow material and status interests of the intellectuals and professionals.⁵³

For Shwe U Daung, an intellectual who was living like a rootless vagabond, communism served as a guide to finding his national roots in the rural life of Magyidone and the

⁵² Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 34.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 36-37.

people living there, people who shared with him a sense of justice based on Buddhism.

The arrest of Shwe U Daung and the last episodes of the San Shar stories

During the Nu era there was a vigorous expansion of the publishing industry in Burma. As Thant Myint-U has observed, '[t]he 1950s are often looked back on as a golden age for the Burmese middle classes. [...] These were also the days of an animated and unrestrained media, with hundreds of newspapers and magazines'.⁵⁴ He argues that 'Burmese democracy [...] flourished under U Nu, with perhaps the freest and most lively press in Asia'.⁵⁵ However the Nu government did take action against publications which it saw as being anti-government. Charney argues that the notorious suppression of the media by Burma's military government after 1962 had actually begun during the Nu regime, under the same 'Section 5 of the Emergency Provisions Act'.⁵⁶

During 1954 and 1955, Shwe U Daung minimised his writing to the point where he earned just enough to support his family, and spent much of his time studying Buddhism and practising meditation. From the second half of 1955 he participated in the World Peace Council. This international disarmament movement was founded in 1950 by the Communist Party of the USSR to oppose what it described as America's warmongering policies. In the 1950s the movement expanded and gained support from many leftist intellectuals, including Pablo Picasso and Jean-Paul Sartre.⁵⁷ The Council's Burma branch, the World Peace Congress (Burma) was founded in 1952, and Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing), Shwe U Daung's old friend from his days working for Thuriya Press, took up the position of the Chairman. Shwe U Daung explained that his decision to join this movement was motivated by an 'invitation from the activists of the World Peace Congress (Burma) and also my own belief that if the awakening and solidarity of the world's people are fostered, this would be a force to prevent a possible world war'.⁵⁸ This movement seems to have attracted many people in Burma and numerous branches were established across the country, including in Mandalay. Shwe U Daung often undertook speech-making trips on behalf of the movement, sometimes with Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing). It was probably during 1955 that Shwe U Daung resumed the position of editor-in-chief of *Ludu* and again began contributing editorials to the newspaper. Hla and Amar also joined the world peace movement. The movement did not promote acts of violence, but the Nu government, which placed priority on Burma's relationship with America, had no desire to see an expansion of the movement or the development of

⁵⁴ Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*. 281.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 289.

⁵⁶ Charney. "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", 9.

⁵⁷ World Peace Council Collected Records, 1949-1966

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/CDGB>

⁵⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*. 514.

connections with 'communist' countries.

During a lecture tour in early 1956, the organiser of the lecture was harassed by leaders of the AFPFL in Mohnin, a town in Kachin State, although the event eventually went ahead as planned.⁵⁹ The AFPFL itself suffered from a lack of integrity at this time. Many local leaders, who were opposed to the Karens and the Communists, armed themselves and became supporters of the AFPFL for their own benefit. They often disobeyed directions from the AFPFL headquarters.⁶⁰ It is not known whether the incident involving Shwe U Daung in Mohnin was the result of a decision by the Mohnin AFPFL or a direction from headquarters. Under the conditions of the Cold War and the spread of internal conflicts, 'Nu believed that he could only succeed by isolating Burmese political forces from external influences.'⁶¹ The involvement of civilians in an international leftist movement was clearly not something the government would view favourably. By this time, Hla, Amar and Shwe U Daung were all regarded as *personae non gratae* by the Nu government. Shwe U Daung continued his involvement in the world peace movement because he thought a citizen's awareness and active efforts were the best possible defence against the likelihood of war between the USSR and the United States at this time.⁶² Nu's own approach, which was designed to protect national unity by isolating the people from foreign contacts, shows some similarities with the strategy adopted by Ne Win after 1962.

A general election was held in 1956. The Nu government was sensitive to anti-government comments in the media, as the unity of the AFPFL had begun to fragment and some members had left the AFPFL and formed new political parties. Hla was detained on charges of defamation of the AFPFL in April 1956. In the same year a warrant for the arrest of Shwe U Daung was also issued but he was not detained immediately.⁶³ In the 1st May issue of *Ludu* Shwe U Daung published an editorial which criticised a powerful AFPFL candidate, Bo Khin Maung Lay. At a recent political rally held in Kyaukhse, Bo Khin Maung Lay had criticised his opponents and even warned them not to compete with him. At the time he was Minister for Home Affairs and in control of the police force.⁶⁴ In his editorial, Shwe U Daung expressed the opinion that the election should be held fairly, and the present power holders should not use pressure or threats against their opponents.⁶⁵ Following publication of this editorial, on 10 May 1956 Shwe U Daung was arrested.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 516.

⁶⁰ Nemoto Kei, *Monogatari Biruma no Rekishi* 280-281, 283.

⁶¹ Charney. "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", 7.

⁶² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 599.

⁶³ Charney. "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", 9.

⁶⁴ Kyaukhse is a town located in the southern part of a region to Mandalay.

⁶⁵ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 517.

He was told by the police the direct reason of his arrest was because of another article which criticized the 'Pyusawhti', pocket army of the Burma Socialist Party, named after the legendary first king of the Bagan dynasty.⁶⁶ They were formed by the Nu government to take responsibility of local securities, but soon they became notorious in and outside of the government as they were corrupted and committed crimes such as robbery, banditry, bribery, murder and intervention in the electoral campaign.⁶⁷ Shwe U Daung's imprisonment lasted five months. He did not expect it would last so long, as he had written the critical editorial in a spirit of friendly advice to the Nu government.⁶⁸ His filthy cell was hot and stuffy. The nutritious food sent by his family was sometimes eaten by the warders before it could reach him. Coincidentally, while he was in prison, his old friend Nyunt, 'Parrot' Sann Ni and his only son Soe Naing (from his second marriage) passed away. Life in prison was a harsh experience for Shwe U Daung, then sixty-six years old. He was released on 1 Oct 1956.⁶⁹

After the publication of "Murder in Sheinmakar Village" in the February 1955 issue of *Shumawa*, Shwe U Daung did not publish any further episodes of the San Shar stories. However, perhaps in response to a demand from his readers, he wrote new two episodes during the Nu era. These were "Tainkat Nayimya Yaikkhwehmu" (Destroyed Clocks) and "Ingaleik Sitbo Linmaya Ahmu" (The Case of the British Army Officer and his Wife) published in the September and October 1961 issues of *Thwedauk* magazine respectively. These two episodes are adaptations based on episodes from the collection of pastiches, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* (1954), written by Doyle's son, Adrian Conan Doyle and a well-known crime writer John Dickson Carr. Both episodes specify a time setting in the colonial period and deal with the typical colonial society and lifestyles of the era. "Destroyed Clocks" is set in a summer resort hotel in Kalaw, where English-educated members of society, including Anglo-Burmese and Shan *Sawbwa* have gathered. "The Case of the British Army Officer and his Wife" depicts the life of English officers and their families in a suburb of Mandalay known for its high society. In this episode, San Shar saves the beautiful wife of a retired British Army officer from suspicion of murdering her brother. "The Case of the British Army Officer and his Wife" is also noteworthy for its critical view of the British colonial government, an aspect of the story which would have resonated with the nationalist thinking of the Nu government and younger readers who had grown up after independence. Torture by the colonial police force was notorious.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 520-521. The date of publishing of the editorial is unknown. It could be sometime before May in 1956. King Pyusawhti ruled from A.D. 167 – 242 according to legend. King Anawrata, who established the first substantial Burmese dynasty (reigning from 1044 to 1077), is considered as the forty-second king of the Bagan dynasty, according to Burmese legend.

