Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution

E. Sarkisyanz

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Dedicated to the memory of my unforgettable teacher

ARNOLD BERGSTRAESSER

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PREFACE

THERAVÂDA AND STATE POLITICS: THE BURMESE WAY

Does this world of ours, so dangerously pregnant of its future, definitely call for the Buddhist valuations now at work in Theravâda Buddhist countries, especially in Ceylon and Burma? Will it favor that attempt to reduce what survives, especially at popular, folkloristic level, of the historical Theravâda tradition into some kind of a compromise with English constitutional principles, as a remainder of the Colonial Period? Supported as the Buddhist Church still is by the adhesion and veneration of the lay community, the "Teaching of the Elders" (skr. *sthaviravâda*) might seem to some, in reference to today's problems, less a help than an escape, seeking as it does an individual and fundamentally monastic liberation (*mukti* = *nirvâṇa*).

Now that they have rid themselves of all direct tutoring from the West, is it wise of the Burmese to try to build themselves as a modern nation on such an antiquated ideal, inspiring as it may have been in the past? Even in ancient history, has not State Politics in the area derived its inspiration more from the pragmatic tradition of power developed in neighboring Hindu Kingdoms, than from so aloof and retiring a Church?

Prominent Asian leaders and scholars have expressed doubts concerning the whole issue. In Mr. Sarkisyanz's own words,

> Dr. Hla Myint, Rector of the University of Rangoon under the Army Government in 1959, [once] tried to convince me, with all the weight of his authority that "Buddhism is unimportant for Burma politically" and that "Burma had no original ideas worth studying". In the eyes of such successors of the British rulers, a statesman like U Nu who takes folkloric, that is to say [according to them] "superstitious" notions of the "Uneducated Class" seriously and even orientates his program in their direction, committed treason against the "Educated Class".

Undoubtedly, considering such terms as *dharma*, *nirvâṇa*, or *âtman* (pali *dhamma*, *nibbâna*, *attâ*), for which "Law", "Extinction" and "Self" are just insecure approximations, Modern Theravâda Buddhism, in so far as it still deliberately centers on the Pâli texts and on the extensive exegetic literature attached to them, will not easily find there meanings reconciliable with present conditions and circumstances and there is thus some danger that the traditions of the common people should more and more prove to be an obsolete language.

Conversely, our Political Scientists and their Asian counterparts will have a hard time of it, trying to adjust authorized Buddhist words and phrases to the meanings themselves have in mind. What, for instance, will our "Welfare State" be in Pâli and Sanskrit, or in Southeast Asian vernaculars, the cultural vocabulary of which derives from Indian models, even more than ours from Greek and Latin?

Mr. Sarkisyanz's learned and vivid study goes a long way towards filling that gap, dramatically revealed to the West, a few years ago, by D. C. Vijayavardhana's *Revolt in the Temple* (Ceylon 1953),

> an attempt to interpret the Message delivered twenty five centuries ago, not only in terms of the expanded universe in which we are living today but also against the background of the great thinkers who have given their characteristic colour to the thought of our times,

to quote the publishers' preface.

Taking both sides into account, Mr. Sarkisyanz's comprehensive approach will provide the staunchest *bona fide* Burmese Conservative with an expression, to him most acceptable, in his own figurative rather than conceptualized mode of thinking, of such a typical Western concept as the above mentioned one, whereas the Westernized "Educated Class" will be brought better to understand the full meaning and communication value, say for example of the Padeytha Tree, the "Tree of all Wishes" of Burmese popular tradition, a mythical counterpart of the Indian cosmic *Kalpavṛkṣa* or *Kalpadruma*. As a figurative translation of the beneficient, though perhaps to some degree utopic principles connected with the Westerners' Welfare State policy, it might be compared through Near Eastern references with our Santa Claus and Christmas-tree cycles.

It is not in Theravâda Buddhist countries only that prophets and political leaders, having to face hard facts, have found convenient to tune down that kind of popular imagery, to bring it back to earth. This will answer deeply seated aspirations and longings in the mind of the common people. As a matter of fact, such motivations may even

present an objective value, when precisely their true object, under its various figurative expressions, is in reality *ourselves i.e.* our attitudes, conceptions and decisions, and our illusions as well, prompt as these are to build themselves up into hard facts, when misinterpreted or neglected.

Throughout South and Southeast Asia, in a general upsurge of renascent nationalities, Modern History has passed the period when these communication questions, between nations or between peoples and their leaders, were chiefly the preoccupation of a handful of Western specialists, more concerned with textual formulations than with their incidence on present events. All Burmese national Governments, whatever may be their political allegiance, will henceforth have to cope with these problems, if the country and people are to survive, in the full capacity of themselves.

A comparison would be highly instructive between Mr. Sarkisyanz's approach and the Ven. Walpola Râhula's illuminating essay, *What the Buddha Taught* – especially the concluding chapter, *What the Buddha Taught and the World to-day*. Both authors reject vigorously the Western denunciation of the "narrow and selfish" outlook of the Theravâda School, in contrast to "the broad ideal" professed by the Bodhisattvas of Mahâyâna, the Great Vehicle [of Salvation]", those Archangels of Mercy and Understanding (*karuṇâ* and *prajña*), who could accede right now to Nirvâṇa "without remainder" (*nirupâdhiśeṣa*), but have taken the solemn vow not to do so until their universal, untiring charity has brought the entire round of suffering creatures to that ultimate goal.

No point, of course, is of greater importance for a doctrinal comparison between the different Buddhist schools, with a view to their possible reunification. A positive step would be taken in that direction, if Theravâda Buddhism appeared, specially on account of the State Religion it has shown itself able to inspire, as capable of taking greater interest in worldly affairs than currently believed.

In favour of this view Mr. Sarkisyanz brings forth two arguments the first one mainly ideological, the second more historical, both two-pronged:

1,a – A doctrine denying any authenticity to the notion of Self (*âtman*) cannot fairly be taxed with selfishness.

1,b – This fundamental renunciation of the Self (*nairâtmya*) must in some way imply identification with or at any rate non-differentiation from "the others"; in good Doctrine no self, in any sense, can be alleged, on either side, to substantiate a discrimination, and thus,

[thanks to] this consciousness of universal identity, the quest for deliverance contains the wish for the happiness of all Beings.

2,a – Aśoka's inscriptions (3rd Century BC) leave no doubt as to the systematic care the great Maurya Emperor took of the social welfare of his subjects. Quoting the opinion of one of the best Western historians of Ancient India, Vincent Smith, Mr. Sarkisyanz observes that

through Aśoka the ethical and social tradition of public welfare services was established in India earlier than anywhere in the world "anticipating the deeds of modern Christian charity."

2,b – The question will of course be raised how far such a secular program had anything to do with the individual quest of *Nirvâṇa* so characteristic of Theravâda Buddhism. Our author's answer, directly expressive of Modern Burmese thinking, insists on the fact that political deterioration and consequent impoverishment are detrimental to peaceful meditation (*bhâvanâ*) as well as to monastic vocations and institutions – the convents having to be supported by voluntary lay alms and charities – and thus appear contrary to individual salvation.

In the age that is to come with the decline of Buddhist values as described in prophecies attributed to Gautama Buddha, "princes and nobles will oppress the poor" ... Economic deterioration is to be followed by the decline of fertility and prosperity. Increased oppression by the rulers infringing the ethical and at the same time cosmic harmony of the universe [is] to cause drought and famine. As a result the patrons of the monkhood [will be], according to these visions of the future, no longer in a position to support the monastic order. And the Understanding of the Buddhist Scriptures [is] expected to be lost.

In such a perspective, there is good reason to believe that

the royal ideal was a Welfare State, at least to the extent of guaranteeing the economic basis of "leisure for meditation" to everybody who wanted to withdraw from materially productive economy.... Thereby Burma's Kings aspired to safeguard economic possibilities of meditation which alone could lead to *nirvâṇa*.

Is it permissible to trace this ideal back to Aśoka in person? Mr. Sarkisyanz answers in the affirmative, pointing to the famous declaration, *Pillar Edict 7:*

... Mankind has been blessed with as many such blessings by the previous [brâhmanical] kings as by me; but I have done this with the intent that man may practice practices of Dharma.

It is a well established fact that Dharma, "Order", "the Law" etc. (pâli *dhamma*) is the last word of Aśoka's epigraphy, where nirvâṇa is never mentioned. According to modern Burmese Buddhists, however, his Welfare Services program aimed indirectly at promoting that quest:

> ... these welfare benefits were meant by Aśoka to make it easier for his subjects to observe the moral law, if not to provide them with leisure opportunities for meditation towards the pursuit of nirvâṇa.

For all we know, up to the present day, of the great Emperor's inscriptions, the last point however is just an inference, unfounded epigraphically. The conclusion is bound accordingly to remain somewhat conjectural, that

> it is still a Buddhist ethos of *lay* Buddhism acting within the world of Impermanence in pursuing *nirvâṇa*, by creating the outward social conditions for such striving towards the overcoming of attachment.
>
> [However] this political Aśokan Buddhism is less widely known than the philosophical canonic Buddhism of the monastic order.

In the dramatic and lucid composition of Mr. Sarkisyanz's book, this fundamental thesis does not receive its full and final expression, in connexion with our present problems, until chapter XXVII, the last but one: *Burma's synthesis of Tradition and Revolution: U Nu's Buddhist Socialism*. The salient ideas are thus marshalled into the reader's field of interest in the very same sequence in which they have played their part in history, from Aśoka down to modern Burmese developments, in the last phases of which U Nu's cultural and political choices have proved so important factors.

On that ground already trodden by a previous study of his, *On the place of U Nu's Buddhist Socialism in Burma's History of Ideas*, published in 1960, Mr. Sarkisyanz's present work cuts an unusual figure, standing as it does, brilliantly and fruitfully, half way between the leading disciplines with which most of our experts in that field fall in line: Philosophy, often with metaphysical yearnings, and Political Science, too often encumbered with typically Western, and thus locally rather inadequate categories.

In Mr. Sarkisyanz's approach, by a most welcome contrast, political technicalities are bolstered with well chosen original quotations from pâli sources – and not just with a reproduction of what may be found in the usual Western philologists' compilations of or commentaries on Buddhist canonical and exegetic literature, the model of which remains Herman Oldenberg's study, *The Buddha, his Life, his Doctrine, his Community*. Western erudition seems to have left little unsaid on Ancient Buddhist textual traditions in India and Ceylon. But its emphasis has been placed mainly on doctrinal tenets and attendant controversies, insufficient attention being usually paid to the positive background, historical, soci-

ological etc., in a word to the semantic compass of the corresponding civilization, pre-Buddhistic as well as Buddhistic.

No wonder, then, that we do not find with our classics in that field much that could be immediately applicable to to-day's problems and difficulties. What we have been given – and the value of which should certainly not be underrated – is mainly philology, if at its best: i.e. self-critical rather than self-assertive, except where it blindly replaced Asian combinations by Western concepts. All being said it thus remains an invaluable asset, in that controversial field.

Following the steps of the great Indologist Eugène Burnouf, Ernest Renan has made of that discipline, in his famous manifesto, *L'Avenir de la Science*, a quasi-religion. Yet since that time the rhythm and dimensions of the World's History have undergone incredible changes and the prophesized advent of the Positive Age, that was to turn the leaf over all religions, does not seem nearer – nor so desirable. Better to deserve their name, our Humanities will probably have to devise less restrictive approaches not only to the contemporary cultural advance of other continents, but to the common, yet diversified past that made them all what they are.

In that perspective, a sound, critical handling of textual and monumental sources, usefull as it remains, runs the risk – if unsufficiently aware of what they were about – of finding finally in History just the shell of what once filled it.

This is the timely warning given by Mr. Sarkisyanz's choice when he selected his pâli references not according to Western pre-conceptions or theoretical systems, but on account of their current screening by the local press or according to the scales of value of the Burmese Assemblies.

Few of our Political Scientists could emulate, concerning their own special pursuit, our author's span of information, as he draws liberally not only fron the usual English, German, French or even Russian literature on the subject, but from Burmese basic works too, as well as from the papers and speeches daily published or delivered by the foremost religious authorities, eminent educators or top political leaders – a complete panel of Burmese opinion, with valuable elucidations collected in the course of many friendly interviews.

Trained initially in the methods of Comparative Cultural History, Mr. Sarkisyanz has taken full scope of the local tendencies promoting or resisting the modernization of the country. He has thus been able to give a direct and thorough account of them in the very form and perspective prevailing at different levels of the Burmese society. This

contrasts favorably with many Western or even sometimes local publications the chapter headings of which are so often modelled on the headlines of our newspapers, a language untranslatable at village level, where we still meet 80 to 90% of the nation! These are the many to whom U Nu's allusions to the Padeytha Tree will sound plain common sense, being a fable rather than a concept, *more asiatico*. The truth of such images resides less in what they say than in their applicability to that in connexion with which they are expressed. There is a way in which our Santa Claus too makes sense. Similarly sensitivity to unmodernized people's longings expressed in an intuitive synthesis of imported revolutionary ideology with deeply rooted Burmese lore does account for much of U Nu's charismatic standing in Burmese politics.

In following with commendable historical impartiality these various trends and motivations, Mr. Sarkisyanz does not seem to have neglected any important aspect or source of information, by writ or wit, as he sums up the whole process as follows:

> Aśokan Buddhist ideals of society, English socialistic [i.e. "Fabian"] influences together with objective sociological economic facts of Burma's situation all combined as factors in the Socialist Welfare State program of Burma's post-war governments.

No mention, however, is made here of the important (though often discussed and sometimes resented) role played by the Marxists in the last decades of Burma's political and social experiences: this factor will be fully recognized and analyzed in other chapters of the book, in connexion with the notion of "nirvâṇa in this world" (*lokka nibbâṇa*), a standard phrase, applied to the prospective realization of the specifically Communist slogan: "to everyone according to his needs".

The reason of the omission is evidently that Marxist orthodoxy will reject rather than support such an accommodating conception of the Welfare State policy by Fabian and revisionist Socialism, denouncing it as a mystification, meant to delay the inevitable awakening of the Proletariat to the bitter realities of its shameless exploitation by the capitalists, colonial or domestic, and by that supreme expression of Capitalism, *Imperialism*, direct or disguised, colonial or post-colonial.

To retrace through all its inflexions so typically Asian a process of acceptance, elusion, opposition, restriction and compromise, required a delicate and vigilant psychological touch – and here Mr. Sarkisyanz excells, for example in his discriminative description of the not so

numerous but very articulate and in the long run still very important "Educated Class".

Initially recruited among "the better families as understood in Burma's social order under her Kings" and educated in England, it has been closely associated, though mostly in a subordinate position, with the British Civil Service, mainstay of the Empire: *vide* Kipling. After the collapse of the Japanese – and as a delayed consequence of the loss of face of its British patrons in 1942 – it was for a while supplanted, at least politically (its last intrenchment remaining of course its administrative capacities and familial connexions) "by the revolutionary statesmen of the Anti-Fascist People's League", culturally less separate from the majority of the people. It seems to have been given a new chance by the Army, since 1962, with a professed reversion to efficiency criteria.

The crucial period would thus cover some thirty years, from Saya San's uprising of 1930 – regarded by the "Educated" as a "repulsive and degrading" aberration – to U Nu's overthrow of 1962, summarily related in guise of conclusion in Chapter XXVIII *The Success of Efficiency against the Symbols of Buddhist Democracy.*

Meanwhile the Educated Class has seen, in its own ranks, the old-timers increasingly replaced by

> a new, "progressive" generation ... shaped by the utilitarian type of Socialism imported by the London School of Economics. But [this] did not contribute much to bridging the gap between the intellectual bureaucracy and the people. Instead of the hierarchical gradations inherited from the Burmese Kingdom, social superiority came to rest on the Educated Class's Enlightenment of progressive Anglo-Saxon style and on corresponding notions about the backwardness of the rural classes.

A reference to Lucian Pye's broad and directly informed study *Politics, Personality and Nation Building: Burma's search for Identity* brings in here a humoristic note; such local standards would imply

> in the tradition of the British Ruling Class ... a well articulated distrust of ... specialized knowledge and intellectual pretension ... [and] the British custom of always appearing to be slightly less intelligent and less informed than one really is.

Et ego in Arcadia ... Judging by direct acquaintance with our tough British friends in India, during the eventful 1943–1945 years, I would feel inclined to suggest, in somewhat different terms, that at times – "always" should be definitely avoided here, as an overstatement – one will find the British slightly more intelligent and better informed than they look. This however is left to the other fellow to discover – and, in

case he would not know nor appreciate the trick, to his own risk. *At* times, then, and – for your own sake – better *in* time!

Shall we then recognize, in the case of the Burmese Elite's anglicized behaviour just second-hand mannerism? Let us beware of hasty conclusions! Contrary to one of our settled prejudices, Asia – fond of abstraction as her intellectual classes may sometimes show themselves – remains nevertheless a land of pragmatic action. *Primum vivere:* always a problem, with such numbers... Burma's case should be of special interest, as she stands half-way between India's ideologies and the more positive Chinese traditions, the latter being usually a pitfall for those who take the Confucian lore at face value. In that respect too, there is much in common between Far-Eastern and British methods.

"To understate" would have to be, in Sanskrit, *alpî kṛ* "to belittle" But this is nothing more than a rough approximation, a *lectio facilior*, in which the gist and point of the idiom is lost. The Chinese language would here fare better if not improve on the model, with its very common verb, *jang* "to give way to, to yield", which means in fact, in a more pregnant sense, "conceding in order to conquer" and this in turn, one step further East, would lead to the insidious "soft way" of the japanese: *judo*.

All well considered, if the Burmese Educated Class resents U Nu's charismatic personage as "immodest", one wonders whether there might not be in that reaction more than merely a relic of the British period.

To come back to our author's theoretical arguments, as summed up above, it is hardly to be expected – solidly grounded though they may be in facts – that they will command immediate acceptance in a field where dogmatic quarrels have been rife these two thousand years and more, especially regarding the adjustment of worldly affairs and final salvation.

The chief objections that seem likely to be raised by dissentients from various quarters – narrow Theravâda orthodoxy or, to the opposite, imaginative tenants of the "Northern" mahâyânist schools or again pragmatic adepts of modern social and political ideas – could be:

– to 1,a: that *nairâtmya*, the doctrine of no-Self, while leading, in genuine Theravâda perspective, to complete elimination of any kind of metaphysical ego and egotism, still leaves room for a self-centered,

individual renunciation of the Self, unconcerned, as such, with the salvation of others;

– to 1,b: that even the universal reduction of all selves to a zero value is not tantamount to "the unity of all lives". It is true that according to Ancient Buddhism, belief in the existence of a Self should be eliminated through Right Understanding, Right Action etc.; but this – as noted by Mr. Sarkisyanz in other instances – has to be achieved *individually*, in each of the infinite sequences of lives that we mistake for as many transmigratory "selves". Similitude in the process of elimination of that error does not necessarily establish a consistent cosmic unity into which all would finally coalesce. In the religious context of the time, what could have it been, but some counterpart of the Great Being or Cosmic Male of *Ṛk Saṃhitâ* X. 90, the Life and Soul of all Beings, a dominant ritualistic figure, later to be succeded by the Lord (*îśvara*) of mediaeval theistic Hinduism, with markedly more devotional and emotional connotations (*bhakti*)? Even in the eyes of Mahâyâna Buddhism, i.e. in a doctrine where the Great Bodhisattvas, often styled *îśvaras*, participate (*sambhuj-*) in a transcendent Body, the Body of the Law (*dharmakâya*), common to all Buddhas and thus to all Beings, as all these are secretly Buddhas-to-be, such conceptions have been carefully remodelled not to incur the charge of Pantheism or Panpsychism.

– to 2,a: that the analogy between the Social Welfare Policy of the most illustrious Theravâda Buddhist sovereigns and the modern Welfare State concept, admissible in what concerns mediaeval Ceylon and Burma, is far less convincing when tentatively extended as far back as Aśoka's reign. Though having entitled his fourth chapter *The Buddhist Welfare State of Aśoka*, Mr. Sarkisyanz has been wise, in my opinion, to mention, in his actual text, just Public Welfare Services. Technically, this makes a serious difference.

Directly connected, in modern History, with the laicization of the State and with the resulting transfer of various ethical competences and functions from Religion to Politics, say from the Church to the State, the Welfare State Policy, under its socialistic aspects – and these are the ones the Burmese usually refer themselves to – does not simply denote a State equiped with national health insurance and other social services, but one assuming, as far as humanly possible, the moral charge of making life worth living, even for the less favored members of the community.

Looked at from that angle, private charities and foundations, when

specially inspired by religious motives, may be accepted as a welcome intervention, parallel to specific Public Welfare Services, but, for all that, they by no means combine so happily with the Welfare State program, properly so called. They run contrary to its basic purpose, which denies that "charity" should give what has to be considered to be of right. Such private palliatives are denounced by many Socialists as well as by Communists as a mystification, directed against the productive base, usually with an ostentation of self-styled Christian virtue and not without obligations of gratitude attached. In strict Marxian orthodoxy – to be taken as a certainly incomplete but not wholly unfounded analysis of the situation – it consists barely in giving back to the victims of capitalism (or, at another historical level, of feudality), i.e. of the exploitation of man by man, part of the fundamental excedent left by the technical and nowadays more and more scientific exploitation of nature by man – in other terms a part of what already belonged to them, as economic "producers".

It accordingly does not seem advisable to try to project our terminology and connected conceptions – whatever be the way we approach them – as far back as Aśoka's or even Duṭṭhagâmanî's times. Special account should be taken, in this matter, of the great Emperor's insistance on the development of *private* "charitable" initiatives, as such. Incitation in that direction rather than final State control appears to have been his aim.

Kindness for the poor and weak, to slaves and servants was spreading, proclaimed, Aśoka and he wanted them to extend further, [claiming that] the advancement of Dharma [= "true and beneficient Order", rather than "Law"] amongst men [had been] achieved through two means, legislation and persuasion. "But of these two, legislation [had been] less effective and persuasion more so".

Last, but not least,

– to 2,b: that Theravâda orthodoxy and the whole cosmogonic system developed in the Scriptures seem to assign narrow limits to the State's initiative – even if conceding it any – in its pretension to assume the welfare of the people. The doctrine of Retribution, being strictly individual, though "impersonal", requires that "the doer of the deed [*karman*] and he alone, should reap the fruit [*phala*]". In fact, nothing approximating the Hindu belief in the unity of all lives, cleverly reinterpreted as it may have been later by the Mahâyânists as a symbol of the universal [re]integration and liberation of all creatures in the transcendent "body" of the Buddha, can be ascribed to Aśoka's time. *Saṃsâra*, the round of Transmigration, appeared

unlimited and indefinite. Salvation, in the perspective of the inscriptions, at any rate salvation by what could be called the king's intervention, manifestly remained the lot of the comparatively few:

How may I uplift some of them with a growth of Dharma?

There is no trace, here, of the Mahâyânist belief in universal Liberation. And from another point of view:

There is no higher duty than the welfare of the whole world and what little effort I make is from debt to all beings. I work for their happiness in this life, that in the next world [i.e. "next birth"] they may gain heaven.

Heaven (*svarga*), not *nirvâṇa*, is thus set as the ultimate aim of the king's exaltation of and personal devotion to the Dharma. There is little doubt, however, that as history proceeded, the charismatic figure of the Wheel-wielding King (*cakravartin*) grew in size and was credited with increasing soteriological powers, as a compensation for and prospective help against too positive and immediate woes. This seems to have been specially true in Ceylon where Theravâda Buddhist kings were constantly and destructively assailed by their Hindu neighbors of Dravidian Southern India, in a merciless and, as seen against the cultural background of the time, a quasi cosmic conflagration. There cannot but have been periods when Messianic perspectives, as a relief, simply *had* to be reconciled with whatever the most inflexible tenants of orthodoxy had to say against them.

The birth as an ideal universal king came to be seen as the last stage before birth as the future Buddha

– i.e. Maitreya, for according to Theravâda Buddhism there can be in the world but one Buddha at a time, and the interval between them is astronomically long.

In Ceylon earlier than anywhere else, possibly in the sixth century AD, at a time of increased Mahâyâna Buddhist influences, ... the Bodhisattva [= future Buddha] ideal came to be adopted in the Theravâda ethos of kingship. Though Theravâda tenets could not promise each believer, nor even each member of the dynasty to become a Buddha, its tradition by implication opened for Ceylon's kings the possibility of becoming the only future Buddha that the Theravâda admits within [or rather during the remnant of] this World Age [i.e. Maitreya, pali Metteya].

It were such visions of the future that King Kyanzittha of Pagan (1084–1112 AD) applied to himself in his inscriptions ... "building monasteries or digging tanks or planting groves ... only that beings may escape from Saṃsâra', ...

This time the flavor of Universal Salvation, Mahâyâna style, is more perceptible – but of course, in Pagan and at that period, the doctrinal setting, even if it remained short of specific Mahâyâna tenets, should have been deeply marked by Sarvâstivâda Buddhist influences.

Kyanzittha still mentions, in his inscriptions, a rebirth "of all mankind" into heaven; this now seems to be just a preliminary step, preparing universal Liberation [*mukti* = escape from *Saṃsâra*], in the same manner as the Sovereign's station as king is an anticipation of an ever more glorious accomplishment, Buddhahood.

[beholding] the mighty universal monarch who rides upon a white elephant, the omniscient one [this is normally a qualification of the Buddhas] ... exalted above all other kings, ... all good men understood that this [was] indeed the King of the Law (*dharmarâja*) who was foretold by Buddha [and] who is to become a true Buddha

This takes us a far cry from Aśoka's sober and positive soteriology!

The final outcome has to be looked for less perhaps in U Nu's Welfare State ideology, addressed, in fact, mainly to the Burmese intelligentsia, than in his own historical figure, as seen by the masses.

It was U Nu that popular imagination most frequently identified with the ideal Buddhist ruler expected about the 2500th year of the Buddhist era [= 1956–57, the year of the great celebration of the *Buddhajayantî*].

These expectations, heedless of doctrinal implications, concerned the man himself, his personality, regarded as a concrete sign of what was going on, and that is why psychological warfare plans, too cleverly planned against him, fell short of their intentions:

In vain did [in 1960] the rivals of U Nu urge the people to vote against him... arguing ... that his deprivation of political power might facilitate his development as a future Buddha ...

The people at that time manifestly saw in him more than just a human stature – an important clue, to judge by analogy of what happened in the past.

In strict orthodoxy, however, such prophecies, bringing forth many claimants to the one and unique position as a future Buddha allowed by the doctrine, cannot be but erratic and destructive of each other, in turns.

On the whole, then, none perhaps of the four leading arguments adduced by Mr. Sarkisyanz and his learned Burmese advisers would seem fully convincing, if regarded from a purely ideological point of view. But this very consideration, when re-placed against the factual background, is what most decisively recommends his interpretation. For in spite of all such theoretical objections as the die-hards of Theravâda monachal orthodoxy may raise, there is no denying that Theravâda Kingship, in Ceylon, Burma and other Indochinese States,

appeared that way to the people. Theoretically insuperable doctrinal difficulties must accordingly be considered a test: it took momentum to overcome them! Those Buddhists indisputably went so far as to regard their local rulers as a kind of anticipative image of the prophesized Buddha, Maitreya. This is in fact how the king showed in the eyes of the common people, in accordance with the ceremonial, "cosmic" aspect under which urbanism, architecture and stately celebrations made him familiar to them.

Throughout a long and often agitated historical process, popular faith and anticipations seem thus to have often been building on images rather than on concepts, deliberately keeping clear of theoretical justifications. All our evidence points to a conception of the royal function in connexion with broad Messianic expectations, always ready to focus on the charismatic personality of the day, should the occasion occur – although general acceptance of the *karmaphala* doctrine, as the supreme explanation of the Cakravartin's relation to this people succeeded in maintaining a minimum of orthodoxy, under various accommodations and makeshifts.

In order to appreciate more fully Mr. Sarkisyanz' contribution, from the point of view of Theravâda orthodoxy, one may find useful to examine more thoroughly, in the light of present events and of the reactions of authentic South-East Asian authorities on Buddhism – as U Nu himself – what the West usually considers as the abstract leanings and the limitations of that religion, chiefly when it comes to its secular applications, social and political.

Mr. Sarkisyanz directly challenges, for instance, the conclusion reached by the well known sociologist, Max Weber, in his popular book, *Religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism:* that there would be "no nexus between the Buddhist ideology and social action" – to say nothing of politics. This restrictive interpretation, still has great weight among Western political scientists, as shown by the fact that some of the latter, discussing a lecture given by our author, as a preview of the present book, at Yale University, last Spring, expressed the opinion that they could not find in it any decisive refutation of Max Weber's thesis. It will thus apparently require some effort to amend what I consider, with Mr. Sarkisyanz, as Max Weber's misinterpretation of the texts he refers to, as well as of the facts.

The eminent sociologist, "reached this mistaken conclusion, according to our author because he took for granted that any possible socially binding ethics per definition would have 'to operate with the

endless value of the individual soul' ... [whereas] in Buddhism ... reality is denied both to individualities and to souls".

Mr. Sarkisyanz' answer rests – as already noted – on the assumption of a *lay* branch of Theravâda Buddhism discriminatively to be referred to the temporal traditions attached to the name of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka (3rd century B.C.), in Northern India –. It would have developed collaterally with the corresponding monastic branch of the same school of Buddhism. This interpretation has in fact been the active and consistent inspiration of U Nu's policy.

May we not however consider such temporal issues and developments as a direct outcome of Theravâda Buddhism? Would it not be, not an accretion to, but rather an extension of it? For if "lay" Aśokan Buddhism should appear just as a compromise between the two powers, Church and State, for instance in the traditions of medieval Ceylon or of pre-British Burma, and not as a deep and natural expression of the canonical and popular faith, it would then be strange that such an artificial arrangement should have survived and adapted itself to this world of ours, so widely different. But if on the contrary, previous to the coming and interference of the Westerners, that style of political, quasi national Buddhism has been historically established on authentic Theravâda values, it would seem possible to build a new covenant on that strong and lasting foundation: the Buddha's message.

The crucial question should accordingly be: Is there in this message enough to build on, especially concerning worldly, social affairs or must one supplement it with pragmatic principles, foreign to it in essence, such as either the realistic policy of the Hindu State, or some Aśokan anticipation of our Welfare State theory?

The whole controversy, carried by Max Weber's supporters, against Mr.Sarkisyanz and the consensus of genuine Theravâda experts, *in situ*, hinges in fact on a technical term, *upekṣâ*, *upekkhâ* in pâli, usually translated as "indifference" or "impassibility", and taken as the last word of the doctrine, so that, according to Weber

"The specific form of Buddhist altruism, universal compassion is merely one of the stages which sensibility passes when seeing through the nonsense of the struggle for existence of all individuals in the Wheel of Life"

In other terms and in close agreement with our tenaciously recurring interpretation of nirvâṇa in morally and socially as well as ontologically negative terms, the final message of the Buddha would be

an out and out casting off of all interest in the world – the "all gone!" style.

This however does not take enough account of the crucial fact that *upekṣâ*, "indifference", better taken as "equanimity" (W. Rahula) or "impartiality", is *not* a concept to be mastered by contrast with previous stages, but the crowning step of a progression, implying them and preserving them as its foundation: it does by no means contradict but rather realizes them, i.e. universal friendliness (*mettâ, maitrī*), deep clarity (*karunâ*) and sympathetic joy (*muditâ*).

The great merit of Mr. Sarkisyanz' book is to have so fully realized the sway and resources of this deep and far reaching element, in the present development of Asian History, without minimizing the obstacles, local and general, it has to face. U Nu's figure, presented here with great sympathy and thorough understanding, is a remarkable illustration of both aspects of the problem, by his achievement as well as by his failures.

Far from considering "Aśokan" Buddhism as a mere historical, pragmatic accretion to the authentic line of the Theravâda faith, a closer study of its intimate connexion with the doctrine will help to reconstruct a more human and convincing picture not only of the social and political expansion of the religion, in its temporal applications, but of the initial construction of its dogmatics as such – especially in the philosophical literature of the Abhidharma/Abhidhamma, in the chronological setting of the latter against its pre-Buddhistic, Brahmanical background.

The preceding pages cannot pretend to be more than a rough and tentative sketch of that indispensable revision, the incitation to which is nowhere to be found more clearly than in Mr. Sarkisyanz' bold and far-sighted presentation of the facts alive.

PAUL MUS

FOREWORD

Ideological developments in Burma are of considerable significance for the comparative history of ideas: Burma is both, in some ways, a center of the Buddhist revival and the only major area of Theravâda Buddhism to pass through a revolutionary mass upheaval. Recently Lucian Pye wrote about that country:

> With respect to political development, it is apparent that we cannot think simply in terms of a quantitative decline in traditional role characteristics and a rise in modern ones. We must consider instead what patterns will lead to national development. In a sense we can picture modern patterns of behaviour as providing the superstructure of the advanced society and thus conclude that the effective operation of the society depends upon whether the traditional patterns of behaviour tend to reinforce and give greater substance and clarity to the modern superstructure pattern or relationships ...

Seen in this view of traditional and modern patterns of contemporary Burma, the traditional have, on the whole, received less attention than the modern ones. Therefore, this book concentrates on the impact of the former. This explains why the specialist will not find in it much of what is customary to describe in Burma area studies; it is hoped that he may feel compensated to some extent by finding instead a few points not customarily treated in books about modern Burma. The cultural context of modern Burma's ideological phenomena might possibly be further elucidated through methods developed by Max Weber.

My interest in Burma was first awakened by the modern Buddhist phenomenon of U Nu and by Gordon Luce's painstaking historical reconstruction and aesthetic evocation of Burma's Middle Ages. Research on the present topic received its initial stimulation from Professor Heine-Geldern's lectures, in New York, in 1946–1949. The problems treated in this book began to preoccupy me ever since, as a student at the University of Chicago of fourteen years ago, I prepared

a paper on this subject for Professor Bergstraesser's Seminar on methods of cultural history. A confirmation of my working hypothesis about cultural connections between Buddhist ideals of state in the Ashokan tradition and modern Burmese welfare state ideologies, in a conversation with a scholar commanding the historical knowledge of Pe Maung Tin, encouraged further research along these lines. Subsequent field research in Burma (in 1959) was assisted by a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation. Many Burmans, respectively residents of Burma, have assisted me with their advice and research suggestions or interviews. For this I would like to express my gratitude to U Nu, the former Prime Minister of Burma; U Kyaw Nyein of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, Rangoon; the Aggamahapandita of the Anisakan Monastery, Sagaing; Professor U Chan Mya of Mandalay; Saya U Hein of the Burma Translation Society; Dr. Khin Maung Win of the University of Rangoon (Philosophy Department); U Maung Maung Tin, Lecturer in Burmese, Mandalay; Sayadaw U Pa Mauk Kha of the U Yin Taik Monastery, Rangoon; U Kyaw Nyein of the Burmese Broadcasting Corporation; Thakin Kyaw Sein, Secretary of the People's Literature Committee; U Saw Aung, Superintendent of the Government Printing Office; U Saw Oh and Colonel Ba Than of the Burma Army's Psychological Warfare Department; Thakin Kudaw Hmain; Daw San Yin, Research Officer, Directorate of Information of the Union of Burma Government; the Shwenan Sayadaw Ai Ga Maha Pandita; Mr. Tha Kyaw, Barrister-at-Law, Mandalay; Taw Paya Nge, Deputy Director of Religious Affairs Administration of the Union of Burma; Thakin Thein Maung Gyi; U Tin Maung of Mandalay; the Ven'ble U Wisudda Sayadaw of the Vijjalankara Monastery, Mandalay; Zeyawadi U Thilasara Sayadaw, Rangoon; Maung Ay Maung, Publisher, Mandalay; U Wizaya, Sagaing; U Khin Maung, Retired Principal of the Police Academy, Mandalay; Mr. John Scoon, Cultural Attache of the American Embassy in Rangoon; Mr. Arthur Hummel, United States Information Officer in Rangoon and Mr. Jack Halliday in Mandalay. I also benefited by discussions with the Sawbwa and Mahadevi of Hsipaw, Thakin Ba Sein, and Professor Winston King of Grinnell College. While in Burma, I benefited particularly from the advice and kind assistance of Justice U Chan Htoon of the Supreme Court of the Union of Burma, Secretary of the Buddha Sasana Council. U Want Nyunt of the United States Educational Foundation Board, Rangoon, has been most helpful in the collection of material in the Burmese language, which would have

taken me much longer to collect without his assistance. The translations from Burmese sources given between quotation marks or in small print are – with one exception – my own. In similar cases it seemed preferable to sacrifice idiomatic English presentation to what seemed to be the most literal rendering of the original Burmese. All italics are my own. The bibliographical transliteration[1] follows the system used by Professors W. Cornyn and Musgrave in "Burmese Glossary" – with such approximation to consistency as seemed practicable (aside from terms which older English literature on Burma has popularized in earlier forms of transcription, instances of which are still used by some Library entries).

The Libraries of Congress, the University of Chicago and the New York Public Library supplied materials used in this book; Mr. G. Caldwell of the University of Kansas Library helped to supplement them with items obtained by Interlibrary Loan. I have particularly benefited from the book collection and borrowing facilities of the Centre for Comparative Research on Cultural History directed by Professor Bergstraesser at Freiburg im Breisgau, Western Germany. Among its staff, I would like to thank my Research Assistants, Miss Inge Hofmann, Miss M. Ummenhofer and Miss Ute Glockner.

The actual text of this book largely originated in connection with lectures on Burmese History which I delivered in the Fall Semester of 1962/1963 at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Mrs. S. Martin of its Soviet Area Studies Office typed some of its text. Most of it was dictated to and typed by Miss Pamela Beezley of Lawrence. Without her advice on questions of English style, this book would have been much less readable. Its completion in February, 1963, was made possible by Professors Backus and Ellison of the University of Kansas being so kind to provide me with clerical assistance.

E. Sarkisyanz

[1] Also in the case of terms derived from the Pāli language, as have Cornyn and Musgrave.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ba U	Ba U, *My Burma. The autobiography of a President* (London, 1959)
BEFEO	*Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*
Cady, *A history of modern Burma*	John Cady, *A history of modern Burma* (Ithaca, USA, 1960)
Cowell, *Jâtaka*	E. B. Cowell (Editor), *The Jâtaka or stories of the Buddha's former births translated* (Cambridge, 1895; London, 1957)
Crosthwaite, *Pacification of Burma*	Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London, 1912)
Cûlavaṃsa: transl. W. Geiger	*Cûlavaṃsa, being the more recent part of the Mahâvaṃsa,* translated by W. Geiger (Colombo, 1953), Parts I, II, III
Dîgha Nikâya: transl. Rhys Davids	Sacred Books of the Buddhists edited by T. W. Rhys Davids, Vol. IV (London, 1957): Dialogues of the Buddha transl. from the Pâli of the Dîgha Nikâya by T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys-Davids, Part iii
Dîpavaṃsa: transl. Oldenberg	*The Dîpavaṃsa: An ancient Buddhist historical record,* edited and translated by H. Oldenberg (London, 1879)
Epigraphia Birmanica	Archaeological Survey of Burma, *Epigraphia Birmanica, being lithic and other inscriptions of Burma,* edited by C. Duroiselle, Vol. I, Part ii; Vol. II, Part i (Rangoon, 1920, 1921)
Epigraphia Zeylanica	Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Epigraphia Zeylanica,* Vols. I, II (London, 1912, 1928)
J. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*	John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice. Comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge, 1948; reprinted New York, 1956)
Guardian (Rangoon)	*The Guardian. Burma's National Magazine* (monthly)
G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*	G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma from the earliest times to 10. March 1824, the beginning of the English conquest* (London, 1925)
JA	*Journal Asiatique*

JBRS	*Journal of the Burma Research Society*
JMBS	*Journal of the Maha-Bodhi Society*
Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*	Adoniram Judson's *Burmese-English Dictionary. Unabridged Centenary Edition* (Rangoon, 1953)
MBUBW	*Maha Bodhi and the United Buddhist World* (Journal)
Mahâvaṃsa: transl. W. Geiger	*Mahâvaṃsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon* translated by W. Geiger (London, 1912)
Mahâvastu: transl. Jones	*The Mahâvastu* translated from the Buddhist Sanskrit by J. J. Jones. Vols I, II (*Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vols. XVI, XVII: London, 1949)
Maung Maung	Maung Maung, *Burma's Constitution* (The Hague, 1961)
Maun Maung Pye	Maun Maung Pye, *Burma in the Crucible* (Rangoon, 1951)
E. M. Mendelson, "A Messianic Association in Upper Burma"	E. Michael Mendelson, "A Messianic Buddhist Association in Upper Burma," in: *Bulletin of the London School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XXIV, Part iii (1961),
Paul Mus	Paul Mus, "Barabuḍur. Les origines du Stûpa et la transmigration: Essai d'archéologie religieuse comparée," in: *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, XXXIII (1933)
Nakamura, *The Ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples*	H. Namakura, *The Ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Tokyo, 1960)
"Pacification of Upper Burma. A vernacular history"	Tha Aung & Maung Mya Din (R. Alexander, Editor), "The Pacification of Upper Burma A vernacular history," in: *JBRS*, XXXI, ii (1941)
Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa:* transl. Law	Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa. The history of the Buddha's Religion [in Burma]*, translated [from Pâli] by B. C. Law (London, 1952)
Paranavitana, "Mahâyânism in Ceylon"	S. Paranavitana, "Mahâyânism in Ceylon," in: *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Section G, Vol. II (December, 1928 / February, 1933)
Przyluski, *La légende de l'empereur Açoka*	J. Przyluski, La *légende de l'empereur Açoka (Açoka Avâdana):* Annales du Musée Guimet, *Bibliothèque d'Etudes*, Vol. XXXII (Paris, 1923)
L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*	Lucian W. Pye, *Politics, Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's search for identity* (London, 1962)
W. King, *In the hope of Nibbana*	Winston L. King, *In the hope of Nibbâna. An essay on Theravâda Buddhist ethics* (in print). Professor King has kindly shown me the proof sheets
Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *Theravada Buddhism in Burma*	Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *An introduction to the study of Theravâda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1946)

Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*	[Vicente] Sangermano. *A description of the Burmese Empire, compiled chiefly from native documents* (Rome, 1833)
SBE	F. Max Müller (Editor), *Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford)
Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*	Shway Yoe [J. G. Scott], *The Burman, his life and notions* (London, 1896). Where the edition of 1910 is being referred to, that date is specified
Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court"	Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court under the Konbaung Kings," in: *JBRS*, XLIV, i (1961)
H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*	(Captain) Henry Yule, *A narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava. With notices of the country, government and people* (London, 1858)

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

Brohm	J. F. Brohm, *Burmese religion and the Burmese religious revival* (unpublished dissertation, Cornell University, 1957)
Rājāvaliya	*Rājāvaliya or a historical narrative of Siṅhalese kings*. Edited [and translated] by B. Guṇasékara (Colombo, 1954)
Maung Maung, *Law*	Maung Maung, *Law and custom in Burma and the Burmese family* (The Hague, 1963)

CHAPTER I

THE BUDDHIST TRADITION OF BURMA'S HISTORY

Among the research works about Burma published during the last decades, outward political developments (but also foreign relations, economics and anthropology) are the main topics. The pioneering spade work of Professor Gordon Luce and his pupils has opened the medieval epigraphy of Burma as a source for future historians. Indologists and students of the history of religion have elucidated many details of the development of Theravâda Buddhism. But the bearing of Buddhist concepts on the history of political ideas in Burma has received much less attention – in spite of the fact that Burma is the only Theravâda Buddhist state to reach independence through a revolutionary mass movement accompanying an acute crisis of traditional culture and producing spectacular Buddhist-Marxist syncretism.

One reason why relatively little attention has been given to such problems may be that Theravâda Buddhism is rarely ever considered in the context of the semi-Mahâyânistic elements that survive in the actual folk-Buddhism of Burma. This "Hinayâna" Buddhism is known unilaterally in its other-worldly monastic tradition of the Pâli Canon, much less in its lay tradition of post-Ashokan Buddhist ideals of state. Such traditional Buddhist political ideals are much less known – and rarely considered in the current image of Buddhism. Thus could engrain itself the notion that, as canonic Buddhism depreciates the world and society, "Buddhism" per definition could not possibly produce a social or political ethos or inspire historical and political action.[1] Therefore Buddhism is usually not counted among the relevant power factors in Burmese politics. And as Political Science – the main discipline of Burmese Area Studies – is chiefly concerned with factors relevant for the power situation, the intellectual

[1] Cf. Winston L. King, *Buddhism and Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1962) pp. 97, 99, 101 and also Ernst Benz, *Buddhas Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens* (Munich, 1963), p. 111.

history of Buddhist-Marxist syncretism of Burma has been rarely considered. There may be still different reasons for this: Religion does not even come under the Social Sciences, only under Humanities. Some of the best known writings on modern Burma have originated from a background of Baptist missionary education. The tradition of Baptist missionary education may concede to Burma a right to political independence but cannot easily grant the existence of a living Buddhist source of Burmese cultural tradition as alternative to Protestant utilitarian values. On the other hand British archaeological and historical scholarship has to a considerable extent reconstructed the historical elements in the traditions of the Burmese about the origin of their earliest states. But the surviving effect of these traditions on the outlook and self-image of the Burmese, the impact of this self-conception of Burma's destiny on political development have been but little touched upon in the whole literature dealing with Burma.

Burma's historical tradition is inseparably linked with Buddhism. It is only since the introduction of Buddhism that the earliest historical sources – in the nature of inscriptions – appeared in what is now Burma. It is mainly to provide illustrations of the basic idea of Buddhism, the Impermanence of all Existence, the cyclical regularity and causality of endless change, that Burmese historiography was conceived. As other branches of knowledge in the Medieval Occident served theology, so in the Buddhist tradition of Burma, the recording of the past served mainly didactic functions of exemplifying the transitory nature of all things. "Stories of kings, robbers, ministers, and generals" were considered idle talk that could not lead to the overcoming of attachment to existence, to the overcoming of the cause of suffering and to the liberation from Impermanence. Only if such stories were used to illustrate the transitory nature of all existence, only then did they receive Buddhist sanction.[1] Historical sources are characterized either by monuments of Buddhist piety of kings or chronicles written by Buddhist monks. This determines the traditional Burmese conception of history.

Theravâda Buddhism of Burma is based on the Pâli Canon. In it illustrations of the impermanence of all existence are exemplified in historical narratives about the destruction of the Lichchavis. This Pâli Canon of Theravâda Buddhism developed in Ceylon. And the chronicles of Ceylon provided the model for Burma's historiography.

[1] U Tet Htoot, "The nature of Burmese chronicles," in: D. G. E. Hall (Editor), *Historians of Southeast Asia* (London, 1961), p. 50.

The Dîpavaṃsa, one of the earliest chronicles of Ceylon, written in the fourth or early fifth century, best preserved in Burmese manuscripts,[1] derived the following moral from history: "Perishable, alas, is whatever exists, subject to origin and decay; it appears and perishes; its extinction is bliss." [2] The Cûlavamsa, a later chronicle of the kings of Ceylon, systematically draws edifying lessons from historical narratives: "For all power they had amassed and for all the glorious splendor they have enjoyed, all the rulers of the earth were in the end unable to escape death. With the thought "all things are subject to the law of decay the wise men should forever entirely forsake the desire for wealth and even for life." [3] "These ... kings who were all content in spirit, whose wealth was endless, who gloried in their troops, their elephants, their chargers and in the chariots of their heroic army, they had finally to surrender all and, forsaken by their followers, mount the funerary pyre. The wise man when he remembers this should, if he seeks his salvation, harbor the wish to fling away from him the happiness of existence." [4]

In this sense a victim of brutal arbitrariness of despotism in the Burmese Chronicle exclaims before being executed: "[Whenever] one person rises to well-being, someone [else] happens at that time to be destroyed [according to the] established nature of things." [5] When the king who had ordered his execution read this death song of Anantathuriya, he commanded that his life be spared. But it was too late: the man had been killed already.

Just as attachment to life was seen as leading to suffering, a help in the overcoming of suffering was sought in works of merit. Works of pious merit and patronage of the Buddhist [Samgha] community of monks was the criterion by which Buddhist historiography judged rulers. When foreign (since antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages South Indian, Tamil) invaders of Ceylon were opposed, it was because they destroyed the monasteries of Ceylon or at least withdrew patronage from its Buddhist monkhood rather than because of "patriotism." [6] When the Tamil conqueror Eḷâra was driven out by Ceylon's epical

[1] H. Oldenberg (Translator and Editor), *The Dîpavaṃsa: An ancient Buddhist historical record* (London, 1879), pp. 9, 11f.
[2] *Dîpavaṃsa*, III, 50: transl. by Oldenberg, *ibid*, p. 132.
[3] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 248: *Cûlavaṃsa, being the more recent part of the Mahâvaṃsa*, Part I, translated by W. Geiger (Colombo, 1953), p. 26.
[4] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XLI, 103: transl. W. Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp. 62f.
[5] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, CXLIII (Mandalay, 1318/1956), p. 347.
[6] L. S. Perera, "Pali chronicles of Ceylon," in: C. H. Philips (Editor), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London, 1961), p. 39.

hero Duṭṭhagâmaṇi (161–137 B.C.), it was under a battly cry "not for the Kingdom but for Buddhism." [1] Duṭṭhagâmaṇi belonged to a dynasty that prided itself of having established Buddhism in Ceylon, receiving it in the third century B.C. from the son of Ashoka himself, the founder of a Buddhist empire in India.[2] And the strong attachment to the land of Ceylon springs in its chronicle from the concept of Ceylon being *the Island of the Buddhist Law* [Dhammadîpa]. It springs from the conviction that the island was destined by the Buddha himself to be a repository of the pure (Theravâda) doctrine, where the Buddhist Order of monks and the Buddhist community in general would be firmly established and shine in glory. The conviction that Gautama Buddha had foreseen all this development and hallowed Ceylon by his visiting it, preparing her for her glorious Buddhist destiny,[3] had great significance for the Buddhist conception of Ceylon's history. It determined Buddhist Ceylon's self-image and played a tremendous role in the history of the island.[4] "For more than two thousand years the Sinhalese have been inspired by the ideal that they were a nation brought into being for the definite purpose of carrying the torch lit by the Buddha." [5]

And this idea likewise was to influence the self-image and thereby the intellectual and political history of Buddhist Burma: the concept of Burma's Buddhist destiny if not mission was certainly stimulated by the example of Ceylon, the original center of its Theravâda Buddhism. Buddhist Ceylon's wars against south Hindu invaders were invoked as models in Burma's struggles even against the fellow Buddhists of Siam.[6] No other people was thought to have preserved the Buddhist Dhamma (Moral Law) more carefully and more exactly in its form as it came from the lips of Lord Buddha himself, than the Burmese.[7] Buddha has even been thought – by peasants – to have been a Burman.[8]

[1] *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXV, 17: *Mahâvaṃsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, translated by W. Geiger (London, 1912), p. 171.
[2] *Dîpavaṃsa*, I, 27: transl. by Oldenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
[3] *Dîpavaṃsa*, I, 17; I, 22–23; II, 2; XII, 30: transl. by Oldenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 118f, 124, 169.
[4] L. S. Perera, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 40f.
[5] [D. G. Vijayavardhana], *Dharma-Vijaya (Triumph of Righteousness) or the Revolt in the Temple* (Colombo, 1953), p. 3.
[6] Inscription on king Trŷaphŷa of 1375: C. Duroiselle, *A List of inscriptions found in Burma, Part I* (Rangoon, 1921), No. 682^{1-108}, translation by Than Tun, "History of Burma, A.D. 1300–1400," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), p. 130.
[7] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions* (London, 1896), p. 96.
[8] F. Trager (Editor), *Burma*, Human Relation Area Files (New Haven, 1956, unpublished), pp. 247f.

Formidable geographical barriers separating Burma from its major neighbors, India and China, contributed to this consciousness of exclusiveness and to an emphasis on the uniqueness of Burma's pristine Buddhist tradition. According to the Suttavaddhamanîti, life in a "foreign country" was to be the first obstacle to the hearing of the True Law.[1] "In so far as the Burmese express any feelings of ethnocentrism, ... such feelings may well be couched in terms of the presence or absence among the out-group of the symbol of civilization – Buddhism." [2] Burma's Buddhist greatness is said to have been foreseen already by Gautama Buddha himself. Thus, according to the tradition of the Mons (of Lower Burma), who were to transmit Theravâda Buddhism from Ceylon to the Burmese, the high destinies of their center Pegu (in the south of what became Burma) were foretold by the Buddha himself.[3] It was from the Buddha himself that the Burmese tradition up to the present derives Burma's Buddhism: [4]

In the eight year after he had gained the highest wisdom, the Blessed One (Buddha) with many hundred monks came to Sudhammapura (Thaton) in the Râmañña Country (Lower Burma). Now when (the Buddha) had come and dwelt ..., he gave the essence of immortality to the inhabitants of the country together with their king and established them in the Three Refugees [The Buddha, the Buddhist Law, the Buddhist Monkhood] and the Five Precepts. "So in precisely the eighth year since the Blessed One's [Buddha's] Parinibbâna ['535 B.C.'] the elder Gavampati established the Religion at Sudhammapura in the Râmañña Country (Lower Burma)." [5]

The legendary traditions of the Mons derived their Buddhism also from subsequent missionaries sent by India's ideal Buddhist emperor Ashoka in 241 B.C.[6] (as attested historically for Ceylon). (In reality, Theravâda Buddhism may have been flourishing among the Mons since the 5th century A.D. and seems to have come to them more from Pallava India then from Ceylon.[7]) In south-central Burma, at Prome, Buddhism is attested (both in the Hinayâna and Mahâyâna form by the sixth if not the fifth century A.D. (the former with south and

[1] Suttâvaḍḍhana-nîti, 35: J. Gray, *Ancient proverbe and maxims from Burmese source or the Niti Literature of Burma* (London, 1886), p. 149. The Suttavaḍḍhananîti is apparently a nineteenth century collection of "useful" maxims from the Buddhist Canon.

