

Myanmar Perceptions
of
the Social Economics
of Myanmar

A TEXTBOOK

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Hans-Bernd Zöllner, Introduction

1 Contexts, objectives and aims

One of the many epithets assigned to Myanmar reads “hermit nation”. The attribute evokes a variety of connotations. The country is famous for its Buddhist monasteries, in which the art of Vipassana meditation leading to a state of complete individual enlightenment and liberation from all worldly troubles is taught. It has been remarked that this kind of meditation has been one of the most notable export goods from Myanmar.¹ Being a country of hermits - of very different kind and not just of pure Buddhist character - contributes a lot to the charm of the country noted and praised by most foreign visitors.

Looking from a political perspective, the country’s isolation was at least partly positively assessed for many years – if it was noticed by the international community at all. Some foreign observers regarded the Burma under the “Burmese Way to Socialism” as an example of a Third World society that took the desired “Third Way” between capitalism and communism, a contemporary Asian version of Asterix’ and Obelix’ Gaulish village and their fight against the global village as implemented by the Roman Empire. This favourable image however completely disappeared in 1988 when the military took over power. Now the country’s leadership was labelled xenophobic retrospectively, despite the fact that the international community had respected (if not supported) the isolationist politics under Ne Win.²

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

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

¹ Houtman 1998 *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics. Aung San Suu Kyi and the* : 134. One of the most famous “exporters” was U Ba Khin (1899-1971).

² Japan and Germany for different reasons gave a lot of assistance between 1962 and 1988.

majority of the Burmese public: the government was at fault. Implement good governance and the economy will blossom.

Some of the texts assembled in this volume support such assumption. Other documents point to other factors behind Burma's/Myanmar's poor economic performance over decades. One of them is denoted by metaphor of the "hermit nation". Among other factors, Burma's poor economic records might be influenced by the country's dominating religion and its traditional culture.

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

Such intention can be corroborated by theory. Max Weber (1864-1921) raised in his groundbreaking sociological works the question of how religion/culture influenced the "spirit" of economic activities.¹ With regard to Burma/Myanmar, J.S. Furnivall (1878-1960) contributed to this issue in the 1930s and 1940s and developed the idea of a "plural society".² Later, E. F. Schumacher (1911-1977), after a visit to Burma, wrote his book "Small is beautiful" which contains a chapter on "Buddhist economics".³ In the early 1960s, Melford Spiro collected data about economic life in a Burmese village and used them to disprove some prevailing conceptions of Buddhists' attitudes towards inner worldly activities like economics.⁴ However, these theoretical approaches have not yet been integrated in the discussion of the future of Burmese economics.

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

¹ Max Weber's essay „Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus“ (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism) came out in 1904. His works on Buddhism and Hinduism were published shortly before his death in 1920.

² John S. Furnivall 1931 *An introduction to the Political Economy of Burma*. Rangoon : Burma Book Club. (Reprinted 1957); John S. Furnivall 1948 *Colonial Policy and Practice. A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge Univ. Press.

³ Ernst Friedrich Schumacher 1973 *Small is beautiful. Economics as if People Mattered*. New York [u.a., Harper & Row.

⁴ Melford E. Spiro 1970 *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. New York, Harper & Row.

2 The problem of getting access to the mindset of “the people”

It was the idea of complementing the existing literature on Burmese economics that was the force behind the collection of the texts presented here. Such supplementation was stimulated by the observation that most books dealing with the topic focus on the “political economy of Burma” as the title of Furnivall’s handbook published in 1936. Economic policies implemented in the various periods of the country’s history focus on the ideological factors which together, with other circumstances like war and civil war, prevented Burma to realize its assumed great economic potential.

Typical for this approach is the motto of David Steinberg’s book *Burma. The State of Myanmar*: “Dedicated to the diverse Burmese peoples who have suffered so much in a state yet to fulfil its promise”.¹ The quotation stresses the responsibility of the state towards the people and suggests that “the peoples” share this attitude. But is that true? If yes, do Burmese people define “responsibility” for economic wellbeing in the same way as Mr. Steinberg does? Here a fundamental problem becomes visible: Our knowledge about what “the peoples” have in mind mostly stems from what peoples’ representatives – academic, political or humanitarian – say.

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

3 Method in randomness - diverse personal starting points

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

¹ David I. Steinberg 2001 *Burma. The State of Myanmar*. Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press: ii.

The editor is by no means an economist and a latecomer to the field of Myanmar and Southeast Asian Studies. His interest in Burmese economics was aroused by the encounter with the Nagani song reproduced in the historical section 2 of this textbook. This meeting happened in course of the attempt to document the books published by the Nagani Book Club between 1938 and 1941.¹ The song promoted the club's activities effectively. The refrain asserts "We will be healthy and wealthy, protected and defended from all the dangers and perils. Poverty-stricken people will soon be rich and no more out-of date." This can be seen as a clear economic message which was to be achieved not only by the "potency of the Nagani Book Club", e.g. reading and other activities undertaken by the enterprise, but also by two famous Burmese magicians, Bo Bo Aung and Shin Ajjigona. The question arose of how these two components of economic success might be related. Other texts from Nagani books posed other questions as did newspaper editorials, official statements and speeches of politicians.

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

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

These essays can be used to demonstrate the arbitrariness in the method, which was attempted to obtain material for section 3, essays that look at economics from different perspectives. A number of acquainted people were approached and asked to write about a certain topic. Some promised to write something but were unable to keep their promise, others changed their topic and others who were not directly contacted proposed a paper after hearing about the project.

¹ For the results of this project see www.zoellner-online.com/MLP.htm.

As a consequence, the papers assembled in section 3 of the textbook reflect both the ideas of the editor of what could be important and the distinct choice of topics by people willing to contribute.

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

4 Limitations

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

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

In the meantime, information from the outside must be consulted – including research undertaken by Burmese organisations working outside of Myanmar.¹

5 The textbook's user value

According to Marxism value has a dual nature - made up of use value and exchange value. Independent of labour, use value relates to the utility of the properties of a product, which is realized only upon its use. It cannot be expected that many people would be willing to exchanging money for the contents of this textbook. Further, the publication of this work was

¹ See recently: Ken MacLean 2010 *The Rise of Private Indirect Government in Burma*. Susan L Levenstein (ed.) *Finding Dollars, Sense and Legitimacy in Burma*. Washington D.C., Woodruff Wilson International Center for Scholars: 40-53..

sponsored by a German non-profit organisation, the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. This status prevents the organisation to sell publications published with its financial assistance.

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

- a) Private value: The reader is invited to benefit from the material presented here by getting new ideas, comparing the views of some texts with his own experiences, frowning on other contributions, asking questions about the meaning and relevance of some passages and starting to draw conclusions or develop hypotheses. He or she is invited, too, to share some of the reactions with the editor.
- b) Teaching value: The texts assembled in this volume might be useful for a variety of teaching opportunities both inside and outside Myanmar. (Note: For people who read Myanmar language some of the texts are to be published in Burmese – hopefully.) It could be worthwhile to compare facets of the “Burmese mindset” manifested in these texts with experiences in other countries or cultures.
- c) Workshop value: It is intended to organise a workshop to be taking place in Yangon in late 2011 based on the material introduced here. At the centre of the workshop four or five discussion groups are planned in which topics related to the contents of this textbook are to be discussed. At the end of the workshop, some policy recommendations should be formulated. – At the end of Dr. Tin Soe’s contribution on (3.1) some recommendations for such topics are suggested. More proposals are very much welcome!

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

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1 TODAY

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

Editor's note: The following texts were written by students of two Myanmar educational institutions in October and November 2009. They were chosen from some 60 mini-essays written by students of one of Myanmar EGRESS'¹ courses in social entrepreneurship & leadership on October 30 and some 15 papers written by attendees of the BARS program at the Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) in Insein. The EGRESS students had one hour time to write down their ideas, the contributions from the MIT are results of a homework assignment.

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

Text 1: Knowing People

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

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

EGRESS

Text 2: Traditional Fetters

As Buddha taught, rich and poor people have their previous life's effects. They are different because of their previous lives, and also present doing of good or bad actions. We accepted the differences of endowments although we believe in the equity of rights. Some people may be better, richer or more intelligent than others and this is not merely because of his present actions. They are born to achieve, what the law of *kamma* stated.

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

¹ For details see <http://www.myanmareregress.org/> [5.6.2010].

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

EGRESS



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

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

Text 3: Kamma and Risk

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

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

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

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

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

MIT

Text 4: Dependence

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

themselves. So, they would like to choose some eligible people instead of giving relief material to all people. The villagers argued that, of course, rich people can recover by themselves. But we rely on rich people, such as: we can borrow money from them, working as labour in their farms and rich people make donation to the community and monastery. They should be selected for distribution. If not, we don't want to your help.

That's the real culture of Myanmar people.

EGRESS



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

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

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

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

Other impacts include poor means of transport and lack of border trade, to which losses in business can be ascribed. In Rakhine State, average persons are lower in status than their counterparts in other States and Divisions, and so-called rich men are lower in status than

their counterparts in other States and Divisions. It is mainly due to the fact that the economy of the region is controlled by big dealers and merchants and privileged persons who have connections with the government.

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

MIT



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

Text 6: The trouble cycle

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

Fuel oil dealers no longer work as the prices go up and not much profit is left. Families with cars have come to use them less frequently, and turn to buses. Taxi drivers choose the routes where they can find passengers easily. Buses become more crowded than ever. Buses that use

CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) queue up at the filling stations that work with electricity. Because of the shortages of electricity, gas filling stations do not work regularly, and the buses cannot ply on their routes. Because of the crowded buses, people get to work late.

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

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

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

Employees at companies and neighbours at wards collectively save money.

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

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

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

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

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

EGRESS

Text 7: Plural Society

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MIT

Text 8: The Missing Link

“Poling boat, without capital/ investment”

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

“Donation 1\$, with getting 50cents”

“Donation while selling”

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

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

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

For many lives, all the wealth I had got is till out of hand to earn all my living expenses. If so, we can not guarantee for our health. Moreover, from government's side, the supportive measures are only on paper and not for real. And therefore, civil societies, NGOs, INGOs had been coming at in our country. But there had been some misunderstanding and barriers that

prevent politics and nature of those organizations to be known by beneficiaries openly. Those barriers are coming from insufficiency of knowledge, nature and ability of citizens.

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

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

EGRESS

Text 9: Sanctions

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

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

MIT

Text 10: Selfishness

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

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

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

EGRESS



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

Text 11: Two Different Classes

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

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

On the contrary, poor farmers, who constitute the majority, have to take pains, toiling with draft cattle. As they cannot afford to buy fertilizer, the harvest is poor, and fetches only a small income. They live in small huts without any modern facilities. They cannot enjoy

proper health care. They cannot send their children to school. As a consequence, the children grow up into uneducated persons, who become farmers or casual labourers.

Similarly, rich fishermen, armed with motorboats and good fishing gear, go out into the sea on trawling trips and pile great catches into the hull. They live comfortably in large houses, furnished with modern equipment. Their social, economic and educational standards have become higher and higher.

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

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



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

1.2 Profiles of Myanmar Economic Actors

Editor's note: Most of the profiles were written by students attending the BARS program at the MIT. The lecturer of the Business Major course, Kyaw Kyaw Thac, instructed the students on the special project. Profile 10, the self-portrait of the owner of the art gallery was written by his son, Bo Bo. The final profile was written by Khin Maung Nyo, editor of a business magazine.

Profile 1 Mini-store keeper

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 2: Traditional snacks manufacturer

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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



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

Profile 3: Cultivator

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 4: Marketing employee

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

Profile 5: Construction and internet café businesses

Personal data:

- Name: Daw Thanda Aye
- Marital status: Married (1 son and 1 daughter)
- Age: 39
- Education: M E (Civil)
- Business: “Grace Family” Construction and Internet Cafe

Business profile:

Daw Thanda Aye and her husband both being engineers, it was appropriate for them to found “Grace Family” Design, Construction and Decoration Company. However, her husband is a government employee, and so she mainly manages the company. She understands that government job has constraints and salary is small. Sometimes, government employees are assigned to rural areas which makes it difficult for respective family to go along with the employee.

In fact, the two businesses have no relations to each other. But she felt a need to keep up with the time, and also wished to cater to the people, young and old, in the area where there was not an internet shop and so opened the internet café with skilled employees.

For construction, she had to recruit skilled labour and engineers. For the site, she has to collect construction materials—bricks, sand and stones. She invested nearly K 25,000, 000 in the internet business and K 35,000,000 to K 40,000,000 in the construction. Incomes are not steady. Customers from 80 to 100 visit the internet cafe every day, and K 400 is charged for one hour’s service. Construction too depends on the number of projects available.

Income is mostly used for children’s education. Part of it is re-invested because she always wishes to extend the two businesses.

There is no specific training for engineers. They are called to meetings once in every two days and discuss their requirements. Workers are attached with skilled employees at the internet shop, in which air conditioners have been installed. She plans to increase the number of computers. Currently she places emphasis on the two businesses only.

Occupied all the time, she does not have time for rest and recreation. The time when there are no construction projects is her free time.

In future, she would like “Grace Family” at the top of all construction companies.

In her view of the economic system in Myanmar, delays and difficulties are caused by constraints imposed upon free trade. She sees 2010 a time for all changes. She wants to see her country people living in high social standard.

Profile 6: Internet café business

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

Profile 7: Company employee

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

He gets a monthly salary of K 400,000 plus bonus. Among the fellow Agonies of the same generation, it is a fairly large salary. He also holds good attitude towards his job. Yet, he is faced with difficulties such as delays in obtaining government sanctions and poor internet connection. It is also difficult to recruit qualified professionals. Especially, he is always occupied as a project manager because MOL has to be always prepared to compete with its main rival TOTAL. He works 8 hours a day. This makes MOL to depend on professionals within and without the country.

Profile 8: Traditional snack seller

Personal data:

- Name: Daw Khin Nwe Aye
- Marital status: Married (one son)
- Residence: 23 Kyauk Awing Pagoda Road, Mayangon Township

Business profile:

Daw Khin Nwe Aye has been engaged in selling Mont Ti (Hot-tasting Rakhine fish soup eaten with rice noodle) for 10 years. She was keeping a small bookshop when she got married in her second year for an Economics degree. After marriage, she closed the bookshop temporarily. When her son was 3 years old, she joined a company, completing closing the bookshop. But it was not convenient for her to take care of her young son. Her husband, being a government employee, also has to go out from morning to evening. She thought of working by the house. Eventually, she conceived an idea to sell Mount Ti by the house. So she quit her company job, and opened a Mont Ti shop in the compound of her parents-in-law, facing the street.

In the first stage, she had to spend K 50,000 on the purchase of pots, dishes and spoons. Later every month, she has to invest K 10,000 only from which she gets a daily profit of K 5,000 to K 10,000.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Profile 9: “Shoe Gallery” employee

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 10: Private hostel keeper

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

Daw Ni Ni Aye is a spinster who runs a private hostel in Insein Township. She is also the secretary of Mayanchaung Social Service Association (Leprosy). Formerly, she opened a bookshop for about 30 years. She closed the bookshop because of some inconveniences, and has now turned into a hostel keeper for 2 years. To open this hostel, she had made a lot of preparations. Of the two wings of her house, she repaired and decorated one wing with new furnishing for opening it as the hostel, which accepts ladies only, especially young ladies. Her family members live in the other wing. She had to arrange for beds, water supply, clotheslines, toilets, electricity supply, bathrooms with tanks, dining rooms, reading room and security. A telephone has been installed to enable the hostellers to communicate with their families.

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

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

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

Profile 12: Brick manufacturer

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

U Aye Win was formerly a dealer of beans and rice. He has changed to brick-baking industry because his former work demanded big investment, too much travelling and anxiety for the goods vulnerable to weather. Actually, brick baking has been family business, traditionally done for 20 years.

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 13: NGO employee

Personal data:

- Name: Daw Suziena Htun
- Marital status: Single (Five family members)
- Education: B Sc (Physics), Diploma in Civil Engineering, M A (Development Studies)
- Residence: Kyimyindaing Township, Yangon
- Designation: Director (Programme Support Department), Population Services International (PSI)

She has to provide support for 9 units—HR, general admin, local procurement, international procurement, ICT, logistics, transport maintenance and quality control.

- Former jobs:
 1. Secretary of Joint Venture Company
 2. Trade manager/tourism operation manager in private sector for six year
 3. Head of Social Unit in World Food Programme
 4. PSI Myanmar (for 8 years) (1st time)
 5. Assist Field Officer (UNHCR)
 6. National Field Coordination Officer in UNOCHA
 7. PSI Myanmar (2nd time) up to NOW

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 14: Retailer of snacks

Personal data:

- Name: Daw San San Win
- Marital status: Married (4 children)
- Education: B A (Myanmar literature) (1983)
- Residence: 84 Myoshaung St, Myenigon Ward, Mawlamyaing Township

Business profile:

After graduating from university, Daw San San Win joined the government service as a Junior Assistant Teacher (JAT). For 15 years, she had to fulfil her family needs, combining her salary as a teacher and that of her husband. Later on, as the combined income could no longer solve the family difficulties, and as she also wished to support the education of her children fully and contribute to charities, she retired from job, and started selling snacks.

Now she has been in this business for 10 years, and can deal with all social matters and contribute to religious charities. She conceived the idea of selling snacks as she, as a teacher, had seen children buying snacks every day. In the beginning, she was faced with difficulties, but later on she has accumulated experience.

She invested K 300,000 at the initial stage, and her average daily income is around K 100,000. At first, she had to buy the snacks for reselling. With trust built later, she can take the commodities on credit and repay afterwards. She does not put much profit on the snacks, but has to sell them out because of expiry dates and the harm given by rats.

She has rivals in her neighbourhood. Yet, her advantages include smooth relations with the customers and re-selling of the snacks to smaller shops. Her shop is open from 6 am to 6 pm.

Now she is biding time to grasp new opportunities to extend her business.

Profile 15: Moun Hinga Seller

Personal data:

- Name: Aunty Freda
- Marital status: Married (1 son)
- Age: -----
- Education: University graduate
- Residence: Insein, Yangon
- Business: Traditional snacks seller

Business profile:

“I’m pleased with my life in which I have forgotten all my tiredness at the end of the day because I am doing the job which I am interested in,” said Aunty Freda who has opened a shop selling Moun Hingar (Fish soup eaten with rice noodle), noodle salad and fried vermicelli.

Born and brought up in Insein, Aunty Freda is kind and attends to her disabled husband, without any grumble. She lives a happy life, working for her husband, son and 90-year-old mother. Formerly, she worked for the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) for more than 22 years. While with the CSO, she was ordered to transfer to Nay Pyi Taw in a one-step higher rank. But, as she had to attend to her family closely, she denied the promotion offered to her, and quit her job.

Her hobby being cooking, she opened a snack shop where she sells some light foods. She is also a dealer who buys cloth from a large market and re-sells it to retailers. To prepare Moun Hinga, she keeps onion, cabbage and coriander ready by the night. She gets up from bed at 4 am, and starts cooking the fish soup. She invests K 7,000 per day, making a profit of K4,000 every day.

She maintains quality by buying good ingredients. Customers like her. Some children like her to prepare the snack by herself. Some customers go back home when they do not see her at the shop and someone else sits there. At first, she opened it as a trial. Her shop being on a market street and close to a school, children and students came and had Moun Hinga for breakfast. Seeing many customers favour her shop, she has continued to open it. She opens it only for 3 hours—from 6 am to 9 am every morning.

Profile 16: Store (Small shop) seller

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 17: Photo studio

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

Profile 18: Internet shop

Personal data:

- Name: Saw Mu Tha Tha Dee (Husband) & Naw Paw Dhay Nyar Loo
- Children: 2
- Residence: 112 A, Seminary Street, East Gyogone, Insein Township
- Education: B A (BM), B A (Religious Studies) (Business Major) (Husband)

Business profile:

It is said to be 2-in-1: Saw Mu TT Dee is skilled in management and his wife, in technology. That was why they initiated business by opening “Computer and Electronic Service Store” at 1042, Yangon-Insein Road. They opened a branch service and sales shop at Hledan, Kamaryut Township which is now managed by cousins. Later on, they opened an Internet shop, named “Shalom” (meaning “peace”).

For preparation, they had to look for investment money. They invested about K 20 million. Secondly, they had to choose a busy place for opening the shop. The couple does not seek so much profit, and instead, place emphasis on customer service. Their income is not fixed—ranging from K 45,000 per day to K 80,000 per day. They spend most of the income on family costs and a part on religious affairs. They plan to provide salary for one religious teacher per year.

One problem in opening Shalom is that as the place is on the low land, it is very hot. So the couple plans to install an air-conditioner. The follow-up problem is that because the electricity supply is not regular and the current is not steady, the air-con cannot be used all the time. They are occasionally engaged in promotional activities—e.g. by offering discounts on the per-hour rate.

Daw Paw Dhay Nyar Loo, “The Internet is not an essential thing for Myanmar people, but we wish to provide service satisfactory to the customers.” They admit customers over 15 years of age because under-15s are not steady and tend to make noise in the shop.

The advantages of Shalom are: (1) good location, (2) wide space and installation of a larger number of computers, and (3) good internet connection. This gives Shalom a great chance to take up larger market share than its rivals. The Internet shop is open from 8 am to 11 pm, sometimes up to 12 midnight. As future plan, the couple wishes to put computer accessories on sale and offer desktop publication services.

Profile 19: Fritters hawker

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

Lakshmee is an Indian woman who earns her livelihood by selling “baya kyaw” (Rice dough fritters). She was born in Kyauktaga Township, Bago Division, and formerly, worked as a casual labourer—paddy planting, transplanting and tilling for farm owners. Because her life

was hard, she moved to Yangon and began selling fritters. Now she has been hawking baya kyaw for eight year.

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

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

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

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

Profile 20: School teacher

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Profile 21: Mushroom cultivator

Personal data:

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

Business profile:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

U Alan said his income is enough for his family. He wishes his fellow Kayin nationals under the Kayin Baptist Church to grow mushrooms on a manageable scale. He is prepared to

provide help to them. For growing mushroom, not so much capital or not so many labourers are needed. It has market. He wishes others to try it.

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

Profile 22: Owner of Thiriwaimon Art Gallery

Name : U Myint Swe

Age : 58

Position: Owner

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

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

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

When all things stabilized, we all get back to Yangon. In Yangon, the Longyi business is quite competitive. It needs a lot of capital money to be established. As nobody supports my family, I was working as a manager at my friend’s gallery. I was friendly with well known artists ever since I worked for my thesis. During the time of preparing my thesis, I often visited their homes to do the interviews. To be an art dealer, not only you got to know with the artists but also you need to know thoroughly about the art to explain the customers. In the mean time, I realized how to make picture framings as well. I just only received paintings from the artists. So I got to make framings them to hang on the wall by my self.

I have some experienced on organizing for the exhibitions of famous artists such as “Bagyi Aung Soe”, “Paw Oo Thet”. I sold one water color painting of “Paw Oo Thet” for 3000 Kyats in 1990. I just needed to give money back to the artist 1500 Kyats (1.50 \$) only. 3000 Kyats was well enough for one household in 1990. The US embassy was the main customer for the exhibitions held at Yangon in those days. Nowadays, “Paw Oo Thet” painting prices are very high. If you want to collect his water color paintings, you have to afford 2.000.000 Kyats (2000\$) for 10 into 15 inches size. For the oil paintings on a canvas, the prices are within 500.0000 Kyats (5000\$) to 1.000.0000 Kyats (10.000 \$). It depends on the quality & the condition of the paintings. If I had kept his paintings at that time, now I could be a rich guy

through selling his paintings. I got nothing left when the prices rose right after the artist died. The point is no one knows the future what will become next.

Then I quit the job from my friend's gallery, I rented a small shop in Bogyoke [Scotts] Market. At first, I sold "Shwe Chi Htoe" tapestry which is made in Mandalay. One of my friends who lives in Mandalay, he hired some workers to make "Shwe Chi Htoe" and deliver to me. At that time, Japanese business guy asked me "Can you produce 500 pieces per month, I can pay you 500000ks (50\$) for each". I said "What we making is handicraft, we don't have capability to do it like mass production". That's how I missed the chances to be millionaire.

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

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

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

Profile 23: Khin Maung Nyo, From Pegu Yoma to IT Entrepreneur: Wah Wah Tun¹
(Text taken from a Power Point Presentation)

Part 1: From Class Room to Battle Ground

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

Part 2: Entering the Business World in the Socialist Period

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

Part 3: Under Market Economy

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

Part 4: IT Entrepreneur

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

Part 5: Remarks on the Business Environment in Myanmar

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

Part 6: Strengths of the Lady Entrepreneur Introduced Here

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

¹ The name was not mentioned in the presentation of Khin Maung Nyo.

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

SUPPLEMENT: Literary Portraits

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



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

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

1 Daw Amah¹

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

1.1 Wealthy U Thet Shay and son U Kyaw

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

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

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

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

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

The main central monastery is a two-storey brick building that has eleven sections from east to west and eight sections from south to north, and four stairs. The interior is brightly gilded. The sixteen encircling monasteries are also two-storey brick buildings that have seven-section and five-section walls. The huge posts are brightly gilded. The people who built and donated these large monasteries were the wealthy U Thet Shay and his son the wealthy U Kyaw who was also known as Tea Kyaw and Salt Kyaw. U Kyaw's friend, U Lan of Pwe Gone,

¹ The following stories were taken from: Ludu Daw Amar 1991, *Men and Women hailed from Mandalay (Mandalay Thu Mandalay Thar)* Yangon, U Aung Gyi.

requested them to allow him to build and donate a monastery in the Ma Soe Yein monastery compound so that the good deed might result in an encounter with his friend in the future existence. Being extremely good friends, he was granted his request and there was the Vinaya Naru Padesa monastery donated by U Lan; the daughter of U Thet Shay, Daw Wee, also desired to build and donate a monastery and the daughter/ sister was allowed to build the Pali Naru Padesa monastery. The other fourteen encircling monasteries and the main monastery were the good deeds of U Thet Shay and his son U Kyaw.

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

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

U Thet Shay had three children. The elder son was Maung Kyaw. The middle child was Maung Taw. The youngest was the daughter, Ma Wee. When the elder son Maung Kyaw came of age the father took him along to sell green tea. The father and son carried green tea with two shoulder yokes and sold them. Business was good. Good business allowed them to be in comfortable circumstances. When they were in comfortable circumstances U Thet Shay arranged to buy a cart and bullocks to carry and sell green tea because it was very tiresome to walk and carry the goods with a shoulder-yoke. In making such an arrangement U Thet Shay consulted villagers of the same mind so that they would not have to go alone; he found those who would go to Myit Thar to buy and sell *sebesten* leaves,¹ and those who would buy and sell other Shan produce and he had four or five carts for company. And so U Thet Shay and his son would come to Mandalay on a cart to sell green tea.

I will tell of an incident that U Thet Shay encountered while he went selling with his cart. When they entered Myit Laung village to give the tired bullocks a short rest, they went along the track and made a clearing in the east of the village. There suddenly appeared a small pagoda about fifteen cubits² high. They carried on clearing the area and found a stone inscription.

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

¹ *sebesten* leaves (*Cordia dichotoma*) are used as wrappers for rolling cheroots.

² About 18 inches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the German said just to give what gold U Kyaw had and that he would leave all the salt and U Kyaw got a ship load of salt very cheaply.

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

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

U Kyaw's father U Thet Shay was devout and revered the Three Gems. He was from Myo Pyin Gyi and had the opportunity to revere and attend to the Myo Pyin Gyi Sayadaw who was well known for his knowledge of the Pitakas. When his business began to prosper, U Thet Shay humbly informed the Sayadaw that it was his desire to build and donate a monastery. The Sayadaw was far-sighted and said that if he wanted to build and donate a monastery, he should not to do so in Myo Pyin Gyi, but to do it in Mandalay. So he built a wooden monastery in one of the well known teaching institutions in Mandalay, the Hpa Ya Gyi Taik. When the wooden monastery was burnt down in a fire, he built the large central brick building of Hpa Ya Gyi Taik.

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

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

U Thet Shay filled the lake that was at the centre of the orchard with earth and built a large brick building that had 11-section and 8 section walls there. It was started in the year 1269 of Buddhist Enlightenment and completed in 1271 BE.¹

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

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

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

¹ Editor's note: The dates given refer to the Burmese Era commencing in 638 of the Christian era. Accordingly, the monastery was built between 1907 and 1909.

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

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

1.2 Daw Mya who sold crockery

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

The women of Zay Cho Taw

Among those who have brought prestige and fame to Mandalay are many women. Our city had been a royal city. It was the capital of a kingdom and therefore the centre of national culture. But from the days of British colonial rule to the present time, it was no longer the administrative capital of the government and its existence was by trade and commerce. In the past, the distribution of goods was done by private entrepreneurs and traders and vendors were a major class of people in Mandalay. And as Myanmar women are wont not to be like our Indian and Chinese neighbours and depend on the husband but would earn one's bread alongside the husband, many women were traders and vendors. They made up almost 90% of the class. If you were to talk about Mandalay of the past, it would not be complete without mentioning the large Zay Cho market. Much has been said of the large Zay Cho market and its women. And there were reasons enough to do so too.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daw Mya who sold crockery

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

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

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

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

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

In the large shop were hundreds and thousands of pieces of crockery stacked in rows. You can get crockery of the same colour, design and form by the hundred and in no time at all. Bowls,

glasses, teapots, plates and cutlery were in profusion. Everything you need is displayed and sold.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the large Zay Cho market, there were many shops selling crockery. But customers would come to this shop first and ask Daw Mya. They would buy from her and would take no notice of the Indian owner sitting in his chair. If the old Indian tried to attend to the needs of the customer when Daw Mya was not present, the customer would rather wait for her return than deal with him.

Daw Mya was eloquent and dealt well. Everyone was satisfied with her manner of speaking. I could remember well one incident when my grandfather and grandmother went to buy crockery at her shop. I went along with my grandparents. Grandfather U Pho Gaung wore a white garment and a white cotton jacket with a white silk scarf wrapped around his head. Grandmother Daw Shan Ma wore a green skirt and a white jacket with mauve stripes and wore a small bun of hair at the top. They were both over 70 and approaching 80. They both had fair skin. While they bought crockery, she remarked that it was very pleasing to see an elderly couple together and sat down and with her hands clasped palm to palm, paid her respects to them. It was an act done in all sincerity. Actually Daw Mya was of Islamic faith. Myanmar Muslims were called Pa Thi (Parsee). Although they had a different faith, Myanmar Muslims in Mandalay lived like the Bamar. The Bamar thought they were like them too. Myanmar Muslims of Mandalay were different from Myanmar Muslims of other parts of Myanmar. Some of them were praised by the Myanmar kings and they had assimilated the tradition and matters associated with Myanmar culture. They could speak as well as the men and women of Mandalay; there were many who spoke better. Daw Mya was an eloquent Muslim woman. She sold very well. In 1938 there was a conflict between Indians and Bamar

in Mandalay. The young monks forbade people from buying at Indian shops but as an exception allowed them to buy at Daw Mya's shop. The customers did not take her as a saleswoman but regarded her as the owner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daw Mya said she was hurt by her matrimonial affairs.

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

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

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

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

1.3 Bandoola U Saing

I am going to write about things you should know of Bandoola U Saing who sold on a large scale robes that Buddhist monks wore. In the past, the business of selling robes was done by dyeing the cloth and sewing the cloth in one's region like Mawlamyine, Patheingyi, and Mandalay etc. The handicraft that the monks liked became well known in that region.

When U Saing of Mandalay introduced the 'Maha Bandoola' brand, the robes with that brand stuck on it became well known throughout the entire country, and as the monks liked the robes, they were distributed all over the country.

Theravada Buddhism thrives most in our country. Data collected in 1350 (Myanmar calendar) showed 120,000 novices and 210,000 monks. The business of manufacturing and selling robes for the nearly 350,000 members of the Buddhist Order was not a small one.

In writing about 'Bandoola U Saing' of Mandalay, allow me to write about some inseparable things like the changes made to the robes and how it was adapted to the circumstances of the times.

In the time of the exalted Buddha, the robes that the Buddha allowed the monks to wear were made of discarded material. The monks had to find clothes discarded on the bodies of dead people, cloth wrapped around bodies or any piece of cloth that could be found discarded in the cemetery. They had to wash it and sew it as prescribed in the Vinayas (codes). They then had to dye the robes with the dye obtained from the barks of trees to get a uniform colour. It was difficult and tiresome to get a pair of robes for a monk.

As things were, an eminent healer received, as a token of gratitude, an excellent and very expensive garment from a king he had treated. He thought it was fit for kings and decided to offer it respectfully to the Buddha. So, one day, the healer respectfully said to the Buddha that the monks had to put in too much effort to get a robe and asked the Buddha to allow the monks to wear robes offered by donors. He respectfully offered the garment to the Buddha.

The Buddha accepted his proposal and the garment. The monks were allowed to wear the robes made of discarded material and also the robes offered to them by donors. For a long time after this there was no making and selling of robes for the monks.

From what I have heard there was no one who sold robes for the monks up to the time of Myanmar kings. The donors had to offer, along with the piece of cloth earmarked for making the robe, a length of a plank of wood, a wooden roller, a pot to boil the bark and an earthen basin in which to dye the robe. The bark of the jack fruit tree was boiled in the pot to obtain the dye. The cloth was immersed in the pot and later wrapped around the wooden roller and rolled along the piece of plank so that it would take up the dye. Except that they no longer had to search for discarded cloth, the tedious task of making the robe was still there.

When we were young, at the time of the British rule, there were people who dyed and sold robes. In Mandalay, U Yin Gyi (of Areca orchard at the corner of 37th and 84th streets) was well known. U Pho Yin- Daw Thein who sold robes at the corner of 82nd and 31st streets, were the most well known. U Pho Yin and our grandfather U Phyo Aung were very good friends. When our father bought the building that used to be the Myeik Association's house, we were right in front of their house and we used to play in their house. There were many Singer sewing machines under U Pho Yin's house. Bamboo poles were stretched across upright posts and there were rows of them under one half of their large house, under the shed behind the large house and also in the yard. Being only a child then, I did not ask how many times you had to immerse the cloth in the dye solution. I knew it was repeated many times. At the start of the dyeing process, you had to let the robes dry in the sun. In the later stages, they were left to dry in the shade. The bamboo poles on which the robes were spread out to dry were smooth

and shiny and because of repeated staining with the dye, were brown like the colour of the robes that monks of the Shwe Kyin Order wear today. There was also a brick stove with a chimney and six large iron pans secured in place on the stove with cement.

Chips of the bark from the jack fruit tree were put in these pans and boiled for a long time to get the dark yellow dye. The sewed garments were dyed in this liquid. Back then, the best robes were made of cloth from Holland and a pair of the best robes would cost 5 to 6 kyats. A moderately good pair would cost 3 to 4 kyats. To get a good pair of robes you would need good cloth cut according to the Vinayas, sewed and dyed the colour the monks liked.

A Sayadawgyi (elder monk) once said that a good pair of robes would swish and rustle like silk when you wear them. Because there was no mordant to make the dye fast, the robes dyed with the bark of the jack fruit tree faded and the dye leached out and stained the hands, feet and the bodies of the monks yellow. All would have had witnessed that the handkerchiefs, pillow cases, towels of the monks and the napkins in the dining hall were stained yellow.

An elder monk said that when they were young they used to go U Yin Gyi who sold robes, to buy bucketfuls of the dye solution to dye faded robes.

The dye from the jack fruit bark was yellow. The colour that the monks liked was deep yellow or brownish yellow and the robes were dyed over and over again to get a darker hue. Some added the bark of the madama tree to get a darker colour. But the problem was there was no mordant to make the dye fast. Later, there were robes made from imported dyed cloth. Some would dye these robes with the dye obtained from the bark of jack fruit trees to make the robes conform to the Vinayas and acceptable to the monks. But the colour was a vivid yellow with a tint of red and was bright. The elder monks did not like the colour saying it was immodest.

At about the same time as the Holland robe, there appeared the robe with the Maha Bandoola brand, which guaranteed that the dye was fast.

U Saing's robes appeared around the year 1300. The monks said that they liked the robes because the colour was good and did not fade. The colour of U Saing's Bandoola robes was very agreeable to the monks because it was the exact dark yellow like that obtained from the bark of the jack fruit tree. It is said that the head monk of the Shwe Kyin Order, the Shwe Hintha Sayadawgyi of Sagaing Hill, who is now over 90, still likes to wear the robes of this colour.

Hands and feet were no longer stained yellow with the introduction of U Saing's robes which were dyed with chemical dyes. There were no longer faded robes about the bathrooms. There was no longer the need to buy the dye solution to dye faded robes. There was the question whether the dye conformed to the Vinayas and it was resolved by saying that the dye was extracted from the bark of trees.

U Saing himself boldly assured that the robes were made to conform to the Vinayas.

When the business was in full swing, there were more than 100 Singer sewing machines at the Bandoola building at the corner of 25th and 84th streets, to the north of the Zay Cho clock tower and more than 100 machines at the east end of Mandalay, to do the sewing. A bolt of cloth had 40 yards and would yield 9 lower garments and a little less than 5 upper robes for the monks. A machine can sew the cloth from a bolt into garments in one day.

You have probably seen robes that the makers said were cut with a knife and conformed to the Vinayas. The cloth would be piled on the floor in layers, measured and cut with a knife. They used a particular word for this process in their parlance.

Bandoola U Saing said he tried to make the robes conform to the Vinayas. But the key to the success of the business was to make the dye fast by using a mordant. One might ask whether this alone could let him monopolize the business.

Yes. Foreign chemical dye companies did not produce special dyes for the purpose of dyeing robes for Myanmar minks. They probably had to blend the dyes in Myanmar to get the preferred colour. It was here that U Saing's expertise proved invaluable to the business. He had originally been an apprentice in the dyeing and printing works of Hajee U Ba Oh who sold towels in Mandalay and was well known.

Hajee U Ba Oh, who sold towels, had seen Mandalay during the reign of Myanmar kings. His son Maung Maung and Mya Mya were well known merchants who sold towels when we were young. Towels were made from silk imported from Japan and floral designs were printed on the silk. Men wore it wrapped around their head and women draped it on their shoulders. U Saing had been an apprentice at the dyeing and printing works of Hajee U Ba Oh. He set up his own business when he was proficient in his trade. He dyed and sold bands of black cloth that Myanmar women stitched to the upper hem of their skirts and printed skirts.

The black band of cloth that women stitched to the upper hem of their skirt was dyed in Myanmar and if the dye was fast and the brand came to be well known, it was a good enough business for one to pursue. The band used to be about 6-9 inches in breadth in the past. Nowadays, it is only about 3-4 inches. It has become smaller. Women want the waist to look small; they no longer stitch a broad band at the upper hem of the skirt, make a large roll and wrap it around the waist.

The black band of cloth had the Maha Bandoola brand. It also bore the name Ma Thi La's band of black cloth to be stitched to the upper hem of the skirt. Ma The La was U Saing's first wife. After Daw Thi La passed away, U Saing married a Daw Saw Tin of Innwa.

The printed skirt that U Saing produced and sold was the off-white cotton cloth with a breadth of 44 inches that was printed with a single colour to give a pattern of white flowers. A skirt cost 5/16 to 3/8 of a kyat. A band of black cloth was not needed to be stitched to the upper hem of the skirt because the length of the skirt was long. The colour was deep and could take some dirt and stain well. The poor working class women liked these cheap skirts.

When U Saing got things moving with this business, he went on to produce shirts and monks' robes. These only bore the Maha Bandoola brand. The wife's name was not used.

By about 1300, U Saing's business prospered as a result of his dyeing skill and the opportune time. The robes he produced became well known by the day. It was unrivalled. When his business was successful he took along his manager with him to India and Japan to import bolts of cloth and good quality dyes and to find good contacts.

A Sayadawgyi with an Agga Maha Pandita title laughed and said that when he was young he had thought that Bandoola U Saing was a leading actor in Myanmar drama. He might well have thought so because there was a leading actor in Myanmar drama by the name of Bandoola Maung Sein.

U Saing's robes sold very well from around 1300 till it was nationalized. There was a branch shop in Yangon at No. 71, Konzaydan Street. U Saing had brown skin and his features did not look like a Myanmar and some said he was a Muslim and that he only became a Buddhist because his robes were selling well. That was not true. U Saing was a true Buddhist.

U Saing was born in Htein Gone ward of Mandalay. His parents were U Chon and Daw Thi. He had 6 siblings; U Hlaing, U Myaing, Daw Ma, Daw Kyi, Daw Yi and Daw Aye. U Saing's mother Daw Thi was a Muslim woman but all the 7 brothers and sisters were Buddhists.

When U Saing's wife Daw Thi La passed away, he married the spinster Daw Saw Tin of Zay Cho ward, Innwa. At the time, U Saing's business was doing quite well. Daw Saw Tin had large pots of fish sauce packed tightly in their yard and was well off. She and her sister Daw Aye Kyin sold fresh water products like fish paste and dried fish in Mandalay Zay Cho market. They also had a brick building at Hlaing Tet, at the north entrance to Khattiya compound of Mandalay. U Saing did not have any children with either Daw Thi La or Daw Saw Tin. He only had adopted sons.

At the time the A.F.P.L. was in power, he had licenses to import dyes, reels of thread and cloth. He was a bona fide importer and used the right kind and the right materials to make his products. U Saing also made shirts and sold them as the 'Maha Bandoola' shirts. The inferior quality shirts that sold for 1 ¼ kyats were made of Dragon brand Japanese cloth. The superior quality shirts that cost 2-3 kyats were made of superior quality cloth like S.O. U Saing also did the business of selling lottery tickets. You could get a rough estimate of his working capital by the amount of money he had to hand over to the government when it declared that the K50 and the K100 notes were no longer legal tender. It was said that he handed over K17 lakhs of those bank notes.

The amount that U Saing and Daw Saw Tin gave away in charity was not small. The large central brick building in the Shwe Yay Saung monastery was donated by them. The examinations well known among the monks as the 'Sakya Thiha' examinations were held in the Vejaranta hall that was renovated by U Saing and Daw Saw Tin. The original donor of the hall was the wealthy U Thar Hnyin, the father of a nationalist leader U Chit Hlaing, and was formerly known as the 'U Thar Hnyin' hall or rest house. After many years and a world war, it became dilapidated. U Saing and Daw Saw Tin built it again and named it the Vejaranta hall.

U Saing and Daw Saw Tin also built and donated a large hall or rest house in the Dharma Nada monastery where the Mingun Tipitaka Sayadaw resided. Along with the building, they donated tableware, mats, carpets etc. so that if there was to be an offering of food or a reception, there would be no need to get these items from somewhere else.

U Saing's Maha Bandoola monks' robes shop prospered to the time it was nationalized.

U Saing passed away in 1971.

(His shop was so popular that it was mentioned in the song 'the Donor' by the well known singer Liberty Ma Mya Yin.)

"There's no need to ask; even before Miss Yin's saying so, he's generous;

I'll scold him when I see him; he didn't come in the morning on the day we offered alms;

He himself entered the Bandoola monks' robe shop which was to the west of the Zay Cho Taw market;

He said he was too shy to be seen by other people; he didn't attend the symbolic pouring of water at the end of the ceremony, not even for a moment...'

2 Kyaw Yin Myint¹

2.1 Mya Gon Yi

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

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

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

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

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

I was born in 1299 (Myanmar calendar).² I was a native of Shwe Goon village. I am a Burmese Buddhist. My father was U Toke and my mother was Daw Chit.

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

I was five when the family moved to Ta Ohn village to take refuge during the Japanese invasion. As war refugees we had to live under a hay rack in someone’s compound. We were miserable. It was the lowest possible existence. We always had to size up the rapport with the owner of the house.

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

The fire had started from the hay rack we were living under, and some villagers said they were going to kill us. It was during the war and anything could happen when people were

¹ The following texts are taken from the book Kyaw Yin Myint, 2009 *Colorful Scenes of the Stage of Life*. Yangon, U Myo Nyunt. The stories were translated by Phone Kywe Myat.

² 1937 according to the Christian calendar.

angry. The headman of the village, U Ba Thar, took us to his house. He said we had not started the fire and we were saved from being killed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 Ngwe Zin Pale

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Baking was the important thing for our family and my father wanted me to go to England and study baking after I finished high school. When I passed the tenth standard I attended the Rangoon Institute of Technology because I liked it. I got the bachelor of engineering in textiles in 1970. I did not get to learn bakery as my father had hoped for.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My two daughters and a niece were attending ACCA classes. They had different subjects so I had to pick them up at different times. Every day I had to go into the city many times

to pick them up. And my wife said that would it not be good if we tried to sell milk in the city. If I were to tell the truth, I was a little wary of selling milk in the city. But I agreed to give it a try and took 25 viss of milk and gave some milk to the houses in the street. I had to give away only about half the amount because people bought about half of the milk I had brought. It was the same the next day. On the third day I started selling milk and I sold 25 viss that day. The volume increased gradually and I had to issue token receipts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3 Touring the world with puppets

Daw Ma Ma Naing wanted to learn to speak English. Although she had attended English language classes at the Institute of Foreign Languages when she was a teacher, she had little practice and could not speak with much skill.

Her spouse was a taxi driver who also worked as a guide for foreign tourists. After she resigned from government service, if her husband brought some foreigners in his car, she would ask for their permission to accompany them so that she might practise speaking with them in English.

She herself wanted to learn English and she also wanted to help others learn English so she opened an English speaking class. A girl about 12 by the name of Kay Thwae Phyo would ride her BMX bicycle everywhere and would introduce herself to any foreign tourist she met to practice her English speaking.

One day she met a foreign tourist couple having some rice noodles (in fish soup) near the Aung Taw Mu Pagoda. She introduced herself and paid for the rice noodles the foreigners were having and took the foreigners to her teacher Daw Ma Ma Naing. Daw Ma Ma Naing and they came to know each other and she invited them to dinner at her cramped little house the next day. Her mother was surprised at her inviting foreign guests to dinner when she had to live frugally at the moment. She just wanted to practice her English while they were having dinner. It so happened that the foreigner was an official of the CGG oil company. Mr Gary Mulder was an expert from the oil company. He offered to employ Daw Ma Ma Naing's husband U Than Nyunt.

Daw Ma Ma Naing was unemployed. She wanted to have the opportunity to practice English speaking and at the same time earn some money so she went into a partnership with her friend Daw Naing Yi Mar and opened a Myanmar handicraft shop. They sold gold embroidered articles and puppets.

One day, a lady, a foreigner, came into the shop and asked her to perform a puppet dance. When Daw Ma Ma Naing was unable to give a performance, the lady said she would come again and buy a puppet if she could give a performance on her next visit. Daw Ma Ma Naing continued telling her life experience. I was very much ashamed. It was not because I did not manage to sell the puppet. My father Gon Htoo U Thein Naing wrote a book on puppets and here I was, his daughter, selling puppets and I couldn't perform a puppet dance.

Right after that I went to the skilled practitioner of music, the harpist Inlay U Myint Maung for help. Saya U Myint Maung sent me to Dr Tin Maung Kyi. Dr Tin Maung Kyi made puppets as a hobby. He was also doing research on puppets and could perform a puppet show. He suggested that I go to the puppeteer Sayagyi U Pan Aye. I went to see him at Min Te Ee Kin ward.

I saw him and he came to our house the next day clutching a puppet and a cassette recorder.

I had a bench placed across the water drain in front of our small handicraft shop. A handrail was rigged up and he gave a puppet dance. He hadn't performed for quite a long time. He was feeling sad at the thought that puppet dances were on the way out.

The audience crowded around the stage when he performed the puppet show. Many of them had never seen a puppet show before. That was in 1989.

The next day I told him to set up a troupe to perform puppet shows. He thought it wouldn't be possible. Daw Naing Yi Mar said she would like to a partner if there was to a troupe performing puppet shows. One of her brothers also wanted to take part. So the three of us formed a group and started this business.

We signed a contract with the master puppeteers U Pan Aye, U Mya Thwin and U Sel Rel. We agreed on the payment for three months. They were to get paid whether or not they had to perform during the three months under the contract.

On our first night two groups of tourists came to our show. Tour guides Daw Nyunt Nyunt and Daw Mya Mya Aung brought them. It was good luck for us. The tourists had nowhere to go and nothing to see after dinner and a puppet show was a convenient attraction. But there were no guests the next day. The senior colleague of theirs had said there could be problems and told them not to take the tourists to our show.

Daw Naing Yi Mar and I went to places like Mandalay Hill and Bo Bo Gyi Shrine for the spirits where tourists frequented and distributed leaflets when we met them and invited them to come and see our puppet show in the evening.

There was some misunderstanding by the foreigners. We had invited them at 8:30 in the evening; it was to be free of charge and we were still quite young women. We didn't know that they had some doubts. We were only too enthusiastic about performing the puppet show. Some agreed and came and saw that we were actually performing a puppet show. After the performance they asked why we did not charge them for it. We said we had already paid the artistes and we had nothing more to lose financially. It would only be a loss if nobody came to see the show. If they went back and told others that there was a puppet show in Mandalay it would be a gain for us. We explained that we were to gain if they came to see the show and spread the news.

We happily performed the show even if only a single person came to see it. That person sometimes happened to be a writer of a guide book or a journalist. Eventually people came to know about the puppet show. We waited patiently even if no one came to the show. We were rather obstinate. And then we became successful.

We were on intimate terms with the artistes and we learnt the art of the puppeteers from them. The master artistes had much goodwill and taught us everything.

The first time I went abroad was with the gem merchant and writer Padamyar Mo Mo and the group. The puppet troupe went to Singapore with those who were to hold a cooperative gem exhibition there. Then in 1998 we were invited again to Singapore to exchange our knowledge of theatre art. Puppeteer artistes from Southeast Asia came to Singapore. It lasted exactly one month.

The troupe as a whole went first to Europe. Through the efforts of Daw Naing Yi Mar, we went to Holland, France and the global puppet festival. We returned to Yangon, spent only a night and went to the United States of America.

Our troupe had been to many countries like Finland, Morocco, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, China (Taipei) and Japan to perform puppet shows. When we performed in those foreign countries people came to see our shows and they appreciated our art very much. I want Myanmar nationals to get the chance to see puppet shows too. We tried to perform puppet shows in our country.

We first got the chance to perform at Malaing Shwe Paw Kyun; we performed for exactly one week. Then we performed for three nights in Mandalay after the moat was dredged. We later performed at pagoda festivals at Sagaing Kaung Mu Taw and Kyauk Taw Gyi. People from Thazi came and asked us to perform there. They said there were to be puppet shows at Kaung Mu Taw pagoda festival every year. We do not gain financially when we perform at pagoda festivals. We were contented to see young people passionately watching our puppet shows. Mr Ong Keng Seng from theatre art made a documentary film of us performing at Kaung Mu Taw pagoda festival. It was included in the puppet shows of Mekong region. NHK of Japan also filmed us. I am happy.

1.3 Questions and Answers from a Business Magazine

Editor's note: The following texts are taken from the book It contains some 100 questions of readers of the ... magazine and the answers given by Dr. Khin San Yee from Yangon University, Department of Management. The 20 questions reproduced here were chosen by Daw New Ni Aung.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are rules of conduct for those of Buddhist faith and culture. For example, trades involving weapons, humans, killing animals and selling the meat, liquor and poisons are prohibited. The rules of conduct prohibit killing other living things and telling lies. But people would not buy fish if it weren't fresh; if the meat was not fresh people would say that the vendor misled and sold them the rotten meat. For example, if an entrepreneur misled and sold some items of inferior quality to his customers, it might

be profitable for him in the short term but in the long run when people lose their trust in the items and his trade, the business could be ruined. Especially in small enterprises, the morals of the entrepreneur could profoundly affect his business.

When morals or standards of behaviour have become serious issues laws would be laid down to deal with them. If there were mutual understanding, good relations and standards of behaviour were good, there would be less restrictions by laws. Laws could be enforced but morals or standards of behaviour could only give guidance as to what should or should not be done.

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

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

3 Effects of changes: How are the changes in the economic environment having effects on the business? When should businesses undertake reforms?

4 Internal relations: If the relationship between a manager and his/her subordinates goes beyond the business and involves social affairs, how can this affect personnel relations and administration at the work site? What should be the consequential advantages and disadvantages?

5 Knowledge workers: It is said that “knowledge workers” are needed in the modern business organizations. I would like you to explain “knowledge workers.”

6 Trust: How can trust be built among businesses?

7 Non-profit service: I have seen a line “Non-profit-making government service” on the MRTV – 3¹ channel the other day. Which institutions provide non-profit services? I would like to know their organization structure and principles.

8 Filling vacancy: Of the two ways to fill a vacant post—(1) giving promotion to a person in the one-step lower position within the service and (2) calling from outside through a newspaper advertisement—which would be better? What will be the advantages and disadvantages?

9 Risks: To what extent can the risks taken in doing a business be limited?

10 Risks: What risks will a person doing a business be faced with? What preparations should be taken to prevent the risks?

¹ MRTV – 3: Myanmar Radio and Television Channel 3

11 Seeking market: I would like to know the methods for seeking market for a business and related do's and don'ts.

12 Competency: During the past seven years, I was happy at work because the work suited my hobby. Because I work hard, I have been promoted through positions at different levels and now reached a management position. But, I am not so happy as before. Though I take annual leave, my tiredness seems not relieved. I happen to wonder whether my tiredness is related to my handling of management. Can my thought be right? How should I get on with my work? Should I continue to stay at the current position (without going further up the ladder) and try my best?

13 Faction/favouritism: How can the development of the “master-disciple relationship” be prevented? Should action be taken to the extent that the persons involved are dismissed?