⁶⁷ Kyaw Zaw Win, "A History of the Burma Socialist Party (1930-1964)", 254.

⁶⁸ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 520.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 520-521, 525.

Earlier San Shar stories always described the cooperation between San Shar and his Burmese friends in the police force, but in this episode Shwe U Daung has changed this standpoint. San Shar makes strongly negative and sarcastic remarks referring to the colonial police bureaucracy and the Burmese police officers who depended on them:

San Shar: 'You are right. Do not be in a hurry to arrest the criminal. Only after things become clear, should the arrest take place. Arresting and torturing someone with an electric bar to force a confession, as some of you always do, won't work in this case, you know.'

Su Ya (police officer): 'I am very careful about that, my big brother.'

San Shar: 'Indeed, this could be a quite tricky case for you. Not so easy to solve with an electric bar, right?'

Su Ya: 'I don't use it on everybody.'

San Shar: 'Of course not, but that's not because of your merciful attitude. It's because you are afraid of being rebuked by your superiors.'⁷⁰

This conversation looks like a criticism of the colonial authorities and shows why San Shar successfully continued as a national hero, even after the country's independence. However the publication of this episode was not long after Shwe U Daung's imprisonment and many readers must have been aware of his arrest. Thus this episode can be seen as being aimed at the Nu government and its police force. The fact that the exploits of San Shar the detective had to continue to be set in the colonial era casts a shadow over the idea of this period as one of literary freedom.

Buddhism and a Burmese gentleman

It is widely known that Nu was a devoted Buddhist and promoted Buddhism not only in his own country but also overseas. Between 1954 and 1955 he hosted an international Buddhist Synod, and invited many foreign Buddhist leaders. He also strengthened his commitment to the connection between Buddhism and politics, and saw Buddhism as contributing to the unity of the state and functioning as a safeguard against communism. In 1960 he attempted to make Buddhism the state religion.⁷¹ During the period of the Nu regime, continuing on from the colonial period, Shwe U Daung also deepened his thinking about Buddhism. What did Buddhism mean to him? I argue that Buddhism was a very personal practice for Shwe U Daung, a way of achieving greater self-knowledge and developing his intellectual and mental faculties.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, while he was in Rangoon between 1950 and 1951, Shwe U Daung contributed several essays on Buddhism to Nyunt's *Hanthawaddy*

⁷⁰ Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: Sondauk Wuttudo Paungjoukthit* Vol. 2. 1451-1452.

⁷¹ Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*. 290-292; Charney, "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", 333-355.

newspaper under the pen-name of 'Buddha Gawtha (2)'.⁷² Nyunt liked Shwe U Daung's critical thinking on the subject of how to become a better Buddhist. Shwe U Daung depicted the general attitude of Burmese Buddhists as 'traditional Buddhists who are satisfied with the regular practice of abstinence, reading volumes of *Dipani* (a manual for Buddhist practice) by Ledi Sayadaw and counting the beads of a rosary'.⁷³ He described himself as being different, a 'revolutionary type of Buddhist' (*Tawlanye-dhamar Buddha bathawin*).⁷⁴ Shwe U Daung also stated that he did not abstain from eating beef, as was strongly promoted by Ledi Sayadaw and many of his Burmese followers, saying this was a Hindu custom, not part of Buddhist tradition.⁷⁵ Shwe U Daung's comments refer to a fairly new Buddhist teaching by Ledi Sayadaw which was propagated from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and in time became widely accepted. People even thought this was traditional Burmese practice. This was almost a half century after Ledi Sayadaw's death, when the interpretation of his teachings was probably becoming more conservative. One example of the contemporary interpretation of Ledi Sayadaw's teaching, the lyrics of Pyone Cho's Buddhist songs written during the 1920s, encouraging listeners to become more positively involved in mental and physical practice, seeking the path to Nirvana. At this time, Pyone Cho was working as a Burmese editor for Thuriya Press after Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing) resigned.⁷⁶

In the previous chapter I discussed the origin of Shwe U Daung's Buddhist thought in the teachings of Abbot Beik. Although some of their narratives might differ, the teachings of both Abbot Ledi and Abott Beik are characteristic of the practices of Burma's new Buddhism, for example the promotion of meditation. During his stay in Rangoon Shwe U Daung often spent time discussing Buddhism with Nyunt and another old friend, 'Parrot' Sunny, who was a famous film producer from the colonial era.⁷⁷

In 1954 and 1955 Shwe U Daung again developed a focus on the practice of meditation and a few months after his release from jail, from February 1957 he began contributing a series of essays on Buddhism to the *Shumawa* magazine. In 1960 these essays were eventually published in book form by the Shumawa Press, under the title

⁷² Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 468.

⁷³ Ledi Sayadaw wrote numerous books on Buddhist teaching in both Pali and Burmese. Especially his *Paramattha Dipani* (Manual of Ultimate Truths) is well-known.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 488.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 579. Ledi Sayadaw published a book titled *Nwa Myitta Za* (A Letter Teaching Love for Cows) (1885). Anagarika Dharmapala also promoted abstinence from beef in his propagation of Buddhism.

⁷⁶ I have produced a music DVD of a collection of Pyone Cho's Buddhist songs entitled *Tribute to Maestro Pyone Cho* (2013) with the Myanmar traditional musician Ye Naing Linn. An English translation of these songs is included in this thesis as appendix 2.

⁷⁷ 'Parrot' Sunn Ni (Sunny) first worked with an Englishman named Parrot managing a tax company in Rangoon. Later he set up a film production company named after Mr. Parrot.

Di-Htay Di-Hta Mattan Let-twe Kyintzin (The Practice of Contemplation). The book drew a positive response from readers and was reprinted three times in the same year.⁷⁸ He described 'the practice of contemplation' as the teaching of Gautama Buddha and stated that practice of meditation based on this teaching had helped him to understand human psychology.⁷⁹ He used the English expression 'clear thinking' several times, apparently to mean logical and critical thinking, and he stated his belief that the development of this ability would come through practising the Buddha's teachings.⁸⁰ In his *The Practice of Contemplation* he expresses his perception of Buddhism when he says 'If I write the ideology of Buddhism, I have to write first that it is not materialism and not spiritualism either. A disciple of Gautama Buddha asked him "What sort of ideology is your teaching?" Gautama Buddha replied, "My ideology is *wibeikza*-ism." The meaning of the word is an analytical ideology, or critical approach, which is necessary for knowing the truth.'⁸¹ Another aspect of Shwe U Daung's acceptance of Buddhism derives from Abbot Beik's Theosophical-style Buddhism that places emphasis on individual effort and the law of cause and effect. Shwe U Daung wrote that this style of Buddhism gave him a calm and peaceful mind and *Record of Life and Thoughts* ends with an expression of his hope to keep his mind at peace at all times and to maintain his health in order to practise it. At that time, at the age of seventy-two, Shwe U Daung was in good health, sometimes drinking beer, playing badminton and *chinlone* (Burmese football using a light woven bamboo ball).⁸² His autobiography won the Sarpay Beikman Award in 1961.