[2] See page, 4 note 8.

[3] Lik Smin Asah, *The story of the founding of Pegu.* With English translation and notes. Edited by R. Halliday (Rangoon, 1923), p. 69.

[4] U Nu's speech of May 18, 1954, in: U Nu, *Forward with the people. Transl. of selected speeches* (Rangoon, 1955), p. 161.

[5] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa,* III, 36; 37: *The history of the Buddha's Religion* [in Burma], translated [from Pâli] by B. C. Law (London, 1952), pp. 41, 42.

[6] *Mahâvaṃsa,* XII, 1–8; W. Geiger, *Dîpavaṃsa und Mahâvaṃsa und die geschichtliche Überlieferung in Ceylon* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 15.

[7] Cf. G. Coedès, *Les états hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (Paris, 1948), p. 109.

south-central India origins, particularly from Andhra and Pallava Deccan, the latter deriving from East Indian Bengal).[1] And Buddhist Prome, a state of the linguistically Tibeto-Burman, perhaps "Proto-Burmese," Pyus, left memories as a predecessor of the Burmese empire established by Anawrahta [1044–1077] ruler of Pagan. There "Mahâyâna Buddhism" was discouraged by him but not actually eliminated: Anawrahta established the Theravâda Buddhism of the conquered Mons among the Burmese who were to remain its upholders to this day. And therefore Burmese monastic historiography compared his conversion to that of Ashoka.[2] On the other hand, Burma's historiography identified with Burmese localities the Indian sites consecrated by the presence of Buddha.[3] It followed the example of the chronicles of Ceylon [4] – a land which since the late 12th century actually did come to exercise that decisive influence on the Buddhism of Burma that tradition attributes to a much earlier period. After the example of Ceylon, Burma's tradition derived the country's dynasties from Buddha's own lineage: A prince (named "Abhi Yaza") of Buddha's clan, the Sâkyas, is said to have been (long before Buddha's time) forced by military developments in India to migrate to Burma. There he allegedly founded Tagaung.[5] He allegedly established the "Tagaung Dynasty," from which, according to Burmese historiography descend the famous kings of Pagan. The period during which these kings are attested to have ruled at Pagan (1044–1287) was the classical formation period of Burma's culture and the zenith of medieval Burma. The Buddhist spirituality of their monuments is comparable to the Gothic experience of medieval Europe.

> The legacy of their floating sway has enriched posterity forever. It was they who made the sun-scorched wilderness, the solitary plain ..., to blossom forth into the architectural magnificence of Pagan ... To them the world owes in great measure the preservation of Theravâda Buddhism, one of the purest faiths mankind had ever known. Brahmanism had strangled it in the land of its birth; in Ceylon its existence was threatened again and again ..., but the Kings of Burma never wavered, and at Pagan the stricken faith found a city of refuge.[6]

[1] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *An introduction to the study of Theravâda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1946), p. 44.
[2] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 57–58: transl. B. C. Law, p. 65.
[3] C. Duroiselle, "Notes sur la géographie apocryphe de la Birmanie...," in: *BEFEO*, Vol. V, pp. 146ff, 167ff.
[4] *Dîpavaṃsa*, III, 49: transl. Oldenberg, p. 132.
[5] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, CII, pp. 175ff.
[6] G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma* (London, 1925), p. 70.

In the Pagan period Burma became the main stronghold of Theravâda Buddhism on the Indochinese Peninsula. Burma's Theravâda Buddhism conquered the conquerors of the country, the Shans who in their southward migration, accelerated by the Mongol conquest of southern China (1253), overran and destroyed Burma's Pagan empire. From there they (and possibly other Thai peoples, like the Siamese and Laotians) adopted "Southern" Buddhism, while Burma broke up into a number of succession states. For the second time it was unified into an empire by Tabin Shwehti (1531–1551) and his dynasty of Toungoo. Buyin Naung (1551–1581) made Burma the strongest military power east of India and south of China – and sent a broom made from his own hair to sweep a sanctuary of Buddha, the conqueror of Impermanence and discoverer of causality of Suffering and its overcoming. Costly offerings to pagodas may have been this monarch's attempts to atone for his power struggles of blood and iron. This "greatest explosion of human energy ever seen in Burma" coincided with her first contacts with Western Europeans in the Renaissance age of overseas discoveries. The successors of the Toungoo Dynasty rose and fell; during the 17th century Burma again broke up into rival succession states. Its ephemeral domination by the Mons (1740–1752) was interrupted by the military conquests and renewed unification of Burma under the third and last Burmese Empire. This was the work of Alaungpaya (1753–1760), one of the most brilliant and ruthless conquerors of the 18th century world. Under him was compiled the Manu-Kyay Dhammathat Code in which a comparatively humane Buddhist and ethical approach occupies the place of the Brahmanic ritualistic injunctions of its more ancient and better known namesake. Alaungpaya's name is a designation of the Future Buddha – and he died while attempting to conquer Siam. His conquests were continued by his successors. Among them Bodawpaya (1781–1819) carried the Burmese arms to the farthest limits they ever reached. By the Primate (Samgharâja) of the monastic order of Burma, Ñâṇâbhivaṃsa, the fratricide Bodawpaya was confronted with the example of Ashoka, the ideal Buddhist emperor and unifier of India of more than two milennia earlier [cf. chapter IV], confronted with the morality of the (Jâtaka) narratives about Gautama Buddha's previous lives and the subsequent Buddha's discourses on the ethics and duties of kings.[1]

[1] Nâṇâbhivaṃsa dhammasenâpati, "*Râjadhirâjavilâsinî*," edit. and transl. C. Maung Tin, "Manifestation of the King of Kings", in: *JBRS*, IV, No. 1 (1914), p. 18; Mabel H. Bode, *The Pâli literature of Burma* [Royal Asiatic Society, *Prize Publication Fund*, Vol. II (London, 1909)], pp. 78ff.

Ñâṇâbhivaṃsa contributed much to the stimulation which Burmese Buddhism in 1802 gave to the Buddhism of Ceylon. Thereby Burma's Theravâda Buddhism, a thousand years after its Mon derivation from Ceylon, in its turn contributed to the renovation of the monastic community on that ancient island stronghold of the Theravâda tradition.

And the Buddhist culture of 19th century Burma under the Alaungpaya Dynasty [1752–1885] attempted to resume the traditions of the Pagan period with its flourishing Buddhist scholasticism and lavish royal patronage of the Buddhist monastic Order. The first and second Anglo-Burmese wars (1824–1826, 1852) put an end to Burma's military preponderance in Further India. Thereby Burma suffered decisive territorial losses; what remained of the Burmese Empire was landlocked, deprived by British power of an outlet to the sea. Even after the enormous economic losses arising from this, Burma's King Mindon (1853–1878) utilized the reduced means of the country to become the Convener of the Fifth Buddhist Council at Mandalay (1871). Thereby Mindon followed the example of Ashoka's council of the middle of the third century B.C. – and prided himself in calling Ashoka his "ancestor." [1]

But Mindon's successor Thibaw (1878–1885) resumed methods of dynastic fratricide in the spirit of Hindu pragmatic traditions of power politics. His attempts at a pragmatic foreign policy of counterbalancing British pressure by plans for cooperation with France, so successful in the case of Siam, accelerated a British invasion to forestall possible French influence. And even this last king of Burma, when trying to defend Burma's independence by force, proclaimed at the same time that it was to be a fight for the Buddhist message of salvation: "Those heretics, the English ... barbarians, have most harshly made demands calculated to bring about the injury of our Religion ... To uphold the Religion, to uphold the national honor, to uphold the country's interest ... will gain for us the notable result of placing us on the path to the celestial regions and to Nibban [Nirvâṇa], the eternal rest ..." [2]

Then, after half a decade of guerilla warfare (1886–1891), Burma's resistance was broken. It became a province of British India. The

[1] Edict of King Mindon of May 21, 1854, cited by: Henry Yule, *A narrative of the mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava. With notices of the country, government and people* (London, 1858), p. 367.

[2] James G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* (Rangoon, 1900), Part I, Vol. I, p. 110.

British conquerors withdrew the state patronage from Buddhism. The resulting decline of the Buddhist Order coincided with the dissolution of the traditional social order, as through the British Empire Burma was drawn more and more into competitive world market economy. Most of Burma's secular elite became culturally Anglicized in varying degrees. But its rural majority tended to cling to the folk traditions of medieval Buddhism. For them, against the backgrounds of Buddhist concepts of history, the crisis of the traditional outlook and political order continued to mean a phenomenon of the inevitable decline of all things. Such a decline too, in the Hindu-Buddhist meaning of history, was seen as but passing phenomena: In cyclical sequence, the rise and decline of world ages follow each other in a flow of endless change. In the context of this Buddhist folk-teleology, events of the present and of the recent past tend to be assimilated to happenings of the distant or even legendary past and, indeed, to those of the distant future: Precisely the apparent deterioration of the traditional order indicated that the lowest point of the Cycle of Decline was near, and that therefore the upward development of the new World Age would approach. In this sense, precisely the fall of Burma's Buddhist kingdom tended to foreshadow a distant future when the world would be unified in peace within a perfect Buddhist society, anticipating the advent of the Future Buddha.[1] From this background arose a rich folklore of prophecies ("Thaik"). One Burmese category of these prophecies still interprets the hidden meaning of the past, present and future events, the waxing und waning of dynasties, the rise to power and the fall from power of kings, as leading to a glorious fulfillment of history through an ideal Buddhist Ruler before whom the power of the foreign conquerors and unbelievers would wane. And such prophecies in the form of folk beliefs played a considerable political role in the 20th century: [2] They contributed to rural Burma's receptivity for the struggle of the Burmese modernized elite for national independence and social renovation. While the political effects of these folk beliefs contributed to shaping the future, their content reflected a vision of an idealized lost past.

[1] Cf. A. K. Warder, "The Pâli Canon and its Commentaries as a historical record," in: C. H. Philips, *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 51.
[2] "Memoirs of a Retired Police Officer," in: *The Guardian* (Rangoon, Burma), VIII, No. 12 (December, 1961), p. 30.

CHAPTER II

BUDDHIST TRADITIONS ABOUT A PERFECT SOCIETY, ITS DECLINE AND THE ORIGIN OF THE STATE

In Buddhist perspective, history develops in cyclical sequence. To the beginning of the present World Age Buddhist tradition attributes a blissful state of perfect society before human beings had fallen into the Illusion of the Self and thereby lost their original perfection. This was thought to have caused the social imperfections that legislation was meant to remedy. And Burma's main codification of regulative and punitive law, the so-called Burmese Code "of Manu," came to be prefaced by a narrative about this primeval ideal social order and its loss through human delusion: "From then on, the people of the beginning World Age spoke thus, 'before that time we excelled by means of our state of mind. Joy excelled, before such things came to pass. The bodies shone as the firmament ... a tasty thin soil offered itself [for food]. The sweet creeper was eaten until it was exhausted. These foods disappeared because of [human] demerit.'" [1] The same development towards the loss of the initial blissful state of man are preceding the dynastic narratives of the Burmese chronicle: "From that time onward, the people of the beginning World Era thus complained [with] dissatisfaction: The [human] bodies had been shiny and sparkling ... Tasty had been the soil of the earth; shining had been the mud near the earth and the creepers that could be eaten ..., disappearing because of the demerit [of man, according to the] Dhamma." [2] Such descriptions of the loss of the idyllic state of society and of the world are apparently derived mainly from the DîghaNikâya, which of all the "Nikâya" scriptures of the Pâli Canon is the best known in Burma and the most studied.[3] According to this Theravâda

[1] Badda-kaba maha-kappa u: asa Mahathamma ta-min: le' -hte' nwa: caun: tha: Manu ama' si-yin yei: tha: tho, *Manu-ce Dhammathat* (Rangoon, 1903), p. 3.
[2] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, XII, p. 32.
[3] M. Bode, *Pâli literature of Burma*, p. 2.

Buddhist scripture, "then successively fine moss and sweet creepers and delicate rice appeared." [1] There was in that remote past ambrosia flowing on the earth. And fragrant mud from which subsequently grew a sweet creeper. Then rice emerged and grew without the necessity of plowing.[2] This rice grew without human labor. What was taken from it for food, was replacing itself without any labor within one day: [3]

> If this was cropped in the evening, by the morning it had sprouted, ripened and fully grown, without any signs of it having been cut. For a very long time, friends, we lived on this rice, which was without powder or husk, but was just fragrant grain, and it was the source of our appearance, nourishment, and sustenance. But when wrong ... [states of mind] came to be known among men, powder and husk began to envelop the ripened rice. Nor when cropped in the morning would it sprout, ripen, and fully grow by the evening, while the signs of its having been cut were clearly seen,

narrates the Mahâvastu-Avadâna.[4] Though the Mahâvastu is a Sanskrit Buddhist work, it shows in the relevant sections no deviation from the Theravâda Buddhist traditions characterizing Burma.

According to its Pâli Canon, that nourishing food plant vanished when some men came to despise those inferior to them in appearance. This inequality of appearance through the coarsening of bodies,[5] the origin of inequality according to Burma's Buddhist tradition, is also associated with the development of material want – which in turn was thought to have arisen from the instinct of appropriation: "It [the rice] was eaten at night, it was eaten in the morning. [But] *because* it was gathered and deposited in storage, stored up, it did not come afresh in places where it was harvested, and it was exhausted." [6] "What of it was reaped and taken away from the spot, did not come [to grow] anew [as it had originally]. As it came to be gathered and stored up, it became exhausted." [7] As beings begun to hoard more rice than they needed for their immediate wants, rice no longer replaced itself in the fields. Then man divided the rice fields among themselves and demarcated their individual portions.[8] "Then ... the lazy stored up the rice, instead of gathering it each evening und

[1] Rhys Davids (Editor), Dialogues of the Buddha, Part 1: *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. II (London, 1899), p. 106.
[2] *Dîgha Nikâya*, IV: *Myan-ma pyan-hsou hce' acin: jou'*, Paragraphs 121–122 (Rangoon, 1320/1958), pp. 82ff.
[3] Aggañña-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII), 16: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 85.
[4] *Mahâvastu*, I, 345–346: The Mahâvastu translated from the Buddhist Sanskrit by J. J. Jones, Vol I (*Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. XVI: London, 1949), p. 291.
[5] Aggañña-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII), 13; 15: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 83; 84.
[6] *Manu-ce Dhammathat*, p. 3.
[7] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, XII, p. 32.
[8] Aggañña-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII), 17, 18: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 86, 87.

morning. And rights of property arose and were infringed." [1] But, in that distant time, some indolent persons began one day, in order to eat by night, to take food for two days, building up a storage of it and attaching importance to it. Because they hid it, this [natural wealth] disappeared and vanished: [2] "What if we were now to divide the rice-fields and set boundaries to them? Let us allot this field to you and this to ourselves. And so ..., they set boundaries to the rice-fields, saying, 'This field is yours, this is ours.'" [3] "[Therefore] the rice paddy plants were demarcated [by sections]. And obtaining them became desirable. This was said [by man] before in consultation: a partition was put up [between the particular sections of rice plants] ... as being desirable." [4] Then this thought occurred to some being who had gone to gather rice: "What will become of me? How shall I get a living from my plot of rice fields? What if now I were to steal and take another's?" And so ... "while he was watching over his own plot of rice, he stole und took another's." [5]

From that time on extortion appeared, [initially through] only one man. He worried that his own portion could be exhausted and [therefore] took and stole a[nother] man's portion. On the first encounter, and [again] the second time, they reprimanded him and [merely] sent him away. [When he was] caught the third time, [they] beat, hit and shot [at] him. From that time [on], alas, man began the stealing of property, alas, the speaking of falsehoods, the administering of punishment. Alas, this happened.[6]

"Then followed striking, beating and shooting. From then on, alas, the stealing of man's property was started. Reviling, alas, pronouncing opinions of falsehood, alas, punishment, alas, all this became conspicuous." [7] Thus, as the paddy was set aside into individual portions, men began to take the rice away from others. Theft began, threats, lying and violence.[8] "Whoever of men were oppressed [hnyin: pan:], crushed and dropped, such men, alas, were in indigent circumstances. Those men have been called the Poor. As the World Age had begun in such a way, Rulers, Brahmans, Men of Abundance and the Rich [as

[1] Rhys Davids (Editor), Dialogues of the Buddha, Part 1: *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* (London, 1899), Vol. II, p. 106.
[2] *Dîgha Nikâya*: *Myan-ma pyan-hsou hce' acin: jou'*, Paragraphs 122f. (Rangoon, 1320/1958), pp. 83ff.
[3] *Mahâvastu*, I, 346: transl. Jones, Vol. I, p. 291.
[4] *Hman nan*: *Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, XII, p. 32.
[5] See fn. 3.
[6] See fn. 4.
[7] *Manu-ce Dhammathat*, p. 3.
[8] Aggañña Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII), 19: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 87.

well as] the Poor, these four classes [amyou:] became conspicuous. They that were well fated despised them that were ill fated." [1]

"Therefore, when that happened, the totality of the World Age's first man assembled for consultation. Thus, [they] did deliberate together: «Now depraved actions and matters are being accomplished,» [they said]. One man possessed with integrity and knowledge of the Precepts is to be named as ruler [asou: ya hein: min:]." [2] "Those beings selected a king who was the most kind-hearted and authoritative among them and said to him, 'Let Your Majesty reprove whosoever among us deserves reproof, and approve whosoever deserves approval. We select you to sovereignty over us.'" [3] "... [He was to be one] willing to censure, to put down and to command, [capable] to drive away, remove, commit and take away. [As compensation], of ten portions of our rice paddy, one portion [shall be] given [to him]. This was said." [4]

"The first men of the World's Age determined his name that way for the [following] reason: That the people in unanimity bestowed [authority upon him,[5] this is expressed in the] name. Therefore, man bestowed [upon him] the exalted name [of] the Great Unanimously Elected. Therefore, he was called Mahâthammada." [6] In the Ceylonese chronicle Mahâthammada became the first king.[7] In the Burmese chronicle he appears not only as the first but also as the best of rulers.

"When consulting together was accomplished, the appearance of one [endowed] with the requisite mark of the supreme Buddha [was noted]. The great, noble, exhalted, glorious one was entreated to [let himself] be invested with governmental authority, in order to enable the World's Age to be strengthened by the presence of our Future Buddha [a Bodhisattva], Gautama." [8] According to a tradition traced to Ceylon, he received existence by apparitional birth and became ancestor of the Sâkyan clan of the solar race: from him descended

[1] *Manu-ce Dhammathat*, p. 5; *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII, 13: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 83.
[2] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:, Pahtama-twe*, XII, p. 32.
[3] *Mahâvastu*, I, 347–348: transl. Jones, Vol. I, pp. 292f.
[4] See fn. 2.
[5] Aggañña Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII), 20–21: transl. Rhys. Davids, p. 88.
[6] *Manu-ce Dhammathat*, p. 4. The name of Mahâthammada (Mahâsammata) does not occur except in Buddhist sources. He is identical with "Manu Vaivasvata," which name was understood to be his surname: W. Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in medieval times* (Wiesbaden, 1960), pp. 112f.
[7] *Dîpavaṃsa*, III, 3: transl. Oldenberg, p. 129.
[8] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, XII, pp. 32, 33, 35.

Gautama Buddha.[1] Thus, Mahâthammada appears both as the Future Buddha and as the ancestor of Gautama Buddha – who, in an earlier existence as a Bodhisattva, was also elected by the people as their king,[2] in a way not unlike the election of Mahâthammada.

Descent from this first ruler of Buddhist historiography (and the Solar Race) was claimed already by the Ceylonese king Parakkamabâhu I (1153–1186 A.D.).[3] This Ceylonese tradition was adopted by Burma's dynastic historiography. Even the last royal line of Burma, the Konbaung Dynasty (1753–1885), claimed descent from Mahâthammada (through Okkâka Yaza),[4] for example, Burma's penultimate King Mindon (1853–1878).[5] Mahâthammada as prototype of the ideal of Buddhist royalty had been invoked in 1853 at the coronation of Mindon who himself among the recent kings of Burma came closest to the Buddhist ideal of kingship: "Oh, king do always act as [did] the good and righteous from Mahâthammada in the beginning of the world, onward . . . !" [6]

Such exhortations to rule justly, as formed part of the coronation ceremonies, have been called by Harvey "pious exhortations, not binding oaths." But even Harvey admits that, while the Burmese kings ascended the throne unconditionally, they were not regarded as a law unto themselves, they were "not absolute in the sense in which the tyrannos was absolute." Ideally the king was to conform to the Ten Princely Precepts. Almost every king strove to win the approval of the Buddhist monkhood: the Buddhist monastic community represented the public conscience. In practice, the monarch was bound

[1] *Mahâvaṃsa*, II, 1: transl. Geiger (1912), pp. xl, 10; Cf. R. Spence Hardy, *A manual of Buddhism in its modern development translated from the Singhalese* (London, 1853), pp. 125, 203.

[2] Telapatta-Jâtaka; Panchaguru-Jâtaka: E. B. Cowell (Editor), *The Jâtakas or stories of the Buddha's former Births*, translated from Pâli, Vol. I (Cambridge, 1895), pp. 236, 289: "When the kingdom had been offered to the Bodhisatta *by the people* and when he had accepted it . . ."

[3] Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II (London, 1928), pp. 268, 274.

[4] Cf. Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 96; Nânâbhivamsadhamma-Senâpati, "*Râjadhirâja Vilâsinî*," edit. and transl. by Maung Tin, "Manifestation of the King of Kings," in: *JBRS*, IV, No. 1 (1914), p. 17; U Tin, "Myanma Min: Okchak-pon Sadan, II, § 171, cited in Dr. Thaung "Burmese Kingship in Theory and practice during the reign of Mindon," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), pp. 175f.

[5] Yule, *A narrative of the mission*, p. 107.

[6] *Myan-ma maha min-gala min: hkan: to*, pp. 19–28, Burmese text from: Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court under the Konbaung Kings," in: *JBRS*, XLVII (1961), i, pp. 122f. A title referring to Mahâthammada, the Elect of *all* the people, was used by the kings of Thailand, even by the modernizers Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, and not dropped until the reign of Vajravudh (1910–1925): Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: The paternal monarchy of Bangkok, 1782–1932* (London, 1960), p. 271.

perhaps even more than by Buddhist values by immemorial customs. The historical Burmese kings did not issue commands that would claim the power of law; the state did not actually legislate (but practically commanded and ideally exhorted). The monarch ideally exercised political authority on behalf of the people in exchange for their support, nominally under "contractual obligations," – as attributed already to Anawrahta's coronation promise of 1044 [1] – while in village government political responsibility was collective and cooperative in the common interest.[2] Not from royal legislation but from unanimous custom were derived the regulations of the daily life of the people. These customs were administered by the village elders. "Nor did the king consider himself empowered to alter them." [3] Thus king Pye (1661–1672) had said in the face of calamity: "I had no desire [for kingship] when the chiefs, ministers, servicemen [and] soldiers said, [we], royal slaves have [otherwise] no proper protection, and again and again petitioned. Since it is said that against the monkhood's strength not [even] the Lord Buddha could go, I became king in accordance [with this]." [4]

Thus, until modern times, Buddhist society maintained an ideal of kingship that may be compared with the theory of government by social contract.[5] Early Buddhist texts (of the Theravâda, Sarvâstivâda and early Mahâyâna schools) contain almost juridical conceptions of kingship as a necessary societal institution established contractually because of imperfect human conditions. Therefore, from Buddhist texts could be derived claims that sovereignty originates and returns to the people, that "kingship is essentially a contractual agreement between the People and the Ruler in which the welfare of the country and its people is the sacred trust." Such a governmental contract theory for kingship has been called a Buddhist contribution to Indian political theory.[6] Yet there is no evidence that these contractual theories of government in the Mahâthammada tradition about the

[1] U Tin, "Mayanma Min: ou'hcou'poun sa-dan:, II, § 170, p. 271, cited by Dr. Thaung, "Burmese Kingship in theory and practice during the reign of Mindon," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), p. 176.

[2] Richard A. Gard, "*An introduction to the study of Buddhism and political authority in South and Southeast Asia*" (typescript for presentation at the "Religion and Politics in South and Southeast Asia" Panel, Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, April, 11–13, 1960), p. 5.

[3] G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 199, 329.

[4] *Hman nan: Maha Yaza win-to-gyi:*, Tati ya-twe (Mandalay, 1317/1955), p. 274.

[5] Dr. Thaung, "Burmese Kingship...." (See fn. 1), p. 177.

[6] R. Gard, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5, 19.

Great Elect did shape the actual historical republican institutions of Indian states in the early Buddhist period.[1] On the model of these early Indian republics have been patterned the canonical elective institutions of the Buddhist monastic Order.

[1] As implied in Romila Thapur, *Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford, 1961), p. 147.

CHAPTER III

REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS IN PRE-BUDDHIST INDIA AND IN THE BUDDHIST ORDER

Elective institutions have been read into sources going back to India's later Vedic period (the early first milennium B.C.): The Aitareya Brâhmaṇa mentions "Vairâjya" rulers in northern and Svarâṭ rulers in western India, the former a system of self-government or self-rule where the plurality of people were annointed.[1] This passage has been repeatedly interpreted in the sense of Vairâjya states being kingless, so that not one individual but a large group, if not the whole people, were consecrated to sovereignty.[2] Svarâṭ has been interpreted to mean a ruler elected among equals through an election based upon merit, a kind of president within a self-government (Svârâjya) system.[3] The existence of republican along with monarchical states, in the "Middle Country" of ancient India, is indicated in a hardly less controversial passage in the Avadâna Sataka: "... In the countries of some of us there are kings, but in others there is Gaṇa government." [4] "Gaṇa" states have been interpreted as aristocratic, though the Mahâbhârata mentions – possibly referring to them – "persons that are equal to one another in family and blood ..." [5] The Lichchavi Gaṇa state (known from early Buddhist literature) had an assembly of 7707 members and a Council of nine.[6] As there are indications that in some of the republics of ancient India both the military and the trading classes

[1] *Aitareya Brâhmaṇa*, VIII, 14: Arthur B. Keith (Translator), *The Aitareya and Kausitaki Brahmanas of the Rig veda* (Harvard Oriental Series, XXV: Cambridge, USA, 1920), p. 330.
[2] As against Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 331, fn. 2: A. S. Altekar, *State and Government in ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), p. 117; K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity. A constitutional history of India in Hindu times* (Bangalore, 1943), p. 89.
[3] Jayaswal, pp. 8of.
[4] *Avadâna Śataka*, II, 88; cited by Altekar, p. 109 and R. Ch. Majumdar, *Corporate life in ancient India* (Calcutta, 1922), p. 223.
[5] *Mahâbhârata-Canti Parva*, CVII: *The Mahabharata translated into English prose* by Pratapa Chandra Ray – *Canti Parva* (Calcutta, 1890), p. 348.
[6] Altekar, p. 132.

shared political power,[1] it has been concluded that the governing class of Gaṇa states was fairly large. It has been compared to that of the republics of classical Greek and Roman antiquity, even if the franchise was hardly as universal as that of modern mass democracy, just as the old Hindu republics, though often larger than the ancient Mediterranean ones, were smaller than modern West European democracies.[2] It was not so much the vote of the majority as the concord and the unanimity carried by the prestige of the elders that Gautama Buddha considered essential for the stability of communal self-government.[3] Likewise in the stories about Buddha's former births is mentioned how the people elected a chief on the basis of unanimity:

> ... When the people came, ... they took council together, as follows: "the man that could master his senses ... is a noble man, filled with wisdom. With such one as King, it would be well for the whole kingdom. Let us make him our king." And all the courtiers and *all the citizens of the kingdom* were one-minded in the matter. So the Bodhisattva, being chosen king, was escorted into the capital ... and annointed king of Tokkasila.[4]

The self-government of Buddha's own people, the Sâkyas of nothern India, has been reconstructed as follows:

> The administrative and judicial business of the clan was carried out in public assembly at which young and old were alike present, in the common mote-hall (Santhâgara) at Kapilavastu .... A single chief – how, and for what period, chosen, we do not know – was elected as office holder, presiding over a session and if no sessions were sitting over the state. He bore the title of râja which must have meant something like the Roman Consul or the Greek Archon .... But we hear at one time that Bhaddiya, a young cousin of Buddha, was râja.... Suddhodana, the Buddha's father [who is elsewhere spoken of as a simple citizen], is called râja [of the Sâkyas].[5]

This would suggest a monarchy. On the other hand, each member of the Kshatriya, aristocracy of these eastern states, may have been "entitled to call himself râja, and Bhaddiya may have been a râja in that restricted sense of the term." [6] Buddha's father may have been the "president" of the Sâkya states with the title râja. Their council seems to have been composed of 500 members.[7] Some small towns and villages in the Sâkya states had their own assembly in which

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Altekar, p. 115; Jayaswal, p. 174.
[3] *Mahâ-Parinibbâna-Sutta*, I, 4 = Buddhist Suttas translated from the Pâli by Rhys Davids, in: M. Müller (Editor), *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XI (Oxford, 1881), pp. 3f.
[4] *Telapatta-Jâtaka*, Verse 399: Cowell, *Jâtaka*, Vol. I (1957), p. 236.
[5] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (London, 1917), p. 19.
[6] Altekar, p. 122.
[7] Jayaswal, p. 46.

probably the non-privileged classes had an equal voice in local affairs.[1]

To a general vote the Sâkyas resorted, according to a Northern Buddhist source, in an emergency, when their capital was besieged: "... The Sâkyas said 'Let us all assemble and deliberate whether we should open the gate.' When they had assembled, some said, 'Open them,' others advised not doing so. Some said 'As there are various opinions, we'll find out the opinion of the majority.' So they set about voting on the subject." [2] The Sâkyas lost their independence already during the lifetime of the Buddha. But likewise during his lifetime flourished not only the above mentioned Lichchavis but also the Mallas and Videhas as republican states.[3] The Videhas and the Lichchavis united into a league known as the Samvajjis (or Vajjian Confederates).[4] Their league was formed to oppose the rising adjacent empire of Magadha whose ruler's only chance to overcome the Vajjians was said to be rivalry among themselves: It was perhaps because "the party system was so common among the republics, that it is referred to even by the grammarians. The term Dvandva was used to denote the rival parties and the term Vyutkramaṇa their rivalries." [5] But such party rivalries do not seem to be mentioned among the village assemblies (sabha or samiti), to which apparently all villagers had access to transact their common affairs. Thus, an early Buddhist source mentions that "in that village there were just thirty families, and one day, the men were standing in the middle of the village transacting the affairs of the village ..." [6]

As a general rule the great field was divided into plots corresponding in number to that of the heads of houses in the villages; and each family took the produce of its share. But there was no such proprietary right, as against the community, as we are accustomed in England. We hear of no instance of the shareholder selling or mortgaging his share of the village field to an outsider; and it was impossible for him to do so, at least without the consent of the village council ... Neither had any individual the right of bequest, even to the extent of deciding the shares of his own family.[7] No individual could acquire either by purchase or inheritance, any exclusive right in any portion of the common grassland or woodland.[8] It will be seen, however, that the mass of the people, the villagers,

[1] Altekar, p. 124.
[2] *Dulva*, V, fol. 150: *The life of the Buddha and the early history of his order. Derived from Tibetan works in the Bkah-Hgyur and Bstan-Hgyur* translated by W. Woodville Rockhill (London, 1907), p. 119.
[3] Altekar, p. 122.
[4] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 22.
[5] *Pâṇini*, VIII, 1.15, cited by Altekar, p. 130.
[6] *Kulâvaka-Jâtaka*: Cowell, *Jâtaka*, Vol. I (1895), p. 77.
[7] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 46f.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

occupied a social grade quite different from, and far above, our village folk. They held in degradation, to which only dire misfortune would drive them, to work for hire.[1] Of want, as known in our great cities, there is no evidence. It is put down as the direst misfortune known that a free man had to work for hire.[2] The economic conditions in such villages were simple. None of the householders could have been what would now be called rich. On the other hand, there was a sufficiency for the simple needs, there was security, there was independence. There were no landlords and no paupers ....[3] And it is no more accurate to speak of caste at the Buddha's time in India than it would be to speak of it as an established institution, at the same time, in Italy or Greece .... The caste system, in any proper or exact use of the term, did not exist here until afterwards ...[4] How otherwise can we explain the fact, ... of the most complete and unquestioned freedom, both of thought and expression, which the world has yet witnessed?[5]

A freedom of thought "probably unequalled in the history of the world" is attributed by Rhys Davids to India on the eve of the rise of Buddhism.[6] For the India of two centuries later, a Greek historian of Alexander the Great's invasion of India (327–324 B.C.) makes a similar claim: "This also is remarkable in India, that all Indians are free, and no Indian at all is a slave .... The Indians have no slaves at all, much less is any Indian a slave."[7] A fragment from a famous Hellenistic description of India [by Magasthenes] claims that "... most of the cities adopted the democratic form of government, though some retained the kingly until the invasion of the country by Alexander."[8] Arrian also distinguishes between India governed by kings and "autonomous" India.[9] According to Diodorus, the "Sambastai" people [identified with the Ambastha of the Sanskrit Mahâbharata Epic] "dwelled in cities in which the democratic form of government prevailed."[10] The Roman geographer Strabo wrote in the third century B.C. that the "Kathaians" of northwestern India [in the area of present day Lahore and Amritsar] did elect their king.[11]

The republican Lichchavis survived the Maurya Empire (321–184

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 257f.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 247.
[7] Arrian, VIII, *Indika*, 10, viii–ix: *Arrian with an English translation* by E. Iliff Robson, Vol. II (London, 1933), p. 335.
[8] *Diodorus*, II, 39: J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, being a translation of the fragments of the Indika of Megasthenes* (London, 1877), p. 40.
[9] Arrian, VIII, *Indika*, 10,v: transl. E. Iliff Robson, *op. cit.*, p. 340 (341).
[10] *Diodorus*, CII: Diodor's von Sicilien, *Historische Bibliothek*, übersetzt von Julius Friedrich Wurm, XIII. Bändchen (Stuttgart, 1838), p. 1700 (sic.).
[11] Elected in accordance with... his looks: *Strabo*, XV, i, 30: *The Geography of Strabo*, literally translated by C. Hamilton and W. Falconer, Vol. III (London, 1906), p. 193.

B.C.?) which had for the first time united India. Thus they outlived their ancient republican contemporaries, and by the fourth century A.D. seemed to have remained the sole India republic. It was through a marriage alliance with the Lichchavis that the Gupta Dynasty (320–535 A.D.) rose to reunite northern India.[1] By the end of the fifth century republics disappeared from Hindu India, though a branch of the Lichchavis allegedly migrated to Nepal after a political existence of at least a thousand years.

But long after the small republican state communities of ancient India succumbed, their principles of government were preserved in the Buddhist monastic community and through it transmitted to other parts of Asia. Thus, historically speaking, the Buddhist "copy has long outlived its secular models": In founding his monastic community [Samgha] "the Buddha adopted the name as well as the constitutional form of the political Samgha of the Sâkya and adjoining republics .... Although the Buddha renounced a possible future government position, he remained throughout his life an adviser to neighboring states and ... founded his monastic organization upon existing political practices." [2] The Buddhist samgha was copied from the political samgha [of the Indian republics]. The procedure was secular first and became Buddhistic afterwards.[3] The canonic rules of organization of the Buddhist monastic order "give a very nice system of a democracy which did not certainly come by accident, but, as a matter of policy, being already in vogue in the confederacies of the Sâkyas, ... the Mallas, the Vajjis from which were largely drawn the members of the Bhikkhu [monastic] samgha in the lifetime of the Buddha." [4] "The Buddha was born in a republican people ... and mostly lived amongst republican communities; he was perfectly familiar with their working system and adapted it to the benefit of his own [monastic] Order." [5] As the terms for what amounts to rules of quorum, ballot voting, procedures of majority, and the referendum, have been mentioned by Buddha without definition, it has been concluded from this that such institutions were taken for granted in his time.[6] Unfortunately, the precise working system of the Indian

[1] L. de la Vallée-Poussin, *Dynasties et Histoire de l'Inde depuis Kanishka jusqu'aux invasions musulmans* (Paris, 1935), pp. 33–34.

[2] R. Gard, *Buddhist influences on the political thought and institutions of India and Japan* [Society for Oriental Studies: Claremont, California, *Phoenix Papers*, No. 1 (Claremont, 1949)], pp. 2,4.

[3] D. Gokuldas, *Democracy in early Buddhist Saṃgha* (Calcutta, 1955), p. ix.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Jayaswal, pp. 42, 101.

[6] Jayaswal, p. 100.

republics is not directly described in the extant Indian sources. "We can get, however, some idea of the matter if we assume, as is very probable, that the rules of procedure and debate in the meetings of the Buddhist samgha were modeled on those of the assemblies of the Gaṇa or Samgha [republican states]." [1] This is confirmed by the description of exemplary observances of the institutions of the Vajjian Confederation serving as introduction to an exhortation for exemplary observances of the monastic order in a speech of Buddha in the Pâli Canon:

> So long ... as the Vajjians meet together in concord and rise in concord – so long as they enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has not been already enacted, and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the Vajjians – so long ... may the Vajjians be expected not to decline but to prosper ... So long as the Bhikkhus [Buddhist monks] meet together in full and frequent assemblies, so long as they meet together in concord and rise in concord, ... so long as the Bhikkhus shall establish nothing that has not been already prescribed and abrogate nothing that has been already established ...[2]

But, beyond this statement of Buddha about the desirability of full and frequent public assemblies, the organization of political authority was not textually expounded further in the Buddhist scriptures.[3]

On the occasion of the fortnightly *uposatha* ceremony, samgha affairs were settled initially by the joint unanimous vote of all monks and towards the later part of the life of the Buddha by majority vote.[4] The Buddhist canonic rules of monastic organization (Vinaya) contain rules regarding the form of moving resolutions in the monastic assembly and the necessity of the quorum. They would rather stop the *uposatha* ceremony altogether than hold it with an incomplete congregation.[5] Resolutions had to be formally put before the samgha up to three times. They were automatically passed (by unanimity) if the members present kept silent. If anyone spoke out against it, this meant differences of opinion and the decision of the majority then prevailed: "I allow you, Oh Bhikkhus [monks], to settle such disputes by the vote of the majority," said Gautama Buddha. For this purpose a monk "shall be appointed as taker of the voting tickets ..., one who doesn't walk in fear ..." "And how, Oh Bhikkhus, is the secret method of

[1] Altekar, p. 131.
[2] *Mahâ-Parinibbâna-Sutta*, I, 4; I, 6: Buddhist Suttas translated from Pâli by Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI, pp. 3f., 6.
[3] R. Gard, *Introduction to Buddhism and political authority*, p. 5.
[4] Gokuldas, *op. cit.*, pp. xvii, 56.
[5] *Mahâvagga*, II, xiv, 3; *Chullavagga*, IV, xiv, 16: Vinaya Texts translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids & Hermann Oldenberg, in: *SBE*, Vol. XIII (1881), p. 259; Vol. XX (1885) p. 46.

taking votes? ... The teller of the votes is to make the voting tickets of different color, and as each Bhikkhu comes up to him he is to say to him thus: 'This is the ticket for the man of certain opinion; this is the ticket for the man of such an opinion. Take whichever you like.' When he had chosen [the teller is to add], 'Don't show it to anybody ...'" These are words attributed to the Buddha. "By that Bhikkhu, the taker of voting tickets, are the votes to be collected. And accordingly as the majority number of the Bhikkhus who are guided by the Dhamma [Moral Law] shall speak, so shall the case be decided ... That is what is meant herein by the vote of the majority." [1] If a matter was exceedingly complicated and the discussion deviated from the point, the question could be referred to a smaller committee. If that committee were unable to reach a decision, it would hand the matter back to the samgha assembly to be settled by the majority vote.[2] Unanimous consensus or majority vote of the samgha assembly also settled the course of action to be taken on monks who violated its regulations. Resolutions were moved and procedure decided usually by the eldest monk – if he was ignorant, by the most learned and competent one.[3] Until he was found incompetent and replaced, the chief thera (elder) – elected by the monastic assembly would preside. But all who reached the status of monk (Bhikkhu) were equally entitled to participate and vote.[4] In this sense the monastic regulations of the canonic Vinaya made the seating "hierarchy" within the Samgha dependent upon the length of service only. Thus, King Bâlâditya of the Indian Gupta Dynasty is reported to have been dissatisfied with his low position within the monastic community as he was a new member. But no exceptions could be made in his favor, even though he was a king.[5]

And such Buddhist values of the monastic Vinaya code have remained not without bearing on lay life of Burma, there being a Vinaya

[1] *Chullavagga*, IV, ix, 5; IV, xiv, 24, 26, in: *SBE*, Vol. XX, pp. 25, 54, 56.

[2] *Chullavagga*, IV, xiv, 19, 24; XII, ii, 7, in: *SBE*, Vol. XX, pp. 49, 53, 407. Though majority vote in general decided the dispute, the binding force of this majority principle was not recognized in all cases: "There are ten cases, o Bhikkhus, in which the taking of votes is invalid....When the taker of votes knows that those whose opinions are not in accordance with the Law will be in the majority..., when... voting may result in a schism in the Samgha....and when they do not vote in accordance with the view [which they really hold]": *Chullavagga*, IV, 10, in: *SBE*, Vol. XX, pp. 26f. The texts do not explain at all how the matter was to be decided if the majority decision were rejected. Such casuistry deviating from the generally democratic principles prevalent in the Vinaya has yet to be satisfactorily explained.

[3] *Mahâvagga*, II, xvii, 2, in: *SBE*, Vol. XIII, p. 267.

[4] Gokuldas, *op. cit.*, pp. xv, xvii.

[5] H. Nakamura, *The ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Tokyo, 1960), p. 99.

element in the Burmese law codes.[1] Among them, the most famous, the 18th century Burmese Code "of Manu" is largely devoid of the hierarchical inequality before the law that characterizes its wider known Brahmanic namesake.

Caste did not affect Buddhist Burma as it affected Buddhist Ceylon. And Burmese Buddhism even stimulated a "reformation" attempt within Ceylon that was to make ordination again accessible to all classes (1802: the "Amarapura Sect"). "It was a mighty achievement that was accomplished by Gautama, when in India where the fetters of caste are riveted with the greatest strength, he successfully instituted an order that sets its restraints at open defiance, and joined the Raja, the Sudra and the outcaste, in one common brotherhood." [2] In a famous explanation of the origin of the social differences (cf. p. 12f.) Gautama Buddha refused to agree that the Brahmans are a superior class: "Adhered to for a long time are the views of the ignorant, the ignorant tell us, one is a Brâhmaṇa by birth. Not by birth is one a Brâhmaṇa, nor is one by birth no Brâhmaṇa; by work [kammanâ] one is a Brâhmaṇa, by work one is no Brâhmaṇa." [3] "I do not call a man Brâhmaṇa because of his origin or of his mother. He is indeed arrogant and he is wealthy: But the poor, who is free from all attachments, him I call a Brâhmaṇa." [4] "Not by birth does one become an outcaste, ... by deeds one becomes an outcaste, by deeds one becomes a Brâhmaṇa."

Whosoever, after cutting the bonds, does not tremble, has shaken off (all) ties and is liberated, him I call a Brâhmaṇa .... Whosoever, being innocent, endures reproach, blows and bonds, the man who is strong in (his) endurance ..., him I call a Brâhmaṇa. The man who is free from anger, endowed with (holy) works, virtues, without desires, subdued and wearing the last body, him I call a Brâhmaṇa. Whosoever, after refraining from hurting creatures, those that tremble and those that are strong, does not kill or cause to be killed, him I call a Brâhmaṇa. The man who is not hostile amongst the hostile, who is peaceful amongst the violent, not seizing (upon anything) amongst those that seize (upon everything), him I call a Brâhmaṇa.

"The man who has no desires for this world or the next, who is desireless and liberated, him I call a Brâhmaṇa." "And I do not call a Brâhmaṇa on account of his birth or of his origin ..., the one who is

[1] M. Bode, *Pâli literature of Burma*, p. 60.
[2] R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism: An account of the order of mendicants founded by Gotama Budha* (London, 1850), pp. 329, 375.
[3] *Sutta Nipâta* (verses 649f; 654), III, ix, 56f, 61, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, ii (1881), pp. 116f.
[4] *Dhammapada*, 396, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, p. 91; Aggañña Sutta, *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII, 4; 27f, 30f: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 78f., 92f.

possessed of nothing and seizes upon nothing, him I call a Brâhmaṇa." "Whosoever in this world harms living beings, whether once or twice born, and in whom there is no compassion for living beings, let one know him as an outcaste." "Difference there is in beings endowed with bodies, but amongst men this is not the case, the difference amongst men is nominal [only]." [1] The only priority that seemed relevant to Buddha was that of achieving enlightenment, enlightenment by cognition and thereby liberation from the shackles of attachment, release from the burden of Impermanence, a priority achievable by beings from all castes. He emphasized that people from all castes suffer for wrong notions and wrong actions through the laws of causality. For right notions and right actions men of all castes enjoy the same results because the same laws of Causality apply to all. For him all castes could achieve extinction in this present life.[2]

Within the institutionalized Nirvana pursuit of the Buddhist monastic community, canonical regulations obstructed economic inequality: If monks received gold or silver, it was to be used in common by their Samgha community. Even when things were allowed to a monk for his personal use, it was still considered as property of the entire Samgha. And samgha property, according to Gautama Buddha, was not to be transferred to individuals. This community of property applied jointly to *all* monasteries in common.[3] Such traditions contributed to the ideal of universalism within the Buddhist monastic corporation that transcended ethnic or geographic particularities and contrasts.[4]

> ... And the monasteries not being the personal property of the Bhikkhus [monks], the minority had to yield to the opinion of the majority .... This democracy was shortlived, for by the time of the Second Council [in the 4th century B.C.] ... in its place there arose the Ubbâhika Rules or control of the Samgha by a selected few, chosen from a vast number of Bhikkhus who [by virtue of their vast and expanding numbers] became uncontrollable. The last stage which became more or less a permanent feature of Samgha government was the case during the 3rd century B.C. at the time of Emperor Ashoka whose order was binding on the Samgha or on the chief Thera [elder] ...[5]

[1] *Sutta Nipâta* (verses 135; 141), I, vii (Valasutta of the Uravagga), 21; 27; (verses 621, 623f, 629f, 634), III, ix (Vâsetthasutta of the Mahâvagga), 28, 30f, 36f, 41; (verse 620), III, ix, 27; I, vii (Vasalasutta), 2; (verse 611), III, ix (Vâsetthasutta of the Mahâvagga), 18, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, ii, pp. 23, 113f, 21, 112.

[2] See p. 24, fn. 4.

[3] *Chullavagga*, VI, xv, 2, in: *SBE*, Vol. XX, pp. 210f.; *Nissaggiyâ Pâkittiya Dhammâ*, 18–19, 22, in: *SBE*, Vol. XIII, pp. 18 (fn. 1), 26, 27; Maung Maung, *Law*, p. 126

[4] R. Ch. Majumdar, *Corporate life in ancient India* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 320f.

[5] Gokuldas, *Democracy in the early Buddhist Saṃgha*, p. xix.

CHAPTER IV

THE BUDDHIST WELFARE STATE OF ASHOKA

Ashoka's dynasty, the Mauryas, rose to power as a result of the collapse of the Persian Empire's dominion in northwestern India after the invasion of Alexander the Great. Thus, Ashoka inherited the Mesopotamian imperial idea applied by the old Persian Achaemenid Dynasty under Cyrus and realized under Darius, who had united the "East" from the Indus River to the Libyan Desert. Like Darius, Ashoka proclaimed his deeds to Posterity in rock inscriptions. But whereas Darius' famous rock inscription towers almost beyond the sight of the human eye in solitary heights, Ashoka's inscriptions were set up at frequented thoroughfares and addressed not only Posterity but even more the people he ruled. Darius proudly enumerates the rebellions he crushed and the provinces he ruled; Ashoka mentions not so much that under him India was unified for the first time as that he desired to assist in the salvation of his subjects through the Moral Law (Dhamma): "To govern according to Dhamma, to administer according to Dhamma, ... to protect according to the Dhamma." [1] The term Dhamma has been translated as what has been made intelligible by Buddha to be the law of the world's immanent order, uncreated but eternal. Dhamma thus means the universal causality of rational and at the same time moral norm.[2] (It was by charming others through Dhamma that Mahâthammada, the legendary first ruler – cf. p. 13f. – was called King.[3]) The universality of the Dhamma concept underlying Ashoka's imperial ideology permitted to accomodate within it the essence of all local beliefs and practices of the India of that time. Thus, the imperial unity of India realized by

[1] Pillar Edict I: Jules Bloch, *Les inscriptions d'Asoka* (Collection Émile Senart, Vol. VIII) (Paris, 1950), pp. 161a, 161b: "dhaṃmena sukhiyanâ dhaṃmena getti ti".
[2] R. C. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pâli Language* (London, 1875), p. 85.
[3] Agañña-Sutta, *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII, 21: transl. R. O. Franke, *Dîghânikaya, das Buch der langen Texte des buddhistischen Kanons* (Göttingen, 1913), p. 281.

Ashoka reflects (and is reflected in) the moral universality of the Dhamma as ethical, natural and rational norm of his inscriptions.[1] Accordingly, the basic Dhamma state idea of Ashoka's epigraphical proclamations expressed more the common denominator of the empire he unified, the India characterized by Brahmanic, Buddhist, and Jain co-existence, than exclusively Buddhist teachings: [2] "The king, the friend of the gods, ... honors all sects ... by liberality as well as by various honors .... Doing so enhances one's own sect while at the same time it serves the other ones. Acting differently would harm one's own sect and at the same time desert the others." [3]

Ashoka's inscriptions do not mention Nirvana, the goal of Buddhist philosophy and hardly mention Buddhism as such. The only inscription containing purely Buddhist concepts (Buddha, the Law and his monastic community) is also the only one in which he calls himself friend of the gods *and* King of Magadha.[4] It confirms the Buddhist ideal of his welfare state. This definition as a welfare state is justified by the welfare character of the public works Ashoka mentions. Their Buddhist motivation becomes clear from their professed goal, the growth of Dhamma Morality: "... The Beloved of the Gods, saith thus: ... in times past kings had wished that men should grow with befitting growth of Dhamma but men did not grow with befitting growth of Dhamma .... How may I uplift some among them with a growth of Dhamma .... Proclamations of Dhamma will I proclaim. Instructions in Dhamma will I instruct ..." [5] Such contemplation about Dhamma was probably not new. New and going far beyond the existing religions of that time – and Ashoka's original contribution to the history of the Buddhist oriented states – were welfare measures of the government as means to permit men to rise within the causality law of Dhamma towards the overcoming of their suffering, the aim of Buddhism: "On the roads have I planted banyan trees. They will offer shade to man and beast. I have grown mango-orchards. I have caused wells to be dug, ...; and I have had rest houses [built]. I have made waiting sheds at different places .... Mankind has been blessed with as many such blessings by the previous kings as by me. *But I*

[1] Paul Mus, "Barabudur. Les origines du Stupa et la transmigration: Essai d'archéologie religieuse comparée," in: *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, XXXIII (1933), pp. 650, 798.
[2] Radhakamud Mookerji, *Asoka* (London, 1928), pp. 68ff.
[3] Ashoka's 12th Rock Edict: Bloch, pp. 121f.
[4] "Priyadassi lâjâ magadhe" (Bhabra Inscription of Ashoka): Bloch, p. 154.
[5] Pillar Edict VII: D. R. Bhandarkar, *Asoka* (Calcutta, 1925, p. 318.

have done this with the intent that man may practise practices of Dhamma." [1] This can only mean that these welfare benefits were meant by Ashoka to make it easier for his subjects to observe the Moral Law – if not to provide them with leisure opportunities for meditation towards the pursuit of Nirvana ...