14 Job security: Which norms can a newly appointed employee use to assess his/her own job security? How long can this take?

15 Overload: When an employee becomes a senior manager and is weighed down by workload, he can no longer spare time for warm relations with work mates. What will be the good or bad effects of this?

16 MBO: I would like to know the good and bad points of employing the MBO (Management by Objectives) method.

17 Management: Which is more difficult—managing a successful, growing business or managing a slow-growing business? Why?

18 Choice for filling a vacancy: Who of the following two kinds will be more appropriate for promotion to a head-of-department position in a large company:

- 1 an employee with long service, skilled, but without a university degree
- (or)
- 2 an employee with short service, skilled, and with a university degree?

I feel that their educational qualifications are not directly related to work.

19 Measuring efficiency: Our office conducts training courses on English language and management. How can the efficiency of an employee who has completed a course be measured? What measures should be taken to improve the efficiency of an employee?

20 Market reach: Two businesses have products of equal quality and provide equal service, but the degrees of market penetration between the two are different. Why do this happen?

21 Changing culture: Scholars say “Businessmen should not be hesitant in changing their work culture so that they can catch up with the changing eras and systems.” In this regard, I would like to know the precautions businessmen must take in changing work culture and preparations that should be made so that all employees will come along with the changes (without resistance).

22 Management: Which is more important for a manager—reaching correct decisions or persuasion and motivation of his/her subordinates so that work can be finished in time?

23 Shirking duties: Should a person holding the position of a manager shirk duties (3-M attitude)¹? Should this attitude be ridden in business? Does this happen because the employer

¹ In Myanmar, there is a popular “3-M” attitude for shirking employees (Especially for government employees under BSPP, the former Sole Socialist Party): Ma-loke, Ma-shoke and Ma-pyoke. Ma-loke (NOT do): It is believed that if an employee does not do much work, there cannot be errors. Ma-shoke (NOT get involved): It is believed that if an employee does not get involved much in business affairs, there cannot be problems for

has misjudged in recruiting and promoting employees? Or, is it because the employee holding this attitude, having worked hard before, no longer wishes to exert due efforts?



Two ghosts meeting

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

him/her. Ma-pyoke (NOT get sacked): For these two reasons, he/she cannot get sacked.

2 Yesterday

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

2.0 Royal Burma

2.0.1 “Alas, These Tolls and Taxes!”¹

JUNE 1966
23

“ရွာဝန်ကြေးကြောင့် ဝေးချည်မယ်”

(အိုင်ချင်း)

အမယ်မင်းငယ်နှင့်၊ အမင်းငယ်မသနား၊
 ဥစ္စာလည်းမဲ့၊ အားလည်း နှံ့သန့်၊ ဖြစ်ခဲ့ငြားလို့၊
 သကြားငယ်မှ ရည်ရှိ၊ ခါးတွင်သိုးနှင့်၊
 ပြည့်စုံအိုက၊ စေဆိုသန့်၊ လက်ဖက်မလှမ်း၊
 ကွမ်းမကမ်းသန့်၊ ကြေးထမ်းမြင့်လို့၊
 အခွင့်ငယ်မှမသာ၊ အပေါ်ချောနှင့်၊
 ပြောရရှာ၏၊ သို့ပါလျက်ကို၊ ဘယ်ဝိပါက်ကံ၊
 ဘယ်နှယ်စန်လို့၊ ငွေကျန်အများ၊ ရှိသည်တစေ၊
 ပြည်စီးတက၊ မွှေးနံ့များလို့၊ စကားငယ်လွန်သည်၊
 ရွာဝန်ကြေးငယ်ကြောင့်၊ ဝေးချည်မယ်လေး။

“တောင်တွင်းရှင်ဗြင်းမယ်”

Alas, These Tolls and Taxes!

(A 16th century *Aing-gyin*)

by Lady Shin Nyein Mai of Taungdwin

(Translated by Kenneth Ba Sein)

Thus the maid laments:

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

x
x
x
x
x

village headman=hereditary village official during
 feudal times

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

—o—

¹ The Guardian. Burma's National Magazine 13, 6: 23.

2.0.2 From the *Rajadhammasangaha*, Written for the Last Burmese King¹

Editor's note: The term *rajadhammasangaha* can be translated as "A Collection of Norms for Kingship", or "Civil Society under Monarchy" or as something in between according to the translator of the text that was written for the last Burmese king, Thibaw, two months after the king's ascension to the throne. It contained a set of rules to be observed for a prosperous and peaceful state of the country (*naing-ngan*). The author U Hpo Hlaing (1830-1873) was a court official who was engaged in the endeavor of Thibaw's father, Mindon, to modernise Burma by evaluating the policies of western countries.

11. How the western peoples have followed the four rules of *sangaha*²

Since, in our own day, the peoples of the West have made it a matter of great importance to follow the four rules of *sangaha* the rulers of those countries wish to ensure that there should be no failure in the collection of taxes and in the handling, by *purisamedha*,³ of the taxes collected under *sassamedha*.⁴ For this reason, consultations are held with the houses of the elected⁵ officials and of the officials by right of position, to make sure that no one is adversely affected. Once the tax has been collected, a sufficiency for current use is handed over once a year to the government. The balance for which there is no immediate use is, with the agreement of the officials, placed on reserve in the treasury. The treasury remains in the charge of the officials. The treasury does not only take charge of tax money collected in the country; it also holds surplus funds of ministries, of the wealthy and of traders, including their gold silver and jewels. Careful accounts are kept of all such moneys and valuables and, whenever it may be in the interest of the country's defence or advancement, after consultation with and with the assent of the assemblies, following the *sammapasa*⁶ rule, budget balances that have been collected from the people in general may be used for making loans at appropriate rates of interest to merchants and farmers.⁷ It empowers the commercial world and assists mutual trading groups. Since there is more to be gained from international trading than from trading within one's own country alone, no barriers are placed to the encouragement of trade with other countries and so associations are formed and travels undertaken.

Countries that will not discuss the legal provision of such encouragement may be attacked and ruined. If one country alone has not sufficient strength for this, the attack may be made by two or three western countries in alliance. For the most part among the peoples of the West, wars

¹ K.E. Bagshawe 2004 *Rajadhammasangaha*. By the Yaw Mingyi U Hpo Hlaing. Translated by L.E. Bagshawe from the biographical preface and edition made by Maung Htin (U Htin Fatt) and published by the Sape U Publishing House in 1979 (http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/THE_RAJADHAMMASANGAHA.pdf [6.12.2010]).

² *Rajadhammasangaha* pp. 108-109.

³ "Tax money that has been collected for protecting trade and agriculture must be spent only for the maintenance and expenses of the government servants and military who have the duty of protecting traders and farmers from danger. [...]. The distribution of tax money thus collected to those who will actually provide the protection." is what is called *purisamedha*.

⁴ "Support for [...] government forces, maintenance for government servants and military, and provision for military stores must, however, be found and money for this will come from the rice crop. This is what is called the *sassamedha* tax."

⁵ Translator's note: *Pyeithu thabaw tu pei thei hmu* - "officials given the people's agreement".

⁶ „What is called *sammapasa* is giving support in their work to the merchants and farmers, to make them effective, to give them facilities and remove obstructions; giving aid where aid is called for."

⁷ Translator's note: Presumably he is thinking of the Bank of England, but generally he does have a basic understanding of the banking system as a whole.

are undertaken, following the rules of *sammapasa*, on account of hindrances put in the way of their traders. Wars may be begun and wars may be ended only with the agreement of the merchants and farmers. For making war, money has to be provided by merchants and farmers.

Because they thus in their actions give the greatest importance to the four rules of *sangaha* and to their promotion, among all the nations the peoples of the West stand out for their prosperity. As the great kingdoms of the Middle Land were in the past, so now the west is preeminent in power -- economic, military and industrial.

3. How the peoples of the west abide by contracts¹

The peoples of the western countries know that speaking the truth and keeping faith bring great benefits, while untruth is a great fault. They give much importance to keeping faith. Whatever they have agreed in joint consultation to enact into law cannot be begged off; there are no exceptions and the law is so enacted. If one or two officials fail to be present at the time when it has been agreed that they should be¹⁷¹, whether for a true reason or for a false one, they are seen as ones who spoil the business. Any official of one party who fails to be present according to his instructions at the time stated, will prejudice the passage of the law and this may be irreversible.

In this world there are times set for working to achieve benefits. If the work is not done at the proper time, the time will go by and the opportunity will be lost. If, at the time proper for sowing a particular crop, the time is let slip, there will be no fruit and all will be in vain. If the work is not done that would bring in a thousand kyats on a particular day, it will be lost; if it is done on the next day, it will have taken two days and the thousand that might have been made on the first day is lost. In the life of men, too, from their birth to their death, nothing of their youth that slips away into the past ever comes back. Therefore what has to be done must be done without taking time off. It is not right to let time get away from us. Therefore, there are proper times to work for making the best of this and of the next worlds. It has been said therefore: *mogha kalam nakhepaye* - that is "do not let time pass uselessly."

In this world, if, of two men engaged in a project one says exactly what he will do and later forgets and fails to do it, the whole of the work on which they are engaged becomes useless and fails. If in a major project you speak without meaning it, you will get much blame. Such blame is not the same as that for speaking untruthfully, but one who has spoken cannot recall his words. When duties are assigned in the presence of an enemy and sectors for guarding are clearly accepted, if one fails to guard as he had promised and the enemy breaks in his sector, all is lost. If you are known to have undertaken to do a particular thing, you must not work for any other purpose; if you do not do as you have said, not only will many of those who hoped to profit from the project gain less, but the deceived will become an enemy and in return will work to reduce the deceiver's profit. In carrying on the business of the world, you must keep to what you have undertaken in the first instance. If you do not keep your word, it will not be possible to carry through the business and all will be lost.

Thus the peoples of the West, recognising the important principles that speaking the truth brings profit and lying brings loss, that failing to keep properly to time brings loss, and punctuality brings profit, do not go beyond a promised time and, so that work may be done quickly, make use of telegraph lines, steam ships and steam trains. They also make use of machinery in their work so that it may be done quickly. Everybody -- women, men, important and unimportant people, all carry watches so as not to miss an appointment. For quick movement, both inside and outside the cities, roads are well kept. At night, no time is wasted in sleep. At night in every city, lights are kept neither burning as bright as day, so that as far

¹ Ibid.: 122-123.

as possible trading, services and work may be carried on without interruption and so that thieves and brigands cannot rob nor enemies make an entrance. We can see for ourselves that it is by this style of work that the western peoples have surpassingly increased their well-being.

For this reason, the first consideration of kings must be to speak truly and to avoid lying, even to save their own life.

30. The seven Limbs of a country¹

The *Kamantaki* and other *niti* books² refer to the seven "limbs" of the state, which appear in the Abhidhamma: [...]: The lord who rules the land, the united council of ministers, the towns and villages, the fortified cities, the storehouses filled with gold and silver, with paddy and rice, the valiant soldiers (*bala*), the network of allies, bound to mutual assistance – these must be called the seven limbs of the land. (This means that the body which is formed from these limbs is that which is, in Burmese, *naing-ngan*³ and in Magadhi, *rajja*. If any one of these limbs is broken, the state cannot stand firmly, just as a man cannot stand firmly with a broken limb.)

Elsewhere in the *Kamantaki* and other *niti* books it is said that the number of the "natural assets" (*pagati*) of the state is five instead of these seven:

31. The ruling king

These seven assets thus include the ten-fold law of royal conduct and the four rules of *sangaha* of which we have spoken. The ruler who is perfect in them, may indeed be called a king. If, however, a single one of the country's "limbs" is lacking to him, the kingdom cannot amount to much and he may lack the respect of its people as a whole. The mass of the people will be divided into separate interests. People with special skills in civic affairs, ethics, religion, technology and the like, who could give good care to the interests of the state will be named as military commanders and other grades of officials.

People whose interest is in buying in the course of a widespread trading system and those whose interest is in selling in foreign lands, since they do not know each other will lose their trade, since they do not dare to hand goods over. Large-scale trade does not allow of simple cash payments. People are needed who know the business both of the buyer and the seller and who undertake to accept the seller's goods on behalf of the buyer and to act as brokers in such transactions. By setting up the sale once a sufficient deposit has been paid, they enable the sellers to dispose to their satisfaction of the goods that they have brought to market, while the buyer buys according to his wishes. Foreign traders coming into a country will not know the prevailing prices well and they will not dare to trust in what would-be buyers tell them. It is by relying on a broker and enquiring from him that sellers can sell and buyers can buy. It is by the brokers working in the middle and providing information that buying and selling can take place. If there were no brokers to mediate between buyers and sellers in large-scale trade, trade could not take place.

Brokers must therefore be knowledgeable both in the goods of the sellers and the buying prices of the goods. They must also know what buyers will want and the going price in the

¹ *Rajadhammasangaha* pp. 148-150.

² Books on politics used in Burma.

³ *Naing-ngan* originally has the meaning "subject to conquest" and apparently referred to outlying territories not directly controlled by the central power. Later, however, and up to the present day, it covers the whole sovereign territory.

buyers' market. Since they know both sides of the business, brokers are relied upon to speak to both buyers and sellers and to bring them together, thus working for the benefit of both buyer and seller. The broker therefore has the credit of a beneficial action.

It is in just the same way that the ministers in any state will know well the disposition of their ruler and what is likely to reduce and what to advance his well-being. They will also have a good knowledge of the minds and desires of the people of the state and of what will improve and what reduce their well-being. Thus, ministers are people who stand in the middle, knowing both what is above and what is below them. If they work for the well-being both of the ruler and of his people, they will bring them into a good relationship. If the state lacks the "limb" that is the body of such officials, it cannot be a *naing-ngan*. Separate areas will become the domain of separate nationalities - each will become a separate district - Shan, Burmese, Chinese, Turks, English, French and so on. They may also be called *janapada* (Bur. *zanapok*.) In each of these divisions there will be villages, hamlets and towns, more or fewer, according to the size of the territory. In a real *naing-ngan* there can at most be one or two such separate districts (*taings*).

2.1 Colonial Period

2.1.1 Discussion in the Government's Council, 27. July 1921¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Source: Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Lieutenant-General of Burma, Assembled for the Purpose of Making Laws and Regulations under the Provisions of the Government of India Act, 1915. The quotations are taken from the pages 854-880.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.1.2 Ba Thoung, *Dobama* Manifest No. 1

Editors note: In May 1930, the Dobama (We-Burman) Association was founded which should become the leading Burmese nationalist organisation led by Aung San. The founder was Ba Thoung who adopted the title “Thakin” (master) to indicate that the Burmese and not the British were the masters of the country. Thakin Ba Thoung propagated the program of the new association through a song that should become Burma’s national anthem and two series of pamphlet the first of which started with the following exhortation:¹

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

Begin establishing Burmese shops.

Buy at Burmese shops.

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

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

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

¹ Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000) *Birma zwischen* : 508-509.

2.1.3 The Nagani Song¹

Editors note: The song was composed end of 1937 to propagate the Nagani (“Red Dragon”) Book Club founded by young Burmese intellectuals and politicians-to-be, the most prominent being Nu who became independent Burma’s first Prime Minister and Than Tun and Soe, later leaders of the two Burmese Communist parties. The song was an instant success and remained popular among the Burmese intelligentsia for many decades.²

1. Stanza

- a) To be free from poverty and paucity, (we) will guide and lead. (Indeed,) variety of gems, gold, silver are enriched. That is OUR NATION’S LAND.
- b) Poverty-stricken people will be able to do charity, (such as) building monasteries, also erecting pagodas.
- c) Similar to the times of Bo Bo Aung³ and Shin Ajjagona⁴ (when they helped poverty-stricken people) now, our predestined ostentatious time has arrived.

Chorus

(We) will be healthy (and) wealthy, protected and defended from all the dangers and perils.
Poverty-stricken people will soon be rich and no more out-of date (and left behind).
With the power and the potency of our *Nagani* Book Club, poverty-stricken people will not be withered or wasted. They are bound to enjoy “Special Results”.
(We are) going to establish a “NEW AGE” (for us), peaceful and prosperous,
With the competency and capability of *Nagani* Book Club, (we are) going to raise (our) “National Pride, Glory and Honour”.

2. Stanza

- a) For (everyday living) dwelling and eating, (these things) must be disburdened and unencumbered without delayed.
- b) We, the *Nagani* Book Club, will endeavour to help poverty-stricken people feel comfortable and content.
- c) The Light of (our) Religion, The Light of Buddha *Sasana* will be luminous and glitter.
- d) Our Land of Myanmar people will be prosperous and successful. Golden Rain will fall (i.e., our land will be blessed with prosperity, happiness and well-being).

Chorus

¹ Translation: U Tin Htway

² For some more details see Working Paper 1 of the Myanmar Literature Project, pp

³ A famous mystic with supra natural powers of the 19th century who was – and is – believed to help Burma to find a way out of any troubles.

⁴ An alchemist of the Bagan period.

3. Stanza

- e) All sorts of perfections will be secured and protected. Without practicing alchemy day and night, (we) can enjoy (good and prosperous) results.
- f) Myanmar – our Myanmar Land, with the power and potency of *Nagani* Book Club, will be able to submerge in to the earth (or) will be able to fly in the sky.
- g) For the poverty stricken people will not suffer scarcity (in terms of) money, (we will) struggle and endeavour. Aiming (to reach our National Goal) (we) will guide and show “THE WAY OUT”.

Chorus

2.1.4 Ba Khaing, Political History of Myanmar, 1938¹

Editors note: Ba Khaing (1906-1940) was a Burmese intellectual and a co-founder of the Fabian party which propagated a kind of “soft socialism”. Fabian ideas had been introduced to Burma by J.S. Furnivall (1878 – 1960) who tried to reconcile Western and Burmese traditions in terms of society and economics.² Ba Khaing’s book was the first Burmese attempt of writing about the country’s current history. It was critical both of British and the mainstream of Burmese politics of that time.

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

In economic matters there is the call "to promote native arts and crafts", and "monk preachers should teach people the value of austerity during their dhamma talks." "The government is requested to promote and assist salt production." "In villages money lenders are charging high interests. They should be stopped." "The government is requested to stop giving land grants and holding rights to foreign investors." "It is resolved to put up appeal to the government not to freeze paddy prizes in 1919-20. The profits from paddy business should be spent in Burma." These are advanced economic proposals. Judging from them we have to admit that those leaders were really far-sighted.³

[...]

The Burmese people these days are not living well like in former days, when they used to say that, "There is no funeral of one who died of starvation." They said it because it was true then. But times have changed. The Burmans are doing worse; they are like fish in water that's getting scantier. One can see for oneself poverty and starvation. This is due to the gradual intrusion of foreigners who are cleverer. The Burmans being unable to match their cleverness have fallen from being well off to badly off.

Foreigners who have intruded into the country rob from the people; but they do not rob all at once. Their method is gradual, like driving in a wedge; it's slow torture. For example, the people do not object the municipals which prescribe home designs; the people don't think it was against their interest. But the law makers have intentions. By making rules about home designs, the people are forced to buy iron, corrugated iron sheets for roof, cement, glass for glazing, ceramic toilet seats etc. That makes good business for importers and foreign factories, but puts the people in financial hardship. By such indirect means, the foreigners rob from the people. That is the way foreign capitalists work.

To fight such exploitation, the people need to produce the materials domestically; and there must be laws, enacted by government, to enforce the use of domestic products. The people on their part should use native products out of patriotism. In this way we can develop our national economy. But we are sad to observe that in Burma people are interested in politics, but not in the economy. A nation may be free, but without economic freedom, there is no real benefit; the people will remain backward. This is obvious in Thailand, which is politically independent, but cannot economically recover, because it is exploited by France. Due to unbearable economic oppression by foreigners, there had been a revolt to dethrone the King. In Abyssinia, even before it came under Italian invasion, the economy had been in the hands of foreigners. Economic exploitation by Italy is also evident in Albania which has its own

¹The quotations are taken from Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.), Material on Ba Khaing, *Political History of Myanmar*. Myanmar Literature Project 10:5.

² In 1935, Furnivall wrote a book on Burmese economics designed as a textbook for Burmese students entitled "The Political Economy of Burma".

³ Ba Khaing, *Political History*: 35.

monarch. It is clear that political leaders should bear in mind the importance of economic independence, in addition to national independence.

There is another important task. That is to improve commerce. It is the duty of the Burmese Chamber of Commerce, Burma Central Trading Association, Upper Burma Trading Association, and political leaders to work together to develop commerce. Commercial organizations have the duty to provide information, and assist people with their problems with regard to commercial business. They should find ways and means to make progress. The organizations should talk with the government, railway and shipping companies, to recover, or prevent losses. They should also fight foreign exploitation; find foreign markets for Burmese companies to export, exhibit native products foreign trade exhibitions.

It is for the purpose of assisting in these tasks that the Burmese Chamber of Commerce has got a set in parliament to represent it. The Burmese Chamber of Commerce and Upper Burma Trading Association have representatives attached to railways and Rangoon port authority. Although the Burmese Chamber of Commerce is not quite active at present, it is hoped that in future it will work for the benefit of the country, as indeed it is required. It is the duty of the people to remind and ask them to do their duty.¹

¹ Ibid 132-134.

2.1.5 Discussion on Socialism (1938)¹

This is the first revelation about socialism and there are points to ponder and to discuss. As we have been urging you time and again, we would like you to form small groups to discuss. We have given an outline:

(1) Are the English governing Burma? Or is it the expansionist system? What is the difference between the English and the expansionist system?

(2) Is it good for (of benefit to) us to hate the Chinese and the Indians? Or do we hate all the Chinese and the Indians? Or do we hate the wealthy Chinese and the wealthy Burmese?

(3) Are people poor because of their karma? And do they get wealthy because of karma, too? Is it true that they got their material wealth by exploiting the poor?

(4) Are members of religious order trying to make the people contented with their poor lives? Are they trying to prolong the expansionist system, the capitalist system?

(5) Would you call Burma a feudal society? Or is it a capitalist era? Are there not remnants of a feudal era in the Shan state and the hill regions? Would reformists neglect those regions?

Isn't it time for those who want independence of Burma and make the poor wealthy, to exhort the people to wipe out the system of Sawbwas (chieftains) in Shan state?

(6) If the capitalists are murderers, would the poor suffer in hell if they were to annihilate those who had exploited them?

(7) The government is an organization that the capitalists use to suppress the poor. The government issues banknotes and coins and the capitalists benefit from it. Would it be proper if the poor make banknotes and coins as they wish to? Was it just of Thakin Ba Thaung to make coins worth one eighths of a rupee?

(8) Capitalists are great thieves. Would the poor suffer in hell if they steal the property from the capitalists? Is it legal or not, in some countries, to steal and rob to carry out the country's affairs?

(9) Is the nam/soul important?

Or is the matter/ material important?

If you want to change/ reform a person, would moralizing alone be enough?

¹ Nagani Nwes I, 3: 8-9. The article referred to the publication Thakin Soe's book "Socialism". The text was translated from the Burmese by Ye Nyunt.

Or do we have to change the environment?

(10) According to the ideology of world history, monks, Brahmins and those of the Bramana caste came after the era of plenty. When the royalty was predominant, they associated with them; when the capitalists became predominant, they associated with them. Now they are encouraging those who are suppressing the poor.

Are the above points correct or not? If correct, what would those who want to change the times/era do?

(11) According to the socialist ideology, how should the tasks been carried out for the independence of Burma?

Rangoon

2.1.5 Thein Pe, Indian-Burmese Riot, 1938¹

Editor's note: In July 1938, riots broke out in Yangon which quickly spread to many parts of Burma and. 240 people were killed and almost one thousand injured. The main targets of the Burmese assailants were Indian Muslims. Shortly after the incidents, Thein Pe who later should become one of the most prominent Burmese writers, published a pamphlet dealing with events. Between 50.000 and 100.000 copies of the booklet were distributed.

The Indians never consider the interests of the Burmese. They are always seeking their own benefit. They never dream of working together with the Burmese for better or worse; instead they segregate themselves into a privileged minority. On many occasions in national politics as well as in district and urban administration, they make alliances with the Europeans just to oppose the Burmese.

Therefore, it is very funny that some of the Indian leaders and the Indian newspapers lay the blame for the Indo-Burman riot on the Europeans who separated Burma from India by force. It is a great joke. In the economic field, the Indians always suppressed the Burmese. They gave no room for any sort of progress.

One of my friends became a retail agent for a foreign perfume and toilet goods firm. But a group of Choliya Indians claiming that this line of business was not suitable for Burmese, tried to obstruct him in every way they could. Yes, it is true. Not only that: another friend of mine manufactured some cosmetics and sold the goods by himself. But the Indian traders did all they could to ruin him. At last the poor fellow was forced to allow one Indian as his sole agent for trade and then only could he carry on his business. When the Wunthanu movement reached its height, Burmese home-spun cloth became very popular and the demand for textiles from Madras and Bombay fell badly. To take counter action, the Indians, being the wholesale dealers for cotton raw materials, raised the price to squeeze out and strangle the Burmese weaving industries. When the government, with the aim of promoting industrial know-how in Burma, proposed to establish a technical institute it met strong opposition from an Indian capitalist. By these and similar methods those Indians had a strangle-hold over the Burmese and, albeit without bloodshed, were working for our ruination and destruction, the method propounded by Gandhi.

The instances of unjust and illegal oppression by the Indians of the Burmans are numerous. On the issue of the restriction of immigration, mixed marriages, the Tenancy Act, the promotion of industrial expertise, Burmese as a first language in school education etc. etc., the Indians' part was only to protest, obstruct, and prevent.

I hope you can now see that the Indians who are obstructing and working against Burmese interests belong to the capitalist and middle class. They cannot be described as average Indians. But these capitalists and middle class Indians in Burma are trying to involve the poor ordinary Indians in our quarrel. Therefore, it appears that we Burmese have come to hate all Indians without exception.

But actually, I don't think the ordinary poor Indians, who came and lived in Burma are ungrateful. They never attack the Burmese. They don't treat the Burmese as their enemies. And sometimes they work together with the Burmese for better or for worse. In oil-field strikes such as Yen-an-gyaung and Syriam and some other strikes, Indian workers and Burmese workers were inseparable. And it is certain that even if the capitalist and middle

¹ The quotations is taken from Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.), *Material on Thein Pe, Indo-Burmese Riot*. Myanmar Literature Project 10:12.

class Indians try to break their unity, they will not be divided.

So, while the Indians are giving all sorts of trouble, the Burmese are becoming more and more aware; the Age of Prosperity is disappearing and the Age of Austerity begins; the Burmese become poorer and poorer with less and less to comfort them, physically and mentally. They see the approach of poverty, unemployment and hunger in turn. But on the other hand, our young men are awakening. Those who have an education but no job are becoming more and more aware of the real situation. And even the monks are organizing themselves to face the country's predicament.

So, in such conditions and in such an atmosphere it is not surprising that some small incident should spark off an Indo-Burman riot. It is no wonder that that the spark gradually became a flame.

As usual, capitalist groups and capitalist's stooges, the middle class groups, were those to start to attack.

2.1.6 Aung San on the economic basis of Burmese democracy

On May 23, 1947, Aung San at a convention of the AFPFL outlined his principles for the new constitution to be drafted by the Constituent Assembly elected in April. After some remarks on the quality of the Burmese state he stated that a “true democracy” had to be established based on the following principles:

Basis of Burmese Democracy

Economic principles are the underlying basis of political conception. Politics is inseparable from economics. A capitalist democracy may deny it, but when we study profoundly the constitutions of the world we find economic laws immanent in them.

Capitalists may argue that capitalism is the last word in the sphere of economic truth, but no political or economic system can be permanent. They change with circumstances. As for Burma, she has to rise from a position of subjection which is even worse than capitalism. We must first rise from subsection afore we can get over capitalism. Meanwhile we can and must control and restrict capitalism. Only by building our economic system in such a way as to enable our country to get over capitalism in the quickest possible time can we attain to a true democracy.

How shall we lay the foundations of such a democracy?

1) Ways must be found that will lead to the nationalization of important industries and mean of production. [...]

Seven other criteria follow the next two of the, (workers rights and the right to own the land) being closely related to economics. After that, other political topics (minorities, power control, fundamental rights, defence, judicial system) are mentioned. At the end of the list and before an elaboration of these principles, Aung San stated:

Without such fundamental principles no true democracy can be attained. Built on such foundations and in time the noble edifice of true democracy will stand for all the word to marvel.

2.2 The Parliamentary Period, 1948 – 1958

2.2.1 The *Pyidawtha* Programme

Editor's note: *Pyidawtha* can be translated as “happy motherland”. Under this name, Prime Minister Nu announced an ambitious program in 1952. Two years later, when it was started, a book was published that outlined the basic foundations of the scheme.¹ The book commences with the following text:

A PROSPEROUS FUTURE CAN BE OURS BECAUSE

we can more than adequately feed our own population. Unlike many of our neighbours, Burma is not overpopulated.

We have within our nation adequate fuel resources and great electric power potential - the prerequisites for industrial development.

We have known deposits of a variety of minerals-raw materials to feed industry and to benefit agriculture.

Our great rivers, with their tributaries and canal systems, constitute a natural transportation network over which goods and people can be moved cheaply between the main population centres.

We are leading producers of several commodities, notably rice and teak which can be sold abroad to earn the money we need to buy the things we must import.

The people of Burma are resourceful and talented. In their native intelligence, their spiritual strength, and their faith in the future of our country, they possess the indispensable personal and human values that always underlie national greatness.

These are the elements of our future prosperity: fertile land, power, transportation, raw materials, and good human resources. Efficiently developed and wisely administered, they can provide the material basis for a new era in Burma.

Yet in large measure our assets today represent only potential wealth. In the past our resources were exploited not for Burmans but for foreigners.

Much of what we had was destroyed in the war. More has been destroyed by the insurgent enemies of the New Burma.

Instead of the high standard of living that our resources make possible we have today an abysmally low standard of existence. It's well known that living standards throughout Asia are sadly inferior to those of Western Europe and especially the United States. Yet standards of living in Burma are low even when compared to most of our neighbours.

But we shall waste no energies in lamentations or bitterness over the past. Our heritage is proud and strong, but our tea history lies ahead. And there is much to be done.

What is to be done for the next few years has been charted carefully. For more than two years the Government has been laying the groundwork for the economic and social development of the nation. An intensive study of Burma's resources-present and potential-has been carried out; and we have drawn up ambitious but practical plans for development in agriculture, mining, transportation, communication, power, industry, and finance, as well as in health, education, housing, and social services.

The most qualified experts from Burma and abroad have been engaged in these studies. Their reports and recommendations have been carefully studied by Government. With some changes and modifications to suit the conditions of the country, we have now adopted a great programme for economic and social development, including an impressive list of projects for completion in the near future. Some of them already are under way. Together with the policies and principles that will guide them, and a flexible time-table for their completion, these

¹ Government of Burma (1954) *Pyidawtha. The New Burma*. Rangoon, Economic and Social Board: 9-11.

projects constitute the Development Programme for our Pyidawtha, the New Burma.

It is important that the people of Burma know about this programme and understand it. They must share its purposes, understand its requirements and, in the end, make it work. That is why this report has been written.

OUR OBJECTIVE

THE New Burma sees no conflict between religious values and economic progress. Spiritual health and material well-being are not enemies: they are natural allies.

We do not seek Improved agricultural techniques or modern factories as ends in themselves: we seek them as useful means towards a better life.

We shall describe in the rest of this report the material and technical steps that must be taken to build the New Burma. But do not forget that the objective of all these steps-separately and together-is a Burma in which our people are better clothed, better housed, in better health, with greater security and more leisure – and thus better able to enjoy and pursue the spiritual values that are and will remain our dearest possession.

OUR PRIORITY TASK

IT is not necessary to tell the people of Burma that war and insurrection - quite apart from being a moral outrage - are destructive, wasteful, and costly. We have seen enough of that to need no reminder.

Yet it must be emphasized that until peace is fully restored throughout our land, we cannot push ahead with maximum speed in building our New Burma.

We cannot bring crops to market from lands that lie in areas held by insurgents. We cannot complete our river and rail and road and air transportation systems into enemy territory.

We cannot construct dam to provide us with power until the river banks are clear of bandits.

We cannot even explore some territories for minerals and other resources because they are not free for peaceful development.

And so, reluctantly, we have devoted much time and money and materials to our national defence against internal enemies. Reluctantly, because it is sad that we should have to fight against brother Burmans. Reluctantly, because this time and material and money that should rightly go to constructive use must be employed for destructive purposes.

There are many things that can be done to develop our nation even as the fighting continues, and these things are being done. But our soldiers must be paid, fed, clothed, housed, and armed. This effort now takes nearly one-third of our total budget. Every kyat and every hour devoted to garrison, to patrol, to guard, to arm, to kill, is a kyat and an hour stolen from our Development Programme.

So more in sadness than in anger - but with firm resolve - we shall spend allocate and fight until peace dwells in the remotest corners and in the deepest jungles of our land.

This is our first - our priority task.

2.2.2 December 1953: Maung Maung, State Socialism in Burma

Editor's note: Dr. Maung Maung (1925-1994) was a Burmese intellectual who held a variety of positions from his training as a soldier of the Burmese army in 1944 to his post as the country's last chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and the country's president in 1988. Furthermore, he can be regarded as the chronicler of Burma's history from the times of the independence struggle until the end of Burma's socialist period. In 1953, he became editor of *The Guardian*, an English language weekly magazine which sympathetically reported and commented upon the country's development.¹

Most people in Burma today are ardent leftists. Marxists, intellectuals and thinkers, organisers, and workers, revolutionaries and realists. It is extremely difficult to find people who profess themselves to be rightists; "rightists" and "reactionaries" are terms of reproach reserved for political opponents. At the core of this great enthusiasm for leftist principles and ideology is state socialism which finds acceptance in the constitution of the Union and which is today becoming a real and active force. A whole series of government sponsored schemes have been launched to build the welfare state; "pyidawtha" or "welfare state" is a slogan as much as a programme. A national convention was assembled with the Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League (AFPFL) and the Socialist Party as organisers; representative organisations came, and men from the professions and experts. There at the convention, socialist principles were expounded, socialist plans were proposed and approved, "pyidawtha" committees appointed. Burma, however, was not unaccustomed to such national gatherings. There had been a number of them before, were great messages had been delivered, lofty principles expounded, pledges and promises made, and plans even adopted. After such gatherings peoples would usually go home happy to have done their bit. The pyidawtha convention was different from many of its predecessors in that serious endeavour survived it-

A NATION AT SCHOOL

The endeavour has given rise o many plans of far-reaching range. State socialism is at it with a vengeance. Government machinery itself is to be overhauled and rebuilt. There is the plan for "devolution of powers" by which the people are to be brought into the government at different levels through the village, township, district and divisional welfare committees that are to be set up; in future government and the people are to be one. [...] There are plans for the development of Burma's economy; agriculture production is to be stepped up, national resources fully exploited and industries built. The plans appear practical and practicable. In 1948, in the first flush of freedom's excitement, such plans had been hastily drafted, but it was under unduly optimistic envisaging a two-year period of operation. The present pyidawtha plans are long-term plans and therefore more realistic and have a better chance of success. [...] Perhaps the best hope of the pyidawtha plans is the education plan. There is a growing realization of the urgent need to educate the people for democracy, to train men and women to run the welfare services of the state, to develop the country's economy, to man the industries. It is a picture of a nation at school, and the encouraging thing is that people are learning without much trace of self-consciousness. [...] Mass education that began in a groping way a few years ago has now found its feet; field workers are being trained and sent out to deliver education at the door of the peasant and the villager. The pyidawtha plans seem to be in earnest.

¹ For a biographical sketch and some of his writings see Robert Taylor (compiler) 2008 *Dr Maung Maung: Gentleman, Scholar, Patriot*. Singapore, ISEAS.

Apparently there are no obstacles to the success of State socialism. The constitution is pledged to it. The Socialists enjoy a decisive majority in Parliament; they hold important Cabinet posts. [...] Nobody quarrels with socialism; even those who do not know what it is all about are ardent Socialists and Marxists. The danger to State socialism comes from within, from the habits of behaviour and thinking and the complexes of the people. In the Burmese political scene the one thing that is sadly and conspicuously missing is an organised and disciplined opposition. Those parties and splinter parties which have something to say and some ability to organize have preferred to fight it out with the government in the field rather than in free and fair elections. [...] When the masses are educated for a genuine and active democracy, when they are taught tolerance, taught to appreciate the value and necessity of unity amid diversity, then perhaps multi-party politics may cease to do the harm that is has been done to the country. Till then, it may become a painful essential for the government parties to assume greater and more far-reaching powers to enable them to preserve the State and promote effectively the various pyidawtha and welfare schemes. For that, the AFPFL and the Socialists, who have come through five years of office a little battered but whole, seem best-fitted. But how to reconcile concentration of power in the government to make State socialism work, and such of the pyidawtha plans as that for the devolution of powers is a question that must worry the best political strategist.

2.2.3 Editorials from the *Ludu* Daily

(Translation: Phone Kyaw Myat)

Editor's note: The *Ludu* ("People") newspaper was founded in 1946 by U Hla (1910-1982) who later became known as "Ludu U Hla" in Mandalay. It was renowned for its critical and independent reporting and commentating. For a series of articles the editor was jailed for three years under the Nu government. The newspaper was closed down by the military government in July 1967.

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

We heard over the radio the first part of the recorded speech that Prime Minister U Nu gave on 4.8.52 at the opening of the Pyi Daw Tha conference which was to last two weeks, held at the Kyaikkasan racecourse. The Prime Minister's speech lasted three hours and it would have to be recorded as the longest in history not only of that given by U Nu but for a conference opening speech.

If you considered the fact that not all members of the parliament but only some selected members were invited; that some prominent members of the opposition were left out; that the Arakan members had walked out of the preliminary meeting that was held on the day before the conference etc., it seemed that they did not want any opposing, or weighing up of the pros and cons of the proposals that would be presented at the conference and only wanted the 'pote thin nyo/ chameleon' (yes-men) delegates. If that were the case, the 'Pyi Daw Tha' programme drawn up by U Nu's cabinet could have been presented at the parliamentary meeting and the matter settled and it could be said that (? 4-5 lakhs) of tax revenues were wasted, and not used. We heard the meeting chairman Minister U Tun Win say at the opening that the conference that was being held would become a tradition and forever remain in the history of Burma, and thought that posterity would say that U Nu's government had wasted abundantly on AFPL propaganda as if the financial situation was comfortable.

U Nu had the habit of mentioning about the rebels whenever he had the chance to do so in his speeches and he didn't forget to do so this time at the Pyi Daw Tha conference either. U Nu said his government did not like the violent course and had said repeatedly to the rebels to lay down their weapons and to come in. If there was difference of opinion in the country or if they were not satisfied with the government and rebelled, it was understood that reconciliation through negotiation was called the amicable way and fighting to suppress totally the rebellion was called the violent way to end the rebellion. We couldn't understand U Nu saying that he did not like the violent way when instead of negotiating with them he had been following the path that would lead to fighting until either party was soundly defeated.

In his speech U Nu said the Burmese had, during the British rule, 'education for slaves' and in the future they would get education fit for 'Thakin (master)' and the country would be 'Pyi Daw Tha-peaceful and pleasant'. By this he must have meant the sort of education that would produce barristers-at-law, directors of companies, traders, factory owners, bank managers and wealthy persons. That sort of education would only make those people the masters/ Thakin of the people. In any country that sort of people only amounted to a handful. We find it quite hard to digest that. The education fit for Thakin (master) must have meant sending the sons and daughters of those officials and ministers to study abroad as state scholars at the expense of the state and the son and daughter of the owner of the company going to study at their own expense. We don't want that sort of Thakin, and neither do the people. At some point in his speech he referred to the saying that 'only people who were well fed could afford to be morally upright' and that bribery was rampant because the Burmese were not well fed. We heard that the Pyi Daw Tha plan would make the people well fed and abolish bribery. We would dare say that was totally wrong. There might be many thieves and robbers because the

people were not well fed but bribery was not because they were not well fed; they were not just well fed, they were so full as to be almost at bursting point. We have often heard it frequently enough in U Nu's speeches. It was difficult to investigate cases of bribery at this time because the officials at the top themselves condone such acts and 'share' the spoils. The head of department could expose or cover up bribery in the department. When people at the top shared, the bureau of special investigation officials could not do anything. What we meant was, under the capitalist system where there was much vying among the people, saying that making the people well fed would abolish or reduce bribery was just wishful thinking. The point is the AFPFL government will, in carrying out the Pyi Daw Tha plan, make mistakes (as U Nu had admitted) and change through trial and error, which needed to be changed. And even if in the end it went smoothly and successfully, the type of prosperity would be like that of the Americans and the English (like the example we had given) and there would be making bigger buckets and pots for those fetching water- there would not much benefit for the people. We could envisage the prosperous minority frequently changing new cars and coming to own two or three brick houses instead of just owning one.

2.2.2.2 August 16, 1952: Plan for Economic Progress

If the government were to say that the peasants who made up 85 % of the village population were hard up and poor and drew up an economic plan that would enable the village to have telephone communication with the city, construct a road so that they could send their children easily to the university and do aerial survey of the village, the village headman and the hamlet committee would give up in despair.

The plan for economic progress that the American companies and experts in economics drew up for the Burmese government was rather similar to the one mentioned above but U Nu's government instead of giving up in despair had been presenting the plan with affectation at the Pyi Daw Tha conference; it was amazing.

The peasants make up 85% of the population of Burma. Traditionally, only when the peasants were well off was the country as a whole well off. Yet, in the plan expected to cost 1080 million, only 250 were to be used for the construction of irrigation canals. Not only that, but it also mentioned a future plan that would cost 7500 million out of which about 2500 million would be used on foreign experts and equipment. We understand that, by accepting the plan drawn by a group from America, U Nu's government was distributing the profits from the sale of rice, the fruits of the labour of the peasants, to the so-called foreign experts and the followers of AFPL.

The objective of inviting only 'pote thin nyo/ chameleon' (yes-men) delegates and not inviting members of the opposition became abundantly clear with this matter. The plan had major undertakings that would prove to be white elephants and members of the opposition would surely object to the proposals when they see that these were shams and meant for the consumption of AFPL followers. But now there were only 'pote thin nyo' delegates hoping to benefit from these projects and there was thunderous applause after every project had been proposed. U Nu's government had anticipated this.

With the current paddy prices the welfare of peasants is not beyond reach. Supposing every farmer were to have 10 acres and did not have to pay any rent, and an acre of land yielded 50 baskets of paddy, that would mean 500 baskets of paddy, and if he were to sell it at 500 kyats (per 100 baskets) a household would get 2500 kyats. It should not be difficult for the government who would be selling it at more than 700 kyats/ 100 baskets to give the farmers 500 kyats/ 100 baskets. It could even exempt them from having to pay the tax on paddy land. In that case, a farmer's household would get 2500 kyats a year and even if the cost of seed

paddy and the cost of hiring the farm hand were to be deducted, they could still live comfortably in a rural setting.

It would only need paddy land and draught animals for this to happen. By natural law the paddy land should be owned by the people working it; if this rule proved insufficient, it should not be impossible if the government were to clear virgin land with the help of machines. This could be done within the 7500 millions that U Nu's government had proposed and the farmers would obviously be better off.

Burma had the history of having an economic set up where persons of great wealth who did not work the land got the lion's share from the land instead of the farmers who had to sweat it. For example, a farmer who had 10 acres of paddy land would get 500 baskets of paddy, and (at the rate in the past) was to get 500 kyats for his paddy, but since he had taken a loan to be paid back with paddy at harvest time the farmer only got 400 kyats. The wealthy person who gave out the loan got 500 baskets of paddy for 400 kyats. He would store it up and sell it when the price of paddy had become 160 kyats per 100 baskets. He would get 800 kyats. Now the wealthy person who gave out the loan who did not have to do anything except jiggle his knees got 400 kyats from the 10 acres of paddy land. The farmer had to give water tax, land tax, the cost of seed paddy and the cost of gathering and transplanting seedlings out of the 400 kyats and he had to toil and would be exhausted. This state of affairs had been going on throughout the history of Burma and still continues to this day and since there were no plans to touch this in the plan for economic progress proposed by the American experts and accepted by U Nu's government, it will continue like this.

Whatever the plans, at how many millions the cost, so long as the problems mentioned above are not addressed, there is no way that the farmers are going to be better off and those traders depending for their livelihood on doing trade with the farmers would be worn out gradually. All the while, those persons of great wealth who stored up the commodities and demanded exorbitant prices, the so-called craftsmen who got a lot without exerting much from white elephant projects, those who got government contracts, AFPL followers and so-called foreign experts would be the only ones whizzing by in their cars.

2.2.2.3 March 4, 1957 Farmers and Foreign Currency

Selling rice still fetches more foreign currency than others and it still remains the 'gold' of Burma. According to the Burmese government and foreign news agencies, paddy production in Burma had been less due to adverse weather conditions and export would not be able to meet foreign demand this year.

The people and the government of Burma very much needed the foreign currency and we believe that if paddy was purchased systematically with due attention rice could still be exported to foreign countries like the previous years.

Many towns still had paddy that was harvested last year. The hitches that the farmers still face when they come to sell the paddy at the purchasing depot of the agricultural produce trading board should be rectified without fail. The farmers should be able to lawfully sell their paddy directly to the buyers and receive promptly, the due amount in full. The cotton farmers face the same problems at the cotton purchasing depot. Sugar cane farmers also have the same problems.

Some responsible persons presumed these problems to be insignificant and did not pay attention to the fact that these were not giving the farmers their peace of mind. The peasants had to toil alongside the draft animals the whole year round and when they came to sell the

paddy at the town, they had the opinion, for quite some time that the relevant persons were not giving them the privileges that should be accorded to them.

The farmer coming to town to sell the paddy on his cart wanted his paddy to be measured correctly and paid the right amount. He would not like anybody to deduct any amount of money for any reason from the money he received from the sale of his paddy and he did not want to wait two or three days to get the money. These basic problems should be solved so that there would be hope for increased paddy production, growing seed paddy of pure stock and improvement. It is especially needed that the farmers be able to buy useful and indispensable items more easily at cheaper prices. It would not do with those who have mainly profits on their mind.

In some towns farmers from the rural areas would come to the paddy purchasing depot at the edge of the town and parked their carts outside the area managed by the municipal corporation and still had to pay fees for parking their carts. The farmers were ignorant and had to pay the fees. The officers from the depot did not intervene; other organizations did not say anything about this and the unknowing farmers had to pay needlessly.

We believe that the government should pay more attention to the farmers if they want increased paddy production and more foreign currency. Peasants constitute 80% of the population. Their peace of mind, prosperity and enthusiasm are very much needed for the economy of the country. Only when we have abundant amounts of foreign currency from selling paddy would we be able to establish industries. Therefore, relevant persons should be more attentive when dealing with peasants and should be fair and compassionate. Help and education should be offered so that the desired progress could be made. It is time to put it into practice.



Going shopping abroad? Be considerate of the department stores here!

2.2.2.4 February 19, 1958: Finance of the State

Observers of the financial situation of the state had predicted that the state would be in financial straits. The government knew this and had been increasing taxes and introducing new ones. It had been registering war reparations as an income and borrowing from foreign countries.

The state had been in financial straits all these years except when the price of rice had been very high. France had been in a financial strait because it was waging a war in Algeria to expand its territory; England was not in a comfortable financial situation because it had been competitively producing weapons; the government as well as the opposition accepts that our

country had been in financial difficulty because of the civil war. The people had personally experienced that.

The financial situation of our country would be worse this year. It could be said that we would be worse off because the production of paddy would be half of that of the previous years.

According to the news going around in Rangoon, the financial difficulty was not a trivial one. The government's expenditure was 85 million a month while the revenues had decreased by about 40%. Initially, on average, it had been 90 million kyats a month; it was said that at the end of January, it was only 45 millions. If so, it would be cause for anxiety.

While we were having economic difficulty America was also in an economic depression; unemployment had risen three times in January from 1,120, 000 to 4, 494, 000. The situation had President Eisenhower announce that the economic difficulty was a temporary thing to raise the morale of the people. What would be the repercussions of the American depression in the capitalist world? How would it affect us directly or indirectly?

Our country had invited foreign investments. The ministers personally invited them when they went to America, England and Japan. In the present circumstances, it was a long way off for America to come and invest here on purely economic grounds. Capitalists from America and other foreign countries would have liked Prime Minister U Nu saying that he did not accept Marxism at the AFPL conference. But even for foreign capitalists like them, circumstances would not allow them to invest heavily.

If it could affect like this directly, how could it affect indirectly?

If teak and minerals fetched high prices when rice production was less, it would have been better. But it was American aid that enabled the European countries to buy teak and minerals. Since American aid to the European countries would decrease it would affect the trade in Burmese teak and minerals.

The American economic experts that the government had hired to deal with the financial difficulty of the country had proposed:

1. The first advice was to issue more bank notes, and
2. To take drastic measures to cut costs and scrap or merge government boards and departments created on a temporary basis was the second advice.

If more bank notes were issued it would be like the time of Japanese occupation. It would complicate the interrelation with foreign banks and the government would not be able to do so. It would not be easy to scrap some boards and departments, or to merge them or to reduce the manpower. Some departments had incompetent or redundant people. Originally, these people had been appointed even though it was known that they were incompetent or redundant. It would not be easy to dismiss such people like some others.

But the present economic situation of the state had reached the life or death stage and we should be candid and weed out those who had been appointed as a favour.

This alone would not solve the massive economic difficulty and we must be quick to follow the path the people liked and which would rid us of the cost of the civil war and save us from feeling inferior at having to borrow from foreign countries and really overcome the various difficulties.

2.2.3 Nu on the foundation of economics (January 1958)

Editor's note: In January 1958, the AFPFL held its third All-Burma Congress, the first after December 1947. After the elections of 1956 the result of which had shown that the party had lost credibility with the public, Nu stepped down in order to reorganize the AFPFL. Be Swe took over for eight months and handed the premiership back to Nu in February 1957. In his opening speech at the congress Nu gave an all-encompassing overview about the policy of the party and its background as a foundation for its future policy.¹ In the first section Nu speaks about the goals of the AFPFL. In order to clarify the socialism practiced by the AFPFL he deals with the Marxist concepts of Dialectic and Historical Materialism as well as economics. The following extracts reproduce the beginning and the end of this part. A lengthy passage on the history of economics and philosophical matters is omitted.

Economic Doctrine

Comrades, before we discuss Marxian Economics, let us see if we can define economics in an understandable way. Economics is sometimes known as Political Economy.

Economics is nothing but a study of the activity of man in relation to his needs for food, shelter and clothes. This is a rough and ready definition, and is not comprehensive or very exact. But, it will do for the present.

" How are commodities used by man produced ?

"How are they distributed?

" How are they utilized ?

„Why is the income of a car driver better than an income of a peasant?

„Is it better or otherwise to separate a piece of work into smaller undertakings done by different individuals rather than to have a consolidated, big undertaking?

„Is it desirable for the government to manage or control the production, processing or distribution organs in country?

„Where does money come from?

„Who decides on a fair wage?

„What is the cause of unemployment? “

These are some of the questions, concerning man's activities for food, shelter and clothes and for the satisfaction of other economic needs that the science of economics attempts to answer. We need food, shelter and clothing. The simplest way to get these things is to grow one's own food, to make one's own smelts and clothes.

In primitive times, people provided for themselves in this simple way. Even now, in some areas of the world, this simple solution for the satisfaction of human needs is being practised. But, with the development of society, human needs became more involved and complex. For instance, in primitive times, a piece of meat would just be roasted before a fire for eating. But now a days there are many ways of cooking a piece of meat. And there are additional accessories and luxuries, even in the matter of meals, such as dessert courses and sweets followed by a cigarette. In the matter of clothing, too, a bare minimum is not enough. In the olden days, five yards of *pinni* (home spun) would have been sufficient for a man for six

¹ Nu, *Towards Socialist State*. Rangoon, Director of Information. 68 pages.

months. But now, one wants to wear silk, muslin, voyle, and nylon. In the matter of shelter also, it is not enough to build a hut with bamboo and thatch, but cement, bricks and steel girders are needed as building materials. Then, we have to have electricity to dispel the darkness, and fans to cool us.

Therefore, in this present age, it is a sheer impossibility to provide for one's own needs directly by one's own work, that is, to produce the commodities needed by oneself.

And it is not practicable for a man to build factory after factory to produce all the commodities he needs.

Therefore, the production of commodities needed by people has to be divided up and specialized. This is called division of labour. For instance, the cobbler makes shoes, the tailor makes dresses, and the peasant ploughs the land to produce paddy. The produces of such specialized activity can be exchanged for barter, or can be sold for money with which other commodities desired by one can be bought. People who work in offices, or mechanics or car drivers get wages in return for their services, and these workers can buy commodities with the money they thus get.

There are three stages in relation to any commodity. These are:

- (1) Production,
- (2) Consumption, and
- (3) Distribution of Income.

I will first explain Production by means of an illustration.

Take, for instance, the production of a cheroot. First, a piece of land has to be cleared. Next, the plant, the *Cordia Myxa*, the leaf of which is used for the cheroot, has to be planted. Then, the leaves are picked, dried, and packed in long baskets. Then, these baskets have to be sent to cheroot-rolling factories by means of train, truck, steamer, boat, coolies and other methods of transport.