Through the practice of Buddhism as described above, what sort of person did Shwe U Daung want to become? Also, how did he view Nu's approach to Buddhism and politics? Shwe U Daung's autobiography, *Record of Life and Thoughts*, was widely known in the version that included an appendix written between 1961 and 1962. This appendix gives us some guide to the answers to these questions. As a person who studied English literature for many decades, alongside his study of Buddhism, Shwe U Daung also described some aspects of what he had learned from modern Western culture. Important in this regard was making an effort to become a 'gentleman', in other words, to develop a spirit of a 'sense of justice and fair play'.⁸³ He wrote:

A gentleman lives on his pride and hence does not take advantage of others, does not wish

⁷⁸ Shwe U Daung. *Di-Htay Di-Hta Mattan Let-twe Kyintzin* (The Practice of Contemplation). Yangon: Shu Ma Wa Taik, 1960. Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 523.

⁷⁹ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 494.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 491, 526 and 566.

⁸¹ Shwe U Daung. *Di-Htay Di-Hta Mattan Let-twe Kyintzin*, 152.

⁸² Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 585, 587.

⁸³ Ibid. 570.

to get something free. He only wishes to get something in proportion to what he has done. He does not lose his nerve whoever he meets, always maintains a resolute attitude, holding his head high. He is not ashamed to be poor, but is ashamed to be ignoble. He is not proud of an action solely in the interests of his own group, but of fair play. An important point is that a gentleman has a spirit of 'sense of justice and fair play' and does not want to see injustice or anyone suffering because of it, not only in his personal affairs but also in the public environment. He is a man who is always ready to make unfairness become fairness. I don't think it's necessary to question, 'Are the English really these sort of people?' I have explained enough already. What I was impressed by among English people is that good persons want to make the effort to become gentlemen. For these reasons I hope you will understand how sublime it is to be on the level of a gentleman in our world. Some of you might refute my words by saying the goal for an 'Ariya' in Buddhism is much higher than that of a 'gentleman'. However, the aim of becoming an Ariya is to go beyond this secular life. For a lay person, I want to say that this level is 'no grounds for continuing this discussion'. If someone were to ask me which status I admire more, a gentleman or an Ariya, I would answer in this way: As a person living in a lay society, I would prefer to be a gentleman. As a monk, I would prefer to be an Ariya.⁸⁴

Shwe U Daung described Nu as a person who had much goodwill, but who 'does not understand the borderlines between secular and religious affairs.'⁸⁵ As to the Nu regime's promotion of Buddhism, Shwe U Daung was not opposed, but ambivalent. His description of a gentleman is also a part of his criticism of the government's project of the propagation of Buddhism overseas. As the counterpart to a gentleman, the ideal image of the layman in the West, he proposed the ideal of those who uphold the Buddha's Five Precepts, an obvious reference to the deeds of politicians and officials in the Nu government. Towards the end of the 1950s Burmese politics became highly confrontational. Nu wrote an anti-communist/ pro-democracy propaganda novel *Ludu Aung Than (The People Win Through)* and produced a film version of it with aid from America.⁸⁶ However in the 1956 election communist-oriented parties gained ground.⁸⁷ In 1958 the AFPFL split into Nu's 'clean' AFPFL and Ba Swe's 'stable' AFPFL and in the political chaos that ensued, Nu invited General Ne Win to create a 'care-taker government' which lasted from September 1958 to December 1960. Despite its coup-like origins, Ne Win's caretaker government impressed the people, particularly the middle class of Rangoon, for whom the military administration had resulted in a more comfortable urban environment. Squatters were relocated outside of the city. The

⁸⁴ Ibid. 570. In the case of 'gentleman' and 'sense of justice and fair play', Shwe U Daung used these English expressions without giving a Burmese translation. 'Ariya' means a person who has reached the way that leads to Nirvana, beyond this world.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 577.

⁸⁶ This move is known with this official English titles as well.

⁸⁷ Charney. "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", 16-17.

garbage collecting system had not worked under the Nu government, but the army made the city clean and safe. By this time the army had also successfully overcome the country's major insurgency.⁸⁸

Nu came back into power, but the political turmoil persisted. Nu saw Buddhism as the only symbol of national unity and in 1961 he made Buddhism the state religion.⁸⁹ However, discontent from other religious groups soon led to its retraction. Shwe U Daung drew attention to the attitudes of many politicians who joined in the promotion of Buddhism but in fact were driven by their own interests. He expressed his opinion on the project of dispatching Burmese monks to Western countries, saying that the Nu government should remember that although the West had many problems, it was also the source of the spirit of effort to become 'a gentleman' and Christianity. He also stated that without knowing enough Western culture and languages, sending monks overseas just because they were famous in Burma would be 'a waste of money earned from the sweat of the hard work of peasants, just for the sake of the nation's vanity.'⁹⁰ For Shwe U Daung, who was part of an international Buddhist community led by Theosophists at the Thuriya Press and the YMBA, Nu's 'international' Buddhist project must have appeared naïve. His critical comments from the point of view of the peasants also suggests that as a Buddhist with a sense of justice, he could not accept exploitation of the people by the government in the name of Buddhism.

Shwe U Daung also showed a greater level of moral commitment to the world peace movement after reading the work of Bertrand Russell. He thought that awareness and active effort on the part of individual citizens was essential if war between America and the USSR at the time of the Cold War was to be prevented. He also commented that Nu's propagation of the Five Precepts did not generate enough energy among the citizens of independent Burma to achieve this result.⁹¹ This thinking shows that living under the unstable conditions of the post-colonial era gave Shwe U Daung a clearer perception of the correlation between international relations, the nation-state and the citizen or active individual. It also represents an of interpretation of Buddhism for the Burmese in the modern era, which reflects the different standpoints adopted by a political elite who aimed to control the people and a non-political elite who placed more value on individual freedom.

Conclusion

During the Nu era, in his sixties and seventies, Shwe U Daung's study of Buddhism

⁸⁸ Thant Myint-U. *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 284-285.

⁸⁹ Charney. "Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma during the Cold War", 17.

⁹⁰ Shwe U Daung. *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya*, 570.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 599.

became more focused on personal practice to develop greater self-knowledge and an increased ability for analytical thinking. During this period, Nu and his political elites struggled to mobilise the people and saw Buddhism as a set of values held in common by the Burmese people. In this context, does Shwe U Daung's focus on individuality indicate an egoism and indifference towards the newly established state? He was strongly interested in the journey of his new nation-state and his study of communism/socialism helped him to understand the framework of a nation-state and especially the importance of the role of the mass of the people. The difference between his attitude to the people and that of the political elite of the Nu government lay in an argument about the people and their mobilisation. Shwe U Daung viewed the people and their daily lives from the perspective of human rights. Among the factors which helped him acquire this viewpoint was his long-term engagement with the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Shwe U Daung's narrative of a gentleman with a sense of justice and fair play can be seen to be associated with the character of Sherlock Holmes, a unique man of reasoning equipped with a sense of justice. From his first reading of a Sherlock Holmes story in 1917, the hero created by Doyle served as an inspiration for Shwe U Daung in the creation of a new Burmese hero. In the course of a writing career that lasted nearly half a century, 'San Shar the detective' became Shwe U Daung's alter ego and also a projection of Shwe U Daung's changing thoughts on nationalism. The popularity of San Shar the detective even after the country's independence is also an indication of how much readers identified with Shwe U Daung's ideal of a modern Buddhist hero with a sense of justice and a man of action who respects the values inherent in the daily lives of the people.