Yet, a realization that the state can contribute but a limited sphere towards the liberation of man from suffering may be behind the following regretful words of Ashoka: "I am never satisfied with [my] exertions or with [my] dispatch of business. For the welfare of the whole world is an esteemed duty with me. And the root of that, again, is this, namely exertion and dispatch of business ... There is no higher duty than the welfare of the whole world. And what little effort I make is from debt to all beings. I work for their happiness in this life, that in the next world they may gain heaven." [2] Any gain in the next world, by the law of Causality, was inseparable from Dhamma Morality which was to be facilitated by social well-being. Therefore, special Dhamma Officers (Dhamma-Mahâmattas) were appointed by Ashoka to implement the policy of social welfare, "including broad aspects of economic, social and political life. They were to give their attention to the welfare of prisoners, releasing those with children, the afflicted or aged ones ... Everywhere, throughout the empire of Ashoka, the Dhamma Officers were engaged in the administration of charities, setting up the Dhamma throughout society, working among the poor and aged." [3] Kindness to the Poor and Weak, to the slaves and servants was spreading, proclaimed Ashoka, and wanted it to extend further.[4] To own (and keep) only a minimum of property was part of the social ethics proclaimed by this king, obviously under the influence of Buddhist ideals (cf. p. 40): "meritorious is small expense at small accumulation." [5] To reduce one's unrighteousness "is a goal difficult to accomplish whether by the lower or the higher classes of officials, except by renouncing everything," says an edict of Ashoka – and adds: "But it is more difficult for the higher [classes]." [6]

From the Buddhist ethics of renunciation, to overcome Attachment tied with suffering, this Buddhist statesman derived a politically

[1] Pillar Edict VII: Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, pp. 318–319.
[2] Next World: savralokahitena- Pillar Edict VI: *Ibid.*, pp. 289f.; Bloch, pp. 108f.; Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford, 1961), p. 253.
[3] Ashoka's 5th Rock Edict: R. Thapar, *op. cit.*, pp. 157, 252.
[4] Pillar Edict VII: Bloch, p. 171.
[5] Ashoka's 3rd Rock Edict: R. Thapar, *op. cit.*, p. 251; Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 278.
[6] Ashoka's 10th Rock Edict: Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 297. "Unrighteousness" is Bhandarkar's translation of "parisrava." Cf. Bloch, pp. 117ff., fn. 8.

constructive compromise, thereby sublimating society through the Dhamma idea. However, the Dhamma duties and pieties, as proclaimed by Ashoka, do not mention duties of man to the authority of the State, only the obligation this emperor felt toward his subjects, toward all man and indeed all beings.[1] "Thus said the king ..., Beloved of the Gods .... The gift of sight have I given in manifold ways; and various favors to bipeds and quadrupeds, to birds and aquatic animals, even up to the boon of life. And much other good have I done. For this purpose I have caused this Dhamma inscription to be engraved, that they may follow [me] ..." [2] In the pursuit of Dhamma that the royal inscriptions were to serve, Ashoka proclaimed to have established medical assistance for man and beast. Where medical plants of use to humans and animals were lacking, he provided them. Where fruit trees were lacking, he had them planted. Along the roads, trees were planted to give comfort (from the heat) to man and beast. Ashoka prided himself to have rest houses built, water tanks dug for the weary travelers on roads, watering places for the benefit of man and animals.[3] In a public edict Ashoka explained: "... The advancement of Dhamma amongst men has been achieved through two means, legislation and persuasion. But of these two legislation has been less effective and persuasion more so. I have proclaimed through legislation, for instance, that certain species of animals are not to be killed. But men have increased their adherence to Dhamma by being persuaded not to injure living beings and not to take life." [4] "Ashoka's ideal is considered not simply the brotherhood of man, that is to say the brotherhood of the human beings, but rather of the living beings. It is the whole animate world with which he feels he is connected." [5]

Through Ashoka the ethical and social tradition of public welfare services was established in India earlier than anywhere in the world, a long time before Christianity engaged in social service. [6] "It may be doubted whether any equally efficient [welfare state] foundation was to be seen elsewhere in the world at that date; and its existence, anticipating the deeds of modern Christian charities, speaks well both for the character of the citizens who endowed it and for the genius of the great Ashoka ..." [7]

[1] F. Kern, *Asoka, Kaiser und Missionar* (Bern, 1955), pp. 74, 89.
[2] Pillar Edict II: Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 307; Bloch, p. 162.
[3] Ashoka's 2nd Rock Edict and Pillar Edict VII: Bloch, pp. 94f., 170.
[4] Pillar Edict VII: R. Thapar, *op. cit.*, p. 266.
[5] Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, pp. 220f.
[6] H. Namakura, *The ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Tokyo, 1960), p. 83.
[7] Vincent Smith, *Early History of India* (Oxford, 1914), p. 296.

At the time when Rome began its life and death struggle against Carthage for the domination of the early "Western World," Buddhist India's Ashoka, at the height of his empire, publicly repented the bloodshed that had gone into conquering it – and renounced the use of force in one of the unforgettable records of the human race:

> Kaliṅga was conquered ... 150,000 were therefrom captured, 100,000 were slain, and many times as many died .... That is the remorse of the Beloved of the Gods [Ashoka]. Even one hundredth or one thousandth part of those who were slain, died or were captured in Kaliṅga, is today causing regret to the Beloved of the Gods [Ashoka]. Nay, if anyone does [him] wrong, the Beloved of the Gods must bear all that can be borne. And ... the Beloved of the Gods desires for all beings not injury ... and the conquest that the Beloved of the Gods considers to be the foremost conquest of all is the conquest through Dhamma [Dhamma Vijaya]. And that conquest through Dhamma [the force of the Moral Law] has been achieved by the Beloved of the Gods here and in the border dominions, even as far as ... where dwells the Greek King called Antiochus and beyond this Antiochus to where dwell the four kings, Ptolomy, Antigones, Magus, and Alexander, likewise down below, where are the [south Indian] Cholas, the Pâṇḍiyas .... And the conquest which is thereby achieved [through the Dhamma force of the Moral Law] is a conquest flavored with Love .... And this edict has been recorded in order that my sons and grandsons, whoever they may be, may not think of new conquests as worth achieving, that in regard to the conquest which is possible only through arrows they may observe forebearance ... May they regard that to be the real conquest which is a conquest through Dhamma. That is good for this world and the next ...[1]

Out of his remorse for the bloodshed that had brought about his previous conquests, Ashoka resolved to engage in further conquest not by the force of arrows but only through the power of Buddhist ethics. In the pursuit of this "conquest by Dhamma," he had sent the Buddhist message to the Hellenistic third century kings of Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia, and Epirus.

The response or reaction that Ashoka's universal message found in the Hellenistic Mediterranean world – one century after Alexander's dream of uniting the East and West – has not been recorded. What this might have been, Ashoka recorded in another edict: "If my independent neighbors ask what indeed is my desire towards the neighbors ..., the reply is: they should understand that the Beloved of the Gods desires that they should be unperturbed towards me, they should trust me, [and that] they would receive from me happiness, not misery ... They should follow Dhamma for my sake in order that

[1] Ashoka's 13th Rock Edict: Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, pp. 300–303. Bhandarkar's translation slightly modified on the basis of Bloch, pp. 125–132.

they might gain this world and the next ..." [1] Ashoka calls in that edict *all* people his offspring, just as for his offspring he desires welfare and happiness in this world and in the next, he also desires the same for *all* men.[2] This universalistic ideal of human unity is also expressed by the designation of Ashoka's empire as Jambudvîpa,[3] a term denoting India but meaning in other contexts the earth of man as a whole (cf. p. 91). That both these meanings of the term are thereby implied, this is shown by the old Ceylonese Chronicle which calls Ashoka "universal monarch of [Jambu Dîpa] ...,[4] the ruler of the earth," [5] not to mention the Ashoka Legend that makes him, the Lord over Jambudvîpa ..., "extend his sovereignty over the whole universe." [6] But this identification of India's universalistic empire with the human world implied in the Buddhist tradition not a consciousness of racial or national superiority.[7] It referred rather to the ideal of Dhamma-râja, the monarch championing the universalistic cosmic Moral Law of the Dhamma which through his power would find its realization in society. This political realization of the Buddhist Dhamma came to be associated with the unification of the universe under a perfect Buddhist king of the future, the Turner of the Wheel of the Law (Cakkavattî p. 87), an ideal possibly foreshadowed in the edicts of Ashoka.[8] The vision of the ideal Buddhist Cakkavattî ruler of the future, Turner of the Wheel of the Law, was and still remains associated with the Golden Age of the future that is cyclically conceived after the model of the blissful past (the Hindu Kṛtayuga) [9] from which man had departed (cf. p. 10f.).

Ashoka was confident that his policy of Dhamma had achieved so much good in the country that it was just as it had been in the righteous days of the Kṛtayuga when the gods in their pleasure visited the earth and associated with the people. Here again he was using a value judgement with which his average reader was familiar. The concept of an ideal state, a period of prosperity and

[1] Second (separate) Kaliṅga Edict of Ashoka: Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 326, modified in accordance with J. Bloch, p. 141.
[2] Second (separate) Kaliṅga Edict of Ashoka: Bloch, p. 141.
[3] Minor Rock Edict from the 13th year of Ashoka: Bloch, p. 146; *Mahâvaṃsa*, V, 20f: transl. Geiger, p. 27.
[4] *Dîpavaṃsa*, VI, 23: transl. Geiger, p. 148.
[5] *Dîpavaṃsa*, VI, 84: transl. Geiger, p. 153.
[6] J. Przyluski, *La légende de l'empereur Açoka* (Açoka-Avâdana) [Annales du Musée Guimet, *Bibliothèque d'Etudes*, Vol. XXXII (Paris, 1923)], pp. 298f.
[7] H. Nakamura, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
[8] Ashoka's 8th Rock Edict: *Dîghanikâya, das Buch der langen Texte des buddhistischen Kanons*, in Auswahl übersetzt von R. Otto Franke (Göttingen, 1913), p. 262, fn. 1.
[9] E. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients. Sendungsbewusstsein und Chiliasmus des Ostens* (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 309ff.

righteousness when men lived as gods and when gods were not afraid to mingle with men, a concept which later became crystallized in the [Hindu] idea of Râma Râjya [1] was no doubt constantly in the minds of people in this period. In this statement Ashoka is suggesting that such a golden age has been brought about by the efficacy of Dhamma.[2]

And in mid-twentieth century Ashoka has again become a symbol of India's political self-conception of non-violence and ethics of international relationships. Long forgotten in India itself, his memory was revived by the discoveries of European Indologists. Ashoka has been called one of humanity's greatest figures. He has been compared to Marcus Aurelius, the historic philosopher-emperor of Rome, to Constantine, the patron of Christianity as a state church, to Charlemagne, the Catholic conqueror of the Saxons and founder of the medieval Holy Roman Empire, to St. Louis of France, the crowned saint and crusading warrior. But what distinguishes Ashoka is that he founded no state church, engaged in no forced conversions and did not conduct holy wars.[3] H. G. Wells thus assesses the historical significance of Ashoka: "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal hignesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines and shines almost alone, as a star. From the Volga to Japan his name is still honored. China, Tibet and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness." [4]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 315.
[2] R. Thapar, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
[3] Bloch, p. 41.
[4] H. G. Wells, *Outline of History* (London, 1961), p. 402.

CHAPTER V

SURVIVAL OF ASHOKAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRADITIONS IN THERAVÂDA KINGSHIP

Yet in India's dynastic "chronicles" Ashoka's name remained almost as obscure as the forgotten script of his edicts until they were deciphered in the nineteenth century. But this does not mean that Ashoka's Dhamma State ideal was not recorded and that no later king of any standing tried consciously to adopt these principles as bases for policy, nor were the political values of Ashoka buried in the oblivion of the past.[1] While Ashoka's own inscriptions could no longer be read, Buddhist legends about him continued to transmit his memory. Though these legends were not necessarily "historical" in a factual sense, they had affected history through their popularity and corresponding intellectual influence. The Ashoka legends (originally as "Ashoka-sutra") were edited apparently within a century after Ashoka's lifetime by a "Sthaviravâdin" Buddhist writer. Not only did they contribute one of the main works of Buddhist Sanskrit literature ("Asokâvadana") but reaching Ceylon, perhaps five hundred years after their origin,[2] they inspired a tradition inherited by Ceylon's historiography, the model for Burma's historiography: Ceylon's tradition about her receiving Buddhism through king Devânampiya Tissa's conversion by Ashoka's missionaries (cf. p. 4) seems to contain elements of imitation of Ashoka's own conversion (as narrated by the Ashoka legends [Asokâvadana]).[3]

Like Ashoka, Ceylon's king Duṭṭhagâmaṇi (161–137 B.C.?) repented the slaughter involved in his wars – even though these wars were fought to protect his island's Buddhism (cf. p. 3f.) – and thereupon attempted a life of gentleness and piety.[4] In the spirit of Ashoka's Buddhist social

[1] As claimed by R. Thapar, p. 214.
[2] Przyluski, *La légende*, pp. vii, 9, 59, 67, 110, 167.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 119.
[4] W. Rahula, *A history of Buddhism in Ceylon: The Anurâdhapura Period* (Colombo, 1956), p. 79.

welfare ideals, the chronicle of Ceylon records that its king Sirimeghâvaṇṇa (362–409) "built ... tanks which always contained water because of his pity for all living creatures." [1]

"Sri Samghabodhi" (ruling Ceylon around 308 A.D.?) is said to have entirely prohibited the taking of animal life. Even the greatest criminals who were condemned to death were secretly released by his order. (In their place, the corpses of persons who had died a natural death were exposed in the place of execution.)[2] To the Ceylonese king Buddhadâsa (about 340) the same source attributes the Ashokan "pity for (all) beings as a father (has pity for) his children [cf. p. 29]: he fulfilled the wishes of the poor by gifts of money ... Great in discernment, he treated the good with winning friendliness ..., the sick with remedies." [3] The Chronicle of Ceylon says about a son of Buddhadâsa, Upatissa "II" (ruling about 400 A.D.) "For cripples, women in travail, for the blind and the sick he erected great nursing shelters and almshalls ..." [4] "When rain poured [into his house] he passed the night nevertheless lying on his bed, thinking it would be a trouble to the people [if he were to call anyone] ... Thus never for his own sake did he cause trouble to living beings." [5] It is recorded about Upatissa "II" that "*by the four heart-winning qualities* he won over the four regions of the world," [6] just as Ashoka aspired to win his conquests not by the force of arms but through the force of Buddhist Dhamma-morality (cf. p. 30). After Ceylon's internal struggles of the centuries that followed, the deeds recorded about Aggabodhi V (711–717) echo the Buddhist ethos of Ashoka's inscribed proclamations. This Ceylonese king, living almost a milennium after Ashoka's lifetime, is described to have

> been fasting together with the inhabitants of the island (of Ceylon) ... He preached to them [Buddhist] doctrine in order to procure them spiritual happiness. Everyone in his kingdom cultivated action which leads to Heaven. For as the monarch acts, so do all his subjects — No means for bringing to beings happiness in both worlds was left untried by him who was unflagging day and night ... To all creatures he gave nourishment by which each of them lived, and whatever makes them happy with that he blessed them.[7]

[1] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 98: transl. Geiger, Part. I, p. 8.
[2] R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism* (London, 1850), p. 413.
[3] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 109–111: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 10.
[4] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 182: transl. Geiger, Part I, pp. 17f.
[5] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 187f: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 18.
[6] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 181: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 17.
[7] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XLVIII, 10–11; 15; 18–19: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 111.

In the same 8th century A.D., King Mahinda II of Ceylon (772–792) is, in the Ashokan tradition, thus glorified in the Island's chronicles: "The poor who were ashamed to beg he supported in secret, and there were none in the island who were not supported by him according to their deserts. Pondering how food can be provided for cattle, he gave them young corn full of milky juice from a thousand fields." [1]

In a similar feeling of brotherhood with and oneness of all beings that inspired Ashoka's welfare measures, (cf. p. 29) King Kassapa IV of Ceylon (around 900 A.D.), after the long bloodshed of the 9th century Indian Tamil invasions of Ceylon, left the memory that "to all creatures on land and water he granted safety ..." [2] State welfare measures for both humans and animals, acts in the Ashoka tradition, are also reported about Mahinda IV of Ceylon (956–972), who "built an alms hall and gave to beggars alms and couches. In all hospitals he distributed medicine and beds, and he had food given regularly to criminals in prison. To apes, wild boar, gazelles and to dogs he, a fount of pity, had rice and cakes distributed as much as they would (want) ... The king had rows of rice laid down in heaps with the injunction that the poor should take of it as much as they wanted." [3] But in the beginning of the next century all resources of Ceylon's Sinhalese states were strained in the defense of the island against the Tamil Hindu empire of the Cholas, who in 1017 captured its king and annexed Ceylon. It was not until about 1070 that Ceylon reconquered her independence under Vijayabâhu I. One of the island's most celebrated kings, Parakkamabâhu I (around 1164) was reputed in Burma to have taken Ashoka as his model.[4] A century later, his namesake Parakkamabâhu II (1236–1271) thought not unlike Ashoka: "... It is indeed for me a heavy burden to care for the welfare of the world. But which of my dignitaries has the capacity to accumulate the blessings of merit which would be equal to my aspiration, and care (likewise) for the welfare of the world?" [5] Ceylon's next king, Vijayabâhu IV (1271–1273), with a much reduced territory, still acted – according to the chronicle – as "the support for such as had no support, ever abounding in pity for aged people and suffering creatures ..." [6]

[1] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XLVIII, 146–147: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 124.
[2] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LII, 15: transl. Geiger, Part II, p. 163.
[3] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LIV, 30–33: transl. Geiger, *ibid.*, p. 181.
[4] Dhammazedi's of Pegu Kalyâṇî Inscriptions, translated by Taw Sein Ko, "A preliminary study of the Kalyâṇî Inscriptions of Dhammacheti," in: *Indian Antiquary*, XXXII (January, 1893), p. 39.
[5] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LXXXVI, 2–4: transl. Geiger, Part III, p. 171.
[6] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LXXXVII, 45: transl. Geiger, Part III, p. 180.

In the fifteenth century Ceylon's Buddhism became a source of renovation for the monastic order in the Mon kingdom (of subsequent Southern Burma) under Dhammazedi (1472–1492) who prided himself in following the example of Ashoka.[1] Self-comparisons with Ashoka's exemplary monastery and pagoda building were cultivated by Burmese royalty; they appear again in an inscription of Hsinpyushin (1774),[2] and in the panegyrics of Bodawpaya – who was also compared to Devânampiya Tissa, Ashoka's Ceylonese convert.[3] However, unlike Ashoka but like many other rulers who prided themselves on comparisons with this ideal Buddhist Peace Emperor, Hsinpyushin and Bodawpaya persevered in conquests by blood and iron.

Still, the very fact that precisely such rulers found it necessary to make professions of Buddhist social values, presupposes the existence of a Buddhist ethos. These *are* Buddhist social ethics – no matter how widespread the notion that Buddhism is anti-social and *only* "negative." Yet it is true that this Ashokan social emphasis was not identical with the ethos of the Buddhist order of monks striving out of the world of Impermanence towards Nirvana, but it is nevertheless Buddhist ethos: the ethos of *lay* Buddhism acting within the world of Impermanence, in pursuing Nirvana by creating the outward social conditions for such a striving towards the overcoming of Attachment. It was *this* social ethos that the Ashokan tradition of historical Buddhism has transmitted, a political lay tradition within Buddhism. This "political Ashokan Buddhism" of historical rulers is less widely known than the philosophical canonic Buddhism of the monastic Order.

[1] Dhammazedi's Kalyânî Inscription of 1476: Taw Sein Ko, *op. cit.*, in: *Indian Antiquary*, XXXII, (April, 1893), pp. 87, 88.
[2] Taw Sein Ko, "Po: U: Daung Inscription," in: *Indian Antiquary*, XXII (1893), p. 6.
[3] Nânâbhivaṃsadhamma senâpati, "*Râjadhirâja Vilâsinî* – The Manifestation of the King of Kings. A Pâli 'historical' work," edited and translated by Maung Tin, in: *JBRS*, IV, i (1914), pp. 18, 19.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE PROBLEM OF SOCIAL ETHICS OF THERAVÂDA BUDDHISM

The social ideal of lay Buddhism in the political Ashokan tradition was action to create the *means for the pursuit of Nirvana*, for the overcoming of Attachment and thereby of Suffering (cf. p. 28). But more famous is the ideal of the canonical Buddhism of the monastic order: the pursuit of the *Nirvana goal* itself, through ethics of non-action – in order to overcome Attachment to existence and Impermanence. Between this "Arhat" ideal and active social endeavor "there is no bridge" – in the opinion of Max Weber.[1] He assumed that actual social ethics were not derivable from Buddhism. This assumption seems to the present writer a misunderstanding. Max Weber apparently reached this mistaken conclusion because he took it for granted that *any* possible socially binding ethics per definition would have to "operate with the endless value of the individual soul." [2] And in Buddhism only that in which all life merges is endless, not individual souls: their reality is denied both as individualities (in the sense of indivisibility) and as souls: the soul and the ego is conceived not as a permanent entity but as a function of all its innumerable components, a perennial process of flaring up and burning, of birth and rebirth in seconds just as in aeons.[3] "All created things perish ... all created things are grief and pain ..., all forms are unreal, he who knows and sees this becomes *passive in pain*; this is the way ..." [4] "Woe upon life in this world!" [5]

Not even Buddha can make the phenomena of Impermanence permanent, "he cannot make the beings [satta] subject to the law of

[1] Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen, 1920–1921) Vol. II, pp. 229f.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] G. Hafner, *Kernprobleme der buddhistischen Ethik* (Erlangen, 1927), p. 13.
[4] *Dhammapada*, 277–279: translated from Pâli by F. Max Müller, in: *SBE*, Vol. X (1881), Part i, p. 67f.
[5] *Sutta-Nipâta*, III, ii, 16 (Mahâvagga: Padhânasutta): The Sutta-Nipâta translated from Pâli by V. Fausböll, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, Part ii, p. 71.

birth unborn, he cannot make the beings subject to the law of aging not to age, the beings subject to the law of sickness not to be sick, he cannot bring about that the beings subject to the law of death should not die." [1] "When we bethink us of the death of the sons of the Universal Teacher [Buddha] who was gifted with perfect insight, who had attained all there is to attain, ... then may we lay to heart the entire vanity of all that comes into being and vigilantly strive [after deliverance]." [2] Deliverance is sought in Buddhism by breaking the ceaseless chain of becoming and perishing: meditation is to achieve insight into the illusory nature of sensory phenomena. Thereby the desire for transitory things is destroyed and clinging to existence is overcome. This leads to overcoming the cause of endless rebirth, the overcoming of endless change, the overcoming of Suffering. To those who reach that stage death has lost its peril:

> Having abandoned both passion and hatred and folly, having rent the ties, not trembling in the loss of life, let one wander alone ...[3] Having thrown behind pleasure and pain, joy and distress, having acquired equanimity, tranquility, purity, let one wander alone ... strenuous for obtaining the supreme good [Nirvana], with a mind free from Attachment, ... let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.[4] Having left son and wife, father and mother, wealth, and corn and relatives, the different objects of desire, let one wander alone ...; "this is the tide, ... this is the fishhook", so having understood, ... wander alone like a rhinoceros.[5] As the beast unbound in the forest goes feeding at pleasure, so let the wise man, considering [only his] own will, wander alone ...[6]

Gautama Buddha taught: "Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge ... look not for a refuge to anyone besides yourself." [7]

Thus Theravâda Buddhism has not accepted doctrines of vicarious salvation or salvation by Grace. Its quest is concerned with the self-salvation of what is otherwise called the individual. Therefore this Buddhist quest has been again and again described as selfish,[8] ignoring

[1] Buddhagosa, *Kathâvatthu-Atthakatha*, edited by Tissadata Rajâsudhi (Bangkok, 2465/1922–1923), XXI, 4, cited by A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule* [Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. XXXVIII (Paris/Saigon, 1955)], p. 237.
[2] *Mahâvaṃsa*, IV, 66: transl. Geiger (1912), p. 25.
[3] *Sutta Nipâta*, I, iii (Uravagga: Khaggavisâṇa Sutta), 40: transl. Fausböll, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, Part ii, p. 11.
[4] *Sutta Nipâta*, I, iii (Uravagga: Khaggavisâṇa Sutta), 33–34: transl. Fausböll, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, Part ii, p. 10.
[5] *Ibid.*, I, iii, 26–28: transl. *SBE*, X, ii, p. 9.
[6] *Ibid.*, I, iii, 5: transl. *SBE*, X, ii, p. 6.
[7] Mahâ-paranibbana Suttanta, II, 33: translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI (1881), p. 38.
[8] For example, R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism: An account of the order of mendicants founded by Gotama Budha* (London, 1850), p. 343.

its basic presupposition: the non-reality of the self. This Buddhist self-salvation can only be accomplished through realization that the self is an illusion; the allegedly egoistic Nirvana can only be sought through insight into the illusory nature of the ego! This insight is to result from a consciousness of one's identity with all beings, animals and men, friends and enemies, the virtuous and the vicious. To this consciousness of universal identity the quest for deliverance contains the wish for the happiness of all beings, the awakening of Universal Love [Mettabhavana].[1]

Thus Nirvana can only be reached through a consciousness of universal compassion. This means that nobody can be saved without his compassion for "others." On the other hand in Theravâda Buddhism nobody's deliverance can be directly promoted by somebody "elses" compassion for him – even the compassion of Buddha's (Tathagatas) can only promote the salvation of other beings by preaching their insights into the causality of Suffering. Living beings can only attain Nirvana through their own efforts.[2] Yet in Gautama Buddha's attaining Nirvana through his compassion for all beings, his universal compassion was a stage in his path towards the Great Deliverance, the final stage of the Way towards Nirvana being conceived as semi-Stoic quietism. Because universal compassion is considered a stage in self-salvation, Max Weber saw fit to conclude that an emotion of human love could not spring from Buddhism.[3] But he overlooked that if Nirvana is a state beyond universal compassion, it is only because by reaching it the consciousness of individuality had been overcome [4] – and the unity of all lives is so deeply realized that quietism does result not from what Max Weber calls the "cold distance" between the object and the subject of the previous universal compassion, but from the overcoming of their polarity and the emotional merging of both. This meant overcoming the consciousness of "substantial individuality" by applying the doctrine of non-substantiality ["pudgalanairatmya"), which is shared by both "Vehicles" of Buddhism, the "Hînayâna" (Theravâda) and Mahâyâna.

Already Gautama Buddha's second sermon contains this doctrine

[1] Nyânatiloka, "Uber die buddhistische Meditation," in: *Zeitschrift für Buddhismus*, 1924, p. 137.
[2] Dhammapada, 276: transl. F. Max Müller, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, Part i, p. 67.
[3] Max Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 229f.
[4] Cf. Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dhammasangaṇi (Atthasâlini), I, 43; V, 192, transl. Maung Tin, in: Pali Text Society, *Translation Series*, No. 8 (London, 1920), pp. 56, 258–263.

in the formulation of "this is not mine. I am not this, this is not self for me," [1] (respectively, "there is no Âtman": roughly translatable as "there is no individual soul.") – As there is assumed to be no Âtman, the consciousness of "my soul" and "my" in general is considered not permanently real; consciousness, like volition and feeling, is seen as part of the sphere of rûpa (roughly translatable as form), the sphere of Impermanence. In the Majjhima Nikâya Buddha explains that the notions of "my," "this is I," "this is myself" are devoid of reality.[2] Thus Buddhism denies reality to the concept of "mineness" (Mamatta). This insight is meant to overcome attachment to attributes of "mineness": those striving after Nirvana are not to "harbor the idea of possession of 'mine' and other's" – "he who doesn't think 'this is mine' and 'for others there is also something,' he, not having egotism, does not grieve at having nothing." [3] "Don't say to yourself, 'I have... a son, I have a daughter, I have numbers of men and maids for my service, I have precious gold'; do not cleave to these things with craving and desire." [4]

But not only the clinging to attributes of Possession was to be overcome by insight into the unreality of "mineness." The idea of the illusory nature of the self also meant that consciousness of the self as actor of a deed was equally illusory: "Assure of this, that never will there develop in me, the notions, whether great or little, of 'I am the doer' and 'the mind is the doer.'" [5]

Through this basic presupposition of Buddhist thought, the political *power* of an individual over others could not be rationalized in Buddhistic terms. If it proved, nevertheless, possible to base *the ideal of* political power largely on Buddhist ethics, it was precisely because from this very doctrine of the non-substantiality of "mineness" sprung an aspiration to realize the basic non-dualism of "self" and "other selves": It has been an ideal of much of Indic spirituality in general, and Buddhism in particular, to attain a state of non-duality of one's "self" and other "selves," to realize the union of all life and to overcome the phenomenal forms that disguise the basic oneness.[6] The realization

[1] Cf. *Aṅguttara Nikâya*, III, xiv, 131, 3: Pali Text Society, *Translation Series*, No. 22 [F. L. Woodward (Translator), *The Book of the Gradual Way, Anguttara Nikâya*, Vol. I] (London, 1932), p. 263.
[2] *Majjhima Nikâya*, I, 8 (Sallekha Sutta), xl: K. E. Neumann, *Die Reden Gotamo Buddhos aus... Majjhimânikayo des Pâli-Kanons... übersetzt* (Zürich, 1956), p. 44.
[3] *Sutta Nipâta*, 951 (Attadaṇḍasutta, 17): transl. Fausböll, in: *SBE*, X, ii, p. 179.
[4] Kacchapa-Jâtaka (*Jâtaka*, II, 81): transl. Cowell, *Jâtaka*, Vol. II (1957), p. 56.
[5] *Mahâvastu*, II, 142: transl. Jones, Vol. II, p. 137.
[6] H. Nakamura, *The ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Tokyo, 1960), pp. 75, 81, 84.

of "one's" identity with "others," the elimination of distinction between the experience of happiness and sorrow of "others" and the happiness and sorrows of "one's self," is called "karuṇâ." [1] Thus "karuṇâ" means the widening of the "consciousness" in a "mystical" sense to a point where it embraces all living beings, the self-identification with all that lives. Such ideals have been mainly developed in Northern Buddhism of the Great Vehicle [Mahâyâna]. But they affected Theravâda Buddhism too. For example, the Northern Buddhist "Questions of Milinda" which had very wide circulation in Theravâda Buddhist countries, contain the following answer about selflessness: "It is a merely commonly received opinion, O king, that 'this is I' or 'this is mine'; it is not a transcendental truth. Attachment is a way of mind put away by the Tathagata [Buddha], he has put away clinging, he is free from the [notion] 'this is mine,' he lives only to be a help to others." [2] Such non-duality of "mineness" and others, in the ideal of "karuṇâ," implies a derivation of sublime altruism from truly *enlightened* egotism. Such Buddhist ethics of Merit of social welfare could have drawn upon Buddhist texts like the Saṃyutta Nikâya:

> "Say of what folk by day and night forever doth the merit grow.
> In righteousness and virtuous might what folk from earth to heaven go
> Planters of groves and fruitful trees and they who build causeway and dam,
> And wells construct and watering sheds and [to the homeless] shelter give:
> Of such as these by day and night forever doth the Merit grow
> In righteousness and virtuous might such folk from earth to heaven go." [3]

[1] *Mahâyâna Sutrâlaṅkâra*, 19,17; 176, 27 (edition of S. Lévi-Paris, 1911); *Bodhi-caryavatara*, viii, 110, 131, 136, 140 (I. Minayeff's edition, 1889) cited by Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1932), p. 179. Kṣemendra wrote that Karuṇâ was natural and innate in all beings, even in lions: Kṣemendra, *Bodhisattvâvadana-kalpalata*, II, 955ff. [edition of C.S. Das: *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta, 1888)], cited by Har Dayal, *op. cit.*

[2] *Milinda-pañha*, IV, ii, 30: The Questions of King Milinda, translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids; in: *SBE*, Vol. XXXV (1890), p. 226.

[3] *Saṃyutta Nikâya*, I, v, 7: English transl. Mrs. Rhys Davids, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part 1. (Sagâthâ Vagga) [Pali Text Society, *Translation Series*, No. 7 (London, 1950)], pp. 45–46.

And these aspirations have been popularized into folk ideals by [Jâtaka] legends about the Bodhisattva, the being who was eventually to become the Buddha Gautama, and his deeds in previous lives.

... The Bodhisattva ... established [thirty families] in the Five Commandments, and thenceforth used to go about with them doing good works. And they too doing good works, always in the Bodhisattva's company, ... with their clubs they used to roll out of the way all stones that lay on the ... highway and ... roads of the village; the trees that would strike against the axles of chariots they cut down, rough places they made smooth; causeways they built, dug water tanks, and built a hall, they showed charity ... in this wise did the body of the villagers generally abide by the Bodhisattva's teachings ... The Bodhisattva made answer: "We showed charity, we leveled roads, dug tanks, and built the public hall; this is our spell, our safeguard and our strength." [1]

According to the Kâka-Jâtaka, "a king laid his kingdom at the Bodhisattva's feet, but the Bodhisattva restored it to the king, ... beseeching him to shield all living creatures from harm. And the king was moved by these words to grant immunity to all living creatures ..." [2]

In a situation in which the Bodhisattva did become king, it was said about him: "... Were he but asked, he would even cut off his head in all its magnificence, or tear out his gracious eyes, or give up his very kingdom ..." [3] According to the Mahâsîlava-Jâtaka, the Bodhisattva as king refused to defend his state against invasion, declaring to his soldiers: "None shall suffer because of me. Let those who covet kingdoms seize mine, if they will." And he refused to allow them to march against the invaders, moving the aggressor eventually by his strength of Morality.[4] By the boundlessness of his abnegation, the Bodhisattva's kingly power over others was to merge with his quest for the salvation of others from the state of suffering in the fetters of illusory "mineness." It was largely through the Bodhisattva ethos that "Buddhism developed from an ethical sect into one of the *politically* most effective ethical systems in the world" [Paul Mus].[5]

[1] Kulâvaka-Jâtaka (*Jâtaka*, I, 199): Cowell, *Jâtaka...transl.*, Vol. I, (1895), pp. 77–79.
[2] *Jâtaka*, I, 486: Cowell, *Jâtaka...transl.*, Vol. I, p. 301.
[3] Kurudhamma-Jâtaka (*Jâtaka*, II, 368): Cowell, *Jâtaka-transl.*, Vol. II, p. 252.
[4] *Jâtaka*, I, 263; 267f: Cowell, *Jâtaka...transl.*, Vol. I, pp. 130, 132.
[5] *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, XXXIII (1933), p. 650.

CHAPTER VII

EMERGENCE OF THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL OF KINGSHIP IN THERAVÂDA BUDDHISM

Expressions of a Buddhist ethos as principles of policy on the part of Buddhist rulers have been dismissed by Max Weber as gestures of mere formality,[1] for example, a victorious Mahâyâna Buddhist king of early 9th century Bengal, proclaiming in an inscription that he released captive elephants – who with tears in their eyes rejoined their fellow elephants in the forest.[2] Bengal under the Pâla Dynasty [about 725–1125] became a center of Mahâyâna Buddhism that had extended into Sumatra. A Buddhist monarch of the Shrivijaya Empire in Sumatra and Malaya proclaimed about himself (in 775 A.D.) that those who "have their heart burned by the flames of poverty come to him to put themselves into his extreme power, as the elephants, when the sun is hot, come to take refuge in ... the cool water."[3] Mahâyâna Buddhism inspired a similar state ethos in Cambodia, one of the earliest culturally Indianized empires of Indochina, where it enjoyed high favor under Jayavarman VII (1181–1218?). This Buddhist ruler described his aspirations as follows:

Perceiving that the earth, of which his wisdom had made a heaven, was oppressed by Death, he pointed out the ambrosia of remedies for the immortality of the mortals. Making by his address out of the Kali [Dark] Age the Kṛta [Golden] Age ..., he suffered from the maladies of his subjects more than from his own; it is the public pain and not their own pain that makes the pain of kings ... Marching at the head of his troops ... the king made himself through his thoughts the guardian of the needs of his subjects; forever lasts his intercession among the charitable kings of Cambodia ... The good work which I did, you

[1] Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, II, p. 229.

[2] "Mungir Grant of Devapâladeva," in: *Indian Antiquary*, XXI, (1892), p. 257. In the Mati-Posaka-Jâtaka, king Brahmadatt of Benares releases a captive elephant who was to become the Bodhisattva, so that he could join his elephant mother in the forest: Cowell, *Jâtaka...transl.* (1957), Vol. IV, p. 58; cf. *Râjâvaliya*, p. 63.

[3] English version from the French translation of the original published in: Institut Royal Service Archéologique du Siam, G. Coedès, *Recueil des inscriptions du Siam* (Bangkok, 1929), Vol. II, p. 38.

should preserve it because it is yours too ... Even if guilty of repeated offences, the inhabitants of this place should not be punished: but those who please themselves by doing harm to living beings should be punished without mercy. Filled by sympathy for the welfare of the world, the king expresses his vow that "by virtue of this good work may I be enabled to save all beings that are plunged into the ocean of the existences!" [1]

This aspiration arose out of the Bodhisattva ethos which was developed by Northern (Mahâyâna) Buddhism into the ideal of self-renunciation of Nirvana until all living beings have been liberated from suffering and Saṃsâra – Impermanence. *But such Bodhisattva ideals affected the political ethos of Theravâda Buddhism too.* Common to both Northern and Southern ("Hînayâna") Buddhism is the Bodhisattva Maitreya (Mettaya), the Future Buddha. Within "Southern" Buddhism, the development of the Maitreya idea was characteristic for the (now extinct) Sarvâstivâdin School [2] (which is attested at Prome, in southern Burma in the seventh century A.D.[3]). At Bodhgaya, the site of Gautama Buddha's Enlightenment, he ("Sâkyamuni") and Maitreya were symbolized in the same single statue: [4] Maitreya (Mettaya) is to be illuminated in the same place and in the same way as Gautama. Not only renovation but also fulfillment of Buddhism was expected from Mettaya: universal compassion is to become through him a cosmic reality. Universal love (Metta) is to be fulfilled throughout the world through Mettaya, as his name indicates.[5] In the Dîgha Nikâya scripture of Theravâda Buddhism, these visions of the future are described in prophecies attributed to Gautama Buddha.[6] Thus the Mettaya expectations are a part of the Pâli canon of the Theravâda. However, the Pâli canon does not give them a prominent place. It may be said that this *canonic* Theravâda Buddhism reflected the Mettaya expectations only "from far and without emphasis." [7] More frequently than in the strictly canonic literature, do Mettaya prophecies occur in the apocrypha that are not included in the Canon. And even in early medieval Ceylon, where Theravâda Buddhism

[1] English version from the French translation of the original Jayavarman's VII Say-Fong Hospital Inscription, v, vi, x, xi, xiii, xlii, xliii, xlv, xlvi: M. L. Finot, "Inscription Sanskrite de Say-Fong," in: *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. III (1903), pp. 29, 30, 33.

[2] Przyluski, *La Légende*, p. 171.

[3] Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1936), pp. 19ff.

[4] Paul Mus, p. 833.

[5] E. Abegg, "Der Buddha Maitreya," in: *Mitteilungen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft der Freunde ostasiatischer Kultur*, VII (1945), p. 30; E. Abegg, *Der Messiasglaube in Indien und Iran* (Berlin, 1928), p. 201. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 143, 152, 165.

[6] *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI, 24 f.: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 73.

[7] Przyluski, *La Légende*; p. 171.

developed its canon, the belief in the Bodhisattva Mettaya was to become and remain "one of the principle tenets of the popular religion of the Sinhalese Buddhists." [1] In Ceylon is extant a very little known Pâli work, which (in spite of attributing its narrative to Gautama Buddha and in spite of presenting itself as a Sutta) is not included in the Canon (and thus appears to be later than the fifth century A.D.): "Stories about the births of the ten Bodhisattvas," [2] and their past and future lives (except Mettaya, having nothing in common with the personalities of Mahâyâna Bodhisattvas but being figures otherwise mentioned in the Pâli scriptures).[3] Gautama himself, as Bodhisattva, in a previous life preceeding the birth in which he attained Buddhahood, was Universal King.[4] As king he had made a vow to "become a guide of the world, teacher of gods and man." [5] Against this background, the birth as an ideal universal king (cf. p. 87) came to be seen as the last stage before birth as the Future Buddha. And it was in Ceylon earlier than anywhere else, possibly in the sixth century A.D., at a time of increased Mahâyâna Buddhist influences (which began with the third and fourth centuries A.D.), that the Bodhisattva ideal came to be adopted into the Theravâda Buddhist ethos of kingship.[6] Though Theravâda tenets could not promise each believer, not even each member of the dynasty, to become a Buddha, its traditions *by implication* opened for Ceylon's kings the possibility of becoming the only future Buddha that the Theravâda admits within this World Age: [7] There evolved in Ceylon first a cult of Mettaya and then ideals of the King's association with this future Buddha. Eventually this culminated in the royal ideal of aspiring to become the Bodhisattva Mettaya. An early trace of these developments is the application of the Bodhisattva designation "Great Being" (Mahâsattva) to king Sri Saṃghabodhi (307–309 A.D.) by the Chronicle of Ceylon.[8] On the other hand, the Bodhisattva Mettaya received the "complete equip-

[1] S. Paranavitana, "Mahâyânism in Ceylon," in: *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Section G, Vol. II (December, 1928/February, 1933) p. 52.
[2] *Dasa-bodhisatt-uppatti-katha* (printed in Ambatanna in 1926), cited by Paranavitana, *op. cit., p.* 67.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.
[4] *Mahâ-sudassana-Sutta*, II, 37; II, 42: Buddhist Suttas translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI, pp. 285, 289.
[5] *Mahâvastu*, I, 52–53: transl. Jones, Vol. I, pp. 44f.
[6] Cf. C. W. Nicholas & S. Paranavitana, *A concise history of Ceylon... to 1505* (Colombo, 1961), p. 171.
[7] Paul Mus, p. 728.
[8] *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXXVI, 90; W. Geiger, *The culture of Ceylon in medieval times* (Wiesbaden, 1960), p. 211.

ment of a king" in the reign of Dhâtusena of Ceylon (460–478).[1] In an inscription that has been tentatively dated from the early seventh century, an unidentified ruler is already proclaiming: "By this merit may I be able, in every succession of rebirth, to relieve all the suffering of the world and to bestow complete happiness [on humanity] ... May I with my hand of great compassion deliver suffering humanity from the extensive quagmire of Saṃsâra [Impermanence] ..." [2] Such aspirations to become a future Buddha are attributed by Ceylon's Chronicle to its king Sena I (831–851), a "sovereign whose aspirations were directed to the Buddha step." [3] The source of these ideals, Mahâyâna Buddhism, reached the highest point of its influence over Ceylon in the tenth century, on the eve of the greatest south Indian (Chola) overseas conquests. It became an article of faith with the monks of the second main monastery of Ceylon (Abhayagiri) that every king of Ceylon was a Bodhisattva.[4] An inscription of Mahinda IV (about 956–972, otherwise dated 1026–1042) already refers to "assurances of Buddha that none but the Bodhisattvas would become kings of prosperous Laṅkâ (Ceylon)." [5] Ceylon's king Vijayabâhu II (1186–1187), according to the Chronicle, was "like the wise Bodhisatta, everywhere in every way he interested himself in all beings." [6] His successor, Niśśaṅka-Malla (1187–1196) proclaimed in a rock inscription: "I will show myself in my [two] bodies ... with ... virtuous qualities of a Bodhi-satta King who ... protects the world and the religion." [7] But Vijayabâhu IV (1271–1273) is already called by the Chronicle, "... our Bodhisatta Vijayabâhu." [8] To the later kings of Ceylon was applied "the epithet of Bodhisattvâvatara [incarnation of the Bodhisattva]." [9] To the end of the Buddhist Sinhalese states of Ceylon there remained a "popular belief that every king of Ceylon was a potential Buddha." [10] It was from Ceylon that Theravâda Buddhism was strengthened, in the fourteenth century among the

[1] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVIII, 67–68: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 36.
[2] Sanskrit Kuccaveli Rock Inscription, in: *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III (London, 1933), p. 161.
[3] *Cûlavaṃsa*, L, 65: transl. Geiger, Part I, p. 143.
[4] Paranavitana, "Mahâyânism in Ceylon, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[5] Second Jêtavanârama Slab Inscription of Mahinda IV: Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, in: *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I (London, 1912), p. 240.
[6] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LXXX, 12: transl. Geiger, Part II, p. 126.
[7] *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, II, p. 176.
[8] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LXXXVIII, 35; XC, 48: transl. Geiger, Part II, pp. 185, 205.
[9] Paranavitana, "Mahâyânism in Ceylon," *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[10] S. Paranavitana (of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon), in: *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III (London, 1933), p. 87.

Thais of Siam (who had adopted it from the Mons and Burmese since the thirteenth century). About 1347–1370 their first state, Sukhodaya (Sukhot'ai), was ruled by king Lü T'ai (Dhammarâja), who proclaimed in an inscription of 1347, that as fruit of his merit he desired not power nor world domination, nor the position of the gods Indra or Brahmâ. He only wished to become a Buddha to help all beings to leave the three regions of existence, the sensual, bodily and the unbodily region, to leave behind the sufferings of transmigration so that he could lead them to ... [Nirvana?].[1] Another inscription (in the Khmer language of Cambodia) is said to have described this Buddhist ruler in the following way: "His mercy and charity were as boundless as water of the ocean, he loved his people like his own children. He was wont to pardon criminals, giving them the wherewithal to make restitution for their crimes, and send them home. In his time there were no slaves in all the land. All men were free and happy. His fame spread among all nations, and men flocked from every side to live in peace under his gracious rule." [2] Lü T'ai Dhammarâja's epigraphy thus records the aspirations of this Buddhist "King of the Law": "This king reigns observing the Ten Royal Precepts. He is full of pity for all his subjects ... If people were seized ... who threw poison into his rice, in order to cause his sickness or death, he never killed nor beat them. But he had mercy on those who showed themselves evil towards him. If ... he repressed his heart and restrained his spirit, and did not give in to rage, [it] ... was because he desired to become a Buddha, ... to put every creature beyond the ocean of the afflictions of transmigration." [3] Lü T'ai Dhammarâja "was a lover of peace. On the few occasions when he was forced to go to war, such as an expedition ... in 1359, he won less renown by his military prowess than by the humanity with which he treated his prisoners ... Prisoners of war ... usually became slaves. But this king had no use for slaves, so he supported and fed his prisoners and would not let them come to misery and ruin." [4] When the second Siamese state, Ayut'ia,

[1] Institut Royal Service Archéologique du Siam: G. Coedès, *Recueil des inscriptions du Siam*, Part I (Bangkok, 1929), pp. 97, 101.

[2] W. A. R. Wood, *A history of Siam from the earliest times to the year 1781* (London, 1926), p. 60. This inscription, discovered in 1833 by the subsequent king Mongkut of Siam, was translated into English by Prince Pawaret: "There is reason to suppose that Prince Pawaret's translation was not very exact." The stone with a large part of the inscription has crumbled since. Therefore, it can no longer be fully reconstructed.

[3] Translation given from two French versions of the original: G. Coedès, "Documents sur la Dynastie de Sukhodaya," in: *BEFEO*, XVII, No. 2 (1916/1917), pp. 27 f. and also G. Coedès, *Les états hindouises d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (Paris, 1948), pp. 368–369.

[4] Wood, *A history of Siam*, p. 60.

attacked Sukhot'ai in 1349, its pious king submitted without resistance.[1] Such political ethics the Chronicle of Ceylon attributes also to a ruler of the last Ceylonese monarchy, king Kittisirirâjasîha of Kandy (1747–1781). He is said to have "developed the virtues of the Bodhisatta in the [Mahâ] Sîlava Jâtaka" [2] (who as king had refused to shed blood for the self-defense of his state against aggression – cf. p. 42). Though it was not because of Buddhist ethics of non-violence that the coastal areas of Ceylon had fallen successively under Portuguese (1505–1658), Dutch (1658–1795) and (since 1795) British domination, according to the Chronicle, Râjadhirâjasîha (1781–1798) too "strove after the dignity of a Buddha." [3] The coming Buddha of the Theravâda, to whom alone this could have referred, is Mettaya. And Mettaya's "conversation" with a Sinhalese monk, "Shin Male" ("Mâleyya") is described in a non-canonic Pâli work of Ceylon, the Rasavâhini.[4] "The hope of meeting the future Buddha Maitreya [Mettaya] is the ultimate aim of all Buddhists in Ceylon. Failure to be born in the dispensation of Maitreya is a great spiritual calamity [for them]." [5] At Maitreya's advent, the world of men (Jambudvîpa) is to grow in extension and in purity. The earth is to be leveled down and be under a fertile cover of golden sand. Sevenfold crops are to ripen without labor. All men shall be compassionate of heart and *practise* good; [6] the ill are to become healthy, the blind shall come to see, the deaf to hear, the mute to speak: The poor are to become rich.[7] And this ideal of a perfect society came to be included in the aspirations of Theravâda Buddhist kings towards identity with the Bodhisattva or even the accomplished Buddha (Buddha-râja: "the Buddha-Ruler," the Burmese Buddha-Yaza – cf. p. 152). Such Buddhist ideals of kingship were strengthened by cosmological associations.[8]

[1] G. Coedès, "Documents sur la Dynastie de Sukhodaya" (Textes Pâlis), in: *BEFEO*, XVII, No. 2 (1916/1917), p. 43.
[2] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XCIX, 97: transl. Geiger, Part III, p. 264, fn. 3.
[3] *Cûlavaṃsa*, CI, 17: transl. Geiger, Part III, p. 301.
[4] Pe Maung Tin, "Buddhism in the inscriptions of Pagan," in: *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, XXVI, i (1936), p. 59.
[5] S. Paranavitana in: Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, p. 192, fn. 3.
[6] Sylvain Lévy & Edward Chavannes, "Les seize Arhat protecteurs de la loi," in: *Journal Asiatique*, 11th Series, Vol. VIII (1916), p. 14.
[7] Przyluski, *La Légende*, p. 226.
[8] Cf. Richard Gard, "*Introduction to the study of Buddhism and political authority*" pp. 4–6.

CHAPTER VIII

PRE-BUDDHIST FERTILITY ELEMENTS OF THE CHARISMA OF BURMESE KINGSHIP

The very universality of the Buddhist Dhamma – of the ethical as well as cosmic law – made the ideal Dhamma-kingship the agent through which the cosmic order was to be fulfilled on earth by harmonizing human society with the forces of nature. A correlation of the natural and human orders centered representatively in the king as the essential coordinator of Nature's and Humanity's orders in society, in the institution of kingship and in the morality of the head of state.[1] Already classical Buddhist lore had inherited such ideas from pre-Buddhist India.[2] Through the king's observation of the Dhamma, by ruling ethically, the earth of his realm was to produce good harvests. Injustice of kings (their non-observation of the Dhamma Law) was thought to cause even the fruits of the forest to become bitter and dry.[3] According to the Bharu Jâtaka, the unjust deeds of a king brought about a calamity of nature, a flood destroying all the inhabitants of the state.[4] In accordance with pre-scientific notions of causality, neglect of the Buddhist ethical precepts and moral virtues was an infringement of cosmic Law and would thereby upset the cosmic harmony: Thus a famine caused by the absence of rain was in Buddhist legend thought to result from a king's neglect to give alms, from his non-fulfillment of Buddhist precepts. But when his nature-stricken subjects persuaded him to do so, "then the king practiced the ... precepts and fulfilled the five virtues. And then in all the realm of Kâliṅga the rain fell, the land became prosperous and fertile." [5] In medieval Burma, king

[1] R. Gard, *Buddhism and political authority*, pp. 5–6; Paul Mus, pp. 794f.
[2] *Mahâbhârata*, Canti Parva, LIX, 121: Pratapa Chandra Ray, *The Mahabharata translated into English prose* (Calcutta, 1890), p. 189; *Manu*, IX, 246f., in: *SBE* (1886), Vol. XXV, p. 385; *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXI, 29f.: transl. Geiger, p. 144.
[3] *Râjavada-Jâtaka*: Cowell, *Jâtaka...translated*, Vol. III, pp. 73f,; 260.
[4] Cowell, *Jâtaka...translated*, Vol. II (Cambridge, 1895), p. 120.
[5] Kurudhamma-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...translated*, Vol. II, pp. 252, 260; *Râjâvaliya*, p. 42.

Kyanzittha (1084–1112) of Pagan proclaimed in one of his inscriptions that under his rule "all the people ... shall eat plenty of food, they shall enjoy happiness. In the realm ... rain shall fall one hundred and twenty times and all the sap of this great earth shall come forth, all barns and granaries shall be full." "Throughout the whole realm of king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja [Kyanzittha] rain shall fall hundred and twenty times ... At the time of king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja all ... fungi, sprouts, flowers and fruits of trees shall be very plentiful." [1] On the other hand, it was still believed in eighteenth and nineteenth century Burma that "when princes are unjust and men observe not the Law ... the sown lands will be dried up or yield fruit of pernicious quality." [2] Without royal morality, foodstuffs together with medicinal herbs lose their nourishing power. The people are afflicted with severe diseases.[3] At the coronation ceremony of Mindon (1853–1878), the king was emphatically warned that infringing Morality would disastrously upset the cosmic harmony:

> [If you] shall ... break the Abhiseka [coronation] Ceremony oath agreed upon by the good kings, the noble kings, the world shall be distressed, the country darkened and dusky. The great Monster [nga-lyin] shall break the earth [through earthquakes] and the Hell's fire flaming brightly, shall be flashing burning blazes, [making the earth] crumble to powder, destroying man, burning man. [Insubordination] and theft shall begin ..., pestilence, base witches, magic beings [hpou: – Cornyn, *Burmese glossary*, p. 109], ghosts shall rise, dwell in the palace, stirring up, agitating, frightening [with] terrifying snakes, worms, serpents, and spiders rising up and devouring.[4]

In contrast, "if kings are righteous, the whole country lives happily." [5]

The well-being of nature and the fertility of the fields was thus thought to depend upon the royal charisma. Such cosmo-magic ideas affected Burma – as other Southeast Asian areas – from India and apparently also from China. Similar to China, these were expressed in the ceremony of symbolic ploughing by the king, a tradition which

[1] Archaeological Survey of Burma, *Epigraphia Birmanica*, edited [and translated] by C. Duroiselle, Vol. I, Part ii (Rangoon, 1920), pp. 126, 122.