Then the workers in the factories have to roll the cheroots. The cheroots are then sold by wholesale and retail shops. The means of transport such as train, truck, steamer, and the distribution outlets such as shops, have to be included in this first stage, called Production, because though they may not be, directly involved in the actual manufacture of the cheroots, they add to the price of the cheroot. For instance, if the price of a hundred cheroots is one kyat, the train, truck, steamer, coolie and shop get a portion of that kyat. Thus, they indirectly are involved in the Production Stage, by adding to the price of the cheroot.

Comrades, I have explained the first stage, called Production. Now we come to the second stage, called Consumption. This is easy enough to understand.

Comrades, smoking the cheroot, when it is the finished product, is Consumption.

Comrades, I will now go on to the third stage, namely, Distribution of Income amongst the factors of Production.

Comrades, of the three stages, that I have mentioned, the third stage of Distribution of Income is the hardest to grasp. Distribution here means the distribution of the wealth, usually called income, gained in return for the commodity, amongst the various factors responsible for, or involved in, the production of the commodity. Here, by wealth or income, money is not meant. Some economists define this wealth or income as anything that satisfies the needs of people. This wealth can not be gained without work. In the case of my illustration above, the cheroot leaf, the content of the cheroot, the filter and the cheroot itself can be regarded as form of wealth. The extent of their wealth depends on the price of the cheroot.

Although the price of the cheroot is handed over to the cheroot seller, he is not the only person who gets this price or income in return for the cheroot. From the man who clears the ground for planting the cheroot-leaf plant, to the cheroot seller, many individuals share indirectly in the income, received as the price of the cheroot, and these individuals would include even the maker of the paper for the cheroot brand, the printers and engravers of the brand, and the man who sticks on the brand. In this way, everybody involved in the production of the cheroot to the point of its sale, shares in the distribution of the income derived in the form of the cheroot's price.

However, it would be impossible to look for every individual who shares in the distribution of the income from the commodity.

Therefore, we have to look for the factors of Production. These are

- (1) Land.
- (2) Labour.
- (3) Capital.
- (4) Management.

These four factors of Production exist in Capitalist society, and now I will explain each one of them.

Land is at the root of all economic activity. Take the case of the cheroot. The cheroot-leaf plant has to be planted in the ground. Even the scissors used in cutting the leaf, and the metal used in the engraving block for the brand, are made of raw materials which are obtained from land. Even the cheroot factory has to be built on land. Therefore, when any income, or wealth derived from the production of any commodity, is distributed, land is a factor taken into account. For instance, if a piece of land is hired out to plant the cheroot-leaf tree, rent is obtained in return. If the owner of the land himself grows the plants, when he calculates his profit, he will have to charge the rent value of the land first.

Labour also is an essential factor, as without workers no commodity, and no raw material can be produced. In this category of labour is included both the manual worker, who handles tools and implements, and the intellectual worker who works with his brains. In the distribution of Income, labour has to be taken into account as a factor.

As regards Capital, there are two schools of thought. Capitalists hold that capital is nothing but savings, accumulated as a result of industry and hard work. Socialists hold that capital is profits gained as a result of exploiting the labour of the workers, by withholding part of the income that is due to the workers. Capital exists not merely as money, but can be in the form of means of production, buildings, and raw materials.

In the distribution of Income, the capitalists take their share in the form of interest. Just as rent has to be paid for hiring land, interest has to be paid to the capitalists for the use of their factories, machines and tools, buildings and raw materials.

Management is also an important factor sharing in the distribution of income. Even though there may be land, labour and capital, if there is no one to manage the production processes, no production can be successful. Those responsible for management must plan for the development of the undertaking, must find the land, must engage the workers, must maintain discipline amongst the workers, must save up for capital, and must take risks for the enterprise. Taking risks means taking the risk of making a profit or incurring a loss. Therefore, in the distribution of Income, management has to be taken into account.

Comrades, What I have said so far is just background material to make it easier to like to touch on and grasp the economic doctrine of Marx. I would like to touch on the history of Economics, since an

understanding of Economic History will be of great value in studying the Economic Doctrine of Marx. Therefore, I would like you to pay attention to the following summary of the history of Economics.

Economics, as a Science is of fairly modern growth. At the earliest, its scientific beginnings may be placed in the 16th or 17th Century. At that time it took the form of Mercantilism.¹

[...]

Comrades, as the AFPFL does not believe that Marxism is a doctrine that is infallible,

- (1) the AFPFL approves of only some parts of the Economic Doctrine of Marxism, and
- (2) rejects Marxism as to the ideology of the AFPFL.

Comrades, we accept some parts of the Economic Doctrine of Marx. It is our belief that commodities should not be produced for profit, but for use. The production of goods for profit and not for use is one of the main causes of poverty and starvation in the midst of plenty, and one of the main causes of ill-health and disease, of immorality, and of destructive in bloody wars.

Comrades, it is not an easy task to establish a system in which goods are produced not for profit but for use. In attempting to establish such a system, the most difficult part would be to overcome human greed. If greed can be overcome successfully, to that extent will the establishment of such a system be successful.

However, difficult it may be to overcome human greed, as Socialists we must make it our goal to establish a system in which goods are produced not for profit but for use. There will be plenty for all if we are successful in establishing that system.²



Darling! I happened to spend the kitchen money on buying a piece of cloth for its unusual design. So, today's dish will only be kazunywet, water green.

Translator's note: Kazunywet is a cheap, leaf vegetable

¹ Ibid.: 24-28.

² Ibid.: 42-43.

2.3 The Caretaker Government (1958-1960)

2.3.1 General Ne Win on “Economic Insurgents” (1958 and 1959)¹

Editor’s note: In September 1958, U Nu resigned as Premier Minister of Burma and handed the Government over to General Ne Win who was elected Premier by Parliament on October 31. According to the 1947 constitution, his tenure was limited to six months. Before this period expired, Ne Win resigned in February 1959. After the constitution was amended, he was re-elected again. The following texts are taken from his speeches before parliament on the two occasions and contain the sections dealing with economic questions.

2.3.1.1 From Ne Win’s Speech on October 31, 1958²

Mr, Speaker, Sir, I wish now to speak about the fact that just as there are perils threatening the country due to the armed insurgents, there are also perils in the form of economic insurgents. The people of this country will continue to suffer at the hands of the economic insurgents as long as businessmen will do anything for a profit, as long as they always strive for a large profit margin and as long as they welcome participation in black-market activities.

I wish to make this request to the business sector. Give up those ideas of raking in huge profits. Give up those monopolistic practices. When the rebels are bringing the country to ruin through armed rebellion, do not contribute to the ruin of the country also through economic insurgency. Do not commit this economic insurgency, even if inadvertently.

It shall be announced here in no uncertain terms that, even if despite this request, rules and regulations continue to be routed, due and severe action will be taken according to law.

My Government will strive its utmost to bring down the high-ceiling prices of goods and foodstuffs today. I wish to suggest to the members of Parliament and to the consumer public not to remain passive against those guilty of inflating prices. Do not depend entirely on the Government to take action against them. Lend your help to bring these economic insurgents to the attention of the Government. If the people, through mass action, can bring about the apprehension of these economic insurgents, I assure you that my Government will mete out due and severe punishment to these wrong-doers.

2.3.1.2 From Ne Win’s Speech on February 13, 1959³

Mr. Speaker, Sir with your kind permission, I would like to issue a warning to the economic insurgents. They might think to themselves: "Now, the Caretaker Government is no more and we can commit as much economic insurgency as we like".

Do not entertain any such notions. I give you this stern warning that you will face a penalty as severe as the scope and extent of your act: of economic insurgency.

On their part, citizens of the Union should not indulge in widespread purchasing and stocking of goods and necessities just to forestall the economic insurgents. Citizens should refrain from doing so, because by this very activity they will be aiding and abetting the cause of the economic insurgents. The Defence Services will continue to perform the task of providing and distributing the various basic necessities and foodstuff required vitally by the populace.

¹ Source: *Is Trust Vindicated? A chronicle of the various accomplishments of the Government headed by General Ne Win during the period of tenure from November, 1958 to February 6, 1960*. Rangoon; The Director for Information, 1960.

² Ibid. 549.

³ Ibid, 550.

2.4 The Socialist Period

2.4.2 Editorial in the *Guardian Magazine* (1966)¹

PREScription FOR PROSPERITY

In his address to the Second Convocation of the Institute of Economics last month, Rector Dr. Aye Hlaing put the matter in a nutshell when he pointed out that the two measures needed for a country to become prosperous were to economize on expenditure on the one hand and to amass capital and make investments on the other. This prescription for prosperity is agedly, which, nevertheless, holds true for all time. This has also been stressed by the Revolutionary Council Chairman and his colleagues time and again in giving their leadership for the improvement of the people's economic condition. The call made by them for the people to put forth their utmost efforts to increase the national production must still be vivid in the mind of the people. It was pointed out that the country's population was increasing by about two per cent. If the production stagnated, the people would become poorer yearly. It was imperative that the people strove to ward off yearly worsening poverty. But for a better life, they would need to increase their productivity of national wealth by more than enough to feed the increasing mouths; enough to allow for capital accumulation for investments in development projects and industries. The nation's economic planners have set their sights at an eight per cent increase. This would provide the people with a better living standard and also allow for reasonable capitalization.

But, any increase in productivity would avail the people very little if they do not exercise, or try to develop habits of thrift- We, as a people, it is feared are sorrowfully lacking in this habit of thrift. More sorrowfully, it would seem we have been born, rather with a great propensity for ways of improvidence. This weakness of ours it can be seen, has been fully exploited by strangers in our midst. True, the depression of the thirties hit the cultivators hard and as a result the majority were dispossessed of their lands, It was also equally true that their unconcern for the morrow, too. was partly responsible for their plight. This defect in us, which might be called a national malady, must be remedied, if we would build ourselves a better life. Otherwise, all our efforts at increased production would amount to a futile labour of fetching water in a sieve. It would, thus, seem to point to the fact that of the two measures of increasing production and exercising economy, the latter is no less imperative than the former. While some of the factors may be beyond one's control in the former, there is none that one cannot control in the latter. All that the people need is to make a resolve and hold fast to it. If the people can see that they are making a valuable contribution to the national prosperity by economizing in their expenditure, there can be little doubt of their being able to rise to the full expectation of their leaders.

¹ *The Guardian Magazine* 13,11: 5.

2.4.2 Editorial in the *Guardian Magazine* (1967)¹

Definitely Better

The new paddy purchase systems explained to the press last month by Trade officials, may admit of improvement but is definitely better than the old, and an easily be seen as one designed to profit both the cultivators and the State. The rise in the paddy prices, though hardly high enough to meet the desire of to cultivators, will become some sort of an incentive for the new purchase system. The cultivators have now the freedom of selling at any place they want, not restricted to a certain centre as they had been before. Then, they may sell at the mills and storage and buying centres or through their AMPC's or Collective Marketing Bodies where there are no AMPC's or through individual registered agents of the Trade. This makes for a whole lot of convenience for the cultivators. Registered agents are a new innovation this year. This should prove successful, besides giving some of the active peasants a profitable spare-time employment in the kind of work that they can do well.

The people will also welcome the categorical statement that there will be no compulsion whatever used to make the cultivators sell their paddy. The cultivators are free to; sell any amount they wish or not all. Only appeals would be made to their good sense and some incentives in the nature of essential consumer items would be given. On the whole our peasantry can be relied upon to show good sense. The incentive in essential commodities would be heartily welcomed by them. Salt, textiles, oil, green tea are some of the items sorely needed by the peasants, for which they had been made to pay through their nose by profiteers. These incentives would reflect on the enhanced prices to be given this year a great deal of attraction. The increase would become substantial against controlled prices for the essential commodities. The government may not be able to meet the needs of the cultivators fully in this respect, but it would be able to ease their lot considerably. And, that would be quite a large incentive, to be sure.

The peasants would also be allowed to barter their paddy for other essential commodities like oil, onions, chillies, and so on This would also ease their lot. The paddy so bartered would have to be sold to the State. There is no outlet for them. With the bumper harvest expected, the prospects of the State being able to procure as much as it wants may be stated as better then ever. And, the new system of classifying 'emata' and 'ngasein' grades ought also to encourage the cultivators to sell. But, the thing which appears would need to be done is to persuade the cultivators to sell early. If they rushed in only at the last moment just before the rains, a lot of paddy could get damaged by the rains. It would also present difficult transport and storage problems. It is the Mass Affairs and Peasant Cadres to convince the cultivators of the need to sell and sell early, both in their own and State interest.

¹ *The Guardian Magazine* 14,11: 5.

2.4.3 A Letter to the Editor of *The Guardian* (1968)¹

People's Forum

Frank Views & Comments

Hiring of Private Nurses

Sir,

'Hiring of Private Nurses' in this (December 1) morning's paper prompted me to try my hands at letter writing, hoping I might in some way be able to improve things as they are now.

I don't see why without private nurses we could not keep our hospitals clean. We do not need private nurses to help us, but what we need is hard work, dedication and highly trained nurses with good theoretical grounding. A well-trained nurse with good basic grounding and a true sense of duty will always be a good nurse overworked or not.

The best way as I see to improve nursing in our hospitals are not keeping of private nurses, but in helping and teaching the present nurse to understand more of their duty towards the sick and refresh them with latest developments in modern nursing. The aim is to turn present nurses into better one and the future nurses into good ones.

Refresher courses for all the nurses working in a highly-organised institutions now a necessity. We cannot keep drop-outs and duds in teaching hospitals. Those working in a teaching hospital should have a thorough selection and reorientation course to qualify them to stay on. The future of nurses depends greatly on the knowledge, teaching and sense of duty of the present ones. As they are like pillars of guiding light for the younger ones much depends on them what kind of nurses we turn out in the future. The most important thing for the teacher and the student as well, to realise is that we are striving to produce humble, reliable and highly-trained good nurses and not an imitation of a third-grade Private Doctor.

Selection of future nurses also is important. A high school drop-out with no sense of duty and dedication, but seeking only a livelihood out of nursing, will be worthless compared to a girl of 7th grade who really wants to be a dedicated nurse. Both will be nurses, but the former irresponsible, and the latter dedicated. It needs more than brain to be good nurses – DEDICATION.

Yours etc.

F.N.

¹ Source: *The Guardian*, Tuesday, December 3, 1968, 4.

2.4.4 Extract from Chairman Ne Win's Address at the Last Day Session of the Fourth Congress of the BSPP on August 8, 1981¹

Editor's note: In his speech at the end of the party congress, Ne Win covered three matters. First, he explained why he resigned of the post of President of Burma. Second, he spoke about economy and third, he talked about party matters stressing that "goodness" of the leadership on all party levels was more important than "ability". The following text reproduces the section dealing with economy.²

The "political report" of the Central Committee had stated with regard to the economy: "The Second Congress of the Burma Socialist Programme Party, held in October 1973, laid down guidelines for the twenty-Year Long-Term Plan and for the Second Four-Year Plan. [...] During the period of implementation of the first and second year of the Second Four-Year Plan, targets were not achieved in almost all sectors."³

[...]

The second point I would like to talk about is the economy. I would like to speak on what Burma should do in the economy. Let us say economic principles. I do not mean that they are to be carried out *in toto*. They are to be practiced as opportunity arises and time is right.

(a) Receipts and payments and income and expenditure should at least balance.

(b) Effort must be made, if conditions permit, to ensure that income exceeds expenditure.

And as income exceeds expenditure, that desire to spend the surplus freely, and eat and live freely, must be curbed. It is all right to spend a little more but if the habit of spending all the surplus is followed one will never prosper or progress. It is necessary to spend the surplus beneficially. It will also be necessary not to spend all the surplus but to spend only a portion and invest and save the balance.

(c) In making investments, it is best to do so with one's own money and one's own possession, without borrowing from others.

If a venture undertaken with one's own money or resources should fail due to unfavourable circumstances, or should collapse and get totally lost, there is no need to worry as it is one's own money and no one will come to bother you. There is only one thing. Effort must be made through one's own speech, physical as well as mental, to accumulate new surplus for renewed investments. But if one does business with borrowed funds and such business ends in disaster, then one will be left burdened with debts. It will become necessary to make efforts to repay these debts and whatever profit is made through one's effort will have to be used to repay debts. Thus, the responsibility of repaying debts will become a burden.

(d) If a venture is sure to be profitable, such venture should be carried out partly with one's own money and partly through borrowings or totally through borrowings.

Here I would like to add that if preliminary surveys show that an enterprise is not likely to lose but is sure to be profitable, carry it out with loans if necessary, or if possible, with some of one's own funds and some loans. When investments are made wholly with loans it is important to calculate how beneficial they would be after payment of interests on loans. If there would be no benefit but only a waste of physical and mental energy, profits earned

¹ Burma Socialist Programme Party, Central Committee Headquarters 1985 *The Fourth Party Congress 1981. Party Chairman Speech and Political Report of the Central Committee*. Rangoon, The Burma Socialist Programme Party.

² Ibid.: 286-292.

³ Ibid.: 191.

having to be used to pay interest on the loan, why do it? Do not take up such enterprises. In short, if work must be carried out with loans from others, the benefit it would bring after payment of interest on loans must be carefully calculated. Do it only if there would be benefit. And in getting loans prudence must be exercised so that only loans that will not become a burden are taken.

- (e) If it is a manufacturing enterprise it must be one which would make use of raw material produced within the country. If a manufacturing industry is set up just for the sake of setting up an industry with no raw materials available within the country that industry could meet with difficulty. That industry would have to be closed down or be throttled by those who have raw materials for such an industry. So in setting up a new enterprise of an industry survey must be made on whether raw materials would be available for it within the country.

In continuation to (e) I would like to go on to (f). If work is to be done with loans, are must be taken that interest and principal are paid back without fail in due time. Don't build an industry merely for the purpose of saying that ours is an industrial country, pointing at the mills, leaving the future to take care if itself. In short, do not buy and ride an elephant merely because you can buy it on credit. Carry out an enterprise only after seeing that the points mentioned above have been fulfilled.

I say this because I do not want our country to get bankrupt, as we would, if we carry on without being careful about the points I have mentioned and if we are not able to repay the loans when due. A human being, on reaching maturity, has the responsibility living on the basis of his own physical and mental to work for his ability. Food, clothing and shelter are essential for every human being and if these essential requirements could not be met it would be difficult to have a decent living standard. Similarly, if a family is unable to fulfill the needs for food, clothing and shelter, its life in society would not be up to standard. So also it is necessary for a nation to meet the needs for food, clothing and shelter of the people with the strength of the entire people, otherwise that nation will fall prey to other nations.

Another point is (g). We must say that our people and our country are fortunate. I have just now said that if, either an individual, or a family, or a country, is unable to meet food, clothing and shelter needs it would be hard to have a decent standard of living and move in decent society. Some countries are unfortunate. They are not able to produce enough of the most essential food. This problem of food is a daily problem. Inadequate daily food supply will cause daily anxiety. As I have said afore our country and people are fortunate. We have not only enough, but a surplus of food supply. That is why I said we are fortunate. We are sufficient not only in food but, to some extent, also in natural resources. It is not only our country that has these resources. Different countries in different place of the world have different natural resources.

However, you must know how to use those resources effectively and prudently. You must fully study the use of those resources. If we lack such know-how, and also lack capital. to invest, we will have to get capital by exporting those resources as raw material. For we also need things other than food and what is needed will have to be bought with the money obtained from sale of the country's resources or food.

Therefore, in dealing with those matters feasibility and profitability must first be carefully weighed.

Over thirty years have passed since our country became free from enslavement. To be really independent, it is not enough only to be politically independent: the economy is also a related factor. Though politically independent in name, if the economy is not sound, a hand will have to be thrust before others to borrow. If one's economy is very unstable one can feel

very humiliated. But if prospects are good, the lender might willingly lend.

If asked whether we can do without borrowing now we must say we cannot. Though we still have to borrow, we are in a position to refuse, if any creditor nation, bank or individual desired to force us to do something against our wish. Because although our economy is not par excellence, it is not one that has fallen to the point where we have to do as others dictate,

Let us repeat it in political terms. There was colonialism, imperialism in the past. Under imperialism, the imperialist governments had their local administrations which monopolized the economy. That was what they did. That was what we suffered. However, after World War II, imperialism and colonialism declined to some extent. The world no longer accepted that. So, they do not themselves come and govern. They strive to exert their influence through some other means. The means they use on a wide scale is to exploit, in the guise of well-intentioned aid, the newly-independent countries which do not quite know how to manage their economies. That is why I was relating a few economic principles earlier.

Then after ten or fifteen years of independence, as the saying "the gaur teaches the hunter" goes, independent countries gained experience in economic matters through working and learning lessons when exploited or swindled by others.

What they did next was to get in and control the economy and then continue to manipulate politics. When they could not manipulate through control of the economy, they tried to recruit traitors from among our own race, those who would be subservient to them and they worked to put those people in executive positions, Such instances are many the world over. It is necessary for us to be vigilant and prevent such danger from reaching us.

I have dealt with Burma's economy. I shall go on to say something about the world economy.

If I must go into details on the world economy there will be much to be said. However, I shall mention only what should be noted. There are some matters that, though true, will hurt here and there. I shall not speak about those matters here. I will however have close discussion on these matters with individuals and enterprises taking the leading role in economy.

What I want to mention at this Congress are samplings of world economic and monetary problems.

Take England for example. I will deal first with monetary matters. In 1925, the pound sterling's exchange rate was US \$ 4.8665. After several devaluations - about twice or thrice - they declared officially in 1967 that the pound was equal to US \$ 2.4. Formerly, it was over US \$ 4.8. Then it was US \$ 2.4, a drop of over 50 per cent.

That was what was officially said in 1967. But what was the latest as of August 6. All that remained was US \$ 1.8 to the pound. How it fell! When compared with the exchange rate in 1925, there has been a frightening fall in value from US \$ 4.8 to US \$ 1.8.

Faced with such economic difficulties, they had to look for various means to head toward recovery. I will tell you of one notable method they used.

That was the abandonment in 1931 of the system of paying gold for sterling. There was the gold standard in the past. In 1925 the price of pound sterling was over \$ 4.8 or 7.3224 grammes gold. If you presented a pound note at the bank, you could get over seven grammes gold. They abandoned that backing with gold in 1931.

Then America. America continued to stay with gold. It did not declare any currency devaluation. But the way America stayed on with gold was: in January 1934 President Roosevelt raised the value of gold from \$ 33 per ounce to \$ 35. Again, in 1973, it was raised

from \$ 35 per ounce to \$ 42.22.

This shows that while others declared currency devaluations, Americans, thinking the word undignified and degrading, did not say they had devalued their currency. In a round-about manner they said they had raised the buyer's price of gold when what they were actually doing was to lower the price of money. When you calculate that, the fall in value was close to 20 per cent. America, too, had gold backing for the dollar in the past. However, in 1971, during President Nixon's time that backing was withdrawn. Formerly, the dollar could be exchanged with gold. It was the gold standard. That was abandoned.

Take Japan. In 1971, one US dollar was equal to 360 yen. However, later, the value of yen rose from ¥ 360 to the dollar to between ¥ 200 and ¥ 220. Formerly, it was ¥ 360, now, it is ¥ 220, resulting in a profit of ¥ 140. In that exchange rate fluctuation, there was much market speculation. This month, or in the last week of last month, the rate was only ¥ 235 to a dollar.

Take Germany next. The German Mark was accepted internationally as the strongest currency along with the Japanese yen. The German Mark was revalued upward by 5 per cent in 1961, and again by 9.3 per cent in 1969. This was done not voluntarily but under pressure from other countries, who said the Mark was too undervalued then. The price of revaluation had to be paid when it came to foreign trade, as its exports became dearer and uncompetitive. Under such pressure, the German Mark had to be floated. It no longer had a fixed exchanged rate but was left to market forces. So much about currencies.

Next, take the case of commodities and prices. Take gold, for instance. First, gold was priced at \$ 33 an ounce. It had to be raised to \$ 35 and then to \$42.22 in 1973. Those were official prices but actual trading prices were different. When it was no longer possible to control the price of gold, it soared, as much as up to \$ 850 an ounce about two years ago. That was the highest. It rose from the said \$ 42.22 to \$ 100, from \$ 100 to \$ 200, from \$ 200 to \$ 300, from \$ 300 to \$ 400 and so forth, going up to \$ 850, and then gradually came down, to \$ 392.5 an ounce as of the 6th of this month. Again, take silver. In January 1980, its price was \$ 50.35 an ounce. In March it was down to \$ 15.

Tin was priced at £ 6030 per ton in February 1981. But such is the case with price manipulations that, sometimes even a small incident causes an abrupt rise or fall in price. Just about that time, there was suspension of business due to the Chinese new year festival and p and dropped to £ 5980. However, on the 4th of this month, i.e. August 4, the price was £ 8000 per ton. Before, it was nearly £ 6000 and now it is £ 6000. On the 7th, that was yesterday, it was £ 7875. What I want to point out is that there is economic instability, monetary instability and price instability. They tried hard to regain monetary stability. They created a new currency unit, the SDR (Special Drawing Rights) with the IMF (International Monetary Fund). It involves mere transfer of accounts. There is no backing with gold or silver. However, rich countries and others tried to find a remedy through contributions according to their capacities and regulations.

Another method - when the price of gold soared from a little over \$ 42 to \$ 500, \$ 600, \$ 700, \$ 800 and upwards the two tier system of gold pricing was introduced, with the hope that it might stabilize gold prices; but it failed. It was not successful. Nations were said to be working together in trade and monetary matters but in the meantime they were secretly competing with one another. Countries in Europe created the EMS (European Monetary System), attempting to regulate exchange rates, setting upper and lower limits of fluctuation in trading among themselves - EEC and, European Countries, no matter how much prices fluctuate with others. But that too did not succeed. So what happened? Economic difficulties appeared. On the one side is inflation, fall in value of currencies. An article that can be had for K 5 a year ago is now priced at K 10. Such factors interacted which one another so much so

that America had to find some remedy for its malady, monetary malady. It saw that a lot of money was in circulation among the people, with people spending high with credit cards from banks, companies making investments with bank loans. It found that the volume, of currency in circulation must be regulated to reduce inflation. So what it did was to raise bank interest rates. The bank rate before was never above ten, It was always under ten. Eight was considered high. Then it went up, once exceeding 20. Then for a little while it came down, to 17-18 but now again it has risen back to 20. What America did to cure its own malady had repercussions on other countries. A situation developed where even those countries said to be rich, said to be industrially developed, said to be monetarily very strong like Germany and Japan, suffered from the repercussions.

A desperate situation developed. That was why seven rich countries met in Canada recently to consider how to resolve the economic and monetary problems. After the talks, they said problems were indeed there but they could not be solved by the seven alone and the best place to find solutions was the United Nations. The problems would therefore be discussed next October at the United Nation. In my view, an, economic war has been going on secretly among the countries said to be friends. It has been going on for a long time covertly. Now it has come out into the open. They might say they want to help one another but in reality they are no longer in a position to do so.

What I wish to say here, and what I have already told our people in charge of the economy, is that these nations will have to strive for recovery the next two or three years. During this time, they will be in no condition to grant loans or provide aid. Do not look forward to it. Just carry out what you can accomplish on your own. Afterwards, when conditions improve, help will have to be procured. In my opinion, a secret economic war and a secret monetary war has been in progress. It has now come out into the open. A cure must be found. They say that they will look for a redress in October. We can only pray that they will be successful in finding it. One cannot say what might happen if a cure cannot be found. I wish to tell you that the world economic conditions today are similar to those which led to the world economic crisis of 1932-33.

[...]

2.4.5 Nyi Pu Lay, Two Stories

Editors note: The author is the son of Ludu U Hla (1910-1982) and Daw Amah (1915-2008). The two stories shed some light on the changes in Mandalay after the great fire which destroyed great parts of the town in 1984.

2.4.5.1 The Python (1988)¹ Translation: Vicky Bowman²

The front door which was always kept closed, had been opened. Sitting in the front room, U Taw Daw was gazing vacantly out onto the road. The armchair in which he was reclining had once belonged to his father. Rather than cover it in nylon or cloth, his father had upholstered it in leather so that it would endure years of use. In the days when the cover had been new, the leather had been stiff and strong-smelling. His father had sat there throughout his many discussions concerning all shapes and sizes of beans and pulses with his broker friends. Here, his father had read his way through the newspapers of the day: *Ludu*, *Baho-si*, *Man-khit*. And here, he had riffled his way through the piles of banknotes bearing the signature of the then treasury secretary, Maung Kaung. In those days, they had house on stilts, painted with creosote. When he had lived in a grown up, story brick all he knew and built a new building, and it was in this home that U Taw Daw had learned about chick peas and pigeon peas and every variety of bean.

Nowadays, the armchair's leather cover had been worn as soft as velvet, and although the leather was not burnished or polished, the color shone out of its smooth surface, and the seams had all but sunk into the material. Contact with years of *longyis* had frayed some of the stitching, and the padding at the head of the chair was stained brown with coconut hair oil. The embroidery on the headrest was his father's own handiwork and the stitches were so regular that one might have thought they had been big wooden his father had pulled down the old house of the then sewn by machine.

The clock that his father had used to teach him how to tell to the east wall. To the time was paper was to the base with the red letters SUN in his father's hand, boxed off in blue pencil - it was a note to remind him to rewind the clock once a week. Although the face of the clock had begun to yellow, the black roman numerals still stood out clearly. Second by second, it still kept good time. Two of its hands told the hour, and a third pointed to the date: All three still rotated correctly and today the third hand was pointing to the fifth this day, a piece of attached still attached day of the month.

U Taw Daw sat gazing around him at the house, the compound, the furniture, all the household goods and kitchen utensils, down to the thermos flask and betel box-everything he saw had been left to him by his parents.

His thoughts then turned to his younger half brother, U Aung Toe, and his nephew, Maung Thant Zin. U Taw Daw's business had been sliding downhill for some time. Despite the fact that none of the three had any weakness for gambling or drinking or other forms of entertainment, they still had to dip into their savings from time to time, and, while dipping in on the one hand, they were still trying to earn on the other, but little by little, like an evaporating mothball, their bundle of savings was diminishing. Nowadays, they had to work hard just to repay the money that they had borrowed.

Business was not booming. He bought when the price was high but then all went awry and

¹ Source: Trevor Carolan (ed.) 2010 *Another Kind of Paradise. Short Stories from the New Asia-Pacific*. Boston, Cheng & Tsui Company, 193-201. – The author kindly permitted the reprint.

² Vicky Bowman is a British diplomat who served as her country's ambassador to Myanmar from 2002 – 2007 after having served at the embassy before from 1990 to 1993.

the price of his stockpiled beans didn't rise as it should have, so that when he sold his beans, he failed to make a profit. In fact, business was a disaster. Although he could bear one bad year, or even two, after three or four bad years on the run, he was in deep trouble. Just as a boat cast adrift must be chased by another boat, so the sums of money that had drained away had to be chased by more money. And once he discovered he was no longer able to send good money after bad, what was to be done? He and his wife had often discussed this very question. The first person to come up with advice had been Ko Nyi Aung, one of their relatives, who was a property broker. "Uncle" he had said, "I could easily get you eight hundred thousand kyats for this place of yours."

When U Taw Daw had heard this, he had flown into a rage and came close to beating him. Get out! Get out!" he had sputtered, his face bright red with fury. But it had only been a little misunderstanding between age and youth. Ko Nyi Aung had not taken offense, and had apologized to his uncle, saying that he had no idea that he was so attached to the place. Soon after, he was to be found coming and going in his regular manner, and he never missed coming with gifts for his elders on festival days.

Outside in the road, the bicycles steamed past. U Taw Daw's house was close to the petrol pump used by the buses plying the routes all around town, so that buses from all lines rumbled by outside. This was the business quarter of Mandalay, full of brokers and merchants, and full of ware-houses, bean-processing factories, oil mills, wheat mills, car-maintenance workshops, and video parlors. As he gazed out onto the road, U Taw Daw shivered and put on his jacket. The workers from the bean factory across the road had started to lay out a tarpaulin to spread out the beans. On the roof of the building, he noticed a row of pigeons sitting, gazing expectantly at the tarpaulin, waiting for their supper.

Through the fence-posts of the compound, U Taw Daw caught sight of his wife returning from the market, twenty minutes earlier than usual. From afar, Daw Daw Thwin tried to gauge her husband's expression. He had been gloomy for many days, but in the last two or three, his despondency had become more obvious.

Carrying her basket by her side, Daw Daw Thwin went straight in through the house to the kitchen at the back. Neither said a word to the other. Sitting in his armchair, U Taw Daw continued to stare out at the road. Usually, when Daw Daw Thwin returned from the markets, he would get up to open the gate of the compound for her, and help her with her shopping basket. What are you going to cook for me today, Ma Thwin?" he would ask, and she would perhaps reply, "Shall I cook us up some fish with some nice sour soup?" Or, if it had been a day when she bought pork: "I thought I'd cook you a bit of that pork curry that you like, dear." Whatever dish Daw Daw Thwin suggested, U Taw Daw invariably responded, "Mmm, that'd be just fine." But today, they behaved as if they were hardly on speaking terms, like a couple on the verge of divorce.

Suddenly his reverie was interrupted by the appearance of his young brother, U Aung Toe, smiling broadly and asking him how he was. "Uh, well enough-where's young Maung Thant Zin?" he replied.

"He's coming along later, he went off to buy a quid of betel." U Aung Toe took a look around the house. U Taw Daw inclined his head toward the brass level box and said, "There's plenty in there." Then he resumed his gazing at the road.

When he heard two honks of a car horn, his heart skipped a beat and he turned his head to look. But the car sped on past, without stopping in front of the house. Every time he heard a car horn, his stomach gave a lurch, and he would turn to look and check his watch.

Maung Thant Zin arrived, his quid of betel making his cheek bulge. "Uncle, what curry is Auntie Thwin cooking for us today?" he asked, his words rendered virtually unintelligible by the betel quid. "I'm sure you're going to give us something delicious today, aren't you?"

U Taw Daw tried to smile. "Of course, we're planning to," he said.

The conversation stopped. No one uttered a word. The two older men just stared glumly

into space, while young Maung Thant Zin silently studied the house. The photographs were still on the walls. The bed, the furniture - all were where they had always been. The room was as silent as a morgue, the most recent arrival having been infected by the miserable thoughts of the two older men. He stopped chewing his betel quid, and didn't even get up to spit out the juice.

A car pulled up in front of the house, the latest model, in bright red. The sound of the engine running could scarcely be heard. U Taw Daw's jaw sagged and he murmured, "I think this must be them." The other two turned to look. The driver of the car glanced up at U Taw Daw and another face appeared next to his. From the moment the car pulled up at the doorstep, U Taw Daw felt like a patient who had just been told that his cancer was confirmed. Ko Nyi Aung climbed out of the car first, while the other man raised the windows and gently closed the door on his side, quite unlike the slam Ko Nyi Aung had given on his side.

"Uncle! Uncle, I'm so sorry we're a little late," Ko Nyi Aung was calling. U Taw Daw said nothing, forcing a smile. In fact, they had arrived on the dot.

"It's my fault we're late, I'm afraid. I had some business to finish concerning a building in the Chan Aye Tha Zan Quarter" Ko Nyi Aung's voice echoed around the silent room and his booming tones seemed at odds with the surroundings.

Ko Nyi Aung quickly took stock of the situation, realizing everyone was putting on a brave face. Daw Daw Thwin came bustling out of the kitchen, asking "Maung Nyi Aung, did you eat before you came?" The others knew she was simply looking for words to fill the silence. Disconcerted, Ko Nyi Aung replied that he had just eaten. Thant Zin handed him a betel quid. The other man had brought in a hold all made of a rough, scaly fabric, the kind that some termed a snakeskin bag, others a Penang bag. As he watched the newcomer, U Taw Daw felt his breathing become even more constricted, as if a weight were bearing down on his chest. Again he forced a smile.

The men placed the bag on the bench and Nyi Aung carried out the introductions: "Uncle, Aunt, this is Ko Myo Khin." As U Taw Daw was wondering what to do next, the newcomer stretched out his hand toward him. Caught off guard by the unexpected gesture, U Taw Daw rose hastily from his armchair and grasped the proffered hand. When he touched it, he noticed how cold and clammy the palm was, as soft and supple as a girl's. U Aung Toe broke in, "Sit down, please, sit down in this chair here." "Yes sit down, do sit down, Ko Myo Khin," urged U Taw Daw.

The room again fell silent. Each smiled at the other, although they had not a thing to smile about. "It's all wrong that we should be silent like this," thought U Taw Daw, and he blurted out, "Ko Myo Khin, are you from these parts? Were you born in Mandalay?"

No sooner had he asked the question than he realized he had made a mistake. He felt embarrassed at the thought of appearing unduly nosy.

"He says he hasn't been in this city long, Uncle," interrupted Ko Nyi Aung. After a while, Daw Daw Thwin went back out into the kitchen again. The newcomer simply smiled.

From the moment Ko Myo Khin had stepped through the doorway, they had all been sizing him up. Quite young; in the prime of his life; maybe about forty or so. On his wrist he wore a gold watch, which was set off well by his yellow-toned skin. On his left ring finger was a bright green ring. He was smartly dressed, and U Taw Daw guessed that his clothes must be quite expensive.

Bundles of bank notes were plainly visible, protruding from the snake-skin bag, and U Taw Daw was thinking that once he took this money, the house and land would no longer be his. He and his wife would be forced to move out to the so-called new pastures in the suburbs that were more in keeping with their financial means.

Ko Myo Khin started to undo the string tying up the bag containing the money. U Taw Daw wondered if Ko Nyi Aung had mentioned that they wanted to stay on in the house for another two weeks. He had assumed that the buyer would not pay up in full until they actually

moved out, so would he hold some back? He took the handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the beads of sweat from his brow.

U Myo Khin tipped out the contents of the snakeskin bag onto the long table on which U Taw Daw's father had once displayed samples of his beans and pulses to the other brokers. Holding up the two corners of the bag, he shook it out until the last bits of dust came tumbling out with bundles of money. Three or four bundles fell off the edge of the table. Of all of the bundles of green, turquoise, crimson, and brown notes, the crimson notes predominated. If anyone asked, U Taw Daw would have had to admit that he had never handled so much money in his life.

His eyes glazed over and he stared straight ahead without seeing a thing. He was remembering the people to whom he owed everything, his parents, and was only brought back to earth by the voice of U Myo Khip. What was that the man had just said? U Taw Daw started and stared about him wildly.

Ko Nyi Aung repeated what the buyer had said. "Ko Myo Khin says he brought the money along without counting it properly just. He just bundled it up. So Uncle Aung Toe and Thant Zin should check it carefully. Whatever's mising, you're just to say. He'll make up the shortfall."

U Aung Toe put a little water in a teacup and put it down next to him so that he could wet his thumb and index finger as he counted the money. Thant Zin spat the betel juice into the spittoon. They started to count the money and Ko Nyi Aung made a move to close the front door so that people outside would not be able to see them counting. But Ko Myo Khin indicated with a wave of his hand that it should be left open.

Ko Myo Khin was apparently suffering none of the agonies being endured by U Taw Daw; he was sitting calmly on the wooden chair, and far from inspecting the rear of the house, he did not even bother to inspect the immediate interior. This was the just time he had stepped across the threshold; yet here he was, behaving more like a man who had just come home to his own hearth than someone buying a house.

U Aung Toe and his son were counting the money deliberately, placing the bundles of money to one side after each had been counted. U Taw Daw sat wondering if it would help any if he took part in the counting of the money rather than just looking on. He knew that in his present state of mind it would be easy to make a mistake. But he felt a need to assuage his misery by some methodical counting. He brooded over the merits of joining in and really lifted his eyes, which had been glued to the floor. He had come to a decision.

He would count the money. That way, the whole business would be over more quickly. Ko Myo Khin and Ko Aung Toe and everyone else would leave the sooner, and he would be left in peace.

The first thing he did was to search for a bundle of notes stapled together by the bank. But he failed to find a single one. As he reached for a bundle, Ko Nyi Aung immediately glanced across at his uncle in surprise, as if to say that this was no way for his uncle to behave. U Taw Daw, who could not bear to be on the receiving end of such a look, pretended not to notice. His hands were trembling so much that it was only with concentrated effort that he succeeded in untying the bundle and started to count ten-kyat notes. Holding down the bundle with the heel of his left hand, he turned the notes over one by one with his right index finger as if his fingers were climbing stairs step by step. This was the method that his father had taught him. Carefully he counted the thousand notes and found neither a note short nor a note too many. U Taw Daw picked out another bundle, and as he counted, he could feel Ko Nyi Aung's eyes upon him. Ko Myo Khin stood up and wandered out to the car, as if the counting of the money had nothing to do with him whatsoever, as if he knew without a shadow of doubt that the counters were not going to try and pull a fast one. He did not even look back over his shoulder. U Taw Daw wanted to call across to his brother and nephew to make sure that they counted correctly, but in Ko Myo Khin's absence, perhaps it was better to say nothing so that

any misunderstanding could be avoided.

Ko Myo Khin walked back to the house carrying a gold cigarette case that he had left in the car. U Taw Daw realized with embarrassment that he had neglected to offer his guests anything to smoke - although, on reflection, Ko Myo Khin did not strike him as the sort who would accept the offer of a cheroot. Meanwhile, the bundle he was counting only seemed to contain ninety-eight notes. He scratched his head and then began counting again very slowly from the beginning. As he counted, he was praying that there would not be any missing after all. If there really was a shortfall, what was he to do? Should he mention it? U Aung Toe and his son had been counting for some time, but he hadn't heard them say that they had found any shortfall. U Taw Daw had previously been wetting his fingers from U Aung Toe's teacup; but now he counted this bundle again, using his own spit.

He stopped at nine and heaved a huge sigh of relief, not bothering to count the last note which remained under his finger. He fished out his handkerchief from his pocket and took off his jacket. Ko Nyi Aung looked the other way and lit up a cigarette offered to him by Ko Myo Khin.

As they counted the money, the seconds ticked by and started to mount. By now they had counted about a quarter of Ko Myo Khin's pile of money and so far not one of them had said that a bundle was short.

Next, U Taw Daw picked up a bundle of forty-five-kyat notes, while Ko Myo Khin picked up the newspaper and started to read, Ko Nyi Aung inhaled his cigarette with a long, drawn out breath.

U Taw Daw had collated the bundle carefully. One forty-five-kyat note was missing. This time there was no mistake. One forty-five-kyat note, out of a pile of over a million. It would be embarrassing to mention it. He held the bundle in his hand and wondered what he should do. "It had to be my bundle, didn't it?" he thought to himself and looked over to Thant Zin, who was counting his bundle. "There's one short," he whispered and held up a single finger as he passed over the bundle. The finger shook imperceptibly. Ko Myo Khin lowered his newspaper and looked up.

Almost unable to contain himself, U Taw Daw followed Thant Zin's every movement and counted along with him under his breath, Thant Zin was clearly a faster and more accurate counter than himself. The bundle under his fingers passed from thick to thin. U Taw Daw was on the edge of his seat asking "How many? How many?" like an accused man waiting for the sentence to be passed down. He and Thant Zin arrived simultaneously at the same figure. Thant Zin pushed the incomplete bundle across to Ko Myo Khin saying, saying, "Here, you count it too," but the latter simply smiled and slowly shook his head. Reaching into a bundle of money he was keeping separate, he pulled out a forty-five-kyat note and handed it to Thant Zin.

As the pile of counted notes grew, so did U Taw Daw feel his strength ebbing away. U Aung Toe said that his bundle was two notes short. Thant Zin made as if to count it again to be sure, but Ko Myo Khin again just smiled, and, saying something which U Aung Toe could not understand, gestured with the palm of his hand that it would not be necessary to recount it and took out two fifteen-kyat notes. He appeared not to want to waste any time. He lit up a cigarette and returned to reading the newspaper, looking like a man without a care in the world, quite unruffled, more like an automaton than a human being.

All that could be heard was the sound of the old clock ticking and the quiet rustle of notes. U Taw Daw finished a bundle and decided that he could not count another note. Leaning back in the armchair he looked long and hard at (his man, Ko Myo Khin, who had come to buy his house for eleven lakhs when four months ago it had only been valued at eight. Ko Myo Khin was still perusing the newspaper, his lips moving as he read as if he was spelling out each line word by word.

"Did Maung Nyi Aung mention that we would like to stay on here another two weeks? "

asked U Taw Daw.

The money counters shopped with their fingers in midair. Speaking in the same slow manner as he had been perusing the newspaper, Ko Myo Khin said something that none of them understood except Ko Nyi Aung, who repeated it for their benefit: "If you want to stay on another two Geeks, you can stay. I will still give you the money now in full. But please make sure that you move out on the day you say you will."

2.4.5.2 Nyi Pu Lay, Yadanabon - Golden Mandalay¹

Translation:

"Thu Daw (white-robed acolyte)."

"Hey. Thu Daw." The latter call sounded angry and was harsher than the first.

"Hpa Yar." I had to answer quickly.

"Be quick about it! Every morning we have to wait for you. It's getting late."

The monks who were to go around the town to accept offerings of food were already in a line under the neem tree in front of the monastery. Thu Nanda (hadn't called me and) was letting me get into trouble. I got this scolding because he went there and made the monks know that he was ready and waiting. I carefully wrapped the garment around me and looked for my constant companion, the triangular brass gong and the small club with which to hit it. I found only the small club and not the brass gong. Had the students been playing with it last night and did not leave it back at its usual place? Or was Thu Nanda trying to get me into trouble? When I carefully rummaged for it, I found it under the reed mat. Someone must have done this and I think it was done by Thu Nanda. He would often get me into trouble like this.

It was just like any other day. When I got there under the neem tree, the monks had already tucked one end of their robe neatly about the wrist, had the sling for carrying the food bowl across their shoulders and were falling in a line according to the seniority of their monkhood. The Sayadaw did not say anything but gave a meaningful look. The look had a lot of meanings. 'Take a look at the cane.' 'You lack diligence.' 'If you are late in the coming days you will be punished.' It was a reproving look. The monks looked pleased at my being scolded and given the reproving look. Some of the monks smiled. The acolyte Thu Nanda smiled with much satisfaction. A moment later, the Sayadaw said, 'Ay, Thu Daw, let's go.' The elder monk said it without guile but I thought there was a hint of sarcasm. The gentle breeze at dawn in the month of Nayon (June) was scampering hither and thither. It had carried the chimes of the clock from the tower of Ma Soe Yein monastery declaring that it was five in the morning. The chiming ended when we reached the north gate of the monastery. In that case we were not late. It was as usual. We were on time and yet

I was about to hit the brass gong as we left the north gate when Thu Nanda whispered, 'Strike the brass gong.' There was no need to say that. I know he was deliberately trying to appear better than me. I abruptly turned my head back and looked daggers at him. I hit the brass gong hard out of spite and the sound rang through the Aung Duwon ward. I chalked up a grievance against Thu Nanda. I did not want to report that he had been reading novels and cartoons behind their back. Had I reported that to the monks he would surely be put on the bus to Myingyan and sent back to his village.

Aung Duwon ward was largely made up of working class people and there were mostly huts and wooden houses. There were two small brick houses and the owners did not usually offer cooked rice or some other food. I can't tell where they go to offer alms. Oh, the wife of the

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healer of the Arogyan traditional medicine clinic at the south end of the street, Daw Sein Oo is offering cooked rice. Yes. Today's Tuesday. She was born on a Tuesday. The goldsmith also offered cooked rice. Only these two families in Aung Duwon ward offered cooked rice today. Daw Sein Oo, the wife of the healer, as usual, offered a large scoop of cooked rice for me. Some people did not take us into account.

Back at the monastery, we get to eat at the same table but I sometimes yearn to carry the deep basket with the offered food like Thu Nanda. Who would want to be always hitting the brass gong? The brass gong is quite light and carrying the deep basket can make the muscles stiff and the hands numb with fatigue and that it gets worse as time passes. But the dogs in the wards bark at me, who is at the front hitting the brass gong, don't they? The monk Oo Zin Pyone Nyo said that the one who sounds the brass gong could become a celestial being with a pleasant voice in his next existence. It would not be bad if it really turned out like what he said.

We passed Aung Duwon ward and reached the banana plantation. People from this place do not usually offer cooked rice much. They only offer it once in a while. The elderly man from the central plot is peculiar. In a whole year, he would offer once, on a day in July; you do not need to look at the calendar, the whole country would feel deep sorrow on that day. The cooked rice from the fourth garden was a little red in colour. Up to now, the small cups with lids for holding dish of meat or vegetables offered to the monks are still mostly empty or only partly filled.

We passed the banana plantation and halted for a while at the North West corner of Mya Taung monastery. Monks who had collected food from donors in Da Huttaw, Shan Waing and Monti Su wards that are to the east of our monastery would join us here and accompany us into the city to accept food offerings. The monks who came with us but who were going to collect food offerings from donors in Daewon and Gaw Wein would leave us at this point and go west.

A while later, the Sayadaw told me to tap the triangular brass gong. It was the sign to continue going around collecting offerings of food.

We now have a line of nearly 25 monks. I was at the front; behind me was the acolyte Thu Nanda, behind him was the Sayadaw, the monks followed in a line according to the seniority of monkhood; at the end of the line were the novices Koyin Bhaddiya, Koyin Zawtika, Shin Paduma etc.

In the large Ma Lun ward we went weaving in and out of the various sectors. It was a ward where merchants lived. It was a ward totally made up of Burmese Buddhists. The elderly matron from the broker's sales centre at the corner of the street regularly offers food. She was elderly and I had to strike the brass gong louder and at shorter intervals because she was a little hard of hearing. The cooked rice she offered was white, steaming and fragrant, too.

The first dish to go into the small cups with the lids was beans that had been boiled and fried. It was offered by the wife of the owner of the car workshop. The beans were cooked to a bright red colour. But too little oil was used.

The people from the long-distance bus terminal offered fritters made of split yellow peas. I remembered that there were a lot of those fritters in the monks' bowls on the 8th waning day of Tabaung (March). It was the anniversary of the day that a fire broke out in the centre of Mandalay. I think these offerings were made to ward off disasters. The people from the house with the 'beware of the dog' notice at the south end of Ma Lun ginger sector offered boiled garden peas. The boiled garden peas had only a wee amount of cooking oil. After that, the old woman who sold pickled tea and a variety of fried beans and offered cooked rice and a dish of

curry every day, today offered a dish of bitter gourd. This is a favourite of the Sayadaw. They say bitter food is good for elderly people, don't they?

After that we got some cooked rice that had a tinge of red. The people at the corner of 33rd Street who bored a deep well and sold water also offered cooked rice and a dish of curry every day. Today she offered a dish of fritters of split yellow peas. This old woman seems to like fried crickets. When these are in season she would often offer fried crickets as a dish. The female crickets would be laden with eggs. They would be fried with ginger and garlic. That would be the favourite of Bhaddiya and me.

Before the fire mentioned just then, we got a lot of cooked rice and many dishes of meat and vegetables. Many of our donors lost their houses in the fire. Now, only some of them remain; some have moved to more favourable places. After the fire, some donors no longer offered food daily; they would offer only when they had the opportunity. There were new donors but there were not as many as before. The fire had taken away the heart of Mandalay. It was a huge fire. Mandalay is said to have a new heart but it has not settled yet. The injury was not a small one. The people had to struggle their way up from the ashes. I know that was why they could not offer food to the monks yet. Otherwise, they would, you know. They are Myanmar, always ready to give away in charity.

Some people 'rose' higher after the fire. Those who previously had a small brick building now have a two-storeyed or three-storeyed brick building; some who had a two-storeyed building now have 3-4-storeyed buildings. But these were the minority. Some are newcomers. We have not yet encountered them with much frequency to recognize them yet.

The man who usually offered a dish of roselle, the one Thu Nanda made a lampoon against, was unable to build a new house. There was a notice with the words 'to enquire at Nyunt Wai's barber shop, 32nd Street' fixed to a stake driven into the ground of his plot. It looks as if he's going to have to sell it.

The old woman who used to offer a dish of pork in thick brown sauce made of horse gram on days of religious significance took advance payment for hiring a house from the tenant and built a small two-storeyed brick house. It hasn't even been painted yet. She and her family live upstairs and the tenant has opened a shop and hires out books and cassettes. Many are trying to get on their feet again in this way.

Once past Bo Gyoke Street, we got to the ward with the new heart_ new people and or new houses. After crossing Bo Gyoke Street, a person offered a dish of pumpkin. Another one offered only cooked rice. Then a short woman with yellow skin who recently opened a guest house offered fried pork sausages that were cut into pieces about two finger joints in length. I don't know how much she offered to each monk. I don't know if she also offered some for Thu Nanda and me. The person from the ice factory offered only cooked rice. The old lady with gold teeth, from the two-storeyed brick building that hasn't been completed yet, offered deep-fried dough sticks. The big black dog behind the iron door bared its teeth. In the past, there had been a small wooden house here. Whenever there is an offering of deep-fried dough sticks, I would see the tray of deep-fried dough sticks that nobody touched lying on the table in the dining hall. Sometimes the heap of deep-fried dough sticks would be touching the underside of the top of the mesh cover made of thin bamboo strips. The elder monk would give these to guests or visiting monks. They did not like them much. We turned left after about a furlong. The man from the shop that sold lottery tickets offered some fried bean curd. After that, a fat elderly man offered cooked rice. He was not one of those who we meet with any frequency. He probably came out from between the yards. There are various reasons for offering food. Some hope for the attainment of Nirvana; others offered it because it was their birthday; some did so in keeping with an astrologer's advice to avert impending misfortune and some offered food in dedication to the dear departed or for those in a difficult situation

etc. The woman from the beauty parlour offered fritters made of split yellow peas. By looking at the way she's holding two fritters in her hand, I think she's offering two to each monk. The person from the guest house diagonally across the street offered deep-fried dough sticks. I slowly turned my head back and saw that Thu Nanda too, looked unhappy like me and he made just a small grimace so that the woman with the narrow eye slits who offered them would not notice it. From there we went north for about a furlong. When we reached 29th Street, we went west towards Wahdan and walked back towards the monastery.