CONCLUSION

The nationalist force which brought independence to Burma was concentrated in the Thakin party. The Thakin nationalist narratives eventually acquired the status of national history and came to be regarded by many Burmese as the dominant 'Buddhist Burman' voice. This official national history has influenced foreign historical studies of Burmese nationalism, but to what extent does the official nationalist narrative represent the views of 'Buddhist Burmans' as a whole? Was the Thakins' concept of the 'Buddhist Burman' also embraced by other nationalists? And if Burmese nationalists identified themselves as 'Buddhist Burmans', what part did religious and cultural affairs play in their political movement?

In investigating a variety of Burmese nationalist narratives in historical perspective, this thesis has focused on the YMBA (later GCBA), as this was the dominant nationalist force before the emergence of the Thakins, even though it has been only partially explored in the existing literature. Burmese nationalist narratives outside those of the political elites are also little understood. Shwe U Daung, a novelist, short story writer, translator and journalist, became popular with his 'San Shar the detective' stories with the support of the YMBA's publishing arm. Importantly his San Shar stories are still popular among present-day readers, an indication that some aspects of the YMBA/GCBA nationalist narratives and their cultural heritage are still thriving in today's Myanmar.

My research has shown that 'San Shar' became a hero for Burmese readers because he encapsulated the image of a modern Burmese with a sense of Buddhist justice. San Shar made efforts to maintain law and order in a multicultural colonial society and helped people regardless of their class and ethnicity. In the course of writing these stories over a period of nearly half a century, Shwe U Daung also deepened his thinking about individuality through Buddhist practice and his extensive reading of English literature, which crystallised in his concept of the 'Burmese gentleman' or an active Burmese citizen who interacts with his nation-state. After Burma attained independence, 'active citizens' were not part of the Nu government's requirements. New episodes of the San Shar stories at this time remained set in the colonial period, sometimes as a device for the expression of criticisms directed at the Nu government.

Nationalism emerged as an expression of European modernity and formed the basis of movements aimed at the formation of nation-states. It developed in the late eighteenth century along with the rise of the bourgeoisie and its goal of participation in the governing order, a key part of modernity. This new way of life envisaged the individual as a citizen having a relationship with the state. In contrast to the traditional local religious community under the feudal system, a nation-state is generally a much

larger entity and an abstract concept. However the citizens of the nation-state develop a sense of community with the support of a system of bureaucracy and print mass media.

In the later stages of imperialism and colonialism, this style of polity also became a model for resistance movements in the non-Western world. However the idea of the nation-state was modified to suit the aims of these movements. How did one group of people, the Burmese, understand the notion of a nation-state and use it in the development of their nationalist movement? This big question requires careful analysis from various viewpoints. Different narratives provide access to the varieties of nationalism that developed in particular contexts. Alongside the stories of the political elites who saw themselves as the authors of nationalism, this thesis has examined the narratives of individuals who were part of the Burmese intellectual elite, but who existed on the margins of Burmese political nationalism at this time. This approach focuses attention on the emergence of modern Burmese culture and its connection to Burmese tradition, as an expression of nationalism in the broad sense. As a representative of this intellectual elite who was engaged in the attempt to develop a modern Burmese culture, Shwe U Daung is a significant nationalist figure. Together with his autobiographies, the *San Shar* stories record his changing perceptions of government and his struggle to contribute to the formation of a Burmese nation-state over a period spanning nearly half a century, from 1917 to 1962.

There is a large variety in forms of nationalism, which manifest as different national identities. Anthony D. Smith claimed that it was important to analyse nationalism as culture. In the formulation of his 'ethno-symbolic approach', Smith argued that a national identity was moulded from an *ethnie* in which common myths, symbols and memories were shared. Smith also considered these aspects of culture to be connected with religion, so that, even after the establishment of seemingly secular modern nation-states in the West, values derived from Christian religion remained significant. In the non-West, Smith also pointed to the strong historical attachment of Myanmar to Theravada Buddhism. After the fall of Mandalay to the British in 1885, the loss of the Burmese king, who was the patron of the Sangha, motivated many Burmese to seek their identity in Buddhism. Around the turn of the twentieth century, they formed numerous Buddhist groups and worked for the preservation of Buddhist practice in Burma. Some attempted to resist the British through force of arms.

Among these Buddhist groups, some Western-educated nationalists took steps to deepen their understanding of Western polities and at the same time promote the modernisation of Buddhism and Burmese literature. This is one of the factors which makes the YMBA significant in Burmese nationalist history. It also demonstrates the dynamism and flexibility of Burmese Buddhist culture. As representatives of this aspect of Burmese nationalism, readers of the *Thuriya* magazine, who were also supporters of

the YMBA, welcomed the San Shar stories as a new type of Burmese literature. For them, San Shar was a heroic embodiment of a new ideal, the modern Buddhist Burmese.

In the growth of the new wave of Buddhism, Theosophy's influence on the YMBA was important. Theosophical influence contributed to the politicisation of the YMBA, and personal connections via the Theosophical movement provided the Association with important links to the Indian National Congress. The Theosophical Society was losing its political influence in both India and Burma by the beginning of the 1930s and the GCBA's parliamentary politics were also proving unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Galon Saw, one of the younger GCBA politician with no connections to Theosophy, remained a significant figure until the late 1940s.

Shwe U Daung's autobiographies portray colourful facets of daily life in colonial Burma and also in the post-war era of the U Nu government. They are also testimony to the changes in his attitudes towards the government. His initial standpoint is pro-British, influenced by his parents who, as former servants in King Thibaw's palace, respected government authority. However, after taking up Buddhist practice and reading Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, Shwe U Daung shifted his stance to one of anti-colonialism. This did not necessarily mean that he was anti-British. What he imagined was future dominion status for Burma in cooperation with the British, the goal which many GCBA politicians were working towards at this time. After Burma won its independence, Shwe U Daung developed an interest in communism and socialism. As a Buddhist, he rejected the materialism of communism, but his leftist viewpoints made him critical of the Nu government, which he believed was not acting in the interests of the country's people.