[2] [V.] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire* (Rome, 1833), p. 32.

[3] Nânâbhivaṃsadhamma senâpati, *Râjadhirâja Vilâsini*: transl. Maung Tin, in: *JBRS*, IV, i (1914), p. 18.

[4] *Myan-ma maha min-gala min: gan: to*, pp. 27–28, Burmese text quoted by: Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court under the Konbaung Kings," in: *JBRS*, XLIV, i (1961), p. 124.

[5] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 153: transl. B. C. Law, p. 153 (sic). Even in the westernized Ceylon of 1962 it was declared, on March 23, 1962, at a rally of the United National Party at Nawalapitya (in the Plateau of Kandy), that any attempt to push back such miracles of Nature (sic) as Senanyake (of the United National Party) or Nehru would cause calamities of nature, draught, floods, earthquakes: H. D. Evers, "*Die Entstehung der Unternehmerschicht als Führungsgruppe im sozio-kulturellen Wandel der singhalesisch-buddhistischen Kultur Ceylons*," (unpublished dissertation: Freiburg im Breisgau, 1962), p. 205.

early Buddhism [1] inherited from Vedic India. The Plowing Ceremony (le-htun min-gala) was said to have been performed already by a (probably legendary) sixth century chief of Burma's subsequent capital city Pagan.[2]

And Burma's last king Thibaw (1878–1885) was still expected to perform in person this symbolic plowing.[3] It was to secure seasonable monsoon showers and fertility for the kingdom.

This was to be achieved by harmonizing the cosmic powers of Earth, Water and Sun. In Hindu mythology, Water is symbolized by a "Nâga Serpent." These serpentlike earth spirits were associated with (particularly terrestrial) Water already in pre-Buddhist India.[4] Nâgas were thought to dwell at the bottom of rivers, lakes and seas, often in palaces with gems and pearls. They were guardians of Earth and Water. Therefore, the fertility insuring functions of kingship required close association of the rulers with the Nâgas of their realm.[5] As the spouse of the soil spirits, the Nâgas, the king linked the empire with the divine forces of heaven: The throne of the ideal king was to rest on the same pillar as the Sun; it was to touch the Sun.[6] On the other hand, the Glass Palace Chronicle of Burma relates that a female Nâga became pregnant through the Sun God; of their union was born a king of Burma.[7] According to the same Burmese source, Nâga princesses intermarried with kings of Burma of the (legendary) Tagaung Dynasty. It is narrated about the legendary Dwattabaung: "... That king's queens were as follows: ... the Nâga king's daughter Beisandi [was] also [his queen]." [8] Her presence was to ensure fertility to his land. But then this king broke his ethical charisma: "A monastery-serving

[1] R. Spence Hardy, *A manual of Buddhism in its modern development translated from Sinhalese* (London, 1853), p. 150.

[2] Htuntaik (allegedly 569–582 A.D.): *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, CXX (Mandalay, 1318/1956), p. 238.

[3] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions* (1910), p. 257.

[4] H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* (New York, 1946), p. 37.

[5] J. Ph. Vogel, *Indian Serpent-Lore. The Nâgas in Hindu Legend and Art* (London, 1926), pp. 33, 35ff. Cf. Mabel H. Bode, *Pâli literature of Burma*, p. 12, fn. 1. Thus Jayavarman VII of Cambodia (1181–1218?) proclaimed that "he took the Earth as his spouse...": M. L. Finot, "Inscription Sanskrite de Say-Fong," in: *BEFEO*, Vol. III (1903), p. 29. Cf. "Memoires sur les coûtumes de Cambodge," par Tcheou Ta-kuan, traduit par M. P. Pelliot, in: *BEFEO*, II (1902), pp. 144–145, regarding ritual sexual relations of King and Nâgi in the Cambodia of the thirteenth century.

[6] Jeanninne Auboyer, *Le trone et son symbolisme dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1949), pp. 79f.

[7] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, LXXXIX p. 130. By the time this Burmese chronicle was composed, in the early nineteenth century, such symbolism was no longer understood. This is indicated by the rationalist criticism of this episode by the Buddhist compilers.

[8] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, CV, p. 193.

rice field ..., given for religious purposes to the master monk ..., [the king Dwattabaung] seized and deigned to take. Therefore the Nâga queen's exalted daughter Beisandi also deigned to go away [from him]." [1] With her, departed Dwattabaung's and his kingdom's welfare. But the pious king Mindon, penultimate ruler of Burma, allegedly received in December 1873, soon after his convocation of the Fifth Buddhist Council, in his palace at Mandalay, the services of a Nâga king.[2]

As the king was to form the magic link of the earth-water principle and the solar principle, he had to be in harmony with both of them to ensure fertility: Good harvests through rainfall were thought to be assured for the land whose king possessed a "White" Elephant.[3] This mythology of the White Elephant was inherited by Buddhist India from early Hinduism. The White Elephant became connected with Buddha's birth and previous lives.[4] Since at least 1295, Shan princes who ruled Burma after the fall of Pagan assumed the title "Lord of the White Elephant" (Chan phtû syan).[5] Wars were fought over white elephants (for example, one of the first of numerous Burmese invasions of Siam in the middle of the sixteenth century).[6] Particularly at the height of Burma's power under Bodawpaya [7] and up to the very end of the Burmese monarchy, the White Elephant remained an attribute of royalty and one of the symbols of state sovereignty.[8] "Like a cloud the king sustains creatures." [9] Originally clouds "that had lost their wings" were symbolized by elephants.[10] In Siam elephants were used in rain-producing ceremonies.[11] H. Zimmer

[1] *Ibid.*, CV, pp. 196f.

[2] James G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Vol. I, Part i (Rangoon, 1900), pp. 71f.

[3] Kurudhamma-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. II (1895), Vol. VI (1957), pp. 251f. Min:pu: Sayadaw U: Aw Tha-ị, *Wethandaya Za'-to-gyi*: (Rangoon, Hanthawaddy Pitaka Hnei'tai', 1957), pp. 33, 43.

[4] Mati-Posaka-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...translated*, Vol. IV (1957), p. 58.

[5] Pe Maung Tin & G. H. Luce, *Inscriptions of Burma* (Oxford, 1933–1957), Plates $389c^{8}$, $406a^{19}$, 482^{13}, $470a^{1}$, cited by Than Thun, "History of Burma, A.D. 1300–1400," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), pp. 122, 123, 124.

[6] W. A. R. Wood, *History of Siam* (London, 1926), p. 117.

[7] *Koun: baun-ze' Maha Yazawin-to-gyi*: (Mandalay, 1905), pp. 572ff, 622, 633, 676, 703, 710f.

[8] W. S. Desai, "History of the Burmese Mission to India, October, 1830 to July, 1833," in: *JBRS*, XXVI, ii (1936), p. 91; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, pp. 485–490; *Koun: baun-ze' Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, p. 997.

[9] *Hitopadeśa*, i, 162: *Hitopadeśa. Die freundliche Belehrung. Eine Sammlung indischer... Sprüche in der Recension des Nârâjana.* Übersetzt von Johannes Hertel (Leipzig, 1894), p. 56; J. Gray, *Ancient proverbs and maxims from Burmese sources*, p. 101, fn. 91.

[10] *Mâtaṅgalîlâ*, I, quoted by H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 106.

[11] Andramontri, Phya, "Adversaria on Elephant-Hunting," in: Siam Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Publication*, Vol. II (Bangkok, 1954), pp. 6–7.

has pointed out the magical fertility and rain-producing associations of the White Elephant. Their affinity to monsoon clouds made white elephants so valuable to attract the precious rains: their white color suggested their special connection with the "Universal Milk" of the cosmic water. In the Hindu mythology about the churning of the milky ocean [1] a milk-white elephant, by the name of Airâvata, arises out of these milky waters. (Its consort was called Abrahmu, which means "Cloud Producer." [2]) Airâvata is the white elephant of Indra, the Vedic Hindu God of Thunder and of Rain. Already the Hastyayurveda refers to an elephant painted white, who is worshipped by the officials of the realm. The worship of this elephant makes crops sprout in due time; Indra will send rain, there will be no drought.[3] The rain god Indra (under the name of Sâkra or Sakka) appears as special patron of the early Burmese dynasties in the Glass Palace Chronicle.

Against this background, according to Burmese folk belief, "... when just and upright princes reign .... whatever is sown will wonderfully fructify." [4] As the king of Burma was responsible for good harvests, he continued to receive in the Hindu tradition offerings of first fruits.[5] These traditional fertility-producing functions of kingship contributed to extensive state control over the agricultural economy and possibly also to the institution of royal monopolies: The king, allegedly descending from the Naga earth spirits, was, at least formally, owner of a large part of all arable land.[6] The Burmese king was thought to be in theory "the owner of every inch of land over which he ruled." [7] Accordingly, although in pre-British times Burma knew aside from royal lands private lands [mainly through private occupancy], it lacked concepts of private land property in the sense of absolute private rights of disposal and alienation.[8]

[1] *Mahâbhârata*, I, 17ff., xii–xiii: Manmatha Nath Dutt, *The Mahabharata, translated literally from the original Sanskrit Text*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1895), p. 39.
[2] H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 106.
[3] *Hastyayurveda*, IV, 22, quoted by H. Zimmer, *Ibid.*
[4] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire compiled chiefly from native documents* (Rome, 1833), p. 32.
[5] A. Bastian, "*Reisen in Birma in den Jahren 1861–1862*": *Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, Vol. II (Leipzig, 1866), p. 105.
[6] R. von Heine-Geldern, "State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," in: *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. II (1942), p. 26; Albert Fytche, *Burma past and present*, Vol. I (London, 1878), p. 242f.
[7] Nai Thien, in: Siam Society, *Selected Articles from the Siam Society Journal*, Vol. V, Part i (Bangkok, 1959), p. 73; Howard Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia embracing ... a full account of the Burmese Empire*, Vol. I (Boston, 1839), p. 221.
[8] Cf. J. Nisbet, *Burma under British Rule and Before* (Westminster, 1901), pp. 268f.; J. Furnivall, *Colonial policy and practice. Comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge, USA, 1948), p. 135; J. Furnivall, *An introduction to the political economy of Burma* (Rangoon, 1957), pp. 84ff.

CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE BUDDHIST IDEAL OF KINGSHIP

Early Burmese agriculture in the dry zone south of Pagan depended on artificial irrigation,[1] which may have presupposed traditions of considerable state control over agricultural economy and central planning on "the hydraulic pattern." [2] "The king's claim to the personal service of all the people" was perpetuated in taxation (which "was not a levy on property or income as such" but rather compensation for this universal service claim).[3] Through such taxation in kind and services (money economy not being much developed while Burma – aside from Arakan and unlike India – had no coins [4] until 1861), the state apparently exercised great influence on production.[5] The Burmese monarchy controlled foreign trade and maintained monopolies of the main natural products of the empire: teak, petrol-oil, precious stones, silver and amber (before 1867 also cotton), monopolies that were delegated or farmed out to private merchants. If they were classified as "Rich Men," a part of their property was periodically taken by the King.[6] Such institutions fitted traditional notions about the obligations of the ideal Buddhist king: to give seeds and feed to those who cultivate agricultural lands and keep cattle, to supply funds to those who engage in trade, to supply wages and upkeep to those who serve the ruler.[7] Burma's monarchs were to give food to the people every six months [purisamedha] and to lend even insolvent

[1] G. H. Luce, "Economic life of the early Burmese," in: Burma Research Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Publications*, No. 2 (History and Literature) (Rangoon, 1960), p. 326.
[2] Cf. K. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism. A comparative study of total power* (New Haven, 1959), p. 47.
[3] J. F. Cady, *A history of modern Burma* (Ithaca, 1960), p. 20.
[4] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, pp. 168f.
[5] Cf. H. D. Evers, ... *Wandel der sinhalesisch-buddhistischen Kultur Ceylons* (unpublished Dissertation: Freiburg/B 1962), pp. 69ff.
[6] Cady, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 47; John Crawford, *Journal of an embassy to the Court of Ava*, Vol II (London, 1834), p. 131.
[7] Kuṭadanta-Sutta, *Dîgha Nikaya*, V, 11: transl. Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. II, p. 176.

debtors funds with which to discharge their debts – for three years without interest.[1] If the debtor through a misfortune beyond his control were unable to pay, the debt would be remitted by the king.[2]

This reflected the ideals of Buddhist kingship. Among the traditional models for Burma's monarchs was Duṭṭhagâmani of Ceylon (161–137 B.C.?) whom welfare considerations made hesitate about imposing upon his subjects the burdens of building a new Buddhist monument: "At the conquering of the Damiḷas [South Indian Tamils], this people was oppressed by me. It is impossible to levy a tax [on them]. 'How shall I have the bricks transported without laying burdens on the people?' Thus pondered the king in the night-time. 'Work shall not be done here without wages.' At every gate, he commanded to be placed 1,600,000 [coins] . . ." [3] Extensive fiscal exploitation of subjects by a ruler was considered robbery as early as the exemplary Buddhist Jâtaka legends: [4] A (perhaps legendary) Mon king of Pegu (Lower Burma) allegedly set up a bell, by ringing which, oppressed people could call him for help, so that justice be done to them and "that he may reach Nirvana." [5] In contrast, historic kings of Burma did seek Buddhist merit by building pagodas even when it imposed burdens on their subjects. Buddhist disapproval of such arbitrariness mistaken for piety is recorded in the Chronicle of the Burmese kings, as follows:

> The great king Narapatisithu (1173–1210) thus . . . deigned at that time [to decide]: the Sulaimani [pagoda] having been built . . ., the ruby-colored brightness (radiating from it, he) deigned loftily to see. "In this place I wish and want [thereby] to accomplish my good act [hmu]." [Thereupon] the totality of the country's people . . . got weals [from laboring on the pagoda] . . . [Therefore] lord Panthagu, the great Mahâthera [abbot] deigned exaltedly to declare this: "Great king, you attach importance and are thrilled at the undertaking [that is] now accomplished. It is not good to attach value to it. Only an evil issue is to be made out of it." These exalted [words] he deigned to declare: "[Therefore] I do not accept the boiled rice which the great king deigns [to make] as a religious offering" . . .[6]

Five centuries later the monk Ratanâkara answered to king "Mahâdhammarâja" (Anaukpetlun) of the second Burmese empire in 967/

[1] Nânâbhivaṃsadhamma senâpati, *Râjadhirâja Vilâsinî*, v. 14, cited after Maung Tin, in: *JBRS*, IV, i (1914), p. 21; Maung Maung, *Law*, p. 13.
[2] Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Law Tales. The legal element in Burmese folklore* (London, 1962), p. 34.
[3] *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXVII, 21–23; XXVIII, 3–5; XXX, 15, 23, 29: transl. W. Geiger, pp. 184, 187, 199f.
[4] *Padakusalamâṇava-Jâtaka*: E. B. Cowell, *Jâtaka . . . translated*, Vol. III (1897) p. 305.
[5] A. Bastian, *Die Geschichte der Indochinesen aus einheimischen Quellen* (Leipzig, 1866), p.235.
[6] *Hman nan*: *Maha Yazawin-to-gyi*:, Pahtama-twe, Chapter CV, p. 356.

1605 A.D.: "I do not like to take alms received by oppressing the country." [1]

In such Buddhist social ethics of the welfare state Max Weber saw only religious goals, goals of "promoting salvation possibilities, but not rational economic welfare." [2] Thereby he overlooked completely that precisely rational economic welfare was meant to be a prerequisite for the Theravâda Buddhist path of salvation. This he failed to see, although he himself had pointed out that it was the lack of economic possibilities of meditation towards the pursuit of Nirvana that prevented a mass appeal of the Buddhist path of deliverance. Yet Theravâda Buddhism does not admit of other, vicarious ways of salvation – not even by the Buddha himself: "You, yourself must make an effort. The Tathâgatas (Buddhas] are only preachers. The thoughtful that enter the way are free from bondage." [3] Against this background was developed the ideal of a social order that would permit each living being to save himself. Such deliverance could only be achieved through individual contemplation and meditation which alone was to permit man to save himself. And this in turn implied, as a goal of political aspirations, the creation of such social conditions as would permit the leisure necessary for meditation. Ideally kingship had, therefore, to guarantee such economic relationships as would ensure a sufficient livelihood for its subjects – to allow them the leisure for meditation on which depended the achievement of Nirvana. Thus the royal ideal was a welfare state, at least to the extent of guaranteeing the economic basis of leisure for meditation to everybody who wanted to withdraw from materially productive activities: nobody was to be excluded through a lack of monastery endowments; the whole people were to be enabled by the king to supply the monks with alms. "[Is] the country people's offering [of] boiled rice not also my offering of rice [to the monks]," said king Narapatisithu.[4] Thus Buddhist tradition endowed the kings of Burma with responsibility of providing alms to the Nirvana-seeking monks. Thereby Burma's kings aspired to safeguard economic possibilities of meditation which alone could lead to Nirvana. For this purpose they were to strive to ensure a livelihood for their subjects – to enable them to give alms to the monks.

[1] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 104: transl. B. C. Law, p. 110.
[2] Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (Tübingen, 1920/21), Vol. II, p. 262.
[3] *Dhammapada*, 276: The Dhammapada translated from Pâli by F. Max Müller, in: *SBE*, Vol. X (1881), Part i, p. 67.
[4] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, CV, p. 356.

Theravâda canonic scriptures as well as the epigraphy of Buddhist kingship attest this "soteriological rationale" of the Theravâda Buddhist state. To the Buddha is attributed the following description of the ideal kingdom: "Just, ... as the royal city of the gods ... is provided with all kinds of food, so was the royal city provided with all kinds of food ..." "The great King of Glory established a perpetual grant ... – to wit, food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked, means of conveyance for those who needed it, couches for the tired, ... gold for the poor, and money for those who were in want ..." [1] With such attributes of popular welfare Buddhist historiography endowed outstanding Buddhist kings. Thus, at the time of Udaya II of Ceylon (885–896), Prince Mahinda, who ruled a part of that island, "was like to a wishing tree," [2] (Kapparukha, Kalparukkha, Kalpavṛksa in Sanskrit, cf. p. 89), supplying all material needs of mankind.[3] According to the same chronicle of Ceylon, this Buddhist island's great king Parakkamabâhu I (1153–1186) had his capital "embellished by a wishing tree offering all desired things which sparkled with all kinds of ornaments ..., which was resplendant with garments, ... which gleamed with its golden trunk ..." [4] In an inscription of about 1165 A.D., he thus described his aspirations: "... Parâkramabâhu who is descended from the royal line of the ... Okkâka Dynasty [cf. p. 14], a Bodhisattva in the fullness of his benefit, who is ... filling the ocean, which is the hearts of multitudes of the poor assembled from various directions, by the flow of limitless and varied jewels and treasures from the Wish-Conferring Tree, which is his own person ..." [5] His successor, Niśśaṅka-Malla of Ceylon (1186–1197) had himself recorded in an inscription in the following way:

His majesty ... flourishing like the wish-conferring tree has sprung up by reason of the merit of the world, ... he quenched the fire of poverty with showers of gifts of gold, silver ... pearls, precious stones, clothes, ... And when he beheld the prosperity of the people, in great compassion and wisdom, he reflected, "we have rendered help to the world ... how can we maintain to the end of the present cycle [Kalpa] the stability of this prosperity which we have secured as in the golden age [kṛta-yuga, cf. p. 31 f.].[6]

[1] *Mahâ-Sudassana-Sutta*, I, 3; I, 63: Buddhist Suttas translated from the Pâli by T. W Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI (1881), pp. 248, 264.
[2] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LI, 124: transl. W. Geiger, Part i, p. 159.
[3] Cf. *Âkâraṅga Sûtra*, 127 = Gaina Sûtras, II, 19, in: *SBE*, XXII (1884), pp. 196f., perhaps the earliest extant reference to such Wishing Trees.
[4] *Cûlavaṃsa*, LXXIII, 84–86: transl. W. Geiger, Part ii, p. 10.
[5] Parâkramabâhu's Devanagala Rock Inscription, Lines 1–14, in: *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, pp. 322f.
[6] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 163.

This aspiration to maintain such well-being may have been connected with the insight that poverty and material distress do increase cravings for material satisfactions, thereby strengthening attachment to impermanence, strengthening the fetters of suffering.[1] Buddha himself postponed preaching the Law of the impermanence of material satisfaction until his listener was fed. He was thought to have reflected: "If I preach the Law while he is suffering from the pangs of hunger, he will not be able to comprehend it ..." "As soon as the poor man's physical suffering became relieved, his mind became tranquil. Then the Teacher preached the Law, ... expounding the Four Noble Truths [about suffering, the cause of suffering, the overcoming of the cause of suffering, and the method to overcome the cause of suffering] ... The poor man was established in the truth of Conversion." [2] In an earlier life, as a king, the Bodhisattva, the subsequent Buddha, is believed to have "built six Almonries, – one at each of the four city gates, one in the midst of the city, and one at his own door; daily he distributed 600,000 pieces of money in alms, by which he stirred up the whole of India." [3] In another previous life, the birth of the subsequent Buddha produced the growth of Wishing-Trees: "let them take garments from the Wishing-Trees and jewels from the Wishing-Trees." – This Bodhisattva fed visitors with rice out of the material utopia in the "continent" of Uttarakuru (cf. p. 83),[4] whose inhabitants surpass men in selflessness, as they do not have private property.[5] (Cf. pp. 89–92) The utopian material idyll of the legendary "Uttarakuru Continent" is to be realized in the capital of the unified earth of man at the time of the ideal Buddhist world ruler of the future, when the coming Buddha, Bodhisattva Mettaya, is to appear. Then men are to live in universal concord without conflict, free from worries and sickness. This is described in a Pâli "History of the Future" frequently copied in Burma.[6]

[1] *Aṅguttara-Nikâya*, VI, 45: *Reden des Buddha aus dem Anguttara Nikaya* übersetzt von Nyantiloka, Band IV (München, 1922), pp. 59ff.

[2] Buddhist Legends translated from the original Pâli text of the Dhammapada Commentary by Eugene Watson Burlingame, in: *Harvard Oriental Series*, Vol. XXX (Cambridge, USA, 1921), pp. 75, 76.

[3] Kurudhamma-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka... translated*, Vol. II, p. 252.

[4] Buddhist Legends translated from... the Dhammapada Commentary by E. Watson Burlingame, in: *Harvard Oriental Series*, XXX, pp. 320, 322.

[5] H. v. Glasenapp (Editor), H. Oldenberg, *Buddha. Sein Leben* (Munich, 1961), p. 437.

[6] *Anâgatavaṃsa*, not translated into Western languages, nor have I been able to find a Burmese translation of it. Summarized in E. Abegg, "Der Buddha Maitreya", in: *Mitteilungen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft der Freunde Ostasiatischer Kultur*, VII (1945), p. 12.

CHAPTER X

THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL OF BURMESE KINGSHIP

Aspirations toward the attainment of future Buddhahood, [purha lon = paya laun:],[1] aspirations to be born as the future Buddha Mettaya, whose coming had been foretold by the Buddha Gautama, the aspiration to bring a state of society that prophecies associated with Mettaya, became an ideal that Burmese kingship inherited from medieval Ceylon [2] (cf. p. 45f.). It meant a rationalization and idealization of kingship in a Buddhist sense. The ruler received through Buddhism the exemplary soteriological charisma of the Bodhisattva Mettaya, a being aspiring toward the liberation of all living beings from Saṃsâra. In this sense Burma's Buddhist kingship has formulated – particularly in its epigraphy – a soteriological rationalization of the State. The institution of kingship was thereby given an ideological foundation; the charisma of kingship came to rest to a certain extent on Buddhist ethics. On the other hand, there survived from pre-Buddhist times concepts of kingship as agents of cosmic harmony that linked the earth of the realm with the fructifying forces of the universe (cf. p. 51). On the royal observation of Buddhist ethics were to depend the fertility and the harvests of the kingdom. Therefore it was in the ideal kingdom of the Buddhist Dhamma that were to grow maximum harvests, culminating in the utopian Wishing-Trees. This perfect fertility of the soil was to bring maximum prosperity – which in turn was to create the welfare necessary for meditation and thereby the universal salvation of all beings, a vision derived from Buddha's prophecy and associated with the Future Buddha.

It were such visions of the future that Burma's king Kyanzittha

[1] Than Tun, "Religion in Burma, A.D. 1000–1300," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), p. 51; Pe Maung Tin & G. H. Luce [Editors], *Inscriptions of Burma* (Oxford, 1933–1957), Plate 36/3.

[2] Cf. Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *An introduction to the study of Theravâda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1946), p. 151.

(1084–1112) of Pagan applied to himself in his inscription: "As by the lord Buddha was foretold, so has all come to pass. The King of the Law, who was foretold by the lord Buddha, who is great in love and compassion toward all beings, to the end that all beings may obtain happiness and bliss ..." [1] "In order that my lord [may act?] for the benefit of all beings [my lord must become King of the Law ... in three] stages of Existence ..." [2]

At the time of my lord's reign ..., the grandeur and magnificence of this great earth shall be like the grandeur and magnificence of heaven. All men, women, children shall have length of life, shall be free from sickness ... altogether. All the people shall be exempt from calamity, exempt from misfortune.[3] .... All those who cause pain to other people shall become steadfast in virtue .... All the people I shall exhort to keep [the precepts of] virtues, exhort to carry out the Law ... The true principles of morality I also shall exhort [them] to maintain. I shall be ... the candle of all the people.[4] That [in] every city, every country district, every village, all the jungle folk ... hereafter might feed mother and father, do meritorious deeds, give pious gifts, keep the ethical commands, ... that hereafter all [mankind?] might obtain happiness in this world and the worlds beyond ...[5] "... Do good! Do good!" This shall king Sri Tribhuwanâdityadhammarâja [Kyanzittha] teach all people at all times. Those who intend evil, with good intent shall king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja soften their hearts. Those who speak evil, [the] king ... shall exhort to speak good. The bar of the gate of Heaven, ... by wisdom ... shall king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja ... draw open for [all mankind?] [6] The tears of those who are severed from all trusty friends, by a course of benevolence, by loving-kindness ... shall [the] king ... wipe away.[7] Those who lack relatives, shall have plenty of relatives ... Even the poor old women who sell pots and potlids ... they shall become rich ..., those who lack cattle shall have plenty of cattle ...; even poor people who have difficulty in getting food and clothes shall wear gold ornaments, handsome clothes, and shall enjoy them fittingly ...: all men who [wish to] increase security ... [the] king ... shall enrich them all.[8] King Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja, with his right hand he shall give boiled rice and bread to all the people, with his left hand he shall give ornaments and wearing apparel to all men ... Thus shall [the] king ... keep watch and word with benevolence. All men who are harsh, [the] king ... shall make gentle. Men who are not equal [to the rest] in body, speech or in spirit, king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja shall make [them] equal ...[9]

[1] Kyanzittha's Myakan Inscription, in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. II, Part i (Rangoon, 1921), p. 142, translations from the Mon by Duroiselle.
[2] Kyanzittha's third inscription at the Shwesandaw Pagoda, Prome, in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. I, Part ii (1920), p. 168.
[3] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, I, ii, p. 126.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 127.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 117f.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 123.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

"That all beings may obtain plenty and be free from famine, in every place that lacks water, arable land, our lord, the King of the Law, dams water, digs a tank, creates cultivation ... This tank he gave the name Mahânirbban [Great Nirvana] ..." [1] "Whether [to] man, or [other] beings ... the king poured out water [and] gave loving offering every time, in great quantity, exceeding a thousand, exceeding two thousands, not to be [numbered?] ... The pious gifts that king made ..., building monasteries, or digging tanks, or planting groves ... *only that all beings might escape out of Saṃsâra* ..." [2]

... He shall proclaim and voice the Law, which is even as a resounding drum. He shall arouse all the people that are slumbering carelessly ... he shall open ... the gate of heaven ... and shall bring all mankind into heaven. He shall empty he Four Apay [painful states of existence], he shall drop down the flowers of the Law upon the heads of all mankind. When the king of the Law shall preach the Law, the sounds of applause of all men [shall be] like the sound of a rainstorm at the end of the year. Thus lord Buddha has foretold the origin of the king of the Law ...[3]

"Every day when king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja gives instruction to all the people, the sounds of applause ... [shall be] like the sound of a great rainstorm in the middle of the night. All the people shall be adorned with good deeds." [4] "... King Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja ... in his final existence [before entering Nirvana himself?] shall raise out of the Four ... [Forms of Being] all ... the world, together with the devâs [gods] that are immersed in Saṃsâra, which is even as an ocean that is devoid of shelter [or] a place of refuge, shall [he] lift into the good Law, which is even as the great ship [and] shall bring them to the haven of exalted Nirvana ... Thus did lord Buddha prophesy ..." [5]

King Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja, the exalted mighty universal monarch, who rides upon a white elephant, the omniscient one, the Bodhisattva, who shall verily become a Buddha that saves and redeems all beings, who is great in love and compassion for all beings at all times, who upholds the religion of the lord Buddha, who is exalted above all other kings ... over the Four Quarters ..., who has wisdom and splendor exceeding other kings .... All good men understand that this is indeed the king of the Law [Dhammarâja] who was foretold by the lord Buddha, *who is to become a true Buddha* ...[6]

[1] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, II, i, p. 142.
[2] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, I, ii, p. 166.
[3] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, II, i, pp. 141f.
[4] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, I, ii, p. 123.
[5] *Ibid.*, I, ii, p. 122.
[6] Kyanzittha's Mon Inscription from an uncertain pagoda in the Mon area, dated 1098 A.D., in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, I, ii, p. 146.

These Bodhisattva ideals of Burma's Buddhist kings are a persistent theme in their epigraphy. The following (Pâli) inscription of Kyanzittha's successor, Alaungsitthu (dated 1131) [1] provides a beautiful example of the Theravâda Buddhist royal ideal of aspiring towards future Buddhahood:

"As this great being has fulfilled the Ten Perfections
And attained omniscience,
Releasing all from bondage,
So may I fulfill the Ten Perfections and attain Omniscience
And loose the bonds of all ....
... Whatever boon I seek,
It is the best of boons, *to profit all*
By this abundant merit I desire
Here nor hereafter no angelic pomp ... nor the state and
Splendours of a monarch, ...
But I would build a causeway sheer athwart
The river of Saṃsâra, and all folk would speed
Across, until they reach the Blessed City.
I myself would cross
And drag the drowning over ...
Ay, myself tamed, I would tame the wilful;
Comforted, comfort the timid;
Wakened, wake the asleep;
Cool, cool the burning;
Freed, set free the bound.[2]
Tranquil and led by the good doctrines
I would hatred calm.
"The three immoral states, greed, hate, delusion,
Rooted all in self, [cf. p. 39f.]
O may they die, whenever born in me!
Won not by oppression may my wealth remain.
Longing of sense for all delicious things,
Sounds, sights and touches, odours, relishes,
Pregnant of immorality, be gone! ....

[1] Not "1141": The Shwegugyi Pagoda Inscription with a translation [from Pâli] by G. H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin," in: Burma Research Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Publications*, No. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), pp. 379, 382–384.

[2] Parallelled in other Buddhist texts. Cf., for example, *Mahâvastu*, I, 49–50: transl. Jones, p. 42: "Having crossed over, may I lead others across, comforted, may I comfort others; emancipated, may I emancipate others."

... As the best of men,
Forsaking worldly fame and worthless wealth,
Fled, for he saw their meaning ...
So would I
All worldly wealth forsaking draw me near
Religion, and the threefold course ensue.
"I would fulfill hereafter, great and small
Those rules the Teacher gave for our behoof.
Borne through the elements, the spotless moon
Outdazzles all the constellated stars.
So I delighting in the Master's lore;
The Saint's religion, virtuously yoked,
Would shine among disciples. I would know
Sutta, and Abhidhamma, Vinaya, the Master's
Mind, his ninefold doctrine fraught with works
And Meaning.
.... Beholding man's distress I would put forth
My energies and save men, spirits, worlds, from
Seas of endless change.
"By merit of this act I would behold
Mettaya, captain of the world, endued
With two and thirty emblems, where he walks
Enhaloed on a rainbow pathway fair,
... and sets free
Saṃsâra's captives by his holy word ....
.... till clad in virtue's eight,
Informed by such a teacher I become
A Buddha in the eyes of spirits and man
... O might I thus
Compass a Buddha's duties and attain
... [Nirvana] lavish of abunding bliss."

Just as Burmese kingship derived itself from the first and perfect ruler, a Bodhisattva (cf. p. 13), so its ideal aspired towards a transformation of royalty into future Buddhahood. The future Buddha of Theravâda Buddhism is Mettaya (Maitreya). A cult of Maitreya (particularly developed in Mahâyâna Buddhism) is attested at Prome (southern central Burma – cf. p. 5f.) [1] already in the eight century,

[1] C.D., "The Bodhisattva Maitreya in Burma," in: *JBRS*, Vol. II (1912), p. 102.

and certainly was incorporated into medieval Theravâda Buddhism of Burma.[1] Maitreya-Mettaya is invoked in Sanskrit, Pâli and Mon inscriptions (including one attributed to King Anawrahta) of Pagan, where images of this Bodhisattva have been excavated. The supreme wish of those obtaining Merit through foundations or donations during the Period of Pagan was to find salvation in a future life when Mettaya shall be the Buddha.[2] In the Pagan Period, belief in him was important enough for the prospect of "never beholding the most high Arimittiya [Ari Mettaya]" to be used as a threat and curse against violators of pious endowments.[3] "May I become a disciple of Mettaya, the coming Buddha," so reads an inscription of 1298 by a king of the western Burmese state of Arakan.[4] And the expectation of Mettaya to appear as the future Buddha, after the dispensation of the Buddha Gautama shall have passed away, was still not extinct in Burma in the late nineteenth century.[5] Mettaya was to renew and fulfill the dispensation of Gautama Buddha which was meant not as an object of faith but rather as a goal of gnostic cognition of Causality. Future Buddhahood meant gnostic omniscience into the Causality of suffering: "He ..., who understands the words and their interpretation, who knows ..., he has received his last body, he is called the great Sage, the great man. I have conquered all, *I know all*, in all conditions of life I am free of pain, I have left all and through the destruction of thirst I am free, having learned myself, whom shall I teach?," said Buddha.[6] During his Enlightenment Buddha had answered Mara (the Tempter), who had offered him sovereign power over the world, that "... *when* I have attained the all-knowing truths, I shall be triumphant over the regions of the world."[7] In this sense, the ideal of Burmese kings, striving towards becoming the future Buddha Mettaya, was an aspiration towards the sublimation of their mere political power, an aspiration towards the transformation of the state into a soteriological institution through a welfare state basis (cf. p. 56f.), but particularly by virtue of the king's *exemplary Gnosis*. Political power over the world of impermanence rationalized and sublimated itself through a royal

[1] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 151.
[2] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma* (Amsterdam, 1936), pp. 42, 44f.
[3] Myazedi Inscription, in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. I, Part i, Nihar-Rajan Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 106; Than Tun, *op. cit.*, p. 57; Pe Maung Tin & G. H. Luce (as p. 59, fn. 1), Plate 2/32.
[4] Sin byu thikhin Trâ Mingyi's inscription in the temple of Buddhagayâ, Lines 6, 19, in: *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XI (Calcutta, 1912) pp. 119f.
[5] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 90.
[6] *Dhammapada*, 352, 353, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, Part i, p. 83.
[7] *Mahâvastu*, II, 324: transl. Jones, Vol. II, pp. 301f.

exemplary charisma of future Buddhahood, an exemplary charisma comprising the ideal of gnostic insight into the Causality of deliverance from impermanence. And the omniscience towards which Burma's Buddhist kings aspired, through rebirth in future Buddhahood, was to mean Buddhism's insight into Causation, the Gnosis of the Buddhist methodology of liberation from causationally determined fetters of transitoriness.[1] It was such Gnosis of deliverance that Kyanzittha in the 1090's and Alaungsitthu in 1131 prided themselves to be able to impart when they proclaimed (cf. pp. 60–63):

> The bar of the gate of heaven, ... by wisdom ... shall king Sri Tribhûwanâdityadhammarâja ... draw open .... He shall proclaim and voice the Law, which is even as a resounding drum. He shall arouse all the people that are slumbering carelessly .... He shall open the gate of heaven ... and shall bring all mankind into heaven. He shall empty the Four ... [painful states of existence] ... When the king of the Law shall preach the Law, the sounds of applause of all men [shall be] like the sound of rainstorm at the end of the year ...[2]

> "So may I obtain omniscience and loose the bonds of all ....
> I would build a causeway sheer athwart
> The river of Saṃsâra, and all folk would speed
> Across until they reach the Blessed City.
> I myself would cross
> And drag the drowning over.
> ... Beholding man's distress I would put forth
> My energies and save men, spirits, worlds, from
> Seas of endless change, ... as
> Mettaya ... sets free Saṃsâra's captives by his holy word ..." [3]

Buddha Mettaya's "holy word" embraces Metta, universal love (akin to the – largely Mahâyâna Buddhist – Karuṇâ, cf. p. 41), the experience that overcomes the illusion of "mineness" into a loving "self"-identification with all living beings. These ethics inspired pronouncements like Kyaswa's [Klacwâ] of Pagan edict of 1249: "... These words of mine ... are uttered in reliance on the omniscient words of the exalted Buddha. Kings of old put thieves to death by impaling them and in various ways. Not desiring the destruction of such creatures *but thinking of all creatures as myself*, I have spoken these words of mercy

[1] E. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients, Sendungsbewusstsein und Chiliasmus des Ostens* (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 332, 334.
[2] *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. I, Part ii, pp. 117f.; Vol. II, Part i, pp. 141f.
[3] As p. 62, fn. 1, above.

.... Thus if these words of mine are acted upon, happiness in this world and in the next will surely be obtained." [1] Such pronouncements were apparently inspired by examples of Buddha, who – according to the Vessantara Jâtaka, one of the birth stories of Buddha that were a most potent vehicle for the popularization of Buddhist ethics in Burma [2] – in a previous life said:

"And set me on the royal seat, this first boon I crave
May I condemn no man to death, not though he guilty be
Condemned, may I release from death: this second boon I crave
May all the people for their health look unto me,
The young, the old, the middle aged: this the third boon I crave ...
Conquering the world in righteousness: this the fifth boon I crave." [3]

Even a king craving conquest beyond righteousness, to the point of building pyramids of human skulls, like Hsinpyushin, whose forces invaded Siam, in 1767 destroyed the Siamese capital and then repulsed even the might of the Chinese Empire, professed hopes to become a future Buddha. In an inscription of 1774, this warrior-king longs for the *ability to dispel the ignorance of the numerous creatures, through omniscience,* before finally reaching the tranquil, immutable bliss and security from death, rebirth and old age in Nirvana.[4]

Under the same Konbaung Dynasty of Burma, in the early nineteenth century, after a period of Burma's military expansion, the king was still addressed as "lord of Wisdom, master of exalted golden Glory, Being aimed at leading all existences through the transmigrations from the sandy Shore of Misery [Saṃsâra], across the great whirlpool, into the noble, beautiful and excellent land of sublime Nirvana." [5] King's were accepted to be Bodhisattvas.[6] Burma's penultimate king Mindon (1853–1878) was glorified for his exemplary

[1] Amarapura Patodawgyi Stone Inscription [of Klacwā]: Pe Maung Tin, "Buddhism in the inscriptions of Pagan," in: *JBRS*, XXVI, i (1936), p. 70.
[2] Cf. G. Duroiselle, in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. I, Part i (Rangoon, 1920), pp. v–vi.
[3] Vessantara-Jâtaka (verse 572): Cowell, *Jâtaka... translated*, Vol. VI (1957), p. 295.
[4] *Po: U: Daung Inscription erected by King Sinbyushin in 1774.* Translation by Taw Sein Ko (Rangoon, 1891), p. 10, quotation by courtesy of Dr. Than Thun; Taw Sein Ko, "Po: U: Daung Inscription," in: *Indian Antiquary*, XXII (1893), p. 6 (1); "Intercourse between Burma and Siam as recorded in the Hmannan Yazawindawgyi," in: Siam Society, *Selected Articles from the Siam Society Journal*, Vol. VI (Bangkok, 1959), p. 21.
[5] U Pon Nya-i *Yei-thi pyạ za'* (Mandalay, no date: U Hla Pe's Edition), p. 121; Cf. A. Judson, *Burmese English Dictionary. Unabridged Centenary Edition* (Rangoon, 1953), p. 275, 6th line from below.
[6] Saya Pye, *Magadewa Lingathit*, p. 43, cited by Dr. Thaung, "Burmese kingship in theory and practice during the reign of Mindon," in: *JBRS*, XLII, Part ii (December, 1959), p. 175.

charisma of having instructed the people in the Buddhist cognition of Causality of Attachment and Suffering:

> He would give instruction repeatedly: "whatsoever meritorious deeds you do, long only for the absence of rolling on, not for rolling on." He would always give instruction with a religious discourse connected with the characteristic of impermanence. Not only this righteous king was the helper of the religion, virtuous and proud of the religion, but also all the inhabitants of the kingdom, who were obedient to their king, and supported by the righteous king, were the helpers of religion, virtuous and proud of the religion.[1]

Allusions to the cognition of the unity of all life, in the sense of the universalistic ethics of Metta, appear in the coronation exhortation directed to king Mindon: "O king, ... love compassionately everyone ..., treasure their lives as though your own .... Look after everyone as though after yourself. Guard their welfare as though your own .... Deign to watch over the country's inhabitants' welfare [like over your] own exalted self's welfare, over the life of all beings just as over [your] exalted self's life. O, great king, watch over and protect all men's welfare as [your] exalted person's welfare." [2] In an edict of 1853, king Mindon proclaimed his desire for the happiness of all beings and his wish to attain Buddhahood through good deeds. Similarly, his attainment of kingship, his having been born as "Lord of earth and water, Lord of the white elephant and of many white elephants, ... Lord of Life, and great chief of righteousness," was explained, in preambles to such ordinances, by his "having in the former state of existence accomplished all deeds of religion ...," "having attained the merit of a former state of existence by charitable deeds ..." [3] "... Meritorious deeds done in past existences, my kamma has designated the exalted king in the present life ...," proclaimed another stylized preamble of Mindon's edicts.[4]

[1] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 151–153: transl. B. C. Law, pp. 152f. (sic)

[2] *Myan-ma maha min-gala min: gan: to, Yaza thei wa-ka-di pa-ni hcani*, pp. 26f, Burmese text reprinted in: Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court under the Konbaung Kings," in: *JBRS*, XLIV, Part i (June, 1961), pp. 122f.

[3] Mindon's Edicts of April 24, 1853 and May 21, 1854, quoted by H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, pp. 363, 367.

[4] *Myan-ma Min: ou'hcou'poun sa-dan:*, Vol. III (Rangoon, 1933), p. 62, paragraph 352, cited by Ma Thaung, "Burmese Kingship in theory and practice during the reign of Mindon," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), p. 173.

CHAPTER XI

KAMMA AND BUDDHIST MERIT-CAUSALITY AS RATIONALE FOR MEDIEVAL BURMA'S SOCIAL ORDER

Already in the Pâli canon the ideal king, who in a subsequent life became Gautama Buddha, attributed his might and greatness to the fruits of Giving, Self-Conquest and Self-Control through kamma effects of past lives.[1] Historic kings of Ceylon likewise justified their exalted status by a favorable kamma from past lives.[2] And Burma's third historically attested king, Kyanzittha of Pagan, proclaimed in an inscription during the 1090's that in a former life he had been performing pious deeds at the time of the Buddha who preceded Gautama, that as a result he was subsequently reborn in two Indian dynasties: After giving happiness to all the people and piously observing the Ten Duties of Kings, he was born again as the sage Bisnû at the time of Gautama Buddha, who prophesied his future birth as king of Pagan, so that "all beings shall find shelter in the shade of [his] merit ..." [3]

A preamble of king Bodawpaya's ordinance of 1795 declared: "In proportion to the meritorious deeds done in past existences, my Kamma has designated the exalted kingship for me in the present life." [4] From Mindon (1853–1878), Burma's "righteous king [who] through the power of merit accumulated in many hundred of births obtained the wealth of kingship," [5] to Ba U, President of the republican Union of Burma, the belief in the positive kamma effects of good deeds

[1] *Mahâ-Sudassana Sutta*, II, 2: Buddhist Suttas translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI (1881), p. 271; Cf. *Mahâvastu*, I, i, 52: transl. Jones, Vol. I, pp. 1, 44f.
[2] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XLVIII, 114; LXXXVII, 61; XCIII, 15; XCIX, 9, 11: *Cûlavaṃsa* transl. W. Geiger (1953), Part I, p. 121; Part II, pp. 181, 226, 255f.
[3] Kyanzittha's Myakan Inscription of Myanpagan, in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. I, Part ii, pp. 126, 138ff.
[4] *Myan-ma Min ou:' hcou'poun sa-dan:*, III, § 352 [hke], p. 62; Saya Pye, *Magadewa Lingathit*, p. 206, quoted by Dr. Thaung, "Burmese kingship in theory and practice during the reign of Mindon," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), p. 173.
[5] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, Vi, 149: transl. B. C. Law, p. 149 (sic).

in past lives and negative kamma effects of bad deeds in a past life [1] remained a stabilizing force of social adjustment and integration.

Such concepts of kamma, as causality determining suffering, affected even the theories behind Burma's penal legislation, as Buddhist ethics tended to replace the ritual injunctions of the Brahmanic codes like that attributed to Manu.[2] Kamma causality served to reconcile the ethical maximalism of Buddhist social ideals (cf. p. 66) with expediency of the historical State and Government which by their very nature can, even at their best, only ensure an ethical minimum. Where pragmatic demands of society or else brutal arbitrariness inflicted the death penalty, killing was rationalized by the victim's kamma, (theoretically) not by his present guilt. Already in the narratives about Buddha's previous Lives, one personage thus consoles the widows of victims: "Your husbands, though innocent, have reaped the fruit of their *former* deeds. Do not grieve ..." [3] For crimes in their present lives the criminals were to suffer in some future existence under the indissoluble nexus of Cause and Effect that ruled the moral order inherent in the universe. Therefore, morally the act of crime could not be subject to punishment (or pardon by grace) by anybody's decision. In this context penalties could not be imposed for crime by any human (or divine) act. "Morally no punishment can be inflicted because in the Buddhist belief every deed will with unerring certainty bring its own definite ... [result] which can not be increased or diminished by the appreciation or condemnation of other beings." Yet crime had to be and was restrained for the defense of society. The Burmese Manu Kyay Dhammathat Code of the 1750's conceived crime not as moral offense but only as damage to society (and dealt with it largely by the principle of proportionate compensation). Where death was inflicted, it was not supposed to be a punishment for the crime but a consequence of negative kamma effects through evil deeds in past lives. And those who inflicted death (no matter what was the social "justification"), even the rulers who took upon themselves to pass sentences of death, were to suffer themselves in future existences the miseries resulting from manslaughter.[4] On the other hand, the

[1] Ba U, *My Burma: The autobiography of a President* (London, 1959), p. 175.
[2] M. Bode, *Pâli Literature of Burma*, pp. 87f.
[3] Bhadda-Sâla-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. IV (1901), p. 95.
[4] E. Forchhammer, *The Jardin Prize Essay on the sources and development of Burmese Law* (Rangoon, 1885), pp. 60, 75; M. Bode, *Pâli Literature of Burma*, pp. 85f; G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 353.

Burmese language has an expression for "supporting [someone] in return for having been supported in a previous existence." [1]

The idea that merit acquired would by the course of nature take its effect in future lives, became an important element of Burmese social ethics. The acquisition of merit for future lives became a source of social standing and even of charisma already in the life in which merit was performed. Thus, around 1364, the bandit Nget-pya robbed the rich and even the king, using the proceeds of his banditry to build a pagoda and to help the poor. When he was caught and tried, the use of his loot for works of merit on behalf of the people caused his acquittal; he was even appointed minister of state.[2] The merit of good works was thought to offset the guilt of evil deeds like bloodshed. Many of the most ruthless Burmese conquerors like Anawrahta, Buyin Naung and Alaungpaya (cf. p. 6,7) were the most lavish patrons of the Buddhist order and builders of pagodas but also of public works of social welfare. Buddhist merit was to be acquired by economic care for the monastic order and measures for public welfare in general.[3] Already Buddhist historiography of Ceylon, the cradle of Burma's Theravâda Buddhism, emphasized the royal merit of constructing water tanks for dry zones.[4] The urge to win Merit, in order to rise in the scale of future lives, became in early medieval Ceylon and then also in Burma, an important motivation of economic activity through public works as well as private endowments.[5]

While such search for Merit impelled much of the economic activity of pre-British Burma, it also contributed to the acceptance of the traditional social and political order. Hierarchical privileges of officials, and even arbitrary injustices, were explainable or acceptable as results of kamma. "From former action still both bliss and woe begin; ... each act's a debt discharged. Where then does guilt come in?" [6] Rulers could be even brutal and unjust and yet stay in power as long as they held that power by virtue of (almost magically conceived, pre-

[1] A. Judson's *Burmese-English Dictionary* (Rangoon, 1953), p. 799.

[2] This refers to the reign of king Thadomynbya, the last ruler of Sagaing and the first king of the Ava Dynasty; the pagoda referred to is the Mashikana Paya: Cf. Saya U Maung-gyi: *Myanma Yaza-win* (Rangoon, 1292/1930), pp. 279ff.

[3] *Saṃyutta Nikâya*, I, v, 7: English translation by Mrs. Rhys Davids, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part I (Sagâthâ-Vagga) Pali Text Society, *Translation Series*, No. 7 (London, 1950)], pp. 45–46.

[4] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XXXVII, 185f; XXXVIII, 45, 50f.

[5] Cf. H. D. Evers, *Die Entstehung einer Unternehmerschicht als Führungsgruppe im soziokulturellen Wandel der sinhalesisch-buddhistischen Kultur Ceylons* (unpublished Dissertation: Freiburg im Breisgau, 1962), pp. 45ff.

[6] Mahâbodhi-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. IV, p. 123.

Buddhist Energy-Force of) Merit from former lives. But, as soon as that past Merit became exhausted through a lack of additional Merit as against growing demerit of the present life, they would perish, even if it were through non-human agencies.[1] The position of the mighty of this world, like the throne of the heavenly king Sakka (Indra, identified in Burma with the king of the Nats [Nature Spirits], the Thagya Min [2]), literally became too hot when their Merit was exhausted [3] or outdone by the demerit of subsequent evil action.

Attachment to temporal joys, no matter how impermanent, was not always absent from the intentions of those seeking Merit to improve their kamma towards future lives. Thus, Queen Caw, wife of king Klacwâ (Kyaswa – cf. p. 65) of Pagan wrote:

> Before I attain Nirvana, by virtue of the work of Merit I have done on such a big scale, if I am born as a man, I wish to have prosperity and happiness above all men. If I am born a spirit, I wish to be endowed above all spirits with noble and enthralling beauty ... long-lived, ... beautiful, sweet-voiced, well proportioned in limbs, the beloved and honored darling of every man and spirit. Gold, silver, rubies, corals, pearls ..., may I have lots of them. By virtue of my power and glory I would be triumphant, with pomp and retinue, with fame and splendor. Wherever I am born, may I ... not know one speck of misery: And *after* I have tasted and enjoyed the happiness of man and the happiness of spirits, when the noble law of deliverance called the fruit of Sanctity blossoms, may I at last attain the peaceful bliss of Nirvana.[4]

Others desired to share with someone else the Merit they acquired through pious deeds, like other women of the same period expressed it: "May those who in future ... support this offering I have made share equally with me the Merit of my work ..., may all their miseries disappear, may they be endowed with prosperity ..., happiness of mind and body. And when the Law of instability takes place ..., after enjoying all the happiness, may they in the end get the boon

[1] *Hman-nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe (Mandalay, 1318/1956), cxxviii, p. 250; Cf. Mandhâtu-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. II, pp. 216f.

[2] A. Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*, p. 614.

[3] Kaṇha Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. IV, p. 6.