On the way back someone offered cooked rice; another offered what looked like shrimp paste curry or tamarind curry that I could not tell because the dish had oil covering the top of it. Then there were fritters made of split yellow peas. The slit-eyed woman from the shop that sold electrical goods again offered deep-fried dough sticks. When we got a little distance from that house Thu Nanda whispered something to me that I didn't hear because of the sound of the triangular brass gong. When I turned back to enquire, Thu Nanda gave a solemn look as though as if he hadn't said anything. I thought it was not important and decided to ask him only after we got back to the monastery.

On the way back to the monastery, we were offered quite a lot of cooked rice and curry.

In the dining hall, the Sayadaw and the elder monks would sit at the round table at the east end. The other monks would be seated at the two tables to the west of the first table. The novices would sit at one table in the north end and another in the south end of the hall.

In our monastery they all have their meals together like this. There is discipline at meal times and everything is quiet. The acolytes and the students wait on the Sayadaw and monks while they are having their meals.

We acolytes and the students have our meals after the Sayadaw and the monks have had their meals. The Sayadaw had finished his meal and was having green tea and dessert when he called Thu Nanda.

I was a little distance away and didn't hear all of what he said.

'.....'

'.....'

'It was because I forgot, Hpa Yar (your reverence)'

'How could you forget that? The next time you speak while on the round accepting offerings of food, you'll get the cane.'

The Sayadaw always reminded us to walk with composure while going around town accepting offerings of food. This would be an opportune time to inform the Sayadaw that Thu Nanda had been reading novels and cartoons and expedite his downfall.

Thu Nanda remained motionless and cast down his eyes.

It was evident from his expression that he had done something wrong.

'Do you think I didn't hear what you said?' The Sayadaw's voice was harsher. The Sayadaw scolded me this morning. It was Thu Nanda's turn this afternoon. I did not even have to expedite his downfall.

'If I hear something like this again, you'll be given some severe punishment.'

'Yes, yes, Hpa Yar.'

'Hpa Yar, what did Thu Daw say?' interrupted the monk, Oo Zin Pyone Nyo, with a question.

"What did you say when the deep-fried dough sticks were offered?"

Thu Nanda looked very frightened. He couldn't find his voice for some time.

'Yes. Yes, I said it would not be long before the acolyte would get the more deep-fried dough sticks the longer he lost his bearings.'

(This was an allusion to the saying that a nun gets more rice if she lost her bearings.)

We laughed when we heard his words. Dhaddiya and Chet Phaung laughed out loudly. His words prompted me to look at the mesh cover by the shelf for the crockery. There was some ground for Thu Nanda saying so. There were a lot of 'the things Thu Nanda referred to'. But the monks did not even smile, let alone laugh, at this. I can't understand why the words as laughable as a joke for us, didn't make them smile. The elders are far-sighted, aren't they?

Why didn't they laugh or smile? I'll have to ask the monks later.

2.5 The SLORC/SPDC-Period

Editor's note: Some features characterizing the perception of economics in the period after the coup of September 1988 are presented in chapter 1. Some others will follow in chapter 3. Here, just two documents will be reproduced. The first document is SLORC's programmatic Announcement 1/88. It hinted at the shift in economics from a socialist system to a more "private" one. - The second text shows how economic affairs were perceived by a writer commenting on the Visit Myanmar Year of 1996. The journal "Myanmar Dana" dealt with economic issues. Because of the censorship, the editor asked writers to convey some "hidden meanings" to the readers by means of texts that did seemed to deal with cultural matters only.

2.5.1 SLORC Announcement 1/88

Announcement No. 1/88 of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, 18 September 1988

1) In order to effect a timely halt to the deteriorating conditions on all sides all over the country and for the sake of the interests of the people, the Defence Forces have assumed all power in the state with effect from today so as to carry out the following tasks immediately:

- a. to restore law, order, peace and tranquillity;
- b. to provide security and to facilitate transport and communications;
- c. for this organization to do the utmost to ease the people's food, clothing, and shelter needs, and to render as much help as possible to the cooperatives and the private concerns;
- d. to stage democratic multiparty general elections after fulfilling all the above-stated responsibilities.

2) The present Elections Commission for Holding Democratic Multiparty Elections will continue to exist for the successful holding of multiparty general elections.

3) In order to be ready for the multiparty general elections, all parties and organizations which will accept and practice genuine democracy can make preparations and form parties beginning now.

4) All presently active organizations, individuals, monks, and all the people are requested to render their assistance.

Signed: General Saw Maung, Chairman of the SLORC.

2.5.2 Maung Khaing Mar, Taking a Look Back at Bagan

Translation: Saw Hlaing Bwa

Photo – Myint Soe (Emperor)

Myanmar Dana, February, 1996

Behind the curtain of the grandeur of the old Bagan city, one can have the feeling that sounds to whisper the blissfulness, sadness and melancholy. Though it still reveals the course of history, it is up to the present generation to take the lesson and repent.

Myo Khin (Thin Padauk)
“Sound of the Bell from Bagan Temple”
Tankyi Series 5
1995

As the stain caused by water can be cleansed only by water, it is only by the mind that one can cleanse the stain caused by the mind. In order to do so, I took a camera, making friend with a painter artist, and viewing the beauty of Bagan. It is the Bagan with an abundance of Buddha cultural background, being well known as Thri Anurudha, the creation of Anurudha (Anawrahta); the Bagan with the meditation centers of Badanta Thomabuddhi, which provide a clear mind, true knowledge and help to see things as they really are without confusion with the illusive, deceptive unreality; the Bagan renovated in the national spirit and decorated with the unquenched lighting in order to entice the spirit and pocket of international visitors for the up boosting of dollars; Oh, it is the Bagan really with all the blessedness. Because of being an historic artistic glorious center, a zone of archaic buildings, a zone of research work, and a zone of preservation are erected for the prevention of the beauty of Bagan with 27970 square acres not to lay in ruin forever. Once systematically and neatly projected, Bagan is really beautiful. How much Anawrahta and Kyanzitha would be excited if they could have a chance to visit the Visit Myanmar Year to see the modern day Bagan.

Has a Myanmar with a reflective mind of the past drama of Bagan ever done for the Bagan Sasana not to wither down? Does one while passing by the Arindama boat harbor on the bank of Irrawaddy and coming to a view of “Isipañña Devaguru temple,” a meditation center of the old Bagan, has ever washed away the Kilesa worry and personally invested a day meal in obeying and responding to the ring of the bell from the temple? Have you ever been learn from the Dharma of a Sasana pilgrim “Badanta Thomabuddhi” who is the heart of old Bagan, who taught that if the Bagan Sasana has to be renewed again, it would be only natural that the Bagan Sanghas have sufficient meals and enough robes? With never failing alertness, and

regardless of the demand of the flesh, they have to rightly practice their Sangha vinaya by keeping a well-timed begging for meal, well-timed taking of bath, well-timed having a meal, shaving, resting and meditating the Buddha attributes. Have you ever closely seen a holy man, the monk of Tankyi hill, who established an insight meditation center in order to keep the mind awakened? While in a deep thought of such goodness and hence being in the compound of a temple, there comes into my mind an image ...

Oh, there is an image of Shin Araham of old Bagan. Oh, my darling, what a venerable image comes with a wonderful delighting feeling of imaginary, in an absolutely silent peaceful temple of serenity. With a clear mind, I have realized that the true and incomparable grateful person for the Burmese is really the saint Shin Araham. It was Shin Araham who sowed the seed of Buddha culture in the soil of Bagan. It is Shin Araham who had served as a missionary for the propagation and expansion of Theravada Sasana all along the reign of King Anawrahta, Saw Loo, Kyanzitha and up to Alaungphaya. Regardless of all the pluralism, and the multitude of things to be proud of in the present age, it is because of the gratefulness of Shin Araham, who made his way from Thaton to Bagan, and because of whose creative innovated efforts with the farsighted mind into the future, the marvelous development of the Bagan temples, pagodas, Stupas, religious buildings and art remains forever the object of veneration and study in the heart of the Burmese people. Oh, my darling, what I have in view is the “Isipaṇṇa Devaguru temple,” located on the bank of Irrawaddy River. It has come clear to my mind that this is indeed the spirit of the Bagan people, the spirit of the 20th century Bagan beauty who had come to be enlightened, because of the old 11th century spirit of Shin Araham.

In this short vicious circle of Samsara, what could be more important other than the Visit Myanmar Year that invites international tourism in order that the world may come to a friendly relation with Myanmar, the world may come to be in mutual understanding with Myanmar, for the development of Myanmar-global friendship and cooperation for mutual benefit. Is there anything other than the human relation that does not neglect pluralism that could achieve the goal in this present age? This is no more the age in which one frantically comes in with a camera, a package of condom, with a ragged jean, a bottle of whisky, a cartoon of cigarettes, in order to establish mutual acceptance and right relationship between the nations. Just as you see now that all the international tourists are provided with foreign exchange currency (FEC), the life of our country, in order to use within the country. Since one unit of FEC is set to be equivalent with US one dollar, it is convenient also for the tourists to

travel and look around as long as they can. The more they spend it is the more of our enjoyment. The only thing is that we need to lock our immature guys in the village so to guard against their bad heritage and bad spirit not to permeate in us. We have indeed so many things to be proud of, places to visit ... Strand hotel ... President hotel ... Myatyeiknyo hotel ... December hotel ... Thiripyitsaya hotel ... Chaung Tha hotel ... Do you want to go to Narawat and Summit park view hotels which are especially endowed with foreign investments? There are also Central Hotel, Kandawgyi hotel, Thahtaygyun hotel (you can feel them from a far if you want), Sedona Hotel, Traders Hotel, Royal Lake and Sophie Hotel will also be emerged not too far in the future. We have also to be proud of for places to visit like Pyin Oo Lwin and Inn Lay, Kalaywa and Haka, Myitkyina and Putao, Tachilake and Lashio, Kyaikhtiyo and Maulamyaing, Loikaw and Kawthaung, Chaungtha and Mawtinsoon, Myeik isles and Tavoy, Pa'an from Karen State, all are super (as I have heard about what others are saying). Now, if I have to say with my clear mind about the bliss I feel as a golden portrait of art in the soft morning shine of the sun in the direction where I am treading, it is the sound of the dawn bell ringing in the compound of "Isipañña Devaguru temple," and the best dharma view of "Tankyi Hill Holy Tooth Pagoda" from a far over the other westerly side of Irrawaddy River.

Irrawaddy harbor, with hundred harsh summer soul, is such that conquers the enemy without surrendering. Likely to meditating on the philosophy of "we are the bank," there in the westerly bank is located the Tankyi Hill, there on top of the high land is Boo pagoda, and just up there is the floating hotel known as Irrawaddy Golden Princess. This group of people is travelling to and fro as their daily life; some using hired boat, some on ferry boat, some by motorized boat. Then there are also those who are relaxing on the bank of the river, eating lunch, some enter into the Moukhinkha (a Burmese traditional food for breakfast) shop, some are boarding, some are enjoying their traditional food ... Oh darling, I can't even explain it to you about the scene of the Bagan market place in which I am now standing.

"There is a small piece of voice comes out of a small shop but with deep thought. I really want you to hear it my darling, I really want you see it closely by yourself, I really remember you my darling. If interpreted like this, I think you can know the truth on what she has said and the thought she has presented. When thinking what the weakness of Bagan is, it is ample of foreign food that is never adequate to meet the demand. A foreigner then asked, do you have here only the Chinese food. It is really bitter to hear about it. I could not bear it any longer. With all the language I have learned, I replied that in our Burmese culture, we have

the royal dishes, we have the dishes for the visitors as well, and we have the dishes on a daily basis meal. There was a time when the King call “Chinese-run” (Tayoke Pyay Min) ruled Bagan, people had to present him three hundred dishes daily. What kind of dishes do you want? As I daringly ask him like this, he got caught up. Oh, I know that they do not like something hot. And they are very inquisitive and used to bargain in a very detail. I know their mentality so that they could not be so loquacious. Actually, it does not depend on whether they are European or Asian, anyone who wants to be rude is rude, and anyone who wants to be bullied is bullying. Come with different history and culture, we can simply forgive them from our side. But being overcome with genuine altruism, it is really painful to suffer from the insult given by our fellow Burmese. Being met the municipal tax and struggling to survive on a daily basis in our own ways for not to fall into bankrupts, we are suffering from the side-look by the floating hotel over there. I with my small shop will never let the dignity of our people down. Those all who ever pass by this Irrawaddy bank know it very well. Considering the main problem, rather than letting the foreigners’ mouth got hot by the Burmese curries, we have on our side to amend as well to not let them got hot by misperception over the Burmese social life. Since we know what they like, we should not cover-up our weaknesses. In this 1996 Visit Myanmar Year, we too want to sell the variety of our Burmese food and curries. But, believe it or not, in this Bagan, because of the shortage of plates, we can open only a small shop. Who may want to loss? But since everything is very expensive in these days in order to be modernized, we still have to rely only on the relative visitors and the pilgrims and struggle hard just not to be broken down for the survival of our family.”

I can only gaze back at Bagan which is left behind me with the vast water of Irrawaddy and its harbor.

Before coming back from Bagan, feeling the historic buildings, I have trod several time for worship at the three pagoda ... Sambula ... Culamani ... Manuha ... Apeyadana ... Nagayon ... Shwesikhon ... Gubyawkyi ... Htilominlo ... Shwesandaw ... Arnanda ... Sandawkya ... Kyansitha U Min ... Shinpinthalyaung ... Nat-hlaungkyaung ... Kantawpalin ... Kyaukgu U Min ... Nanphaya ... Tharapa Gate. It is true that I have been to Bagan for several times, but I always look back at Bagan, whenever I look back, I feel something confuse in my heart. Irrawaddy knows this, Anawratha knows this, Kyanzitha knows this, Razakuma knows this, and may you also know this ... Oh my darling.

Maung Khaing Mar

2.5.3 Nay Lin, Articles in Myanmar Dhana Magazine featuring economic views

Translation: Ye Nyunt

This paper deals with articles in a series of the “Myanmar Dhana” monthly magazine which feature various economic views in the 1990s, which was a period of transition in which Myanmar social life, political situations and economic patterns evolved. In other words, it was a period in which socialism was abolished and people began to embark on a new political system. During that period, the socio-economic life of the people took on various forms, and people were awakened to international economic situations. It was also a period in which businesses were set to transform into e-economics, based on industrial and computer technologies.

Hence, the issues of Myanmar Dhana that appeared in the 1990s reflect a new outlook on the economy, as different from the socialist economy, business enterprises that appeared in response to the times and new industrial technologies and techniques prevailing during the period.

State-owned and private businesses

In the first instance, Tekkatho Ne Win, in his article “State-owned and private business,” stressed the greater success achieved by private enterprises in the public sector, comparing it with businesses in various other countries. The author mentions that state-owned businesses were transferred to the private sector beginning in the years following 1980. It also mentions that the practice of releasing businesses from the government control was common not only in industrialized countries but also in developing, Third World and communist countries.

The author gives instances of success stories of private businesses. In Britain, Jaguar Motor Company was nationalized in 1975. In 1979, its production declined, and a loss of 1,000,000 pounds incurred. Beginning in 1984, its shares were sold out to private businessmen, and gradually Jaguar fell into the hands of the businessmen. Since then, the business reared its head again.

Argentina sold the state-owned oil-drilling businesses to foreign companies in 1986. Mexico, too, began selling 85 public companies in 1985, and declared that it would also sell the remaining 66 companies to the private businessmen.

In the Far Eastern part of the world, Japan transferred telecommunication and rail transport businesses to the private sector. Sri Lanka handed its passenger transport business over to the private bus companies. Overall, more than 50 countries of the world had come to accelerate privatization. These countries included not only industrialized capitalist nations but also socialist and communist nations. For instance, in 1986, the Soviet Union tentatively transferred some of the cultivation work and restaurant businesses. In the meantime, the Chinese communist government started selling housing complexes to the private individuals.

The “white elephant” view

The genuine cause of transferring government businesses to the private businessmen is the fact that people had come to realize that the public businesses were nothing more than a “white royal elephant,” which actually brought no benefits to the people. This was dubbed by the Myanmar author as the “white elephant” view. Adam Smith’s economic study team of London remarked: “Despite the Karl Marx’s view that production should be in the hands of workers, it is only the free market and the government that encourages the private sector could implement his expectations.” Thus, author Tekkatho New Win points out the successes achieved by the private sector in the 1990s.

The Art of Advertising

Author Khin Maung Than (Psychology), in his article “The art of advertising,” deals with the changes in the economy along with the crucial role of advertising. The author says just as the economic systems changed from socialism to marketism, sales of commodities took on different modes. Just as sales became competitive, businesses came to rely on advertising to make their products as widely known as possible. With advanced technology, advertising was upgraded from print media (newspapers, journals and magazines) to electronic media (television and digital-screen billboards). The author suggests choosing the most effective method in popularizing one’s products.

The author has a guess that some traces of the ideas of advertising might have been identified with the earlier barter system.

In conclusion, the author thinks of two points connected in effectiveness with advertising (1) increase in the number of the readers of newspapers, journals and magazines; and (2) smooth transportation, which will bring commodities easily to far areas .

Mini-market

Author Moe Myint Aung, in his article “Mini-market,” presents a sketch of the Myanmar economy in which the scales patterns of products had changed. It is about the mini-markets or small stores of private businessmen that have taken the place of government’s department stores. Mini-markets mushrooming in cities have made people in convenient in obtaining what they want.

The author explains:

In fact, a mini-market is a small store of assorted products laid out attractively. Asian countries coined a new word “mini-market” to refer to these small stores. It has been more than a decade since mini-markets emerged in developed Asian countries.

In Myanmar, mini-markets emerged since before 1980. The first ever mini-market in Myanmar is U Tin Kyi’s “Kyi Myanmar” store on Pansodan Street. However, the first store that assumed the word “mini-market” was “Sein Gayhar”. The author details lay-out designs of the products, organizational set-up, management of accounts and publicizing of the products. He points out some benefits for the customers such as all-time availabilities, convenient locations of the mini-markets. As the Myanmar market opened to the outside, products from all parts of the world have come into the country. These foreign products occupy the shelves not only of mini-markets but also department stores, shopping centres and shopping malls. The author believes that emergence of these modern markets would help stabilize the prices of commodities.

Interesting facts about banking

Another article carried by the Myanmar Dhana Business magazine is “Interesting facts about Banking” compiled by Dr. Aye Lwin. The article deals with the nature of banking, the history of Myanmar banking industry, and world’s banking industry.

The author explains that banking is an industry that provides monetary or financial services such as keeping and augmenting the deposits, issuing cheques, transferring money, and rendering assurances for various transactions. He also writes various kinds of banks—State-owned bank, cooperatives bank, joint venture bank, conglomerate bank, private bank, etc.

The history of banking dates back to more than 2000 BC of Babylon era when, though not yet endowed with full characteristics of modern banking, Babylonians undertook keeping

deposits, giving out loans, and fixing the values of gold, silver and other metals (use value) and exchange value.

In China, Shanxi banks existed beginning from 600 BC. They undertook remitting money from one province to another, collecting 3% of the remittance as service fee. The author mentions the banking practice beginning from Greek and Roman eras up to the development into modern banking industry in Italy, England and America.

In Myanmar, in the author's view, the nature of banking could be traced back to the Pyu era when the Pyu had relations with China. He based his speculation on the coins of Pyu era. But modern banking appeared only under the British rule. The banks during the colonial era benefitted the British government. There was the fair progress of the financial services in the post-independence period under the AFPFL government. Later in the BSPP era, banking industry was controlled by the government which imposed strict rules and collected high service fees. Hence, people turned to a private money-transferring business, known in Myanmar as "hondi" system. In other words, financial black markets emerged.

In the last part, the author emphasizes the importance of the banking services, which need to satisfy the requirements of clients pointing out the fact that banks are to work for the brisk circulation of money, further progress themselves in the interests of the State or individuals. Without proper mechanism, the banking industry may bring negative impacts on the society or individuals. Especially, banking industry plays a crucial role in this market-oriented age, he concludes.

If you intend to buy a watch ...

Among the articles carried in the *Myanmah Dhana Business Magazine* are ones that advise people ways to choose correctly the products they wish to buy and avoid falling into the tricks of rapacious persons. For example, the article "If you intend to buy a watch ...", authored by Maung Sein New, presents facts about watches, in vogue on the market in the 1990s, such as Seiko, Citizen, Casio, etc and winding watches from China and Hong Kong and their prices so that buyers would know correct prices and differentiate between the genuine and imitated products. He also explains significant points to enable the buyers to differentiate genuine and the imitation, and frauds of some watch shops.

Transformation of Mandalay

Zin Thant, in his article "Transformation of Mandalay", examines the fresh sketches in socio-economic conditions of Mandalay. Residents of Mandalay rely more on bicycles than motor-cars. As its streets are mostly busy with bicycles, it is often referred to as "the Bicycle City". Bicycles are used to not only for normal travel but also for business. Some people are seen carry big loads on the pillion, to distribute goods such as cheroots, snacks to small shops. Wholesales are making large profits from such form of distribution. Thus, the writers reveals a pattern of the distribution of goods in compliance with the prevailing local transport mode.

The author also throws light on the sugar industry in Mandalay. Sugar is usually produced from cottage industry which existed more in the earlier eras when the producers applied traditional methods in producing sugar on commercial scales. In the period following 1988, the businessmen in Mandalay began using large sugar mills, and productivity has become higher, enabling them to distribute not only in Upper Myanmar but also to lower Myanmar and export to Bangladesh. When sugarcane season gives out, they continue to refine toddy-palm sugar. Thus, sugar production runs continuously throughout the year. If a person invests about 2 millions kyats on the machine and raw materials, he/she can retrieve the investment money in the 19 months. So, sugar production is said to be second best industry, next to wholesale business. Nowadays, sugar industry has gradually expanded from its original centre

Mandalay to various regions in upper Myanmar. The producers are also striving to upgrade their products to export quality.

The Glittering Monastery with a dark shadow

Than Htay (Uttara) in his article “The Glittering Monastery with a dark shadow,” reveals the dark sides of the Mandalay’s socio-economic and civilization development such as large gaps between the rich and the poor and deterioration of moral characters.

The author says Mandalay has changed in its appearance since the outbreak of a large fire in 1984. Its façade has assumed modernity—with modern stores, department stores and hotels. Products in array in these stores are mostly of foreign origin. Modern restaurants have taken the place of traditional food shops. Brokerage houses or warehouses are busy, trucks coming in and going out.

Behind the facade lay unfavorable scenes—poor persons picking up pieces of recyclable plastic and waste paper, beggars and hawkers. Some persons, desperate in life, have turned fraudulent or come to engage in gambling. Unemployed persons have become real estate agents. Some have resigned themselves to fate, drinking day and night. The author thus compares the socio-economic sketches in Mandalay in the 1990s with miserable scenes behind the curtain.

Conclusion

Some articles in the series of Myanmar Dhana Business Magazine brought out monthly in the 1990s reflect sketches of the contemporary socio-economic changes. Especially, the authors have pointed out conditions suited to the changing economic system. The authors have reviewed the situations developing during the transition from the socialist economy to the market economy: characteristics of state-owned and private sector greater than those in the public sector, the crucial role of advertising in the market economy, the first Emergence of Modern sales mode such as mini-markets, and their consequences, the role of financial services, issues experienced in the sales and purchase of commodities in the people’s socio-economic life etc. Compared to the transitional period the current situations show a great leap: the market economic situation expanding wider, and emergence of new industries in various economic fields.

The presentation in this paper is only a selection of the articles that appeared in the Myanmar Dhana Magazine during the 1990s. Economy embarks on a wide area with a variety of fields. It is believed that the articles dealt with in this paper will provide a true picture of the 1990s.

3 TOMORROW

Editor's note: Contributors were asked to submit papers that

- look at the crucial issue of Burmese economics from different perspectives - historical, literary, cultural, religious etc.;
- deal with one particular topic without examining the whole picture of Burmese economics;
- can be submitted either in Myanmar or English language;
- should have a size between 4 and 8 pages,
- should inform about the sources used (interviews, literature), but must not meet academic standards;
- should contain a final paragraph on the future economic development of Myanmar.

3.1 Tin Soe¹, Myanmar Economy in the context of Myanmar Culture and Tradition

Myanmar is a tradition-bound society so much so that not even an official function is opened without a display of traditional things like inviting the Buddhist monks to read for the “*undaye kin pa-yeik*” (i.e; literally the religion-like sutra to overcome the dangers regarding the event) which is not strictly religion as some argued; it is purely social or historical tradition. It was practiced since long time in the past as if a religious recipe so that most Myanmar (and some analysts of Myanmar as well) think it is a religious activity. However, it exerted very strong influence on the thinking and behavior of the policy-makers as well as the peoples that most policies are confused with traditions and culture. To employ Karl Marx's terms, the Production Relations conditioned Productive Forces in Myanmar, but not Vice Versa. Regardless of the levels of development; the prevalence & exertion of influence of tradition on social, political & economic activities can be high in everyday decision-makings & living.

These traditional factors may be constraints of (economic) development or not, but these mostly caused to merge inequalities in ownership; unequal distribution of income, and imbalance of trade etc. so that it can be regarded as a definite constraints to (economic) development of the society & country. Now, let us briefly introduce the traditional activities and its influences on the socio-economic & political activities of Myanmar society.

So far, three major strands of thought in the history of economic development can be pointed out as: Myanmar also faced all these three systems and, strangely enough, tradition has strongly exerted influence that no system has showed any significant progress.

(1) 1950's & early 60's: Stages of growth theories;

¹ Dr.Tin Soe is a professor and Head of the Dept. of Economics, Yangon Institute Of Economics from 1994 to 1999, then transferred to the Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE) from 1998 to 2005, retransferred back to Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) in 2000 to 2006. He then retired from the Professorship in 2006 and took the job of the Visiting professor, dept. of GSICS, Kobe University, Japan in 2007. He was offered a Visiting Professor from the international Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in 2007 and he rejected the offer due to his deteriorating health condition. He is at present ado consultant to the private & govt consultation bodies in Yangon, Myanmar. He is at present also an adhoc consultant and a free lance writer at the local media.

- (2) Late 60's & early 70's: International dependence theories, and
- (3) 1980's & 90's: Free market theories again.

Why market? Because, most probably, market can allocate resources more efficiently than any other mechanism so far available and used by men. It can be argued with valid reasons that that market came as a successful response to the 'government failure' for economic development.

Hence, the rapid & widespread development of market since the turn of the 20th Century is a miracle. However, despite the important & inevitable space & span with which the market was growing & taking place in our day & time, Government. is still necessary in the areas/cases of 'market failure'; Market and government are no longer seen as substitute, but as complement to each other.

Competition as rejected under socialism & Communism as undesirable is turned to essential again for assurance of quality, efficiency and progress for which ICT, flexibility, skill and knowledge are called for urgently & these become crucial.

Accordingly, emphasis has changed to growth of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), HRD (Human Resource Development) and of competition. The pace of the change of the subjects & content of these subjects as taught at today's universities all over the world are so rapidly changed that even the syllabus designer & drawer can be amazed in reviewing the syllabuses of the subjects.

Orientation towards HRD

The objectives of the growth theories are to raise the standard and level of HRD together with the growth of GDP. The core values of HRD are to raise the value of HRD. The three core values of HRD needed to grow included:

- Life-sustenance of human beings;
- self-esteem of HRs ; and
- freedom of choice.

Taking into consideration of these HRD values, the meaning of development was noted to redefine as to raise the level of living of people.

In expansion of globalization, the three main characteristic features of globalization are to be considered more importantly than others. They include:

1. International trade based more on the principle of the 'competitive advantage' than on the 'comparative advantage'.
2. Increased interdependence among the developing economies, and
3. The expansion of the Third World markets.

It would be more sensible to discuss Myanmar tradition in the context of Myanmar economic development considering the following Myanmar traditional wisdom;

Thus, Myanmar Traditional Wisdoms **selected for discussion in this seminar are:**

1. Conception on Myanmar Kingship; Perception on 'Min'
2. Govt. intervention in the economy
3. Social Classes & Productive Classes
4. Perception on Land and Labor
5. Perception on Money Lending

6. Perception on Tax and Revenue

7. Perception on Crisis and Remedy

Conception on Kingship (*Min*)

- **(Western) divine right theory:** A certain person had God's exclusive blessings to have a right to rule.
- Traditional Myanmar wisdom: The fit person shall rule because of his intrinsic merit (*kutho*).
- This stems from the Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation together with the concept that one's good in this life is the result of good deeds done in the previous life, and gives best opportunities in his next life.
- This stems from the Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation together with the concept that one's good in this life is the result of good deeds done in the previous life, and gives best opportunities in his next life.

(UDE: 1997:144)

Extended implications

The king must have a very meritorious past; the greater the power of the king, the more meritorious he becomes and hence the nearer to the future Buddha;

The idea of 'check and balance' or 'argument' is alien to Myanmar kingship for he or she rules because of his virtues (*phon-kan*), but not for the blessings he receives from God;

He or she is not equal to any others; He or she is the law and others are obliged to obey.

Perception and Image of '*Min*'

Traditionally *Min* in Myanmar was perceived as one of the five kinds of enemies of mankind (known in Myanmar as *yan--thu-myo-nga-bar*):

1. *mee* (Fire) ;
2. *min* (King or govt.);
3. *yay, lay* (Water/air, refers to floods/storm);
4. *khoe-thu* (Thieves); and
5. *ma-chit-ma-hnit-thaw-thu* (The unloved and disliked ones).

Implications:

- Nothing good can be expected to come from the enemy (*min* in this case).
- Consequently, indifference, ignorance, lack of trust, and reluctant to participate in the activities and plans initiated by *min* become a tradition.
- For the opportunists, it was a 'blessing in disguise' to achieve their ambitions, but with a result of widespread corruptions.

Govt Intervention in the economy

- The traditional Myanmar wisdom was in favor of govt. intervention in the socio-economic affairs. (The *Mahasamata*: i.e. the Great President is needed by the people to rely on him for equity and justice, and for security and support (*Hman-Nan* 1:64).
- The Western concept of *laissez-faire* seemed to have no appeal to Myanmar rulers.

- Implication: Govt. intervention is perceived by the rulers as justified and desirable.

Social Class & Productive Class

In the ancient times, Myanmar tradition has only two classes of mankind and they are:

1. the ruling class (the rulers)
2. the ruled (the subjects), and ruled of the game was

The ruled or the subjects are to obey and the rulers are to rule by hook or by crook, the rulers make rule so that they are above the laws. The concept of rule of law is alien to them (the Myanmar people as well as the rulers). That is, for the rulers, action towards rule of law is to pretend that he or she is the noble ruler.

Tax had been the main source of King's revenue;

1. Categories: Vary and many including
 - (a) Land tax, (b) Irrigation tax, (c) Production tax (d) Commercial tax, (e) Gifts/Presents, (f) Other
2. Neither the tax rates nor the tax collecting system was standardized, and was a heavy burden to the tax-payers.
3. A definite disincentive for promotion of production, trade and consumption.

Four Social Classes prevailed up until the era of Early Konbaun Dynasty:

1. *Min-myo* (the King and royal members/officials)
2. *Ponnar-myo* (Bramins)
3. *Thuhtay-Thugywe-myo* (The rich and wealthy)
4. *Thusinye-myo* (The poor class)

Four Productive Classes until the period of Late Konbaun Dynasty

- ***Le-loke*** (Farmers or cultivators);
- ***Kon-thwe/Kon-the*** (Traders or merchants);
- Well informed, reputed ***hmu-matt*** officials;
- The learned reverend **monks**.

(Raja Dhamma Singaha Kyann)

LAND: Traditional classification:

1. *Ayardaw Myay* (Royal Land);
2. *Naingandaw-Paing-Myay* (State Land);
3. *Athe-Myay* (Commoners' Land);
 - (a) Common, (b) *Boba-Paing*, c) *Dama-oo-cha*
4. *Wuttaka-Myay* (Religious Land).

Ownership of land:

1. The king is the sole landlord and owns all land; (the *asu-a-ngan-thar* cultivate the royal land for the king).
2. The king considers the property of his subjects as in reality belonging to him 'for every subject is the emperor's born slave'.

3. The tilling right was noted to be transferable for the *Boba-paing Myay*

Value of land

- Transferability of land was an indication that it had an econ. or commercial value;
- Three determinants of land value:
 1. Fertility of the soil;
 2. Irrigated or not in cultivation; and
 3. Location (i.e., access to market).
- Note: Very close to the differential rent system of the present time
- Subjects was perceived by him as his private property because he is the 'lord and master of the life and property of his subjects who were his born slave';
- The king has no obligation to pay for any labor service. If he pays his slaves after a service that satisfies him, it is done not from a sense of justice but as an act of bounty (UDE:1997:145).
- This point is often interpreted by many as 'forced labor' by the commentators, but is officially termed as 'free contribution of labor' .

PERCEPTION ON MONEY LENDING

- Existed since early Pagan period;
- The king himself was the money-lender, and his officials and the wealthy the borrowers;
- Loans neither for investment nor for supporting production; it was mostly for socio-religious purpose (a kind of non-performance loans);
- Interest rate very high and bad debts heavy. *The Hluttaw*, during King Thibaw's time, had heard about 47,000 cases of bad debts, and were settled by writing them off.

CRISES

Classification of Crisis: Caused by two factors:

(1) Naturalistic and/or *Karmic*; (2) Supernatural

Naturalistic/*Karmic*:

A class of ills, dangers and troubles (e.g., snake-bite, imprisonment) is perceived to be caused by natural or *karmic* factors.

Supernatural elements:

Another class of miseries, even if their distant cause is *karmic*, its proximate cause is supernatural agents like witchcraft, spirits, planetary influence, evil omens, bad fortunes etc.

Economic Crisis

- two main factors as the cause of economic crisis:
 - (1) *Karma*, and
 - (2) Avarice or greed.

Karma:

- Calamities, dangers, class distinctions and discriminations, inequality in income, property ownership and status etc. among the social classes are all believed to be due to *karma*. As such, *karma* is the first attributable factor that causes economic crisis.

Implication: Undertake the activities that could change *karma* and kill greed (i.e., religion)

Greed:

- Greed is another major source and cause of economic crisis.
- “The life span of mankind deteriorated from *assenchie* (indefinite) years of age to *se-hnit-tan* (two-digit-years) of age because of widespread greed which finally led to shortages and to crisis”. (*Hman-Nan-Yazawin*, 1:55)
- Implication: Accumulating capital and enhancing wealth and property is not desirable for they are motivated by greed.

CONCLUSION

1. Most traditional wisdoms considered in this seminar are observed to be widely prevalent or preserved today.
2. None of them was noted to be suitable to or relevant for fostering national economic growth in the context of free market theories and broader meaning of development under globalization.
3. Traditionalism has some advantages (e.g., maintaining social stability, unity and harmony) but disadvantages outweighed them.

Remark of a scholar from China in responding to my query on why their govt., following the ‘opening of their economy’, has sent a large number of scholars and students only to the ‘capitalist’ countries for study tour:

‘Because our thousands-year history of culture and tradition that we stuck up for more could not compete with the 200-year history of culture and tradition’

(Response of a personal query in 1989, Sydney, Australia)

3.2 Economic terms coined or adopted in Myanmar

Compiled by Nay Linn

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Agricultural terms
- 3 Economic ideologies and procedural terms
- 4 Economic terms in vogue in every-day life
- 5 Conclusion
- 6 References

1 Introduction

Just as Myanmar has traversed successive eras in history, it has also experienced various economic systems and patterns. The designs Myanmar employed in dealing with the food, clothing and shelter needs have become traits of the Myanmar economy.

Generally, the Myanmar economy can be identified with the five different patterns:

- 1 The monarchic economic pattern adopted during the reign of despotic kings;
- 2 The part monarchic and part landlord economic pattern adopted during the colonial era (1886 – 1948)
- 3 The parliamentary democracy economy in the post-independence period (1948 – 1962);
- 4 The socialist economic system practiced from 1962 to 1987; and,
- 5 The market economic system, following 1988.

The economic terms used in various eras of the Myanmar society reflect the images of the Myanmar economic life.

This paper categorizes selectively the economic terms applied in the five economic patterns. Though this lot of terms may not cover the entire picture of the Myanmar economy, it is believed that this paper will glimpse changes in the Myanmar economic history.

2 Agricultural Terms

Myanmar economy has been based on agriculture since monarchic eras. This section is confined to terms used in the late monarchic era and during the colonial era.

1 Subsistence agriculture (pyi dwin wanzar phu lone yay sanit¹)

Literally, it means the system in which food must be sufficient for consumption in the country. Myanmar agricultural system during the

¹ Literally, a system in which food production had been managed for only the sufficiency in the kingdom

monarchic era was aimed at food sufficiency only. It was based on the exchange of farm produce.

2 Monetary economic system (e tha bya sie pwa yay sanit¹)

In the colonial era, the aim of the economy had changed from the barter system to the monetary system. Rice was exported to foreign countries, under the influence of the foreign capitalists. In other words, it was a system of exchanging farm produce for money.

3 Taxes (e khun e tote²)

It was the money paid to the ruler for the ownership of farmland and farm produce, based on the value of crops. In the reign of monarchs, the farm tax was paid in, in kind (paddy).

4 Agricultural economic system (lei ya site pyoe yay hnint sai thaw sie pwa yay sanit)

It was an economic system in which farm produce was exported under the British government.

5 Royal property land (ayadaw myay)

It was one of the five kinds of land classified under the Myanmar kings. The royal property land was sub-classified again into four:

- (1) the land handed down through successive kings;
- (2) the land confiscated from those who did not have any successor to inherit;
- (3) the land confiscated from those who had been convicted of crime; and,
- (4) the land presented to the chief queen on her marriage to the king.

6 Ancestral property land (boe ba pai myay³)

There are three kinds of ancestral property land:

- (1) **dha ma u-cha myay**: Literally, it means the land on which the first wide-blade knife (dha ma) had been set (for clearing). It was the farmland whose ownership was established by the first person to clear it for cultivation.
- (2) **min pay myay**: Literally, it means the land awarded by the king.
- (3) **ngwe wei ngwe paung myay**: it means the land purchased or the land not redeemed after mortgage and left in the hand of a person.

7 Religious land (wit htu kan myay)

The term is still retained in this era. It is the land donated for a religious purpose. Included in this kind are the pagoda precincts, the monastery precincts and any plot of land on which a religious building (such as a depository for Buddhist scriptures) has been built.

8 Credit system (ngwe chay sanit)

¹ Literally, money economic system

² Literally, taxes paid to the king. In the monarchic era, the farm tax was the most popular tax of the time.

³ Literally, the land owned by ancestors

The credit system during the monarchic era was free of exploitation. It had been fixed so that the total interest paid did not exceed the amount of the principal.

9 Money lender (ngwe chay sar thu)

The term still exists. It refers to a person who collects interest on an amount of money (the principal) he has lent out. Chettyars, belonging to the Nattukotai or Tamil race, who migrated from India to Myanmar in the colonial era, lent money to Myanmar peasants at high interest rates.

10 Landlord (myay pai shin)

The word still exists. The landlord is the one who owns land. Just as the king owned the entire land in the monarchic era, the British government was the land owner in the colonial era. Private land owners are also called landlord.

11 Protected tenants (thee sar)

The word is still retained. A protected tenant is the one who rents a plot of land from a landlord, and works on it. As rental, he pays the landlord in kind. Protected tenants originated only in the British era.

12 Tenancy rate (thee sar kha hnoun)

The British government decreed that the costs for cultivation of a crop and the basic food need of the tenant's family be deducted from the total value of the crop yield, and then half of the outcome only was to be paid to the landlord as rental of the farmland.

13 Tenancy system (le thee sar sanit)

It is said that 1880 AD was the year in which tenants originated in Myanmar, in addition to landlords. In other words, tenancy system appeared with the British administration.

14 Fee paid for renting farmland (lei htauk kha)

It refers to the fee paid for renting a plot of farmland.

15 Farm labourer (thu yin hngar/lei ku li)

The term still exists. It refers to a person who works for a landlord, doing all-round farm work (land preparation, tilling, transplanting, reaping, etc), and receiving wages especially in kind.

16 Chettyar interest (chit tee toe)

It was the interest collected by a Chettyar (Tamil) money-lender on the principal money lent to Myanmar peasants. At that time, while the bank interest rate was within 6% and 12% (6 – 12 kyats per 100 kyats per annum), Chettyar demanded an interest from 15% to 42%.

17 Payment in paddy (sabar pay sanit)

It was system in which both the principal money and the interest were repaid in paddy. For example, when a person borrowed 80 kyats at a time when 100 baskets of paddy was worth 80 kyats, he/she had to repay 100 baskets as the principal and another 100 baskets as the interest, totalling 200 baskets.

18 Interest in paddy (sabar nyunt etoe)

It was the same term as “sabar pay sanit” above. Both the principal and the interest were to be repaid in paddy. Paddy to be repaid was appraised at farmgate price, rather than the market price in town.

19 Creditor and debtor (myi shin hnint myi sar)

Creditors were landlords and money-lenders while debtors were tenants, labourers and money borrowers.

20 Farm land tax/land tax (lei khun taw/myay khun taw)

It was the tax paid to the ruler for ownership of farmland/land.

21 Bronze Post Officer (kyay tai saik ayarshi)

Literally, it means the officer responsible for erecting bronze posts (for land marking). He had the right to reach decisions on matters related to farming.

22 Ownership by first clearing the land (dha ma u-cha sanit)

Literally, it means the system in which the first person who set his wide-blade knife on wild land for clearing it was the owner. Farmers were allowed to own and work the wild land which they had cleared. The British government let the system continue. The “dha ma u-cha” system was officially made to call “squatter system.” But ownership was approved only when the person had worked the land for 12 consecutive years and paid in the land tax regularly.

23 Hinged system (patta khan thaw sanit)

The government or the capitalists disbursed some money to farmers for extension of their land for cultivation. This system was abolished in 1910.

24 Agricultural loan (amah daw kyay)

“Amah daw kyay” is the money lent by the ruler or the government to peasants at the beginning of the cultivation season. The money has to be repaid at harvest time.

(*Translator’s note:* Myanmar people wrongly translate “amah daw kyay” as “subsidy.” The true meaning of “subsidy” is different from “loan.”)

3 Economic ideologies and procedural terms

In Myanmar literature, various economic ideologies experienced in Myanmar and procedural terms are found. Some terms have been directly adopted from the English language, and others appropriately adapted into Myanmar.

1 Capitalism (e-yin shin sanit)

Capitalism is translated into Myanmar as “e-yin shin sanit.” All the productive assets are owned by a private businessman who works for profits. Myanmar people understand this term against “socialism.”

2 Colonialism (ko lo ni sanit)

The term is directly adopted from English (ko lo ni = colony + sanit = system). It refers to the exploitation of the Portuguese, Spanish, French and Dutch of Europe who searched for regions that had lagged behind in

development, annexed them and settled on them. Myanmar experienced colonialism when it fell under the British rule.

3 Imperialism (Ne che sanit)

The term is translated into Myanmar as “ne che sanit,” literally meaning the system of expanding territory. It refers to the domination and control by power through direct occupation of a foreign land or through political and economic influence from outside.

4 Depression (see pwa yay pyat kap)

The term is translated into Myanmar as “a disaster from economic chaos.” It refers to a peak period in which unemployment and the rate of inflation are highest. Myanmar suffered economic depression in 1930.

5 Economic policy (see pwa yay paw le si)

The Myanmar translation of the term is a combination of Myanmar (see pywar yay = economy/economic) and English (paw le si = policy). It refers to the method employed by the government for achieving one or more of the economic objectives.

6 Economic system (see pwa yay sanit)

It refers to the government’s economic designs. The term has come into vogue since the colonial era.

7 Economy (see pwa pay)

Just as it refers to the nation’s economic system and conditions laid down by the government, it also means the patterns of solutions which people employ in dealing with their food, clothing and shelter needs. When a person asks another, “How is your see *pwa yay* condition?” or “Is your see *pwa yay* good?”, the former is enquiring about the latter’s condition of making money.

8 Socialism (so shal lit sanit)

The term was conceived in Myanmar with the people’s anti-colonial struggle. It is directly adopted from English (so shal lit = socialist + sanit = system, thus, socialist system). It is a system in which emphasis is paid to government ownership, rather than private ownership. It refers to the economic pattern practiced in Myanmar from 1962 to 1988.

9 Communism (kun myu nit sanit)

The term has been directly adopted from English. It spread into Myanmar society with the movement of Doh Bamar Organization and Nagani Book Association during the period of struggle for independence. Myanmar also call it “leftism.” According to Karl Marx’s Communist Declaration, it is an ideology oriented towards equality in ownership and share of assets with the eradication of private ownership. Communist parties led by Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Soe appeared in Myanmar.

10 Planned economy (si man kein see pwa yay)

The Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) adopted the planned economy pattern. The economy is based on the government projects, and the government controls everywhere. In the post-1970 period, short-term and long-term economic plans were laid down and implemented.

11 Closed door economy (ta ga peik see pwa yay)

It also refers to the economic endeavour made during the BSPP era. In this economic system, foreign trade does not exist at all or only a little exists.

12 Open door economy (ta ga phwint see pwa yay)

It refers to the economic system in which special emphasis is placed on a great deal of foreign trade. The word came into vogue following 1988.

13 Free market economy (lut lat thaw zay kwet see pwa yay)

This system allows free competition in the market without the control of the government especially on pricing and flow of goods. The Myanmar government is now practising free market economy.

14 Free trade (lut lat thaw koun thwe yay)

It is a trading pattern in which there are no trade barriers and control upon foreign trade. Now, Myanmar is involved in the process of establishing a free trade zone in the ASEAN region.

15 Globalization (glo bal lai zei shin)

Myanmar has adopted the word in its original pronunciation “glo bal lai zei shin.” Myanmar now shows signs of effects by globalization such as cooperation of international organizations.

16 Fiscal year (ban dar yay hnit)

It is a one-year period fixed by the government or the economic circle. In Myanmar, the fiscal year begins on April 1 and ends on March 31.

17 Barter system (bar ter sanit)

The term has been directly adopted in Myanmar as bar ter sanit (sanit, being system). It is a system in which goods are exchanged without the involvement of money. It was widely practiced during the monarchic era.

18 Budget (ya thoun hman chay ngwe se-yin)

The term is translated into Myanmar as “Estimated Income and Outgo Account.” It is an account which estimates in advance income and outgo (expenditure) of an economic institution or the government. It is widely used in various sectors of the Myanmar economy.

19 Central Bank (baho ban)

The term refers to the main authoritative organization regarding the banking service of a country. The central bank mainly carries out activities such as issue of legal tender, control of money in circulation and control of loans.

20 Currency (ngwe kyay)

The term refers to the banknotes and coins legally issued by the government and the organization in which the government has vested power. The Central Bank issues or exchange various banknotes and coins from the time of regaining independence.

21 Debt (kywe myi/e-kywe tin chin)

It is the money to be repaid for a loan or to pay for a thing purchased. In Myanmar economic circle, the system of paying interest over the principal exists.

22 Demand (we lo ar)

It refers to the total buying capacity of a commodity.

23 Dividend (e-myat way su)

It refers to profits to be shared among the share-holders after deducting taxes and all costs. Generally, dividends are distributed once a year or once a quarter. In the present era, companies usually hand out dividends annually.

24 Exchange rate (ngwe le hnoun)

It refers to the spot rate in exchanging a local currency into a foreign currency. In Myanmar, there is a gap between the rate officially fixed by the government and that on the informal exchange market.

25 Export promotion (poh koun hmyint tin yay)

Export promotion plays an important role in bringing about economic progress of a nation. In accordance with the market economic system, Myanmar is striving to promote export.

26 Foreign trade (nai ngan char koun thwe hmu)

It refers to trade with foreign countries. Myanmar government has relaxed control over foreign trade and permitted private companies to do foreign trade.

27 Futures market (kyo yaung kyo wei/kyo point sanit)

It refers to an arrangement of a deal between the seller and the buyer, who set a future period at an agreed price. In rural areas in Myanmar, peasants sell in advance the crop before harvest. In urban areas, apartments are sold before the construction of the building.

28 Import duty (thwin koun khun)

It refers to a tax imposed on the goods imported into the country.

29 Insurance (ar ma khan louk ngan)

It is a means of buffering people from accidents, disasters and financial losses. Myanma Insurance, a government economic institution, offers such services.

30 Investment (yin hnee hmyouk hnan hmu)

It means contribution of money or other assets in an economic enterprise for future profits. There are investments both in private and government sectors.

31 Means of production (koun htouk e-yin e-hnee)

It has been in vogue since socialist era. Included in the means of production are land, labour and capital. Marxists refer to the capital as the means of production without including land and labour.

32 Nationalization (nai ngan pai louk chin/pyi thu pai thein chin)

It refers to the government's takeover of private businesses and industries. It was an economic policy undertaken during the BSPP era.

33 Privatization (pouk ga li ka pai pyu chin)

It is the opposite of nationalization. Now the State-owned enterprises are being transferred to private businessmen.

34 Private sector (pouk ga li ka gan dah)

It refers to the entire arena of private businessmen.

35 Private enterprise (pouk ga li ka see pwa yay louk ngan)

It refers to the economic enterprises spearheaded by private businessmen.

36 Production (koun htouk louk yay)

It means production of various commodities as required by various consumers.

37 Imposition of tax (e-khun kauk chin)

It refers to part of the profits/income paid by every citizen to the government. There is a fixed proportion between tax and profits/income. There are different methods of levying taxes.

38 Tax evasion (e-khun shaun chin)

It refers to an attempt to evade tax by employing various methods.

39 Trade deficit/trade surplus (koun thwe yay lo ngwe/koun thwe yay po ngwe)

If the total value of imports exceeds that of exports, it is said to show trade deficit. Conversely, if the total value of exports exceeds that of imports, it is said to show trade surplus.

4 Economic terms in vogue in every-day life

There are various words applied in various economic enterprises. These words reflect every day socio-economic life of the Myanmar people

1 Cottage industry (ein dwi hmu louk ngan)

It is a small-scale industry of a private businessman undertaken at home. In Myanmar cottage industry includes tailoring, snack making, hair cutting and shampooing, repair of small machines, etc.

2 Handicraft (let hmu louk ngan)

Handicraft involves small-scale production of private businessmen. It includes cane ware production, furniture making, gold smith's, etc.

3 Mechanical business (set hmu louk ngan)

Mechanical business refers to small businesses in which electricity and ironware are involved.

4 Private business (ko bai louk ngan)

It refers to a business owned and managed by a private individual.

5 Government business (e-soe yah louk ngan)

It refers to all the businesses under the ministries formed by the government to attend to the administration, economic, social and educational affairs.

- 6 Government servant/employee** (e-soe yah wun htan)
It refers to all the employees working in various ministries of the government.
- 7 Joint-venture business** (phet set louk ngan)
It is a joint venture between two private enterprises or between the government and a private enterprise for sharing profits.
- 8 Company business** (koun pa ni louk ngan)
It refers to big private businesses registered with the government. Companies appeared in the period between 1948 and 1958 and in the period following 1990.
- 9 Owner of company business** (koun pa ni pai shin)
A person who established a company is called a company owner. Myanmar sometimes call a company owner “the htay” (rich man).
- 10 Company employee** (koun pa ni wun htan)
It refers to employees working for a private company. As there are different levels of employees, as required by a particular company, there are different levels of salaries paid to them.
- 11 Hawker** (gaung ywet byat htoe zay the)
It refers to persons who sell from street to street, door to door, carrying foods or commodities of small values.
- 12 Casual labourer** (let louk let sar)
It refers to persons who have to take up any job, which appears casually and is not permanent. They are called casual workers. They are the kind of persons who can have daily food only when they go out to work.
- 13 Seller** (zay the)
It refers to persons who produce a small amount of capital they can afford, buy things from a place and resell them.
- 14 Merchant** (koun the)
They are big traders who buy goods, products or farm produce from a region in large quantities, and sell them in another region where they can reap large amounts of profits.
- 15 Broker** (pwe sar)
It refers to a person who serves as a middleman for execution of a deal between the vendor and the vendee. A broker's fees vary, depending on the kinds of goods.
- 16 Moneyed person (capitalist)** (ngwe shin kyay shin)
It refers to a person who has a lot of money or capital in the economic world.
- 17 Rapacious person** (wi the ma lawka thar)
It refers to a person who places emphasis only on getting profits and who will seek money by employing unjustified or illegal methods.
- 18 Basic commodity** (achay khan sar thauk koun)
It refers to commodities required by people in their daily life.
- 19 Economic holdings** (u-bai louk ngan)

It refers to large economic enterprises jointly set up by the government and private businessmen.

20 Wholesale centre (koun si dai)

Wholesale centres buy goods from various regions of the country or goods imported into the country and redistribute them. These centres are usually large warehouses, which are also called brokerage warehouses (pwe youn).

21 Border trade route (ne sat koun thwe yay lan kyaung)

It refers to trade routes at border areas. In Myanmar, there are a number of border trade routes such as Myawady-Maesod route (for trade with Thailand), Tamu-Kalay route (for trade with India), Pharkant-Muse route (for trade with China), and Maungdaw route (for trade with Bangladesh).

22 Regular trade route (poun hman koun thwe yay lan kyaung)

It refers to regular, other than border, routes for trade with foreign countries or for domestic trade. It includes rail, water and motor routes.