What did Shwe U Daung actually see as the framework of a nation-state? It was not his intention to become part of the ruling elite. I have argued that his goal was to become a citizen, enjoying ordinary life but with a critical spirit and a sense of justice, and adopting the persona of a man of action, a Burmese gentleman. This ideal was formed through his practice of Buddhism and his long-term reading of the Sherlock Holmes stories. This was his way of contributing to the newly created Burmese nation-state. San Shar the detective was Shwe U Daung's alter ego and a reflection of his ideological outlooks. However, this was not the ideal citizen in the eyes of the Nu government. In this case, the state and the citizen held different viewpoints on the nationalist narrative. Nu saw the people as an object for mobilisation. Indeed, the nationalism embraced by the Thakins after independence could be called 'bureaucratic nationalism':

A world of small nations is a decentralized world, and, as a model, decentralization flies in the face of much accepted economic theory and social planning. It also flies in the face of the so-called 'realities of power', founded on state maximization of territory and resources, including man-power, and now regarded as almost sacrosanct, even if state sovereignty is

cloaked with the legitimation of popular, that is, national, consent. In this struggle state elites employ the tactic of 'bureaucratic nationalism': they claim that their state constitutes a 'nation', and the nation is sovereign and therefore integral and alone legitimate, with the result that nationalism becomes an 'official' doctrine and the nation is taken over by the territorial and bureaucratic state.⁹²

Smith made reference to many nations undergoing ethnic struggles, including Myanmar. He suggested that these struggles could be overcome by recognising the importance of myth, symbol and memory in the formation of the *ethnie*, not only superficial political economic factors. I agree, but in this thesis I have argued that it is also important to understand culture more broadly, in forms of popular narratives and how they related to popular perceptions of nationalism. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the interpretations of Buddhism by Shwe U Daung and Nu, and their understanding of the place of Buddhism in the Burmese nationalist narrative, were very different.

Postscript

Record of Life and Thoughts includes Shwe U Daung's accounts of Ne Win's coup d'état. In February 1962 Shwe U Daung travelled to the USSR as a member of three delegations from Burma for the World Peace Conference. In a conversation with Russian friends, he stated he was not a communist, but he had formed a positive impression of the USSR, and was especially admiring of a retirement home for old artists he had visited during his travels there.⁹³ On 2 March he was informed about the change of government in Burma. He was at first very worried about the incident. He did not know Ne Win personally but he soon concluded that the 'General's administration might be better than the Nu government'.⁹⁴ His reaction reflects the belief of many Burmese citizens at the time that the Nu government was too unstable to function effectively.⁹⁵ The coup d'état was carried out unobtrusively and at first foreign observers did not see it as a coup but an 'attempt to restore order'.⁹⁶

The last episode of the San Shar stories was published in June 1962, three months after the Ne Win coup. "The Case of the Land Officer Mr. Thar Lu and his wife Khin Tint", the last episode in the San Shar stories, appeared in the June issue of the *Thwedauk*

⁹² Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford & Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999), 221.

⁹³ Shwe U Daung, *Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya* (Record of Life and Thoughts) (Yangon: Zabe Oo Phyantchiye, 1982), 619.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 614.

⁹⁵ Nemoto Kei, *Monogatari Biruma no Rekishi* (A Story of Burmese History), (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2014), 300.

⁹⁶ Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 293.

magazine. It is the story of a crime involving a sealed room, following the famous plot of the original story by John Dickson Carr. This episode does not mention the particular year in which it is set. However in the story, before taking the final action to capture the criminal, San Shar and Thein Maung go to watch the movie *Don Juan*.⁹⁷ This film was released in America in 1926 and must have attracted good audiences in British Burma as well. Shwe U Daung's initial response to the Ne Win administration was cautiously optimistic, but he seems to have been unwilling to bring San Shar into the contemporary era. After this episode Shwe U Daung wrote no further episodes. San Shar was sealed in time in the colonial era.⁹⁸

The long journey of Shwe U Daung's autobiography *Record of Life and Thoughts* also ended in the same month. It was dated 14 June 1962 and it contained a farewell message to his readers that showed his passion for the World Peace Movement, his commitment to Buddhist meditation practice and his strong intention to keep writing.

Just over two weeks later, on 4 July 1962, Ne Win's Revolutionary Council issued a declaration stating that in order to ensure the unity of the nation, it was instituting its own political party, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), to bring about the 'Burmese Way to Socialism'. All other political parties were dissolved. The Rangoon University Student Union (RUSU) protested against the end of the multi-party democracy system. On 7 and 8 July the military fired on a student demonstration and dynamited the Student Union building, causing at least 16 deaths and injuring between 60 and 100 others.⁹⁹

The press came under the control of the BSPP and in 1964 a censorship system was introduced (which was only abolished in 2012). The BSPP proceeded to nationalise many private economic bodies and introduced a policy of isolation from the international community. It ruled the country until 1988. Ne Win's 'bureaucratic nationalism' approach to the people as an object for mobilisation was inherited from Nu, but its application was much more severe.¹⁰⁰ Under the Ne Win regime, Shwe U Daung was invited to be editor-in-chief of the *Loukthar Pyidhu Nezin* (Working People's Daily). After retiring from this position, he passed away on 10 August 1973, at eighty-four years of age. Shwe U Daung's life and thoughts during the Ne Win period are a topic for further research.

⁹⁷ Shwe U Daung, *Shwe U Daung: The New Comprehensive Collection of Detective Stories*. 1514.

⁹⁸ Shwe U Daung's literary successor, Min Thein Kha, published numerous detective and adventure fantasy novels and short stories between the 1970s and the 2000s. His fiction was often set during the colonial period or the U Nu period and he explained that this made it easier for him to write views critical of the present government. (Interview in December 2006 in Yangon). A few years after his death in 2008 I learned he was a core member of the Theosophical Society in Myanmar.

⁹⁹ Robert Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, 336.

¹⁰⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 221.

Although Shwe U Daung did not write new episodes of the San Shar stories after 1962, the earlier episodes were often republished during the Ne Win era and continue to appear today. The image of the hero San Shar, a modern Buddhist Burmese with a sense of justice and a supporter of a multicultural society in Burma, the embodiment of a different type of nationalist narrative from the official version, still resonates with readers in Myanmar today.

Appendix 1.

Biography of Shwe U Daung

* This biography is translation from *Shwe U Daung Sazu Sayin* (Shwe U Daung: Bibliography) compiled by Khin San Nwe (Ms.), Rangoon Arts and Science University Library Science Department, 1978, but Some parts are edited by Yuri Takahashi.

1889

Born on 24 October, Thursday, at Wajaing (or Wardan) quarter in Mandalay city. His father Aye Yar was originated from Magyidone village in the south of the Shwebo area. After serving on the council of ministers at the Burmese Place, he established the 'Peing Dang' style slippers workshop in Mandalay. His mother Shwe, daughter of a chef for King Mindon and Thibaw, was formerly a narrator for King Thibaw, who conferred upon her the land and profits from Tanetthi village.

1902 (12-13 years old)

After completing grade five at the Dekkhina Wuntaik Monastery School, founded by a monk Abott 'Beik'. Then he entered the American Baptist Mission (ABM) school, also called the 'Kelly school.'

1908 (18-19 years old)

Passed the examination for admission to Calcutta University (* although he did not enter), but instead began working as a teacher for a monastic school. After serving in the Deputy Commissioner's office in Shwebo, as an assistant clerk, he became a junior clerk working for the Forestry Office.

1910 (20-21 years old)

While working as a clerk for the Agricultural and Co-operative Office in Mandalay, he married Hla Mu, a daughter of a teacher for the Land Surveillance School.

1914 (24-25 years old)

Divorced Hla Mu and began his second marriage.

1915 (25-26 years old)

Wrote his first novel, *A Victory against Big Enemies* (Yan Kyi Aung).

1916 (26-27 years old)

Wrote *The City of Jewels* (Yadanabon).