[4] G. H. Luce, "Prayers of ancient Pagan," in: *JBRS*, XXVI, iii (1936), p. 136; Pe Maung Tin, "Women in the inscriptions of Pagan," in: Burma Research Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Publications*, No. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), pp. 419f. My above quotation combines the text of these two translations. Cf. *Suttâvaddhananîti*, 73ff.: "By this my Merit may I attain Nibban (Nirvana); until then....may I obtain food, clothing, and wealth not by manual labour, but by supernatural power, according to my desires": J. Gray, *Ancient Proverbs and Maxims from Burmese Sources: the Nîti Literature of Burma* (London, 1886), p. 157, fn. 29. These collections, according to Gray (*ibid.*, p. viii), may go back into the thirteenth century, that is into the Pagan Period.

they have asked for and enter Nirvana where the Buddhas ... have entered." [1]

May the merit of my deed go also to the king, ... lord of land and water. By virtue of my work may he live long, seeking the welfare and happiness of all who live in the realm, and upholding this foundation. May the queens also, and all the ladies-in-waiting share it. May they look at one another with eyes of love, without one speck of anger or cloying .... May the king [of Death] Yama and all creatures also share it. May those who desire worldly prosperity get it .... For myself, I pray that I may never be covetous, insatiate, wrathful, bullying, ignorant, dull, stingy, mean, unfaithful, frivolous, forgetful nor inconsiderate. But I would cross Saṃsâra full of the good graces – modest in my wants, easily satisfied, mild of temper, pitiful, wise, conscious of causes, generous, large-handed, honest, unforgetful, and affectionate; and may I win deliverance in the very presence of the Lord Mettaya.[2]

In this inscription of the lesser queen Âmanâ such striving after unselfishness, the aspiration toward selflessness, followed after an insight into Suffering arising from Impermanence: "I wish to abandon a body oppressed by countless miseries – the miseries of birth, old age and death, the misery of separation from those we love, and of living with those we do not love, the misery of wanting a thing and not getting it. I long to reach the bliss of Nirvana. So I have resigned my dear and precious gold, silver and other treasures ..." [3] An ethos of renunciation born out of experience with the tragedy of Impermanence of all objects of attachment speaks with forcefulness from the very personal touch of such private inscriptions of medieval Burma: "When lord Gangasu died, my beloved husband, my very life, the apple of my eye, I suddenly felt the law of impermanence, and I was frightened and built a site for the Three Gems [the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Monastic Order]." [4] Another pious donor to the monastic order of Pagan had inscribed that he wanted "to rebel against the world of slavery to appetite" and – offered "a hundred slaves to serve the needs of the ... monks ...." "ere I reach Buddhahood." [5] In order to become a Buddha in a future life through the force of Merit, the court official Abinandathu made himself and his family slaves to a pagoda:

[1] Pe Maung Tin, "Buddhism in the inscriptions of Pagan," in: *JBRS*, XXVI, i (1936), p. 65; Archaeological Department of Burma, *List of Inscriptions*, No. 334.
[2] Pe Maung Tin, "Women in the inscriptions of Pagan", *op. cit.*, p. 419; Archaeological Department of Burma, *List of Inscriptions*, No. 311.
[3] G. H. Luce, "Prayers of ancient Pagan," in: *JBRS*, XXVI, iii (1936), pp. 136f.
[4] Archaeological Department, *List of Inscriptions found in Burma* (Rangoon, 1921), No. 259. Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *An introduction to the study of Theravâda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1946), p. 164.
[5] Archaeological Department, *List of Inscriptions*, No. 123, quoted by Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

In the month Wazo 541 [1179 A.D.] Abinandathu, a court official, regilded the Tainggyut pagoda, set a golden spire on it, built a new offering platform nearby .... and fed and clothed many monks. *Then he offered himself, his wife, and his two sons as slaves to the pagoda.* Also he offered five acres of rice fields ... in order that the produce might be used for rice offering at the pagoda. By virtue of this meritorious deed, may I and my pastors, masters, friends and kinsmen, escape the miseries of this life in this world and the next and at last attain Nirvana, and may I become a Buddha.[1]

While, for the sake of future lives, a lord would voluntarily enslave himself, in an age that saw the culmination of the Buddhist feeling of life in Burma's history, the whole people made the building of Buddhist monuments of Merit the main object of their activity. The ruins of their pagodas around Pagan cover sixteen square miles, almost every available inch of ground of the torrid plains of Pagan, and number nearly a thousand. Although the best known of these pagodas were those built by princes, the greater number was the work of private persons. Like the Gothic cathedrals of contemporary medieval Europe – and unlike contemporary Cambodian royal command-building performances of Angkor – Pagan's pagodas and monasteries were largely spontaneous acts of an entire people; "a labor of love" they are called by Harvey. Not slave labor constructed them; their builders received wages and board, the amounts of which have been recorded.[2] That the available economic resources were strained to the utmost for the endowments and servicing of monastic withdrawal and pursuit of deliverance from transitoriness, is testified by dozens of inscriptions recording donations of land, slaves, of entire villages for the regular upkeep of pagodas and monasteries, by the remains of dozens of monasteries strewn all over the area of Pagan. And these monuments of Buddhist piety were erected in the short span of two and a half centuries. Those of them that still pierce the Pagan sky are an undying testimony to the efflorescence of Buddhism during those glorious two hundred and fifty years. Their upward projecting shape, as if symbolizing world growing out of world, narrower and narrower towards the summit, were meant to express the longing for Nirvana in brick. The whole force employed is in an upward urge and the spire is its culmination – the summit to which countless soaring lines of

[1] Inscription from the porch of the Tainggyut Temple, quoted after G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 331f. Harvey is wrong in assuming that in this case the donor "outcasted himself": The Pagoda Slaves were not "outcastes" yet -as they became later. Cf. Than Tun, "Social life in Burma, A.D. 1044–1287," in: *JBRS*, XLI (December, 1958), pp. 37–47.
[2] G. H. Luce, "Economic life of the early Burmans," in: Burma Research Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Publications*, No. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), p. 341.

ascendent growth converge.[1] This summit, like a focus of rays from visible objects, points towards the boundless and that cosmic prototype where all images radiating from life meet.[2] That prototype was to symbolize the totality of existence. This ultimate principle of the union of all life was meant to reveal itself as the diversity of phenomena was to be surmounted.[3] Such symbolism is conveyed by the monuments of Pagan in which the earthbound gravity effect of horizontal lines is as far as possible annihilated. Pagodas, pointing toward the transcendental, where all life was to meet in unity, were what the proud conquerors of the Pagan Dynasty left after themselves. While elsewhere vainglorious tyrants built themselves lasting sepulchres, none of these men has a tomb to immortalize their transitory lives as individuals. It is a mistaken sentiment to contrast the early medieval splendor of Pagan with the mat huts of today. "Then as now hut jostled temple and housed even the great; the two were not antithetic but correlative: These men's magnificence went to glorify their religion, not to deck the tent wherein they camped during their transitory life." [4] And ultimately Pagan's empire crumbled and passed on like the impermanence the overcoming of which its monuments strove to symbolize. In vain did king Narathihapati (1254–1287) wish to interrupt the building of the Pagoda whose completion, according to a famous prophecy, was to coincide with the end of the realm of Pagan. His hope to evade the end of his kingdom by delaying the terminations of this pagoda proved a vain desire: the Kingdom of Pagan crumbled under the onslaught of the Mongol empire of Qublai Khan's China.

[1] G. H. Luce, "The greater Temples of Pagan," in: Burma Research Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Publications*, No. 2, p. 170.
[2] Cf. R. von Heine-Geldern, "Weltbild und Bauform in Südostasien," in: *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, IV (1930), pp. 28–78.
[3] P. Mus, pp. 799f.
[4] G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 70.

CHAPTER XII

BUDDHIST ETHICS AGAINST THE PRAGMATISM OF POWER UNDER THE BURMESE KINGS

But the Buddhist heritage of the Pagan Dynasty survived. Its Buddhist ethos remained for its successors a source of inspiration. Even the declining Burma of the later Konbaung Kings (who fell in 1885) continued to aspire towards that spirit of renunciation overflowing in the dedication of the Buddhist works of Merit. Thus an official of the harsh and arbitrary king Pagan Min (1846–1853) starts his dedication of a bell for a pagoda with vanities of his exalted office and concludes with yearning that, together with his Beloved, he may find the release from the bounds of the transitory: "... My wife, my life's breath ..., like to the pollen of a lily, from whom I will not be separated in all the existences to come, out of which we hope soon to escape, ... we adore before the lord Buddha that we may embark on the golden raft of the noble path which will conduct us towards the final plunge into Nirvana; we two ... have given this bell as an offering." [1] In nineteenth century Burma, personages who could be kings – in court drama, if not in actual history – renounced worldly power, withdrawing into the wilderness [2] where princes would become hermits.[3] The ethos of Gautama Buddha's renunciation of kingship remained symbolically perpetuated in the "Shin Pyu" Novitiation Ceremony in which the prospective monk was paraded with the symbols of regal splendor like Wishing-Trees (Padeytha Pin – cf. p. 88f) before renouncing Family, Property and Desire.[4] In this situation, the parents bowed before their sons in the otherwise age hierarchy-

[1] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, pp. 206f.
[2] U: Kyin U, "Parpahein," in: U: Kyin U, *Papahein-pyạ za' hniṇ Hanthawadi U: Ba Yin-ị ahpyei soun* (Rangoon, 1318/1956), p. 158.
[3] U: Kyin U-ị, *Deywagonban-pyạ za' hniṇ Hanthawadi U: Ba Yin-ị ahpyei soun* (Rangoon, no date), pp. 271f.
[4] R. Paw U, "*The Buddhist Priesthood in Burmese Society*" (unpublished Dissertation: Columbia University, 1948), p. 37.

conscious Burmese society. Without exception, the mighty of this world were and still are expected to incline themselves before the monk – as a symbol of the Nirvana-pursuit being above all worldly power.

Ideally and theoretically the king – beginning with Anawrahta of Pagan (cf. p. 6) – was in relation to the monastic order only a lay worshipper.[1] Such theoretical subordination of royalty to the monastic order derived from the Buddhist rationale of kingship and mitigated Burmese autocracy. Sometimes the monkhood tried to temper violence against dynastic rivals.[2] Thus the Primate Panthagu could reproach forcefully, though vainly, the fratricide king Narathu of Pagan (1167), builder of the Damayangyi Pagoda,[3] gloomily shaped like a yearning of despair and the caverns of a conscience (Gordon Luce's formulation). Rajadirit (Yazadirit), of the Shan dynasty ruling Pegu, was (in 1401) persuaded to recall his forces approaching the Burmese capital Ava, when a monk sent by his adversary explained to him the implications of destroying human life as a great obstacle to rebirth as a human being.[4] While such arguments could not have had any effect without the Buddhist ideals of kingship, they may have also served to save face in embarrassing military situations. But when a military setback induced the Burmese conqueror king Buyin Naung (cf. p. 7) to "lock up into heat ... in order to burn to death" his defeated commander and his men, "the totality of Burmese, Mon and outside [yun:] abbots exaltedly deigned to unite ... Extinguishing the fire, [they] released ... the lord and the totality [of his] soldiers from the heat," escorting them into the safety of their monasteries (1567?), [5] just as they had persuaded this Burmese king not to burn alive all the participants of a Mon uprising in Pegu (1564).[6] Again and again the Buddhist monkhood of Burma intervened to save lives from despotism and even from penal law. And if the arbitrary brutality of power in Burma went further in cruelty than in the pre-totalitarian Occident, Burma's Buddhist monkhood went also further in the protection of human life than did the historical Churches of Christendom who have hardly resisted and on the whole tacitly recognized the claims of temporal powers to inflict death.

[1] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 58: transl. B. C. Law, p. 65.
[2] Cf. J. G. Scott, "Religion and its semblances," in: *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, Vol. ii (Rangoon, 1900), p. 2.
[3] *Hman-nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe (Mandalay, 1318/1956), CXLII, p. 340.
[4] *Ibid.*, Duti-twe (Mandalay, 1319/1957), p. 17.
[5] *Ibid.*, Duti-twe, p. 404.
[6] *Ibid.*, Duti-twe, p. 404.

The Talapoins [Burma's Buddhist monks] ... sometimes even withdrew criminals from the hands of justice. Indeed under the predecessors of ... king [Bodawpaya: 1781–1819] a capital punishment was a rare occurrence. For no sooner did the Talapoins [monks] hear that a criminal was being led to execution than they issued from their convents in great number with heavy sticks concealed under their habits, with which they furiously attacked the ministers of justice, put them to flight, and unbinding the culprit conducted him to their [monasteries] .... In thus saving the lives of criminals, they believe that they are doing an act of piety .... They think that it must ... be meritorious to preserve the lives of others, though by so doing they inflict a grievous injury on society,

wrote the Roman Catholic missionary Sangermano, who up to 1806 was working in Burma for the cause of historical Christendom.[1] His claim that under king Bodawpaya (who had exterminated his own male relatives) the monks "do not venture upon such bold measures" is refuted by French eye-witness reports from the year 1784, describing how monks would snatch victims condemned to death literally from the hands of the executioner.[2] Under Burma's last pious Buddhist king Mindon (1853–1878), the Abbot Sayadaw Pa Kan Ahmat-gyi (with the title of Thet-tawshe) could press the king himself to revoke death sentences.[3] In 1879 he had to save one of Mindon's sons from massacre by the latter's half-brother Thibaw.[4] Yet a quarter of a century earlier, in an edict of May 21, 1854, king Mindon of Burma had hopefully proclaimed:

"Hoping that all evil passions inherent in humanity may subside in the breast of all created beings, and further to secure the merit of rescuing from calamity those who are suffering privations and afflictions and confinement, and having preserved the land-animals, birds and fishes from injury, I now grant an amnesty and general release to prisoners. Let them, therefore, without exception, be entirely released." [5] On the occasion of coronations, all prisoners throughout the empire were customarily released. For a week all courts of law were closed, nobody could be arrested and no fish could be caught.[6] This is to be associated with the Buddhist ideal of kingship comprised in the coronation ceremony (cf. p. 67).

[1] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 95.
[2] H. Cordier, "Les Français en Birmanie au XVIIIe Siècle. Notes et Documents," in: *T'oung pao*, Vol. II 1891), p. 13.
[3] W. L. Baretto, *King Mindon* (Rangoon, 1935), p. 30; Cf. *Koun: baun-ze' Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:* (Mandalay, 1267/1905), p. 1135.
[4] "Pacification of Upper Burma. A vernacular history," p. 83.
[5] H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, p. 367.
[6] J. G. Scott, "Palace customs in Burma under native rule," in: *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, Vol. ii, p. 86.

But although almost all Burmese kings professed a Buddhist ethos and although some of them strove to live up to it, the ordinary power practice of rulers obviously frequently contradicted the Buddhist ethics of regard for all living beings – in spite of patronage of the monastic community by almost all the kings of Burma. Although only one ruler in Burmese history, Thohanbwâ (Sirihaṃsvâ) is known to have massacred monks and plundered monastic property (1525–1527), the general ruthless power practice of numerous historic kings inculcated in Burmese tradition an experience of the moral dangers of Power. Already in the Buddhist monastic regulations of the Pâli Canon "danger from kings" is put before "danger from robbers, from fire, from water, ... from beasts of prey." [1] Threats of calamity caused by rulers (as well as by fire, thieves and enemies in general) were invoked as imprecations around 1826.[2] Even a loyal official of king Pagan Min expressed in a votive inscription his hope to be freed from the Five Enemies [3] ("yan-dhu-myou: nga: pa:"), proverbially known in the Burmese language as the hostile dangers from Rulers, Water, Fire, Thieves and Disease and still recently referred to by the popular Buddhist preacher U Nye Ya.[4] In almost every monastic school of Burma was (or still is) taught the Lokanîti, a popular collection of both moral and prudential maxims,[5] popular maxims including the saying that "fire, water, ... and *royal families* – these should be pacified by avoiding them; suddenly they take away life." "Although living, four persons are declared to be dead ...: one in poverty, one in sickness, a fool, one in debt and *one who serves a king*." [6] The latter saying goes back to a Hindu source. But the famous Buddhist "Questions of Milinda," the only Northern Buddhist work transmitted in Pâli translations to Theravâda Buddhist Burma and accepted there as a standard authority, also states that "kings are grasping. The princes might, in the lust of power, subjugate an extent of country twice or thrice the size of what they had, but they would never give

[1] *Mahâvagga*, II, xv, 4: Vinaya Texts translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids & Hermann Oldenberg, in: *SBE*, Vol. XIII (1881), p. 261.
[2] John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, Vol. II (London, 1834), Appendix, p. 48.
[3] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 207.
[4] Tharrawaddy U: Nye Ya Ashin Mya', *Sasana lu-zun: gaun* (Rangoon, 1319/1957), p. 5.
[5] J. Gray, *Ancient Proverbs and Maxims from Burmese Source; or, the Niti Literature of Burma*, p. x; cf. U Nu, speech of February 28, 1951, in: U Nu, *From Peace to Stability. Transl. selected speeches* (Rangoon, 1951: Ministry of Information), p. 180.
[6] *Lokanîti*, 125; 141: J. Gray, *ibid.*, pp. 28, 31.

up what they already possess." [1] Because Theravâda Buddhism has either radically reduced or altogether eliminated the superhuman position of Indic kings, an outright "anarchic spirit" has been attributed to it.[2] A Buddhist canonic text, the celebrated Dhammapada, specifically states that "Self is the lord of self, who else could be the lord ..." [3] (cf. p. 40). And Hell is said to be nothing but "the state of bondage to others." [4] World domination was among the temptations that Gautama Buddha resisted and rejected in order to reach Buddhahood.[5] From previous lives, as son of a king, he recollected,

> "My father took me on his lap, but midst his fondling play,
> I heard the stern command he gave, 'at once this miscreant [robber] slay,
> Saw him in sunder, – go, that wretch impale without delay."

And the future Buddha took upon himself suffering upon suffering only to avoid becoming king. Eventually, his father, the monarch, too followed him into renunciation.[6] That the pragma of Power with its political expediency worked as an obstacle to the ethos of renunciation and detachment, this was an historic experience of the Buddhist peoples: Even the great Ashoka, in spite of his repentance over the bloodshed by which his empire had been built, did not withdraw from conquered Kaliṅga (cf. p. 30). "Thus, reflecting that sovereignty, being the source of manifold works of merit, is at the same time the source of many an injustice, the men of pious heart will never enjoy it, as if it were sweet fruit mixed with poison," is said in the Chronicle of Ceylon's kings.[7] Burma's third historical king, Kyanzittha decorated his famous Ânanda Pagoda at Pagan (around 1090) with illustrations and explanations about that past life of Gautama Buddha in which the Bodhisattva had preached: "If I become a king, I shall be born in hell and suffer great pain and ... my father *through being a king* is

[1] *Milinda-pañha*, IV, ii, 2: The Questions of King Milinda translated from the Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XXXV (1890), pp. xi-xii; 203.
[2] G. Coedès, *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor* (Paris, 1947), p. 66.
[3] *Dhammapada*, 160: *SBE*, Vol. X (1881), p. 45.
[4] *Praśnottattaramâlika*, XX, cited by H. Nakamura, *The Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Tokyo, 1960), p. 67.
[5] R. Spence Hardy, *A manual of Buddhism, in its modern development, translated from Singhalese* (London, 1853), p. 157; Cf. *Mahâvastu*, II, 321: transl. Jones, Vol. II, pp. 299f.
[6] Min:pu Sayadaw U: Aw Ba Tha-ị, *Temiya Za'-to-gyi*: (Rangoon, 1956), pp. 293 ff.
[7] *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXXVI, 133: transl. W. Geiger (London, 1912), p. 266.

becoming guilty of grievous action which brings men to hell." [1] Thus it was precisely "political Buddhism," as an ideal of consistent application of Buddhist values to the conduct of state, that revealed the tragic incompatibility between political pragmatism of power and Buddhist ethics.

Yet it was the personal and political conduct of the ruler through which was to be expressed, realized and experienced the cosmic Dhamma in human affairs: In theory the Indic "science of politics" (Arthaśâstra) "was to be subordinated to and governed by universal and unitary ethics operative for the ruler and his subjects alike." As protector of the Buddhist monastic order, the king was to serve the people through the monkhood.[2] On the other hand, some Buddhist monks occasionally were employed by the Burmese kings. Around 1606 two monks gained the favor of king Mahâdhammarâja, through their aptitude for state affairs, acting as advisors. But the monastic order disapproved of them. They have not been given a place in the "succession of Theras [Elders]." [3] The enormous influence of Buddhist monks in Burma has never been a political influence of the monastic order as Buddhism's only institution. Contrary to Mahâyâna Buddhism of Tibet (and partly medieval Japan), the Theravâda Buddhist monkhood of Burma had not "ever aimed at any share in the management or direction of the affairs of the country," writes the Catholic bishop Bigandet.[4] Though the Buddhist monastic order of Burma was more efficiently organized than the state itself, it has never attempted to seize political power. It mitigated blood and iron power practices of numerous Burmese rulers but could not eliminate them altogether, as the above quoted negative Buddhist evaluations of monarchic authority showed.

In practice, the main spheres of political power could not be rationalized in Buddhist terms. Against the background of ruthless power practices of numerous historic monarchs, the Bodhisattva ideal of kingship proved only a partial ideational foundation for the royal charisma: Even in Theravâda Buddhist states like Burma, kingship remained largely based on Hinduistic concepts. Hinduism's relativistic ethics did provide more effective principles for ruthless power practices

[1] Mon language plaques of the Ananda Pagoda, explaining its illustrations from the Mûga-Pakkha Jâtaka, in: *Epigraphia Birmanica*, Vol. II, Part i (Rangoon, 1921), p. 3.
[2] R. Gard, *An introduction to the study of Buddhism and political authority*, p. 5.
[3] M. Bode, *The Pâli Literature of Burma*, p. 50.
[4] P. Bigandet, *The life or legend of Gautama, the Buddha of the Burmese, with annotations, notices on the phongies or Buddhist religious and the ways to Nibban* (Rangoon, 1858), p. 273.

than could the indiscriminate Buddhist ethos of overcoming Universal Suffering: "*Forgiveness* shown to friend or foe, is an ornament *in the case of hermits*, while the same when shown to offenders by kings is a blemish," says such a Hindu maxim.[1] Such Hindu maxims were learned by Burmese kings and influenced their practice.[2] For the pragmatic aspects of Burmese kingship such Hindu ethics, gradated by life situations, were more relevant than Buddhism's ethical universalism of causality. "A purely Buddhist ruler doubtless ... can preach to ... people to be good and pious, but can piety *alone* save a country from its enemies? Doubtless ... he can show his people the way to paradise. ... But as king he must also be able to *look to this world, as different from the next* ... An able soldier ... will be able to guard his kingdom from its enemies, to suppress robbers and thieves, and to enforce discipline and order among his people." [3]

While from Buddha was derived the methodology of universal deliverance, the kingly rule over the world was derived from the Brahmanic god Indra (Sakka).[4] (Sakka was identified in Burma with the Thagya Min, King of the Nats or pre-Buddhist animism that survive in the Burmese folk outlook side by side with Buddhism, supplying the feared supreme beings and objects of prayer that Buddhism lacks.) Already in ancient Buddhist Ceylon Brahmans officiated at coronation ceremonies.[5] In Burma too (as in Siam and particularly Cambodia) [6] Brahmans used to conduct coronation ceremonies, most elaborately since the late eighteenth century but probably already since the eleventh century,[7] if not earlier. Under Burma's last dynasty such Hindu enthronement rites included not only the symbolic Plowing (cf. p. 51) but also offerings to the Hindu deities Parameśvara and Vishnu (Vithano) and symbolic associations between royalty and the rulers of Devaloka (the world of Gods). "Sakka [Indra] ... is in heaven what the earthly king was in Burma." [8]

[1] *Hitopadeśa of Na'ra'yaṇa*, edited with a Sanskrit commentary, translation and notes in English, by M. R. Ka'le (Bombay, 1924), p. 70.

[2] Cf. J. Gray, *Ancient Proverbs and Maxims from Burmese Sources, or: The Nîti Literature of Burma*, p. 141, fn. 46.

[3] Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Law Tales. The legal element in Burmese folklore* (London, 1962), p. 84.

[4] Cf. C. F. Koeppen. *Die Religion des Buddha* (Berlin, 1857), p. 251.

[5] *Mahâvaṃsa*, X, 79: W. Geiger, *The Culture of Ceylon in medieval times* (Wiesbaden, 1960), p. 128.

[6] Cf. K. Landon, *Southeast Asia: Crossroad of Religions* (Chicago, 1949), pp. 131f.; O. Frankfurter, "Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur Siams," in: *Ostasiatische Studien*, Vol. XXIII/XXV (Berlin, 1922), pp. 72–77.

[7] G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 325.

[8] C. Duroiselle, *Guide to the Mandalay Palace*, p. 39, quoted by Yi Yi, "Thrones of the Burmese kings," in: *JBRS*, XLIII, ii (December, 1960), p. 106; Yi Yi "Life at the Burmese Court under the Konbaung Kings," in: *JBRS*, XLIV, Part i (1961), pp. 85, 119, 121, 128.

CHAPTER XIII

STATIC COSMOLOGICAL MODELS FOR THE MEDIEVAL BURMESE STATE AS MICROCOSM

Kings were to have as their prototype Indra, king of the gods. And the royal capitals were to be like the City of the Gods, with the royal palace being modeled after the palace of Indra, already in the (Jâtaka) narratives about Buddha's former lives and in the Chronicle of medieval Ceylon.[1] "The king built a palace resembling that of Sakra [Indra]," was written about Bodawpaya in 1816.[2] Through such identification with the mythical abode of Indra, the royal palace, even in nineteenth century Burma, was still identified with Mount Meru as its archetype.[3] This mythical Mount Meru (Myin: mo) was for premodern Burma the centre of the universe, as conceived in Hindu-Buddhist cosmology.[4] Around it were thought to be seven circular mountain ranges, separated from each other by seven annular seas.[5] The whole circular universe was thought to be surrounded by an enormous rock wall [6] which enclosed an ocean with four insular continents, each of them set in cardinal directions.[7] The continent of

[1] Pañcagaru-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. I (1895), p. 289; Cûlavaṃsa, LXXII, 328–329; LXXXV, 110; LXXXVIII, 116, 121: transl. W. Geiger, Part I (Colombo, 1953), p. 348; Part II, pp. 169, 191 -with regard to Parakkamabâhu I and Parakkamabâhu II (1153–1186, respectively 1236–1271) and Vijayabâhu IV (1271–1273). Beliefs in earthly parallels to heavenly prototypes, ideas of the Earth as image of Heaven, with lands, towns and rivers having celestial prototypes, are traced to ancient Mesopotamia and may have entered Indic traditions through the pre-Aryan Indus Valley Civilization since the third millenium B.C.

[2] Wun-dau' Shwe taun Anawrahta, Sihasana hma sa-tho yaza pallin-to 9 ya' lou' si lou' ni: satan [India Office Palm Leaf Manuscript of 1816, Chevelliot 3473], VI, kai wam: 2–6, quoted by Yi Yi, "Thrones of the Burmese Kings," in: *JBRS*, XLIII, ii (December, 1960), p. 107.

[3] Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court...", p. 85; J. G. Scott, "Palace Customs in Burma under native rule," in: *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, Vol. ii (Rangoon, 1900), p. 154.

[4] *Vinaya Pitaka*: Ma U: Sayadaw Paya: Gyi:, *Pâramitâ Atakata* (Mandalay, no date), p. 100

[5] Cf. Slab Inscription No. 1 of King Mahinda IV of Ceylon (about 1026–1042 A.D.), in Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Epigraphia Ceylanica*, Vol. I (London, 1912), p. 226.

[6] Ma U: Sayadaw Paya: Gyi:, *Pâramitâ Atakata*, p. 112.

[7] Ashin Zanakabhiwantha, *Atama can: za Kou cin Abhidhamma* (Amarapura, 1320/1958), pp. 317f.

Mount Meru was called Jambudvîpa and considered the abode of men.[1] On the smaller islands around it were supposed to dwell the English and other non-Indic peoples. There, just as in the countries of barbarians (ignorant of Buddhism) and in the three other island continents (including the otherwise blissful Uttarakuru – cf. p. 89), Merit could not be obtained, it was thought, not even by good works, because of the absence of Buddhist Enlightenment. Such enlightenment about causation was thought possible only in Jambudvîpa, the abode of men, the continent of Buddhism: Only in this continent of Bodhisattvas and universal monarchs (cf. p. 91) were Buddhas said to have been ever born.[2]

Only from our wonderful sphere [Jambudvîpa] did lord Buddha deign to be exaltedly born. Also [it was] in our wonderful sphere [that he] meditated. In the other three islands, the Western Island, the Northern Island, the Eastern Island, lord Buddha does not deign to have his exalted birth. In our Jambudvîpa, the Southern Island only, did lord Buddha exaltedly deign to be born.[3] On the Southern Island Jambudvîpa's middle and circular center, grows the Bodhi Tree. Near this Bodhi Tree lord Buddha deigned to have his exalted birth ... [There] through Merit and virtue, the [pious] lords of the worldly state [for the sake of] freedom from all kamma travel slowly [towards] the Resting Place of Nibban [Nirvana]. [There, in Jambudvîpa only] can they go to this crowning victory.[4]

As it was on the insular continent of Jambudvîpa that Gautama Buddha found his Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, its site became the center of the human earth, according to Buddhist cosmology.[5] And Jambudvîpa the continent of man was sometimes poetically called "Nirvana's Ferry," [6] while in Burmese sources it often designates Burma.[7]

[1] Main: hkain: Sayadaw, *Witi poun, hpoun sin, hsan: poun thein poun* (Rangoon, 1290/1928), pp. 52f., 68.

[2] Spence Hardy, *A manual of Buddhism, in its modern development*, pp. 4, 449; Cf. Niśśaṅka-Malla's Galpota Slab Inscription at Poḷonnaruva (about 1195 A.D.), in: *Epigraphia Zeylancia*, Vol. II, p. 115.

[3] Saya U Tein: Han, *Lei: cun: zaca pahka-dein* (Mandalay, 1320/1959), no pagination, second page.

[4] *Ibid.*, fifth and sixth page.

[5] Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*, p. 742.

[6] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 9; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 93.

[7] M. Bode, *The Pâli Literature of Burma*, pp. 16f. "Bhâratâ [India] is... the best of the divisions of Jambudvîpa, because it is the land of works. The others are places of enjoyment alone. It is only after many thousands of births and the aggregation of much merit, that living beings are sometimes born in Bhâratâ, as men. The gods themselves exclaim: 'Happy are those who are born, even from the conditions of gods, as men in Bhârata-varsha, as that is the way to the pleasures of paradise or of final liberation. Happy are they who... obtain existence in that land of works...'"; *Viṣṇu Purâṇa*, II, iii: *The Vishnu Purana, a systematic Hindu mythology and tradition*, translated by H. H. Wilson, Vol. II (London, 1865), pp. 136f.

In Burma, as in other Indianized states the basic idea of empire organization was harmony with the cosmos; the state was conceived as a microcosm, an image of the universe.[1] The empire's capital was to be its symbolic (though not consistently geographical) center: In the spirit of the early Hindu Brâhmaṇa scriptures, royal power derived strength from the ritualistic concentration of all regions of the state around the king, through an allegory of the universe. The monarch's personal power tended to be identified with the world order as it expressed itself in the world centering around the capital. The royal city and the palace were instruments of cosmic power.[2] The capitals of medieval Burma were ideally to be the world's axis, patterned after Mount Meru. The imagery of Mount Meru was to assure the king ideal possession of the world's axis linking the earth with the cosmos.[3] The permanency of this world center is reflected in the notion of continuity of Capitals in Burmese historiography, from legendary Tagaung to Prome and historic Pagan (cf. p. 5f.). Around such capitals Burmese dynastic history tended to group events "centripetally," even when centrifugal realities prevailed in periods of Burma's division between contending dynasties (particularly before 1044 and 1287–1539). Prome was allegedly designed after the model of Indra's City of Gods.[4] In the Mon state of Pegu (Lower Burma) the throne hall stood on a stepped pyramid, shaped like Mount Meru, which on its summit carried Indra's paradise of the Thirty-three Gods. It was according to their number (with Indra as King) that since the fourteenth century the territories of Pegu were divided into thirty-two provinces. The Burmese conqueror Buyin Naung (1551–1581, cf. p. 7) symbolized possession through a palace conceived as image of the universe.[5] The last royal capital of Burma, Mandalay (built in 1857) was designed as a square corresponding to the four cardinal directions and centered around the Palace. The gates of the capital were marked with the signs of the zodiac,[6] perhaps in the tradition of the four gates of the mythical royal city Kusâvati of the Great King of Glory of the Pâli

[1] R. von Heine-Geldern, "State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," in: *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. II (1942), pp. 16f.; Cf. W. Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Bonn, 1920), pp. 180–189.
[2] Paul Mus, p. 649.
[3] Paul Mus, p. 710.
[4] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Pahtama-twe, CV (Mandalay, 1318/1956), pp. 192f.
[5] R. von Heine-Geldern, "Weltbild und Bauform in Südost-Asien," in: *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, IV (1930), pp. 53f.
[6] J. G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Vol. II, Part ii, p. 157; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions* (London, 1910), p. 478.

Canon.[1] Thereby the capital – and within it the palace – symbolized the centre of the universe, in a microcosmic sense, surrounded (just like Mount Meru) by constellations. Particularly the spire (Pyatthat) of the palace above the king – as the throne of Mandalay under him – was still under King Mindon (who died 1878) conceived as center of the universe.[2] The royal throne was a microcosm in relation to the empire, and the empire in relation to the universe.

"Center of the Earth" and "Center of the Universe" were some of the formula used for formally addressing the King of Burma even in the nineteenth century.[3] He sat between symbols of the Four Cardinal Directions, the Four Guardians of the World, ornamenting his throne.[4] To this cosmocentric position of the king corresponded the symbolism of his Four Chief Ministers, the four Wungyis constituting the executive council (Hlutdaw).[5] Each of them originally had charge of one quarter of the capital and one quarter of the empire, corresponding to the Four Great Guardians of the World, the Four Lokapâlas of the cardinal points, lords of a lower paradise on the slope of Mount Meru.[6] These associations of the king's chief officers with Indra's Four Guardians of the World were found already in old Ceylon.[7] In the last Ceylonese monarchy, in Kandy (which lasted until 1815) the four main chiefs were called Lords of the Quarters (disâva, disâpati).[8] It was to their prototypes, the Four Guardians of the World or the Four Heavenly Kings,[9] that Buddha allegedly entrusted the four parts of the world when he entered into Nirvana.[10]

[1] *Mahâ-Sudassana-Sutta*, I, 5: Buddhist Suttas translated by Rhys Davids, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI (1881), p. 250.

[2] W. L. Barretto, *King Mindon* (Rangoon, 1935), p. 17.

[3] U: Kyin U, *Papahein-pyạ za' hniṇ Hanthawadi U: Ba Yin-ị ahpyei soun* (Rangoon, 1318/1956), p. 47.

[4] C. Duroiselle, A guide to Mandalay Palace, p. 40, cited by Yi Yi, "Thrones of the Burmese Kings ...." in: *JBRS*, XLIII (December, 1960), Part ii, p. 106.

[5] Cf. John Cady, *A history of modern Burma* (Ithaca, USA, 1960), p. 16.

[6] R. von Heine-Geldern, "State and Kingship in Southeast Asia", *op. cit.*, p. 20. The officials representing those ministers carried flags in the colors attributed to the corresponding sides of Mount Meru, the colors of the cardinal directions. Cf. H. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies* (London, 1931), p. 31, regarding the invocation of the Four Lokapâlas of Mount Meru during the coronation ritual of old Thailand.

[7] *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXX, 89; XXI, 29f.: transl. W. Geiger (London, 1912), pp. 207, 144; *Cûlavaṃsa*, LXXII, 59: transl. W. Geiger, (Colombo, 1953), Part I, p. 324, fn. 6.

[8] F. A. Hayley, *Sinhalese Laws and Customs* (Colombo, 1923), pp. 39, 49, cited by A. M. Hocart, "The Four Quarters," in: *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Vol. I, iii (January, 1927), p. 107.

[9] Cf. *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXI, 29f; XXX, 89: transl. W. Geiger, pp. 144, 207.

[10] Przyluski, *La légende de l'empereur Açoka*, pp. 168, 399f.; Cf. W. Kirfel, *Symbolik des Buddhismus* [*Symbolik der Religionen*, herausgegeben von F. Herrmann, Vol. V. (Stuttgart, 1959)], p. 25.

The cycle of eternal return was symbolized by the cosmic spires around which beings passed into each other without permanent personality. This passing into each other was conceived as constituting their only reason for existence and their only manner of existence. The external form of this Saṃsâra-Impermanence was the Cosmos as symbolized in the architecture of kingship over the royal throne. Above its archetype, the cosmic axis, over the earthly pole, was thought to be the paradise of Metteya, the Future Buddha.[1] Towards this paradise even Theravâda Buddhist kings hoped to approach Mettaya (cf. p. 45): The throne on which they sat, by being the centre of the earth, was to approach the Bodhi Tree of Enlightenment under which Buddha sat, this being the center of the human earth (cf. p. 83, 85). *Not* only in Mahâyâna Buddhism but also in the folklore of Theravâda Buddhist Burma, Buddhahood was associated with kingship (cf. p. 44ff.). And the access to Nirvana came to be described as access to a Royal City.[2] In Burmese literary usage, Nirvana was called the Golden City ("Neibban ti: hu shwe myou"; "Shwe myou-to"). Very similar (if not almost identical) designations were used for Burma's last royal capital, Mandalay.[3] In that center of the state the Buddhist Moral Law of Dhamma-Righteousness was to have its greatest concentration,[4] just as in the Pâli Canon the mansion of the great King of Glory is "a palace to be called Righteousness." [5] Great King of the Kings of the Law (Mahâdhammarâjâ-dhirâjâ) and Master of the Universe (Lokadhipatipaṇḍita) was, until 1885, one of the titles of Burma's king.[6] By normative, not descriptive terminology, the Royal City, a mythical model, was "located in the Golden Age," impregnating, almost magically, the repetitions of this ideal, incantations "calling into existence" the ideal state they described. Such conventional formulae aimed at the "Essence, a secret soul of visible things" Conventionally the ruler was to aspire to establish the the Golden Age. One wanted to believe in his sovereignty over the entire Island Continent (Dîpavatî).[7]

[1] Paul Mus, pp. 651f., 720, 731.
[2] Paul Mus, p. 966.
[3] Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*, pp. 573, 877.
[4] Paul Mus, p. 696.
[5] *Mahâ-Sudassana-Sutta*, I, 67; I, 69–70, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI (1881), pp. 264f.
[6] Yi Yi, "Life at the Burmese Court," p. 86.
[7] Université de Paris, Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, XXXV: Paul Mus, *La Lumière sur les Six Voies. Tableau de la transmigration bouddhique* (Paris, 1939), pp. 44–45, fn.

CHAPTER XIV

HINDU-BUDDHIST UNIVERSALIST IDEALS OF A WORLD STATE

Such universalistic visions of a world state were expressed in hymns chanted in 1853 at the coronation of Mindon of Burma: "... Great chief of Righteousness, may [thy] rule extend not only to the great Southern Island ... but also to all the four great and five hundred small islands: May it equal the stability of ... Myen-mo [Meru Mountain, the Centre of the Universe] ... When ... Buddha ascended the golden throne, all ... beings became his subjects and he overcame all enemies; so may kings by hundreds and by thousands do homage to the [King's] golden feet." [1] Just as Burma's historiography derived the genealogy of its dynasties from Buddha's Sâkya family (cf. p. 6), so the Sâkyas have earlier been derived from rulers over all the Four Island Continents.[2] An alternative to Gautama's Buddhahood would have been universal emperorship.[3] An association if not identification of Buddhahood with ideal universal rulership is expressed symbolically both in Gautama Buddha's imperial funeral and in the use of the term Cakkavattî for the Buddha as well as for the ideal universal emperor. Cakkavattî (Chakravartin) means "Roller of the Wheel of Sovereignty," the wheel symbolizing also the teachings of Buddha.[4]

When the subsequent Buddha, in a previous life, ruled as king in Benares (according to the Mahâsîlava-Jâtaka), killers were brought before him and he inquired: "'My children, why have you killed my villagers?' 'Because we could not make a living,' said they. 'Then why did you not come to me? See that you do not do the like again,' and

[1] H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, Appendix C, p. 352.
[2] Vinaya der Mûlasarvâstivâdin, Tok. XVII, 3, p. 2b ff., cited in J. Przyluski, "La ville du Cakravartin," in: *Rocznik Orjentalistyczny*, Vol. V (Lwów, Poland, 1927), p. 168.
[3] *Mahâvastu*, II, 158–159: transl. Jones, Vol. II, p. 154.
[4] Paul Mus, pp. 579, 582, 596; E. Abegg, *Der Buddha Maitreya* [Mitteilungen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft der Freunde ostasiatischer Kultur, VII (St. Gallen, 1946)], p. 4, fn. 8.

he gave them presents and sent them away." [1] In a later life, the subsequent Buddha's message induced the king, his father, with multitudes of his subjects to abandon the kingdom and become monks in the forest. Invaders, who overran the country to seize its treasures, joined the Buddha and his father in the renunciation of power and wealth. "This being that way, the treasuries, the gold, silver and rubies, were abandoned. Therefore, allowing them to be seized, taken and carried away, the Future Buddha deigned to scatter diffusedly and to spread the jewels prolixly on the bare ground, in the sand, over the three Yadana wide hermitage." [2]

Similarly, at the time of the Future Buddha, the universal emperor, or Cakkavattî Saṃkha is to renounce his status and wealth to the poor, the homeless and the destitute, and is himself to wander into homelessnes. He and his army, as well as gigantic crowds accompanying them, shall become monks.[3] (The monastic community "is conceived to be the nearest possible approximation to the ideal society possible in time and space, which all men ought to approximate as nearly as possible in their social relations to each other." [4]) In this vision of the perfect Buddhist society of the future, the state is thus seen spontaneously dissolving itself into the monastic order with its community of property (cf. p. 25). In that ideal world community there is to be only one language, like in the utopian island continent Uttarakuru, "on the northern side of high Meru, the mountains' king" (cf. p. 83), whose inhabitants "are equal and similar in everything." [5] In that perfect future state, the divisions that split mankind through the urge of acquisition (cf. p. 12) are to be overcome – as rice shall grow without labor for a coming humanity unified under the ideal Buddhist Cakkavattî ruler.[6] In his universal realm Wishing-Trees are to supply all material wants of man.[7] These Wishing-Trees are called, in Burmese, Padeytha Pin: [8]

[1] Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. I (1895), p. 129; Cf. *Mahâ-Sudassana-Sutta*, I,3: *SBE*, Vol. XI, p. 249.
[2] Min: pu: Sayadaw U: Aw Ba Tha-ị, *Temiya Za'-to-gyi*: (Rangoon, 1956), pp. 293f.
[3] *Anâgatavaṃsa* ("History of the Future"), text published by J. Minayeff, in: *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1886, p. 41–53, summarized and cited in E. Abegg, *Der Buddha Maitreya* p. 14f.
[4] Winston L. King, *In the hope of Nibbana*, Chapter VI, Section 3.
[5] Saya U Tein: Han, *Lei: cun: zaca pahka-dein* (Mandalay, 1320/1958), no pagination, third and fourth page.
[6] *Anâgatavaṃsa*, Vs. 14–42, cited in E. Abegg, *Der Messiasglaube in Indien und Iran* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 163ff.
[7] E. Abegg, *Der Buddha Maitreya*, pp. 11f., 19.
[8] Cf. E. W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology* [= Grundriss der indoarischen Philologie, III, Heft 1B (Strassburg, 1915)], p. 7f.

... In the Uttarakuru Island it happened that into man's power the desirable Padeytha Tree had initially given garments and ornaments, ... ornaments tied together, hung from such a Padeytha Tree, suspended to be shaken [down], to be plucked rapidly .... Various enjoyable colors were lined up by means of weaving, ... properly decorated .... Such ornaments were shaken [down from the Tree] ... The exhausted [supply of] ornaments [was] rapidly [re]placed and hung again suspended, then again pulled down while they were rapidly [re]placed ....[1]

"From its bounteous branches hang the most gorgeous dresses of every variety of color, and the happy islanders have only to take them off, nor are they at any necessity to till the ground to produce themselves food. From this tree they obtain also an abundant supply of a most excellent kind of rice, already husked to their hands ..." [2] "They do not perform any kind of work, as they receive all they want, whether as to ornaments, clothes, or food, from a tree ..., and when the people require anything ... the tree extends its branches, and gives whatever is desired. When they wish to eat, food is at that instant presented; and when they wish to lie down, couches at once appear ..." [3] But "the people of this Northern Island do not go to Nirvana." [4] And therefore ... "the inhabitants of the Southern island [Men] endowed with judgment and reason, ... should not envy this lot" : [5]

Their material welfare, not being accompanied by the Enlightenment, in itself could not overcome Impermanence. Yet copies of their Padeytha Pin Wishing-Trees, loaded with material necessities, are – as in medieval Burma under the name of "pateñsa pan" – still in the twentieth century presented to monasteries [6] to facilitate leisure for the meditation of Nirvana-pursuing monks. It was for the same Buddhist purpose that the ideal Cakkavattî ruler of the future Buddhist world state is to distribute money to the poor that may be in his empire.[7] The Buddhist motivation for this economic instrumentality is implied in a prophetic vision attributed to Gautama Buddha, describing the material utopia in the Buddhist ideal of the future

[1] Po Sein-tyi, *Hpya'-thyi kan-pe hpon: to-gyi: thyi pyin-hnya kahtein can*: (Rangoon, 1252/1890), pp. 294f.
[2] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 92f.; Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 8f.
[3] R. Spence Hardy, *A manual of Buddhism in its modern development*, p. 14f.
[4] Saya U Tein: Han, *Lei: cun: zaca pahka-dein* (Mandalay, 1320/1958), no pagination, third and forth page.
[5] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 9.
[6] Than Tun, "Religion in Burma, A.D. 1000–1300," in: *JBRS*, XLII, ii (December, 1959), p. 64, citing Pe Maung Tin & G. H. Luce, *Inscriptions of Burma* (Oxford, 1933–1957), Plate 117b/3; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 330.
[7] Cakkavattî-Sîhanâda-Sutta: *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI, 5: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 62.

Cakkavattî's world state: "Jewels lie around and are plentiful like stones. People say that in former times men harmed each other, threw each other into prisons, lied to each other, stole from each other, and [through this] were *binding themselves even stronger to Saṃsâra.* [But] now nobody protects these jewels; people have no desire for them and despise them." [1] As the italicized passage of this quotation shows, the function of this material utopia was meant to deaden man's desire for earthly possessions, to overcome man's attachment to Saṃsâra-Impermanence. In the wider sense this utopian prosperity was meant to overcome human attachment to riches through a process of over-satiation, just as it had been over-satiation that prompted Gautama Buddha on the path of enlightenment about the universal Causality of Suffering. And those who, amidst the material utopia of the ideal Buddhist world state, shall hear the words of the future Buddha Mettaya, will follow his precepts and are to be liberated from the whirlpool of Saṃsâra and its realm of Impermanence and Death. Mettaya is to recognize the causality of this world and other worlds; he is to reveal it to all beings. His community of monks shall surpass Gautama Buddha's.[2]

It is to be patronized and joined by Cakkavattî Saṃkha, who, renouncing the world, shall himself become a subsequent Buddha, after he shall, starting with the domination of one of the continents,

[1] E. Leumann, *Maitreya-Samiti. Das Zukunftsideal der Buddhisten* (Strassburg, 1919), p. 246f. The quotation follows Watanabe's German translation of a Chinese version of a Sanskrit Maitreya scripture, combining the slightly diverging terminology of the "M208" and "M209." As Mr. U Ohn Ghine (Mettacittena), of the Union Buddha Sasana Council of Burma, has kindly pointed out in a private communication, the ethos of this source is more strictly Mahâyana than Theravâda Buddhist. Such criticism has also been made by F. Trager, "Reflections on Buddhism and the Social Order in Southern Asia," in: Burma Research Society, *Fiftieth Anniversary Publications*, No. 1 (Rangoon, 1961), p. 533, fn. 3. In reality, the folk-Buddhism of Burma has absorbed Messianic associations of the Bodhisattva idea which developed in the Mahâyâna (cf. pp. 45ff., 62ff., 151ff., 207.). E. M. Mendelson, "Religion and Authority in modern Burma," in: *The World Today*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (March, 1960), p. 117, writes: "No amount of Burmese denial of Mahâyâna can hide the fact that the principles on which Mahâyâna are (sic) based survive in Burma today: perhaps... not so much destroyed ... as relegated to jungle and forest..." (Cf. p. 44f.) The source in question, the Maitreya-Samiti, might have had common roots with some of the earliest Buddhist influences in Burma: Before it was adopted by early (Chinese) Mahâyâna Buddhism, it seems to have been originally a Vaibhâshika (Sarvâstivâda) Hînayâna text. It is certain that one of its translators into the Chinese version referred to, Kumarâjiva, had been exposed to Sarvâstivâda intellectual influences. The Sarvâstivâda form of Hînayâna Buddhism is also attested in eighth century Burma (at Prome, cf. pp. 5f). It is in this school of Hînayana Buddhism that the Bodhisattva idea is found in its oldest form [Edward J. Thomas, *The history of Buddhist thought* (London, 1953), p. 170]. Therefore its Messianic associations could have possibly entered Burmese folk-Buddhism from the Sarvâstivâda Hînayâna as well as from the Mahâyâna.

[2] Cakkavattî-Sîhanâda-Sutta, *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI, 25f.: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 73f.; E. Abegg, *Der Buddha Maitreya*, pp. 14f.

unify the entire earth and rule over all Four Continents that surround Mount Meru up to the Ocean (cf. p. 82), without violence, without the force of arms, but only through the moral power of Dhamma, as "guardian of the people's good." [1] To this Cakkavattî emperor (Burmese "Setkya Wade:") the rulers of the East, South, West and North shall submit voluntarily. He shall declare that no living being is to be injured, that nothing that is not given should be taken, and shall pacify the entire earth surrounded by the ocean.[2]

And such visions of the ideal Buddhist monarch of the Future remained not without effect on aspirations of historical Buddhist rulers, just as it was since the historical Ashoka that there had been growing (simultaneously with the Ashoka legend) the Cakkavattî lore.[3] Already in the earliest chronicle of Ceylon, Ashoka appears as the ruler over the Jambudvîpa continent.[4] In Ceylon's famous Mahâvaṃsa Chronicle such Buddhist ideals of universalism already resulted in identifications of the state with the earth and of its subjects with humanity.[5] Subsequent kings of Ceylon recorded their aspirations toward the Cakkavattî benevolence ideal of the Buddhist world state. Thus Kirti-Niśśaṅka-Malla declared in an inscription dated about 1192–1196: "... Reflecting, 'as there are no enemies [left] in this world, we will conquer the enemies in the next,' he established in his own country *and in foreign lands* many alms houses and furnished them like wish-conferring trees. He maintained alms giving in abundance ... It is indeed Dharma [dhamma] that protects the whole world."[6] "... And [seeing that] many persons being impoverished, are eking out an existence by robbery and [that] these men committed robberies, even at the risk of their lives, through their desire for wealth, he bestowed on them gifts of gold, silver coins, pearl, precious stones, clothes, ornaments, and the like – whatever wealth each one desired, and also cattle, villages and lands; and granted them security, he made them desist from stealing. He relieved a great number of other people also, each

[1] Ambaṭṭha-Sutta, *Dîgha Nikâya*, III, i, 4–5: transl. Rhys Davids, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. III (London, 1921), p. 13; Mahâ-Sudassana Sutta, I, 14–19, in: *SBE*, Vol. XI, pp. 253f.; Cf. *Mahâvastu*, II, 158f.: transl. Jones, Vol. II, p. 154.

[2] Cakkavattî-Sîhanâda-Sutta, *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI, 6: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 63f.

[3] Przyluski, *La Légende de l'empereur Açoka*, pp. 67, 102, 113.

[4] *Dîpavaṃsa*, I, 26: transl. H. Oldenberg, p. 119.

[5] The King was therein called "ruler of men," "ruler of the earth": *Mahâvaṃsa*, XXXVI, 60, 67, 77; XXXVII, 9: transl. W. Geiger, pp. 260ff., 268; Cf. A. M. Hocart, "The Four Quarters," in: *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Vol. I, Part iii (January, 1927), p. 106.

[6] Poḷonnaruva Hāṭa-dâ-gê Portico Slab Inscription, Lines 15–23, in: Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II (London, 1928), p. 90.

from his own misfortune."[1] "Thus did he dispel fear of theft .... And seeing that the inhabitants of the ... kingdom ... were in distress, his majesty decided, 'I will give them wealth equal to that of kings,' and made everyone happy. Then reflecting, 'in my days will beggars have wealth wherewith they may also enjoy themselves as do the royal personages,' he built alms houses .... and furnished them with wish-conferring Trees. ... Here he entertained the beggars ...; to this effect this rock edict has been inscribed." [2] Though no longer expressing such Cakkavattî aspirations, the Cakkavattî *title* was still claimed by Ceylon's last king (of Kandy, in the beginning of the nineteenth century).[3]

[1] Kirti Niśśaṅka-Malla's Inscription at Ruvanväli-Dagaba-Anurâdhapura, in: *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, p. 81.
[2] Niśśaṅka-Malla's Priti-Dânaka-Maṇḍapa Rock Inscription, Lines 8–19; 32–45, in: *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, pp. 175f., 178.
[3] F. A. Hayley, *Sinhalese Laws and Customs* (Colombo, 1923), pp. 39, 49, cited by Hocart, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAKKAVATTÎ IDEAL AS A FACTOR IN THE EXPANSION AND FALL OF THE BURMESE EMPIRE

Burma's conqueror kings too were influenced by such visions of an ideal Buddhist world state through which Dhamma Morality was to be extended to the whole world and the golden age restored.[1] Against this background, Tabin Shwehti (1531–1550), founder of the Second Burmese Empire (cf. p. 7), also sought to become a Cakkavattî.[2] Yet it was not before his indecisive invasion that he offered peace to Siam, with the statement that he aspired to become a Buddha in a subsequent life: [3] "Thus, royally deigning very appropriately to enjoy the appearance of ... a Cakkavattî, of the Sovereign of the Four Great Islands [cf. p. 82f.], ... it was only [for] victory over Mâra (Evil) that the exalted army deigned to descend [hcạ] [upon Siam]." [4]

The successors of his Toungoo Dynasty rose and fell. But the ideal Buddhist state of the Cakkavattî,[5] who is to conquer the world without violence but only through his Justice (dhammina) and his love for all living beings, therein preceding the advent of the future Buddha Mettaya, could be realized politically neither by the second nor by the last Burmese empire. Its founder Alaungpaya (1752–1760), "the future Great King of Dhamma Righteousness" (Alaung Min: Taya: gyi: – cf. p. 86), proclaimed in the style of a Cakkavattî: "May the one hundred and one nations hear and spread the news (of the power of the king), the subduer of foes ... and may he rule over the whole of Jambudvîpa." [6] "And all the inhabitants ... acclaimed him ...,

[1] D. G. E. Hall, *Burma* [Hutchinson's University Library, *British Empire Series*: (London, 1950)], p. 41.