23 Trade fair (koun si pya pwe)

Commodities or products are displayed and sold for a period at a trade fair. There are regional trade fairs as well as international trade fairs.

24 Price rise (zay swa/zay tet)

It refers to the rise of a price of a commodity.

25 Price fall (zay neint/zay kya)

It refers to the fall of a price of a commodity.

26 Standing firm in high price (zay tin khan)

It refers to a situation in which the price of a commodity stays firmly at a level although it is the time when it should go down. It is also said that it is the influence of merchants who attempt to keep the price at the desired level.

27 Manipulation of market prices (zay ge zar chin)

It is the creation of dealers who manipulate prices so that they can reap large profits. They usually keep the buying prices low and selling prices high (e.g. by creating shortage of a commodity by monopolizing the purchase and storing it singly.)

28 Decline of money value (ngwe tan phoe kya chin)

The value of money is said to be declining when the prices of commodities rise but incomes are stable.

29 Kyat value of the dollar (daw lar zay hnoun)

It refers to the kyat value of a dollar at a time in focus, or the dollar-kyat exchange rate. There is large gap between the kyat value of a dollar fixed by the government and that on the informal exchange market.

30 Real estate agent (ein chan myay akyoe saung)

A real estate agent is a coordinator between the vendor and the vendee of a land plot or a house or an apartment, who collects a fee for his service.

31 White money (ngwe phyu)

It refers to the money earned within the framework of law promulgated by the state. It is the money recognized by the government.

32 Black money (ngwe me)

It refers to the money earned from businesses outside the law.

33 Motorcar dealing (maw taw kar we yaung louk ngan)

Motorcar dealers usually watch the time when car prices rise or fall. They buy cars when their prices are low, and resell them when prices become high.

34 Lending money with gold as security (shwe paung khan chin)

A pawn broker accepts a piece of gold ware and disburses a loan. Generally, the amount of money lent is half the price of the gold. The debtor has to pay the monthly interest until he/she redeems the security by repaying the principal.

35 Mortgage or pawning (e-paung khan louk ngan)

It is a business in which a loan is disbursed with an interest on it which is fixed by appraising the value of the security. Government or private banks offer mortgage, accepting articles of high value, such as a house, a plot of land, a car, or a piece of jewellery. Private pawn brokers are licensed and engaged in articles of small value.

36 Business license (louk ngan lai sin)

It is a license or an order of the government issued to a private business person so that he/she can do a business.

5 Conclusion

The paper has mentioned economic terms of Myanmar applied in various eras. Though all these terms may not portray the entire picture of the Myanmar economy, they, it is believed, will serve as a glimpse of the Myanmar economic life.

Especially, the reader can grasp the process of changes in the economic patterns and transformation in the socio-economic life of the people. Myanmar economic terms remain a wide area of study, and more sector-wise studies should be made.

6 References

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3.3 Saw Myint Maung, Land Ownership and Tax Systems of Burma before the Colonial Era

Brief background of the administration by Burmese kings:

Written material on subject matters during the reign of Burmese kings (before colonial time) rarely included fiscal and economic conditions of the time. At that time what we now know as Myanmar was an administrative unit based on the city where the king resided (e.g. Yadanapura Innwa Nay Pyi Daw, Yadanabon Nay Pyi Daw etc.) This was further subdivided into smaller administrative units. The stone inscription engraved during the reign of King Innwa Sin Phyu Shin, in 1127 (Myanmar calendar) gave an example that an administrative unit could be divided into 16 such subunits. The extent of the administrative unit stretched beyond the present day Burma. It included Manipur and Assam in the northwest, and in the east, Keng Yong or Siksongpana, Lin Zin or Laos, Yun or Cambodia, and Jun or Ayodaya. The administrative subunits were further divided into districts. The administrative subunit had its own city and a governor was appointed by the king to administer it. These subunits were usually based on the ethnic groups living in it and the governors appointed could at times be Burmese or of the respective ethnic group. Some of these were subordinate kings who were not entitled to the use of the white umbrella, an item in the Myanmar royal regalia. The smallest units of the administrative regions were the villages. The large villages which had walls and markets were called towns. The villages were administered by the village headmen. The towns were administered by the town headmen and the governors. The duties and responsibilities of the governor were concerned more with the affairs of the King and State and that of the headman were concerned more with the affairs of the town people. The governors were called 'A Way Wun (provincial governor)' and were appointed and sent to administer the region. The village headmen and the town headmen were hereditary titles and elected by the local people and there had been women who were given that capacity.

The king, queen and princes and princesses did not have monthly emoluments. Some of the senior ministers, junior ministers, the bearers of insignia, ladies-in-waiting, etc. got monthly emoluments while others were given the right to enjoy the taxes from the villages and towns. Therefore there were those who according to their rank and appointment got monthly emoluments and those who got to enjoy the taxes and proceeds from the villages, towns, wharves and landings on rivers and streams. And unlike the modern system of administration, the official with the rank and duties was directly responsible to the King or State (Nay Pyi Daw) and not along the hierarchy like the present. By looking at how Myanmar kings, up to the last of them, King Thibaw, build and administer the land, you could get to know the state of the national economy of that time.

National economy of Burma in the past:

In the past, agriculture was the main pillar of the national economy. Although there had been sale of forestry products, especially logs, other natural resources like gems and minerals were deemed to be the king's property and therefore not traded. Those natural resources were collected by the town headmen of the region who were given special designations and the gold, silver or iron would be entered in a ledger and put in the royal treasury. Although agriculture was said to be the main pillar of the economy, the production of agricultural produce as a commodity to be sold, had not developed to any prominent state before the English colonial era. The geography, the climate and the fertility of the soil ensured that the people of Burma had sufficient food, clothing and shelter.

In the olden days, the Burmese grew paddy, beans, maize, fruits and crops for oil production for food supplies and produced cotton, silk and jute for clothing. They processed and stored sufficient food supplies for the year and wove the cloth on their looms. At that time there was

very little that they needed which was not produced by themselves in the rural or urban areas that production of commodities for sale, was not very prominent. But since there were 'markets' goods would have been exchanged. And also since in classifying people, there was the class of people called traders, there must have been exchange of goods among the common people. But it was noted that in calculating the wealth of a state the volume of this trade was not taken into consideration.

The matter of trading was not done in the present day context of business transactions, the production of goods was for personal consumption and only the surplus was sold.

Therefore the productive input especially the land for cultivation was not used as a business capital but took the form of a useful asset.

Form of Land Ownership

In the past, vacant and virgin land had no owner; anyone who wanted to grow crops could clear the vacant and virgin land for cultivation. The land one had claimed was one's land. Land that had been cleared and claimed was known as 'Da Ma Oo Cha Myay'. It was recognized as private property and could be sold, mortgaged and inherited. This had been owned by one's ancestors and inherited and was called 'Bo Bwa Paing Myay (owned by one's ancestors)'/ freehold land. This form of land ownership still is important to this day. Even though the king was the implied owner of the land and water in his kingdom, he was not the owner of all the land.

The king did not draw monthly emoluments. He only needed the money to finance the affairs of the king/ state. The money came from the various taxes and the rent he received for his land. In the past ownership of land for cultivation was classified as:

1. Land owned by the king, queen, princes etc. and known as 'A Yar Daw Myay'.
2. Land owned by the people 'Bo Ba Paing Myay' and
3. Land designated for pagodas and monasteries 'Wudda Kan Myay'.

A Yar Daw Myay

The land included the land that the king, queen and princes inherited from their ancestors, the land that had been granted to them, the land that had been confiscated by the court of law because of the crime committed, the land confiscated from the rebels and the land which had no owner to inherit it. Records revealed that during the reign of King Thibaw, the king had about 21,000 acres and the queen had about 920 acres.

Bo Ba Paing Myay

This included the land cleared and claimed by the owner (Da Ma Oo Cha Myay), land granted by the king or queen, land bought and mortgaged land that was not redeemed.

Wudda Kan Myay

Pagodas and monasteries needed money for various matters and people donated land for the purpose of covering such costs with the rent from the land.

Land for cultivation was owned by two classes of people - those who owned the land but did not make a living by cultivating the land and those who owned and cultivated the land. The land owned by the royalty and that donated to the pagodas and monasteries were hired out. The owners did not work the land, they just owned it.

Bo Ba Paing Myay was owned by landowners and farmers. And there was a system by which land for cultivation was transferred from one person to another.

In the olden days, there was a class of people known as the 'A The' in the Burmese society. The class included traders and brokers, artisans and artists. People who did not cultivate the land and persons not in the service of the king or state were generally designated as 'A The'.

Land had been granted by the king to those who were serving or had served the people and the state. The persons receiving the land included those in the service of the king and state, prisoners-of-war, foreigners who came to settle in the state, A The and the common people. The land was given so that they could work the land and earn a living. They were not given ownership of the land. That sort of land was included in the Bo Ba Paing Myay but basically the land was owned by the state.

Transfer of Land Ownership

This meant selling, mortgaging and inheriting land. This kind of transfer could only be done for the land the common people worked on and owned- Bo Ba Paing Myay. In this class of land, only that cleared and claimed by the person (Da Ma Oo Cha Myay) was private property and that granted by the king was owned by the state. Therefore when sold, mortgaged or inherited, the transfer of ownership could only be done freely with Da Ma Oo Cha Myay. There were restrictions when it involved land that had been granted by the king. The land could not be sold or mortgaged. Regarding inheritance, if the land had been granted to an 'A The', it could be inherited. The right to work the land could be hired out. If the land had been granted to a person in the service of the king or state, if the person died, the widow would inherit the land. If the widow were to marry a person in the service of the king or the state, the eldest son or daughter would inherit the land. If the person the widow married was an 'A The', the right to inheritance would be forfeited. The land given to the 'A The' was known as the 'A The Myay'. Those who did not have Da Ma Oo Cha Myay, Bo Ba Paing Myay, were given land so that they might work and earn a living. The land was known as that owned by the village or the communal land. Only the right to work the land was given, there was no ownership. The right to work the land could be sold or mortgaged. There was also the right to continual inheritance. The class not included in the A The and those in the service of the king or state were foreigners who came to settle in the land. Those people were given communal land to work and earn a living but they did not own it.

The ownership of land for cultivation could be separated into those who owned and worked the land and those who owned but did not work the land. Normally, most, if not all, of the Da Ma Oo Cha Myay, were worked by the owners. What had originally been Da Ma Oo Cha Myay might have been worked by the original owners but after inheriting and transfer some might have continued working the land but others might hire it out to others. The produce from Da Ma Oo Cha Myay was exempt from taxation. Some Da Ma Oo Cha Myay, A The Myay, and land owned by the royalty (A Yar Daw Myay) were usually hired out and the rent was fixed at 10% no matter who the owner was; 1% decrement and 2.25% for those measuring the produce. Therefore only 13.25% was given to the landowner and other people and the person who worked the land got 86.75% of the produce. It was unusual that the one who worked the land should get such a large proportion of the fruits of their labour. This fact alone could be the cause of why the people of Burma were quite well off in the past.

The Tax System

Persons governing a state needed to collect taxes to cover the costs of public services. The king had to protect the people of the country or state; he was the lord and master of the country. The expenses of looking after his people were paid from the royal treasury.

The royal treasury was in fact the wealth of the nation. The taxes collected for the royal treasury included the following:

1. The 10% rent collected from the land for cultivation owned by the king, queen and princes.
2. The fixed amount of tax collected from the provinces according to the area, number of houses etc.
3. The taxes collected from the mineral and gem mines.
4. The revenues collected from places where goods were exchanged or traded, such as fairs, markets, tax stations and ferry landings.
5. The 5% tax collected on the sale of items such as rice/paddy, buffaloes, cattle, horses, elephants, timber, and raw materials for making weapons and ammunition along the inland waterways and at seaports of the country.
6. Apart from restricted items such as silk, velvet, lace and similar articles used by the upper classes, taxes collected on the import of goods at specified rates.
7. 10% of the crops harvested by the people of the country.

It was noteworthy that the rent from the land owned by the royalty (A Yar Daw Myay) was not taken as income generated from their property but taken as taxation on the farmer's income. And of the proceeds from the mines, although the mines were owned by the king, only 7.5% was used to cover the cost of production and the 92.5 % was specified as tax.

At some tax stations 'Thathatmeida' tax was collected in the form of money rather than in kind; it was the tradition in the olden days in Burma that tax on agricultural products was the same 10% for commoners as well as the royalty.

Tax and Expenditure Account

The tax and expenditure account of Burmese kings were not complicated; they were quite simple. Basically, the tax and expenditure account was divided into the following:

1. General expenditure; appropriation 25%.
2. Capital expenditure; appropriation 50% and,
3. Emergency matters; appropriation 25%.

General expenditure included monthly emoluments for princes, ministers, officials and persons in the service of king or state, and administrative costs.

Capital expenditure could be called investments and was the total cost of the enterprises that could prove economically profitable. It included the cost of dams and canals to irrigate land for cultivation; glass industry; iron industry; spinning, weaving and textile industry; sugar industry and constructing roads for communication.

Emergency matters would include reserves for war and maintaining stores of food and medicine. By reviewing the tax and expenditure account, it could be said that Burmese kings had the foresight and were conscious of the welfare of the state, even though the country was not economically powerful.

The tax and expenditure account was proclaimed every year. The following was said to have been such an account during the reign of King Thibaw, the last Burmese king before the British colonial rule; the year could not be determined.

Proclamation of the Budget for the year

Revenues of the State (in thousands of kyats):

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Thathatmeida tax collected from Myanmar and Shan states | 3950 |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------|

2. Import and export tax, tax collected from markets, fairs, customs posts, ports and landings, and mines	2,997
3. Tax collected on forest products	502
4. Tax collected on water and lakes (commercial fishing)	411
5. Tax collected on paddy and other crops	1,235
Total revenues	9,095

State Expenditure (in thousands of kyats)

1. Cost of Thathatmeida tax collection	831
2. Monthly emoluments for princes	34
3. Monthly emoluments for princesses	97
4. Monthly emoluments for persons serving inside the palace compound	763
5. Hlut Yone Nga Yat (King's Hluttaw)	345
6. King's Rifle Regiments(4,000)	524
7. Rifle legions comprising of foreign and indigenous troops (3200)	433
8. Rifle regiments comprising of indigenous troops (4500)	616
9. Cavalry (5200)	818
10. Corps of shield bearing troops (1,000)	112
11. Troops following the indigenous riflemen (600)	71
12. Navy (6,000)	779
13. Elephant cavalry (1,400)	177
14. (A) craftsmen (490)	589
15. (B) artisans engaged in making jewellery, filigree work (1,760)	276
16. Public services and other expenses	2,730
Total expenditure	9,095

The budget revealed that items (6) to (13) made up 39% of the total expenditure and was for the 60,000-strong armed forces; this showed that there was rebuilding of the armed forces which had been in disarray during the reign of King Thibaw for the defence of the country. Public services amounted to 33% of the expenditure and could not be said to be small in amount. Monthly emoluments for others in the service of the king and state amounted to 12% and the princes and princesses were also supported by the state.

The budget shown above was not comprehensive and the true economic situation of the time could only be surmised in a general way.

Remarks: Records showed that King Thibaw had about 145,906 pel of paddy land and the queen had a total of about 6,128 pel of land for cultivation and orchards.

1 pel = 0.15 acre (approximately)

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3.4 Shwe Sin Aung, Book Review on Maung Htin, Myanmar Agricultural Economy (1966)¹

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Overview

Writer Maung Htin (U Htin Phat), who had had experiences as a Township Officer under the British government, authored this publication, based on the records, reports and reviews on agriculture. Especially, he compares the economic system of the monarchic era with that of the colonial era. He goes straight to the point by revealing how peasants suffered under transitions of economic systems. The British government saw to the affairs of Myanmar peasants and solved problems faced by them. However, its efforts failed due to the existence of the capitalist class and its will to protect the capitalists.

He points out some needed efforts regarding the Myanmar agricultural system which should be undertaken by the national government in the post-independence period. The most important fact was that agricultural banks were to be set up before changing the agricultural system from the government to the private.

Outline of the Contents

Maung Htin's book "Myanmar Agricultural Economy" is divided into eight chapters. At first, it compares the agricultural economy in the monarchic era with that in the colonial era. Myanmar had relied on agriculture for its economy since the monarchic era. Not like in the colonial era, its economy was not money-centered. The domestic products were consumed by the people through direct transactions in money, which in any way were tantamount to indirect exchange of goods only within the nation. The focus of agriculture at that time was subsistence or domestic sufficiency. The tax had to be paid in kind, especially in crops. The subsistence agriculture was free of landlords or capitalists. The total acreage in the entire country was small, farmlands rare in lower Myanmar and lying in wide stretches in upper Myanmar.

¹ Maung Htinn (pen-name) was born on 21th March, 1909 at Laputar Township, Delta Zone. His real name is U Htinn Fatt. He got his degree in 1933 from Yangon University. He served as a government servant for many years in the mean time he wrote many books according to his natural bent. His most famous book, entitled "Nga Ba", tells the story of a Burmese farmer during the time of the Japanese occupation. He got the highest prize of Literature, National Literature Award of Myanmar in 1981 and other prizes. He died in 2005 at the age of 96.

Then, the British colonization of Myanmar changed not only the administrative system, but also the pattern of its agricultural economy. The British army brought together with it Indian nationals who would provide support to the British. These Indians were awarded vacant, wild lands in the Rakhine and Tanintharyi regions as “grant land” or “government-grant land.” Tax was collected from the owners of vacant land plots at 0.25 kyat to 1 kyat per acre.

Since then, agriculture had expanded considerably. One factor that contributed to the historic change of Myanmar agriculture was the digging of the Suez Canal, which served as a crucial channel for exporting Myanmar rice. Myanmar agricultural system transformed the domestic sufficiency into export-oriented, money-centred economy. Getting profits became the first priority. The number of persons wishing to take up agriculture as their profession had increased. In the reign of the monarchs, those who had traditionally worked as farmers owned the farmlands, but under the British rule, many people left their initial professions to switch to agriculture.

During the monarchic era, the king, the legitimate owner of all the lands in his kingdom, usually honoured farmers by condescending to till the land. The occasion was called “The Auspicious Ploughing Ceremony.” Regarding the monarchic era land ownership, the land was categorized into four—(1) the royal land (the land owned by royal relatives), (2) the land associated with the royal land, (3) the ancestral land, and (4) the religious land.

Soon after their occupation of Myanmar, the British enacted a law which defined that the original owner of all agricultural lands was the state. The land was categorized into three—(1) the state-owned land, (2) the ancestral land and (3) the religious land. The right to work the land was granted in the forms of grant, government-grant and enjoyment of land tax allowed specifically to the village headmen. Thus, foreigners came to enjoy rights equal to those of the nationals. The primary aim of the British was that those who had worked the land and paid the land tax for 12 consecutive years should own the land. However, land transfer to foreigners became widespread in lower Myanmar. Myanmar peasants transferred their farms to foreigners by pawning and selling them as the latter were generous in disbursing money. Since then, people related to farming fell into three classes—(1) those who worked the land and owned it, (2) those who owned the land but did not work it, and (3) those who worked the land but did not own it. In other words, people could be classified again

as money-lenders, landlords and tenants. Sometimes, the same person could be both the money-lender and the landlord. In this case the persons was referred to as the “capitalist landlord.” As a result, the peasants got into trouble, losing their own land to the foreigners and sinking into debts.

In addition to landlords, another class, tenants, appeared in 1880 soon after the British administration system had been established on the Myanmar land. In other words, landlords did not work their own lands, and transferred to other persons under tenancy. During the monarchic reign, there were only two classes—landlords and farm-labourers. With the introduction of tenancy system, a problem arose. Despite the government’s fair specifications of tenancy rates, landlords—usually Chettiers or Nattu kotai and the Tamils, who had migrated from India—practised unfair dealings with the tenants. It was said that Indians from Chittagong and Madras came to Myanmar in the 18th century for trading. The Chettiers at that time were not yet engaged in money lending as the economy then was not based on money.

It was said that Chettiers first launched money-lending in Mawlamyaing in 1850 AD under the British rule. Another version was that they started money-lending in Yangon in 1852 AD. Most probably, large numbers of Chettiers rolled into Myanmar in 1869, when the Suez Canal was commissioned into service. Generally, it can be said that Chettiers took root in Myanmar in 1870, and their money-lending practice became widespread during the period from 1870 to 1930.

With the appearance of Chettiers’ money-lending shops in Myanmar, the lands of Myanmar peasants fell into the Chettiers’ hands as they could not repay the debts, which had been obtained at high interest rates. Myanmar agricultural system became irregular owing to the changes in economic system and emergence of landlords, who were foreigners, leading to the Peasants’ Uprising led by Saya San (April 1931 to March 1932) and the Indian-Myanmar conflicts (July 1938). The Peasants’ Uprising was attributed to the root cause of the financial crisis in 1931. However, there was another main reason—“to get freed from repaying debts to the Chettiers.” Despite an assumption that a book written Maung Shwe Phi sparked the Indian-Myanmar conflicts in 1938, thorough examination revealed the fact that the nationals in the entire country were discontented with the changes in the ownership of farmlands from the nationals to foreigners, and thus the conflicts erupted.

The British government's had to react on the problems arising from tenancy and loss of farmlands to foreigners and vicissitudes suffered by the people. The life of land-owning peasants degraded into landless tenants as they could not repay their debts to the Chettiers. The Central Government of India reminded the Myanmar government of the increase of tenant population in Myanmar. Accordingly the latter drafted a tenancy law in 1892. As the draft law was partial to the tenants, the Central Government did not approve it.

In 1896, Sir Frederic Fryer, who had become a minister in Myanmar, drafted the tenancy law again. Under the draft law, a tenant who had worked a farmland for 10 consecutive years or a tenant, who had formerly owned a farmland, and who had served a landlord, working a farmland for 10 consecutive years, should own the farmland. The tenancy rate was to be discussed with the landlord and decision was to be given by the Land Records officer. However, approval of the draft law was aborted by the reason given by the government officials that the population of tenants was still small. In 1908, Sir Herbert Thirkell White submitted a condition to the legislative body that landlords were not allowed to raise the tenancy rates out of their own volition. The legislative body, made up of officials, merchants and landlords, did not accept it.

In 1924, Mr Thomas Couper, as a special officer, investigated the conditions of farm tenants and labourers. He suggested, "If a tenant pays in a fair amount of fee to the landlord punctually, the landlord must rent the land to him/her for three consecutive years. In case the landlord evicts the tenant, the tenant has the right to claim the money which he has spent on repairing the land. No creditor shall interfere with the harvest of the tenant. The harvest shall first be used to pay wages and fees for hiring draught cattle. The rest will be used for repaying debts." With these suggestions, he submitted a draft farmland law in 1927. This bill had not been approved because landlords strongly protested against it.

On February 16, 1938, U Saw submitted the Burma Paddy Rents Control Bill to the House of Representatives. Under the draft law, a tenant must pay one-fourth of the harvest as rent to the landlord. However, the House of Representatives rejected it. Thus, peasants suffered hardships from tenancy due to the British government, foreigner merchant, foreigner landlords and government officials. This chapter highlights the socio-economic plight of the peasants.

The author points out the falling of the peasants' lands into the hands of the non-peasant landlords. In the first part, it compares the landownership in the monarchic era with that under the British rule. The practice of selling farmlands for good did not exist during the monarchic era. A farmer might sell his farmland to another farmer, but the seller had the right to buy it back whenever he/she wished. The buyer too did not have the right to re-sell it to the third person without the consent of the original owner. For this custom, farmlands remained only in the hands of the genuine peasants under the rule of the monarchs. Moreover, a person who first cleared a piece of wild land had the right to own it. This system was maintained and called by the British government as "squatter system." But there was a condition set by the British government—The person who first cleared a piece of wild land had to work it for 12 consecutive years while paying in the due land tax annually without fail during that period. Thus, this person's life changed from a squatter into a land owner.

The peasants could also become land owners under the "government grant" system. The aim of the British government was to increase the number of peasants who grew paddy. Despite this aim, a lot of farmlands fell into the hands of creditors beginning from 1900. Hence, the government grant was revoked in 1910. In 1891, Finance Minister Mr Smeaton drafted the Burma Agriculturists Relief Bill with intent to prevent the transfer of farmlands without the approval of the Revenue Officer. However, the bill had not been passed into a law. In 1894, Mr Smeaton again proposed a condition that a person, though he had sold his farmland, had the right to work as a tenant on his former farmland. However, the Central Government of India did not show any response. In 1906, Sir Herbert Thirkell White proposed that conditions be set in cases of sale, mortgage and transfer of farmlands. This proposal came to nothing because of the objections of European merchants and landlord Chettiers.

The matter of lands falling into the hands of non-nationals or foreigners was not dealt with in the Burma Farmlands Bill drafted in 1927. In 1934 Mr Swithinbank formulated a system under which a Land Mortgage Corporation was to be formed. The main duties of the corporation were to disburse loans for the farmlands pawned by the peasants who needed money at the beginning of the cultivation season and to keep the peasants' lands without transferring them to non-peasants. Giving the reason that it was not a feasible idea, the government rejected Mr Swithinbank's proposal.

In 1937, U Ba Ohn, a member of the Patriotic Party, submitted to the Lower House a Land Transfer Bill, which he had drafted by referring to the laws of Punjab state in India. The bill had not come up to the stage of consideration. Again in 1938, the Land and Agriculture Committee, in which Lawyer U Pu was the chairman, drafted a land transfer bill. Fortunately, the parliament passed the bill into a law in 1939. The essence of the law was to prevent the transfer of land from the peasant to the non-peasant.

Thus, principles to transform land system underwent changes under the British government. Only when the outbreak of World War II was looming, did the British comply with the demands of the nationals. Like a Myanmar saying goes, "Tilling only when the monsoon has elapsed," the newly formulated law was no longer effective as the British fled the land of Myanmar.

Further, the government's system of disbursing money for agriculture and its ineffectiveness is exposed. There were no Myanmar creditors or capitalists at a time when peasants were buried under piles of debts. The reason was that the money or the fruit of labour earned by the peasants toiling hard till the beads of sweat on the forehead trickled down to the toes slipped into the hands of the British who eventually left Myanmar. The money that had got out of the country came back into the country as the Chettier-owned money. The fact that the money was always in the hands of the foreigners was attributed to the incorrect way of disbursing money to the peasants.

The capital for the cultivation of paddy was obtained by farmers in a variety of ways. The money-lender could be fellow nationals, Chettiers and the government. The government lent money direct to the peasants or through cooperative societies. However, the government system of giving out loans was not effective. The true aim should have been to help farmers produce rice for the people with strong financial stock in hands. In actual practice, the government, being of a foreign country, wanted the principal fully back.

In the post-independent period, the Myanmar government was so generous in disbursing agricultural loans to peasants that a new class of persons who capitalized on the situation emerged. These generous loans too were not supportive to farmers. Some fellow nationals took the place of Chettiers, giving out loans at interest rates much higher than those collected by the Chettiers.

Under the British rule, the commercial bank also could not provide peasants with strong financial stocks, while private money-lenders looked only for the interest. The British rulers believed that it was only the cooperative system that could solve this problem. Since then, the word “cooperatives” had come into vogue. As different from cooperatives of the Western countries which emerged out of the wish of the people, those in Myanmar and India were created only by the government, and so people were not much interested in them. The cooperative societies in Myanmar and Indonesia collapsed in 1929-1930 due to the depression.

The matter of peasants needing to hold strong capital could not be solved as long as the expenditure and productivity of the peasants were not balanced. The development of cooperative credit societies was still sluggish. This was no wonder because of the fact that these associations depended only on the savings or deposits of the peasants. Other factors included carelessness of those involved in these associations in discharging their duties and failure of the peasants in repaying their debts.

The British government also established Cooperative Land Mortgage Banks (LMBs) and Joint Stock Banks (JSBs). The aim of the LMBs was to disburse loans to farmers from the capital established by the government. However, both sides suffered losses. The government was faced with fluctuations in the world economy and the peasants were unable to retrieve their mortgaged lands. Moreover, the banks also gave out short-term loans only against the wish of the peasants who wanted long-term loans. The JSBs depended on shares, to which financially weak Myanmar nationals could not contribute. At that time, the financial strength of the Chettiers was invincible, and they also had links with the commercial banks in Myanmar. Without the government intervention, establishment of financial stocks for peasants could not be accomplished.

Dawson Bank, set up in Pyapon in 1914, achieved success to some extent, but was also not freed from the impacts of the economic slump. In 1942-43, the British government fled the war and seated its office in Simla. With the idea of one Mr. Bens, the National Bank was founded. It had two levels - district bank and village bank. The capital for the bank was issued by the government. But this activity, being that of the British government, did not serve the interests of the peasants, and instead, gave protection to the benefits of the foreigner capitalists.

Towards the regaining of independence, General Aung San submitted a two-year plan regarding agriculture. Realizing the importance of the capital for the peasants, he, with the aid of advisors, intended to set up the National Agricultural Bank (NAB) in 1949. Included in his proposals were that the NAB was to disburse agricultural loans and that the system of disbursing loans was to be changed from the bank officers to the village committee.

Postscript

It has now been 63 years since Myanmar regained its independence. Different eras have seen different systems. Currently, there is the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation which is seeing to the agriculture and peasants. The ministry has now opened Agricultural Banks which are systematically issuing loans, and is now providing every aid in the forms of finance or techniques. It has not only opened agricultural training schools and is turning out agricultural technicians, but also is developing human resources by sending them abroad for further studies. It is found that the ministry is making every effort for the advancement of agricultural system in Myanmar.

3.5 Tin Soe, A Summary of the Economics Ideas of Bogyoke (General) Aung San¹

The book entitled, *Bogyoke Aung San; Seebwaryay Amyin* (Lit; Economic Ideas of Bogyoke (General) Aung San) was written and published in 1974, and second printing in 2010. The author is U Tin Soe, a young tutor from the Dept. of Economics, Yangon Institute of Economics; whose pen name is Tin Soe (Bawgagon) (Bawgagon literally means Economic Honours). The author is now a retired Professor of economics.

The book was written for two main reasons. As Gen. Aung San (GAS) is very highly and widely respected and revered by the Myanmar public as a national hero, certain members of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) under General Ne Win (1962-88) very frequently quoted the economic ideas of GAS to justify their unreasonable, inconsistent and failing policies and get public support.

The author saw these quotations as mostly untimely, irrelevant as well as misleading. He therefore would like to let the public know truly about the economic ideas of GAS and the environment under which these ideas have been diffused. The second objective was to arouse interests among the Myanmar youth and researchers of GAS by pooling the scattered economic ideas of GAS and analyzing them for the general public to be able to understand them easily by the laymen. Very unfortunately for Burma, a very intelligent and well qualified leader like GAS was assassinated by the stooges of imperialists at his young age of 33 years. It was a great loss for Burma. GAS was contemporary to and a friend of some outstanding leaders of the region then: Nehru (India), Nasser (Egypt), Sukarno (Indonesia), among others though young, Aung San was matured, well informed and had the vision and vice. To understand them, some quotation from his public speeches and briefings delivered at several official meetings and conferences have been extracted to attest the above statements.

GAS pointed out that the cinema halls and theatres conceived by the British officials and socio-economic indicators are not true indicators of the socio-economic conditions of the country by arguing that although these might be socio-economic indicators in other countries, they couldn't be in Burma because the founders of Cinemas and Theatres Halls and those who regularly visited these places were generally the middle and upper classes? Also, GAS raised questions to the Imperialist Administration whether they know that the majority of the poor who visited these places did it as an outlet or a form of relaxation in desperation? (*Gen. Aung San: Burma Digest 16, 5, 1946*) Aung San had also reminded as since 1947 not to overdo in revising their inflation problem.

"We must review and revise the inflationary conditions. But when this problem is tackled, we must be careful not to overdo it for it could lead to the other extreme. (of the problem i.e. deflation) (*Gen. Aung San Burma Digest 17, 4/ 1947*)

"In rehabilitating the country, we should adopt the national planning. The country could not develop and prosper without applying the national planning(methods)" (*Gen. Aung*

¹ Tin Soe was born in 1945, in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State. Got his very first degree of B.A (Honours) in Economics in 1966 from the Yangon Institute of Economics. Then he got M.A of the same subject in 1976. He did research as a post-graduate fellow in Agricultural Economics in Tokyo University from 1976 to 1980. As his farther study, at the University of Sydney, he got the degree in M.Ag (Agricultural Economics) in 1988. He got his Ph.D. (Agricultural Economics) from University of Sydney in 1992. He worked as a Professor and Head of the Dept of Economics, Yangon University of Distance Education from 2001 to 2006. He retired in 2006. As the visiting Professor, he worked in the Kobe University in 2007. At present he is serving as a consultant of Agrobusiness & Rural Development Consultants. – The summary was written for this textbook.

San Burma Digest 7, 6/1947) He had pointed out that the state owned enterprises (*SOEs*), Good and clear conscience would be required and it should also be timely in undertaking the issues. (***Gen. Aung San Burma Digest 7, 6/ 1947)***

Although Aung San had studied economics generally when he was a student of Rangoon University, he has never studied economics widely and deeply as he was fully occupied with politics and warfare in his whole life time (which was unfortunately very short), he has enough experience and become a practical economist of the time. A few summary gists are presented here to attest Aung San's economic qualifications.

Aung San was neither a Marxist nor a Maoist but noted to be an admirer of ***Marxism***. He has used ***Marxist*** methodology in many of his analyses in English. For instance, in analyzing the principles of development of Myanmar society, noted that "Fascism is the worst product of capitalism, the world has ever seen. It is the most reactionary jingoism, imperialism and, indeed, rule of Finance Capital. How is it that the growth of such a monstrosity of humanity and history has made possible? The answer lies in the very laws of capitalist society.

"Capitalism, being based on anarchic production for profit and resultant inequalities in distribution of wealth, is no longer able to solve the problem that it itself sets. Instead it has called forth irreconcilable antagonism between man and man, race and race, nation and nation, which is greatly intensified and extended in depth and range, by the very culture that it breeds (the culture of profit motive, greed and hate) and by the very technique it has forged science! As the contradiction of and crisis of capitalism deeper further and further, it grows more and more desperate, and thus it resorts to all sort of stratagems, subterfuges and stupidities. Unable to solve the crisis of "over-production" which it creates, it destroys goods and machinery exploits workers and home market more intensively while it also hunts furiously for foreign markets and colonies. Desiring to get more profit and yet more profit, it get less and less, and therefore it sets in motion unbridled competition amongst the capitalists of the same country and between one state and another, leading progressively to the elimination of one by the other and formation of trusts, cartels and such form of monopoly nationally and internationally which again intensify competitions, seek more fields and pastures new and attempt to exploit or rob existing ones harder until it calls in sharp divisions and struggle between capital and labour, between state and state, between imperialist countries and colonial countries and finally leads to a series of local wars extending at least to a large part of the world and affecting it to its very foundation. This is how, roughly, the laws of capitalist development operate. But this is what capitalist society does not want to do. Instead it seeks to prop itself up by various artificial devices and means. Thus we came to have Imperialism and Fascism, the two expressions of the same phenomenon in different forms-Finance Capital.

"Problems for Burma's Freedom," Presidential Address delivered at the first congress of the A.F.P.F.L, Jan. 20, 1946. (A.F.P.F.L= Anti Fascist Peoples Freedom League)

Aung San's Ideas on Agrarian Issues.

Gen. Aung San assessed that the ownership of land would be the fundamental issue of agricultural development. This land ownership issue should be considered on the basis of the land ownership of those who really cultivate or work on farms. Feudal land ownership i.e. large scale lands owned by the land lords should be constrained or eliminated by law. The size of farm-land ownership should also be limited by law. Allowing the govt-owned and cooperative owned land is not undesirable if it can be controlled and run effectively by law. The govt. must help the farmers, and the constitution guarantee them .(Abstract from the Address delivered by Gen. Aung San at the meeting of East and West Association held on Aug. 29th , 1945, at the Rangoon City Hall)

The agricultural policies for national economic development as seen by Gen Aung San were noted to include the following categories of work and phases:

- (a) Rehabilitation and Resettlement,
- (b) Development of agriculture, and
- (c) Long-term objectives of agriculture.

How to do them in practice was analyzed and outlined in detail is given later. (See them in the book 2010, pp 38-56).

Aung San's views on Industrialization in Burma

Aung San's ideas of industrialization are also interesting and seem to be still valid. "We start on a modest scale in developing form. And we must do first things first and begin with basic things such as relief, supplies, transport, communication, law and order, education, housing and public health on a progressive scale. And we must for our success apply principles of co-operation whenever necessary and practicable" (*"Problems for Burma's Freedom,"*) Presidential Address delivered by Gen. Aung San to the first congress of the AFPFL (*Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League, Jan.20, 1946*)

Aung San's ideas on the financial policy, which can be summarized as follows, is also notable.

"One of the objectives that we have in our Economic and Social Policy is to 'encourage private enterprise'. One of the points of our policy in connection with currency and finance is raising foreign loans in the cheapest markets without the obligation of making concessions at the expense of national interests" (*'Critique on British Imperialism'*, Address delivered at the Second Session of the Supreme Council of AFPFL, on May 16th, 1946.)

As can be noted from these and various other speeches delivered by Gen. Aung San, one other major industrial policy would be "protectionism" in the early phases.

- (1) Allowing the private enterprises to play freely on emergence of chaotic situation as a result of prevalence of unjust and unfair distribution systems, and production points locating too far from the market place, prices may increase and instable leading to inflation. (The same source as above)

Aung San analyzed inflation by classifying it into three categories; namely, cost-push inflation, Demand-pull inflation, and structural inflation (For further details, see *Economic Ideas of Gen Aung San*, 1947, pp 73-5)

At a Press conference held in the 27th. April, 1946, Aung San had observed that money is scarce if Burma, which was published in *The New Times of Burma*, an official British Govt's. Journal. The editor of the journal responded very loudly in the following day issue and replied that money was not scarce in the country as pointed out by Aung San, Instead, according to a wise local economist, money is too abundant in the country that certain amount of money should be with drawn from the money in circulation (to make the value of money stable).

Aung San responded to the editor in his "*Critique on British Imperialism*", an address delivered at the Second session of the Supreme council of AFPFL on 16th May, 1946, which run as follows:

"----- At a Press conference held on 25th.April 1946, I gave a short sketchy view of the situation in our country. I then stated: Money is scarce. Prices of consumer goods are high while those of those of rice and paddy are relatively too low. Agriculture is in chaos, and harvest and crop yield are not good. The food (rice) situation in Burma is continuously

deteriorating. Education is in shambles. Salaries, allowances, and wages are extremely low everywhere. Reports of acts of discrimination between servants and employees of Govt., and of Govt. subsidized companies and corporations are frequent. Law and order is seriously jeopardized. Political persecution is getting into stride. Civil liberties are still being severely curtailed, and emergency laws and Defiance Act continue. There are growing signs of discontent amongst peasantry and labour. The salaries of teachers have all along been low. Now they have been brought much lower. Even then, not all teachers are paid. In particular, the vernacular teachers suffer most. The situation amongst peasantry in several districts is getting from bad to worse. They have no sufficient *wunsas* (food grown by cultivators for domestic consumption), and yet they have to sell whole or part of their *wunsas* to repay govt loans, to pay taxes and rents and to buy essential commodities. In a number of cases, cultivators have been evicted from their buildings. But Govt. up to now is following a policy of drift. The situation is thus anything but a happy one.

“To my above rough survey of our national situation, the official organ of Govt. *‘The New Times of Burma,’* wrote on editorial rejoinder two days later. They argued with my finding that the situation in our country is not happy. However, they did not agree with my diagnosis of the cases of the present situation. To my comment that money is scarce, they made a counter-comment and said; “our observations” (“-----“ are mine) suggested that there is more money about than even before. So much so that a wise economist has argued that a good deal of it should be taken out of circulation. In either case, it must be noted, it is only a case of “observations”. Now all that I would like to ask *“The New Times of Burma”* on what grounds their observations are based. Do they form their observations by seeing the utterances at not very many cinemas and theatres of Rangoon? Do they judge this question of money circulation by paying a stray visit to a local bazaar? Do they know that there are many in this country who cannot think of going to these places by having to struggle for their bare existence from day to day. In Rangoon and a few big towns, belong generally to middle and upper classes and the very few of the many poor who can attend at all are doing so as desperate form of relaxation just to make them forget their unbearable existence for the while whatever may be the tomorrow that await them? I have been through a good many places in this country, I have known personally the actual plight of several people in several places. I also know that when the Japanese currency was abruptly declared null and void by the British Military Administration, even before the whole country was occupied and before the people in the country side has knowledge of it, the commercial adventures from towns dumped all their currencies of the country folks in return for goods and thus aggravated the situation beyond measure. I have already referred, very briefly no doubt, in this point in my presidential address, delivered at the first congress of AFPFL, The money certainly is not in the hands of the people, whatever may be the argument *“The New Times of Burma”*. After all, we know very well that even before the war the greater bulk of the people were very poor while only a few, who were mostly Europeans and foreigners, were rich and in their hands was accumulated the far larger amount of the wealth of our country. Now this position has become much more accentuated. For the cost of living is four times higher than pre-war level according to the Burma Gazette only 12 days ago and even if we assume that the figures that gave were correct and grant that there is a general fall in prices of essential commodities (which, however, I doubt for a good many reasons), it is still quite higher. Place this factor along-side of what have done by the war, such as the fall in production, the absence of export returns, large slaughter of cattle, destruction of homes, materials and transport and the after-effects of the war, such as bigger corruption, malpractices, misdistribution, increase in dacoities, with low prices of the main staple product of our country(rice and paddy) low wages etc., any one who is prepared to face facts must agree, then that money is scarce or, at any rate, not in hands of the people. We would very much like to know exactly from the authorities concerned what the volume of money in circulation is like. Then we can compare

with the pre-war condition, and also we must not forget here a huge amount of dislocations caused in our economy and finance by the Japanese occupation which resulted in pre-war currencies being replaced by the Japanese currencies which flooded this country and the huge consumption and appropriation of our goods, gold and silver by the Japanese war machines with no return in kind etc. When therefore it is said that there is more money about than ever before, a superficial comprise between the pre-war circulation and the present circulation will not give us a true perspective of things. For even if the amount of money in circulation is larger than that of pre-war period, that cannot mean in our country that there is too much money which must call for attempts to withdraw a good deal of it from circulation. The volume of money in circulation must be judged in relation to the actual cost of living in general and if, for instance, the cost of living now is over four times higher than before the war, and if the amount of money in circulation now is nearly two times higher than before the war it cannot [be] said that there is more money about than ever. And, as I have pointed out above, we must not forget the intervening factor of the Japanese occupation which upsets the equilibrium of our country's economy and finances and complicates the present situation all the more. Therefore when we tackle the inflationary situation, it is necessary that we do not over-correct ourselves and saving from one extreme to another. For in that case there will come about deflation, a deflation which will be for worse off than a usual sort we conceive it to be, in that the prices are still uneven and high, and the income of the people in general is very low, in fact lower even than pre-war level, according to my observation-----

“If Govt or we desire really to know the true economic and financial position in the country, it is not by superficial observations such as looking at attendances at a few theatres and cinemas or a crowd of people in a bazaar stall struggling to buy daily necessities which for many have to be severely reduced in amount and kind, just enough for bare subsistence, but by a deeper and more factual survey that we can hope to get a true picture. If at all we must withdraw a good deal of money from circulation, it is not by cuts in wages and salaries(so far adopted by the Govt.) of middle and poor classes but by curbing the activities of profiteers, hoarders, exporters of money outside of Burma, etc. And also by devising measures to take money out of the keeping the rich few for circulation among the people in general we should rectify the present economic conditions of the people.”

Economic Fascism in Burma

As a political leader and the chief of staff of the Armed Forces of Burma, Gen. Aung san might, no doubt, be very busy. Despite this, he has delivered many addresses, and, he has also written a few articles and a book, and most of them are not easily available now. One of the articles, entitled, ‘Economic Fascism in Burma’, was written by Aung San and published in the *Burma Digest*, vol 1, No. 5, May 1946 issue. I have translated that article into Burmese and published in the “Bothahtaung” Daily Newspaper (11-7-1972) issue. As the *Burma Digest* Journal was not available now, I tried here to retranslate some relevant ideas of Aung San from Burmese to English briefly for our foreign readers.

As the non-sensible war policies were no longer popular among the Burmese people, and they no longer approved any war policies of the British Colonial Administration in Burma. Moreover the strong and severe offensive attacks by the Fascists (Japanese), the British forces were finally defeated and withdrawn and settled in (India's) Simla briefly. The British colonial Administration (BCA) during their brief stay in Simla even tried to introduce economic fascism to Burma under the disguised names of the Rehabilitation plans and Projects.

Nobody could deny the fact that resettlement and rehabilitation works were urgently needed for every region of Burma. However, what measures had been taken by the BCA for this purpose? It was reported that the Governor had gained an interest-free loan of 87 million

Pound Sterling to implement the so-called resettlement projects. Please note the word, “interest-free” loan. How could an interest-free loan for Burma be available, while the British Govt. itself then was borrowing from the USA at 2 % interest-rate p.a. Moreover, the loans for Burma were not in cash but in kind, and interest has been included in determining the prices of those commodities. Thus, not a word of them on loans is believable so that whatever they say could not be expected to come in reality.

When Britain borrowed from the USA, many Britishers in the Parliament and among the public had expressed their anger and unhappiness and complained on this issue so that the British Govt. had tried hard to cool the emotions of their people by promising that the loans taken is free from any kind of bindings or bond. Some Britishers had strongly criticized openly to the too much ‘business-like’ behavior of the Americans. Furthermore, some Britishers demanded that just like the USA was enjoying the preferences offered in trade by the Imperial Govt., the USA, in return, should also relax its import controls.

However, in the case of borrowing loans to Burma, the Imperial Govt., although not expressed in clean terms, had deliberately included some conditions that would be beneficial to the UK. What are these conditions?

Discarding the condition that the loans should be used in Britain, the loans obtained by the Governor was not to use in lifting up the economic life of Burmese people, but to help the British and associated business communities. Regardless of whatever they say or said, under the false promises and objectives and targets, the Governor and his people clearly intended to rebuild the interests of the British and their associated (especially, Indians) business communities. Sooner or not long after, most of these enterprises would be handed over to the British and associated business agents as indemnity for the damages and losses caused by war that they encountered during the war. So what the Governor had given to the Burmese people was not a loan but collecting the costs of war from our people. In other words, it was demanding for war indemnity from Burmese people, who, in fact, had been the victims of war.

Burmese people, instead of getting the war indemnity, had, in reality, to bear for the costs of war. This was a true fact as attested by the Govt’s response to our query of “Why didn’t they take any measures to pay the war indemnity to the people of Burma?” The Govt. responded bluntly that they (the Govt.) have no knowledge of what had been happening over the past three years, so that they couldn’t do anything. Do they have to enquire the situations by landing the grounds by dropping parachutes? They couldn’t do that way. Moreover, we should also know how they tricked us with regard to inducement of foreign investment to flow into Burma. Burma needs the genuine inducement of foreign investment. We do not want collecting the costs of war under the disguised name of war indemnity, monopoly enterprises, and unilateral investments.

In announcing the establishment of the Civil Supply Board, some projects like the Agricultural Project, the Govt. committed to procure the “surpluses” or excess domestic supply over domestic demand for all the crops. The Govt. has expected that such measures would induce to arise production of rice as the market and prices of crops was guaranteed, and that these measures would boost production so that stability and normally could be brought in and maintained.

However, for whom would the price incentives be? Is it for the cultivators? Or for the agents of the British Govt. (Capitalists, merchants and traders)? I accept fixation of agricultural crops, especially paddy, by the Govt. Before the war, although we have demanded to guarantee the agricultural prices by fixing them, the Govt didn’t respond at all. Now, the Govt. is trying to fix the prices of agricultural prices when inflation is at its maximum height. How to do it then? I accept that the prices of basic commodities based on world market prices

and the conditions of consumers. However, the inflation problem should be first solved before fixing the prices of basic agricultural commodities (especially staple item like paddy or rice). Determination of prices before solving inflation problem would mean that it is like squeezing the throats of cultivators and labourers. What benefits could they (the British colonial administration) expect from taking such a measure? The consequences, no doubt, would be more dacoities, more robberies, more black market (or illegal) sales of army use items like sweaters, pants and mosquito-nets, among other, which widely prevailed even now. Then, how is the inflation problem to be solved? In this regard, the first thing to do have to encourage the free flow of commodities both inside the country and or from foreign countries, and for that purpose, preparations for the necessary production and transportations should be made. Although the Govt. cannot take responsibility for all these activities, the Govt. can undertake the activities or measures like reducing wastages and supervising or remedying the chaotic situations in the markets and in the economy. I would also like to mention a few of export and import. The export-import business of Myanmar (Burma) is going to be controlled and operated soon under the Govt. monopoly. However, the form of monopoly that the Govt. intended is not like the one practiced in the USSR. Giving the excuse of inexperience in this kind of monopoly business, the Govt. is going to transfer the monopoly power to their former agents (some old exploiters; capitalists, traders and merchants). And, the monopolistic business is to be run by the capitalists and petty-buzyer. How unfortunate our people, especially the poor, are?

Well, if the Govt. cannot take responsibilities of all, then why does the Govt. honored the former monopoly business tycoons by inviting them to undertake the activities that are going to be controlled by the Govt.? Why not our Myanmar nationals considered becoming their agents? Why not Myanmar nationals appointed as agents? The main reason they (BCA) gave us is again “inexperience”

Due to this inexperience facts, our nationals have even to loose all the opportunities for learning or doing to gain experiences? And, was it or is it that difficult to gain experiences of marketing and or trading? In other words, is marketing trading activities too difficult to learn and gain experiences? Can't the Govt. give or provide advice or consultancy service, if necessary, to learn about the businesses and gain experiences?

Under these circumstances, the Japanese legal tenders have been made null and void so that our people, especially the country people have been hit hard. The unclassifiable or unjustifiable fact in this regard was that while the Japanese money in Burma was demonetized, how come that these moneys were left undisturbed and legal and operational in other British colonial countries. What causes or reasons make them do the above thing in Burma? Is it because that the British Colonial Administration has no interest on Burma than those of other non-colonial countries? The military operations are over and printing out the unlimited amounts of Japanese currencies had also been stopped by law now. Why didn't the Govt. undertake any measures still, as they did successfully in some regions, to legalize the Japanese currencies and include them in the money in circulation? Why don't they (the BCA) put any effort, although they can do it, to administer Burma not by the Govt. agents but by the representatives of the people to get approval and appreciation of Burma by the international community? Why don't they try to legalize the Japanese currencies and permit them to include in the circulation of money of Burma, although they can do it?

It would be a long story indeed to write about the introduction of economic fascism into Burma by the British imperialists. There will be no end of the excuses they made. Burma is now facing big troubles caused by the rampant inflation. A great number of people are unemployed and have no money in their hands. These and other factors are causing economic forces to deteriorate and chaotic. The British Govt. not only failed to supply goods and public utilities but also unable to let the free flows of internal and external trade-instead, the Govt.

closed all imports under their “dog in the manger Policy” moreover, the Govt. even cut off relations with the United Nations Rehabilitation and Resettlement Agency (UNRRA). These measures could never bring Burma to her former state and bring back into normalcy. Instead, Burma cannot avoid but encounter more failures and losses. As Burma was still left in a state of ignorance (by the British colonial Govt.), conditions here are still bad, if not worse.

Concluding Remarks

The assassination of Gen. Aung San by the murderers at a young age of 33 years was not only a loss of a great political and military leader but also of a ‘real’ economist for Burma. As he was an intelligent young man with a hobby of observing everything he sees or comes across, most of his observations as expressed in his speeches, writings, though few, and recording are noted to be well qualified and systematic. As he has been through many parts of Burma especially rural regions and areas_ his true knowledge on the issues and problems as encountered by the peasants and labourers are very wide and note-worthy.

Aung San’s knowledge on the financial and monetary problems was not only wide and deep, but also trust-worthy as attested by the argument made between him and the editors of the New Times of Burma, among others. Many economic ideas of Aung San are not only note-worthy, but also still valid today. If Aung San were still alive, most of the financial and monetary problems prevailing in Burma today could hopefully be solved effectively by him. Many of the current rural and agrarian issues and problems, and those of industrial, financial and monetary issues have the same implications that Aung San could be able to correct and assemble them correctly to the path of development.

The loss of Aung San was thus the loss of an economic leader for Burma, indeed, and his economic ideas should be learnt by all Burmese leaders from top to bottom. Aung San might not be a text-book economist or an economic theorist but a ‘real’ or an applied economist who is more useful for the country than the ‘text-book’ economists widely prevailed now-a-day in Burma.

3.6 Zeya Thu, Pyidawtha: Promise of Development

On January 4th 1948, Burma became independent. Burmese who have been under the British rule for more than a century were, once again, masters of their own fate. They became proud members of humanity escaping from the yoke of the colonial masters.

One year later, on January 20, 1949 when President Truman of United States took office, he introduced the word 'underdeveloped' in his Inaugural Address:

'We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.

The old imperialism- exploitation for foreign profit- has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.¹

By using that term 'underdeveloped', Truman divided the humanity into two regions: developed and underdeveloped.

That division was perhaps best described by the words of Mexican intellectual Gustavo Esteva:

'Underdevelopment began on January 20, 1949. On that day, two billion people became underdeveloped.'²

Those two billion people included Burmese. With that speech, Burmese who just recently became proud masters of their own fate became suddenly underdeveloped. They found themselves as second class citizens of the world.