1917 (27-28 years old)

Became an editor for *Thuriya* (The Sun) Press. Started using the penname 'Shwe U Daung' (means Golden Peacock) named after the golden peacock, a symbolic animal in Burmese tradition represented by the sun.

1920 (30-31 years old)

His second marriage ended and he began his third marriage with Soe.

1922 (32-33 years old)

Worked as an English teacher for a private school in Kanni village, near Soe's native place Myadaung village in Katha district.

1926 (36-37 years old)

In Myadaung village, became a monk, intending for it to be for the rest of his life, but eventually had to stop because of ill health. That same year he began working as a secretary for the New Burmah Newspaper company.

1930 (40-41 years old)

In Pegu (now Bago) he worked as a translator for the Christian Literature Society.

1936 (46-47 years old)

Returned to the Thuriya Press to work as an editor.

1942- 44 (52,53 – 54,55 years old)

During the wartime he moved to Magyidone village for safety reasons and supported his life by working as a trader. Kept writing whenever he had time.

1945 (55-56 years old)

Published a translation book *Ahaya phyint Kyanma Ni* from a book entitled *To Be Healthy with Nourishment*.

1946 (56-57 years old)

Became an editor for the *Ludu* Newspaper in Mandalay.

1948 (58-59 years old)

Became Secretary General for the Novelist/Writers Association. As an executive, he organized many events.

1952 (62-63 years old)

Awarded the Sapay Beikman translation prize for his translation of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectation*. Travelled to China as the deputy leader of a Burmese delegation attending the World Peace Conference held in Beijing.

1955 (65-66 years old)

Awarded the Sapay Beikman translation prize again for his translation of Upton Sinclair's *Jungle*, Burmese title *Thwe Souk Mye* (The Soil Sucking Blood).

1956 (66-67 years old)

Criticised the Burmese government regarding a political issue, an obscure compromise of their opponents, Pyu Saw Di and his group, which resulted in his arrest and imprisonment.

1961 (71-72 years old)

Awarded the Sapay Beikman general knowledge prize for his autobiography *Record of Life and Thoughts* (Tathettar Hmattan hnint Atweakhawmya,), a set of four volumes.

1964 (74-75 years old)

Appointed to editor-in-chief for The *Louktha Pyedhu Nezin* (Working People's Daily) newspaper.

1968 (78-79 years old)

Retired from editor-in-chief for The *Louktha Pyedhu Nezin* (Working People's Daily) newspaper.

1973

Passed away on 10 August (Thursday) in Mandalay at 84 years of age.

Appendix 2

Pyone Cho's Buddhist Songs

In 2012 I produced a music DVD in Myanmar as a producer and performer (vocalist) together with Ye Naing Linn, a Burmese traditional musician, in honour of Pyone Cho and his songs. In the following year I translated these songs and produced an English-subtitled version of the DVD in Australia. *Tribute to Maestro Pyone Cho* is the English title of the DVD. Pyone Cho's Buddhist songs are a reflection of the spread of a new Buddhism in the 1910 and 1920s; in particular, his *Taybonma* (The Three Worlds) is still well-known in today's Myanmar. This song is also a good example of the teachings delivered by Ledi Sayadaw (Abott Ledi) based on the Buddhist Abhidamma Pitaka, which places emphasis on individual effort. *Theosophy and Buddhism*, a book published by the Theosophical Society, Burma Section, in 1917 also expressed similar views. This book also taught the importance of individual effort and taking action, which eventually involved becoming active in contributing to the nation. This Buddhist narrative had an influence on the YMBA and their Thuriya Press. It is not known if Ledi Sayadaw had a clear idea of the relationship between individual effort and the making of a modern nation. The connection between Theosophy-influenced Buddhism and Ledi Sayadaw has not been clarified either. However the new trend in Buddhist teaching stressing individual effort attracted many followers, especially readers of publications by Thuriya Press, who must have identified with the message of this song. Towards the end of his life Pyone Cho was also working for the *Thuriya* newspaper as a writer and editor. Abbot Beik, who taught Shwe U Daung and his parents, appears to have been influenced by Theosophy-style Buddhism and encouraged lay people's meditation so that they would be able to find the path to Nirvana. His teachings have similar ideas to those expressed in this song.

This appendix consists of the notes that accompany this DVD and the English translations of three Buddhist songs written by Pyone Cho: Track 2, *World Meltdown*, Track 3, *The Three Worlds* and Track 6, *Getting Tired of the Life*. It also includes the instrumental Track 8, *Biography of 'Maha Gita' Maestro Pyone Cho*.

1. Liner notes for *Tribute to Maestro Pyone Cho* by Ye Naing Linn & Yuri Takahashi

Dear audience,

As 'Maha Gita' (Myanmar classical music)* musicians, we are always willing to play pieces in the genre that we love. In August 2011 we decided to record together and feature some pieces written by 'Maha Gita' maestro, Pyone Cho (1878 - 1928). This eventually led us to produce a DVD paying tribute to him.

One of the most outstanding musicians of Myanmar, Pyone Cho is widely admired by those who love 'Maha Gita'. It is largely due to him that we can appreciate so many 'Maha Gita' pieces today as he was the first person to compile a collection of 'Maha Gita' songs in book form, which was based on his extensive research of old manuscripts. When he published 'The Collection of Maha Gita Songs' (Maha Gita Paungjoukkyi) in 1924 he included several of his original songs such as 'The Three Worlds' and 'Truly Victorious, Everything is Auspicious' which are famous for their deep Buddhist ideas and rich expressions. In a strict sense 'Maha Gita' means songs written during the time of the Burmese Kingdom which ended in 1885, however Pyone Cho's songs are generally accepted as masterpieces of 'Maha Gita' in today's Myanmar.

Pyone Cho was born in Kyaiklat, Ayeyarwaddy Region where Ye Naing Linn was also born and raised. As Sein Bo Tint (1938-1994) the teacher for both Ye Naing Linn and Yuri Takahashi, also came from Kyaiklat, we decided to film the DVD there. Originally targeted for a Burmese domestic audience we hoped the DVD would encourage locals to enjoy their traditional music more, along with their usual diet of pop music. Although not for sale, the DVD was introduced mainly at Ye Naing Linn's gig venues such as pagoda festivals, 600 copies were distributed two months after its release in March 2012 in response to popular demand and has been highly praised by Burmese music and literature specialists. Several related articles have also appeared in Burmese media as well as in Australia and Japan.

Encouraged by this interest we have decided to introduce Pyone Cho and 'Maha Gita' to music lovers overseas through this DVD which now includes an English translation. As an art form combining literature and music, 'Maha Gita' has historically been preserved as a large collection of lyrics. The music has been aurally handed down from

musicians to their pupils and as a result there have been many variants. To preserve their traditional music the Myanmar Ministry of Culture have attempted to standardize sounds and texts, but the performance of 'Maha Gita' music still has much freedom, depending on the musician's arrangements and improvisations. The 'Hsaing Waing' (drum chime) is an instrument unique to Myanmar and on this recording you will hear it played by Ye Naing Linn in the traditional 'Hsaing Waing' ensemble which is built around this instrument.

Hoping you will enjoy.

* 'Maha Gita' has been translated into English as '(Burmese or Myanmar) classical music.' However in recent years in Myanmar 'classical music' has often come to mean any piece played by a 'Hsaing Waing' ensemble, regardless of the time of production.