[2] *Hman nan: Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, Duti-twe (Mandalay, 1319/1957), p. 414.

[3] U: Kala, *Maha Yazawin-gyi:*, Vol. II (Rangoon, no date, Edition of Saya Pwa), pp. 243f.

[4] See note 2, *supra*.

[5] Cf. H. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies* (London, 1931), pp. 31f. The Dharma Çakra, symbol of the Chakravartin (Cakkavattî)-and already earlier the emblem of Ashoka-constitutes the coat of arms of the Republic of India. On its symbolism of the Solar Wheel: E. Senart, *Essai sur la légende du Buddha* (Paris, 1882), pp. 356–364.

[6] Alaungpaya's inscription at the Shwebo Pagoda, in: Archaeological Survey of Burma, *Report of the Superintendent for 1923/1924* (Rangoon, 1924), p. 30.

'this king of ours is a Bodhisatta." [1] Alaungpaya accepted such attributions of Bodhisattva identity, though not the ethos of non-violence which this involved.[2] During his invasion of Siam, he demanded submission by virtue of his being a future Buddha, claiming that he had come to spread the Dhamma and to subdue men by Morality: "We, the Lord of Life and Existence, the future Great King of the Dhamma [and] Buddha [Paya:], long to be the future Buddha [Paya: Laun:] in order to let the Buddhist Community, that is not blossoming nor shining in Siam, blossom forth and shine." [3] It was in vain. But after his death, he was given "the funeral of a Cakkavattî [Setkya-Wade:], Sovereign over the Four Great Islands" and universal conqueror.[4]

Such increased emphasis on the Cakkavattî imperial idea coincided with the spectacular military expansion of the Burmese empire, in the late eighteenth century, and the climax of its power. It seems to have been precisely since the end of the eighteenth century that there arose great expectations about the glorious ascendency of Buddhism 2,500 years after its foundation,[5] that is in the middle of the prophesied 5,000 years' duration of the Buddhist religion.[6] "Daunted by the very great length of time involved ..., certain circles may have adopted the view that Mettaya would appear soon, or even immediately after the 5,000 year span of Gautama's religion, a time unconnected originally with any future Buddha." [7] But there also seem to have been speculations or expectations that the future Buddha would appear after the expiration of *half* that time span: Siam's king, Phya Taksin (1767–1782), who freed that country from the Burmese invaders, "imagined that he was developing into a Buddha," allegedly demanding the honors of a Buddha from the monkhood which many refused.[8] Burmese folk thought apparently applied Gautama Buddha's prophecy about the advent of Mettaya in the ideal future realm of the Cakkavattî Saṃkha to Burma. There must have been at that time,

[1] Paññasâmi, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 123: transl. B. C. Law, p. 128.
[2] *Koun: baun-ze' Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:* (Mandalay, 1267/1905), p. 317.
[3] *Koun: baun-ze' Maha Yazawin-to-gyi:*, p. 315.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 352.
[5] G. Coedès, "Le 2500e Anniversaire du Bouddha," in: *Diogène*, No. 15 (July, 1956), p. 127.
[6] Cf. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, edited by M. de Zilva Wickremasingh, Vol. II (London, 1928), p. 274; *Chullavagga*, X, 6: Vinaya Texts translated from Pâli by T. W. Rhys Davids & H. Oldenberg, in: *SBE*, Vol. XX (1885), p. 325.
[7] E. M. Mendelson, "A Messianic Buddhist Association in Upper Burma," in: *Bulletin of the London School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XXIV, Part iii (1961), p. 575.
[8] W. A. R. Wood, *History of Siam from the earliest times to the year 1781* (London, 1926), p. 269. Chao P'raya Dibakarawongse's "History of the First Reign" (Bangkok, 1869) was not accessible to me, as it is in the Siamese language.

as they locally persist up to now, expectations that a future Buddha Mettaya will be born in Burma.[1]

And it may not have been by accident that, only a little after king Phya Taksin of Siam, it was written in honor of the Burmese king Bodawpaya (1781–1819): "As ... an uproar concerning the Buddha goes about to the effect that the omniscient Buddha will appear in the world and ... an uproar concerning the universal monarch goes about to the effect that ... the universal monarch will appear in the world, so an uproar concerning the king went about to the effect that at such a time such a righteous king of great power and glory, lord of the white elephant would appear in the world ..." [2] Bodawpaya was actually titled "Great King of the Dhamma" (Min: taya: gyi:)[3]. And he declared that the five thousand years allotted for the observation of Gautama Buddha's dispensation had "elapsed" – after less than 2,500 years. Accordingly, king Bodawpaya of Burma is reported to have proclaimed himself – in spite of the monkhood [4] – as Buddha Mettaya whose message was to "abrogate" or renovate that of Gautama.[5] In his early days as king, Bodawpaya announced that he was Mettaya, the coming Buddha, *and* that he was destined to be a world conqueror.[6] This was reported by the Roman Catholic missionary Sangermano, who resided in Burma up to 1806. According to him, Bodawpaya planned to "bend his course towards the West, possess himself of the British colonies ... and in time make himself the undisputed master of the whole Southern Island Zabudiba [Jambudvîpa – cf. p. 83]." [7]

Bodawpaya's policy of westward expansion leading to the conquest of Arakan and Assam may possibly have been ideologically connected with his aspiration towards the realization of the Mettaya ideal by force. He was succeeded by Bagyidaw (1819–1837) whose heir-apparent was named Setkya Min, a title used apparently also by Bagyidaw himself,[8] being a Burmanization of the term Cakkavattî

[1] Mendelson, "A Messianic Buddhist Association in Upper Burma," p. 572.
[2] Nânâbhivaṃsadhamma senâpati, *Râjadhirâja Vilâsinî*: transl. by Maung Tin, in: *JBRS*, IV, i (1914), p. 18.
[3] *Koun: baun -ze' Maha Yazawin-to-gyi*: (Mandalay, 1905), p. 573.
[4] Cf. M. Bode, *Pâli Literature of Burma*, p. 77.
[5] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, 56, 59. Not accessible to me remained U: Yazinda, "Sâsanabahussuttappakâsani" which refers to this period of Bodawpaya's reign. English accounts of the above have, so far, all been ultimately derived from Sangermano.
[6] D. G. E. Hall (Editor), *Michael Symes, Journal of his Second Embassy to the Court of Ava in 1802* (London, 1955), pp. xxvif., lxv.
[7] Sangermano, *A Description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 56.
[8] "Master of the Supernatural Weapon" ("Sakya" in John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, Vol. I [London, 1834], p. 234, being probably a rendering of "Setkya,")

(just as the concept of the Cakkavattî had Buddhicized traits of solar and Vedic mythology). It was claimed by Crawfurd, the British envoy of 1826, that "... the more credulous among the Burmans interpreted the omen and title literally and did not hesitate to believe that he was doomed to be the future conqueror of Hindostan, and that it was especially his destiny to destroy the British empire in that country." [1] In some popular beliefs the Setkya Min associations seem to have subsequently converged with prophecies about the Coming Buddha (Paya: laun:).[2]

Such projections of the people's hopes into a distant future are understandable at a time when Bagyidaw's continuation of western expansion into Manipur had contributed to the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824–1826), as a result of which Burma lost most of her coastline with the southwestern and southeastern provinces of Arakan and Tennasserim, increasing the taxation burden on her remaining subjects to satisfy the heavy financial demands of the mercantile British East India Company. This war indemnity was allegedly to be described in the Burmese Chronicle along the following lines of a Buddhist ethos of kingship: "... The white strangers from the West fastened a quarrel upon the Lord of the Golden Palace. They landed at Rangoon, took that place, and Prome, and were permitted to advance as far as Yandabo; *for the king, from motives of piety and regard for life, made no effort whatever to oppose them* ... Their resources became exhausted; and they were in great distress. They petitioned the king, who, out *of his clemency and generosity, sent them large sums of money*, and ordered them out of the country." [3] This alleged passage "from the Burmese Chronicle" has been repeated again and again by Anglo-Saxon historians of Burma [4] as a negative characterization or as a general condemnation of a country that had resisted Britain. Actually, there is no such passage in the Burmese Chronicle, though the present writer too had erroneously repeated this alleged quotation [5] not as a claim to political reality but as an expression of a political ideal of Buddhist statecraft. Thus, the chronicles of Buddhist Ceylon attributed to its king Saṃghabodhi (307–309) a refusal to defend himself, "giving

[1] Crawfurd, *ibid.*, p. 268.
[2] Mendelson, "A Messianic Buddhist Association in Upper Burma," pp. 568f.
[3] Crawfurd, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 304.
[4] Including as recent a standard work as J. Cady, *A history of modern Burma* (Ithaca, 1960), pp. 77, fn. 26.
[5] E. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients. Sendungsbewusstsein und Chiliasmus des Ostens* (Tübingen, 1955), p. 341.

his own head to let a poor man win the reward offered for it," and to Kittisirirâjasîha (1747–1781) even "the virtues of the Bodhisatta [1] in the Sîlava-Jâtaka".[2] And king Bagyidaw of Burma himself allegedly said about the first Anglo-Burmese war: "Everyone can take life, but who can give it back?" [3] This statement could not be found in the Chronicle of his dynasty either. But the Chronicle does record how a Buddhist abbot advised this king to accept the conditions of the British victors in order to stop a lost war, emphasizing the inevitability of universal impermanence and pious regard for all beings:

[If] the empire were armed, its fall would [come]. [If] a great friendship were to exist [with the adversaries?], then also would its fall come. Since that is the case, the English commanders demands being limited to the extent of an equal half portion of the army's expenses, be this asked of the King's favor and noble wish! The royal duties are, verily, to give in accordance with the exalted message of the Law ... through offerings ... The necessity to give piously ... is caused [by the aim of] welfare of the country's people, of the totality of living beings, the welfare of the lofty ... religion .... The kingly task [is] to appease ...[4]

After further losses of Burmese territories, king Mindon who is said to have "illuminated the Wheel of the Conqueror as did Ashoka," [5] refused to arm his forces with modern weapons in order not to be responsible for the destruction of life.[6] "... The king once said that he never could be so base, in the greatest extremity, as to use against the English the muskets which he had received from them," even in 1855, while British forces were tied in the Crimean War.[7] "We do not strike a friend when he is in distress," Mindon is reported to have replied to advice to invade British occupied Lower Burma when the Indian uprising of 1857 had depleted its garrisons.[8] And a modern Burmese historian of Burma's last king maintains that the Burmese people, who were concerned with the Beyond and with Nirvana, who used to lead "charitable lives" to attain better existences in future births, had "never" thought that the English would use their superior weapons to attack and overrun them.[9]

[1] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XCIX, 97: transl. W. Geiger, Part III, p. 264, fn. 3; Râjâvaliya, p. 43f.
[2] "None shall suffer because of me. Let those who covet kingdoms seize mine if they will...": Mahâsîlava-Jâtaka: Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. I, p. 130.
[3] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 436.
[4] *Koun: baun ze'Maha Yazawin-to-gyi*: (Rangoon, 1905), p. 986.
[5] Paññasami, *Sâsanavaṃsa*, VI, 149, 151: transl. B. C. Law, pp. 150, 152.
[6] W. L. Barreto, *King Mindon* (Rangoon, 1935), p. 46.
[7] H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, pp. 75, 141.
[8] D. G. E. Hall, *Burma* (London, 1950), p. 117.
[9] Than-sin (yahkin-to-paya: kale:), *Thibaw Min: hse' atwin: ye: mya:* (Rangoon, 1959), p. 5; cf. Howard Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia ... and a full account of the Burmese Empire*, Vol. I (Boston, 1839), p. 228.

CHAPTER XVI

BURMA'S IDEOLOGICAL CRISIS IN THE BRITISH CONQUEST

In reality, the Burmese empire had not been prevented by its Buddhism from the pursuits of active military expansion. But Buddhism did prevent Burma from manipulating the destructive powers of nature that could have assured the success of such expansion. Premodern Buddhism (like medieval Christianity) did not promote curiosity about nature and the empirical world, just as Gautama Buddha had held aloof from such "low" arts and sciences as were not directed towards his goal of deliverance from Suffering. The intellectual achievements of traditional Buddhist Burma were directed mainly towards the single purpose of liberation from Impermanence; intellectual will was directed towards the overcoming of transitory phenomena and deliverance from them. Indifference towards the transitory world of the senses was the ideal. Buddhism's rationality principle of Causality emphasized the subjective sphere. The subjective world was conceived as calculable and thereby thought more predictable if not more manipulatable than the world of physical relationships.[1] [What was thought predictable in nature, like natural harmony and natural calamity, was attributed to causation from the sphere of the ethical Law (cf. p. 49).] Insights into mechanical manipulatability of nature were not developed. Such manipulatability or domination of nature was obstructed by the Buddhist pursuit to realize the all embracing unity of life, the pursuit of that which Max Scheler has called "the Democracy of Being," the unity of man with all beings, the union of man with nature. Human control over the phenomena of nature presupposes man's consciousness of separation from it; in Burma monistic or pantheistic attitudes, affected by the pre-Buddhistic animism of Southeast Asia, militated against the scientific observation

[1] Cf. L. W. Pye, *Politics, Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's search for identity* (London, 1962), p. 202.

of nature, and thereby delayed technological achievement. Therefore the Burmese Empire lacked a basis for technization and ultimate effectiveness of its military power. Many of its soldiers were armed with ... knifes "bent double under moderate pressure." [1] The management of its artillery depended upon the corps of Christian descendents of foreign, chiefly Portuguese and French, captives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively.[2] It was a Catholic College of Missionaries in Rangoon that trained (besides ecclesiastics and physicians) also Burma's engineers and pilots in the late eighteenth century.[3] Not only did whatever there was of mechanical training in eighteenth century Burma depend on Catholic missionary instruction, but Burmese authorities usually attempted to utilize the skills in cannon production that were attributed to every Englishman who happened to come to Burma.[4] After Burma's defeats in the first Anglo-Burmese war, Bagyidaw's uncle, the Mekhara Min, had scientific articles translated from an English encyclopaedia, being greatly interested in physics and mathematics. But even then the lack of contacts limited scientific borrowings.[5] Probably such borrowings of modern natural science remained limited before the loss of Rangoon (1852) and thereby of direct overseas contacts.

The chief Burmese negotiator of the Anglo-Burmese arrangement of 1853, the Magwé Min-gyi, Burma's highest minister of his time, still clung to the semi-Ptolemaic view of the world with Mount Meru as axis of the sun and center of the "Continent".[6] As the Burmese throne was to be an image of this cosmic center, an axis of the astral firmament (cf. p. 82), even the later Konbaung kings of the last dynasty had difficulties in conceiving Burma as a state among a multiple power system. (Even the enlightened king Mindon allegedly became indignant when the limited size of Burma was pointed out to him in correct proportions on a globe.) Their clinging to their traditional "semi-Ptolemaic" image of the earth obstructed much of the diplomatic

[1] Grattan Geary, *Burma after the conquest, viewed in its political, social and economic aspects from Mandalay* (London, 1886), p. 93.
[2] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 76.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. iii (N. Wiseman's Preface).
[4] Kaung U, "The beginning of the Christian Missionary Education in Burma, 1600–1824," in: Burma Research Society, *Anniversary Publications*, No. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), pp. 121, 129, 133; Cf. D. G.E. Hall (Editor), *Michael Symes, Journal of his Second Embassy to Ava* (London, 1955), p. lxxi.
[5] India Office (unpublished manuscripts): Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, Vol. 358: Henry Burney's Journal, Paragraphs 208–210; Vol. 362, Paragraph 828, cited by W. S. Desai, *A history of the British Residency in Burma, 1826–1840* (Rangoon, 1939), pp. 97f.
[6] H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, pp. 67f.

relations with Burma. A large part of the Anglo-Burmese diplomatic friction arose (not unlike Imperial China's misunderstandings with the "Powers") from the incompatibility of the British (Copernican) and the medieval Burmese "Meru-centric" concept of the earth: The assumption of the cosmocentric uniqueness and universality of the Burmese Empire did require prostrations of visitors before the throne spire, the image of the cosmic centre, a symbolism devoid of meaning in the Copernican context.[1] Thus the cosmology that Buddhist Burma had inherited from Indic traditions [2] eventually resulted in anachronistic 'Burma-centrism' and in disproportionate overestimation of their own actual power on the part of the Burmese kings in a world of Victorian imperialism, while the medieval Buddhist ethos stood in the way of developing the technological means of destruction that could have made such power goals practicable. Both these circumstances prevented Burma's timely adjustment to the power situation in the age of "Expansion of Europe."

By the time the Burmese government did try to acquire modern weapons and to cultivate relations with Britain's rivals amidst the European Power System, these belated attempts could be blocked by British domination of Burma's coast that resulted in British control of her communications with the western world.[3] When the last king of Burma, Thibaw (1878–1885), jeopardized the concession of a British Teak enterprise, Great Britain invaded and annexed what remained of Burma – to forestall any possibility of rival French expansion into the western part of the Indochinese Peninsula [1885/1886].[4] And Mr. Gladstone, the liberal critic of Imperialism (while in opposition), after he came to power, replied in Parliament that even if the evidence should indicate that this war of annexation was wanton and needless, the annexation should not be reversed.[5] Burma's last king surrendered to the British conquerors and was deported by them. Hearing this "the women, and even the men, in the villages, wept and broke out in lamentations." [6] His officers, who had set out

[1] Cf. Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 479.
[2] W. Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder nach den Quellen dargestellt*, (Bonn, 1920), pp. 180–189.
[3] One instrument of British control of Burma's diplomatic activities was Andrino, the Italian consul in Mandalay, who was in British pay and was believed to have supplied to British Intelligence the draft of a prospective Burmese-French treaty. I. P. Minaev, *Dnevniki puteŝestvij v Indiju i Birmu* (Moscow, 1955), p. 151.
[4] Cady, *History of modern Burma*, p. 120.
[5] Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3d Series, Vol. 302 (February 22, 1886), col. 966f.
[6] Grattan Geary, *op. cit.*, p. 294. This reporter witnessed conquest and early Pacification.

to resist the invaders, capitulated "when the throne of Mandalay fell into the hands of the British, ... not wishing to rebel against the new government." [1]

This may have been partly motivated by the tradition that the possession of the Royal City with the Palace legitimized a ruler of the country. The royal city that was to be Burma's last, Mandalay, had a name which was allegedly (?) derived from "Mandala," [2] hub of the universe, symbolized by the Throne. Obeisance to the empty throne was still customary in early nineteenth century Burma.[3] Most of the Burmese officials continued their service after the British conquest of 1885, "hoping only that appointments would be retained by the new rulers." [4]

"And so the Burmese peasant had to fight his own fight ... alone. His king was gone, his government broken up, he had no leaders ... when he fired at the foreign invaders; and when he lay dying, with a bullet in his throat, he had no one to open to him the gates of heaven ..." [5] The canonic Buddhism of the monastic community could not support a war, not even a defensive war, but individual monks participated in the resistance.[6] The monk known as "the Pongyi of Mayanchaung" was publicly hanged by the English.[7] Those Burmese who had not surrendered their arms were shot "out of hand" without trial. "... The order is to shoot all Burmans with arms ... but people *only suspected* are to be flogged, not shot – as if all the men who were shot were dacoits [bandits], or had committed any moral offense other than hazarding their life in a lost cause ...," wrote a British observer while these operations were still continuing:

> It was in too many cases accepted as an axiom that all that was necessary was to shoot out of hand, whoever was found under circumstances of suspicion, and thereby to establish a terror which would produce the immediate submission of the population. Making prisoners is therefore regarded as a mistake .... The idea fades out that the population which has to be brought into subjection by terror, has any claim whatever to be regarded as possessing human rights. The one virtue is to inspire fear, and anything not calculated to produce that effect

[1] Maung Tha Aung & Maung Mya Din (R. Alexander, Editor), "Pacification of Upper Burma: A vernacular history," in: *JBRS*, XXXI, ii (1941), pp. 134, 136.
[2] Cf. R. C. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pâli Language* (London, 1875), p. 236.
[3] India Office (unpublished Ms), Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, Vol. 366, Paragraph 808, cited by: W. S. Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*, p. 164.
[4] "Pacification of Upper Burma: A vernacular history," p. 81.
[5] H. Fielding Hall, *The soul of a people* (London, 1905), pp. 59f.
[6] John Stuart, *Burma through the centuries* (London, 1909), pp. 174ff.
[7] James G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part 1, Vol. II (Rangoon, 1900), pp. 7–8.

is regarded as evidence of weakness, which will interfere with the effect to be produced.[1]

Against this background, there were daily shootings of several Burmese "dacoits" after the occupation of Mandalay, observes in his diaries the Russian Indologist Minayeff who happened to be there immediately after British forces entered the royal Burmese capital. They faced the British firing-squads smiling, and died smoking cheroots. Then their corpses were carried through the streets to intimidate the population.[2] The above quoted British observer reported about his Empire's Pacification of Burma: "I have no doubt from what I hear that the decapitation of bodies and the exposure of the heads had a bad and not a good effect on Burman opinion ..." "The Burmese temperament is not so much disturbed, as might be wished by military executions; it accepts them as a decree of fate." "It is the custom [of conventional historiography about Burma] to close the eyes and the ears to the real nature of the 'salutary severities' which are sparingly alluded to in the narratives of military operations in a vanquished country" [3] like the Burma of 1886. These "salutary severities" contributed to the spontaneous resistance flaring up all over the country. As the resistance became more and more desperate, questions were asked in the British parliament about the justification and manner of the executions. "The Times" of January 21, 1886, reported "that the ghastly scenes which constantly recur in executions carried out by the Provost Marshall constitute grave public scandals ..." [4] Thus the Viceroy of British India had to report about "amateur" photographing of prisoners in the process of being executed – and to order Lieutenant General Prendergast as well as the scholarly Colonel Sladen to stop military executions.[5] Instead peasants were flogged and entire villages burned down wherever the Pacification Forces met resistance. One column reported burning forty-six villages with 639 houses and 509 000 lbs. of paddy ... "besides some cattle." [6] The

[1] Grattan Geary, *Burma after the Conquest, viewed in its political, social and commercial aspects, from Mandalay* (London, 1886), pp. 45, 231, 69, 249f., 248, 236f.

[2] I. P. Minaev, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[3] Grattan Geary, *op. cit.*, pp. 246, 267, 243f. Of the English language histories of Burma only the American one by Cady devotes to these executions even one sentence. The British historians Harvey and Hall do not mention them at all. Instead, considerable space is customarily devoted to fratricide killings by Burma's last king Thibaw.

[4] Quoted by D. P. Singhal, *The annexation of Upper Burma* (Singapore, 1960), p. 83.

[5] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, January 24, 1886, in: Great Britain, *Sessional Papers*, Vol. 50 (London, 1886), p. 547 (No. 14, 15).

[6] British Burma, *Foreign Proceedings*, Vol. III, 583 (1890), cf. 359 (February, 1889), Reports from Mr. Shaw and Lt. L. E. Elliot, Assistent Commissioner, Mogaung, cited in: Dorothy Woodman, *The making of Burma* (London, 1962), pp. 350ff., cf. p. 449.

British Commissioner Crosthwaite thus described some of the British pacification methods: "Villages from where or near which any opposition was offered would be destroyed ... On those who did not submit, as much damage as possible would be inflicted by destruction of their houses and property." Other villages who resisted were blockaded, food supplies being cut off until they were starved into submission.[1] Soon Crosthwaite found out "that a considerable minority of the population, to say the least, did not want us," [2] as the conquerors disassociated themselves from the charisma of the Mandaly Palace, plundering it – as they had, in 1824, plundered the Rangoon pagodas – [3] not without wanton vandalism.[4]

And the British Indian authorities removed the Burmese Throne to a museum in Calcutta, in order to forestall new Burmese attempts to seize it, because of folk notions insisting that, as long as the throne remained, the Burmese kingdom would rise again: In its cosmocentric function, the Throne was, according to traditional world conceptions, to be the last part of the whole world to disappear at the end of a World Age,[5] being a microcosm of the empire and of the world,[6] an image of the Summit of the world. Above this Summit, above this world (lokottara), according to even Hînayâna thought, the Buddha was to continue to exist (in a literal sense) while all other cosmic heights and depths were being levelled during periodical disappearances of perishable reality. This Summit of the world, prototype of the Throne of Mandalay, was conceived as the limit of Reality, "the point" at which the phenomena are re-absorbed and from which they re-emanate periodically.[7] Destructions of the world were not to reach that Summit of the Cosmic Mountain, prototype of the throne, with the paradise of the past and the future Buddha.[8] Associations of the catastrophical loss of Palace and Throne with the (otherwise "astronomically" distant) end of the enormously long World Age of a Buddha seem to have resulted from the fall of the Burmese kingdom to the British conquerors (cf. p. 155f.).

[1] Ch. Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London, 1912), pp. 105, 109, 283, 303.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[3] Howard Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia... and a full account of the Burmese Empire* (Boston, 1839), Vol. I, p. 76.
[4] I. Minaev, *op. cit.*, p. 147; Grattan Geary, *Burma after the conquest*, pp. 89, 91.
[5] J. George Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, Vol. ii (Rangoon, 1900), p. 154.
[6] Paul Mus, p. 695.
[7] Paul Mus, p. 965.
[8] Paul Mus, p. 941.

But traditionalism, still clinging to a view of the world centered on Meru's image, the royal capital, palace and throne, could not be easily reconciled with the loss of the Royal City: A new royal city was bound to rise. And the Myinzaing Prince, a principal figure of the Burmese resistance against the British conquest of 1885/1886, had founded in the Shan States "a town near Ywa-ngan under the auspicious name of Sinbyumyou ('City of the White Elephant')." [1] Though defeated, the Myinzaing Prince continued the resistance until he died of malaria somewhere in the jungle. His brother accepted a pension from the British conquerors and was still living in Mandalay in 1959. Against possible resistance, a British warning reminded of the conquerors' "canon that could throw shell incredible distances, shell that burst and killed everybody over acres of ground ...; of machine guns that could mow down crowds just as a reaper cut paddy. Also about bombs, with half a dozen or so of which one man could settle a hundred in a few minutes." [2] And yet a son of King Thibaw, the Min-tha:, attempted to continue the resistance during an entire generation, from 1886 to 1922.[3]

Burmese collaborators helped to break the resistance centering around Pretender Princes: "The heads of the Kyi-myin-daing 'prince' and of Boh Hlaing were cut off and carried to Meiktila. At Meiktila Mr. Cournue drew from the government treasury ... 5,000 rupees, of which a sum of 500 rupees was rewarded to [the village headman] for his service in guiding Mr. Cournue and his men to the spot [where the resistance fighters could be killed]." [4] Bo Yit and Yan Byan Bo, who were still continuing their resistance, were betrayed by a Burmese village headman to Burmese officers in the British service, captured and executed in public under the supervision of Mr. J. G. Scott [5] (the author of "The Burman, his Life and Notions"). Nevertheless, in the Minbu area Burmese resistance continued through the years 1886–1889 under U Oktama, who had left the monkhood to become one of the most determined opponents of the British invaders. About him the British Commissioner Crosthwaite wrote:

Oktama inspired his followers with some spirit, whether fanatic or patriotic ... The exertions of the [British-Indian] troops had made little impression on

[1] "Pacification of Upper Burma: A vernacular history," p. 107.
[2] G. E. Mitton (Lady Scott), *Scott of the Shan Hills* (London, 1936), pp. 150.
[3] The Times (London), April 1, 1922, p. 11.
[4] "Pacification of Upper Burma...," p. 121.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Oktama's influence. The peasantry ... were on his side ... The relations of the dacoits [guerrillas] were removed from their villages and a fortnightly fine imposed on all harboring villages. On this the villagers gave him up ... Our success had been entirely achieved by ... imposing a periodical general fine on them until they helped us, by removing the relations and sympathizers of the dacoits ... The military police ... came upon Oktama sitting despairingly by the [Chaungdawya] Pagoda [near Legaing] with only one follower. It was a tragic picture. When Burmans shall paint historical scenes ... or write on the events following the fall of their king, "Oktama at the golden Pagoda" will be a favorite theme for ballad or drama ...[1]

Crosthwaite records that the methods his administration used against the partisans were to make the people fear the British more than the resistance fighters who were accused of banditry:[2] "Weight was to be given to the fait accompli and to considerations of expediency rather than to those of abstract right or justice ..." The British Chief Commissioner had instructed the Superintendent as follows: "You must not be guided solely by considerations of abstract right or abstract justice. You must give great weight to considerations of expediency."[3] Crosthwaite admits that "to such as had any patriotic feeling, and no doubt many of them [the Burmese] had, the representative of a foreign government standing in front of the empty throne must have been the abomination of desolation ... My duty, however, was not to show sympathy with sentiment of that kind but to impress them with the permanence, benevolence and power of the new government."[4] Its benevolence and power is exemplified in a contemporary account with cases like the following: "*On being promised forgiveness for his past offences ... in writing,* Ya Nyun [a resistance figure in the Myingyan District] gave himself up ... on the spot. The Sessions Judge condemned him to death .... The merciful English granted the prayer of [this] desperate criminal and rebel and [his] appeal to the government for mercy was allowed. The death sentence was commuted to one of Transportation [forced labor] for life ..."[5] The methods of British dominance by power Crosthwaite describes as follows: "... Unless men belonging to the village who were now dacoiting [resisting] surrendered within a fixed time, all their relations and sympathizers would be ... removed to some distant place." "... Many surrendered in order to save their people from being removed ..."[6]

[1] Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp. 27, 29, 107–110.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 174.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[5] "Pacification of Upper Burma: A vernacular history," p. 100.
[6] Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp. 105, 109, 283, 303.

Such village headmen and officials as were not suspected of resistance and had helped to suppress it, were confirmed in office or promoted. The confirmation of the old appointments by the new rulers "gave a fillip to their interest in the British government." Such worthies "made up their minds to prove themselves worthy of their appointments." [1] They certainly did. Some such Burmese were rewarded with petty offices for having fought on the British side against the Burmese Resistance. The author of the above cited Burmese narrative about the "Pacification Period" was proud to record about his relatives that "battles were fought by Maung Tun E and his brothers in the English cause without the help of British troops." [2] The author (Myinzi Maung Tha Aung) himself was rewarded "for his ability in confiscating 1200 guns from the people "by appointment to petty office.[3] His narrative proudly records the names of Burmese officials of the last Konbaung kings who preserved their position under the British, receiving promotions for services during annexation days. To *them*, those who continued to resist the British occupation forces were "rebels." [4] Among the latter an outstanding place belongs to Bo La Yaung, one of the most prominent figures of the Burmese Guerrilla War of 1886–1891. To him was attributed an ancestry going back to the period of the Pagan Kingdom. And from him allegedly descended Aung San, the creator of the New Burma.[5]

The old Burma became rapidly submerged since 1897, after the former Buddhist monk U Kelatha had failed to break – with eighteen partisans – into the Mandalay Palace (garrisonned by British troops under the name Fort Dufferin). He was prophesied to be the Setkya Min (cf. p. 152ff.) from whom is expected a catastrophic turning of the tide of conquest through occupation of the cosmocentric Palace.[6] The Palace of Mandalay, which had been venerated as the pivot of the cosmic and at the same time moral order, became converted into a British club, "The Upper Burma Club." [7] And on the place which alone was to stand immovably, even when the whole earth would

[1] Maung Tha Aung, *op. cit.*; in: *JBRS*, XXXI, ii (1941), pp. 99, 101.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 132ff, 106.
[5] Theippan Soe Yin, "Aung San, the architect of Burma's independence, in: *The Guardian. Burma's National Magazine*, VI, No. 10 (October, 1959), p. 46; Cf. Maung Maung, (*Editor*), *Aung San of Burma* (The Hague, 1962), p. 22.
[6] J. George Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, Vol ii (Rangoon, 1900), p. 15; R. von Heine-Geldern, "Weltbild und Bauform in Südostasien, in: *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, IV (1930), p. 56.
[7] *The Guardian, Burma's National Magazine*, VI, No. 11 (November, 1959), p. 8.

shake and tremble,[1] British officers and merchants were now drinking whiskey.

The state ceased being the symbol of a world order. It was no longer an expression of a system of proprieties in human and superhuman relations.[2] Burma's government had departed from its cosmic prototype with which Buddhist kingship had been linking the social order (cf. p. 84f.). When the Palace stopped being a cosmocentric symbol, the traditional semi-Ptolemaic world conception centering on Mount Meru collapsed. With it fell the prototype of the historical Burmese state. The word "revolution" (in an astronomical sense) is first used by Copernicus and Galilei. As in the Occident,[3] so in Burma the history of political revolutions corresponds to the process of man's turning away from cosmic archetypes associated with "Ptolemaic" views of the universe. Ever since the Mandalay Palace is no longer the center of the universe, ever since the constellations are no longer grouped around the Cosmic Mountain Meru, Burma's society and culture was being shaken by revolutionary transformations when that Buddhism which had been a "cosmological morality rooted in spatial – temporal regularity"[4] came to be questioned. More and more, since the cosmocentric Throne, under the impact of Copernican Modernity, no longer constitutes the axis of the universe, the cosmic space in which the Wheel of Kamma used to roll through endless births has come to be challenged by inquiry. With the collapse of the cosmological hierarchy of worlds, around, below and above Mount Meru, the Wheel of Kamma was losing its meaning as a rationale of social hierarchy. Kamma could now be reinterpreted "in terms of each man's power to change his future" : From the cosmic Space, into which popular tradition had mythologized the state of Nirvana (cf. p. 103) beyond the summit of the Ladder of Existences,[5] the archetype of Dhamma fulfillment became thereby transferred into earthly Time. This meant to some extent an ideological evolution from the mythical cosmology of Nirvana as "Shwe Myoṇ–to," the Golden Exalted City (cf. p. 86), in Space to the rationalized futuristic vision of Lokka Nibban – the Earthly

[1] Jeaninne Auboyer, *Le throne et son symbolisme dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1949), p. 89.
[2] Cora du Bois, *Social forces in Southeast Asia* (St. Paul, USA, 1948), pp. 39, 48.
[3] Cf. Jakob Taubes, *Abendländische Eschatologie* (Bern, 1947), pp. 87–88.
[4] Paul Mus, pp. 945f.
[5] *Majjhima Nikâya*, 352 (Aṭṭhakanâgarasutta): K. E. Neumann, *Die Reden... Buddhos der mittleren Sammlung* (Zürich, 1956) p. 387; Paul Mus, pp. 928, 965; I. P. Minaev, *Dnevniki putešestvij v Indiju i Birmu* (Moscow, 1955), p. 162; W. King, *In the hope of Nibbana*, Chapter IX. Cf. W. L. King, *A thousand Lives away* (Oxford, 1965), p. 111.

Nirvana – in Time, a vision to be socially implemented through normative faculties of human will-power (cf. p. 126).

As the social order was deprived of a static archetype, there came insights into the malleability and changeability of Society.[1] When the image of the universe became subjected to the critical powers of the human mind, the state was no longer seen as a reflection of a cosmic harmony. The traditional Buddhist Ashokan ethos of state (cf. p. 35f.) was ignored by the alien government and was preserved only in folklore (cf. p. 208). But the folk tradition about "Government" being one of "the Five Evils" survived – and seemed to be confirmed by experience (cf. p. 78). The combined folk outlook about an ideal Buddhist state and about the evils of government was gradually transformed into a revolutionary impulse. These attitudes towards the state generated revolutionary force in a society split between a subjected "medieval" Buddhist rural majority and a bureaucratic Burmese minority now enlightened in the English style.

Such a Burmese secular elite evolved out of the privileged officialdom of the Konbaung kings which had managed to preserve something of its social status by passing into the service of the British conquerors of Burma (cf. p. 229). There "life, therefore, went on as usual and the villagers *shikoed* [made obeisance to] authority as usual." [2] The outlook of this Burmese bureaucratic elite came to be molded by various degrees of cultural and partly even linguistic Anglization. Its cultural Anglization began with Protestant missionary instruction in coastal Burma since 1826 and particularly since 1852.[3] That process reached its climax at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Burmese speech, reduced to its rudiments and shorn of its refinements, tended to become confined to the domestic sphere and to rural areas,[4] while the knowledge of Burmese literature had at that time almost died out among the Educated Classes,[5] at a time when the greatest number of Burmese students studied in Europe, in 1905–1907.[6] Buddhist Burmese traditions of learning as a means for the pursuit of Deliverance through cognition of Causality of Suffering were supplanted: English colonial requirements for cheap clerks reduced learning to a utilitarian

[1] Cf. Thakin Kudaw Hmain, "Hkit Kala pyu pyin pyaun: le yei:," in: U: Thein: Pe Myiṇ ywei: hoe ti: hpyat-tho, *Hbun-wada hniṇ Dobama* (Rangoon, 1954), p. 13.
[2] Maung Maung, p. 7.
[3] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma, 1824–1942* (London, 1946), p. 46; Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 170.
[4] Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
[5] "Encouragement of oriental learning," in: *JBRS*, II, ii (1912), p. 227.
[6] Ba U, p. 20.

pursuit for acquiring and holding subordinate jobs.[1] Since the end of the nineteenth century, fewer and fewer Burmans were attending Buddhist monastery schools, which on the eve of the British conquest had given Burma a higher literacy rate than contemporary Britain had in 1823.[2]

[1] Cf. J. F. Brohm, "Burmese religion and the Burmese religious revival" (unpublished dissertation, Cornell University, 1957), pp. 17–18.

[2] Henry Gouger, *A personal narrative of two years' imprisonment in Burmah, 1824–1826* (London, 1860), p. 22.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DIS-ESTABLISHMENT OF BURMESE BUDDHISM. PROTESTANT MISSIONARY ATTACK AND MODERNISTIC BUDDHIST RESPONSE

Buddhist monastery buildings were used as barracks by British and British-Indian troops whose cantonment caused suffering to the Buddhist monks during Britain's "Pacification." Monasteries became deserted because the monks no longer received a livelihood.[1] British policy was to withdraw state patronage from the Buddhist order. The institution of the Saṃgharâja, in recent times called Thathanabaing, the primate of Burma's Buddhist Order (recorded since the fifteenth century, though in supervisory practice going back to eleventh century Pagan) was allowed to lapse after the British conquest. Thereby the individual monasteries were left economically and organizationally to their own devices. Monastic jurisdiction was virtually destroyed when a secular judge overruled it in 1891.[2]

Such policy in British Burma contrasted with the initial patronage of Buddhism in Ceylon after the British East India Company had annexed that "Island of the Dhamma" (1815). This sponsorship of Buddhism on the part of the British conquerors (in their capacity of successors to the "native" kings) was an expediency abandoned – in the name of liberal principles of the separation of Church and State. But, in practice, its abandonment was not left unaffected by Protestant missionary influences on the public opinion of Victorian Britain. Although a missionary expert of the caliber of Spence Hardy attested that the monks did *not* feel enmity to him as teacher of another faith,[3] he kept insisting that tolerance of Buddhism

[1] Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p. 38; I. P. Minyeff, *Dnevniki putešestvij v Indiju i Birmu* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 120, 139, 149.
[2] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 170; J. Nisbet, *Burma under British Rule and before* (London, 1901), Vol. II, pp. 126f.
[3] R. Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism. An account of the ... order of mendicants founded by Gotama Budha* (London, 1850), p. 313.

"must have been greatly offensive in the sight of Him before whom idolatry is the abominable thing, utterly hated.[1]

Such pioneering missionaries dismissed Buddhism as the "master error of the world" and delusion.[2]

"Why have India, Burma, Ceylon ... been placed under the control of the British sceptre?",

asked this representative English missionary in a Buddhist land. And he could find no better answer than self-righteous certainty:

"We cannot doubt, that ... nations have been placed under our authority, that we might carry on with better effect the great work of the world's conversion from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." [3]

In the spirit of Victorian missionaries, Hardy rested his argument for necessity of destroying Buddhism "upon the simple fact that it is opposed to *the* truth," only because Buddhism is non-theistic, "ignorant" of the Missionaries' "*only* way of salvation by faith." To his Protestant Old Testament zeal, alleged "idolatry" was a sufficient reason for destruction.[4] Typical for such Protestant missionary attitudes was the anxious hope that Buddhism could be extinguished in one way or another, so that the extinction of Buddhism in Ceylon would be followed by its disappearance throughout the world [5] – as in Britain

"with an increase of national influence arose the breath of prayer to heaven, that it might be exerted for the entire destruction of the empire of hell ..." [6]

"The very heart of the empire, where Satan's seat is," was to the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson ... the capital of Burma.[7] This not too charitable value judgment was expressed by Judson in 1816,

"In order to effect the overthrow of this system" of Buddhism, Mr. Judson desired his Church 'to ... grapple with the Prince of Darkness on his throne,'" [8]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 321.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. ix.
[3] R. Spence Hardy, *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon* (London, 1841), p. 6.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[5] Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism...of...Budha*, p. 430.
[6] Spence Hardy, *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon*, p. 7.
[7] Letter of Adoniram Judson & George H. Hough to the Corresponding Secretary of the Mission Board, Rev. Dr. Staughton, of November 7, 1816, in: F. Wayland, *The Memoir of the Life and Labor of Rev. Adoniram Judson*, Vol. I (Boston, 1853), p. 183.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 416.

years before he was imprisoned upon the Burmese government's suspicion that he might be assisting the British invasion. "This gentleman avows himself predisposed for war, as the best, if not the only means of eventually introducing the humanizing influences of the Christian religion," wrote the British resident Benson about the Reverend Judson in 1838.[1] (Yet, even after the British conquests, the Protestant missionaries failed to convert any substantial number of Buddhist Burmese; their success was on the whole confined to Karens and other animistic tribes.) Not all of those who succeeded Judson in his missionary endeavors had his intellectual caliber and his scholarly abnegation with which he acquired an enviable mastery of literary Burmese, leaving to foreign students of Burma his still unsurpassed Burmese Dictionary. Instead, many of them far outdid him in zeal, a zeal that made no fetish out of empathy or even of tolerance. Thus, exemplifying many of them, the Reverend H. P. Cochrane insisted that missionaries need ... "protection from fanatical and ignorant natives" and therefore approved of western conquests of Native peoples:

"In nearly all non-Christian lands the first impressions of Western civilization have come from the aggressions of commerce. The minister of a foreign government has preceded the missionaries of the Cross. The flag of a foreign nation has gone in advance of the banner of Christianity ... upon the weaker nation. All this may have been in the best interest of the world at large; probably in the best interest of the people themselves, however slow they have been to realize it ..." [2]

Such slowness of weaker peoples to realize what great benefits were in store for them the Reverend Cochrane seemed to explain by allegedly inherent qualities of such natives:

"The natives are so sodden in vice, so wedded to their idols ..., so dull of head and slow of heart to understand and believe,

he was complaining – in a book entitled as fruitage of fifteen years of work among the Burmese ...[3] As a part of this fruitage, we are approvingly informed by him about the disciple who felt that for a child it was better to die than to be brought up by a heathen mother,[4]

[1] R. Benson's letter of July 18, 1838, in: W. S. Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826–1840* (Rangoon, 1939), p. 351, citing (India Office, unpublished manuscripts), India Secret Consultations, Vol. 10. Consultation of August 22, 1838.
[2] H. P. Cochrane, *Among the Burmans. A record of fifteen years of Work and Fruitage* (New York, 1904), p. 157.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 251.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 270.

not to mention the "poisonous environment of the heathen home and community." [1] To such particular ministers of the Gospel, Buddhist monks as well as sculptors of Buddha statues appeared to be "emissaries of Satan" [2] or else as the "Blight of Asia," "seemingly equal in intelligence to their graven images." [3] With such particular standards, the message of Buddhism came to be described as "eternal death" and the state of the Buddhists as "utter darkness." [4] Aside from such and stronger adjectives, the customary emphasis of those missionary polemics used to be put on the alleged "selfishness of Buddhism" (cf. p. 38ff.):

"Never yet have the Buddhists of Burma lifted a finger to alleviate the sufferings of their *outcasts* [? – sic]. Whatever desultory and trifling almsgiving has been indulged in has been prompted not by compassion but by selfishness ... This is Buddhism in both theory and practice. Buddhism has been extolled as a religion of love and peace. Its love is self-love; its peace self-conceit, and indifference to the suffering of others. But Christian missionaries are teaching a striking object lesson." [5]

Among their object lessons were claims that the progress of natural sciences in the Occident would prove the superiority of their particular Christianity over Buddhism. Thus even Judson wrote along these lines:

"As the religious systems of the heathen are *indissolubly* associated with false views on astronomy, geographical and physical sciences generally, if we can correct these errors, the religion resting upon them must necessarily be swept away." [6]

He thought that he could refute Gautama Buddha's message by disproving through empirical geography the traditional "Meru-centric" cosmology (cf. p. 82f.) which Buddhism had inherited from ancient India. Such hopes were based on the assumption that the irrefutable force of arguments in favor of the Copernican system must overthrow the whole of Buddhism.[7] Little did such missionaries realize that soon their arguments about social altruism and about the exact sciences would be turned against missionary Christianity and in favor of modernized Buddhist apologetics.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 203.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 328.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 155.
[6] F. Wayland, *The Memoir of... Adoniram Judson*, Vol. I, p. 208.
[7] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 310; Vol. II, pp. 455f.

When in Burma advanced Buddhist thought was induced to separate the essence of Buddhism from cosmological and other mythological associations of the kingship that had collapsed in 1885, its main intellectual crisis was thereby overcome. It would hardly have been a crisis – affecting as it did not only the state but Buddhism – if popular Buddhism had not mythologically connected Dhamma and Nirvana with Kingship (cf. p. 86). Eventually it became possible to see the breakdown of the Kingdom and Throne of Mandalay rationally, not as a fall of the pivot of the universe and pillar of the Dhamma but only as another application of the Buddhist law of universal impermanence. By becoming used to an existence without the patronage of the cosmocentric Throne, the intellectual lay Buddhism "demythologized" and rationalized itself. This Buddhist modernism contributed to the general renaissance of Burmese Buddhism and to Burma's independence struggle.

Earlier than in Burma, such Buddhist modernism began in the even more Anglicized Ceylonese intelligentsia. It is exemplified by the Maha-Bodhi Society of Calcutta (founded in 1891) and its journal, which initially used English authorities for its apologetics: the modern authority of English critics of historical Christianity and imperialism. As in the case of Hindu modernism, Theosophy had an important place among the European and American stimulants of Buddhist Modernism in Ceylon. Its Anglicized pioneer David Hewavitarane, who became Devamitta Dhammapala, was in 1884 "initiated' into the Theosophic Society. The Theosophists' president, Mme. Blavatska, encouraged him to study the Pâli language and to rediscover Buddhism, which he represented at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893. Evidence of the decline of Buddhism in contemporary Ceylon led Devamitta Dhammapala to make efforts for social reform [1] (perhaps not without influences of the "Social Gospel" of liberal Anglo-Saxon Protestantism).[2] This fin de siècle era was in European intellectual life a time of disappointment in Modern Civilization, Progress and Historical Christianity, a time when Europe developed self-doubts about her civilization and mission. Marxism, rationalist agnosticism if not atheism, and Nietzschean attitudes were challenging middle class respectability, the liberal and missionary values by which Victorian empire building had been justifying itself.

[1] Devamitta Dhammapala, "Reminescenses of my early life," in: *Maha-Bodhi*, XLI (May/June, 1933), pp. 147, 156.
[2] Cf. Ernst Benz, *Buddha's Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens* (Munich, 1963), pp. 42f.

Rationalistic critique of the historical Christianity of the Churches affected Fielding Hall, a colonial official serving in British Burma after its aggressive Pacification, a Burma whose Buddhism enchanted him. With empathic sensitivity of the romantic, Fielding Hall described the personality of the Burmese people in his book, "The Soul of a People," the influence of which on the reawakening of Burmese national consciousness was not unlike that of the German romantic Herder (1744–1803) on the cultural and political activization of Slavic nations in the nineteenth century.[1] This Buddhist reawakening of Burma and Ceylon came as a response to the impact of military conquest and of missionary challenge to their cultural tradition. Some of its most militant manifestations appeared in the Journal of the modernistic Buddhist Maha-Bodhi Society, for example in 1899:

"Righteousness has fled from the land. Christianity is another name for brutality, sensuality, imperialism and plunder all over the world. Happy the day when the English accept Buddhism. It will be a blessing to them." [2]

And some Englishmen did become converted to Buddhism. Among them was (1896/1897) Gordon Douglas, "a person of high social standing in England, ... a son of a well-known Earl ..., said to have come to the East ... owing to his being an out and out radical with socialistic tendencies." As "Bhikkhu Ashoka" he died in 1900 in Bassein, in southern Burma.[3] About the same time, in 1900, the Irish Buddhist convert "U Dhammaloka," wrote, during his visit to Burma:

"Buddhists of Burma, be warned in time! ... As science advances, the belief in Christianity is fading in Europe ... It is perishing in Europe, but money makes it thrive here, while our own scientific gospel [of Buddhism] is dying being robbed of its votaries. Buddhists of Burma! Arise then and gird your loins for the coming struggle." [4]

The modernistic claim of Buddhism being a "scientific religion" was based on the assumption that its gnostic causality concepts would resist the critique of natural sciences more than Christianity could with its dependence on Revelation and Faith. The Maha-Bodhi Journal maintained that the discoveries of what was then modern

[1] At least one veteran of Burma's Thakin Party (Dobama Asiayon, cf. p. 167), who belonged to that generation and is now devoting himself to Education in Rangoon, told me that it was upon reading Fielding Hall that he joined the independence movement.
[2] "Christian diabolism," in: *Journal of the Maha-Bodhi Society*, Vol. VIII (June/July, 1899), No. 2/3, p. 24.
[3] *JMBS*, IX, No. 1 (May, 1900), p. 3.
[4] U Dhammaloka, in: *JMBS*, IX (December, 1900), No. 8, p. 77.

science endangered the position of Christianity and other Theisms but vindicated Buddhism: [1]

"Buddhism shines in majestic brilliance with the advancement of science. Where other religions speak of one earth created several thousand years ago, Buddhism coalescing with the science of geology and astronomy, speaks of numberless solar systems going through a process of cosmic evolution starting thousands of millions of years ago." [2]

Against this background, another Englishman, Allan Bennet MacGregor, in 1902 became a Buddhist monk ("Ananda Maitreya") in western Burma (Akyab, Arakan), returned to England (1908) – and originated the British Buddhist Society.[3] A Buddhist mission was founded in 1913, on the eve of Europe's great crisis, by the celebrated Burmese abbot Ledi Sayadaw (titled "Aggamahâ pandita"), whose sermons decisively contributed to Burma's Buddhist renaissance.[4] Yet this revival was primarily a lay rather than a monastic movement in Burma as well as in Ceylon.[5] Its modernistic current benefitted by the British program of "separation of Church and State" as, unlike political reform, religious reform was not to be interfered with by the State. But although the Maha-Bodhi Society in 1901 had expressed to the British Viceroy condolences at the death of Queen Victoria, its Buddhist modernism became a direct forerunner of Burma's nationalist movement.[6]

To the political activization of the Buddhist revival this modernism contributed by projecting the traditional quest for deliverance from *cosmic* suffering through Impermanence into the direction of a quest for deliverance from *social* suffering through injustice: The Maha-Bodhi's editor Anâgârika Dharmapâla spoke about "Buddha's Social Gospel" (in 1913),[7] undertook famine relief work in India in 1900 and attempted to provide modern instruction for destitute children. By lecture tours in Buddhist Ceylon he also was popularizing modern

[1] *JMBS*, XIII (July/August, 1904), No. 3/4, pp. 39f.
[2] *Maha-Bodhi and the United Buddhist World*, edited by Anagârika Dharmapâla, Vol. XIII (March/April, 1905), No. 11/12, p. 85.
[3] E. J. Colston, "Some social movements in Burma," in: *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, Third Series, Vol. XXIX (January, 1910), No. 57, pp. 79f.
[4] Cf. Ledi Sayadaw Paya: ci:; *Satu thamma di-pani* (Rangoon, 1951); Ledi Sayadaw Paya: ci-i, *Thamma dei'hti di-pani* (Rangoon, 1952); *The Guardian: Burma's national magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 5 (May, 1961), p. 24; Ledi Sayadaw, *Ottama puritha di-pani* (Rangoon, 1952); Ledi Sayadaw, *Bodhi pahkiya di-pani* (Rangoon, 1952).
[5] J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism and a Buddhist Pilgrimage* (New York, 1928), p. 13.
[6] Cf. Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, pp. 380f.
[7] Cf. Ernst Benz, *Buddha's Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens*, pp. 42f.

scientific enlightenment,[1] preaching about his experience in England and about hygiene, but also instructing potential Buddhist missionaries.[2] Such projection of traditional Buddhism's quietist detachment into Modernism's social activism Dharmapâla expressed already in 1904: "Buddhists of Asia, arise, awake, join the army of the Buddha [sic], destroy the hosts of death that strew the path of man with the seeds of evil, awake from your degenerate life of indolence ... The religion of Buddha proclaims a life of strenuous activity and living service." [3] His militancy was directed against both Brahmanic social injustice and the Churches' theistic authoritarianism:

"Buddhism is accused of atheism because it denies the creator. Science does not see the loving, all-wise, intelligent creator living today. With the plagues, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, wars of devastation, raids of cruelty, the extinction of helpless black races in Tasmania and western Australia, the slave-huntings in Africa, the lynching of Negroes in the southern states of [North] America, the extinction of red Indians in North America, ... the unequal distribution of wealth, ... the unwise distribution of races, locating them in such a way that has to cause subsequent annihilation of weaker races by the more brutal, no sober minded Buddhist could believe that the world is guided by an intelligent, all-wise, loving Creator." [4]

As a response to missionary tirades like the one against

"Natives ... so sodden in vice, so wedded to their idols ..., so dull of head and slow of heart" (above, p. 112),

came the vehemence of the Maha-Bodhi Society's counter-denunciations:

"The diabolism known as ecclesiastical Christianity has its paid professors in theological seminaries, where in incubation are hatched half-trained idiots who are sent to civilized people to disseminate the insane views enunciated in theological asylums ..., religions ... [meant] for the enslaved beggar .... Man who exerts, and heroically strives need not beg for his daily bread [through the Lord's Prayer?]." [5]

Counter-polemics in this style also drew upon Nietzschean attacks on Christian humility – seen as alibi for the powerless ones –, upon positivistic criticism of revealed religion in general, as well as upon Marxist attacks on bourgeois society. These anti-theistic ideologies were, since the beginning of this century, among the contemporary

[1] Anagârika Dharmapâla, in: *MBUBW*, XIII (1904), No. 5/6, p. 45.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[3] *MBUBW*, XIII, No. 5/6 (September/October, 1904), p. 45.
[4] *MBUBW*, XIII, No. 11/12 (March/April, 1905), p. 86.
[5] *MBUBW*, XIII, No. 5/6 (September/October, 1904), p. 47.