However, that speech was not just all about doom and gloom. It offered a way out, i.e, program of development. If a nation is underdeveloped, it has no choice but to embark on a 'program of development.' 'Program of development' would bring about 'development', the most desirable goal.

With that speech, the term 'development' in that context was adopted universally. With that speech, era of development was born. With that speech, 'the promise of development' would inspire leaders of newly independent countries, alias underdeveloped countries.

In the words of the father of ecology, Haeckel: *'Development is, from this moment on, the magic word with which we will solve all the mysteries that surround us or, at least, that which will guide us toward their solution.'*¹

¹ Harry. S. Truman, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949.

² Gustavo Esteva, 'Development', in 'the Development Dictionary: A guide to Knowledge as power', Zed Books, 2005 Edition, p. 7.

Pyidawtha

Development means one has to escape from an undignified condition called 'underdevelopment'.² To escape from such condition, one has to realize that one is under that condition first.

Burmese realized their unfavorable conditions. Having confidence after winning independence back, they believed they can 'develop'. They were going to embark on a 'Program of Development' of their own.

That program turned out to be Pyidawtha. As can be seen in the exact words of the Pyidawtha plan compiled in the form of a book,

'Between these covers is presented Burma's answer to the challenge that faces every newly independent nation in Southeast Asia- her blue print for a democratic state dedicated to the welfare of her people.'

A couple of years after the Truman speech, Pyidawtha came to Burma.

Being an elusive term to translate exactly, Pyidawtha meant '*Peaceful and Prosperous Nation*'. Some referred to it as 'Happy Land.' On the cover of the Report itself was printed ***Pyidawtha- the New Burma***. So, Pyidawtha is program of building a **New Burma** or marching toward **New Burma**.

What does New Burma mean? Well, welfare state. According to the Report, it was Burma with 'new levels of prosperity, health and security, and social justice.' The goal of Pyidawtha was captured in a speech made by Prime Minister U Nu during his 1955 visit to the United States- he wanted to '*demonstrate to the masses of people in so-called underdeveloped parts of the world that democratic methods can bring increased standards of living under a system of economic and social justice*'.³ Words and concepts in that speech were strikingly similar to those of Truman in the excerpt from his Inauguration Speech mentioned earlier.

Promised Land

Prime Minister U Nu in his 1952 Martyrs Day speech announced the slogan, 'Toward a Welfare State. He promised his fellow countrymen '*ludago titetalone cardazee lagasheetyar*'- 'every man would possess a house, a car and a monthly income of about \$200'.

¹ Ibid, p 10.

² Ibid, p 7.

³ Nu, 'An Asian Speaks' quoted in 'Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 138'

Thus, Pyidawtha was the promise; promise of development. The promise was dramatized in an attempt to inspire and mobilize masses.

The sense of promise can also be seen in an almost poetic slogan before the prose text of the Report compiled in the form of a book which includes 128 pages, photos and graphs;

'Burma can become one of the most prosperous nations of all Asia.

In this New Burma we can enjoy a high standard of living

...health and security for our people...social justice for all.

We can remain faithful to our past, yet live consciously and gladly in the twentieth century.

We can be proudly independent, yet a willing partner in the community of nations.

We can blend successfully the religious and spiritual values of our heritage with the benefits of modern technology.

To the creation and perpetuation of this great New Burma, we bend our backs and commit our hearts.¹

Pyidawtha was an ambitious attempt to transform Burma into New one. Pyidawtha was an attempt of modernization. Modernization is, in essence, 'catching up' or 'narrowing the gap' with the West. As President of Ghana Nkrumah once hailed: 'We in Ghana will do in ten years what it took others one hundred years to do.' Here in the case of Pyidawtha, it also meant catching up with neighbours. The Report explicitly expressed it;

'...we have today an abysmally low standard of existence. It is well known that living standards throughout Asia are sadly inferior to those of Western Europe and especially the United States. Yet, standards of living in Burma are low even when compared to most of our neighbours.'²

U Nu observed during visit to Thailand that; *'...for every step forward that Thailand takes Burma needs to take ten.'³*

The sense of urgency in catching up can be seen in the then Prime Minister Nu's words expressed after Pyidawtha Period:

'We have been in a hurry and we are in a hurry. We have waited for so long and we feel we must accomplish a great deal in a short time.'¹

¹ Pyidawtha: the New Burma, 1954, p 8.

² Ibid;p 9.

³ Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 119.

'The standard of living, wrote Jean Fourastie, is measured by the quantity of goods and services which may be purchased by the average national income'.² National income is also measured by Gross Domestic Product GDP or Gross National Product GNP, the most common measure of development. The corollary is that development happens when GDP increases. As geographers Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick pointed out in *Theories of Development*; 'High per capita GNP, reached through economic growth, becomes the objective of development.'³ If Burma wanted to develop, it had no choice but to increase its GDP.

The overall goal of Pyidawtha was to raise the GDP to 7000 million kyats by 1959-60 which is about two-thirds above the 1952-53 figures of 4244 million kyats and about one-third over prewar 1938/39 figure of 5537 million kyats. That meant roughly doubling the GDP between 1950/51 and 1959/60. That also meant GDP increase of 31 percent over prewar levels and increase in per capita production of 4 percent- slight increase- over prewar levels.

To bring about the step-up of GDP to planned target, 7500 million kyats was estimated to be invested over the plan period- between 1952 and 1959.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Transportation, Telecommunications, Power development, Minerals, Industrial development, Small scale industries, Health, Education, Housing, Social welfare had been identified as key sectors for development.

Great Expectation Unmet

Pyidawtha was introduced to the people with fanfare. It was publicized heavily. The word 'Pyidawtha' eventually found its way into everyday life of the Burmese.

By 1955, Pyidawtha was abandoned and revised with a Four-year plan. In 1960, scheduled finished time, GDP was only 60 percent higher than that of starting point 1950. Doubling of GDP between 1950 and 1960 did not materialize. Falling short of targets, Pyidawtha failed.

Why did Pyidawtha fail?

'Pyidawtha Plan stalled because of lack of funds, as the price of rice had fallen in the international market; the revenue from rice being the main source of fund for the plan. Added to this was the lack of knowhow and skill on the part of the government.'⁴

¹ Ibid. p 112.

² Serge Latouche, 'Standard of Living' in 'The Development Dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power', Zed Books, 2005 Edition.

³ Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, The Guilford Press, 1999, p 10.

⁴ Khing Maung Kyi et al, *Economic Development of Burma: A vision and a strategy*, Singapore University Press,

According to Myanmar economist Myat Thein, the reasons given by then Prime Minister U Nu for the failure to achieve the plan targets are:

'The failure to restore law and order fully;

Because of the lapse of time usually occurring between the making of orders and actual fulfillment, the implementation of the projects gained momentum only in 1954/55. Unfortunately, a financial crisis also happened in the same year;

Lack of intensive preparation, organization, supervision, and management in the establishment and running of state enterprises;

Lack of trained personnel to administer the projects;

Administrative centralization and the consequent bad effect on the morale of the executives;

*Prevalence of low productivity and inefficiency as a result of lack of skill, low morale, and improper administration'*¹

Even before Pyidawtha began, a review of planning in Burma in general and KTA methods in particular done by four-man mission of World Bank in March and April 1953 commented:

*'The principal limitation of the planning activity so far, appears to be a preoccupation with the engineering and financial aspects of individual projects without adequate consideration for Burma's limited administrative, managerial and technical capacities. Personnel limitations make it improbable that Burma can undertake any large number of development projects within a short period. ...In much of the planning activity, the availability of effective programme administration and efficient management of individual operations appears to have been assumed rather than established.'*²

Several reasons of the failure of Pyidawtha were given by both government and experts alike. Chief culprit seemed to be poor planning. Out of desperation to catch up with the developed world, Burmese made a mistake of careless planning. For this, they had to pay dearly as wheels of fortune cannot be reversed.

However, there is another question in waiting. It is, perhaps, the most important question. Did Pyidawtha really fail?

Comparing 1951-52 economic data with those of 1959-60, some Burmese economists stated:

2000, p10

¹ Myat Thein, *Economic Development of Myanmar*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004, p 20.

² Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence*, Oxford University Press, 1959, Second Edition, p 111.

'Performance was moderately respectable. GDP increased by about 40 per cent and per capita GDP and agricultural production and paddy output increased by about a third. Timber production, both teak and non-teak, increased very substantially, more than doubling in the case of teak. Rice exports also approximately doubled in terms of physical volume.'¹

Those economists again commented,

'The period from 1950 to 1962, in retrospect, was a "golden age" of post-war Burma. The eight-year "Pyidawtha" Plan saw solid achievements in infrastructure, Agriculture and industry.'²

Pyidawtha failed vis-a-vis its ambitious goals. In other words, if goals had not been set that high, it would not have failed. Ambitious goals lent Pyidawtha the look of failure. Pyidawtha Report itself confessed it was ambitious.³

'Social scientist S.C.Dube commented: 'Sights were set rather high when developing societies uncritically accepted the development theorists' assumption that life begins at \$1000 per capita and when an economic historian of Rostow's repute suggested that the test of development is one car for four persons in the society'.⁴

It looked even more ambitious placed vis-à-vis figures in Dube's comment which described those figures as 'rather high sights'. The goals of Pyidawtha according to U Nu's words were far higher than those in Dube's comment. 'Monthly income of about \$200 a person' is definitely higher than '\$1000 per capita' and 'a car per person' than 'a car per four persons'.

Looking back, Pyidawtha was like a 'Get rich quick' scheme; another factor to help Pyidawtha look ambitious.

U Nu later confessed the causes of failure of Pyidawtha as in, 'We wanted to get a thing done in one month which normally should take one year.'⁵

Consider the following:

'As U Nu publicly admitted, that 'because of our intense enthusiasm to achieve these ends (of a socialist welfare state) in the quickest possible time we have committed several blunders.

¹ Khing Maung Kyi et al, *Economic Development of Burma: A vision and a strategy*, Singapore University Press, 2000, p 7.

² Ibid, p 2.

³ Pyidawtha: the New Burma, 1954, p 2.

⁴ Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A global perspective*, Sage Publications, Fourth Edition, p 33.

⁵ Richard Butwell, *U Nu of Burma*, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 117.

These blunders included an over-anxiety to reach the unrealistic goal of self-sufficiency, inability to maintain internal law and order, and a miscalculation of time required for development.¹

Mismatch of Promise and Reality

When reality does not meet expectation, it paves way to frustration which in turn gives way to counter-action. It would be more so if expectations are set very high. When high expectations are not met, frustration might be greater and counter-action would be disastrous. That seemed to happen exactly in the case of Pyidawtha. Pyidawtha was promoted using 'emotional words and unrealistic goals.' That raised expectations. When the plan fell short of expectations, it back fired. People were frustrated. Masses might not matter. But, elites mattered. Just as its formulation inspired elites, its failure frustrated elites, to be more exact, military elites. Frustration might prompt those elites to take action to change the undesirable situation. Pyidawtha Period was interrupted by Caretaker Government in 1958 when General Ne Win, the chief of Armed forces, took over the power in a thinly veiled coup d'état to become the Prime Minister amidst chaotic situation of the nation. It was not an official coup d'état only because elected Prime Minister U Nu offered to make the appearance of acceding power to General Ne Win under his own will to maintain the stability of the nation. Caretaker Government was 'efficient, honest, frequently inspiring, and equally often frightening in its authoritarian character'.² That experience might convince military elites that they would be more effective in pushing the nation towards the goal of development in their own program. Caretaker Government lasted until February 1960 when U Nu came back into power again after winning a free and fair election.

In 1962, a coup d'état, again, was launched against U Nu's government to embark on another program of development, "Burmese Way to Socialism" sponsored by Burmese Socialist Programme Party. Pyidawtha and other subsequent programs before 1962 were based on socialism and planning. This time, as if not to be enough, planning was to be substituted with more planning, and socialist methods were to be replaced with 'more socialist methods' if there were such methods. Full-fledged Socialist Programme promising the most extreme form of socialism was adopted. History was already written for that program and we all know its fate. The program 'Burmese way to Socialism' failed spectacularly after 26 years of its introduction in the midst of 1988 Uprising which ended up in another military coup d'état.

¹ A comparative study of U Nu and Sihanouk, Moo Yubin, Master Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2006, p 67.

² Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 209.

At the time of writing this essay, half a century after first major development program failed, Myanmar is passing through another critical juncture in her history with another goal of development. Election was held based on a new constitution, and once-in-a-generation parliament would start on January 31, 2011. This time, the goal is more vivid: ' Building of New Modern Developed Nation.' Essentially, it is still the same goal as Pyidawtha half a century ago. In the first year of second decade of 21st Century, Myanmar has enriched itself with experiences of 'experiments of development'. As famous inventor Edison put it, ' *"Results! Why man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work."* The morale is just keep on eliminating things that do not work, and things that work would be found out finally. If Myanmar can translate those experiences into wisdom, guiding light to embark on unfinished journey of development, we can step onto the higher rungs of development ladder and catch up with our East Asian brethren starting with Japan, South Korea and more recently, China and Vietnam.

What is in store for development of Myanmar? Well, only time will tell. Forecast of future is always a tricky business though human beings love to do that. There are many unknowns. Even trickier is the fact that there might also be ***unknown unknowns*** - the probable existence of unknowns is not known or overlooked. One thing is for sure. Whether we like it or not, tomorrow will eventually become today, and then yesterday. Our development journey will go on perhaps forever.

3.7 Ye Htut, Buddhist Teachings on Economics

Buddhist teachings, with the rays of Dhamma, illuminate the path to Liberate from the severity of the worldly sufferings. Individuals have numerous worries and stresses. The Buddhist way of meditation is only the solution to relieve stresses. One thing you need to do is to do it yourself. Edward Conze names Buddhism as “do-it-yourself religion.” Just relax the whole body and keep your spine upright. Place your attention at the tip of your nostril where the breath is coming in and going out. Gradual growth of concentration keeps your mind not to travel somewhere else. Your body and mind become cool and calm, reducing your stress and strain at one sitting. The very fundamental and constant rules of a Buddhist are to avoid doing evils, to do good deeds, and to purify her or his mind. While the cries of war-torn victims from battle-countries, Buddhist meditation centers are mushrooming all over the world to appease the severely painful humanity. That is why some scholars point out the fact that many people still consider Buddhism to teach a denial or escape from worldly concerns into a private, hermetic realm of bliss. But if you go a little deeper inside it and find a full and rich teachings of the Buddha encompassing every facet of human life, with a great deal of practical advice on how to live with integrity, wisdom and peace in the midst of the chaotic world.

To advocate the Buddhist teachings as a perfect and true doctrine for the whole planet, H.G.Wells, in his “The Outline of History”, says: Over great areas of the world it still survives: it is possible that in contact with western science, and inspired by the spirits of history, the original teaching of Gautama, revived and purified, may yet play a large part in the direction of human destiny.

There are two human destinies – to obtain wealth and happiness in the mundane world and to attain Nirvana or Immortality in the supra mundane world. A healthy, wealthy and happy life can be built through the mundane way of Buddhist teaching and a peaceful and wholesome life in one’s present as well as in next existence through the supra mundane way of Buddha Dhamma.

Human world is where we dwell and earnestly strive to survive. Human world is defined by U Ba Khin, the Master of the International Meditation Centre of Myanmar as “a half-way home between Heaven and Hell. We experience pleasure and pain mixed together, in degrees as determined by our own part Kamma (volitional activities which lead to either beneficial or detrimental effect).

Men's basic requirements are food, clothing, and shelter. Though we do not have anything to wear or dwell, we can live if we have food and drink. Food is, if empirically tested, the most essential need that makes us survive.

Being empirical in approach, Buddhism views all problems, including economic problems, faced by man in the most practical way. It is this empirical approach that led the Buddha to accept the basic premise that all beings subsist on food (*sabbe satta ahavatthitika*: *Dighanikaya* III PP. 211, 273; *Ariguttara Nikaya*, V. PP. 50, 55) Working on this premise the Buddha realized that people had to resort to various ways and means to acquire this basic need. Here he intervened to regulate the ways and means adopted by people and to keep them within ethical boundaries. For this he applied the general ethical norms that control and guide actions (*Kamma*) of people. Thus one sees that in this manner the Buddha formulated theories that indirectly influence production, distribution, consumption and preservation of all types of goods required to satisfy the wants of people to foster their material well-being.¹

To be a wealthy human or the one who is successful to train himself as a cultured citizen before he becomes rich. He or she must be ethical not only to become civilized ones in the world but also readily purified ones attaining four noble truths-*dukkha sacca* (the truth of suffering), *samudaya sacca* (the truth of the cause of suffering), *maggā sacca* (the truth of the path to liberation from suffering) and *nirodha sacca* (the truth of the cessation of suffering).

The Buddha does not neglect economic life for those who are in need of it as supreme compassion dictates. To get economic welfare or blessing one should do a job without confusion or perplexity. From right means of livelihood one develops greatly and nobly to a high level in a society; so unlawful means to get profit or money(income) must be avoided with a steady vow(= determination); black marketing, illegal trade, evasion of necessary taxes, false statements of income, and profit, etc. are unscrupulous, they take or give recklessly when money is concerned. So fools love foolishness, no doubt. The millionaires in some countries indulge in using harmful drugs, drinks, bribery and corruption to get more and more wealth: their life is indeed miserable now as trade in living beings is indulged in. Drugs, drinks, gambling, sensual indulgence, sensual pleasure must be avoided to get the truth, good and beauty and beauty at present. By dutiful performances of a lawful work, diligence makes one a welfare *Mangala* (blessed) person immediately. So “*Anakulasa Kammanta Mangala*” one of the 38 blessings, taught by the Buddha in *Mangala Sutta*, that means ‘having blameless occupation is a blessing’ means, significantly, the deed of peaceful occupation or job, this is

¹ S.K. Nanayakara, *ECONOMICS*, in ‘Social Dimensions of Buddhism, Encyclopaedia of Buddhism Extract-No. 3 published by the Department of Buddhist Affairs, Ministry of Buddhasasana-Sri Lanka, 1995, p.17

the highest Mangala known to the wise only. In most countries economic crises are accelerating, developing with alarming rate.¹

Buddhism does not consider material welfare as an end in itself: it is only a means to an end—a higher and nobler end. But it is a means which is indispensable, indispensable in achieving a higher purpose for man's happiness. So Buddhism recognizes the need of certain minimum material conditions favourable to spiritual success.

His teachings on ethical, spiritual and philosophical problems are fairly well known. But little is known, particularly in the west, about his teaching on social, economic and political matters. Yet there are numerous discourses dealing with these scattered throughout the ancient Buddhist texts.²

The Cakkavattisihanada-sutta of the Digha-nikaya (No. 26) clearly states that poverty (daliddiya) is the cause of immorality and crimes such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, etc. Kings in ancient times, like governments today, tried to suppress crime through punishment. The Kutadanta sutta of the same Nikaya explains how futile this is. It says that this method can never be successful. Instead the Buddha suggests that, in order to eradicate crime, the economic condition of the people should be improved.³

The passage mentioned below is an excerpt from the kutadanta Sutta.

‘The Buddha then related to him accounts of King Mahavijita in the olden times. He was blessed with wealth, having conquered a large territory, and would like to perform a great Yanna for his progress and security. So he called his Brahmin advisor to tell him how to do so.

According to the Brahmin's advice, the criminals were the first to be eliminated, but not only by killing or imprisoning, since the rest of them would take their place in doing harm to the people as before. The best way was to eradicate their kind through (such measures for economic development as) distributing the seedlings to industrious farmers who live out of their land, granting some money as investment capital to industrious merchants and providing food and salary to those who served the king (i.e. Seeing that all had some work to do from which to earn income). Through such methods the king's wealth would multiply, the towns and cities peaceful and the people happy and merry, dancing their babies on their bosom, without the need to close the doors of their houses.”⁴

¹ Lay-Ein-Su Ashin Vicittasara, INTRODUCTION TO 38 BLESSINGS OF MANGALA, translated by U Han Htay (Research), subtitled 'Mangala and Economic Progress', p.47.

² Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha taught, Gordon Fraser, England, P.81.

³ Ibid, P.82.

⁴ Dighanikaya Sutta, I, P.127 ff.

Grain and other facilities for agriculture should be provided for farmers and cultivators; capital should be provided for traders and those engaged in business; adequate wages should be paid to those who are employed. When people are thus provided for with opportunities for earning a sufficient income, they will be contented, will have no fear or anxiety, and consequently the country will be peaceful and free from crime.

Because of this, the Buddha told lay people how important it is to improve their economic condition. This does not mean that he approved of hoarding wealth with desire and attachment, which is against his fundamental teaching, nor did he approve of each and every way of earning one's livelihood. There are certain trades like the production and sale of armaments, which he condemns as evil means of livelihood, as we saw earlier.¹

The Buddha, thus, encouraged householders to be wholesome in whatever they do. The ideal morality is the measure of how valuable a man is. If a man is morally established, he himself deserves to be regarded by the others; the human world is a better place to live in because of the men who have blameless occupation or do blameless actions. As they don't offend the world, the world is in peace.

The Buddha taught the householders the Mingala Sutta or 38 Blessings to the humanity. The blameless occupation is one of them, anakulaca kammanta (blameless occupation). In finding one's wealth through trades or jobs, what he does must be blameless. His blamelessness makes him to be respected by others in the present life and attain Nirvana in the next existence.

And then most of us cannot avoid economic affairs, so good clean work has to be done. The Buddha has taught Anakutaca Kammanta to keep family in honour and glory of physical and mental happiness, unity and integration. The important point here is not to do work haphazardly or carelessly. 'Anakula' can mean 'care' or 'systematic work for a living', with blameless occupation. If you fully understand the power of Anavajjani Kammani (doing blameless actions), you will be perfect in doing economic affairs.

¹ Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha taught*, Gordon Fraser, London, p. 81.



When we go paying homage, the small parcel is to be presented to parents and the bigger one is for the superior.

Translator's note: During the lighting festival in the Myanmar month of Thadingyut, young persons pay homage to older persons, mostly parents, grandparents, teachers, bosses at work, relatives, etc.

Right livelihood is one factor on the Noble Eight fold path. It is not determined by the amount of material wealth it produces, but rather by the well-being it generates. Many livelihoods who produces a surplus of wealth simply cater to desires rather than providing for any true need.

For the individual, the objective of livelihood is to acquire the four necessities or requisites of human experience: food, clothing shelter, and medicine. Again, the acquisition of these four requisites, be it in sufficient amount or in surplus, is nor the ultimate objective. The four requisites are merely a foundation upon which efforts to realize higher objectives can be based. If one has the right livelihood, he or she will be secured in life. Secured life is sure to create happiness.

A man named Dihgajanu once visited the Buddha and said: "Venerable Sir, we are ordinary lay men, leading the family life with wife and children. Would the Blessed One teach us some doctrines which will be conducive to our happiness in this world and hereafter."

The Buddha tells him that there are four things which are conducive to a man's happiness in this world: First: he should be skilled, efficient, earnest, and energetic in whatever profession he is engaged, and he should know it well (utthana-sampada); second: he should protect his

income, which he has thus earned righteously, with the sweat of his brow (arakkha-sampda); (This refers to protecting wealth from thieves, etc. All these ideas should be considered against the background of the period.) third: he should have good friends (Kalyana-mitta) who are faithful, learned, virtuous, liberal and intelligent, who will help him along the right path away from evil; fourth; he should spend reasonably, in proportion to his income, either too much nor too little, i.e., he should not hoard wealth variously, nor should he be extravagant-in other words he should live within his means (samajivikata)¹.

Buddhism stresses that our relationship with wealth be guided by wisdom and a clear understanding of its true value and limitations. We should not be burdened or enslaved by it. Rather, we should be masters of our wealth and use it in ways that are beneficial to others. Wealth should be used to create benefit in society, rather than concentration and strife. It should be spent in ways that relieve problems and lead to happiness rather than to tension, suffering and mental disorder.

Here is a passage from the scriptures illustrating the proper Buddhist attitude to wealth:

‘Bhikkhus, there are these three groups of people in this world. What are the three? They are the blind, the one-eyed, and the two-eyed.’

‘Who is the blind person? There are some in this world who do not have the vision which leads to acquisition of wealth or to the increase of wealth already gained. Moreover, they do not have the vision which enables them to know what is skilful and what is unskilful..... what is blameworthy and what is not what is coarse and what is refined.....good and evil. This is what I mean by one who is blind.

“And who is the one-eyed person? Some people in this world have the vision which leads to acquisition of wealth, or to the increase of wealth already obtained, but they do not have the vision that enables them to know what is skilful and what is not..... what is blameworthy and what is not.....what is coarse and what is refined good and evil. This I call a one-eyed person.

“And who is the two-eyed person? Some people in this world possess both the vision that enables them to acquire wealth and to capitalize on it, and the vision that enables to know what is skilful and what is not.....what is blameworthy and what is not.....what is coarse and what is refined.....good and evil. This I call one with two-eyes.....

“One who is blind is hounded by misfortune on two counts: he has no wealth, and he performs no good works. The second kind of person, the one-eyed, looks about for

¹ Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha taught*, pp.83.

wealth irrespective of whether it is right or wrong. It may be obtained through theft, cheating or fraud. He enjoys pleasures of the senses obtained from his ability to acquire wealth but as a result he goes to hell. The one-eyed person suffers according to his deeds.

“The two eyed person is a fine human being, one who shares out a portion of the wealth obtained through his diligent labour. He has noble thoughts, a resolute mind, and attains to a good bourn, free of suffering. Avoid the blind and the one-eyed, and associate with the two-eyed¹

The Buddha also expounds the four virtues conducive to a layman’s happiness hereafter: (1) Saddha: he should have faith and confidence in moral, spiritual and intellectual values; (2) Sila: he should abstain from destroying and harming life, from stealing and cheating. From adultery, from falsehood, and from intoxicating drinks; (3) Caga: he should practice charity, generosity, without attachment and craving for his wealth; (4) Panna: he should develop wisdom which leads to the complete destruction of suffering, to the realization of Nirvana.²

Compiled by
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¹ Anguttara Nikaya, I , pp. 128.

² Ibid, pp. 786 ff.



Daughter, if you have something urgent while I'm at the meditation centre, give me a call. Whoever receives your call will certainly know that it's me, Daw Htut Khaung, staying in the special hostel.

Translator's note: A person going into a Buddhist meditation centre to practice insight meditation should have left home affairs behind. He/she should not choose between a good or bad hostel.

3.8 Sayadaw U Eindathiri, *Dāna and Hope in Myanmar Buddhism*¹

Dāna

Writing on the topic of *Dāna* and Hope I will begin with some explanations about *Dāna*.

Dāna can be classified into the following three categories:

dānasāmi (*dāna* given like a master),

dānasahāya (*dāna* given like a companion),

dānadāsa (*dāna* given like a servant).

If a person offers a valuable object with the best intention to a noble recipient considering it too good for of using it herself, this constitutes an act of *dānasāmi*.

If a person offers an object that she uses herself, or an object that is similar in value and function to one that she uses herself, this constitutes an act of *dānasahāya*.

If a person offers an object that she has no use for, or another object of minor quality that she wouldn't want herself, this constitutes an act of *dānadāsa*.

Of these three, *dānasāmi* will reap the best and noblest consequences. *Dānasahāya* will reap mediocre consequences. And *dānadāsa* will reap the least desirable consequences.

Related to *dāna* is also the following: Even if an animal is served food so that it can eat its fill once, the offering will bear the fruits of long life, physical beauty, comfortable live, physical strength and intelligence in for the next 100 lives, as the Buddha, explained about the 14 kinds of recipients for *dāna*.²

Hope (Hmyo lin. chin:)

Hmyo lin. chin: (Sayadaw here uses a Myanmar word) usually translated as hope only means, that there is a wish that something may happen. It is not yet the actual experience of something happening. Hope is desire or will; not destination. He, who hopes to become a Buddha, must practice for a very long time until he has reached perfection. Only when he has reached perfection will he become a Buddha.

...

The Hope of Myanmar Buddhists: Giving and Hope

Buddhists make offerings or donations with various types of hope. These are:

1) The hope that the fruits of their offering may make this life more comfortable and peaceful

2) The hope that the fruits of the donation may lead to a favourable next existence in affluence and peace

Or, to put it another way, through donations they hope to achieve

1) that this life becomes more comfortable

2) that they may realize (or get to know) *nibbāna*, that is free from all thirst and needs (*ta_ha*)

3) that they, before attaining *nibbāna*, may experience, while still in *sa_sāra*, favourable future existences as a wealthy human, as a deva, or as a wealthy deva and gets a maximum of sensual pleasures.

Talking about giving and hope, I will now go on to explain about the four types of *saddhā* – usually translated as faith or confidence – in the context of giving.

2 Animals are the lowest of 14 categories of recipients for donations listed in the *Dakkhi_avibha_a Sutta*,

¹ The author is the abbot of the Shwe Oo Min Monastery in South Okkalapa, Yangon. He wrote the text as a contribution to a Buddhist-Christian dialogic on “Dana and Hope” (editor’s note).

² Animals are the lowest of 14 categories of recipients for donations listed in the *Dakkhi_avibha_a Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* : a Buddha being the highest, followed by arahats, sangha, Buddhist layman, moral non-Buddhist, immoral human, animal. Here the Buddha also points out that the fruits of a donation for the donor depend on the nobility of the recipient.

Majjhima Nikāya : a Buddha being the highest, followed by arahats, sangha, Buddhist layman, moral non-Buddhist, immoral human, animal. Here the Buddha also points out that the fruits of a donation for the donor depend on the nobility of the recipient.

Four kinds of *Saddhā*

There are four kinds of *saddhā*: *Pasādasaddhā*, *Okappanasaddhā*, *Adhigamasaddhā* and *Āgamasaddhā*.¹

Pasādasaddhā means, that one is not able to distinguish between things that truly deserve faith and reverence and those that don't. One places confidence in whatever one comes across, but one also easily loses that confidence again. This kind of *saddhā* is not stable and without reasoning. Just reverence without a proper foundation. A confidence coupled with desire: If I give to him, he will love me, if I offer things to him, he won't harm me. If I make offerings, people will praise my generosity. *Pasādasaddhā* is a kind of confidence, where one may give, in order to be praised. If one sees a poor, suffering person, one gives out of pity, but without being aware that this *kamma* will bear fruits in one's next life. *Pasādasaddhā* is confidence without wisdom.

Okappanasaddhā is faith coupled with a good understanding of the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha and the law of *kamma*. It is firm, lived faith in the truth of the Three Gems, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. *Okappanasaddhā* is faith coupled with wisdom.

Pasādasaddhā* and *Okappanasaddhā

Pasādasaddhā is like the silvery moon that shines from the sky at night: Its light comforts people; it is enjoyable and makes them happy. However, it is not sufficient to work effectively in factories and offices, read, write, or work in the fields.

Okappanasaddhā on the other hand, is like the bright sun in the daytime sky. When it shines, all living beings can do their work, seek education and study without difficulties.

So *okappanasaddhā*, because of the light of wisdom and understanding, allows people to fully eliminate all *kilesā* (defilements). With noble understanding and wisdom it is capable of leading to freedom from all craving, that is, to *nibbāna*.

Pasādasaddhā is like a boat, that before taking you to down the river to the ocean – that is all rivers' final destination – takes you to a couple of islands in the middle of the river - islands that are very beautiful and full of food and luxuriant pleasures.

3 Based on the writings of Buddhaghosa, who distinguishes between *pasādasaddhā* (spontaneous faith which arises whenever the words 'Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha' are spoken), *okappanasaddhā* (faith which arises after some kind of assent to the Buddha's teaching), *adhigamasaddhā* (faith based on attainment, the faith which arises through the penetration); *gaman(ī)asaddhā* i.e. the faith of the *bodhisatta* which arises from the moment he is predicted to become a *sammāsambuddha*) (*Suma_galavilāsinī* II 529) as well as on analyses of faith with and without knowledge/desire contained in the *Abhidhamma*. cf. Ashin Janakābhīraṃsa (1999): *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*.

Mahagandayone Monastery, Amapura.

Pasādasaddhā takes the doer of wholesome deeds not directly to the end of the *sa_sāra*, to *nibbāna* but leads him to intermediate, pleasurable stations on the way, such as to be born as a wealthy human or a deva.

If the intention of giving, or making *dāna* is not combined with wisdom and does therefore

¹ Based on the writings of Buddhaghosa, who distinguishes between *pasādasaddhā* (spontaneous faith which arises whenever the words 'Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha' are spoken), *okappanasaddhā* (faith which arises after some kind of assent to the Buddha's teaching), *adhigamasaddhā* (faith based on attainment, the faith which arises through the penetration); *gaman(ī)asaddhā* i.e. the faith of the *bodhisatta* which arises from the moment he is predicted to become a *sammāsambuddha*) (*Suma_galavilāsinī* II 529) as well as on analyses of faith with and without knowledge/desire contained in the *Abhidhamma*.

cf. Ashin Janakābhīraṃsa (1999): *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*. Mahagandayone Monastery, Amapura

not aim at *nibbāna* the fruit of it will not take the giver to the ocean of *nibbāna* but let him stop on an ‘island’ on the way – such as in the existence of a wealthy man or a deva and is not capable of taking him further.

Okappanasaddhā on the other hand is like a boat that can take you directly to the final destination, the ocean, *nibbāna*.

Like in this image, *okappanasaddhā* means that the giver’s intention ‘*nibbānassa paccayo hotu*’ – may this *dāna kusala cetana* [that is, the wholesome intention to perform *dāna*] help to attain *nibbāna* – is combined with wisdom, aims at *nibbāna* and will therefore take the donor directly to ‘the ocean’ – the end of *sa_sāra, nibbāna*, where there is no craving – without stopping at other ‘islands’.

These are the hopes, that Myanmar Buddhists nurture when they make *dāna*.

Adhigamasaddhā and Āgamasaddhā

Adhigamasaddhā is the confidence of noble persons (*ariya puggala*) well advanced in their insights and wisdom including the *sotāpanna*, ‘one who has entered the stream’ and reached the first of four stages of enlightenment, the *Sakadagami* or ‘once-returner’ who is on the second stage of enlightenment, the *Anāgāmi* or non-returner who is on the third stage of enlightenment or the *Arhat (arahat)* who has attained full enlightenment.

Āgamasaddhā finally is the confidence of a future Buddha.

Okappanasaddhā and Adhigamasaddhā

Okappanasaddhā is like boat or ship that takes you to the opposite shore. *Adhigamasaddhā* is the confidence that the ariyās, the noble ones, have attained; it is like the other shore.

Confidence based on conviction

Conviction based on knowledge is of paramount importance. *Saddhā* denotes abiding conviction in the Three Gems, and the belief that beings are heirs to their own volitional actions, both in this existence and hereafter. A clear and incisive way of perception is the chief attribute of what is meant by the word conviction.

The idea of a soul or a self does not exist in Buddhism

*Kammasa kāraṇa natthi, vipākassaca vedako,
suddhadhammā pavattanti, eveta_ sammadassana_.*

There is no doer of a deed, or one who reaps the deed’s result.

Mind and matter, cause and effect and phenomena alone flow on – **no** other view than this is right.

There is no ‘he’ who does *kamma*; and there is no ‘he’ who enjoys its fruits; all there is, is *nāma* and *rūpa* (mind and matter). Only this – without any deviations and additions is the right view.

So even when a donation is made by ‘Peter’, Peter won’t be Peter in a next life anymore. The next life is cause and effect, flux of mind and matter only. There is no Peter who reaps the fruit of the donation. Mind and matter, cause and effect alone flow on.

3.9 Myanmar Foreign Trade: Post-Independence Period versus Post-2000 Period

Compiled by Ye Nyunt¹



Myanmar Foreign Trade: Post-Independence Period versus Post-2000 Period

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1 Introduction

This paper is a study with its focus on just a section of the entire economic field concerning Myanmar. Yet, this small section forms a perspective, though it may not be complete, that reflects the economic situation of the relevant time, and affords an analysis of the economic progress.

It may be a narrow scope for this study is confined only to foreign trade, but on the other hand, foreign trade is a good parameter in measuring the economic progress of a nation as it reveals the current status of the manufacturing sector.

In the aftermath of regaining its independence in 1948, Myanmar was compelled to enjoy heritage, good or bad, handed down by the imperialist rulers. Over 60 years have elapsed up to this day.

This history of Myanmar can be chronologically divided as follows:

- 1 9th C to 1885: Monarchic era
- 2 1885 to 1948: Colonial eras (Under the British and the Japanese alternately)
- 3 1948 to 1962 Parliamentary democracy era
- 4 1962 to 1974 Revolutionary Council (military rule)
- 5 1974 to 1988 Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) era
- 6 1988 to Now Military rule (State Peace and Development Council, changed from State Law and Order Restoration Council)
- 7 November 2010 General Elections

It would be an interesting area if a thorough study could be made of the economic endeavours during these long years. How has the country fared in terms of economic endeavours for over six decades?

There have been only a few publications that deal with the economy of Myanmar. Maung Sue San, writer and independent economic critic, has compiled “Bamah Sipwayay Sittan”, literally “The Economic Survey of Myanmar”, published in 1968 (2nd print).

Then, in 2001, “Economic Development of Myanmar,” published in Singapore by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, appeared. In it, U Myat Thein, former rector of

the Yangon Institute of Economic, deals with the overall Myanmar economic situations from the Parliamentary Democracy Period (1948-62) up to the market-oriented period under the military rule (1988-2000).

This study is only a review of the two publications, complemented with the data available from the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Nay Pyi Taw.

Hence, it cannot be a complete study that has been made of the starting point and end line—the time-length that Myanmar has traversed for over 60 years since its regaining of independence. There may certainly be causes, barriers or motivations, between the two points, that have contributed to the success or failure of the country's economy.

If there were failures, we could not heap the entire blame on the present. Yet, to make up for the shortcomings in the BSPP era, the current military government has made some efforts, opening the market, watchfully, and the façade of the country has changed obviously, compared to the BSPP era during which the country was nearly completely secluded.

I believe that this small paper, written amidst the limitation of time, will serve, to some extent, the interest of the reader.

2 Foreign Trade in the Post-Independence Period

In 1948, Myanmar, or then Burma, announced to the world that it had become an independent, sovereign country. Despite its status of independence, it was still fraught with colonial characteristics in its foreign trade even four or five year afterwards. In other words, it can be said that although Myanmar was independent in national administration, its foreign trade was still dependent.

In fact, Myanmar foreign trade largely centred on the benefits of the imperialists, and thus was imprinted with colonial marks and scars. If Myanmar were actually bearing these marks, then there would be some defects in its foreign trade policy and practice.

Colonial characteristics

The following situations show that Myanmar foreign trade was still identified with colonial characteristics in the post-independence period:

- 1 Myanmar being a dumping ground of finished and semi-finished products of colonial countries;
- 2 Myanmar only remaining as a warehouse from which raw materials were issued to the imperialist nations; and,
- 3 Myanmar's foreign trade being one-sided.

Dumping ground

Imperialist countries were bringing all their finished and semi-finished products into their former colonial countries with only one aim—to dispose of the remnant products. At that time it was not found that Myanmar had its trading policy such as establishment of national industries and furtherance of national assets.

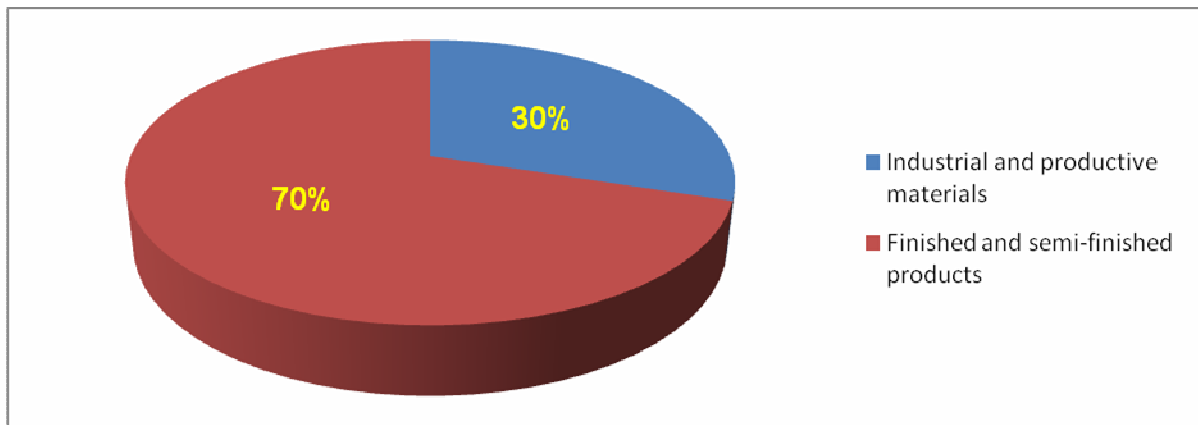
Imports of industrial and productive materials versus finished and semi-finished products

The tables below shows that the volume of import of finished and semi-finished products was double that of the industrial and productive materials. Included in the first category were metals, transportation-related materials and some second-hand boats, which did not contribute to production, and so actual productive materials imported remained small. Even in the industrial and productive materials, some products transformed into finished products, such as steel pipes, were included. This is one of the characteristics of the British colonial era economic system.

(Kyats in millions)

Year	Industrial & productive materials		Finished & semi-finished products	%
1948 – 49	1,015.68	42%	1,383.37	58%
1949 – 50	901.42	25%	2,756.13	75%
1950 – 51	1,086.01	20%	4,252.83	80%
1952 Jan	140.34	35%	256.08	65%
	Average ►	30.5%	Average ►	69.5%

Shares of industrial and productive materials & finished and semi-finished products in the overall imports



Surplus and deficit in trading with the Sterling Area

(Kyats in millions)

Fiscal year	Britain		Australia		New Zealand		India		Pakistan		Sri Lanka		Malaysia	
1948-49	–	66,122	–	6,837	–	668	+	161,392	+	32,110	+	138,788	+	75,582
1949-50	–	81,624	–	10,088	+	318	–	68,349	+	2,068	+	204,313	+	20,923
1950-51	–	89,606	–	13,058	–	1,308	+	28,938	+	2,697	+	213,534	+	36,699
1952	–	35,604	–	4,404	–	9	–	24,373	+	441	+	32,513	+	2,254

(–) sign indicates deficit and (+) sign, surplus.

The above-mentioned table shows Myanmar suffered deficits in its trading with industrialized countries—Britain, Australia and New Zealand—as imports from these countries were greater than the volumes of import.

On the contrary, the volumes of exports were larger than imports in its trading with still developing countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Surplus and deficit in trading with the Dollar Area

(Kyats in thousands)

Fiscal year	America		Canada		Philippines	
1948-49	–	7,702	–	72	–	10,359
1949-50	–	15,501	–	330	–	0
1950-51	–	8,365	–	302	–	3
1952	–	12,710	–	535	–	7

The fact that Myanmar was a dumping ground for the products from the hard currency countries was evident in this table. Myanmar suffered deficits in its trading with America, Canada and the Philippines.

Warehouse of raw materials

The second unfavourable point is that Myanmar had to serve as a warehouse from which raw materials needed in the imperialist nations were issued. Because Myanmar did not have any production facilities for transforming raw materials into finished products, they had just to be exported.

Imperialists also needed raw materials for two purposes:

- 1 to feed their factories with raw materials from colonial countries; and,
- 2 to be able to transform commercial manufacturing into military manufacturing, if necessary.

Exports of Myanmar

(Kyats in thousands)

Goods	1948 – 49	1949 – 50	1950 – 51
Agricultural produce	607,799	602,582	772,193
Rubber	3,279	8,061	24,732
Timber	40,882	12,024	45,771
Minerals	24,719	14,381	40,802
Semi-finished products	7,110	4,532	15,630

According to the table, raw materials—agricultural produce, rubber, timber and minerals—constituted 90% of the total export, and semi-finished products such as wax, leather and timber, 10% only. In other words, lots of raw materials went out of the country. This illustrates the fact that Myanmar served as a warehouse of raw materials for imperialist nations.

One-sidedness of trade

The third point is that Myanmar had to do its trade only with the imperialist and capitalistic nations while there was little trade with socialist and democratic nations.

America blocked Myanmar's trade with socialist countries. This shows one-sidedness or domination of the imperialist nations.

Trade with socialist countries in 1950-51

(Kyats in thousands)

Country	Imports	Exports
Soviet and East European countries	335	—
People's Republic of China	7,291	7,566

The total trade with socialist countries amounted only to 150 million, accounting for just around 1 per cent of the total volume of trade.

These figures indicate that Myanmar's foreign trade reflected the characteristics of the colonial era.

3 Economic Strategy in the Post-Independence Period

Myanmar's economy at the end of the colonial era remained unevenly balance, export dependent on natural produce, mainly paddy, and raw materials from natural resources such as timber, minerals, etc. During the colonial era, farmers lost their role of managing their own land and were excluded from the process of manufacturing, and instead, were relegated to the status of labourers.

The nationalist ideology and its concomitant political economy, which emerged in the post-independence era, can only be understood against the background of the colonial past. The three ways to react the pre-war pattern of the economy were:

- 1 Nationalization
- 2 Myanmarisation
- 3 Import-substituting industrialization.

Nationalization

It can be seen that the economic aims were marked with socialistic sense of public ownership. The first measure taken by the Parliamentary Democracy Government of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) government was to enact the Land Nationalization Act of 1948, by which all the agricultural land were to be nationalized and redistributed to the landless peasants—with a ceiling of 10 acres each.

The government also took over the rein of paddy trade, formerly monopolized by foreign firms. In the second stage, it nationalized the timber industry, which was also under the control of foreign firms, followed by the nationalization of the Ayeyarwady Flotilla Company and the reorganization of the Burma Corporation and the Burma Oil Company into joint ventures.

Myanmarisation

Myanmarisation, or formerly called Burmanization, means reducing the activities of foreigners as best as possible. Since the Myanmar had neither the finance nor the business experience, it was obvious that the government should follow a socialist policy.

Industrialization

At the same time, the government earmarked certain basic industries to be developed on a state-owned basis. The government placed emphasis on industrialization and the role of the state for long-term development, which may be attributed to the socialist convictions of the young leaders. One foreign scholar noted, "In the absence of a sizeable group of indigenous private entrepreneurs, socialism, meaning nationalism, was the obvious policy choice."

Planning

The then leaders with socialist ideologies first launched a two-year plan, followed by an eight-year plan in 1952, which was to be formulated, based on the report of American consultants of Knappen Tippetts Abbett Engineering Co. The Eight-Year Plan came to be known as the KTA Plan, after the engineering company, or Pyidawtha¹ Plan, after the Pyidawtha Conference (4 – 17 August 1952). The plan was abandoned after 1955-56 and later substituted by two less unrealistic four-year plans.

The two-year plan

The two-year plan, announced in April 1948, was the first attempt at planning. Actually, it was not a full-fledged plan but merely a list of targets in physical terms achievable within the following two years.

It was notable in that it listed a number of desirable industrial projects, which eventually came to be realized over a period of 12 years. Apart from that, the plan was never implemented as the countrywide insurrections broke out in the second half of the year and the government came to be preoccupied with restoring law and order.

The Eight-Year Plan (Pyidawtha Plan)

- 1 Pyidawtha Economic Plan covered eight years from 1952 to 1959.
- 2 The national production was to be increased 25% in 1959 over the 1938-39 level.
(Against the population of 1959, the planned per-capita GDP in the same year was very much small.)
- 3 The national income in 1959 was estimated to be K 7,000 million, which was double the amount of 1952, K 3,500 million.
- 4 To get a national income of K 7,000 million, the total investment of K 7,500 million—K 5,100 million to be invested by the government and K 2,400 million by the private sector—was to be made.
- 5 According to the estimation under the Pyidawtha Plan, 12% of the national income was to be saved to cover the amount of investment.
- 6 Of the investment K 7,500 million, K 2,500 million was to be spent on imports and K 500 million on domestic costs including payments for salaries and purchase of raw materials.
- 7 Per-capita consumption was to be increased from K 203 in 1938-39 to K 224 in 1959.
- 8 Per-capita income was estimated to be K 340 in 1959.

¹ Pyidawtha: Literally, pyi (State), taw/daw (Royal) and tha (Prosperous), hence the Prosperous Royal State

It was not known how these estimations had been made or who—KTA Engineering Co or the government—calculated them. It is assumed that the eight-year plan was based on Keynes' economic theory—(1) income, (2) consumption, (3) saving and (4) investment.

A scholar has postulated some assumptions on which the Pyidawtha Plan would have been formulated as follows:

- 1 It was assumed that the plan would go smooth, the economy expanding year by year. (Perhaps, there were some loopholes in the Keynes' theory. And the economy was under the threat of world economic recession in the starting year.)
- 2 It was assumed that the country of free of insurgencies all along the period under the plan. It also meant that the government, by laying down this plan, had been charged with the duty to annihilate communist insurgents. (The outbreak of insurrections in 1948, which continued in a serious way up till 195, did slow down the growth of GDP).
- 3 It was assumed that as income increased, saving power would be enhanced. (But Myanmar suffered in the world rice market, and peasants suffered because of price declines in the nation.)

It can be seen from the three assumptions that they were greatly flawed. Investment to be spent on imports was to be depended on foreign loans. The Pyidawtha Plan also hoped to depend on foreign market. It was vulnerable to the price manipulation of foreign capitalists.

4 Economic Reforms and Foreign Trade in the Market-Oriented Era

The military government that came to power in 1988 introduced the Foreign Investment Law, revoking at the same time the Foreign Investment Law in 1989 and launched a series of liberation measures into order to facilitate transition to a market-oriented economic system. These have certainly contributed to a positive impact, but owing to impulsive changes or "swing door policy" (in which doors tend to close immediately after they are pushed open), the business community has been surrounded by uncertainty.

The major economic reforms by sector may be summarized as follows:

- **Introduction of Foreign Investment Law:** enhancing development in all sectors except those reserved for the state.
- **Industrial sector reform:** restitution of small- and medium-sized establishments; transfer of management autonomy to state-owned economic enterprises (SEEs); allowing more private sector participation through the relaxation of restrictions on private investment; promotion of cottage industry; promotion of privatization;
- **Land and agricultural sector reforms:** Initiating institutional changes such as the establishment of land commission to ensure optimum use of land resources; abolishing price controls, reduction of compulsory delivery quota for paddy; reduction of subsidies; leasing of land for private investment as well as foreign direct investment; measures for production expansion;

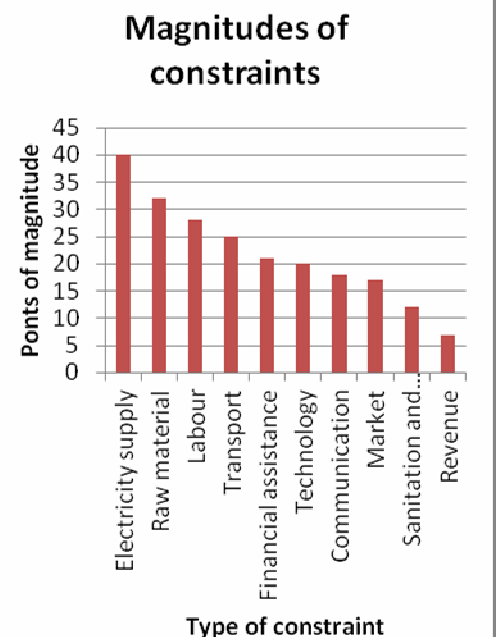
- **Fishery and aquaculture sector reforms:** granting of fishing rights to foreign fishing vessels, marine fisheries, fresh-water fisheries, and aquaculture;
- **Tourism sector reforms:** allowing private sector participation in hotels and tourism business;
- **Reform of frontier areas administration:** pacification and promotion of development of minority races in frontier areas.

The overriding objective of these sector-wise reforms was: “Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well.”

Constraints

Type and magnitude of constraints in industrial zones

No	Type of constraint	Points of magnitude				
		Shwepyitha	Hlaingthayar	South Dagon 1	South Dagon 2	Total points
1	Electricity supply	10	10	10	10	40
2	Raw material	6	9	9	8	32
3	Labour	9	5	7	7	28
4	Transport	8	4	8	5	25
5	Financial assistance	3	8	1	9	21
6	Technology	5	6	5	4	20
7	Communication	7	2	6	3	18
8	Market	4	3	4	6	17
9	Sanitation and water supply	1	7	3	1	12
10	Revenue	2	1	2	2	7



Source: Saw Christopher Maung and U Tun Than Tun (1999)

The above table illustrates the magnitude of constraints to different industrial zones. The severest constraint is allocated a magnitude of 10 points, with the least being 1.

In spite of the fact that many industries are in full operation, some constraints are encountered which have a tendency of posing hindrance to functioning a maximum efficiency.

Foreign direct investment

Since the introduction of the Foreign Investment Law in 1989, the total number of countries that have come to make investments in Myanmar has increased up to this day, but the numbers fluctuated between the years, depending on the world and internal situations. For the time being, potential foreign investors are watching the situation of the upcoming General Elections slated for November in 2010 so that they

can enter Myanmar with bulks of investment when a new government assumes power after the election.

Existing FDI projects: by country

Sr. No.	Country	Number of existing FDI projects
1	Singapore	47
2	Thailand	37
3	Korea	26
4	Japan	23
5	Malaysia	21
6	Hong Kong	20
7	China	16
8	UK	14
9	Canada	9
10	British Virgin Island	7
11	Australia	5
12	India	4
13	Indonesia	4
14	Russia	4
15	France	3
16	Japan, Singapore	3
17	Philippines	2
18	Austria	1
19	British Virgin Island, Singapore	1
20	Brunei	1
21	China, Thailand	1
22	Cyprus	1
23	Germany	1
24	Hong Kong, British Virgin Island	1
25	India, Singapore	1
26	Indonesia, UK	1
27	Macau	1
28	Netherlands	1
29	Panama	1
30	Russia, India	1
31	Sri Lanka	1
32	Switzerland	1
33	U.S.A	1
34	UK	1
35	Vietnam	1
Total ►		263

* Inclusive of enterprises incorporated in British Virgin Islands, and Bermuda Islands.