* 'Maha Gita' is also called 'Thachingyi.'

Thank you and best wishes,

Ye Naing Linn & Yuri Takahashi (November 2013)

Tribute to Maestro Pyone Cho by Ye Naing Linn & Yuri Takahashi

All translation was prepared by Yuri Takahashi

1. Introduction (*instrumental music)
2. World Meltdown
3. The Three Worlds
4. Memories of Mr. Pyone Cho
5. Truly Victorious, Everything is Auspicious
6. Getting Tired of the Life
7. We Shouldn't be Away From 'Maha Gita' (Burmese classical music)
8. Biography of 'Maha Gita' Maestro Pyone Cho (*instrumental music)

2. World Meltdown

This world, where humans have encountered the Buddha's teachings, this world ---

where all water and land exist will be destroyed and those who practice Buddha's law will feel sorrow

and work even harder during such time

(*Lawkabyuha* Deva will show his tears, dressed in a red garment with his long hair unknotted) *repeat

Families who obey the law and observe its precepts for many generations,

will have their accumulated merits shining for more than a hundred thousand years.

World meltdown will happen,

but without doubt they will ascend to the higher *Brahmar* world Voice of victories,
voice of warning, given from the great *Brahmar*

Many creatures will regret what they have done

and try to practice harder . In this time good deeds will spread, like a new force and love will be extended

Unstable, changeable, breakable Even this great earth

can be completely destroyed Oh, everything we can see is impermanent

There is no stability, no durability --- impermanence is the nature of all things

(Instrumental part --- for the sign board by the water)

'Kyaiklat Town --- Mingalar Lake'

(Practice good deeds for ceaselessly, if you do so the power will raise you to the top of the three worlds, Deva' abode) *repeat

(Meditate everyday and observe your mind)

Those who do so will always be attended by Brahmar and have peace in their mind)
*repeat

(Stubborn wrong ideas will change this world to eternal Hell) *repeat

The *Bidagat* volumes are truly basic and shows us Gautama Buddha's words

The venerable Buddha's teachings guide us to Nirvana, it has been shown repeatedly

(If two suns were to appear in this world, five hundred small rivers and streams will dry up

Not even a drop of water the size of a grain of sesame would remain) *repeat

(With the three suns, their heat will soon carry off the water from the five great rivers) *repeat

With the four suns, their fierce fire will carry off the seven great ponds

With the five suns, the oceans will disappear

(The heat is intensified numbers of times.

The heat waves compete with each other and Shake up the Mount *Meru*) *repeat

(Black smoke continuously spreads,

all of this world will remain in the dark) *repeat

(When the seventh sun shines,

the earth of the three worlds

will be in roaring flames and completely burned out) *repeat

It will continue for a long time until things settle down

The period of world meltdown, that's the name we should call this situation

(Instrumental part)

Under this sky the great evil tree will flourish for a long time

For years and years, we should call it the period of world meltdown

The evil tree spreads in all directions and gradually grows bigger

Until all houses will be destroyed, then the great bliss of rain will start

It's also the first observation to enter your mind. The water will rise and cover all the earth

(Remember, this is the settling down of the world) *repeat

Then after an exceedingly long period

The water level will go down and the world will become stable

(This globe has settled,

it's the time this great earth creates lands,

natural resources and necessary features) *repeat

(The Boddhi tree, a noble symbol for this world will also come up after a long period)*repeat

(The genuine and pure ascetic, Buddha. *Brahmars* will come and surround him

(Buddha equipped with his eight items for a monk is ready to go to another life)*repeat

(Our current world is represented by five golden lotus flowers and splendid monks' robes)*repeat

Four Buddhas have attained their enlightenment. Worship each of them,

but one Buddha is not amongst them yet. Pray so that we will have a chance to see him

Avoid wrong deeds, look for the righteous things

Good deeds, you should do it right now. If we are not on the way to Nirvana,

we will be eternally trapped in difficulties

3. The Three Worlds

'The Three Worlds' where creatures live ... Impermanence, suffering and insubstantiality,

as we don't understand these laws, we have to live through many cycles of rebirth

The rebirth is due to our sensualism and wrong ideas.

Shameful desires we can never be free from, that's greed. We have many misconceptions

and see things wrongly such as 'this is a man,' 'this is a deva'

That's also wrong to see that others belong to me such as my son, my wife, my husband, my property,

always 'me, me, me.' Because of our physical bodies,

our false pride expands

Meditate and gain insights into our mistakes

We can possess nothing, no substances, our bodies are empty

Everything is arising, existing and decaying. The bondage of disappearance after appearance

Although appearances happen repeatedly, they only show symptoms of impermanency

The two laws of mind and body. Both will get old, fall ill and die, not last forever

Impermanency is a bondage which does not last forever. Among the Five Dimensions where we came from,

four dimensions connect to Hell. Impermanency is caused by our delusion

Be conscious of the two laws of mind and body

Impermanency is caused by our delusion

Be conscious of the two laws of mind and body. The desires which come from our six senses

totally manipulate us

Shameful thoughts lead to greed

Let's cure ourselves with the medicine that takes us to Nirvana. Let's contemplate the Three Characteristics.

The Three Worlds

(Instrumental part)

Earth, water, wind and fire are the basic elements of this material world.

Our body is also a part of this shameful material world.

Earth, water, wind and fire are the basic elements of this material world.

Our body is also a part of this shameful material world.

Shame on our bodies which is made up of thirty two parts.

Shame on our bodies which is made up of thirty two parts.

Our foolishness, our ignorance. Because of greed we think of many unnecessary things as being necessary.

Our body is a rotten body, but looks right and real

and then captures our mind to control us

Our foolishness, our ignorance. Because of greed we think of many unnecessary things as being necessary.

Our body is a rotten body, but looks right and real

and then captures our mind to control us

Away from the law of Buddha, many creatures are attracted to wrong things
and enter the cycle of reincarnation

Away from the law of Buddha, many creatures are attracted to wrong things
and enter the cycle of reincarnation

Extinguish the Eleven Fires which bring ruin to humans
then work hard to find the way to attain Nirvana

Wrong ideas, wrong thoughts, completely renounce our worldly desires

It will not take very long to step up to a higher level

Both soul and wisdom exist from the beginning

to the end of one's life. Yes, that's why we should avoid dangers

and keep far away from enemies. Fix your mind on the highest level of knowledge,

this will guide you to Nirvana. Try hard to get rid of evil desires

Gain stronger concentration of our mind

and develop insight, that's what we should do

(Instrumental part)

This world is the one where the five Buddhas shall attain enlightenment

With eight steps to Nirvana, even at the fifth step, it's still not enough to emancipate
oneself

Long.....long time.....in the succession of emptiness and silence

Those who indulge themselves in enjoyment bring ruin. Because there is no
understanding of righteousness

The mind is constantly full of wrong ideas

Really scary and horrifying, their deeds expand the dimensions of
Hell and of the beast

Train yourself to eliminate bad and wrong conduct

Train yourself to eliminate bad and wrong conduct

Train yourself to eliminate bad and wrong conduct

Train yourself to eliminate bad and wrong conduct

Years, months, days and hours, don't waste your time

Years, months, days and hours, don't waste your time

Sensualism and malicious greed, cut them off from us

In the cycle of reincarnation, it's important to attempt to perfect our wisdom

Sensualism and malicious greed, cut them off from us

In the cycle of reincarnation, it's important to attempt to perfect our wisdom

Because having planted an evil tree, we have been foolish,

remain foolish and

will be even more foolish. Eradicate the tree

Poor humans, poor creatures, take pity on yourself

Poor humans, poor creatures, take pity on yourself

Poor humans, poor creatures, take pity on yourself

Poor humans, poor creatures, take pity on yourself

Greed, anger and ignorance, they are the fire of worldly desires

Greed, anger and ignorance, they are the fire of worldly desires

Blazing flames, sparkling fires

Blazing flames, sparkling fires

Vicious actions and bad behavior easily become habitual

and are also very powerful

Vicious actions and bad behavior easily become habitual

and are also very powerful

The way leading to Nirvana is not in their thoughts

The way leading to Nirvana is not in their thoughts

They miss the lower four dimensions where they used to live

where they used to live

where they used to live

where they used to live.....