European models for Buddhist modernistic counter-criticism of European Christian civilization, whose uniqueness had for so long served as justification for European domination over non-Europeans: [1]

"... The nineteenth century may be called the century of European [missionary] Christianity. At the close of the century a balance sheet has been made of the century's progress and the results show no dividend. Everything is gloomy from the Christian standpoint. Anarchy, evil desires, covetousness, militarism and an irresponsible, ... sensation-mongering press, increase of armaments, the development of Trusts ..., racial antipathies, imperialism, the pursuit of money, greed ..., these are the dangers that confront the twentieth century." [2]

In an article entitled "The Influence of Non-Aryan Religion", the theme of historical Christianity supplying the destitute with consolations in terms of the life hereafter was taken up in the sense of the Marxist "Opium for the People," and coupled with indictments of certain failings of historical Christiandom:

"... For sixteen hundred years since the time of Constantine in the name of Christ what cruelties have not been committed ... In the city of San Francisco there are about 40,000 Chinese who are deprived of the citizen's rights, and yet idiotic (sic.) missionaries are sent to distant China to convert the people." [3]

Not only was Anglo-Saxon Protestantism accused of not admitting the Chinese into its society but also (through tolerating certain business practices) of having

"introduced opium, abominable intoxicants and drugs, licensed prostitution, sensualistic habits and ... enslaving of smaller races." [4]

"Alcoholism and brutality are the daughters of Semitic religions. Fiendish in their nature, ignorant of the higher laws of sociology, the followers of the Semitic religion committed the most despicable atrocities in countries invaded by them ... The English violated all the ancient traditions of Ceylon, giving the Aryan Sinhalese opium, whiskey, gin ... and other abominations. England, all-powerful, the richest empire today, not content with keeping the people in Ceylon in illiteracy, takes delight in getting the largest revenue from the sale of intoxicants." [5]

"The Protestant missionaries from England, Scotland and America are actively engaged in the work of destruction of all that is beautiful and national in Ceylon

[1] On counterparts of these polemics in Hindu and Moslem Modernism, cf. E. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients. Sendungsbewusstsein und Chiliasmus des Ostens* (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 286–296; 320–326.
[2] *JMBS*, IX (Calcutta, February, 1901), No. 10, pp. 90f.
[3] *MBUBW*, XIII (September/October, 1904), No. 5/6, p. 46.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 47f.
[5] *MBUBW*, XVII (September, 1909), No. 9, p. 236.

... The poor native Catholic has to pay heavily for the hundred and one ceremonials instituted by the Church .... The British tea planter makes a pile of money and returns to his native land, the son of the soil after he had sold his ancient land becomes a pauper and dies of a broken heart." [1]

[1] "Christianity and Buddhism," in: *MBUBW*, XVII, No. 10 (October, 1909), pp. 255f.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN OF EDUCATING NATIVES FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT AND THE COUNTER-CLAIM ABOUT THE DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALISTIC HERITAGE OF BUDDHISM

England's liberal justification for its domination, tutelage and accompanying advantages in such 'native' countries has been its claim of acting as "a trustee for civilization in order to ... build up those conditions of liberty and opportunity for the individual in which the people can *learn* to govern themselves." [1] Since Edwardian times such claims that the peoples of Indic civilization had yet to be trained for fitness to govern themselves came to meet militant contradiction – first in terms of West European borrowings of liberal programs of self-determination, and then in terms of reinterpretations of pre-European Indic traditions in the direction of self-determination aspirations. Precisely British imperial claims of ruling subject peoples like the Burmese "in order to educate them in the responsibilities of self-government" produced counter-claims about Democracy being part of Buddhist tradition. Interpretations of India's Buddhist heritage as democratic tradition permitted to refute British claims about the White Man's Burden and White Man's Mission to impose tutelage on native peoples until they should have advanced far enough in their "education" to "learn the responsibilities" of governing themselves.[2]

It was during the radicalization of India's independence movement since 1905, at the time when the White Man's Burden came to be challenged by counter-claims of renascent Asia's mission of spirituality, for example in the thought of Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose,[3] that within modernistic Buddhism there appeared political currents deriving democratic self-determination from Buddha's message:

[1] Burma, Imperial Idea Committee, *Report of the Committee appointed to ascertain and advise how the Imperial Idea may be inculcated and fostered in... Burma* (Rangoon, 1917), p. 53.
[2] Burma Reforms Committee, *Record of Evidence*, Vol. II (Rangoon, 1922), p. 80.
[3] Cf. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients*, pp. 316–326.

The teachings of Buddha ... show that all men were equal, and that the distinctions were artificial and man-made ... The sience of anthropology is on the side of the Buddha today .... The Brahmin priests, like the [British] White Brahmins of today, laid down a dogma that the non-Brahmin [respectively non-White] could never [sic.] rise. The same selfish principle is re-echoed in the British Parliament today by the Secretary of State for India. The people of India, according to Mr. Morley, are not fit for self-government ... In Buddhism the essential doctrine is self-government for the individual [sic.] .... "Self is the lord of self, who else is the lord?" [cf. p. 79]. So long as the democratic teachings of Buddha influenced the life of the people, India could not be conquered; but when the aristocratic Brahmins became dominant, caste was upheld and India declined.[1]

The very reasons to which Buddhism's decline in India was attributed, became a basis for affirming its democratic mission. Soon the independence aspirations, strengthened by Buddhist modernism in particular and the Indian cultural in general, elaborated the thesis that Buddhism lost out in India because it was "the religion of the common man and the common man in India had no voice then." ... "There are many other reasons why Buddhism declined in India, among which we can enumerate its liberalism and tolerance. This very tolerance had an element of weakness in it, because in a class system intolerance is a basic requirement." [2]

The interpretation of Buddha as an apostle of Democracy [3] became an integral part of much of modern Indian historical scholarship, Indian Marxist as well as modernist Buddhist apologetics.[4] Buddha had adapted republican principles of contemporary Indian states to the organization of his monastic order (cf. pp. 21–23). On this basis, its constitution has been called a system of government by the monks, for the monks and of the monks, and designated "democracy ... based upon adult franchise, i.e. the votes of the Bhikkhus [monks] who were over twenty years of age ..." [5] A recent monograph entitled "Democracy in the Early Buddhist Saṃgha" calls this Buddhist monastic organization only a special form of ancient Indian democracy.[6] And such democracy of the early Buddhist community is seen as "reflection of some republican system of government current in certain

[1] *MBUBW*, XV, No. 8 (August, 1907), p. 110.
[2] R. Paw U, "*The Buddhist Priesthood in Burmese Society*" (unpublished Master of Arts Dissertation: Columbia University, New York, 1948), p. 59.
[3] R. C. Majumdar, *Corporate life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 226f.
[4] Manavendra Nath Roy, *From savagery to civilization* (Calcutta, 1940), p. 15; Bhikkhu J. Kashyap (Pali Institute Nalanda), in: K. W. Morgan (Editor), *The Path of the Buddha. Buddhism as interpreted by Buddhists* (New York, 1955), p. 35.
[5] Gokuldas, *Democracy in the early Buddhist Saṃgha* (Calcutta, 1955), p. xv.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[Indian] states at the time of the Buddha." [1] Jayaswal's very influential "Constitutional History of India in Hindu Times" emphasized that the origin of the social contract theory of government in India is very ancient, "evidently the most ancient in the world." [2] Thus Buddha's Vinaya Code of monastic organization was thought to have perpetuated republican institutions of political corporations within the monastic order.[3] And after this order's dependence on semi-Hinduized kingship ended in Burma (cf. p. 114), Buddhist modernism contributed to an application of the monastic Code's republican values to the political ideologies of modern Burma. Thereby, in the twentieth century, the democratic principles of the canonic organization of the Buddhist order were made a source of inspiration for Buddhist democratic ideologies.

In the spirit of the tradition about the omniscience of Buddha, the Enlightened One, there persisted notions that "all the remedies that are current in the world for the benefit and welfare of man were prescribed by Bodhisattvas. All sciences devoted to the ascertainment of truth which are known in the world were developed by Bodhisattvas .... All the expedients that exist for the service of man were the inventions of Bodhisattvas ..." [4] Accordingly, the revolutionary watchwords of Fraternity, Equality and Justice, under the requirements of twentieth century situations, likewise came to be derived from the Buddha.[5] And Burma's having preserved this message of Buddha became a source of re-affirmation of Burmese cultural traditions after their crisis in the late nineteenth century: "Discarding wealth as well as caste as Buddhism did, society in Burma hardly knew any grading based either on material possession or on birth. Very few countries in fact enjoy such a democratic social life as Burma does ...: And whoever has cared to enter into its spirit and understand the meaning thereof knows well that it is one of those remarkable gifts Buddhism has given to Burma." [6] To individual Europeans, influenced by *fin de siècle* scepticism of those values professing which Britain had conquered Burma, its traditional society came to appear in an idyllic light:

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[2] K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity. A constitutional history of India in Hindu Times* (Bangalore, 1943), p. 173.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[4] *Mahâvastu*, I, 135–136: transl. Jones, Vol. I, pp. 107f.
[5] Gokuldas, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[6] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *An Introduction to the study of Theravâda Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1946), p. 265.

Burma was perhaps the happiest country in the world before the British went there. There was no aristocracy, no paid priesthood, no state church, no standing army, and no poverty. In fact the Burmese may be said to have almost realized Prince Kropotkin's communistic ideal [sic.]: under the Burmese kings the whole country could be best described ... as a federation of communes, with which the central government interferred as little as possible .... There were no castes, no ... nobles or great landowners, or wealthy bankers or merchant princes ...[1]

Business motivations of industrial and commercial expansion had largely prompted Protestant Britain's conquest of Buddhist Burma. And challenges of modern Western acquisitive business values – sanctioned by Protestantism – became a part of Buddhism's modernistic apologetics. Thus, already in its polemics antedating the crisis of Europe in the First World War and the ascendency of Bolshevism, there appeared the thesis of a Buddhist Socialism, for example, in 1907, in the following formulation by Lakshmi Narasu:

The spirit of Buddhism is essentially socialistic, that is to say it teaches concerted action (samanartha) for social ends. *It is therefore totally opposed to that industrialism which, with merciless struggle for wealth as the one supreme object of human effort, is eating the very vitals of the so-called advanced nations of the world.* The fascination for the pursuit of wealth has produced within trade circles perfect callousness to the feeling of human brotherhood .... *The accumulation of capital in the hands of a few can have no ethical justification*, ... how does this differ from theft? ... Buddhism prohibits theft of every form, whatever may be the euphemistic name by which it may be known. Even in extreme need, when no other means of relief may be available, there can be no justification for seizing others' goods ....[2]

Buddhism rejects even *voluntary* asceticism (for example in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta); the Buddhist ideal of monkhood is not ascetic in the sense of its Hinduist counterpart or of Catholicism. Even more was Buddhism to reject the *involuntary* asceticism of poverty as an obstacle to liberation from craving. This was pointed out already in 1911 by Alexandra David-Neel in her book on Buddhist modernism. She wrote that "from this there is only one step to socialism."[3] And it was in this sense that, in Lakshmi Narasu's above-quoted political formulations of modernistic Buddhist social values,

[1] A. E. Fletcher in: "The New Age," reprinted in: *JMBS*, VII (January, 1890), No. 9, p. 86. In this sense Crosthwaite complained – from the standpoint of Burma's British conquerors – that "in a country where one man is as good as another, where there are no landlords, no hereditary aristocracy and no tribal chiefs, the government, especially a foreign government, is at a great disadvantage": Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p. 22.

[2] P. Lakshmi Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism* (Madras, 1907), pp. 45–46.

[3] Alexandra David-Neel, *Le modernisme bouddhiste et le bouddhisme du Bouddha* (Paris, 1911), pp. 244f.

property in land and commerce was called "robbery," [1] thus anticipating (in 1907) – as had Proudhon – respective Communist polemics. Similarly Buddhism's canonic Vinaya rules about community of monastic property have been called "a communistic theory of property," [2] a "negation of private property ... very similar [sic] to the philosophy of modern socialism and communism." [3] But in Buddhist ethics a just distribution of wealth is emphasized and its accumulation rejected mainly because worldly goods are seen as mere means towards deliverance (cf. p. 215) [4] – or as obstacles thereto: "Princes with goodly treasures, ample wealth, and broad domains, ever in sense-desires insatiate, envy each other's goods." [5] This ethos received within Buddhist modernism radical political implications when its Maha-Bodhi Journal claimed that it was Buddha who showed that the "causes of unhappiness ... were due to the extremes of luxury and grinding poverty." Shortly after the Soviet Revolution it wrote:

> One class is luxurious to the verge of vulgarity, and the other class is impoverished to the verge of pauperism. In a country where these extremes are visible there can be no happiness. The Middle Path [between extreme asceticism and extreme indulgence] is the path of happiness ... He is the true conqueror who conquers the ego and his arrogance. What makes man arrogant? Power and wealth. *Proper and righteous distribution of wealth would make all classes happy.* Hatred will cease from the heart of the pauper when he is given the needed comforts of life ...[6]

This modernistic Buddhist journal's polemics against Missionary Protestantism were subsequently directed at its historical sanctions of the treatment of labor – envisaged in the Bible's Parable of the Laborer in the Vineyard: "The landlord hires a laborer at a penny to work for twelve hours ..., the man who works a whole day is paid a penny, ... and the man who labors an hour is also paid a penny .... The Christian clergy in England always catered to the higher classes .... Buddhism is a spiritual democracy [sic]. It recognizes neither wealth nor caste. This gospel is most needed today in Europe. There has been too much dogmatic talk about the power of God and the priests and the lord." [7] "... Russia has become a scene of anarchy and

[1] Lakshmi Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism*, p. 46.
[2] Majumdar, *Corporate life in Ancient India*, p. 319.
[3] Nakamura, *The Ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples*, p. 154.
[4] G. Hafner, *Kernprobleme der buddhistischen Ethik* (Erlangen, 1927), p. 57.
[5] Saṃyutta Nikâya, I, 3, vii, 8: Pâli Text Society, *Translation Series*, No. 7 [= *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, transl. Mrs. Rhys Davids, Part I,] (London, 1950), p. 23.
[6] *MBUBW*, XXVII, No. 10/12 (October/December, 1919), p. 127.
[7] "Buddhism and Christian Missions," in: *MBUBW*, XXIX, No. 10 (October, 1920), pp. 213f.

her people are trying to evolve a form of government that will bring contentment to hundred millions of the Russian people." [1] "Now the time has come for the Buddhists to present ... the gospel of Buddha to the laboring classes in England." [2] "Our duty is to give Dhamma to the British people ... By the power of Dhamma they would see the unwisdom of enslaving nations to satisfy their ambitions. The compassionate doctrine will modify the cruel nature of British imperialism," wrote Dharmapâla in this Maha-Bodhi Journal in the year of Hitler's rise to power.[3] "And ... without being free from bondage, which stems from the fact that one nation is subject to the rule of another, one can hardly find peace in one's heart or in one's environment, the environment in which the Buddhist way of life may be practiced or the compassionate love of a true Buddhist disseminated to humanity at large." [4] This was written as a considerable part of Burma's modernistic revival of Buddhism became associated with the political aspirations of the Burmese people towards self-government and towards economic vindication, so that "through the attainment of political and personal freedom, they may be more favorably and firmly placed on the road to Nirvana." [5]

The most powerful protagonist of this association of Buddhist revival with Burma's independence struggle was the abbot Sayadaw U Ottama. It was about him that a contemporary and associate could write: "U Ottama's plea is for the immediate objective of realizing a good measure of Saupâdisesa Nirvana [6] here in this life, which is only possible when one is free from bondage ..." In his sense the Burmese people were to be taught "not only the Precepts but also how to achieve ... a favorable milieu for the [Buddhist] practices of Dâna Sîla and Bhavana ... To be able to give alms [to the Nirvana-seeking monks] one must first make provisions for one's well-being before parting with what one has to give to another ..." [7] This modernistic reinterpretation came to project the Buddhist quest for deliverance

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 214f.
[3] *Maha-Bodhi*, XLI (1933), p. 348.
[4] Zeyawadi U Thilasara's article in: *Pinnya Alin* of Waning-Wagaung 1285 Burmese Era (September 1, 1923).
[5] Sayadaw Zeyawadi U Thilasara, in: *Pinnya Alin* of Waning-Wagaung, 1285 B.E. (September 1, 1923), translated by U Wan Nyunt, who also translated the passage from this newspaper printed in F. van der Mehden, "Changing Pattern of Religion and Politics in Burma," in: R. Sakai (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1961* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1961), p. 72, Reference 6.
[6] Cf. Edward J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought* (London, 1953), p. 122, fn.
[7] Sayadaw U Thilasara, *op. cit.*

from universal suffering into a quest for social deliverance from political and economic evils. It was in the sense of this quest for a state of social deliverance that one of the traditional concepts of a Nirvana Within Life was endowed with political meaning: The monkhood was exhorted to realize that its responsibility to the laity was to lie in drawing parallels between secular paths of endeavor and Buddha's Way to Nirvana. "The realization must be driven into the minds of the people that while they strive for the ultimate deliverance in the form of Nirvana, it is the duty of everyone to see that Saupâdisesa Nirvana *is attainable* in reasonable good measure here in one's present existance." [1] The above-quoted writer, the Buddhist abbot Sayadaw Zeyawadi U Thilasara, demanded by 1923 that emphasis should shift from the traditional ceremonies and from moral guidance (now to be taken for granted) to programs of economic and political improvement. The stages of the political struggle from the state of a subject nation to Independence he presented as parallels to the stages of Buddhist deliverance from the state of an ordinary human to that of the final Release by means of supreme Enlightenment of the Arhat.[2] In this context, independence for Burma was to mean – Nirvana Within the World, the Golden Land that men are to reach (cf. p. 86), according to Thakin Kudaw Hmain,[3] "Burma's Rabindranath Tagore." Not only the chances of outward freedom (Lu' la' hkwiṇ) but even the ultimate liberation into Nirvana was to be reached by means of the independence struggle – according to Sayadaw U Nye Ya, a popular preacher, active in Burma's Buddhist revival.[4]

Such association between the goals of the Burmese independence struggle and Nirvana had an Indian counterpart if not stimulant: "Swaraj" (Self-government) had been associated with "Mukhta" (goal of the Hindu mystic quest for ultimate release from transitoriness and relativity) under Tilak [5] who in the years 1905–1907 had linked the political demands of the Indian Congress Party with contemporary Hindu revivalism, thereby preparing the ground for widening India's independence movement into a mass struggle. Tilak resided – in-

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] From the ordinary state of Man to Dwi-he-tu, then to Ti-he-ta and finally into the Sotapana and Thagadagami Pathways. *Ibid.*

[3] Thakin Kudaw Hmain: *Thakin-Ṭ'ikâ* (Rangoon, 1938), p. 181.

[4] Thayawadi U: Nye Ya Sayadaw-thi, *Wunthanu Dhamma neyu Padeytha Can*: (Rangoon, 1319/1957 reprint), Vol. 1, p. 10.

[5] Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *Srimad Bhagavadgitâ Rahasya or Karma-Yoga Sastra* (Poona, 1935), Vol. I, pp. 457, 513; V. P. Varma, *Modern Indian political thought* (Agra, 1961), pp. 305f.

voluntarily – for some time at Mandalay, modern Burma's cultural center. Connected with Tilak and the Indian Congress Party was U Ottama.[1] And it was U Ottama, the most prominent among Burma's "political monks," who provided the modernistic elite-aspirations for the self-government of the Burmese Province of British India with roots in traditional folk Buddhism.[2] This traditionalistic mass basis for modernistic minority aspirations resulted not lastly from his emphasizing the achievement of *political conditions* for the pursuit of a *Nirvana Within This World,* as precisely this emphasis effectively converged with folkloric memories of medieval Burmese state ideals and popular prophecies about the perfect Buddhist society of the future (cf. p. 150, 153).

[1] Cf. Bama-hkit U: Ba Yin, *Sayadaw U: Ottama (Lu' la' yei: sei'da'myou: sei. hca. hke. thu)* (Amsterdam, no date), pp. 25f., 31.
[2] Cf. Cady, *A history of modern Burma,* p. 232.

CHAPTER XIX

POLITICAL ACTIVIZATION TRENDS WITHIN BURMESE BUDDHISM AND THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN BURMA'S INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE

After the Anglicized intelligentsia of Burma, the traditionalist masses too came to be affected towards the turn of the century by manifestations of the Buddhist revival. In the Mandalay area, the center of Burmese Buddhism, a Buddha Sasana Noggaha Association was organized in 1897 to preserve and promote Buddhism which seemed to be fading under British rule [1] (cf. p. 110). On the whole the Buddhist revival was a movement initiated by laymen; its very rise presupposed phenomena of stagnation within the monastic order.[2]

To counteract phenomena of decline within Buddhist society by means of social reform was among the main goals of the modernistic Buddhism of the Maha-Bodhi Association which had begun its activity in Ceylon as early as 1891. Among its founders Sri Devamitta Dharmapâla emphasized such contemporary social reform methods as a temperance movement to promote material welfare and modern instruction, including technical schools.[3] A comparable organization was started in Burma in 1902, the Ashoka Society organized in Bassein and named after the Bhikkhu Ashoka, a socialisitic English convert to Buddhism [4] (cf. p. 115). In the same year, 1902, a "Young Men's Buddhist Association" – as existed in Ceylon since 1898 – was founded in Arakan (southwestern Burma) in obvious imitation of the Y.M.C.A., complete with student hostel and home discipline.[5] By 1906 a Young Men's Buddhist Association was established in Rangoon.[6] As the

[1] Maung Maung, *Burma's Constitution* (The Hague, 1961), p. 7.
[2] J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism and a Buddhist Pilgrimage* (New York, 1928), p. 131.
[3] Sri Chandra Sen, "The Venerable Sri Dhammapala. A Life Sketch," in: *Mahabodhi Journal*, XLI (1933), No. 5/6, p. 344.
[4] Maung Maung, p. 7.
[5] *MBUBW*, X, No. 11 (March, 1902), p. 102.
[6] E. J. Colston, "Some recent social movements in Burma," in: *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, Third Series, Vol. XXIX, No. 57 (January, 1910), pp. 79f.; *Annual Report*

objects of the Association were religious, in the context of the "separation of Church and State" (and that non-interference which for British power in India proved to be the path of least resistance), it could not be suppressed by the colonial authorities. Yet in the Y.M.B.A.'s discussions "most of the topics chosen were of a social or political nature." [1] As Buddhism had been traditionally among the main criteria of Burman identity and other religions meant non-Burman identity,[2] reviving Buddhism meant reviving a consciousness of Burman identity. And the Y.M.B.A. became a training ground for Burma's future nationalistic statesmen.[3] It concluded professional men like barristers and journalists. About half of its members were government officials,[4] although at the outset the British authorities suspected the Young Men's Buddhist Association of "political designs" and forbade civil employees of the colonial government to participate in it.[5]

Because of similar apprehensions of a "deep-laid scheme to encourage nationalism and ... subversive tendencies," the foundation of the Burma Research Society in 1910 was not given approval by the British Financial Commission.[6] In order to avoid a prohibition for government servants to participate in its activity, the original charter of the Society precluded it from considering current economic (not to mention political) problems. It concerned mainly that Burmese elite which had contacts with modernity "and a minority of Europeans who dared to admit a sympathetic interest in Burma. Such interest was in itself considered bad form in some [British] circles." "To get away from the strait jacket of conformity to governmental and [provincial Victorian] cultural patterns developed in India" was part of the motivation stimulating the foundation of the Burma Research Society.[7] Its main purpose was to facilitate and communicate research in Burmese history, literature, archaeology, art and the study of Burma in general. Most research on Burma that has been published since that time appeared on the pages of its Journal. Thus the foun-

for the Administration of Burma (Rangoon, 1908), p. 88, *ibid.*, (Rangoon, 1910), p. xviii, cited by J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice. A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (New York, 1956), pp. 142f.; Government of Burma, *Burma Handbook* (Simla, 1943), p. 106.

[1] Ba U, *My Burma. The autobiography of a President* (New York, 1959), p. 19.

[2] U: Kaung, "The beginnings of Christian Missionary Education in Burma," in: Burma Research Society, *Anniversary Publications*, No. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), p. 131.

[3] See note 1, *supra*.

[4] Maung Maung, p. 10.

[5] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 180.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

dation of the Burma Research Society marked the turning point after the colonial decline of Burmese humanities and the Anglization trend within the Burmese secular elite. After two decades in which memories of Burma's historical past had been effectively discouraged in the interest of Law and Order, Trade and Civilization – not to mention the White Man's Burden –, at the time when the Burmese intelligentsia had become culturally Anglicized in various degrees and largely isolated from Burmese culture, Thakin Kudaw Hmain popularized Burma's historical heritage. In 1922 he produced a simplified version of the Glass Palace Chronicle of the Burmese kings, omitting their genealogical derivation from Buddha's family with the Sâkya ancestry and alleged Indian background of the Burmese dynasties (cf. p. 6, fn 5), as well as the Pâli digressions, thus secularizing the panorama of Burmese history in a nationalistic sense.[1]

Thakin Kudaw Hmain's popularization of Burma's past was a prominent contribution to the Movement for National Schools (that followed the student strike against the University of Rangoon in 1920). In the strikers' main National college, at the Shwegyitaik monastry of Rangoon, he served as professor of Burmese history and literature. It was hoped among the striking students that such "national" colleges and national schools, as were developed, could emancipate modernized instruction from British rule. The National School Movement collapsed by 1922,[2] but some of the Burmese national schools it had created were accepted by the colonial administration. And the movement, though politically only an episode, left culturally more lasting effects – a consciousness of Burma's historical traditions among the Burmese intelligentsia. This consciousness remained not devoid of nationalistic exaggerations; pride was taken in the Shwedagon Pagoda of Rangoon having been built "two thousand" or "2,400 years ago." [3] But even such exaggerated claims encouraged intellectual opposition to British domination.

Such opposition was often hardened precisely among the Anglicized Burmese elite by the British White Men's contempt and – in spite of kind friendships of individual Englishmen – by racial discrimination.[4] The English color bar in London drove a fellow student of Ba U, the

[1] Cf. Tin Ohn, "Modern historical writing in Burmese": D. G. E. Hall (Editor), *Historians of Southeast Asia* (London, 1961), p. 92.
[2] Maung Maung, pp. 16f.
[3] Ba U, pp. 28, 41.
[4] Ba U, pp. 21f., 31f., 38, 42, 49, 90; U Kyaw Min, *The Burma we love* (Calcutta, 1945), pp. 5–12.

subsequent President of Burma, to suicide.[1] It was middle-class Englishmen's racial discrimination directed against even elite Burmese plus their demand for Civil Service Class 1 positions – reserved until 1921 for Englishmen only – that attracted scions of British Burma's government service into political agitation for self-government.

This agitation began in Burma when this Province of British India was not to be included into the 1917 constitutional reforms granted in response to India's home-rule demands. The leadership of this movement for Burman self-rule was able to harness popular opposition to the British domination only after its English-type liberal constitutionalist goals had been linked to the economic grievances, traditionalist expectations and Buddhist values of Burma's rural majority.[2] For these traditionalist Buddhist folk expectations (cf. p. 153) of Burma's rural majority such daring concessions as the Y.M.B.A.'s modification of the Empire anthem to "'Buddha Save the King', a change of which their [British] Majesties were not known to disapprove," [3] were insufficient. Nor were the Y.M.B.A.'s prayers for favors and expressions of gratitude and loyalty to the British government very effective. Independently from reform attempts of the English educated and "progressively minded" Burmese politicians, developed a more traditionalist popular movement. And men like May Oung, a subsequent British administration minister who graduated from the London Inns of Court (and who as chairman of the Young Men's Buddhist Association had moved a resolution expressing profound satisfaction and deep gratitude to His Excellency, the British Lieutenant Governor, for the opportunity so graciously granted to one hundred Burmese to serve on the British Empire's western front), had in Burma no chance when competing for popular favor against what the Educated Class chose to call the Buddhist monks' medievalism.[4] Like him, the ablest English-trained government servants and barristers who turned politicians were usually far removed "from rapport with the populace as a whole."

This Educated Class, associated with the Young Men's Buddhist Association, was not to preserve its initial leadership in Burma's movement for self-government. Being conditioned by legal training and bureaucratic service against revolutionary mass movements, it was soon outflanked by the less westernized leadership of the "General

[1] Ba U, p. 43.
[2] A. D. Moscotti, "*British Policy in Burma, 1917–1937: A study in the development of colonial self-rule*" (Yale University: unpublished Dissertation, 1950), p. 153.
[3] Maung Maung, p. 11.
[4] Cady, *A history of modern Burma* (Ithaca, 1960), p. 233.

Council of Burmese Associations," successor of a political offshoot from the Y.M.B.A. This General Council of Burmese Associations (G.C.B.A.) came closer to the traditionalist people and was largely prepared to cooperate with politically active Buddhist monks.[1] U Chit Hlaing, who – contrary to other Burmese politicians of his generation – sacrificed a personal fortune for the cause of Burma's emancipation, was elected president of the G.C.B.A. He used to be acclaimed as "Thammada," the Unanimously Elect [2] (cf. p. 13) of Burma. A number of adherents following him everywhere held the Golden Umbrella over him,[3] a hierarchical symbol under the Burmese kings. Down river from Sagaing, U Chit Hlaing was to parade in traditional royal state, but countered that this was old-fashioned – as "Burma would have to put its case before world opinion." [4] (cf. p. 216). This was in 1928. For, by 1922, political agitation in Burma had ceased to be an exclusive concern of the English-educated or even Buddhist modernistic urban elite and came to be influenced by folk Buddhist traditionalism: "The popular revolution for political freedom had begun." [5]

Burma's Anglicized urban politicians wanting mass backing had – unlike the Indian Congress Party – no indigenous middle class to rely upon (cf. p. 142). Therefore they had few alternatives but to line up with the Buddhist political monks, largely swaying the public opinion of the rural majority.[6] Most influential among these "political pongyis (monks)" was U Ottama: Against the background of modernistic Buddhism, U Ottama gave the Buddhist ethos a political interpretation which endowed the independence struggle with Buddhist meaning among the traditionalist masses (cf. p. 8–9), just as the Maha-Bodhi's modernistic Buddhism had sought for patriotic self-sacrifice in battle a foundation in the Pancâvudha Jâtaka about one of Buddha's previous lives.[7] So U Ottama's listeners came to see the self-abnegation of the independence struggle, the self-sacrifice of life for the sake of others, as an application of the example of the Bodhisattva who was said to have in a previous life, as king of monkeys, sacrificed his body to provide a bridge for other monkeys to save themselves from pur-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[2] Ba U, p. 104; Maung Maung Pye, p. 8.
[3] Maung Maung, p. 15.
[4] M. Collis, *Into hidden Burma* (London, 1953), p. 164.
[5] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 212.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 232.
[7] *MBUBW*, XIII, No. 7/8 (November/December, 1904), p. 61.

suers.[1] This ideal of self-sacrifice, a boundless widening of the "self" to merge with "others" (cf. p. 41), made the illusion of Self (underlying claims to power and domination by superior force) appear the more reprehensible: A popular Buddhist preacher, Sayadaw U Nye Ya, ridiculed Britain's claim to Empire by reminding that the earth laughed at the one who thought to govern it. [2] The people followed the political monks in turning against the foreign government's police, courts and the tax collectors.[3] Burmese applications of boycott methods against such institutions (a boycott which in 1922 was particularly directed against the elections of the deputies devoid of full legislative power) were claimed to have had canonical Buddhist precedents: Thakin Kudaw Hmain ("Mr. Maung Hmain") gave the boycott an ideological foundation, citing from the canonical Vinaya Code of Buddhist monastic regulation that monks were not to accept anything from evil people.[4]

But the contradictions between the 93% majority supporting the boycott movement against the "Legislative Council" and the collaborating Burmese politicians had frustrated by 1924/1925 the first attempt at a united political movement bridging the gap between the Anglicized urban elite and the traditionalist rural majority. "The scramble for office" absorbed the energies of the G.C.B.A.'s politicians, for, "one by one, its leaders broke away to forsake the boycott and tried their fortunes in the Legislative Council." [5] On the other hand, the Burmanization of the services was effectively pressed "so that the higher-paid posts and the "Secretary of State services" such as the Burma Civil Service Class I, the Burma Police Service Class I were opened to more and more Burman recruits. Those prized jobs usually went to the sons of Ministers or sons of friends and supporters of Ministers, or the prospective sons-in-law, but deserving young men were also able to force their way in by sheer merits." [6]

In spite of these developments, U Chit Hlaing's once boycotting remnant of the G.C.B.A. preserved connections with the traditionalist

[1] Bama-hkit U: Ba Yin, *Sayadaw U: Ottama* (Amsterdam, n.d.), pp. 26f. I could not identify the Jâtaka to which reference is made.
[2] Thayawadi U: Nye Ya Sayadaw-thi, *Wunthanu Dhamma neyu Padeytha Can*:, Vol. II (Rangoon, 1319/1957 reprint), pp. 59f. Cf. *Viṣṇu Purâṇa*, IV, xxiv: *The Vishńu Puráńa. A system of Hindu mythology*. Translated by Horace H. Wilson (London, 1864/1877), Vol. IV, pp. 238f., 242.
[3] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 232.
[4] Thakin Kudaw Hmain: ("Maung Hmain:"), Boikot *Ṭîkâ-gyi*: (Rangoon, 1927), pp. 114f., 229.
[5] Maung Maung, p. 21.
[6] Maung Maung, p. 33.

and anti-Administration "general council of Samgha Sametgyi" organization of "political monks." Through such political pongyis, U Ottama's exhortations that the monkhood should actively defend Buddhism against British hegemony (cf. p. 104f., 110ff.) deeply affected the villages, particularly the women of the villages.[1] "The pongyi was the most important instrument by which the independence movement reached the rural masses and gained the adherence of the bulk of the people. The monks were instrumental in developing the non-corporation movement among the local village-athins." [2] These Athins (apparently meant as synonyms with "Ahmudan," the hereditary Upper Burman service class under the Burmese kings) [3] started originally in the course of the extension of the G.C.B.A.'s anti-British agitation into the countryside. By 1924 they appeared in almost every village of Burma,[4] reviving "hoary folk tales widely believed." Such "revolutionary prognostications" or the general influence of the political monks, enlisting a mass following among the village-athins, revived in 1927 with the release of U Ottama from prison.[5] In jail, as a common prisoner, died the monk U Wisara – fasting to death as protest against the prohibition to wear the monks' yellow robes during imprisonment (1929): "When the fast passed the first week, anxiety mounted in the country, and people and organizations sent desperate telegraphs to the government daily, urging that U Wisara's demands ... be met. It was a contest between the popular will and that of the [alien] government, a contest in which a life was sacrificed and the popular will rose stronger from defeat." [6]

That the popular will of the masses, living in a different world from that of the Anglicized political aspirants, would not respond to their leadership, caused worry to such patronizing and well-meaning liberal London School of Economics' Fabians as the late John Furnivall. This socialist presented one of the most vehement arguments against ... broad franchise! "He proposed that the right of suffrage be conditioned

[1] Burma, Police Department, *Report on the Police Administration in Burma, 1922*, pp. 18f.; *Report on the Police..., 1925*, pp. 51ff.; India Office, *Report on the India Statutory Commission*, Cmd. 3568, Vol. XI [*Memorandum submitted by the Governor of Burma* (London, 1930)], p. 269, cited by Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 250, 254.

[2] Burma, Police Department, *Report on the Police Administration in Burma, 1922*, p. 16 quoted by Moscotti, "*British Policy in Burma, 1917–1937*," p. 36.

[3] Cf. M. G. Kozova, *Birma nakanune zavoïevaniïa Obščestvennyi stroï* (Moscow, 1962), p. 62.

[4] Burma, Police Department, *Report on the Police Administration in Burma, 1924*, p. 18, cited by Moscotti, *op. cit., p.* 28.

[5] *Report on the Police Administration in Burma, 1925*, p. 52, cited by Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 37f., 255. There seems to be no such reference *for 1925*.

[6] Maung Maung, p. 21.

on the payment of a land tax of from 25 to 50 rupees and that the burden of proof be placed on those engaged in trades or businesses to make their own case for being included." Such policy would have restricted the number of voters to 40% of those actually given the franchise. Furnival, who had started as British colonial official before becoming interested in social reform and developing into the most scholarly of the Burma Experts, put enlightenment above the popular will. Thus he gave priority to what he considered reasonable against that which he knew the majority would want. Furnivall insisted that "the basic problem of local government in Burma is not to give the people what they want, but to induce them to want what they need." He predicted "that the majority did not know what it would be voting for, that it would sooner or later respond to some religious fanatic's absurd propaganda . . ." And in this he was fully supported by the Burmese spokesman for the Educated Class.[1] For that Educated Class, the people's Buddhism was largely but a religious means for their political ends of self-government, that is for greater participation in government. For the traditionalist majority of the Burmese people, however, the independence struggle seems to have been mainly a political means for a religious goal of achieving a Buddhist state.

[1] Great Britain, Burma Reforms Committee, *Record of Evidence* (London, 1922), Vol. I, pp. 40f.; Vol III, pp. 219ff., 228ff., quoted by Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 226f.; J. S. Furnivall, *The governance of modern Burma* (New York, 1960: Institute of Pacific Relations), p. x.

CHAPTER XX

ECONOMIC CRISIS OF BURMA'S BUDDHIST SOCIETY UNDER BRITISH RULE

The safeguarding of Buddhism has been the main rationale of the Burmese monarchy (cf. p. 6ff., 60ff.). Its traditions were preserved by folklore in the outlook of rural Burma into the twentieth century, even while the secular elite became largely Anglicized in political outlook. It was to the "abandonment" of Buddhism by the new rulers that popular beliefs attributed the economic dislocations of Burmese society resulting from the integration of Burma into the British Empire's world markets. *The* Good Government as upholder of the Buddhist Dhamma and guardian of institutionalized Buddhism was customarily thought to ensure that ethical harmony of nature (p. 49f., 88) through which "crops would grow of their own accord." [1] The government that the traditionalist majority of the Burmese electorate expected and desired was to be "a cornucopia, an inexhaustible source of money and favors," [2] a source of plenty in the spirit of the traditional lore about the ideal Buddhist state as source of welfare and about economic welfare as a prerequisite for institutionalized Buddhism (cf. pp. 56ff., 89f., 179). In contrast the British conquerors had withdrawn the state's economic support to which the Buddhist monastic order had been used under the Burmese kings (cf. pp. 108f.). Thereby institutionalized Nirvana-seeking became more and more difficult.

And money economy produced an atmosphere which made worldly goods tempting to some monks: The lapse of the state-appointed central supervision of monastic observances and the elimination of monastic jurisdiction (p. 110) produced such phenomena of degeneration as the notorious "Thet Phongyi," the corrupt and vicious abbot of Thein Pe's satirical novel (edited by U Nu – "Maung Nu").[3] As the

[1] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma, 1824–1942* (London, 1946), p. 82.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[3] Thein Pe, *Thet Phongyi*: (Moulmein, no date).

standing of some monks declined in the eyes of much of the urban public, fewer and fewer Burmese youths in the towns of southern Burma (the areas under the strongest British impact) went through temporary novitiation residence in Buddhist monasteries. What remained of it in Lower Burma tended to become a mere ceremony ("Shin-Pyu") and was there no longer a source of Buddhist experience.[1] Much of the urban laity of the economically most developed parts of Burma drew more distant from the monastic order. At the same time, the monastery-supporting and harmonious but self-sufficient and limited economy of pre-British Burmese Buddhist society was being dissolved in Lower Burma.

In that economic environment of pre-British Burmese Buddhism, according to a description by a British envoy of 1826, "owing to high wages ... the laboring classes ... [were], upon the whole, well-fed, clad and housed; a fact which is soon observed by a stranger ... The Burmese peasantry ... [was] in more comfortable and easy circumstances than the mass of the labouring poor in any of our Indian provinces; and, making allowance for climate, manners, and habits, might bear a comparison with the peasantry of most European countries." "Beggary ... is very infrequent among the Burmese ..." [2] According to an early nineteenth century Catholic report about Burma, "beggars are rare in this country on account of the cheapness of provisions." [3] Such relative prosperity was made possible by the surplus of land in relation to population. About pre-British Burma it was observed that "the land generally belongs to the immediate cultivators, and each estate therefore consists only of a few acres. There are no large accumulations of land in the hands of individual proprietors .... There was no bustle, no activity, but a stillness and tranquility without animation." [4] "Far away in the quiet countryside dwelt the mass of the people, a homely fold who were ruled by their elders and headmen. They had their songs and gladness, their household cares and village fêtes; they neither knew nor cared what happened at court" [5] or elsewhere outside of the immediate life sphere of local self-sufficiency.

Under that self-sufficiency (not necessarily mere subsistence) the

[1] R. Paw U, *The Buddhist Priesthood in Burmese Society* (unpublished Master's Dissertation: Columbia University, New York, 1948), p. 35.
[2] John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, Vol. II (London, 1834), pp. 242f. Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 172.
[3] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 121.
[4] Crawfurd, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 161; Vol. I, p. 219. Cf. Brohm, pp. 95, 114.
[5] G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 332.

social focus of Burma shifted away from the coast, since the eighteenth century, leaving Lower Burma in the depopulated state of a swamp and jungle land. After the British annexation of 1852 (and particularly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which provided easy access to overseas markets) the countryside of Lower Burma went through an agricultural revolution almost unprecedented in Asia: This fertile monsoon land was colonized from the dry zone of Upper Burma. Many of the Burmese settlers in the British-conquered South died, clearing the rank jungle under a murderous sun in the malaria-ridden swamp.[1] Under British rule Lower Burma received the highest influx of agricultural capital that any Asian country has known (until post-war Japan).[2] This British and Indian capital was spectacularly invested in financing rice production, respectively in rice export (which had been prohibited before the British conquest).[3] Between 1830 and 1940 the acreage under rice cultivation in Lower Burma increased about fifteen times. From 1869 to the end of British rule in 1942 there was a more than tenfold increase in production but only a fourfold increase in population (including immigration).[4] Nearly three-fourths of the increased rice production was grown for export; the needs of British export trade were dominant.[5] The value of the sea-borne merchandise alone doubled in the period previous to 1881.[6]

The port of Rangoon, hardly more than a village in the beginning of the nineteenth century, during the British period became a bustling urban agglomeration of diversified population with a majority of Indian immigrants. It came to be characterized more by the common features of tropical Asian ports than by a Burmese atmosphere, a tropical urbanization phenomenon of market economy. In Rangoon was centered the British colonial administration of "the Burmese Province of British India" and British vested business interests, the activities of the British "Commercial Community." Into this capitalistic economy pre-capitalistic Burmese society was meant to be integrated – but never actually was. Traditional Burmese society in Lower Burma was gradually dissolving in this process. Contrary to the nineteenth century western homelands of free enterprise, in this

[1] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, p. 49.
[2] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, pp. 85, 87.
[3] Howard Malcom, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia ... and a full account of the Burmese Empire* (Boston, 1839), pp. 74f.
[4] L. Pye, *op. cit.*, pp. 85ff, 92.
[5] Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, p. 49.
[6] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 533.

tropical colonial society the impersonal dynamism of unrestrained market economy were not sufficiently mitigated by traditional religious and social bonds.[1] Where Burma's traditional Buddhist ethos survived the impact of an alien world, Buddhist values proved an obstacle to the acceptance of a business mentality. From Buddhism could be derived no ideological sanction for social Darwinism's competition for economic survival.

"A very beautiful religion, full of great thoughts .... It gives solace to the fallen, to the weak, a safe asylum for the broken in life. It guards the bays where the storm-driven souls put in to refit. It is the gospel of the sick, the wounded, the dying .... But ....

The first and greatest truth is to make the best use of this beautiful world God has given us. The greatest sin is to be useless, to cumber the ground. *It is our duty to sweep away the cowardly, the inefficient, the weak, who misuse it, and put in their place the strong and useful.* The Burman already has too much faith. He has been nursed and cosseted and preached at too much. He must get up and fight. *He must not shrink at the blows of the world and seek seclusion from it, but go out and affront it.* He must throw off his swaddling bands of faith and find the natural fighter underneath. *He must learn to be savage, if necessary to destroy, to hurt and push aside without scruple.* He must learn to be a man .... It would open their eyes to new views of life. *But their faith stands in their way ...*" [2]

Thus wrote a sympathetic British colonial official.[3] The lessons in such manliness (if not humaneness) started with the stray dogs of Mandalay: They had multiplied in pre-British days as popular Buddhist sentiment opposed their killing, seeing in their feeding a merit towards future lives. After the British occupation, British officers baited these unfortunate animals with their European hounds.[4] Subsequently these street dogs were poisoned by order of the new authorities.[5] That the Burmese had let them live was considered another sign of native backwardness in sanitation.

The Burmese themselves were to be changed, "a People at School": The general British evaluation of the Burmans, in the official Census Report of 1901, called these natives "unbusinesslike, irresponsible, perfectly incapable of sustained effort, content with what can be gained by a minimum of toil." [6] And "the government apparently did

[1] J. S. Furnivall, "Safety first. A study in economic history of Burma," in: *JBRS*, XL, i (June, 1957), pp. 24–38.

[2] H. Fielding-Hall, *A People at School* (London, 1906), pp. 253f., 264.

[3] His "Soul of a People" is one of the most sensitive evocations of Asian life and had a considerable influence on Burma's emanicipation movement (cf. above, p. 115; fn. 1, of the present book).

[4] I. P. Minaev, *Dnevniki putešestvij v Indiju i Birmu* (Moscow, 1955), p. 150.

[5] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions* (London, 1910), p. 83.

[6] *Census of India, 1901*, Vol. XII: Burma, Part i (Rangoon, 1902), p. 114.

not want to encourage even destitute Burman cultivators to develop slovenly habits." Thus taxes were collected from impoverished peasants, living under emergency conditions, even when the revenue was not actually needed and was only in part spent by the government.[1] "Nature's salutary Laws," as conceived by the Social Darwinism dear to Rangoon's British business community,[2] had little regard for those for whom "money was not a thing to trouble about so long as a fellow was happy." [3] Those preoccupied with the Immediate, not with economic Prudence, on the assumption that nothing material is lasting and everything in life transitory,[4] were supposed to be a backward relic standing in the way of Progress. The application of the economic values of Progress enabled by 1931 British Burma's Census Report to register proudly the achievements made since the time "when ... there was not much difficulty in making a living .... But conditions are very different now and Burman gangs of coolies [are] working in Rangoon." [5] This accomplishment corresponded to the ideals of late Victorian and Edwardian colonial policy, aiming in Burma, as elsewhere, at improving the original shortcomings of the Natives by "educating" the Natives gradually, very gradually for middle-class Responsibility. As part of this Education for Responsibility, the Burmans were exposed to the full benefits of the hard School of unrestrained Free Competition. Among the various improvements brought since the first British conquest, a missionary reports that now "... property is sacred ..." [6]

In this enlightened spirit, the state monopolies of the Burmese kings were abolished, after the British conquest gave place to the application of liberal *laissez-faire* principles. And soon rice milling for export was concentrated in the hands of a few British entrepreneurs who jointly determined the prices they were willing to pay the peasants for rice paddy. In 1882, their joint efforts succeeded in keeping rice prices down as far as the agriculturalists were concerned. Gradually the British rice mills of Rangoon extended their control over other

[1] *Report on the Administration of Burma for 1915–1916* (Rangoon, 1917), p. iv; *Report on the Administration of Burma for 1916–1917* (Rangoon, 1918), pp. 14f., 45f; *Report on the Administration for Burma for 1917–1918* (Rangoon, 1919), pp. vi, 12; Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 187.

[2] John Stuart, *Burma through the centuries, Being a short account of the leading races of Burma ...and of the annexation...* (London, 1909), pp. 191, 192.

[3] E. D. Cuming, *With the Jungle Folk: A sketch of Burmese village life* (London, 1897), p. 98.

[4] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 202.

[5] *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. XI: *Burma, Part i* -"*Report*", (Rangoon, 1934), p. 34.

[6] Howard Malcom, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

mills in Burma to control the prices paid to the rice cultivators. In this way they managed by 1894 to force down the average price the Burmese peasants were receiving for their rice – even when rice values were rising on the world markets.[1] And in 1921 the four principal English rice export firms agreed along these lines on "a common policy in rice purchases and sales" – which was blamed for the hardships of Lower Burma's countryside. A British investigating committee concluded that "it does not seem right to scrutinize too closely the tactics in fighting for existence." [2]

"Regarded as a business concern, Burma under British rule was good business," wrote Furnivall:

"And in this business concern the Burmans played a very minor part .... Where economic forces have free play, the weakest goes to the wall, and in the economic development of Burma, the Burmans have been in the unfortunate position of the weaker .... Relatively, at least they are poorer than before. Under Burmese rule [of the kings] the Burman was a poor man in a poor country. Now [at the end of British rule] he is a poor man in a comparatively rich country." [3]

Between 1870 and 1930 agricultural real wages in Lower Burma may have fallen by 20%.[4] The Burmans' own consumption of rice appears to have fallen by nearly 25% during the last two decades of British rule, 1921–1941.[5] According to other calculations, it fell "only" by 10%. It certainly has not risen.[6]

That the Burmans did not benefit in proportion to British development of Burmese economy was partly due to the non-adaptation of Burma's social ethos to the requirements of a business society. Buddhist social ethics had little place for the economic virtues of saving, calculating and investing. The pursuit of economic gain as an end in itself was not socially sanctioned. If something was laid by in pre-colonial Burma, it was to be applied to "some work of public benefit,

[1] *Annual Report of Maritime Trade and Customs*, 1881/1882, p. 38.
Annual Report of Maritime Trade and Customs, 1886/1887, pp. 17, 21.
Annual Report of Maritime Trade and Customs, 1892/1893, pp. 21f.
Annual Report of Maritime Trade and Customs, 1893/1894, pp. 1, 22.
Annual Report of Maritime Trade and Customs, 1894/1895, p. 1, cited by
J. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice. A comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India*, pp. 96ff.

[2] Peter Ady, "Economic bases of unrest in Burma," in: *Foreign Affairs*, XXIX (1951), pp. 477.

[3] J. Furnivall's Foreword to J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life* (Stanford, 1957), pp. vi, xi, xii.

[4] Furnivall, *An introduction to the political economy of Burma* (Rangoon, 1957), p. 77.

[5] V. D. Wickizer & M. K. Bennett, *The Rice Economy of Monsoon Asia* (Stanford, 1941), p. 216.