Source: *Myanmar Survey Research Databank*

The above table shows that Myanmar has strong economic relations only with Asian countries, especially Singapore undertaking the largest number of investment projects in the country.

Total FDI inflow: by sector

As of December 31, 2009

Sr. No.	Sector	Enterprises/ Projects	Approved Amount (USD in millions)
1	Hydro Power	2	6311.22
2	Oil and Gas	89	3398.48
3	Manufacturing	155	1635.13
4	Mining	61	1409.61
5	Real Estate	19	1056.45
6	Hotel and Tourism	45	1064.81
7	Livestock and Fisheries	25	324.36
8	Transport & Communication	16	313.27
9	Industrial Estate	3	193.11
10	Construction	2	37.77
11	Agriculture	4	34.35
12	Others	6	23.69
Total ►		427	15802.25

Source: *Selected Monthly Economic Indicators*, Central Statistical Organization (December 2009)**Myanmar foreign trade policy¹**

Myanmar foreign trade policy is a very independent one. Myanmar can trade with any country in the world except with some countries that are trade embargoed by the UN's resolutions or a few countries and territories which we have cut off diplomatic relations. Myanmar was a founder member of the old organization GATT, and a member of the new organization WTO. Hence, its foreign trade policies are generally governed by the rule-based multilateral trading system.

Myanmar's foreign trade is mainly with Asian countries. More than 70% of total export goes to the Asian region and round about 90% of total import comes from this region. Like most developing countries, it is still an exporter of agricultural and other primary products. The country's imports consist largely of manufactured goods, particularly the capital goods and raw materials which constitute about 65% of total imports. Myanmar foreign trade is mainly with Asian Countries: China, Singapore, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and India.

Myanmar has bilateral trade agreement with Republic of Korea, China, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Laos, Philippines, Malaysia in the Asian region and six countries in Eastern Europe, on the principle of equality of rights and mutual benefits. Myanmar has signed four Border Trade Agreement with its neighbors, China, India, Bangladesh and Thailand.

Exports of Myanmar (2005 to 2009): by country

USD in millions

Sr	Destination country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total Value
1	Thailand	1,640	1,746	2,804	2,572	2,508	14,669
2	India	424	669	744	738	936	4,811
3	Hong Kong	214	420	572	713	780	3,002
4	Singapore	257	197	347	858	662	2,879
5	China	136	257	475	499	306	1,908

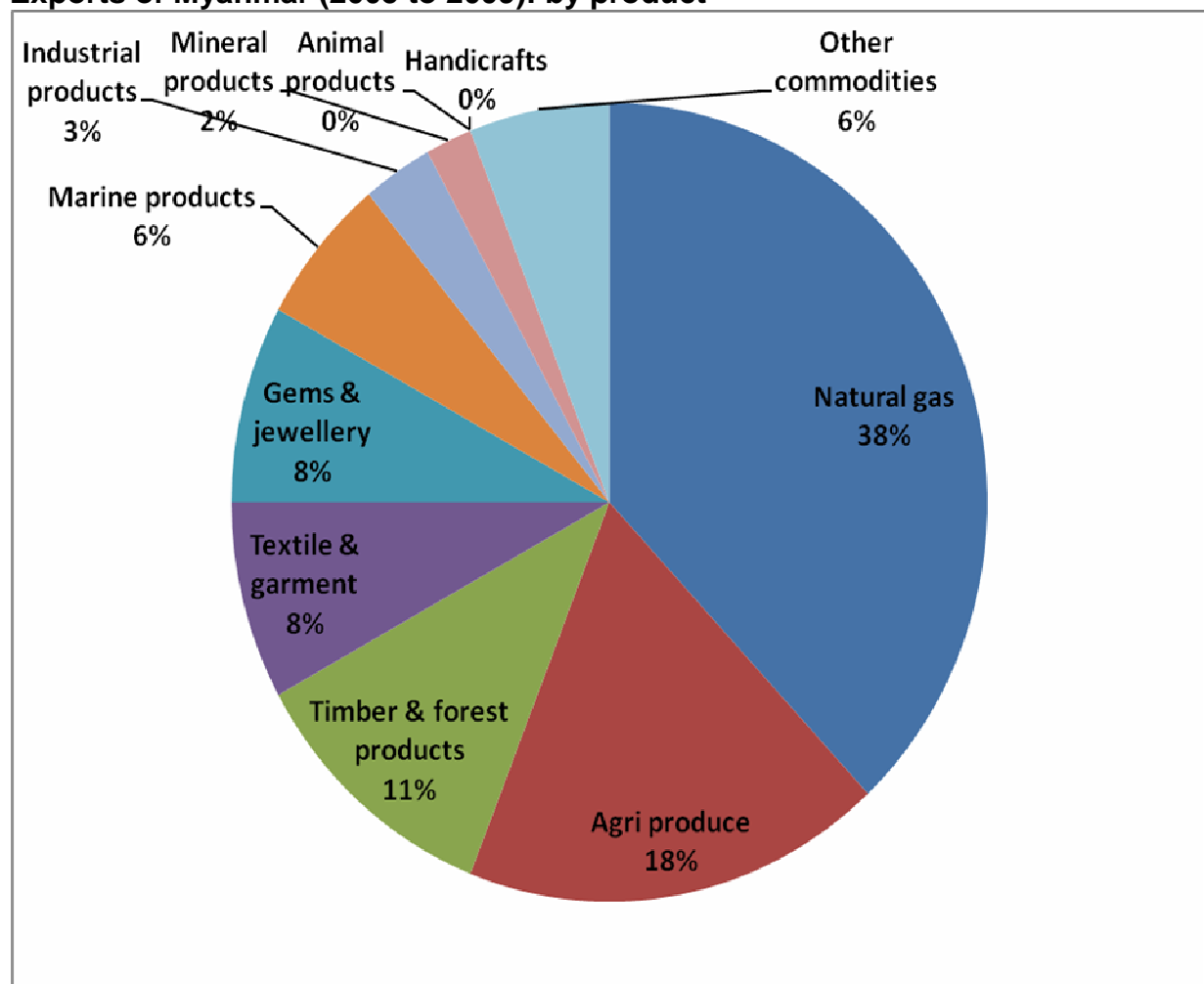
¹ Embassy of the Union of Myanmar in Islamabad
(<http://www.myanmarembislamabad.com/myanmartradepolicy.php>)

6	Japan	138	155	186	179	177	1,214
7	Malaysia	103	82	113	327	127	1,108
8	Indonesia	63	91	88	26	34	509
9	United Kingdom	56	54	61	54	38	490
10	Bangladesh	45	35	41	108	83	466
11	Republic of Korea	37	58	58	79	66	416
12	United Arab Emirates	43	33	39	48	35	365
13	Vietnam	34	57	64	57	47	293
14	Germany	43	74	68	56	48	292
15	Pakistan	31	51	45	34	21	263
16	Greece	31	7	2	1	0.3	243
17	United States of America	0	3	2	2	-	209
18	France	19	15	10	5	4	166
19	Ivory Coast	-	-	-	-	164	164
20	Other Countries	163	171	213	248	264	1,679
Total ►		3,478	4,177	5,934	6,605	6,299	35,720

Source: *Selected Monthly Economic Indicators*, Central Statistical Organization (December 2009)

According to this table, Myanmar's exports go mostly to Thailand, its immediate neighbour, and then to India, Hong Kong, Singapore and China in their order in terms of export values. It is obvious that its export relations are mainly made with Asian countries.

Exports of Myanmar (2005 to 2009): by product



USD in millions

Sr	Product	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total Value
1	Natural gas/ Natural gas condensate	1,490	1,578	2,703	2,504	2,427	13,625
2	Agricultural products	452	736	1,035	1,141	1,366	6,339
3	Timber & forest products	509	530	562	607	466	4,089
4	Textile & garment	255	289	291	292	295	2,958
5	Gems & jewellery	199	403	558	722	797	2,879
6	Marine products	205	252	361	321	260	2,023
7	Industrial products	92	121	95	106	185	876
8	Mineral products	126	128	94	23	45	717
9	Animal and animal products	6	5	7	11	11	58
10	Handicrafts & handmade products of Myanmar	2	1	2	1	2	19
11	Other commodities	144	132	227	874	446	2,137
	Total ►	3,478	4,177	5,934	6,605	6,299	35,720

Source: *Selected Monthly Economic Indicators*, Central Statistical Organization (December 2009)

The pie chart illustrates that industrial products constitute only 3% of the total exports. Most of the exports are non-finished goods from underground and above-ground resources.

Imports into Myanmar (2005 to 2009): by country

USD in millions

Sr	Source country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total Value
1	Singapore	599	814	811	1,102	1,295	7,130
2	China	286	407	564	670	782	3,818
3	Japan	121	113	239	192	258	1,948
4	Malaysia	124	123	121	133	351	1,772
5	Thailand	105	161	227	247	265	1,583
6	Republic of Korea	82	81	102	179	206	1,353
7	India	80	131	178	143	205	1,101
8	Indonesia	52	74	223	207	116	933
9	Bahamas	-	-	0.005	450	1	451
10	United states of America	19	121	34	85	26	390
11	Hong Kong	19	23	20	35	16	329
12	Germany	24	24	37	93	43	315
13	Australia	45	26	33	24	47	231
14	Taiwan	15	20	30	38	33	217
15	France	7	12	15	17	39	138
16	Switzerland	2	1	7	10	10	137
17	Vietnam	8	12	16	21	24	114
18	United Kingdom	5	6	14	33	6	109
19	United Arab Emirates	9	14	11	7	15	104
20	Philippines	6	8	12	17	15	84
21	Other countries	35	63	93	91	98	562
	Total ►	1,646	2,235	2,789	3,795	3,849	22,822

Imports are also brought in from Japan, fairly advanced countries such as China, Korea and Singapore and newly industrial countries in Asia such as Malaysia and Thailand.

Imports into Myanmar (2005 to 2009): by product

USD in millions

Sr	Product	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total Value
1	Fuel, diesel and gas	238	458	416	529	643	3,480
2	Raw material and supply for garment factories	339	273	292	280	247	3,009
3	Machine and machinery equipment	95	282	219	232	215	2,060
4	Foodstuff	147	141	325	353	121	1,675
5	Oilfield and mining equipment & supply	89	34	76	759	655	1,656
6	Steel and steel products	149	131	167	183	271	1,434
7	Spare parts	75	147	126	192	187	1,229
8	Car	70	56	193	126	222	1,211
9	Medicine and medical equipments	76	97	130	196	183	991
10	Plastic resin and plastic products	60	103	136	149	124	950
11	Electronic and electrical products	46	66	142	165	114	862
12	Construction materials	35	54	67	95	161	683
13	Industrial raw material and supply for other industries	0.01	56	137	160	203	642
14	Petroleum product	22	60	66	72	68	492
15	Chemical	30	39	42	49	44	411
16	Stationery & paper	34	38	46	51	54	351
17	Tyre and tyre inner tube	21	26	46	48	51	316
18	Communication equipment	55	4	4	37	11	158
19	Other commodities	64	172	159	119	277	1,212
	Total ►	1,646	2,235	2,789	3,795	3,849	22,822

If we look at this table, we can see that Myanmar still has to rely on other countries for finished products such as foodstuffs, petroleum products, stationery and paper, tyre and tyre inner tubes, etc.

Raw materials imported are: Serial No 2 (raw materials and supply for garment factories), Serial No 10 (plastic resin) and Serial No 13 (industrial raw materials and supply for other industries).

One favourable point is that it imports industrial equipment such as machines and machinery equipment, oilfield and mining equipment & supply, etc.

USD in millions

Finished and semi-finished products	13,664	60%
Raw materials	4,601	20%
Industrial equipment	4,557	20%
Total ►	22,822	100%

5 Conclusion

In an overall comparative analysis of the two situations—the starting point and the end line, the following points have been discovered:

Favourable points:

- 1 Myanmar's chief economic policies have changed:

from:

- 1 Nationalization
- 2 Myanmarisation (Reducing the activities of foreigners), and
- 3 Import-substituting industrialization

to the current:

- 1 Privatization
 - 2 Openness (Welcome to Foreign Investments), and
 - 3 Import-substituting industrialization.
- 2 Surplus shows in the trade balance for the five years (2005-2009), the total export value (35,720 million USD) surpassing the total import value (22,822 million USD)

Unfavourable points

- 1 Imports of industrial equipment have considerably decreased. In the post-independence period, the imports of industrial and productive materials were half of the volume of finished and semi-finished products. In the market-oriented era, the imports of industrial equipment have declined to 20% of the total imports, in which finished and semi-finished products constituted 60% or more than half. It means industrial and productive materials were only one-third of the finished and semi-finished products.
- 2 In the exports for the five years, raw materials, from above-ground (forest and agricultural produce, 11% and 18% respectively) and underground (natural gas and gems and jewellery, 38% and 8% respectively) resources, still constitute a large share (total 75%) of the total export value from 2005 to 2009.

Myanmar's manufacturing sector is still far short of development, comparable to its neighbouring countries. "Made in Myanmar" is rarely seen except that some ready foods packaged in modern technology and labels printed on plastic texture are seen on the shelves of the supermarkets. (Formerly, ready-made Myanmar foods were simply packaged in transparent plastic bags with labels made from Xerox machines.) There are some electronic and other products including motorcars which are manufactured locally with the help of the technologies of advanced countries. Overall, Myanmar industries are still not competitive with those of neighbouring countries. Especially, products from China and Thailand have been rolling into Myanmar market in bulks through formal or informal channels.

Whatever government comes to power, it needs to stimulate technological development competitive enough with countries in the region. USDP, Union Solidarity and Development Party, the party transformed from the semi-governmental association, is said to have won the elections 75%, and the first Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Assembly) is planned to call in early 2011. Although we can generally say that the economic climate of the country would become better now that the general elections are over and transfer of power is approaching, the economic future of the country depend largely on the political situation.

6 Appendices

6.1. References

- 1 **Central Statistical Organization (CSO)**, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development), "Statistical Yearbook 2008", Nay Pyi Taw, 2008.
- 2 **Maung Sue San**, Bamah Sipwayay Sittan (Economic Survey of Myanmar), Pinya Literature House, 289 Maha Bandoola Garden Street, Yangon, 2nd print, August 1968
- 3 **Myat Thein**, Economic Development of Myanmar, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, October 2001
- 4 **Embassy of the Union of Myanmar in Islamabad** (URL source)

6.2. Macro environments of Myanmar

Myanmar at a glance

Official name:	The Union of Myanmar
Population:	57 million
Ethnic groups:	Bamar (69%), Shan (9%), Kayin (6%), Rakhine (5%), Mon (2%), Kachin (1%) and Chin (2%)
Official languages:	Myanmar, English
Religions:	Buddhists (89%), Christians (4%) and Muslims (4%)

Geography

Area:	676,578 sq-km
Location:	Between the South and the South-East Asia, on the Bay of Bengal
Neighbours:	Bangladesh (On the west) India (On the west) China (On the north and east) Laos (On the east) Thailand (On the east)
Topography:	Mountains surround Myanmar on the West, North and East, dense forests cover much of the country. North-South rivers provides habitable valleys and communications, especially the Ayeyarwady, navigable for 900 miles.
Capital:	Nay Pyi Taw
Commercial city:	Yangon (population: 6 million)

Government

Type:	Military regime (the State Peace and Development Council)	
Key leaders:	Senior General Than Shwe	Chairman, SPDC
	Vice-Senior General Maung Aye	Vice-Chairman, SPDC
	Thura U Shwe Man	Head of the military
	U Thein Sein	Prime Minister
	Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo	Secretary, SPDC

Economy

Main Sector:	Agriculture Oil and gas Timber
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	173Marine products Gems and jewellery
Industries:	Garment, wood products, marine products
Schief cross:	Rice, beans and pulses, corn, sugarcane
Minerals:	Oil and gas, copper, lead, tin, tungsten, precious stones
Major Exports:	Natural gas, beans and pulses, garments, prawns, fish, wood products, precious stones (ruby and jade)
Major imports:	Fuel oil, raw materials and supply for garment factories, machines and machinery equipment, steel, spare parts, plastic products and resin, medicines and medical instruments, electronic and electrical products, edible oil, tyres, dairy products, fertilizer

Finance

Monetary Units:	Kyat and FEC (Foreign Exchange Certificate), (1 FEC is roughly equivalent to 1 USD.)
GDP:	11,951 million USD
Per-capita GDP:	208.6 USD
Exports:	7,140 million USD (2009-10)
Imports:	3,684 million USD (2009-10)
Trading partners:	Thailand, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Germany, Australia

Transport

Railroad:	3,991.73 miles in length
Motor vehicles in use:	199,809 passenger cars, 55,051 trucks and 18,296 buses
Civil aviation:	37 airports
Chief port:	Yangon

3.10 Yi Yi Myint and Hinn Wai,¹ The Role of the Myanmar Women in Economics

Myanmar holds precious its cultural heritage and national character and concerted national efforts are being made to preserve and safeguard it. Uplift of the national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character is one of the declared national social objectives. So, the cultural heritage and the social and legal status of a Myanmar woman is such that she never loses her identity or even her name or her right to property and inheritance after marriage.

The traditional, social and cultural attitudes in Myanmar of children in eternal debt to parents for giving them life and for bringing them up, and the bondage of gratitude, wife and family owe to men (as Kyai-Zu-Shin) who are the bread-winners and protectors of dangers and threats to the family, could give an ideal picture of women who are not directly involved in economic development; but only vicariously by bringing up children and relieving men of the less important details of every day living, so that they can devote their full energies to the economic, productive life. There is no job from which she is barred and no educational opportunities that discriminate women because of her sex, according to the constitution. Additionally, there are no social customs that are harmful to the female child or woman or that place a woman at a disadvantage within a marital union. There is no known women's movement such as women's suffrage to fight for women's right to vote, since both men and women voted at the same time. Thus, the status of Myanmar women is traditionally believed to be high and exemplary in Asia and beyond and most Myanmar are sincerely proud of it.

The high status of Myanmar women in the home, in the community and in the society at large place them in positions of considerable influence to extend the culture of peace that they practice within the family to the society. Senior women, especially past the childbearing age are held in high regards as "mother figures" and are freer, to play the role of mentors of peaceful spiritual lives that is indeed basic to the Buddhist philosophy and culture.

The role of Myanmar women as active partners within the family and on the jobs is well organized and accepted. A visit to Myanmar bazaars or markets, work sites, factories and offices; and the sight of street hawkers and vendors would quickly establish the direct role of Myanmar women play in the economic life of the country. Still, the claim of a proud husband that the wife is maintained in "circumstances where there is no chance for hair on her arms and legs to be signed" can sometimes be heard. Possibly, marriage may be considered by

¹ Dr. Yi Yi Myint is retired professor of economics and chairwoman of the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Association. Ma Hinn Wai is her assistant.

some women as “a meal ticket”, though in reality, majority must supplement or take on the duty herself as the female head of households. Women have no social or emotional barrier to being economically active in different circumstances and at different levels of skills. The middle age and menopause seem to free women to be more active, assertive and to command respect from both men and women. Two recent independent studies of women employed in the informal sector confirmed the finding that “spouse generally give encouragement or are co-operative” of wives’ income generating activities. As elsewhere in the world, home-keeping and child-caring responsibilities oftentimes put competing pressures on most women who must set individual priorities between their “reproductive” and “productive” roles at different stages in their lives. The flexibilities afforded by extended family living, self-employment and employment in the informal sector seem to be the favourable factors for this favourable situation.

Since the mid 1990s, there was a growing awareness of the role of women in national and community development activities. Myanmar tradition of community living and sharing was formalized by forming Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA). Other women organizations, such as Myanmar Women’s Sport Federation, Women chapter of the Myanmar Medical Association, Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs’ Association (MWEA), two women co-operatives engaged in business and in women development all became actively and organizationally involved.

Women at home play a vital role in resource allocation, mediation, tender persuasion and family cohesion. This role must be preserved, and enhanced despite the competing demands of modern economic life, by introducing flexibilities in the work place and women support measures. However, violence at home that do emerge usually because of lack of education, substance abuse and difficult circumstances can now be channeled through the organized women’s groups that are now highly visible such as the Working Committee for Violence Against Women in Myanmar, under the Myanmar National Committee of Women Affairs.

According to the Myanmar women in employment by industry survey, the different roles of women in economic activities can be defined.

Rural Women

Women who live and work for their living in rural areas mostly work as agricultural labourers transplanting, weeding and harvesting for daily wages paid in cash or kind. Agriculture work is seasonal but the more recent practices of triple cropping, and integration of farming and animal husbandry could mean increased opportunities for employment, and greater utilization of women in economic activities. However, because of the seasonal and often weather-

dependent nature of agriculture and the possible landlessness of some, weaving, sewing, basket weaving etc. should be considered and promoted as income-generating activities for women

Urban women in work-sites and Cottage Industries

Urban women with little skill and no education use their physical strength working mostly as porters at work-sites or use their finger dexterity at making, packaging or assembling products of all kinds at workplaces. They are mostly piece-rate workers who get paid for what they produce and only if they produce.

Bazaar-based Activities of Women

The next groups of economic activities that women engage in are bazaar-based trading of all kinds. Bazaars may be safely described as “women-domain” with casual sellers and hawkers at the lowest level and traders, brokers and shopkeepers of all variety and significance at the higher level. Their level of education can vary from illiteracy to college education. The source of finance of some may be the daily loans at exorbitant rate of interest and some may be engaged in providing these loans at market rate of interest.



She said the kitchen money I gave to her was small, so I scolded her “Then, don’t go to market for the rest of your life.” She was so choked with happiness that she had a fit and died. I’m not guilty.

Office Workers and Professional Women

Women with certain levels of education work in government departments, organizations and companies as clerks, salespersons, supervisor and managers. Professionally trained women,

such as teachers, nurses, lawyers, doctors, engineers and accountants also mostly work at salaried jobs. Working at full-time jobs with job rules and requirement can sometimes be difficult for the women who already have the burden of household and family. Low income families sometimes face a very difficult problem of spouses being posted to different locations. Among the professional women, a few have achieved the highest positions of director general, university rector and professor. They serve as role models for women and as instances to demonstrate that women also can reach the top.

Women Entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurial skills of Myanmar women are well demonstrated by such famous women as Naga Daw Oo, Sein Brothers Daw Kyi Kyi and more recently by Daw Se, Daw Sein Sein, Dr. Daw Yi Yi Hla of WYZ Co., and Daw Khin Myint Myint of Aung Aung Enterprise. We also have in the co-operative sector, Daw Thet Yi and women co-operatives such as Thiri-May, Myitta Shin and Sandi Daywi. With the market economic system, there is flourishing of companies and joint ventures some with very outstanding women presidents, directors and general managers. Perhaps business is the occupation where women can achieve their highest potential.

The probably the most important point that can be made about Myanmar women is the fact that there is no traditional and cultural barriers that prevent or put social pressure on women to stay home as wife, mother and home-maker. Whenever, there is a need and an opportunity and the will, women simply can go out and be gainfully employed. According to two women surveys, most married women-workers had the support and co-operation of their husbands. There is no profession, position or honorary post from which Myanmar woman, especially educated woman, are excluded either by tradition, law or practice, this fact is demonstrated by some very important positions occupied by women in Myanmar. The Philosophy of some very successful business women of present day and yesteryears provides inspiration to women. The another point that deserves attention and reflection is the fact that only the very insignificant proportion of working women reached the higher level jobs. The fact that majority of women occupy the lower and middle level positions is perhaps partly due to the attitude of women, ready to take back seat is there is someone to take the leadership.

Myanmar women have equal employment opportunities and equal pay for equal work. There are no barriers to employment for women; the majority of women graduates applying for jobs, outnumbering and outshining men in academic performance, create problems of gender imbalance in by the Public Services Selection and Training Commission. However, the career ladders of men and women are observed to take different paths beyond the first few levels of

promotion, after which it becomes increasingly difficult for women to advance further, especially to reach the top.

At present, by bringing together the various images of the Myanmar women in economic activities, it may be able to identify more clearly the role of Myanmar women play in the country's development. The roles that the majority of the women especially those in the rural and urban grass-root level play are in survival and subsistence economics, by their income generating activities from within and outside of the home as co-sponsors of the family.

3.11 Bo Bo, Some Remarks on Recent Socio-Cultural Changes in Myanmar

People are suffering under the regime, they don't have any exit. They are trying a cure by themselves, watching Korean soap operas and love movies to forget their real life. In the real life, they cannot live like what they used to read in love story. They are facing with daily struggle for consumption. Even if they cannot get what they want in the outside world, at least they can get some inspiration from books for what they want to be.

1 The Role of Korean Soap Operas in Myanmar Culture

Korean TV series programs were broadcasted in Myanmar channels since 2002. A great majority of Myanmar people are addicted to these Korean series, especially many young ladies like to watch how the Korean actresses acting, living – and what they are wearing. They try to imitate the clothes of Korean actresses. This imitation has

Moreover, their mindsets have been changed by watching Korean series. For example, in Myanmar, females traditionally do not dare to drink alcohol in public places. In the mind of the people, a woman who drinks with man in a restaurant could be a prostitute. So, elder people teach young Myanmar girls since their childhood not to drink alcohol.

In a drastic changing era, such kind of teaching is out of date. As Korean culture dominates on their life, many Myanmar ladies are daring to drink outside, and no ones blames them as hookers. However, some still resist the influence of Korean culture and follow the traditional way of teaching.

2 Daw Ju's Remembrance

In Myanmar, only the smart people can go to the Institute of medicine. Most of the students who passed the grade 10 with the highest score, choose the Medical University. People admire the medical students as well as the writers from the Medical University. They do have influence on young people.

Juu is one of the prominent writers in Myanmar. "A Mhat Ta Ya" (Remembrance) is her first book and the most controversial one in the literary history of Myanmar. Audiences are so amazed to read the book because a lot of sex scenes are described in it. It is kind of sensual seduction. Also it is written by woman author who is from the Medical University. After the allowance of publication once, there wasn't any permission from "Sar Pay Si Sit Yay" (the group which is formed by government to control & edit the literary texts) until now. Likely, the book is a true story based on personal experiences of the author.

The book is about the tragic love story of two lovers. The lady is attending the Medical University in Mandalay. She falls in love with her classmate. When they become a couple, she moves on to her boy friend's rented house instead of living in the hostel as before. In Myanmar culture, that kind of life style is not acceptable. Her boy friend is having a secret affair with another girl while he has the chance to return to his native in summer time. After they have been living together for 3 years, they got to split up and go back to their hometowns as they intend to get posted at country side hospitals. Unexpectedly, her boy friend's another girl comes and visits to Mandalay before they return. The story becomes sad and ends up with the main narrator's breaking of the heart. There were quite a lot of people criticized on "A Mhat Ta Ya". They said that book is against the Myanmar tradition.

The creative writing of Juu is incredible. Everything she wrote in "A Mhat Ta Ya" is not just like a novel but it is like actual facts. For someone who had being broken heart once, he or she may not forget "A Mhat Ta Ya".

The author writes about the one sided love of a woman who continues her serious love even when the man she loves abandoned her. This is how the story ends. Besides, it is the one who doesn't really care on how she is looked down from other people because her living together with a man without married which can be regarded as an unethical act according to Myanmar norms. Nevertheless, in Myanmar there are just a few people who accepted this kind of living-together-lifestyle so far. In fact, if couples decided to stay together, many questions are coming to them, do we have a job to live all by ourselves, do we have a house to live in, otherwise, they need to have income for renting house, and these are constraints of living together for Myanmar young people.

However, the novel does not provide any solutions to these economic problems. It just concentrates on the love story in accordance of the insinuation of the Myanmar youths to read love stories.

From the point of artistic value, "A Mhat Ta Ya" is the classic one. Let me quote Lenin here, one of his friend playing a piano and it was a sonata of Beethoven. Lenin said "I was amazed to hear that song, I just wonder is that truly come from the human being" and he kept saying "When we listen to beautiful melodies, our mind become with compassion and want to scrub the heads of the other people", "Actually, what we got to do is beating the heads of people in this kind of period" (the civil war of that time).

In my opinion, when young people read “A Maht Ta Ya”, they will try not to be apart from their love ones. Moreover, they regard love as their first priority in their life. They may forget to think about their country is one of the LDC countries.

3 Creating Fantasy Worlds

Especially, people who live in rural areas, reading love novel is some kind of entertainment for them. They are living in place of difficulties to get electricity. So, they rent love novels from book shop as they don't have much choice for entertainment. Otherwise, they go to small video shops running by generator to watch the movies.

99 out of 100, Myanmar movies and novels are based on the university life. Actors and actress are students, they get support from parents. No need to worries about their expense while they are studying at University. After they graduate, they can get a job easily. The reality, however, is in the contrary: Even a doctor cannot get a job easily in outside world.

A few years ago, if someone asks what kind of books are the best sellers in Myanmar literature, we must say love novels written by authors from medical universities, and of course, some books which can provide to get knowledge to be wealthy and successful in life, follow by the second place. It can be seen that love novels are so popular in Myanmar. In recent days, the popular trend of Myanmar literature has changed a bit. Love stories still prevail but more and more include funny are included. In fact, literature has some influence on the film industry as well, so that movie directors are much more focusing to create comedy which means that they follow the market's demands. If one produce a simple love story, probably one would not be able to get much profit like if he makes funny movies. Looking at the Myanmar film production in the whole year of 2010 only one or two love stories were showed in Cinema, and the rest of them are funny love stories.

One of film maker said “People don't want to watch sad movies or tragedy; they want to see happy endings. When they go out from Cinema, I want to see smiles on their faces”. In this case, it can be interpreted like going to see a movie is trying to forget the actual life for a moment. Although they cannot smile and be happy under the suppressive regime, reading love stories and watching funny movies are a remedy for them in a way.

3.12 Waiyan Moe Thone Thann, Sanctioning Democracy in Myanmar

Introduction

In the face of new political developments in Myanmar, the debate on how to foster democracy in Myanmar intensifies. Sanctions would take the central role of strategic decisions to be made by international community to engage with the new “civilian” government in Myanmar to create a better change in Myanmar. The essay will assess the effectiveness of the sanctions by looking into political and socioeconomic consequences of the sanctions imposed by U.S, EU and other western countries.

Development of Sanctions against the Military Regime

The military regime in Myanmar came into the power in September 1988 after brutally cracking down the people power uprising. Responding to the military coup, US, EU and other western countries imposed arms embargo and suspended the economic assistance.¹ Two years later, the military regime kept its promise to hold the elections. Its refusal to hand over the power to the elected representatives, majority of whom are from National League of Democracy Party, led by charismatic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, sparked off the strong reactions from the international community.² In 1996, the delegates from NLD walked out of the national convention that was strictly controlled by the regime. The pro-democracy groups outside the country lobbied the US and EU countries to impose harsher sanctions. The US government banned new investments in Myanmar and the EU pulled off the generalized system of preferences (GSP) in 1997.³ Responding to the brutal crackdown on NLD in 2003, the US government imposed the comprehensive economics sanctions which included financial and banking restrictions.⁴ In 2007, when the military regime again brutally cracked down on the peaceful protests of monks, the US further restricted the import of jade and rubies of Myanmar, regardless of processing country. President Obama signed the extension of existing sanctions in July 2009.⁵

Overview of Sanctions

Different types of sanctions imposed by US, EU and other western countries are systematically sorted into four major categories such as *suspension of aid and technical assistance, investment and trade bans, diplomatic measures and informal sanctions*.⁶ Under suspension of aid and technical assistance, US, EU and UN are legally restricted to provide

¹ Steinberg, David. (2010). *Burma/Myanmar What Everyone Needs to Know*, p.114

² *Ibid.*, p.115

³ ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). *Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape*, p.11

⁴ Steinberg, David. (2010). *Burma/Myanmar What Everyone Needs to Know*, p.115

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.115

⁶ ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). *Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape*, p.10-11

even development aids to Myanmar, only small amount is currently provided to the country as humanitarian assistance. Under investment and trade bans, US has a comprehensive sanctions prohibiting all imports from Myanmar and exports of financial services. EU denies the preferential tariff rates which normally apply to developing countries and has imposed sanctions on logging and mining industries, prohibiting the import of timber products, minerals, metals and precious stones and the export of machineries, technical and financial assistance to those industries. Under diplomatic measures, US, EU and other western countries have visa bans on the ruling generals and their related families and their top business cronies. In terms of informal sanctions, a bunch of governments advise their citizens not to visit to Myanmar on ethical ground.

Assessing Political Consequences

Political Gains

The most obvious political gain from imposing sanctions by international community is being able to provide the critical moral support and legitimacy to the political opposition groups working for democracy in Myanmar.¹ In the view of proponents of sanctions, the main political opposition would be able to use sanctions as the main bargaining chip dealing with the military junta. In their view, sanctions also served as the punitive actions against the military junta for its track records of human right violations. Responding to the pressures from sanctions and international community, the military junta occasionally agreed to the arranged trips of international human rights and labor organizations into the country.² It could be argued here that imposition of sanctions would cripple the political legitimacy of the government. On the other hand, sanctions are not required to point out the illegitimacy of the military rule that uses the coercion and violence to keep the country under control. Rather than that, it is hard to assess other tangible political gains from imposing sanctions to foster prospects for democratic society in Myanmar.

Political Failures

Now, how sanctions have failed to produce desired political results will be explored. Sanctions are designed to weaken the military junta politically and economically to the level that it would introduce reforms favorable to the opposition groups and acceptable to the international community, especially US and western countries. Those are intended to improve the human rights situation in Myanmar and pressure the military leaders to have political dialogue with opposition groups, particularly the NLD and ethnic minority groups. In 2003,

¹ ICG, International Crisis Group. (2004). Myanmar: Sanctions, Engagement, or Another Way Forward?, p. 15-16.

² Ibid., p.15-16.

US imposed comprehensive economic sanctions on Myanmar. The political developments from that point on will be analyzed to assess the effectiveness of sanctions in finding political solutions for the country.

In 2003, the military regime unveiled its so-called seven-step “road map” to disciplined democracy, which is similar to the “New Order” under Suharto. It resumed the national convention to write the constitution. NLD leaders were invited to attend the national convention under strict supervisions of the military junta setting the direction of the constitution. As the precondition for participating in the convention, the NLD demanded for the release of all political prisoners and a dialogue with the government. The military junta rejected the demands of NLD and went ahead with constitution writing process. The military announced the completion of constitution in 2007 and the referendum for the new constitution was held in May 2008. The constitution, which was drafted by a committee of members handpicked by the government, guarantees the political involvement of the military in all three branches of government at all levels. Twenty-five percent of the parliamentary seats as well as the Minister for Defense, Home Affairs and Border Affairs are reserved for military appointees.¹ This new constitution was adopted with more than 90 percent of the votes in favor as reported in state-run media.² The government continued to implement the further steps from its roadmap despite the international and domestic criticisms about irregularities of the referendum.

In mid-2010, the military junta issued new political party and election laws to repeal the 1990 election results and shield many prominent political figures including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from contesting in coming general elections and pressure NLD, the main political opposition party to lose its legal entity.³ The military held new elections in 2010 May. The NLD boycotted the elections and lost its legal entity by refusing to register with new political party laws. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party won about 80 percent of seats both at national and regional levels. Rampant vote frauds were reported, but some other opposition parties that contested and won some seats in the elections decided to join the parliament and work together for potential political reforms within the framework set by the military regime.⁴ The new civilian “elected” government with cabinet positions filled with ex-

¹ Myanmar Constitution 2008

² Steinberg, David. (2010). *Burma/Myanmar What Everyone Needs to Know*, p. 144.

³ BBC, Myanmar Election Law Bars Aung San Suu Kyi from Polls

⁴ ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). *Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape*, p. 17-18.

military men and led by the retired general as the president was sworn in on 30th March, 2011.¹

Those political developments prove the fact that the sanctions failed to undermine the political power of the military in order to concede its position to start a dialogue with the political oppositions in the country and that the military will be the dominant political actor in many years to come with formation of new government and adoption of constitution cementing its rule over the country.

Political Ramifications

Imposing sanctions promotes the isolationism of the military regime in Myanmar, causing the diplomatic imbalances.² The military regime has to rely more heavily on China as the major political and economical ally in attempt to avoid from harsh resolutions in UN Security Council and avert the economic consequences from sanctions. With limited number of friendly nations under ostracism by sanctions, the military regime started developing diplomatic relationships with rogue regimes such as North Korea in promoting nuclear capabilities. The regime also uses sanctions as a scapegoat to deflect the attention from economic woes, by its mismanagement, in the public eye³. More importantly, sanctions polarize the political debate on Myanmar at national and international levels.⁴ The NLD, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, stated clearly that sanctions must remain in place, while the other democratic opposition parties contested in 2010 elections called to lift the sanctions on Myanmar. Sanctions polarized the political oppositions, inside and outside of Myanmar, which are supposed to be united in facing the formidable enemy, the military. ASEAN unanimously called on the international community to end the boycott of Myanmar to foster the economic development in the country while US Assistance Secretary Kurt Campbell called ASEAN's call to lift sanctions premature and EU is yet to review and debate its common position on Myanmar in at the end of this April.

Assessing Economic and Social Consequences

In this part, how the military regime survived the economic sanctions imposed by US, EU and other western countries will be explored and the economic and social ramifications will be analyzed.

¹ CNN, Myanmar Swears in New President

² ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape, p. 13

³ Welsh, Bridget . (2007). "Crisis in Burma: Can the U.S. Bring About A Peaceful Resolution?"

⁴ ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape, p.12-13

Defiance of Economic Sanctions

Myanmar could be considered as another classic example of Dutch Disease. The other economic sectors have been ignored by the military regime because it could fund its military operations against armed rebellions across the border areas and sustain the crony capitalism with enormous income generated from the natural resources extraction industry. Being on the corridor of the energy-hungry emerging economic giants, China and India, the sales of natural gas to the neighboring countries is currently the major and stable source of income for the military regime.

The military regime earns approximately about US\$ 400 million per year from the existing natural gas fields.¹ Fortunately for the regime, the potential income from those newly found gas fields ranges from additional US\$ 580 millions to US\$ 824 millions per year and the total income of from US\$12 to 17 billions for the lifetime of those projects.² Sitting on those earnings, the regime needs not care about the income lost due to economic sanctions. The regime also almost exclusively exploits the earnings from the sales of other types of natural resources.

Economic and Social Ramifications

It is undeniably true that the military regime's economic mismanagements, rampant corruptions and crony capitalism filled with economic rent-seeking activities fundamentally have caused the economic despairs the general public is facing these days. Sanctions, aside from failing to weaken the regime economically, have been contributing in further tightening the economic hardships of the people in Myanmar. As a direct result of introducing US comprehensive economic sanctions in 2003, about 60 local garment factories had to close down and about 40-60,000 workers were laid off almost overnight.³ The spin-off effects were also quite impactful to other industries including vendors and hotels. Many laid-off garment workers, who mostly young girls, sadly fell into the prey of prostitution, which is only easily and available source of income for those undereducated workers.⁴

Opportunity Cost

The opportunity cost incurred by sanctions must be analyzed in three levels such as the loss of business opportunities, loss of aid assistance and loss of opportunities to induce economic reforms. Firstly, before all those boycott campaign against Myanmar, the country was in the similar stage of attracting FDI as Vietnam. And, while Cambodia garment industry boomed in

¹ Shwe Gas Movement, .2006. *Supply and Command Natural Gas in Western Burma Set to Entrench Military Rule*, p. 51-52

² Ibid., p. 51-52

³ ICG, International Crisi Group. (2004). *Myanmar: Sanctions, Engagement, or Another Way Forward?* , p. 19-20

⁴ Ibid., p. 19-20

last fifteen years and Myanmar garment industry declined despite its lucrative start¹. Secondly, while developing countries from the same region such as Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam receive \$62, \$52 and \$42 per capita, respectively, Myanmar receives less than \$6 in aid in last 22 years.² The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have reported to introduce food for education programs in rural areas. However, due the strict and rigid US government' aid policy, they had to stop running the programs that giving families food as incentive to send their children to schools because they no longer received enough food aid. Thirdly, being denied to tap into the international capital markets and technical assistance from international financial institutions, and build ties with socially and environmentally responsible corporations from western countries impede the potential of meaningful economic reform and development in Myanmar which could be considered the necessary condition to induce political reforms.³

Transaction Cost

Due to US's restriction of financial services to Myanmar, trading becomes distorted. Many businesses, which have no ties to the military regime, could not use the international banking system as all the major international banks could not authorize the modes of payment such as letter of credit and telegraphic transfer to any Myanmar-based business entity. Thus, the exporters/importers from Myanmar need to set up dummy companies in third-country like Singapore to use banking services to do the trading with outside world. Then, using informal money transfer market to get US\$ back to Myanmar. Extra cost accumulated in each step of this distorted trading system is transferred to the primary producers/users. In nutshell, due to transaction cost, a farmer get lower price for selling his rice for export and he has to pay higher price for imported fertilizers and farming-related products. Due to sanctions from US, EU and other western countries, Myanmar could only export its agricultural products to India and other neighboring countries. This diminishes the bargaining power of Myanmar exporters as the counterparts from neighboring countries usually take advantage of the situation in business dealings with Myanmar.

Sanctions have disproportionate effects on the different sectors on the economy. The ruling elites with their money from sales of natural resources seem to be immune from the economic punishments of sanctions, while the economic sectors, in which most of ordinary citizens make their livings, seem to be hit hardest by the sanctions.

¹ ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape, p. 12

² Ibid., p. 12

³ ICG, Internal Crisis Group. (2011). Myanmar's Post-Election Landscape, p. 12

Conclusion: Assessing Overall Effectiveness of Sanctions

Using all the information presented early on, the effectiveness of sanctions is assessed under the framework of three parameters, outcomes, conditions and linkages.¹ The direct and desired outcome for the sanctions is political reform and change of regime in Myanmar. Given the evidence presented, aside from crippling the legitimacy of the military regime in international community, sanctions failed to bring about the desired political change in Myanmar in last two decades. For aspect of conditions, sanctions, coupled with denial of technical assistance for capacity buildings, suspension and reduction of development aids, and failure to engage with the military regime, did worsen the economic and diplomatic imbalances and hinder the prospects for economic and political reforms in long run. Linkages, sanctions creating ostracism failed to work hand-in-hand with other approaches such as roles of international aids and development agencies in fulfilling basic needs, protection of local communities merely with their presence on ground, empowerment and capacity building of local communities in bottom-up approach of change, and socialization with the regime at many different levels to expose it with ideas and practices of good governance and liberal democracies. It would be logically sound to conclude that harmful political and economic ramifications dramatically outweigh positive impacts of the sanctions.

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¹ Pedersen, Morten B. (2010). Burma, The International Community, And Human Rights (with particular attention to the role of foreign aid), p. 125

3.13 Samuel Ngun Ling, Work-Related Socio-cultural Values and Economic Options in the Buddhist context of Myanmar (Burma) •

Introduction

In the context of the widening trade and business gap between Myanmar and developed nations, with the increasing number of European and American companies withdrawing themselves from doing businesses in Myanmar in past years, the need to review Myanmar economic system was already overdue, in light of the incoming impacts of the challenging forces of globalization and changing trends of local peoples' social and cultural values. To be candid, most of Western criticisms on the economic issues of Myanmar have failed to see the significant roles of Myanmar cultural and religious traditions, namely, tradition of Theravada Buddhism, with its intermingled local belief systems, social values and moral behaviors that encompass the whole life and business of Myanmar people. Once this religio-cultural context is well understood, it will become apparent that its values have played a significant role in the constitution of peoples' work and consumption behaviors. This paper will identify some religio-cultural values, relating to economic actions of the local people, and indicate areas of influence on their works and consumption. My focus will be confined particularly to Myanmar Buddhist economic context. Five crucial points are to be explored here for further discussion: (1) An Overview of Economic Situation (2) Entanglement of Buddhist Culture in Myanmar Peoples' Socio- Economic Life; (3) Work Values. Social Prestige and Economic Concerns; (4) How Globalization Affects Life in Myanmar and (5) The Significance of Social Relationship in Doing Business in Myanmar.

Myanmar: Highlights of her Socio-Economic and Religio-Cultural Setting

a. An Overview of the Economic Background

Myanmar, a nation which regained her independence on 4 January, 1948 from the British colonial rule, is the second largest country in the Southeast Asia region, with a total area of 261,228 square miles. It shares a 6151 kilometer (3822 miles) boundary with five neighboring countries: 2205 kilometers (1370 miles) with the People's Republic of China, 2108 kilometers (1310 miles) with the Kingdom of Thailand, 1339 kilometers (832 miles) with India, 274 kilometers (170 miles) with Bangladesh, and 225 kilometers (140 miles) with the Lao People's Democratic Republic.¹ Myanmar became a member of the United Nations on 19 April, 1948 and joined ASEAN on 23 July, 1997. Myanmar is a Union of seven ethnic States and seven Burman (ethnically Burmese) Divisions. There are altogether 135 national ethnic groups, out of which the eight major ethnic groups include Bamar (Burman), Karen, Kachin, Chin, Shan, Mon, Rakhine and Kayah. The total population of Myanmar in 2004-2005 is an estimated 54.3 million (latest estimate) and 70% of this population live in rural areas. Economically, Myanmar enjoyed economic prosperity for a short period of parliamentary rule following her independence (January 4, 1948)) for instance, it was known in Asia as the world's leading rice exporter until the military took power in 1962. It was since 1962 that the serious economic mismanagement of General Ne Win's Burmese Way to Socialism, which employed isolationist economic policies, has gradually made Myanmar into one of the most

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¹ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the Union of Myanmar, *Implementation of the Seven-Step Map and Sector wise Development of the State* (27th March 2005), 1.

impoverished countries in the world today. It was under this policy of the Burmese Way to Socialism that Myanmar made experiments in the socialist economy for about three decades.

The fundamental concepts of this socialist economy stated: "In Burmese socialist society, equalitarianism is impossible. Men are not equal physically and intellectually in the respective quantity and quality of service they render to society and differences are therefore bound to exist. But at the same time social justice demands that the gaps between incomes are reasonable and correct measures will be taken to narrow these gaps as much as possible. In building up an economy according to socialist plan, every able individual will have to work according to his ability. The material and cultural values that accrue will be distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of labor expended by each individual in social production."¹ Nevertheless, this socialist economic system had failed miserably in implementing its policies and ideologies after three decades of political mismanagement under Ne Win. The mismanaged economic policy has then resulted creating a series of peoples' demonstrations, riots and conflicts against the central government especially since 1988 and even to the present in diverse forms and at different levels of socio-political dimensions.

b. Economic Situation Since 1988

Many people especially those who are poor, powerless and marginalized have experienced a lot of economic hardships through decades economic repressions under the long military rule. These economic hardships, combined with corrupted moral and socio-political suppressions, have kept many people in fear and anxiety of life. In order to survive, people have developed a coping mechanism which is daubed a 'corruption-adapted common way of life and which is potentially harmful for both the individual and society. Hence, knowingly or unknowingly, almost every person gets involved in doing some things that would have been considered illegal or unethical, religiously speaking. No one is sure about his or her future. Fear, anxiety, ambiguity, uncertainty and distress are common experiences, coupled with continuing nationwide economic crises. All these have dampened peoples' moral obligation to the poor, powerless and marginalized have uphold truth and justice.

Consequences of Myanmar economic breakdown since 1988 have covered diverse issues such as banking crisis, poor communication system, insufficient economic expertise and lack of skilled labors, shortage of supplies of power energy such as electricity, gasoline, petrol, poor conditions of infrastructures, unstable inflation under controlled monetary system, crisis of low income (many live below one dollar a day) and many other issues that cannot be mentioned here. In this context, Myanmar needs a sound economic system with increasing capital investments, including a reliable and efficient banking and monetary system, for instance, to assure that people will have saving security. Inflation rate needs to be systematically put under control to make a long term saving and economic investment secured and trustworthy. In addition, reliable and efficient health insurance and better educational system, which Myanmar lacks of for a long time, needs to be reformed in an urgent manner in order to provide economic security. In regard to labor market, Myanmar has a surplus of unskilled labors on the one hand, and shortage of skilled labors on the other. As development projects are undertaken, it is observed that the stocks of unskilled labors have often diminished.

Myanmar has a potential market for recruiting both unskilled and skilled labors while this market is strongly driven by both regional Asian (ASEAN) and global economy. The international pressure, along with its economic sanction, on the issue of human rights and

¹ The Burma Socialist Programme Party, the Union of Burma, *The System of Correlation of Man and Environment: The Philosophy of the Burma Socialist Programme Party*. (Rangoon): Sarpay Beikman Press, 1964), 46.

dignity has forced Myanmar to limit foreign investments and export of commodities to developed countries, especially to the West. Due to such a serious impact of economic crisis in the country, a growing number of young people flock to abroad (Asian and European countries) to work legally or illegally. The less the young labors experience employment opportunities and earnings (less than a dollar per day) within the country, the more they move and work abroad. Hence, Myanmar needs more and more foreign capital investments (but not impose of economic sanctions), technical cooperation from International firms and explorations of better employment opportunities to help keep the production of cheap labors under control and do a better economy of her own.

At present, Myanmar is trying to rebuild, with its own philosophy, a numerous political challenges both from outside and inside. Just as 'Burmese way to Socialism' was the popular slogan during Ne Win's Socialist period, so is 'Burmese way to Democracy' today. To speed up the process of economic development, the government which renamed itself as State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) initiated market-oriented economic policy since 1989 and laid down four economic - objectives: (1) Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well (2) Proper evolution of the market-oriented system; (3) Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad; and (4) The initiatives to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples.¹

The government tries to implement all-round national development plans based on the above economic objectives. Of varied economic development plans, agriculture is the main economic sector of Myanmar, of which rice, beans, edible oil crops plants, jute, palm, rubber, sugar cane, cotton, corn and castor are the major crops, with 25.4 million acres of farmland, which is 59.2% of the total arable land area (42.9 million acres) of the country. According to 1990 Labor Force Survey, over 55% of the employed population was engaged in the primary sector of agriculture, forestry and fishing, while 15% in the secondary sector of mining, manufacturing, construction and electricity, and 30% in the tertiary sector of trade, restaurant and hotels, water and sanitary services, communication and various social services.²

2. Entanglement of Buddhist Culture in Peoples' Socio-Economic Life

There are three strands that make up Myanmar culture: pre-Buddhist (primal) culture, traditional (typical) Buddhist culture, and popular (modern) Buddhist culture.

a. Pre-Buddhist Strand

This cultural strand is primarily derived from primal peoples' daily life's experiences with nature, land and supernatural powers, known in Burmese as *Nats* which means 'spirit'. Pre-Buddhist culture is believed to be the very basic foundation in shaping the material and social cultural worldviews of Myanmar people. Spirit (*Nat*) worship is widely practiced among Myanmar Buddhists of any school. The practices of making appeal and appease to malevolent *Nats* (harmful spirits) for life security, property security and social security are still very common among the Burmese Buddhists.

The second common tradition is 'ancestor worship' in which generations of forefathers, elders, and national heroes who played influential social and political roles in the affairs of families and society at different levels were made. This tradition is still common among both the Burman Buddhists and tribal peoples in Myanmar.

¹ Dr. Thet Lwin and Daw Khin May Aung, "A Population Profile of Myanmar," in *Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar* (Papers presented at the Symposium at the International Business Center Yangon 18th-20th November 1997)(Yangon: Office of Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, 1998), 41.

² Ibid., 42.

b. Traditional Buddhist Strand

This strand is particularly the Theravada form of Buddhist culture that strongly sticks itself to the original teachings of the elders, *the Theras*, of Buddhism so that it gives not much appreciation to the syncretistic forms of popular Buddhism. This typical Buddhist culture plays central roles in maintaining majorities' Buddhist cultural identities and spiritual values so that many Myanmar Buddhists would identify themselves being in line with this typical Buddhist strand, from which is derived a common Myanmar Buddhist philosophy that claims. "To be a real Burman is to be a Buddhist." Myanmar Buddhists respect the Buddha, although they fear the spirit.



Darling, if I do not die luckily, but you do, would you give me winning lottery numbers in my dreams?

c. Popular Buddhist Strand

Popular Myanmar Buddhist culture is profoundly amalgamated with primal and Hindu cultural elements. Many Myanmar Buddhists who claim to be good Buddhists still practice Nat (spirit) worship for their safety, and still consult with Hindu Brahmin priests for business advices, and for directions of their future visions, have demonstrated that the primal and Hindu religious thoughts have still captured the mindsets and behaviors of Myanmar people. The Brahmin priests were accepted, for instance, as advisers (gurus) at the royal courts of Myanmar kings and this influence continues to exist in Myanmar society especially among the ruling and working class people. More specifically, the Brahmin astrologers are used to be consulted when people want to choose the auspicious date and place for doing business, for holding significant religious ceremonies, and even for conducting the State's affairs.