Therefore many creatures dwell here permanently.....

4. Getting Tired of Life

Under the Mesua Ferrea tree, when Maitreya Buddha attains enlightenment,

We should also be ready to follow him

Under the Mesua Ferrea tree, when Maitreya Buddha attains enlightenment,

We should also be ready to follow him

Contemplate the volumes of Buddha's law

and our belief will be strengthened

Made numerously stronger and stronger

Made numerously stronger and stronger

Then we can compare reality with the truth, it will be goodgood

Under the Mesua Ferrea tree, when Maitreya Buddha attains enlightenment,

We should also be ready to follow him

Contemplate the volumes of Buddha's law

and our belief will be strengthened

Made numerously stronger and stronger

Made numerously stronger and stronger

Then we can compare reality with the truth, it will be goodgood

(Instrumental part)

Don't be extreme, go to the Middle Way

Don't be extreme, go to the Middle Way

Let me know the whole truth

The sound of a noble person's silver gong will wake me up
 and lead to Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path
 At that time I will know the real truth
 Let's do the right thing and act virtuously
 Let's do the right thing and act virtuously
 Now's the time, such a good occasion
 Once we have gained immortality, our journey will be easier
 To look for a way that will take us to the higher place
 To look for a way that will take us to the higher place
 Let's engage in 'C.P.M.' --- Charity, Precepts and Meditation

(Instrumental part)

Don't be extreme, go to the Middle Way
 Don't be extreme, go to the Middle Way Let me know the whole truth
 The sound of a noble person's silver gong will wake me up
 and lead to Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path
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 Let's do the right thing and act virtuously
 Now's the time, such a good occasion
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To look for a way that will take us to the higher place

To look for a way that will take us to the higher place

Let's engage in 'C.P.M.' --- Charity, Precepts and Meditation

5. Biography of 'Maha Gita' Maestro Pyone Cho (*instrumental music)

Maestro Pyone Cho, who was gifted in music and literature was born in 1878 (1240 in the Burmese year) in Kyaiklat, Myanmar. He was the first son of Si, father and Htwe, mother. Si's grandfather Shwe Youk served as a finance officer for the Burmese court.

Since he was a child, he showed his talent in music and literature and became a song writer at the age of eleven. His songs in 'vibrating chin' style, which was popular at the time, surprised audiences and were highly acclaimed. At the age of sixteen he successfully demonstrated his superb ability as a harpist at a traditional equestrian event. After this event many traditional musicians throughout colonial Burma attempted to compete with him musically. From the age of thirteen Pyone Cho supported himself independently, left his parents' home and moved to Kunkyangone town, where he began pursuing various kinds of knowledge and technologies.

By the age of thirty Pyone Cho was earning a living as a traditional herbalist. Towards the end of World War I, Pyone Cho who was now thirty nine years old, toured as director for a 'Zat' (Burmese theatrical show) troop sponsored by Mr. Ba Shin from Zaparyoe village, raising funds for the war. After that Pyone Cho was invited to Rangoon as an editor for the Pyinnya Alinn Newspaper through the recommendation of a famous monk writer, Leti Pandita. While at Pyinnya Alinn, Pyone Cho became very successful through his essays written under the penname of 'Seinda Thekka.' He then moved to the Myanma Alinn Newspaper where his writings again enjoyed popularity, published under pennames such as Bo Min Kyaw and Ayudaw Ne Dunn (Ne Dunn the Great Madman). His series of essays entitled 'The Event for the Nine Political Pagodas,' which included some troublesome characters named 'the Political Planets,' won a huge popularity which encouraged the newspaper to repeatedly publish the episodes. Such a strongly positive response from readers had never occurred before. After returning from a pilgrimage to Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda from Rangoon, Pyone Cho wrote a travel guide to Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda which offers valuable information for pilgrims, along with some humorous expressions. When he published the book under the title of 'A Guide by 'Nat' spirit to the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda,' it was enthusiastically welcomed by readers.

Pyone Cho then moved to the Mawyawaddy Newspaper where he worked as an editor for their 'Myanmar Review Journal' before moving to the Warneizza Newspaper, where he committed himself to editing 'The Great Collection of Maha Gita Songs' (Maha Gita Paung jouk Kyi). This was encouraged by Mr. Myint owner of the Amyodhar Publishing Company. Through this book Pyone Cho became widely

recognized as 'Pyone Cho the Maha Gita.' After the resignation of veteran writer/editor Lune (also known as 'Thakin Kodaw Hmaing') Pyone Cho took up his position at the Thuriya Newspaper (Sun Press Ltd). With this company he published a book recording a variety of games and also a book describing various kinds of fraud cases committed by a young man, Ne Aye. Readers loved reading about Ne Aye's mastery of fraud techniques. Pyone Cho began editing another Maha Gita song book titled 'The True Explanations of Maha Gita Songs ' (Maha Gita Tatta Dipani) but before finishing it he passed away on Wednesday, 25th of January, 1928 (the 4th day of waxing moon in the month of Dabodwe 1289 in the Burmese calendar).

Two of Maestro Pyone Cho's Buddhist songs, beginning with 'The Three Worlds' and another religious piece 'Getting Tired of the Life,' are still appreciated by audiences today. Mr. Hlaik, a knowledgeable person who originated from Kyaiklat and famous for his rich knowledge of the Abhidhamma Pitaka, once explained the meaning of 'The Three Worlds' song by singing each phrase. The contents of the song derived from the Abhidhamma Pitaka were so profound that this took him seven days. Pyone Cho demonstrated his brilliant talent not only in writing and music, but also in painting, sculpture, smithery and various kinds of art forms. He was always curious about various kinds of technologies, learned quickly and mastered many techniques.

As a Burmese literature and music lover, I intend to show my respect to Maha Gita Maestro Pyone Cho, through this DVD, 'Tribute to Maestro Pyone Cho.'

Yuri Takahashi

The Jewel of Golden Kyaiklat

Being a superb writer and musician

Born in Golden Kyaiklat, our teacher

Even after a century, lest we forget

His soul filled with the law of Buddha

It reminds us the Three Jewels

His special love, our great obligation to him

Maestro Pyone Cho

Ye Naing Linn, Kyaiklat

'Tribute to Maestro Pyone Cho'

Australia 2013

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