Myanmar typical Buddhist merchants, traders, and businessmen used to seek, if not always, a piece of secret advice from the Brahmin astrologer, should they want to do business with confidence and self-assurance. Most ordinary Myanmar Buddhists, if not all, have their own horoscope which they take to the astrologer for consultation when the need arises, and that a great majority of Myanmar Buddhists bear astrologically auspicious names chosen by their respective Brahmin gurus. This fact clearly shows that from the cradle to the grave, the Brahmin Hindu cultural influence governs consciously or unconsciously the daily life of Myanmar people.¹

d. Family Values

Myanmar family is structurally patriarchal (male-dominated), Fathers, being regarded as guardian spirits (*ein-oo-nats*), have the highest roles in the family and sons are culturally entitled to inherit most of the parents' possessions. In typical Buddhist families Children are to show their deep respects to parents by bowing down before them twice a day before their parents' going to work in the noon and going to bed in the night. Mothers, being submissive to Fathers, played important roles in many aspects of Myanmar societal life. They are strictly bounded by the patriarchal traditions and cultures, not only to bear and care for children but also to control the purse, prepare food, keep order and discipline, and to be responsible for the general well being of the whole family. In society, constitution gives women equal rights with men, although the Buddhist culture provides the reverse. Article 154 of the 1974 constitution stated that women are allowed to enjoy equal political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Myanmar Buddhist Law also gives Myanmar women equal rights as men with regard to inheritance and divorce. As of the 1983 census, the literacy rate of women is 71.3% and in higher education, women comprise 57.89% of the total student enrollment. The participation of women in the work force also increased dramatically since 1980s. According to the 1990 Labor Force survey, the employment in 1990 was 15.64 million out of which women's participation rate was 22.34% in the primary (agriculture) sector, 32.85% in the secondary (industry) sector and 44.53% in the tertiary (services) sector.²

e. *Kamma* as a Culture of Consumption and Economic Action

Majority of Myanmar Buddhists invest more in religious and cultural spending than in business-related economic investment. They will generously give alms/donations to various religious cultural activities such as celebrating novice-hood, sponsoring special festivals, feasting of monks, and construction of pagodas. Why? The first reason is, because for them, religious spending is believed to be more meritorious than economic investment. Second

¹ Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, "Myanmar Culture, Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar" in *Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar* (Papers presented at the Symposium at the International Business Center Yangon 18th-20th November 1997)(Yangon: Office of Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, 1998), 64.

² Daw Khin Aye Win, "Women, Active Participants in Nation Building in Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar, 233-236.

reason is, because of the impacts of Buddhist belief in *rebirth*, *merits* and *Kamma* on peoples' consumption behavior.¹ As noted by Melford E Spiro,² very well-known American Anthropologist, who is one of the authorities on Burmese Buddhism, Burmese *Kammic* Buddhism provides incentives to worldly action (economic and political), for economic success is a necessary means for Buddhist soteriological action, which in turn has important worldly consequences, social and economic alike. In this *Kammic* Buddhism, a pleasant rebirth is considered as the result of excellent *Kamma* that has to be accumulated by good merits. Burmese Buddhists are therefore enormously concerned with increasing their store of merits. *Kammic* Buddhism hence views worldly action as soteriologically neutral. Since Buddhist salvation is believed to be attained through merit, merit has to be acquired through worldly action. Buddhism strongly resists especially against human evil desire (*ta-hna*) that is believed to be resisted basically from attachment to worldly possession, fame and lust. In other words, the soteriology of *Kammic* Buddhism neither encourages nor discourages worldly action, while economic action is indirectly an indispensable condition for salvation, it is only through this action that one can hope to acquire the most soteriologically valuable merit (*kutho*) - a merit that can be achieved through giving (*dana* in Pali) and morality (*sila* in Pali). This Buddhist belief in *kutho* (merit), *dana* (giving), and *sila* (morality), which is a primary means to salvation provides the powerful motive for economic action, essentially leading to sharpening of one's behavioral patterns and work-related values.

Wealth in Burmese Buddhist culture is the harvest of the good deeds in previous existence converted into reality in present life. It represents *Kammic* rewards for merits accumulated through *dana* in previous existences through giving. A Buddhist who is economically wealthy is therefore viewed as a man of great virtue with multiple merits - the merits that have been earned from the virtue of his or her past rebirths being converted into the prestige of wealth in his or her present rebirth. Again, this economic wealth can continue adding more and more accumulations of merit to present action of life in order to ensure better rebirths in the future existence. The more merit one accumulates, the greater one's chances of spiritual salvation. The merits being acquired through giving is the means par excellence for spiritual salvation, and hence the quest of merit as a noble path to the attainment of spiritual salvation provides the most powerful motivation for economic works and improvement of wealth.³

3. Cultural Impacts on Work Values, Social Prestige and Economic Concerns

For Myanmar Buddhists, acquiring 'merit-through-*dana*' is one of the noblest religious arts for the prestige of a person. Religious works such as giving alms, building pagoda, constructing monastery, sponsoring initiation of novice-hood and the ordination of monk-hood, and feasting of monks are usually public events, which involve public conspicuous display, consumption, and sharing of wealth. The more spending on these religious acts, the more prestige accrues to the sponsor. Economic work and consumption values in Myanmar are therefore often determined by such religious-oriented economic actions. Accumulating merit and earning social prestige are the most essential religious acts and social virtues, both of which require of economic investment in 'giving', provides a powerful motive for economic action (work and saving). This Buddhist tradition of merit-through-*dana* therefore brings, in a way, imbalances effects on the differences in the Burmese standards of living as the rich spends more in religious consumption (giving). In this Sense, the Buddhist tradition of merit-through-*dana* seems to make people of different levels imbalanced in their living condition

¹ Dingrin La Seng, "Kammic Buddhism and Economic Action in Myanmar: A Christian Perspective " in *WAYS MIT Journal of Theology*, vol. 7 (January, 2006), 24-28.

² Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes* (2nd, expanded edition) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 453- 454.

³ Ibid 454.

and economic actions. There are two assumptions: negative and positive assumptions on the question whether the Burmese Buddhist concept of *dana* strengthens or weakens economic actions of the people in Myanmar. As a negative assumption, Spiro wrote, "... it is probably safe to predict that ... the continuation of this soteriological pattern of merit-through-*dana* will continue to pose a serious obstacle to the future economic growth of Burma."¹ What Spiro tried to point out here is that even though Myanmar Buddhists need material wealth to accumulate their merits through giving, such a wealth may not lead them to the capitalist investment which could produce more wealth.² In support of this idea, Mya Maung,³ a native scholar, came with a note arguing that Myanmar Buddhist cultural values, together with its politico-economic policy and traditionalism, resisted the economic progress of the country and affirmed the great influence of Buddhism upon the economic activities of the vast majority of the population, especially rural peasants.⁴

In light of views of the above two scholars, what can be concluded is that though economic activity can be stimulated by one's desire to have profits, a typical Burmese Buddhist culture of giving does not lead Burmese Buddhists to capitalist investment. This might be because, instead of investing their daily earnings and economic profits in profitable enterprises, they spend them mainly for religious purposes in order to accumulate 'good deeds' (*kamma*) and merits (*kutho*), which are determinant of happy rebirth in the future.⁵ Looking back to the economic behaviors of Burmese Buddhists in pre-British Burma, E. Sarkisyanz,⁶ argued that in pre-British Burma, Burmese Buddhists did not save for economic security and the Buddhist tradition allows accumulation of wealth only when it is related to works of 'merit' as building a monastery or pagoda. Thus, 'giving' rather than 'investment' that developed into the Burmese Buddhist culture is characteristic even among poor families of the lowest income. "Out of little one should give little, out of what is moderate, a moderate amount. Out of much give much," read Buddhist maximum.⁷ While works of merit continued to serve, in some ways, as motivation for economic activity, Buddhist values are considered as an obstacle to economic growth and capital investment.⁸ To support this idea of understanding Buddhist values as an obstacle, U Tin Soe⁹ identified two major factors as the important causes of economic crisis in Myanmar: one is the Buddhist concept of *Kamma* (good deeds) and the other is *Lawba* (greed or avarice) and explained that Myanmar Buddhists believe that one's good fortune, high authority and high social status in this life are 'givens,' and are bound to the 'merits' that had been done in previous (past) life so that all life issues including economic prosperity and even poverty are caused first of all by *Kamma* (deeds) and followed by *Lawba* (greed).¹⁰

In contrast to the above views, Padmasiri De Silva¹¹ proposed another aspect on the positive effects of *Kamma* on the economic actions of the people in Myanmar. In opposition to the

¹ Ibid., 463.

² Ibid., 463-468.

³ Mya Maung is Professor of Finance in the Boston College School of Management.

⁴ Mya Maung, "Culture Value and Economic Change" in *Asian Survey*, vol 4, No. 3 (March, 1964), 757-764. For more information about factors affecting poor economic performance of Myanmar, see Mya Maung, *The Burma Road to Poverty* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 205, 210-215, 275, 292-299.

⁵ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 192-193, 206-207.

⁶ E. Sarkisyanz was Professor and Director of the Political Science Department of the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. He earned his PhD from the University of Chicago.

⁷ E. Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 142.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dr Tin Soe is Professor and Head of the Department of Economics at Yangon University of Distance Education.

¹⁰ Tin Soe "An economic Interpretation of Some Myanmar Traditional Concepts in the Context of Globalization," in *Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia*, Part, 3, published by Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Education, Union of Myanmar (Yangon: University Press, 2005), 147-148.

¹¹ Padmasiri de Silva is Professor and Head of Philosophy at University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

idea of Max Weber (1864-1920)¹ who understands Buddhism as other-worldly, monastic ideal, which requires absolute abandonment of the world and its drives. De Silva strongly emphasized the significance of Buddhist ethics opposition to the idea of Max other-worldly, monastic ideal, which requires absolute abandonment of the world and its drives, De Silva strongly emphasized the significance of Buddhist social ethics and hence denied any rational action, which impedes the activity of concentrated contemplation. For Weber, there is no path leading from this "world-rejecting" religion to "any economic ethic or even any rational social ethic."² De Silva therefore criticizes Weber for wrongly asserting that Buddhism is not a source of this worldly social ethic. His critical argument is the fact that Buddhism has a genuine social ethic and hence plays a vital role in social change, even though it is other-worldly directed. In addition, he argued that the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self" (*anatta*) does not weaken a healthy drive for personality integration, social reform or even nation building. Instead, Buddhism has enhanced cooperation and social integration by reducing one's self-centeredness, self-manipulation and greediness.

In view of De Silva, Weber's theory ignored the significance of inter-relationship between lay Buddhism and the world-denounced monastic Buddhism.³ Again, in view of another scholar, namely, E. Sarkisyanz, member's view on Buddhism tends to be too narrow', because it is confined only to the canonical Theravada Buddhism and Weber does not fully understand "the Asokan political Buddhism."⁴ It was this Asokan political Buddhism that devoted the Indian State of that time to the creation of a prosperous nation as a precondition for the support of the Sangha and for "the escape from suffering and the realization of moral law (the Dhamma) in this society as whole."⁵ In line with this thought, Frank E. Reynolds⁶ asserts that the Buddhist law of *Kamma* ensures that piety, moral behavior, and wealth are "mutually supportive" and that a large store of merit gained through giving is believed to assure chances of pleasant rebirths in the future.⁷ Hence, Buddhism is not completely void of the motive of capital investment but it emphatically teaches, "An ethic of diligent work" for the laity and hence to support entrepreneurial energy directed to investments and reinvestment.⁸

4. How Globalization Affects the Life of Peoples in Myanmar

Many leaders in Asia today assume that in spite of some considerable benefits, globalization created social disintegration, inequality, poverty and even endangerment of the human environment. Through a vast network of marketing systems, globalization brought about the widening income gap between the rich and the poor both at national and international levels. The richest quarter of the world's population saw its per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product) increase nearly six times during the 20th century, while the poorest quarter of the

¹ Max Weber (1864-1920) was an influential sociologist.

² Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston, Beacon Press, 1963), 267.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dingrin La Seng, "Kammic Buddhism and Economic Action in Myanmar: A Christian Perspective " in *WAYS MIT Journal of Theology*, vol. 7 (January, 2006), 12-36.

⁵ Sarkisyanz, „Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Socialism,“ in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma*, ed., Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersberg P.A.: Anima Books 1978). See also S.J. Tambiah "Buddhism and This Wordly Activity" in *Modern Asian Studies* 7, no. 1 (1973), 5. Tambiah is Professor of Anthropology at Harvard University.

⁶ Frank E. Reynolds received his doctorate from the University of Chicago, where he currently serves as Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations and as Chairman of the History of Religions Field in the Divinity School.

⁷ Frank E. Reynolds, "Ethics and Wealth in Theravada Buddhism: A Study in Comparative Religious Ethics," in *Ethics, Wealth and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics*, ed. Russell F. Sizemore and Donald K. Swearer (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 59-76.

⁸ Peter Harvey, 207-209.

world's population had a per capita increase of only three times.¹ A Third World country like Myanmar is still not included in this reference of income growth. Myanmar is far behind global market economic competition. She is being ranked as one of the ten poorest countries in the world. It is estimated that 75 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Because of its long-standing exclusion from international community and global market relations, Myanmar impoverished herself almost to the highest point of socio- cultural, educational, economic, and political collapse. Isolationism provides Myanmar with two inter-linked consequences: first, to content with her own self, being detached religiously and culturally from the demonic forces of globalization that would bring about mono-cultural homogenization to the country, and second, to isolate the country by detaching herself economically from the global market competition. Economic sanctions (e.g., restrictions on licenses of foreign trading firms) on Myanmar began since March, 2002, affecting around 100 foreign trading companies.² Full foreign ownership of companies operating in Myanmar is prohibited and hence most foreign investment is carried out through joint ventures with the government. The imposition of economic sanctions upon Myanmar was then made by the Bush's government of the United States of America and by the European Union from March, 2003. This economic sanction has seriously affected only the mass poor people but not the elite groups. In response to the said economic sanctions, Myanmar turns to neighboring countries such as China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and India for regional economic co-operations. Resistant to the incoming impacts of globalization on Myanmar religion and culture, the resurgence and revitalization of the Buddhist faith and culture are revived by renovating new Buddhist pagodas, temples and meditation centers. It is reported that the number of Buddhist meditation centers in Myanmar has increased rapidly in recent years, for instance, Myanmar today has the largest number of Buddhist meditation centers in the world with a total of 28 in 2003.³ Hence Myanmar is "benefiting from a worldwide trend, because increasing number of foreigners (468 in 2002 & 471 in 2003) have been coming here to learn Buddhist meditation techniques."⁴ Other non-Buddhist institutions like Muslim and Christian institutions such as home for orphanage, schools for the blind and the disabled, the deaf, nursery schools for children, Christian Bible schools, have also increased in number in recent years.⁵ The emergence of these new religious institutions, some of these have been developed not necessarily for spiritual purposes but significantly for commercial and economic purposes, has shown the growing impacts of materialism and economic globalization on the existing religions and religious movements of Myanmar, the process of which can be called as 'religious commercialization of our time.'

For economically poor Myanmar, a question posed by the various effects of this economic globalization is, how to deal with this forceful phenomenon in the most responsible way? Can Myanmar religious and cultural forces resist or curve the trends of globalization?⁶ Are Myanmar people ready to boldly face this homogenized streams of globalization and how? The answer to these questions could be both "Yes" and "No." First, Yes, because the

¹ Marj Rosenblum, Globalization], an unpublished document prepared for teaching students of English class at the American Center. Yangon (2003.), 25.

² See Burma: *Country in Crisis: Foreign Investment*. Open Society Institute, Burma Project, 2001, available at <http://burmaproject.org>.

³ Nyi Nyi Aung, "Foreigners look to fled station to quell Modern-day Anxieties," in Myanmar Times (February 24- March 2, 2003), 7.

⁴ Ibid. Increasing interest in Buddhist meditation does not necessarily imply one's conversion from his or her own religion to Buddhism.

⁵ Since 1990s, more than 70 new small Bible schools and orphanages were reported established by the evangelical and para-church groups based in Yangon.

⁶ See Vinay Samuel "Keynote Address: Evangelical Response to Globalization: an Asian Perspective, in *Transformation* (January, 1999), 4.

resurgence and revitalization of the Buddhist faith, nationalism and indigenization of ethnic Christianity (e.g.,

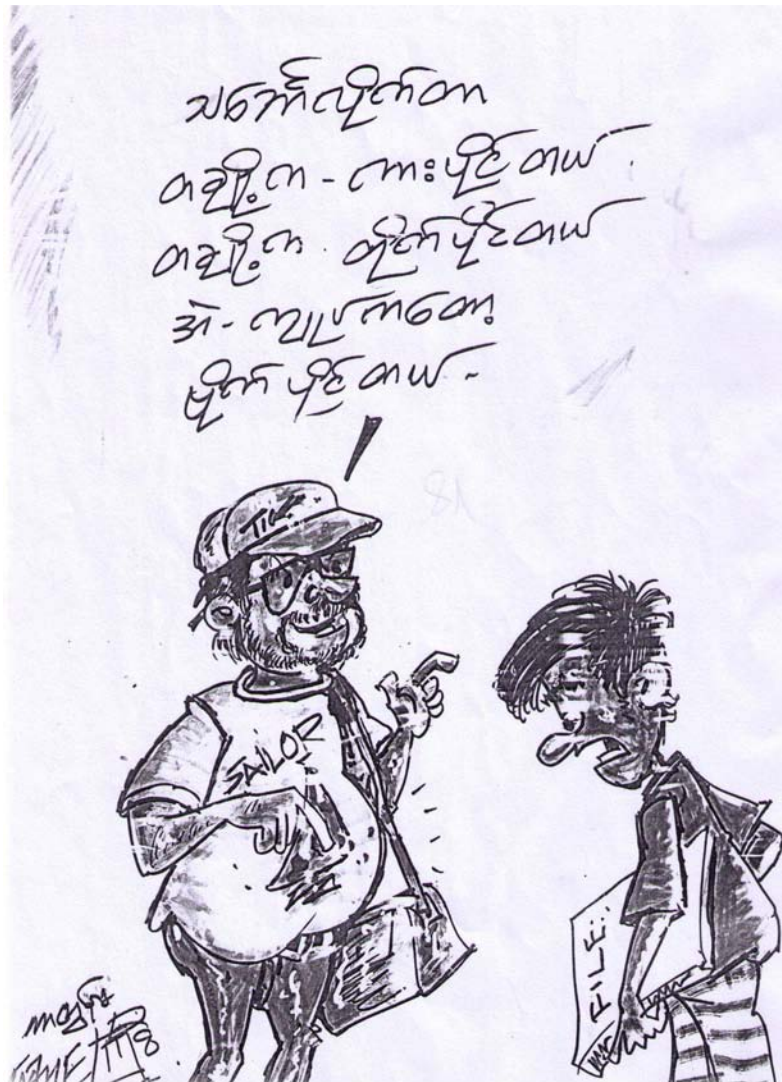
development of the Christian contextual and indigenous theologies) arose intensely in past years as counter-responses to penetration of economic globalization, together with its Western cultural accessories. Second, "No," because limited open market system helps Myanmar only with provision of limited economic resources and opportunities merely for the elite groups and power holders who are minority. Other religious and cultural minorities especially the powerless mass still live in abject condition of life. The net result is that economic globalization has benefited mainly the ruling and rich class people. Such benefits have in turn strengthened the legitimacy and perpetuation of the successive political powers in Myanmar.

In short, globalization of financial markets, not benefiting developing which have no free economic access to the networks of global economic systems, has produced only disadvantages. Hence, the open market system, controlled by the power holders, has resulted in various forms of moral corruption, disintegration of socio-cultural life, collapse of public education, and instability of political life. In fact, unless Myanmar develops competent economic management skills, she may continue to suffer abject poverty in the future and her restricted open-door economic policy might have worsened people's conditions in all sectors of life, from politico-economic injustices to religious exploitations. To give an example among others, many school teachers these days, because of low income paid by the school, spend more of their teaching hours for private home tuition than teaching in the school. These tutoring teachers earn three or four times, sometimes even more than that, of their monthly salaries. The result is that school education in Myanmar has gradually turned to be central on home-based education system, which many poor families cannot afford.¹

All the above factors, among many others, show how globalization affects our communities especially the mass poor who live below poverty line in Myanmar 36 today.²

¹ Samuel N. Lynn, "Voices of Minority Ethnic Christians in Myanmar," in CFC Bulletin vol. XVIII, No. 2- vol. XIX, No. 2 (December 2002-August 2003), 15. A paper from the Consultation on "Journeying Together with Indigenous Peoples in Asia" at Cairns, Australia (Sept.29-Oct. 6, 2002).

² Salai Hta Oke Yangon Church Directory (Yangon: The Christian Library, 1999).



Other people working as sailors on sea-going vessels own a car or a house. In my case, I own only this bulging belly.

5. The Significance of Social Relationship in Doing Business in Myanmar

Myanmar society is a tradition-bound conservative Buddhist society so that any attempt to understand the economic trends and motives of modern Myanmar would not be possible unless the basic knowledge of traditional Buddhist cultures, customs, moral concepts and social behavior is seriously taken into account. Traditionally, society is being composed of five social classes:¹ (1) farmers (or

Myanmar cultivators; (2) merchants (or traders); (3) Entrepreneurs; (4) Well informed and reputed *hmu-matts* (royal officials) and (5) The learned reverend monks. The four out of the five classes were considered as economically productive classes in Myanmar society and are therefore the main sources and causes of wealth, prosperity and welfare of the state.² In order

¹ *Hman-Nan Yazawin* (The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma), trans. by Pe Maung Tin & G. H. Luce (Rangoon: University Press, 1960) and U Po Hlaing's *Raja Dhamma Singaha Kyann*. U Po Hlaing was a very popular minister who had served the last three successive kings of Konbaung dynasty: Bo Daw (Badon) Min, Min Don Min and Thibaw Min. He was a learned Interior Minister (Shwepyithar Wungyi) who was known as Yaw Mingyi (Governor of MinisterYaw region).

² Maung Htin, ed., *Raja Dhamma Singaha Kyann* (Yangon: 1992), 138.

to do a successful business in Myanmar one will need we to understand the significance of social values and know how to have a socially healthy environment built before doing the greater business in Myanmar. There is a Burmese idiomatic proverb, "*pokku-khin hmah, taya mein*," which literally means, "one justice (accountability) only on a friendly tenns,"¹ explains what important role 'friendly social relationship' plays in constituting the communal accountability in 40 Myanmar cultural society.²

In doing whatever business big and small, social relationships always have a role and weight. As a head or a superior of a company, for instance, one will be looked upon as a father or a mother and a teacher if he or she has a good and healthy social relationship with his or her workers. Looked upon as father means not having an authoritarian power but it rather means taking a good care and a high responsibility in the needs of workers. Socially, Myanmar people cannot endure or tolerate any cultural humiliation in front of others. Many Myanmar people do not like to lose their faces before their superior or inferior. This means that *frankness, openness* and *criticism* which are not problematic in Western culture should have a limited range and be made neither publicly nor privately when these are considered to affect interpersonal relationships.³ Doing business on the basis of a healthy inter-personal relationship would be more effective as all business in Myanmar in the first place is largely on inter-personal (face-to-face) basis. In this respect, human face always plays an important role in making deals with any kind of business. The second important thing is a significant role the 'social understanding' (*na-lay-hmuh*) plays.

What it means by social understanding depends on the context, some time it means mutual forgiveness between employers and employees and some other time it means a consensus for mutual cooperation leading to mutual benefits. In fact, social understanding makes one's business faster, better and even more effective, because it has a unique potential to remove all sorts of social tensions between business-doing peoples. The only warning is that it could also be a great block to effectiveness of any business when it is employed as a means to selfish economic exploitation and manipulation of other's profit. The third important thing is Myanmar perception of the relation between time and business. While a saying, 'time is money' is true in other contexts, the reverse is true in Myanmar context. 'Money is time' in Myanmar context, because money makes time. One needs to pay more, for instance, to get a passport in time and he or she pays less to get it delayed is the reality of life in Myanmar today. In this context, the Myanmar concept of time is much more related to the person (human face) than to the clock. That does not mean that Myanmar people do not respect time. The point here is to say that 'time is social' and 'sociality' is fundamental to the achievement of doing a better and a greater business in Myanmar context.

Conclusion

The situation of Myanmar economy is not yet promising and its prospect for the future is still dim. Myanmar at present is on a cross road between globalization and isolation. While the traditional trend of Myanmar economy is geared towards isolation, the changing global situation strongly demands and even challenges to move towards economic globalization. As globalization pervades, Myanmar has no choice but keeps abreast of it.

In this context of globalization, the whole discussion throughout this paper has analyzed some cultural interactions that have taken place between the Myanmar traditional values and the emerging global economic forces, both of which are believed to have immense impacts on

¹ Hla Thamein, *Myanmar Proverbs* (in Myanmar and English) (Yangon: Padamya Mauk Sapye, 2000), 88.

² Samuel Ngun Ling, *Communicating Christ in Myanmar. Issues, Interactions and Perspectives*. (Yangon: ATEM, 2005), 228.

³ Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette, Burma* (Singapore: Time Books International, 1994), 188-189.

economic actions as well as economic crisis in Myanmar While traditional Buddhism is identified as lack of capitalistic motivation for economic development, it should not minimize economic options in Myanmar Hence, the success of any economic action in Myanmar would depend not only on the potential of capital investment but also on one's understanding of Myanmar cultural and behavioral work values, on how effectively one determines to build basic social relationship with local people, and how much cultural investment one has invested as foundation for doing business in Myanmar, It is important to understand that the option of doing business in Myanmar cannot be successfully achieved apart from integrating one-self with its given religious, cultural and social context of the people and their human values.

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

Translation: Ye Nyunt

A new form of earning a livelihood has appeared for a long time in Myanmar as the process of globalization has gained momentum in this changing world. Nowadays, some people go abroad to work for some time or settle there for good. That is what we call working by temporary migration, which has great impacts on the Myanmar economy. Just as the Myanmar workers abroad are faced with no small challenges and obstacles, Myanmar is also enjoying positive effects from these temporarily migrating workers.

The beginning of the process

In the 1980s, it was only a fantasy to work outside Myanmar. It was difficult to leave for abroad with intent to work or pay a short visit amidst strict rules and policies of the government. Moreover, difficult foreign connections and high costs were other barriers. Except some people who worked on sea-going ships, the majority had to stay shut off from the outside world.

The few Myanmar sailors made money easily, and could afford to look after their parents. This inspired others who turned their aim to becoming a sailor on an international ship.

The doors reopened in the 1990s when socialism was changed to market-oriented economic system. It became easier to some extent to visit a foreign country or work abroad. Yet, it was still a little difficult to obtain a passport.

To Singapore, Malaysia and neighbouring countries

Everyone talked about working in Malaysia in the late 1990s. Whereas Malaysia needed cheap labour during its vibrancy of the economy, young Myanmar people found it a valuable destination for work. At that time, Malaysia needed large quantities of workers for its booming industries.

Likewise, construction sites in Singapore were in need of labour. Some chose Singapore where wages were comparatively higher.

In the year following the year 2000, Myanmar found it easier and smoother to go abroad. Throngs of people jostling at the office where passports were issued, people mushrooming at the foreign employment agencies and a rapid increase in the

number of nationals working abroad were a manifestation of the large labour demand in fast-developing Asian countries.

Diversity of foreign labour markets and different working classes

A Myanmar national can go back home with a smiling face after investing a sum (at least 300,000 kyats) and working in a foreign country for two or three years. Some people borrow money for the investment in working abroad, but this debt is settled after a few years working outside.

Their destinations have become widespread—not only neighbouring and nearby countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, but also developed countries such as Japan and South Korea and Middle-East countries such as the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and Qatar.

Emigrating workers include two classes: white collar and blue collar. Engineers, computer technicians, statisticians, doctors and nurses have their destination as Singapore. During the 2-month period granted them as a tourist visa, they try to look for jobs. Almost everyone got a job in the earlier period. In the year after 2005, businessmen from ME countries visited Myanmar to mobilize labour force for their industries. Job opportunities exist in hotel industry where vacancies such as receptionists, waiters and clerks usually fall vacant.

Those who chose to work in Japan and South Korea are fewer because of the high costs of initial investment before working there. But these two countries are regarded as good destinations where wages are two or three times higher than those offered in other countries. There are only a few Myanmar nationals working in European countries, Australia and the United States.

The popular destinations for blue-collar workers are Malaysia and Thailand. There are two routes to reach the two countries: legal route (usually by air) and the illegal route (across the border).

In fact, the life of Myanmar nationals abroad is not flower-strewn: there are full of obstacles and difficulties.

Consequences on the Myanmar economy

Debates are around while scholars are doing research on **brain drain**, and some are pointing out the fact that in the long term, the country will enjoy **brain gain** again.

Nevertheless, the prevailing situation is regarded as a positive sign for Myanmar. It can be said that working abroad is a solution to unemployment and low wages inside the country.

Good consequences flow from the situation of many young persons working abroad—the working themselves enjoying good incomes and the government rewarded with an automatic solution to unemployment.

Working abroad is a new form of livelihood by which the nationals earn quick-to-see money. The incomes are much greater than those that can be earned in the country, and they can live in higher standards. They can transfer money to the family every month.

Despite the loss suffered by the country in technicians and labour force, there is a great inflow of money into the country, which form an integral part of the country.

What the country gains in turn are technology, expertise and foreign networks. At long last, the state-of-the-art technology, high technology and work experiences enter into the country directly or indirectly. The Myanmar workers already in foreign country serve as a base of connection for those who choose to work abroad and also for those who wish to pursue further education.

The major impact of foreign workers on the Myanmar economy was the remittance of money from outside. Myanmar is expected to enjoy more benefits when Myanmar nationals working abroad and those who have settled in foreign countries come back to their motherland where the door is more widely open, with policy changes.

Obstacles and challenges

Working abroad has become a favourite livelihood for Myanmarers. However, not everyone is successful in this livelihood. In 2008, the world economic recession caused decline in the number of persons seeking foreign jobs. Struck by the global wave, Singapore reduced its labour force and suspended recruiting more labourers, leaving white-collar workers of Myanmar jobless. Malaysia labour market too nearly collapsed in 2009 and 2010. Myanmar's weekly news journals even wrote that Malaysia labour market was dead. The markets that have regularly served the Myanmar labour force were UAE (Dubai) and Qatar.

There have been many persons who fell prey to employment agencies in the country which are dishonest and swindling. Many persons in rural areas are inspired by their

relatives who have succeeded in working abroad. However, these people are naïve, lacking in knowledge and information. Taking advantage of this, employment agencies and middlemen cheat such people out of their money. These people eventually end up in the loss of time, money and hope for life, going desperate.

These agencies ask more money than what is reasonable for the service they do for obtaining a passport. They charge high agency service fees. They con them into believing that they would certainly get a job abroad, fleecing them of their money. Finally, the victims are stranded at a foreign airport, without anyone to greet them or without any contact to make. Even if they get a job abroad, the actual salary was much smaller than what they have been promised. The problems are a never-ending story.

There are also foreign businessmen who offer low rates for the labour agents. Myanmar workers are given low wages or given or denied overtime wages. Their working hours are long and could not enjoy a holiday every week. These are the troubles suffered by the blue-collar workers. Myanmar nationals who work as technicians or scholars are also faced with difficulties in obtaining stay permit (visa) and suffer losses such as paying double tax (both to the host country and the native country)

Conclusion

The fact that the Myanmar economic engine has become more efficient can be attributed to the nationals working abroad. Income from outside the country bring a great deal of benefits to the country, especially those in the private sector such as air lines, employment agencies and financial services. Benefits such as inflow of money or the factor for the growth of GDP come to the country directly or indirectly or for the short term or for the long term.

The Myanmar government has to do something more in the following areas: weak enforcement of the Tax Law, lack of strict control over foreign employment agencies, policies that cannot protect the interests of Myanmar nationals working abroad, lack of forming workers unions and lack of encouraging social organizations.

3.15 Brian McCartan,¹ On the march to do business in Myanmar²

Editor's note: The following article substitutes a contribution promised but not yet delivered by a Burmese author. It will be supplemented as soon as possible.

BANGKOK - The debate over United States and European Union-led sanctions against doing business in Myanmar is set to intensify in the wake of US Senator Jim Webb's recent high-profile meeting with Senior General Than Shwe and detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Webb spoke out against the sanctions and Myanmar's junta echoed that call through state media. As US policymakers weigh the pros and cons of economically re-engaging the ruling junta, the process will necessarily take into account that a handful of military linked businessmen, many allegedly involved in illegal activities, including drug trafficking, dominate Myanmar's underdeveloped economy.

For US investors eyeing business opportunities that the cessation of sanctions would present, dealing with Myanmar's top military and business leaders would be key to gaining market access. Myanmar is one of the world's most corrupt countries, according to Transparency International, an independent corruption watchdog, and US businesses would enter Myanmar at great risk to their corporate reputations.

In Myanmar business circles, the most talked about businessman is Tay Za, who owns the Htoo Trading Company Ltd, also known as the Htoo Group of Companies. Htoo maintains large logging, construction, property development, import-export, aviation, transportation, shipping and mining operations. Tay Za has also made recent forays into telecommunications and banking, and established Myanmar's first privately invested airline, Air Bagan.

The US Treasury Department placed five of those companies, along with Tay Za, his wife, and eldest son, Pye Phyo Za, on a sanctions list in October 2007 because of their financial connections to the regime and Tay Za's alleged role as an arms broker. In February 2008, the US stepped up those sanctions by putting several more companies and Tay Za's business associates in both Myanmar and Singapore on a black list, including Tay Za's brother and business partner Thiha. Htoo Trading Company Ltd, which includes Ayer Shwe Wah Company Ltd, Myanmar Avia Export Company Ltd and Pavo Aircraft Leasing Company Ltd, are all currently under US sanctions.

US sanctions, first imposed broadly in 1995, have since 2007 targeted specific generals and their associated business interests by freezing their assets in American financial institutions. The restrictions also prohibit any commercial or financial transactions between American individuals and Myanmar firms named in the sanctions order and ban named individuals from travel to the US.

Tay Za and Htoo Trading have also been targeted by the European Union, which imposed sanctions against them in December 2007. Similar to the US sanctions, the EU also targeted Tay Za's wife, eldest son and brother. Canada also put Tay Za and his family on their Canadian Special Economic Measures Regulations list in December 2007. (Tay Za could not be reached for comment for this article.)

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Sprawling empire

Despite those impediments, Tay Za's businesses continue to thrive, including through contracts with China. In 2008, he negotiated a concession from Alcatel Shanghai Bell to cooperate on projects in the new Yadanabon cyber-city currently under construction in central Myanmar. He also built the old capital Yangon's top shopping complex, the Myanmar Shopping Center, which is stocked with international brands. Htoo Trading was also one of two main companies granted contracts to construct the new capital city at Naypyidaw. Tay Za's rise is directly connected to his close relations with Myanmar's generals, especially Senior General Than Shwe, the country's authoritarian ruler. He is also well-connected to General Thura Shwe Mann, currently the junta's third-ranking officer and often tipped to be Than Shwe's eventual successor. Shwe Mann currently holds a position on Htoo Trading's board, while his son, Aung Thet Mann, is director of Htoo Trading subsidiary Ayer Shwe Wah Company Ltd, which is involved in construction, palm oil products and import-export activities.

Those relationships, analysts and opposition groups say, have helped him win many lucrative government contracts and trade concessions. In the months following the destruction wrought by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, Htoo Trading claimed it spent some US\$3 million on rescue and rehabilitation. Myanmar watchers say Tay Za was granted lucrative reconstruction contracts from the generals for his donations to the relief effort.

He has come under criticism, including from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for a project to build a 150-room [hotel](#) and 60-meter-high tower in the historical town of Bagan which some say damages the religious site's aesthetics. His timber businesses stand widely accused of unsustainably cutting large swathes of Myanmar's remaining forests. But of special concern to the US is Tay Za's alleged role in brokering past arms purchases. Tay Za has consistently denied he is an arms broker for the military regime. The US Treasury claims that Tay Za's Myanmar Avia Export Company Ltd has been used to buy aircraft and helicopters for the Myanmar Air Force, including the 2001 purchase from Russia of 10 MiG 29 fighters and several Mi-8 helicopters. Established in 1993 to supply spare aircraft parts to the military, the company is now the representative for MAPO, Russia's major state-owned military aircraft manufacturer and a subsidiary of MiG. It also represents Russian helicopter company Rostverol, which in 2006 merged with Mil and Kamov to become Oborompom Corporation.

More worrying to US and regional security interests is his alleged role in brokering Russian and North Korean aid for Myanmar's suspected nuclear program. Tay Za was part of the delegation led by Vice Senior General Maung Aye, the junta's second-ranking official, to Russia in 2006, reportedly to discuss weapons purchases as well as the construction of a nuclear reactor.

Testimony from a defector claiming to be a former bookkeeper for Tay Za was recently made public by Desmond Ball, a professor at Australian National University. The self-professed accountant claimed that Htoo Trading was directly involved in discussions with officials from North Korea and Russia "concerning contracts and memoranda of understanding for the provision of nuclear assistance, as well as the logistic arrangements for the export of uranium and the importation of equipment and materials for various elements of [Myanmar's] nuclear program."

Htoo Trading is also allegedly involved in contracting for construction at the sites of the two reactors. According to the defector's testimony, Tay Za is also responsible for shipping equipment to the sites, often under cover of night. According to Ball's notes, the defector was with Tay Za when he played golf with Kyaw Thein, the deputy director of the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence, and an Iranian intelligence officer and nuclear expert.

Controversial enterprise

Two other top businessmen with top connections to the regime are Lo Hsing Han and his son Steven Law, also known as Tun Myint Naing. Together they run Asia World Ltd, Myanmar's biggest and most diversified conglomerate with interests in industrial development, construction, transportation, import-export and a chain of local supermarkets. Ten more companies are owned under the group in Singapore by Law's wife, Cecilia Ng.

Both Lo Hsing Han and Steven Law have been on a US visa blacklist since 1996 for suspected drug trafficking activities. In February 2008, they were also put on the Treasury Department's sanctions list, along with Asia World Company and subsidiaries Asia World Co Ltd, Asia World Port Management, Asia World Industries Ltd and Asia World Light Ltd for their financial connections to the regime.

Asia World currently holds the contract to run Yangon's main port, which handles 40% of Myanmar's container traffic and operates a cargo and shipping business from the same facility. The company was the second main contractor for the construction of the new capital now located at Naypyidaw and earned government reconstruction contracts in the Irrawaddy Delta in the wake of the cyclone disaster.

Asia World currently has contracts to build several hydropower projects, including the Myit Sone dam on a tributary of the Irrawaddy River north of Myittha. It is known to have strong links to China. For instance, the company was contracted by the Myanmar government to develop a port at Kyaukpyu on Ramree Island off Myanmar's western Arakan coast, which is intended to facilitate shipping goods between the coast and China's southwestern Yunnan province.

There is strong speculation that Lo Hsing Han's business empire was originally built on narco-profits - though he has consistently denied the widespread drug trafficking allegations. Starting as a local militia leader in the northern Kokang region in 1960, Lo Hsing Han was dubbed the "King of Opium" by US drug enforcement authorities in the 1970s because of large amount of heroin his alleged networks were sending through Thailand. Arrested by Thai police in 1973 and deported to Myanmar, he was sentenced to death for rebellion but granted an amnesty in 1980. He promptly moved back to northern Myanmar in a known drug cultivation area.

Lo Hsing Han's usefulness to the regime became evident in 1989 when then-chief of intelligence, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, used him as a go-between for ceasefire agreements with several ethnic insurgent groups, including the Kokang and the United Wa State Army, recognized as the world's largest narco-producing militia. According to a 1993 Thai Office of Narcotics Control Board report, in exchange he was granted the right to smuggle heroin from northern Myanmar to the Thai border.

By 1994, his organization was widely considered among the most heavily armed drug trafficking organizations in Southeast Asia. Law enforcement officials say he might have stepped back from the trade in the mid-1990s, soon after he established Asia World. He also made strong efforts to cultivate relations with Myanmar's senior generals, especially Than Shwe; in 2006, Lo Hsing Han was known to have catered the extravagant wedding of Than Shwe's daughter.

Lo Hsing Han is now one of the most prominent persons foreign investors seek out to establish joint venture arrangements. Golden Aaron, an Asia World subsidiary, has been linked to China's National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) since 2004 in a production-sharing contract for oil and gas deposits in Arakan State's controversial Shwe gas project, which has been linked with land confiscation and human rights abuses by monitoring groups.

While Tay Za, Lo Hsing Han and Steven Law are the more well-known businessmen connected to the regime, a handful of other lesser-known and controversial entrepreneurs have also parlayed their relationships with senior generals into lucrative business empires.

Brothers Nay Aung and Pyi Aung are the sons of powerful Ministry of Industry [1] head Aung Thaung, who is known to be close to both Than Shwe and Maung Aye. Pyi Aung is married to Nandar Aye, Maung Aye's daughter. The brothers founded Aung Yee Phyoo Company Ltd and IGE Company Ltd in 1994, which in 2001 was registered in Singapore. IGE has since evolved into one of Myanmar's leading oil and gas companies, while also providing spare parts for electrical generation projects, the agriculture industry and timber trade.

In March 2007, IGE signed a contract with Rimbunan Petrogas Ltd, making it a partner in a joint venture with the state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise in offshore oil and gas exploration in the Shwe gas field. Both men are banned from travel to Australia and the EU, but are not on the US's sanctions list.

Khin Shwe, owner of the Zaykabar Company, is the country's leading property developer and has played a leading role in the tourism industry through his chairmanship of the Myanmar Hotelier Association. He was placed on the US sanctions list in 2007 for his close ties to the generals, including his daughter's marriage to Shwe Mann's youngest son.

He has also served as chairman of the Myanmar-Japan Friendship Association, Myanmar-Korean Friendship Association and the Myanmar Thai Development Company. He maintains strong connections to the regime and hired US public relations firm Bain and Associated in 1997 in a failed attempt to improve the junta's image on Capitol Hill.

Also on the US sanctions list is Htay Myint, founder of the Yuzana Company which has interests spanning real estate, transportation, construction, hotels and tourism, fisheries, palm oil production and rubber plantations. He also owns the Yuzana Supermarket and Yuzana Hotel in Yangon and an oil refinery in Thaketa township near Yangon.

These are some of the businessmen who will be rehabilitated and free for joint ventures with Western partners if the US and EU drop or relax their sanctions against Myanmar's rights-abusing regime. They are also the business groups foreign investors will likely need to seek out to gain access to Myanmar's various underinvested industries and markets.

While dropping sanctions would no doubt ease the suffering of the general population, the policy shift would simultaneously further enrich and entrench some of the region's most controversial business groups.

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

The present era, known as the globalization era, is led by the market. After the eras of colonization and the cold war, the great countries are trying to be superior economically rather than politically; and almost all the countries have come to accept, that they need to, and strive for, to increase their exports to achieve economic progress. Therefore, in the present era, countries are trying to achieve economic superiority. Subjects such as economics, law and information technology have risen to the top. These subjects have progressed basically from experience and the state of the economy of present-day Myanmar can be viewed by studying its history in relation to the economy.

It has to be presumed that before the emergence of the country Myanmar, the Mon people were dominant in the Irrawaddy basin; they hunted and cultivated the land and bartered goods. In the first century A.D., the early Pyu(Myanmar) had attained a high degree of civilization and established the state of Srekettaya that was along the route used by the Chinese and Indian merchants. It could be said that there already was evidence of the use of Chinese silk and porcelain. The conclusion could be drawn that Myanmar's geopolitical importance had began from those days.

Up to the time when it had clearly emerged as Myanmar in the reign of King Anawrahta, the country, despite being fairly developed culturally, its economy still depended on agriculture and natural resources; the forestry products were the main component of the natural resources; goldsmith, silversmith and coppersmith were traditionally small family businesses that had been handed down the generations and gold refining had progressed during the decades. Presumably Arab traders had reached Myanmar to trade, as Motamma, Farokar and Rambia archipelago remain as Arab names to this day.

After the collapse of Bagan, there emerged many small states with agriculture as the main component of the economy. Dams were built and irrigation was much better than in the days of Bagan. Even though there would have been some taxation it was probably given in kind, offering the best product of the land to the lord of the territory/ the state. It remained like that to the time of Innwa and the contemporary early Konebaung period. Up to the early Konebaung period, the kings expanded their states not out of economic desires but rather to show their power and military prowess and were content to accept the offerings made yearly by the kings of the conquered lesser states, of gold and silver and their daughters. History had it that Innwa and Hanthawaddy were contemporary states that waged wars for over forty years; the wars had nothing to do with economics and were just tests of military prowess.

During the reign of King Thalun, the son of King Anaukpetlun who rebuilt Innwa, there was standardization of weights and currency in the state.

The extraordinary fact at the time of absolute monarchs was that those who cleared land for cultivation owned the land; the king didn't own it, and only when the owner died without leaving anyone to inherit the land, was it seized by the king. Those who worked the king's land had to offer him in kind an amount that depended on the harvest. The king would grant awards to the farmers and it was known that the king actually received only about 20% of the harvest. It was amazing to know that it had benefited the farmers more than the present system where the farmers had to pay according to the area of land used, irrespective of whether the crop succeeded or not.

Pyu coins were seen from the Pyu era to the Konebaung era, but it seemed that they only served as a commodity to be saved and wasn't used as a medium for exchange. Money could not be used in the buying and selling of goods. Pyu coins were presumed to have been used by the upper classes as status symbols and the ordinary people just bartered their goods. The last kings of the Konebaung dynasty, King Mindon and King Thebaw, had started to use coins with the image of a dancing peacock in the Yadanabon era and King Mindon began the system of paying salaries to his ministers and servants and taxing the people one tenth of their incomes. Records revealed that some people didn't like that system of taxation and migrated to the lower part of Myanmar that was governed by the English.

As mentioned above, up to the time of early Konebaung period there were only Chinese and Indian merchants plying through the state to trade. Occasionally, merchants from Europe hoping to expand trade would come to towns and villages which were accessible from the sea. In the early Konebaung period during the reign of King Alaunghpaya, the English came to Hiegyi Kyun(Island) to station a garrison and tried to open a trading post(store)there. It was known that Italian missionaries were already present in lower Myanmar before King Alaunghpaya's time. Myanmar had to surrender that part of India which had been under Myanmar rule to the English after the First War during the reign of King Bodawhpaya, the grandson of King Alaunghpaya. During the reign of Bagyidaw, the son of King Bodawhpaya, Myanmar had to further surrender lower Myanmar after the Second War. The first and second wars that occurred had not much to do with economics.

The third war of aggression was very unusual. King Mindon, the son of King Bagyidaw, had noted that the wars with the English were lost because of the (poor) defensive forces and tried to initiate an industrial revolution, placing much reliance on his brother, the crown prince,

Prince Kanaung. Many state scholars were sent to France and other great countries and foreign experts were invited to Myanmar and industries were set up on a huge scale and Myanmar became the first country to develop the (submerged) mine. But prince Kanaung was assassinated and because the methods adopted were wrong, the industrial revolution failed in Myanmar.

One of the causes of the failure of the industrial revolution could be ascribed to the assassination of Prince Kanaung, but actually, there were many errors in the methods used. The first was the error in the criteria used to select the state scholars; instead of personal qualifications, people of tall stature and those with relations to the royalty were selected. Some of them didn't return to Myanmar and some found it too difficult for them to study the subjects assigned to them.

And the worst of it all was that there was no modern system of administration and taxation, and the cost of the industries had to be taken from the royal coffers. No long-term financial planning was made for these industries and no local replacements were produced to take the place of the foreign experts. In addition, the industries did not produce products for sale inside the country nor for export but mostly for the defence of the country; there was no economic planning.

But there had been some modern good starts like the plan start banking in association with the French and the development of printing skills and techniques. There was freedom of the media and compared with the present times, it could be said to be of a very high standard because King Mindon allowed even himself to be criticized and news of events inside the palace could be written freely.

In 1885, during the reign of King Thebaw, the English, citing the timber-related matter of the Bombay Burma Company, seized the whole of Myanmar. The invasion was done by the British authorities at the behest of the company looking after its interests. It could be said that Myanmar's economy and form of administration were forged after coming under British rule.

As soon as they had seized Myanmar, the English formed regions of administration and areas of Jurisdiction and governmental organizations and machinery to run the country. Capitalist companies came and huge corporations like the British Oil Company emerged. Cultivation was done systematically and attempts were made to export rice to the world market. Economic policies were laid down and systematically carried out, like bringing in cheap farm labour from India for the enterprises in cultivation, and Tamil money lenders to lend money to the huge mass of farmers because banks could not do so. Although there were some native

businessmen they were not performing well in external trade and it must be assumed that up to that time natives of Myanmar still had difficulty in doing external trade.

But there was the vivid reminder in history of the wealthy Mon U Nar Auk. The way he had his ships offer competitive service with the English resembled pretty much the model of today's market economy. At that time the Irrawaddy Flotilla, owned by the British, and U Nar Auk competed to lure passengers to ride on their ships. They reduced the fares and offered better services; U Nar Auk finally let the passengers ride free of charge on his ships and the business folded up because he could no longer compete with the English who had more capital. It was a fierce competition for the market. At that time it was a matter of shipping lines competing with one another but it also had political effects. Although passengers initially rode on U Nar Auk's ships out of a sense of patriotism, they ultimately chose to ride on the English ships, despite the offer of a free ride by U Nar Auk, because it was human nature to prefer to have better services. If you looked at that incident from an economic perspective you would see that consumers only wanted to have better services and cheaper prices.

If you consider U Nu's 'Pyidawtha Hsimankein (Plan for a pleasant country)', although there was goodwill for the people, the government didn't realize the basic needs of the people and didn't bring into consideration beforehand the strength of treasury, the stability of the state etc. and the plan didn't succeed because the society basically wasn't ready and the government had overreached itself.

After U Nu, the 28 years of General Ne Win's centrally-controlled economic system led the country's economy to ruin. At that time everything was centrally controlled and the people weren't encouraged any form of enterprise; it was so bad that doctors and seafarers were about the only entrepreneurs. A black market came into fashion; the town of Lashio in Shan State became the main gateway for Chinese goods into Myanmar. Although the government was able to maintain the state of affairs to some extent before the collapse of the world rice market, from the year the world rice market collapsed, the cooperatives were no longer able to provide the people with the necessities of life and not long after, in 1988, there was the social uprising that ended the socialist system.

The socialist system failed because the bureaucratic machinery grew larger and the amount of money needed to pay the salaries of the employees increased; the pay was insufficient to support the family and there was bribery and corruption; the black market grew larger and the people were no longer able to afford the cost of living etc..

After 1988, the military government took over and claimed that there would be a market economy and there was some degree of liberalization. Up to the year 1995, it took only about a week to start a new company; the office procedures went smoothly and the tasks finished quickly. But the Americans and other western countries placed economic sanctions on Myanmar and Myanmar's share of the world market dwindled. The shrinking market share was taken by senior government officials and those in their favour. Financial transactions had to be done through countries which didn't take part in the sanctions; it involved additional costs that had to be borne by the consumers. Now that there was to be a new government after the 2010 elections, and as some of the representatives were from the democratic forces, there were voices calling for an end to these sanctions.

During the time of the current military government, there was the intention of having a market economy; sanctions by the international community prevented it from happening. The military government was able to withstand these sanctions because the country had rich natural resources and they played their geopolitical cards right. The European Community countries had seen the countries trading with Myanmar, especially China, reaping benefits and were changing their stance and trying to deal more warmly.

These interrelations, globalization (making the world a village) and the market drive had the government and those they favoured, wanting for more than what they had already acquired; to catch up with the world market they realized the importance of free access to the market and they have come to adopt democratic processes in order to establish a free market. The other side had also realized that their sanctions had little effect and had seen the profits made by the Chinese; they have realized that they were unable to put pressure on the Myanmar government; it was not in their interest and they have come to see it as giving opportunity to the rival Chinese.

So, with the new Hluttaw (parliament) forming a government and if there were to be access to the world market, to what extent would Myanmar be able to ride the current of the world market? At the moment there are only two types of entrepreneurs in Myanmar.

One type is the generals and those in their favour. And the other is the Chinese who would bribe their way out if they got into trouble. Most of these Chinese had come from the border regions into Myanmar, following the Wa and the Kokant armed groups who had agreed to have peace with the military government. These Chinese, with the money they had gained by illegal means, were setting up businesses in Yangon, Mandalay, Muse, Taunggyi etc. Some were able to live on the incomes of these businesses but some locals, like those in Mandalay,

would say that these were just fronts while they continued their illegal trade at the border regions. They would open businesses like restaurants and karaoke lounges which would not be bringing in many customers but all the same, they would be massing ever more possessions and it had the locals wondering how this could happen so.

Then there are other unrelated enterprises and what might be called the Myanmar middle class who are not manual workers but educated graduates who earn a moderate or a small income; few of the companies and corporations show professionalism in the way they operate and many are merely family businesses. It cannot be refuted that Myanmar as a people and a nation lags behind others on the subject of economics.

Although people have gone abroad to work, few have been able to work as experts. There are professors and economists who are recognized by the world but the number is too few to be of any significance (like the Myanmar saying that a single seed of sesame won't get you any oil). There is still a need to have a political system that would nurture such intellectuals.

In conclusion it must be said that although Myanmar is quite a civilization, it has been just over a thousand years that it has emerged as a distinct people, and very late in its emergence if you compare it with such civilizations as Egypt, Babylon, China and India. The fact that maritime trade hadn't prospered in the country, the fact that the country has rich natural resources and that crops readily grow in the country, the fact that the people are too easily contented with what they have, and although full of hospitality they do not mingle easily with foreigners, have made the Myanmar people not as knowledgeable about politics and economics as other people. Therefore to catch up with the others in the rapidly accelerating market economy, we need political and economic systems that would enable us to do just that. The state should build the infrastructure, introduce stock exchanges and encourage private enterprises and the people should be systematically studying economics and related subjects.