[6] Furnivall in: Andrus, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

such as a convent ..., a pagoda, a hall ..., a bridge or a well. They ... often deprive themselves of comforts to have the pleasure of being a benefactor of the public." [1] One did not save for economic security. Accumulation of wealth was sanctioned in Burma's Buddhist tradition only if it served such works of Merit as building a monastery.[2] Pre-British Burma had no bankers – and "exceedingly few who had anything to lodge with such a personage." Allegedly, in Lower Burma's expanding rice economy, most surplus above the subsistence of the cultivator tended to be spent on "Works of Merit" or else on theatrical Pwe performances.[3] "Thus giving rather than accumulation is built into the Burmese culture, and is characteristic even among families of the lowest income." [4]

"Out of little one should give little, out of what is moderate, a moderate amount. Out of much one should give much," reads a Buddhist maxim.[5] Though "works of Merit" continued to some reduced extent as motivation for economic activity (cf. p. 70), Buddhist values remained an obstacle to purely economic goals of rational accumulation investment and profit.[6] In pre-British Burma, trade had been thought a rather contemptible matter,[7] traders were considered unreliable witnesses in courts ...[8] An early nineteenth century Burmese minister could not believe that the English would consider selling entire provinces to the highest bidder – until the British Resident replied in the affirmative.[9] "The Burman's instincts and traditions are against commerce which he does not quite regard as an honorable profession." [10] The acquisitive type of merchant had been little known in pre-British Burma – outside of its foreign residents.[11] In old Burma the only economic power that existed was part of political power (cf. p. 54): there was no purely economic elite. No group occupied a leading position on the basis of

[1] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 121.
[2] Cuming, *With the Jungle Folk: A Sketch of Burmese Village life*, pp. 13f.; D. Pfanner & J. Ingersoll, "Theravada Buddhism and village economic behaviour," in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXI, No 3 (May, 1962), pp. 345, 348. Cf. Brohm, p. 334, fn. 69.
[3] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 533.
[4] L. J. Walinsky, *Economic development in Burma, 1951–1960* (New York, 1962), p. 390.
[5] *Mahâvastu*, II, 49–50: transl. Jones, Vol. II, p. 47.
[6] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 65.
[7] H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, p. 118, fn. 2.
[8] Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese law Tales, The legal element in Burmese folklore* (London, 1962), pp. 31f.
[9] The Province in question was Tenasserim, annexed by the British East India Company in 1826: India Office (unpublished manuscript), Bengal Secret and Political Consultations, Vol. 358: Henry Burney's Journal, Paragraph 235, quoted by W. S. Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826–1840* (Rangoon, 1939), p. 134.
[10] *Guardian*, Vol. VIII, No. 6 (June, 1961), p. 27.
[11] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 95.

its *economic* function. Purely acquisitive economic aspirations are not in the spirit of the Buddhist Eightfold Path (cf. p. 40). From it sprung more emphasis on sharing than on production for accumulation.[1] Thus the Suttanipâta of the Buddhist Canon says that "the man who is possessed of much property, who has gold and food, [and still] enjoys alone his sweet things – that is the cause of loss to the losing [suffering] men." [2] Men's possessions, toil and vocation were in the Buddhist context to be only means [3] (cf. p. 56). For Buddhist Burma it did not appear worthwhile to establish material comforts on the "temporary camping ground" that the earth was thought to be.[4] The consciousness that to prosper competitively is possible only at the expense of other beings – with which perhaps is connected "*a: na-the,*" the compulsion to consider the feelings of others –[5] proved an obstacle to success in economic pursuit.

A functional or vocational relativity of ethics, gradated in accordance with pragmatic requirements of social situations, had no place in the universalistic Dhamma of Theravâda Buddhism. Such absolute Buddhist ethics were economically less "practical" than the functional Hindu mercantile caste ethos (cf. p. 80f.).[6] Already Max Weber has pointed out the greater economic effectiveness of Hinduistic over Theravâda Buddhist social ethics.[7] The former proved more suitable for an acquisitive business society. On Indian labor, attracted to British Burma, long depended almost all its modern enterprise and commerce. With it the Burmans could not compete. South Indian money-lenders (of the "Chettyar" sub-caste from the Madras area) gradually dispossessed a large part of the rice cultivators of Lower Burma.

"The Burmese peasant was not accustomed to Western legal processes, calculations, interest ..." "The traditional Burmese economic system did not provide for that type of private ownership of land which made it a free exchange commodity, subject to mortgage and foreclosure." [8] In pre-British Burma mortgages were only usu-

[1] Nakamura, *The Ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples*, pp. 59, 153.
[2] Parâbhavasutta, 12 = *Suttanipâta*, 101: transl. V. Fausböll, in: *SBE*, Vol, X (1881), p. 18.
[3] G. Hafner, *Kernprobleme der buddhistischen Ethik* (Erlangen, 1927), p. 55.
[4] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his Life and notions*, pp. 553f.
[5] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 149 ("an-ah-de").
[6] Cf. Shway Yoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 553–554.
[7] Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. II (Tübingen, 1921), p. 372; Cf. J. G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, I, Vol. ii, p. 165.
[8] J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life*, pp. 15, 65.

fructuary: Even if foreclosed, the land could still be claimed back in return for repayment of the original loan even as late as after three generations [1] (paun shin).[2] Nor was sale of land known in old Burma. There were only redeemable sales: sold land could always be redeemed by the seller (or members of his family).[3] For traditional Burma the outright sale of land by its cultivator was inconceivable; "the one thing he could not surrender was the land." [4] Even in the twentieth century, to many Burmans in the less exposed interior parts of the country, the idea that land can be sold is unintelligible.[5] While under Burmese common law freehold was unknown, agriculturalists were left in possession as long as they worked the land. But in case they transferred it, their kinsmen – no matter how remote – had an option at it.[4]

In colonial Burma, on the other hand, the introduction of British-Indian law made possible the alienation of land through mortgaging and foreclosure.[6] The cultivators, not being used to the possibility of losing their land, frequently borrowed more than they needed for cultivation and spent the surplus for non-productive purposes while paying exorbitant rates of interest.[7] The interest rate on land mortgages in British Burma came to be 15 to 36%; "and very few enterprises in the world are believed to have earned a net return on invested capital equal to such rates." [8] Thus in British Burma these extortionist interest rates came to take the place of the exactions of officials under the Burmese kings (mostly exactions of labour[9]). But contrary to abuses under the Burmese kings, colonial usury was backed by the law courts and by social respectability.[10] The hazards and investments that went with developing Lower Burma's new lands for rice cultivation were so great that the interest rates of up to 36% and above could

[1] J. G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I Vol. ii, p. 166; cf. Shway Yoe, *op. cit.*, p. 533; Minute of Sir Herbert White, Lieutenant Governor of Burma, May 17, 1906, quoted in Burma, *Report of the Land and Agriculture Committee*, Part II, *Land Alienation* (Rangoon, 1949: reprint), p. 46.
[2] Cf. A. Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*, p. 650.
[3] J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice. A comparative study of Burma...*, p. 134.
[4] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma, 1824–1942*, p. 24; Maung Maung, *Law*, p. 94.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[6] Cf. Daw Mya Tin, *Land tenure in the Union of Burma* (Rangoon, 1956).
[7] Burma, *Report of the Land and Agriculture Committee*, Part II = *Land Alienation* (Rangoon, 1949 reprint), pp. 51f.
[8] J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life*, p. 67.
[9] Howard Malcom, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
[10] Burma, Settlement Department, *Report on the first regular settlement operations in the Myingyan District, Season 1909/1911*, by J. S. Furnivall (Rangoon, 1912), pp. 84–88, 91–93, 142, cited by Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 161.

rarely be borne by the cultivator. As they defaulted in payment, they would lose the "occupancy right" taken by the money-lenders as security. Thereby the money-lenders almost invariably moved in to take over the "occupancy right" before full heritable permanent ownership could have been acquired by the cultivators' regular payment of taxes for a number of years. Once a cultivator lost his occupancy claim through this economic process, he either became a renter-tenant of his creditors or had to move on – and to attempt the clearance of new virgin land for cultivation. There this economic process of colonization would be repeated: "the expanding structure of debt itself kept agricultural expansion going." [1]

Thereby Burman migratory laborers who made possible the spectacular expansion of rice cultivation in Lower Burma benefited least from the economy's development under British rule. The constant migration from village to village of Lower Burma broke down the restraints of traditional Burmese society and was among the causes of British Burma's phenomenally high rate of murders; most common crimes were associated with these landless agricultural laborers.[2] For British Burma's agricultural laborers it was almost impossible to accumulate enough surplus to become a landowner; Furnivall estimates that agricultural wages have fallen by 20% since 1870.[3] Under British rule relatively few agriculturalists in the newly developed rice cultivation areas of Lower Burma escaped indebtedness to the money-lenders. The process of their dispossession began already in the late nineteenth century. By 1901/1902 money-lenders and other non-agriculturists owned already about 17% of cultivated land in Lower Burma.[4] By 1908 almost half of the cultivated land in the Thaton District was no longer owned even nominally by agriculturalists. According to contemporary British officials' District Reports, "much of the land is in the hands of money-lenders and traders, who let it out on yearly tenancies ... Indebtedness is general; cultivating owners are often merely creatures of the Chetties [South Indian money-lenders]." [5] By the time of the Census of 1921, only one half of the agriculturalists in Lower Burma owned their own land (27% being

[1] Cady, *ibid.*, p. 158.
[2] J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life*, pp. 71, 73.
[3] J. S. Furnivall, *Introduction to the political economy of Burma* (Rangoon, 1957), p. 77.
[4] A. Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol. II (Boston, 1907), pp. 597.
[5] Burma, Settlement Department, *Report on the...settlement of Thaton District, Season 1908–1911*, by T. Couper (Rangoon, 1911), pp. 7–11, cited by Cady, *op. cit.*, pp. 160f.

landless agricultural laborers and 22% tenants).[1] The fall of rice prices during the World Depression resulted in the mass dispossession of Burmese rice cultivators by foreclosure of mortgages. By 1930/1931 money-lending landlords owned already 32½% of Lower Burma's arable land – and by 1933, 41% of it.[2]

The fact that at the end of British rule, in 1941, in the economically advanced part of Burma about two thirds of the rice land was held by non-agriculturalists – many of them being Indian money-lenders [3] – demonstrates the perennial failure of successive projects and proposals to protect the Burmese agriculturalists by legislation until the last year of British rule.[4] All such proposals to protect the Burmese rice peasants by legislative measures, with monotonous regularity, were prevented from realization by opposition from the decisive government authorities and from colonial Burma's British business community. This crucial pressure group generally set the tone of English sentiment in Burma and outnumbered the officials. The British business community demanded abundant and cheap labor, a rejection of welfare legislation for the protection of landless or indebted agriculturalists and *laissez faire* policies ... plus strong police controls. Its vested interests opposed political or economic reforms for British Burma, "foolish measures designed to protect certain classes from the effects of their own folly." Of these British merchants few "associated with the Burmese people or knew anything about Burma except as a place to do business." [5]

And so more rice was grown for export; more land revenue and custom dues were collected as British enterprise developed Burmese economy. But the resulting prosperity was not shared proportionately by the Burmans themselves. The people remained relatively poor and were not given an opportunity to control the vast economic forces that played on them. Nor could they participate profitably in this economic transformation. Such ideals of humanitarianism and social justice as eventually became operative in Britain were but belatedly

[1] Great Britain, *Report of the India Statutory Commission*, Cmd. 3568 (London, 1930), Vol. XI [*Memorandum submitted by the Governor of Burma to the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. XI (London, 1930)], p. 16, cited by Akademiïa Nauk S.S.S.R., Institut Vostokovedeniïa *Birmanskiĭ Soĭuz. Sbornik stateĭ* (Moscow, 1958), p. 71.

[2] Burma, *Report on the Administration of Burma for the year 1930/1931* (Rangoon, 1932), p. 16; Burma, *Report on the Administration of Burma for the year 1932/1933* (Rangoon, 1934), p. iii.

[3] Cf. J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life*, pp. 67f.

[4] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 163–166.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 163; John Stuart, *Burma through the centuries. Being a short account...of the annexation* (London, 1909), pp. 191f.

and ineffectively transferred to Britain's Burmese dependency. Unrestrained by any politically effective rival economic forces, in Burma, as in other English colonies, British vested interests, profiting from notions about universal and beneficial applicability of Social Darwinism and economic *laissez faire* principles, remained unchecked longer than in Britain itself. While in parliamentary Britain free enterprise was already restricted by social welfare legislation, in British Burma free enterprise and freedom of contract to the point of land alienation was still the main object of the legal system.[1] Therefore such traditions of the Burmese common law that gave priority to social welfare rather than to economic progress were supplanted.

As the British-Indian legal principles supplanted the Burmese customary law, the Burmese tradition restricting all accumulated interest to 100% of the amount originally loaned was disregarded. British-Indian law recognized no limit on the accumulation of interest on capital. Burmese customary law made all who had taken part in cultivation entitled to a first claim upon its produce. British courts disregarded such priority.[2] As legality was no longer the largely oral customary law, familiar to the people, but a foreign law, written in a foreign language, it became incomprehensible to the people and required a lawyers' class of intermediaries. The modern administration that the British colonial system imposed for the sake of Efficiency and Economic Progress required an ever-increasing subordinate bureaucracy. This petty bureaucracy was necessary to apply the modern rules of Efficiency and Economic Progress, "rules unintelligible to the simpler people, and applied them largely for purposes of extortion." [3] The higher British bureaucracy which could have restrained such extortion practices remained mostly removed from and inaccessible to the people through its consciousness of racial distance. "... Not only did crime increase under British rule, it is even arguable that it was caused by British rule," writes Harvey.[4] "Indeed, much more was spent on police than on education, on prisons than on public health and agriculture combined." [5]

The prisons of British Burma are described by U Nu in "Man the

[1] Cady, *op. cit.*, pp. 156f.
[2] Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Law Tales. The legal element in Burmese folklore* (London, 1962), pp. 33f.; J. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 134.
[3] *Report of the Bribery and Corruption Inquiry Committee, 1924–1930* (Rangoon, 1930), pp. 7–39, cited by Cady, p. 410; G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, pp. 36, 38.
[4] E. C. V. Foucar, *I lived in Burma* (London, 1956), p. 24, 27ff.
[5] Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp 38, 58.

Wolf of Man." [1] Therein U Nu exemplifies how such jails sometimes confined those who defended their rights too stubbornly. According to a colonial administration report,

> there can be no doubt that the squatter has in many cases been bullied off his land by brute force. If he would be so unfortunate as to settle on a section of land required to round off an estate, he would probably be visited at plowing or harvesting time by retainers [of an absentee landlord]. At planting his work would be harrowed over, and he would be compelled to stand aside while the area was planted on the capitalist's behalf. Or the visit might be postponed until the harvest; then, the man might see the fruit of his year's work disappear ... and his field hut burned .... Through the spread of cultivation over Lower Burma since the opening of the Suez Canal much the same kind of thing had happened, though with increased violence and crime ... Law had prevailed, backed by foreign military force, and the cultivators had been taught that they were impotent to resist oppression by money-lenders and landlords ...[2]

Under British rule Burma's village relations were disrupted, the Burmese local officials disassociated from the populace, and the individual released from the restraints of custom and tradition; much of rural Burma became relatively impoverished while a part of the Buddhist monastic order became demoralized.[3] The social balance stabilizing pre-British Burma, with its "equalitarian character of society," [4] was upset by the colonial system. The colonial administration failed to fill the gap left by its displacing the "medieval" Burmese regime.[5] Through these social dislocations, to Burma's Buddhist traditionalism, the world order seemed no longer a moral order and human society no longer an image of it.[6]

[1] *Guardian* (Rangoon), Vol. II (December, 1954), pp. 18–21.
[2] Burma, Settlement Department, *Report on the original settlement operation in the Labutta Township, 1924–1925*, by U: Tin Gyi: (Rangoon, 1926), as quoted by U Nu, "Man the Wolf of Men," in: *Guardian*, Vol. I, No. 9 (July, 1954), p. 10.
[3] Cf. J. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and practice. A comparative study of Burma...*, p. 114f.; Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 38.
[4] J. S. Furnivall, *The governance of modern Burma* (New York, 1960), p. 26.
[5] Maurice Collis, *Into hidden Burma* (London, 1953), p. 52.
[6] Cf. U May Oung's Lecture in Rangoon, August 1908, published in J. Furnivall, "Dawn of Nationalism in Burma," in: *JBRS*, XXXIII (April, 1950), p. 5.

CHAPTER XXI

BUDDHISM'S AGE OF DECLINE AND BURMESE EXPECTATIONS OF THE SETKYA-MIN, RESTORER OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Among British justifications for such traumatic transformations of Burma was the following argument based on Buddhism:

"I do not see wherein the Burmese, in so far as they are Buddhists, have matter for complaint that we have conquered them. They had made their leading tenet that war was wrong. They believed or tried to believe that the world is a very unhappy place. They said there was nothing in it worth having. All was illusion and despair, and release was the best for all. If then we have conquered them, what harm have we done? We have taken from them what they declared they despised. We have relieved them of the functions of government, and government, they said, was one of the great evils. We are developing the wealth of their country for both ourselves and them, but they say that wealth is evil." [1]

Actually the Buddhist Dhammapada warns, "one is the road leading to wealth and the other is the road leading to Nirvana." [2] Yet, within the Theravâda Buddhist path of deliverance, wealth is to serve as means for (welfare as prerequisite for leisure and meditation that alone could permit) the pursuit of liberation from Saṃsâra (cf. p. 56). Material well-being served a Buddhist purpose wherever it could become a means of overcoming desire and attachment to the wheel of endless change. It was in the utopian land of Uttarakuru,[3] with its perfection of material well-being, that the constant observance of the Five Buddhist Precepts was thought to come naturally.[4] And it was the material utopia of Uttarakuru that repeatedly provided nourishment for Buddha on the eve of his preaching his message of deliverance from Attachment and Impermanence.[5]

A social utopia, resembling that of Uttarakuru, was said to have

[1] H. Fielding-Hall, *A People at School* (London, 1906), pp. 250f.
[2] *Dhammapada*, V, 75: transl. F. Max Müller, in: *SBE*, Vol. X, Part i (1881), p. 22.
[3] Cf. above, p. 89 and W. Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder* (Bonn, 1920), p. 183; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 92.
[4] R. Spence Hardy, *A manual of Buddhism in its modern development* (London, 1853), p. 494.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 190, 300.

flourished on earth before man succumbed to material attachment, to the ruthless acquisition drive and greed (p. 10–12). In the age that was to come with the decline of Buddhist values, as described in prophecies attributed to Gautama Buddha, "princes and nobles will oppress the poor; if they have only one single piece of money left, they will take it from them, and thus leave them ... [destitute], whilst they put the wealth they had gained into their own treasuries that are already full ..." [1] As such rulers would not distribute money among the poor, according to a text attributed to Gautama Buddha, poverty would be increasing and theft spreading. When governments would start executing people for theft, the thieves – to avoid being reported and executed – would resort to murder.[2] "... From goods not being bestowed on the destitute, poverty grows rife; from poverty growing rife, stealing increases, from the spread of stealing violence grows apace, from the growth of violence the destruction of life became common, ... lying ... evil speaking, ... immorality, ... abusive speech ..., covetousness and ill will ..., lack of filial ... and religious piety ..." [3] Gautama Buddha is believed to have foretold that, by the interaction of causes, as the poor would not receive support, poverty would increase; because poverty would increase, theft would spread; because theft would spread, the use of weapons would become general and more and more murders committed.[4] As a result there would arise unjust desires and greed facilitated by false teachings: There shall no longer exist the Ten Paths of Just Action and instead there shall flourish "the ten immoral courses of action." What we call good shall not exist anymore. "There will be no word for moral among such humans – far less any moral agent," declares one of the most popular scriptures of the Buddhist Canon.[5]

Just as in these prophecies economic deterioration is to be followed by the decline of Buddhist virtues, their waning in turn is to cause a decline of fertility and prosperity (cf. p. 49f.): [6] Increased oppression by the rulers – infringing the ethical and at the same time cosmic harmony of the universe – was to "cause" drought and famine.[7] As

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 305f.
[2] Cakkavattî-Sihanâda-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI), 10–13: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 67.
[3] Cakkavattî-Sihanâda-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI), 14–17: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 67–69.
[4] Cakkavattî-Sihanâda-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI), 14–15ff., 21: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 67ff, 71.
[5] *Ibid.*, XXVI, 17–19; transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 68–70.
[6] Przyluski, *La Légende de l'Empereur Açoka*, pp. 400f., 404.
[7] *Anâgatavaṃsa*, cited by E. Abegg, *Der Messiasglaube in Indien und Iran* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 178f.

a result, the patrons of the monkhood were, according to these visions of the future, to be no longer in an economic position to support the monastic order. And the understanding of the Buddhist scriptures was expected to be lost.[1] As a consequence, there shall be no more Buddhist monks and disciples; during these stages of further decline, sanctity shall be acquired no more nor the Precepts observed. Knowledge of the scriptures shall disappear, and finally it was foretold that, as a result, the canonic texts of Buddhism would be no more.[2] Several Burmese Pâli manuscripts (summarized by Minayeff) describe that age of the Dhamma's decline,[3] a decline that was expected to continue through the whole downward course of the World Age, according to the cyclical Buddhist conception of history.

Such a decline and departure from the moral world order is associated in Burman Buddhist cosmology with the end of a World Cycle (of enormously long duration), at the conclusion of which the observation of the Dhamma shall have reached its waning point.[4] In accordance with these traditions, such developments were to be followed by the advent of the Cakkavattî, the ideal Buddhist ruler (p. 87), who is to appear – after the duration of the Law of Buddha had expired – to restore and fulfill the Dhamma. Then the Cakkavattî's non-violent force of Buddhist morality is to unify the world (cf. p. 88).[5] Although the deposed Burmese monarchy used to express in its coronation symbolism Buddhist ideals of Cakkavattî ("Setkyawade:") kingship, this vision was not expected to be realized during the time allotted to the institutions of the Buddha Gautama but only *after* their dissolution.[6] Similarly, the next Buddha (Mettaya), for whose advent the ideal Buddhist Cakkavattî ruler was to prepare the way, was not expected to arise until the progressive decline of Buddhist society shall have run its full course. It was "particularly in Burma," during the 1920's, that some of the monks with whom Pratt conversed "felt that we were already witnessing the decline [cf. p. 110] Buddha had prophesied which is to precede Maitreya's [Mettaya's] descent to this earth." And only after the coming of Mettaya were there again to be

[1] Cf. *JBRS*, Vol. X, Part i (1920), p. 61.
[2] *Manorathapûranî*, I, pp. 87–91, cited in G. Coedès, "Le 2500e Anniversaire du Bouddha," in: *Diogène*, No. 15 (July, 1956), pp. 118, 119.
[3] *Journal of the Pâli Text Society*, 1886, pp. 23f.; E. Abegg, *Der Buddha Maitreya* (St. Gallen, 1946), p. 17.
[4] Cf. Jacobi, "Ages of the World (Buddhist)," in: Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I (New York, 1911), p. 200; Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 88.
[5] Cakkavattî-Sihanâda-Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI), 24: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 73.
[6] Shway Yoe, *The Burman, his life and notions*, p. 446, fn. 1.

"Arhats," men who reach Nirvana *within* their lifetime.[1] Many are to escape the world of misery by following the renovated Dhamma that shall be preached by the future Buddha Mettaya, who would "set rolling the Wheel of the Law." [2]

The concept of this Buddha, turner of the Wheel of the Law, largely merged in Burmese folk Buddhism with that of the ideal Buddhist ruler of the future [3] (cf. p. 45): With the coming of such a "Buddha-King" ("Buddha-Râja," the Burmese Buddha-Yaza), according to living Burmese "Thaik" prophecies, the power of the infidels shall wane.[4] In such prophetic Thaik literature are astrologically calculated (often allegorical) descriptions of past and "future" events. Under the Burmese kings these were among the theoretical premises on which decisions of state were made. Up to the present day, these writings remain a vital part of Burma's folk literature. According to one Thaik prophecy, the British conquerors would not leave Burma until the end of the present World Age,[5] implying that they would withdraw from Burma when the era of decline, associated with British domination, shall have reached its lowest point. Similarly, at the lowest point of decline was to appear the ideal Buddhist ruler of the future – followed by the coming Buddha.

With the future Buddha is associated the "Setkya-Min," a Burmanization of the Cakkavattî of the Pâli Canon. Like Indra (Sakka, Thagya-min) – by whom, according to some Burmese lore, he is to be sent –[6] the Setkya-Min can occupy that position by Merit.[7] On this may rest his identification with the miraculous "Bo Min Gaung" in the lore of a twentieth century Burmese association grouped around the Ma Aung Monastery of Mandalay.[8] Its alleged 5,000 members, mostly peasants and small artisans who keep some of the precepts and abstinences, are said to wait for the coming Buddha Mettaya (Arima-

[1] J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddism and a Buddhist Pilgrimage* (New York, 1928), p. 136.
[2] *Anâgatavaṃsa*, cited by Bimala Ch. Law, *A history of Pâli Literature* (London, 1933), Vol. II, pp. 612ff.
[3] *Dîpavaṃsa*, II, 2: transl. H. Oldenberg, pp. 21, 124.
[4] "Memoirs of a retired Police Officer," in: *The Guardian* (Rangoon), Vol. VIII, No. 12 (December, 1961), p. 30.
[5] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (Editor), Saya U: Po U, *Bodha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik hniṇ* Co Hla, *Than-hcou a'hpyei* (Rangoon, 1317/1955), p. 6.
[6] E. M. Mendelson, "A Messianic Association in Upper Burma," p. 571.
[7] San Win, "Mula Muloi. A Talaing Account of Creation," in: *JBRS*, Vol. II, Part ii (1912), pp. 222, 223: "Mulat ita.... meditated on the law of impermanence and... her sons became Setkya Mins. They were the first mortals to attain that position,"
[8] Its Abbot, in September 1959, volunteered to tatoo the present writer "for protection against atomic bombs!"

deya) [1] expected to occupy the throne cherished among the cult objects of their Maheikdi Gaing. But Mettaya is to appear not before the end of the five thousand year span allotted to the dispensation of Gautama, the last Buddha, that is about 2,500 years from now (cf. p. 94). And, therefore, "before he comes," "Bo Min Gaung," ["being" Alaungsitthu (cf. pp. 62ff.) in a previous life] "might indeed become Mettaya" and is identified with the Setkya-Min, is to rule over Burma "to clean up the country." [2] Setkya-Min (as Burmanized Cakkavattî) "rules over the wheel of history" and (as Bo Min Gaung, identified with him) would potentially be the future Buddha Mettaya: [3] "Setkya-Min is the king who will be the future Buddha ... After being Setkya-Min, the Bodaw [Bo Min Gaung] must ... await his coming as Arimadeya [Mettaya]." [4] And the circumstances of the Setkya-Min's expected coming correspond to the waning of the Dhamma before the advent of the future Buddha (with whom he is identified outright in some Burmese beliefs): [5] The natural order of things, the ethical and social order, shall have been reversed; bribery and corruption shall be reigning.[6] By that time, good people shall have become dependent on evil rulers. Mendacity will be prevailing, and Hindus shall be trampling upon pagodas.[7] Then shall appear Setkya-Min, the "Buddha-Ruler" of the future. And the evil doers shall vanish; then gold and silver shall be plentiful,[8] just as the reign of the Bodhisattva, in a past life (as king Vessantara), had, through the Dhamma power of his Merit, caused "a rain of seven kinds of jewels, like a thunder shower" to fall, permitting him to distribute treasures upon request (cf. p. 210).[9] Setkya-Min's reign was and is expected to bring inexhaustible wealth to all: "The totality of Burma's people shall be made happy through an abundance of gold and silver and gems. [And the] people of the entire world shall equally become

[1] Mendelson, "A Messianic Association in Upper Burma," p. 569.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 566, 568, 571; Mendelson, "The King of the Weaving Mountain", in: *Royal Central Asian Journal*, XLVIII (1961), No. 3/4, p. 232f.
[3] Mendelson, "A Messianic Association in Upper Burma," pp. 564, 575f.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 576, fn. 1.
[5] *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku. hni' ka za yue Sâsana pyu yan lu pyi twin yau' shi ne-tho Buddha-Yaza Etaruppatti* (mu pain shin Myamma ei: tha we) (Rangoon, no date), p. 96.
[6] Hsaun Sayadaw Buddhanda Wepullabhidhaza, *Thaik sa nyuṇ paun* (Meikhtila, 1301/1939), pp. 3–6.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[9] Cowell, *Jâtaka...*, Vol. V (London, 1957), p. 304. On showers of Gold, Silver and Ambrosia that are to fall as a result of the Ruler's Piety and Justice, cf. Przyluski, *La Légende de l'Empereur Açoka*, p. 404; Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 32.

Buddhist [in] religion." [1] And all countries in the world will be ordered according to its Dhamma Law. And the people of the land will practice the Law, and the ruler will have the ideal royal virtues. He will rule according to the Dhammathat (the codes of Burmese customary law). The people will be pious, freed from illness and shall have peace of mind and body. Numerous beings will achieve Nirvana.[2] According to a prophetic song about Setkya-Min, after Burma's downfall, after the downfall of Burma's Throne, the Burmans shall rise again in glory, when the time shall have come for the advent of a descendent of "Bodaw's" (Bo Min Gaung's?) dynasty.[3]

Perhaps this refers to a descendent of Bodaw[paya]'s dynasty. According to a still living tradition, "at the time of Bodaw[paya?] Burma was in peace, [according to] a prophecy about the world concerned with ... domination and rule of Buddha-Yaza [the Buddha King] ..., a prophecy about the Lord of the Palace." [4] It was in the reign of Bodawpaya's successor, Bagyidaw (1819–1837), when Burma's territorial and economic losses, resulting from her defeat by the British East India Company, put heavy burdens upon her people, – but *before* Christian eschatology could exercise any influence in Burma [5] that there appear references to the messianic idea of Setkya-Min: Bagyidaw's heir apparent was a prince by the name of Setkya-Min (cf. p. 152) – who had allegedly been expected to conquer much of the earth that was known to Burma at that time.[6] Strong attachment of "the body of the people" to his person [7] survived his execution under the next king (April, 1838): "... His execution occasioned no other feelings than those of regret and indignation." [8] Out of such feelings seem to have come rumors denying that Setkya-Min could have been actually killed: According to a still popular Burmese legend, Setkya-

[1] Zeyawadi Kyaung: Sayadaw (U: Wunna), *Kaba lu' la yei: can: lu-tain: hmyo liṇ nei: -ca-tho Bodha-Yaza Setkya Min: la-pyi* (Mandalay, 1314/1952), p. 52.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 54, 55.
[3] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (Editor), Saya U: Po U:, *Buddha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik* hniṇ Co Hla, *Than-hcou a'hpyei* (Rangoon, 1317/1955), pp. 138, 126.
[4] *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku. hni' ka za yue Sâsana pyu yan lu pyi twin yau' shi ne-tho Buddha-Yaza Etaruppatti* (mu pain shin Myamma ei: tha we) (Rangoon, no date), p. 91.
[5] Notions that such "Messianism" of Buddhist Burma must necessarily have Christian sources [E. Benz, *Buddhas Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens* (Munich, 1963), p. 131] do not take into account the above facts.
[6] John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, Vol. I (London, 1834), p. 268.
[7] India Office (unpublished MS), India Secret Consultations, Vol. 8, September 4, 1837: Henry Burney's letter of July 12, 1837, Paragraph 29, cited by W. S. Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826–1840* (Rangoon, 1939), p. 330.
[8] India Secret Consultations, Vol. 10, May 30, 1838, G. T. Bayfield's Journal, Paragraphs 196–198, cited by Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

Min was saved from death by the magician Bo Bo Aung.[1] Thus the folk expectations about the advent of the ideal ruler, the Setkya-Min, may go back to the historical prince (allegedly born in 1812) who bore this title in the 1830's.[2] And again and again uprisings flared up in Setkya-Min's name, led by claimants to his identity and eventually to his mission.

"In January, 1839, a revolt broke out in Pegu under the leadership of one Maung Tsetkya ... He prentended to be the late Tsakyamen [Setkya-Min], *and the very name enabled him to collect followers* .... Large bodies of troops had to be sent ..., and it was with difficulty that the revolt was crushed and the pretender captured. On March 29, 1839, he was executed." [3] Nevertheless, in spite of massacres undertaken by government troops in the offending districts, by 1855 such impersonation of Setkya-Min had been repeated several times.[4] The more political reality under the declining Burmese monarchy was departing from the Buddhist ideal and the less the ideal Buddhist state was realized by the actual rulers of Burma, the more this ideal became a vision anticipating a glorious future. It was particularly after the British India Company had annexed Lower Burma (1852) that folk notions about Buddhism's decline had made expectations of the future Buddha politically explosive. In 1858, after an alleged 'portent,' one fisherman was popularly recognized as Mettaya, the coming Buddha (Arimataya), claimed to be "destined to expel the Kala's [Western Strangers] from Rangoon." As a result, his Burman adherents arrested the local colonial Commissioner. Another Future Buddha ("Paya:-alaung:") arose in 1860, causing serious apprehensions for the security of the British position in the town of Toungoo. All (locally) available British-Indian forces were needed to confront him. Eventually, a British captain by the name of Lloyd had him hanged.[5] The German ethnologist Bastian considered the possibility that the songs he had heard in Burma (in 1861/1862) about a prince of victory, expected to expel the British-Indian invaders, referred to Setkya-Min.[6] To Setkya-

[1] Hpoun:ji: caun: tha: Maung Than Nani, *Bo: Bo: Aung Thaik* (Rangoon, 1316/1954), pp. 57f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 44, 47f.; *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku. hni' ka za yue Sâsana pyu yan lu pyi twin yau' shi ne-tho Buddha-Yaza* ..., p. 66.
[3] India Office (unpublished MS), India Secret Consultations, Vol. 17, R. Benson's Journal, Paragraphs 1430, 1432, 1437; Vol. 20, Paragraphs 1677, 1678, cited by Desai, *History of British Residency in Burma*, pp. 399f.
[4] H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, p. 227.
[5] Adolf Bastian, *Die Geschichte der Indochinesen aus einheimischen Quellen: Die Völker des östlichen Asien. Studien und Reisen*, Vol. I (Leipzig, 1866), p. 150.
[6] A. Bastian, *Reisen in Birma in den Jahren 1861–1862: Die Völker des östlichen Asien*, Vol. II, p. 72.

Min may possibly have referred one of the titles of Burma's contemporary king Mindon, a title that had been translated as "Lord of the Celestial Weapon." [1]

After Mindon's successor had been deported by the British conquerors and the remainder of Burma annexed to British India in 1885/1886, much of the spontaneous Burmese resistance against the occupation forces centered around claimants "who went by the names of Buddha Yaza [Buddha Râja], Dhamma Yaza [Dhamma Râja – cf. pp. 86f.] or Setkya Mintha: [Setkya Prince – cf. p. 106]." In the Pyinmana area a Buddha-Yaza pretender lead the resistance during the year 1886 "and there were still large bands to be dealt with, the Buddha Yaza in particular giving much trouble." [2] Among the resistance fighters against the British occupation there appeared (in 1886/1887) at Pyabwe a pretender called "Buddha King and Future Monarch" (Buddha-Yaza Min: Laun:, possibly associated with the future Buddha – cf. p. 45f., 152) who locally challenged the British forces at Yamethin but had to give up. "The fall of the Buddha Yaza Min Laung marked the last day of the troubles that arose in Yamethin district." [3]

As late as June, 1887, Crosthwaite's forces had (in the eastern Kyaukse area) to storm positions held on behalf of "the Setkya-Mintha: ... who had given endless troubles to the troops since the Annexation." [4] The British-Indian forces were resisted by this Setkya-Mintha: in the "Setkya-Min Hills" [sic], there being a connection between their designation and his name.[5] The southeastern part of the Mandalay District (around Pyinulwin) "was troubled by the Setkya pretender, who was reported in August, 1887 to ... be able to call out 300 men ... The Setkya pretender was ... captured ..., tried and executed. His lieutenant Kyaw Zaw continued the struggle ... in the jungles on the banks of the Myit-nge [River]." In May, 1889, there arose in Taungdwingyi (in the Magwe District) resistance led again by a Buddha-Yaza claimant. He was joined by numerous guerillas and continued his resistance northeast of Yenang-Yaung.[6] Only after repeated military encounters were the British Indian forces able to disperse them. By the end of 1889, the "Buddha-Yaza" was crowded into the

[1] Mindon's Edict of April 24, 1853, in: H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, p. 363; cf. Yule, *ibid.*, p. 352.
[2] J. George Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, Vol i (Rangoon, 1900), pp. 119, 139.
[3] "Pacification of Upper Burma. A vernacular history," pp. 93f.
[4] Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp. 70, 99.
[5] "Pacification of Upper Burma. A vernacular history," p. 97.
[6] Crosthwaite, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

hills between Magwe, Pyinmana and Yamethin. Still as late as 1890 a so-called *Mintha*: (Prince) Buddha-Yaza had to be captured in the Bhamo area. He died in prison.[1] Even long after British military superiority had stamped out the Burmese resistance against the annexation of 1886, the expectation that Burma would rise again under an ideal Buddhist ruler, the Bodha-Yaza or Setkya-Min, remained alive among the rural masses and even part of the urban population.

In the summer of 1906 armed uprisings broke out in Toungoo [2] and in 1910 both in Myinmu and Sagaing.[3] In 1912, a revolt, prepared in the Henzada district since 1909, finally broke out, and found support in the Irrawaddi Delta districts of Tharrawaddy and Hanthawaddy.[4] This resistance may have been encouraged by surviving expectations about the coming of the Setkya-Min as a bearer of the Golden Age that was to dawn with the emancipation of Buddhist Burma from British domination. And the Setkya-Min expectations in turn contributed to rural Burma's becoming a receptive ground for the modernistic independence struggle initiated by the urban political elite of the General Council of Burmese Associations. One of the presidents of its nationalist Wunthanu associations in the Limbyu village of the Mandalay district, a core area of historic Burmese dynasties, at the time of his arrest, in May, 1922, was recognized by his followers as the coming king: Thet Kywe announced that "next month" he was to become the Setkya-Min. At the pagoda festival he appeared with the Five Attributes of Kingship. He also appointed a chief minister with the hierarchical dress of his rank. He urged the people to fight for him to regain the country for the Burmans – and they agreed to serve him with their lives. He had "20,000" followers; there were plans to acquire arms and evidence of preparations for an armed uprising to start in the following summer. The colonial Court trying this case apprehended "great danger" (*sou: yein*) from his conspiracy – and sentenced the Setkya-Min claimant to six years in prison, his prospective chief minister to five years.[5] In spite of such measures of repression, by 1924–1926 a hermit calling

[1] J. G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma*, Part I, Vol. i, pp. 156f., 170, 172, 175.
[2] *The Burma Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Toungoo District) (Rangoon, 1914), p. 14, cited in Akademiïa Nauk S.S.S.R., Institut Vostokovedeniïa, *Birmanskiĭ Soĭuz. Sbornik Stateĭ* (Moscow, 1958), p. 67.
[3] Paul Edmonds, *Peacocks and Pagodas* (London, 1924), pp. 96, 98, 99, 100; *Burma Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Henzada District) (Rangoon, 1915), p. 25, cited by Akademiïa Nauk S.S.S.R., *Birmanskiĭ Soĭuz*, p. 67.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26, cited by Akademiïa Nauk S.S.S.R., *Birmanskiĭ Soĭuz*, p. 67.
[5] *Pinnya Alin* of November 15, 1923, p. 9.

himself "Yathẹ Bandaka" (Maung Tun Hla) claimed to have been saved from execution by the magical intervention of Bo Bo Aung (just as Setkya-Min allegedly had been). Clad in royal attire and seated under the symbolic White Umbrella, he paraded in a procession of one hundred carts through Bashu, in the Shwebo area, cradle of Burma's last dynasty. In September, 1926, he completed a "Hsu.daun: pyị Pagoda," such as Burmese kings used to build to celebrate their victories. In March, 1927, his followers repeated what used to be the entire rite customarily followed by Burmese armies of old marching to war. Fifty hermits and laymen trod the "victory ground" of Tedaw, the qualities of which were supposed to ensure victory. There followed a feeble rising: the Yathẹ Bandaka's followers attacked the police and inflicted causalities upon them. Because of the sympathies he enjoyed among the villagers, it was not before 1928 that he was captured and sentenced to deportation for life.[1] About the same time, sections of the Pegu Divisions seemed to the British administration "to go out of hand" after revolutionary speeches by a rebellious monk, so that the military police had, as in Shwebo, to act for months to restore control.[2] Yet, according to folkloric rumor, about that time a Bo Min Gaung – identified with the Setkya-Min and called "second only to lord Buddha himself" – emerged near Michina. That fifteen people had seen him, was claimed in the Ma Aung Monastery at Mandalay. There this writer was assured that all the soldiers trying to arrest Bo Min Gaung (Setkya-Min), "the King," on behalf of the colonial authorities, "died in the attempt." [3]

Thus folk expectations about the coming of Buddhism's great promoter – who was to free Burma from foreign domination – did remain alive. Alive remained the longing for the descendent of Bodaw, the Setkya-Min "who is of the blood of Bodawpaya." After the Throne of Burma's kings had to be given up to the conquerors (cf. p. 103), assurance was sought in prophecies and omens that Burma was to become free again and restore her old glory.[4] In the spirit of the independence struggle, such prophecies were quoted in "political" sermons

[1] "Memoirs of a retired Police Officer. (The Bandaka Rising in Shwebo, Monywa and Sagaing District)," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), VII, No. 12 (December, 1960), p. 29.
[2] *Report on the Administration of Burma for 1927–1928* (Rangoon, 1929), p. 23; *The Times*, August 23, 1927, p. 9.
[3] Interview with the Abbot of the Ma Aung Monastery of Mandalay, September, 1959.
[4] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (Editor), Saya: U: Po U:, *Buddha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik* hniṇ Co Hla, *Than-jou a'hpyei* (Rangoon, 1317/1955), pp. 139–140.

of monks like the Sayadaw U Ketaya of Mandalay.[1] Against this background, such prophecies and rumors ("Thaik," "Tabaung," "Sani" and "Bamaw") became, during the later part of 1930, an object of discreet inquiries by the colonial police. They were attempting to find out the implications of similar folkloric visions about the Past, Present and Future for disturbances in the Burmese countryside. There was a rumor of impending uprisings in the Shwebo and Tharrawaddy areas.[2]

[1] According to the reminescenses of a listener of his, interviewed by the author in Mandalay, in 1959.

[2] "Memoirs of a retired Police Officer," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), Vol. VIII, No 12 (December, 1961), p. 29.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SETKYA-MIN IDEA AND SAYA SAN'S PEASANT REVOLT OF 1930-1932

In 1929 the organization of secret village societies (Galon Athin) was started by U Yar Gyaw, better known as Saya San, in preparation for his "Galon-Army's" uprising. Saya San attracted a wide following among the G.C.B.A.'s rural adherents. A faction of this "General Council of Burmese Associations" had in 1928 included Saya San on its commission sent to the Tharrawaddy district to investigate the economic grievances of peasants.[1] In 1930, the financial burdens that the world depression was imposing upon Lower Burma's peasants made taxation obligations a hardship. Therefore, the cultivators of the Tharrawaddy district presented a petition, requesting the reduction or postponement of that year's taxes from the Acting Governor. This dignitary was Sir Joseph Maung Gyi, leader of a party called after a residential suburb and sponsored by the British Business Community.[2] So he refused and ordered stern measures to be taken to collect the taxes from the indebted or destitute peasants.[3] The next day (December 22, 1930) Saya San's uprising began with peasant revolts in the Tharrawaddy district.

It soon spread – with the impact of the world depression – over half of Burma as peasants rose in desperation to recover their lands from the money-lenders. Yet this Burmese "Peasant War" was not motivated by economic grievances (confined to Lower Burma) alone: It was also propelled by militant folk Buddhism, ("declared war for the benefit of Rahan [Monkhood and] Religion"),[4] with strong ingredients of pre-Buddhist Burmese "Animist" lore that Harvey called

[1] Great Britain, The Burma Round Table Conference, Plenary Session, *Proceedings* [= Cmd 400A] (London, 1932), pp. 79f.
[2] Maung Maung Pye, *Burma in the Crucible* (Rangoon, 1951), pp. 7, 27.
[3] Ba U, *My Burma*, pp. 103f.; Maung Maung, p. 22.
[4] "Proclamation of Rebel Chief. Burma Revolt," in: *Liberty* [Calcutta], January 13, 1931, p. 7.

the dominant ideological motivation of the Saya San movement.[1] It was a phenomenon of what anthropologists call "nativistic" response against overwhelming impacts of an alien civilization that had been dissolving traditional society up to its economic foundations and challenging the traditional world conception of Burmese folk Buddhism. Saya San's traditionalist revolt was a response of withdrawal from the technological power realities and at the same time a revolt against the new forces in the name of a search for security in pre-colonial values, a desperate attempt to restore the old symbols of cosmic and social harmony. Thus the traditions about the decline of the world age and its turning-point through the advent of the Ideal Ruler and Future Buddha, the Setkya-Min and Buddha-Yaza, were made acutely relevant in the context of cultural and economic crisis. These traditions were given expression through visions of accelerated fulfillment in an ideal future. And this ideal future was, as in nativistic movements elsewhere, conceived as cyclical return to the prototypes of an ideal past,[2] as conceived by folkloric echoes of Buddhist ideals of perfect society. It was a general belief among the peasantry that Burma's kingship would rise again.[3]

Against this background the Buddhist monastic Samgha Sametgyi Association seems to have been linked with Saya San's rising.[4] Individual monks and former monks – like Saya San himself – did actively participate in this "Rebellion." [5] In the Thayet-myo District of Henzada, the uprising was prepared and led by U Arthapa, abbot of a monastery, assisted by three other monks. In the Yamethin District, the revolt was guided by the abbot U Thataloka.[6] In the context of rural Burma's folk-Buddhism, Saya San was rumored to be the Setkya-Min, the ideal Buddhist ruler of the Four Island Continents (cf. p. 152ff.), and reputed to be of royal descent.[7] In accordance with such traditions, he had a "Royal City," called "Buddha-Yaza-Myo" (The Buddha-King's City), pegged out and erected a palace of bamboo (in

[1] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma, 1824–1942* (London, 1946), pp. 73–74.
[2] Cf. W. E. Mühlmann, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus. Studien zur Psychologie, Soziologie und historischen Kasuistik der Umsturzbewegungen* (Berlin, 1961), p. 44.
[3] See page 160, note 1.
[4] *Origin and causes of the Burma Rebellion, 1930–1932* (London, 1934), pp. 26ff., cited by Akademiïa Nauk S.S.S.R., Institut Vostokovedeniïa, *Birmanskiĭ Soĭuz. Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 84f. I could not find the source cited.
[5] Great Britain, *Report on the Rebellion in Burma up to the 3rd of May 1931. Communique issued by the Government of Burma, May 19th, 1931* (London, 1931), p. 14.
[6] C. V. Warren, *Burmese Interlude* (London, 1937), p. 146; *Origin and causes of the Burma Rebellion, 1930–1932*, p. 26–29, cited by Akademiïa Nauk SSSR, *Birmanskii Soĭuz*, p. 84.
[7] Cf. Maurice Collis, *Trials in Burma* (London, 1938), pp. 192ff., 273f.

the context of ancient cosmocentric symbolism) on the jungle mountain Alaun-taung, in the Tharrawaddy District.[1] Even before the actual uprising, he proclaimed himself king, in the Myasein Taungnyo Pagoda, under the title "Thupannaka Galuna Râja," endowed with the traditional attributes of royalty.[2] His followers took an oath to risk their lives, being "banded together to drive out all unbelievers ....., 'so that our religion may be saved from the unbeliever.'" The Oath ended with the words, "grant to us liberty and to the Galon King dominion over this land." [3] The "Rebels" raided installations of alien modern technology, such as railway stations, and destroyed telegraph equipment [4] – perhaps not for military reasons alone.

By attacks on police and headmen they meant to procure arms.[5] At the outset the "Galons" only had thirty guns; attempts were also made to manufacture crude firearms from pipe lengths and bicycle tubing. But even when devoid of firearms, Saya San's followers advanced against British machine guns as if they were invulnerable – "only to be shot before they had advanced a few paces." They fought with swords and spears against the colonial troops [6] who

had at their command the latest weapons of destruction that the twentieth century had produced": "They had attacked unflinchingly against rifle and Lewis gun fire of one of the finest shooting regiments in the [British] Indian army. The attackers went down in tens and twenties, but still they came on, storming over their lines of dead. The continuous fire met them and the stuttering Lewis gun tore down their ranks .... Armed with only spears and swords, ... they boldly charged the military police, who easily repulsed them with rifles ...,"

reports a British eye-witness.[7]

And yet this peasant war, spreading to twelve out of forty Districts, into Pegu, Insein, Henzada, Thayet-myo and Yamethin in Upper Burma and even into the Shan States, could not be mastered with the forces of the colonial administration of the British Burman Province of the Empire. They had to call in military assistance from British

[1] Ba U, *op. cit.*, pp. 109f.; *Origin and causes of the Burma Rebellion, 1930–1932*, p. 10 cited as above, p. 161, fn. 4.
[2] Ba U, *op. cit.*, pp. 109f.
[3] C. V. Warren, *Burmese Interlude*, pp. 92ff. There seems to be no other published record of this "Rebel Oath" except the translation made from the Burmese original by Warren, a Forest Assistant of a British teak firm, who happened to be involved in the British military actions against Saya San's peasant revolt.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[5] Cf. *Indian Law Reports: Rangoon Series*, Vol. IX (Rangoon, 1931), p. 418 ("Aung Hla vs. King-Emperor"); Maung Maung Pye, p. 28.
[6] Great Britain, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, XIX for 1931/32 (London, 1932), pp. 132f.
[7] C. V. Warren, *Burmese Interlude*, pp. 63, 64, 145.

India proper. Almost two Indian divisions under British officers and one and a half years were needed to suppress the uprising. According to the British Government's "Statement exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India," the colonial forces suffered only thirty-nine (including police and officials, fifty) casualties but killed or wounded about 3,000 "rebels"; 8,300–9,000 Burmans were captured or arrested (among them 82 children), 350 convicted and 128 hanged.[1] "... The bravest of the rebels, those who had fought magnificently for their cause, had died in battle or had been taken prisoner." [2] On June 12, 1931, the military police decapitated fourteen "rebels" and displayed their heads in public "in an effort to convince the doubting": [3] "Two and twenty heads were cut off, rolled into the dead monk's robe and taken to Prome. Six fell out on the journey and taught their lesson well. Sixteen heads, vacant and grisly, were laid outside the police station for all the world to see." [4] "Known sympathizers and friends of the rebels were arrested, and shut up in concentration camps." By the middle of 1932 the remaining resistance fighters had given up – not lastly because of the pressure they felt from the British internment of their friends and relatives.[5] Thus the guerilla chieftain Bo Hla Maung surrendered voluntarily, though warned that he was going to a "sure and shameful death by the rope": "He replied that his cause was lost and all his relatives taken by the British. By his surrender they would be freed; his own fate did not matter now ....., steadfast in his faith, in the justice of fate and in the path that leads at last to Nirvana, of the wheel that swings immutably through many lives, not deviating a hair's breadth from its track, until men are loosened from it for everlasting peace." [6]

With elimination of the organizers, the rising tended to degenerate more and more into banditry, cruelly terrorizing some villages.[7] This degeneration and demoralization of the movement in turn seems to have contributed to willingness to betray its leader, Saya San, who, ill with malaria, had taken refuge in the Shan States – allegedly hoping

[1] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, pp. 73, 74; Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, Vol. XIX for 1931–1932 (= Cmd 3991), p. 135; Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*, Vol. 262 (March 9, 1932), p. 1818; Vol. 254 (June 22, 1931), p. 11.
[2] C. V. Warren, *Burmese Interlude*, p. 129.
[3] Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates*, Vol. 254 (June 22, 1931), p. 11.
[4] C. V. Warren, *Burmese Interlude*, p. 64.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 91f., 96.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

to obtain modern arms through contacts with China.[1] The Shan States had not been incorporated into the British Empire nor come under direct colonial rule; the organic continuity of their cultural tradition and "medieval" social order left relatively little place for a nativistic restoration revolt like Saya San's. Thus it was in the northern Shan States that Saya San, whom it had proved impossible to capture in Burma proper, was finally handed over in August, 1931.[2] "Saya San ... refused to say anything in his own defense. He treated the whole affair with an indifferent air ... He went up the scaffold with his head erect." "He had a strong, determined face, and his eyes glowed," wrote the Burman Ba U, one of the judges who sentenced Saya San to death.[3] "Saya San, U Aung Hla and other rebel leaders were hanged ... [in] November ..., 1931, but the nationalism that they had helped to further refused to be buried with their bodies." [4] The executed Saya San's worldly heritage, the income from his book of Burmese medical lore, went to finance the introduction of the writings of Karl Marx into Burma.[5] But judge Ba U did receive his promotion in office ...[6]

Even among such Burmese "constitutionalist" politicians as would in Dyarchy's Legislative Council denounce the threat to civil liberties, there was at least one who desired – that the police superintendent near his properties be an Englishman to give them protection against the Burmese "Rebels." [7] Even U Chit Hlaing's followers eventually denounced the peasant revolt of Saya San as well as the rural resistance against taxation, prefering constitutional collaboration. Through such preference U Chit Hlaing lost popular allegiance: He would not take full political advantage of his own charismatic appeal that had almost approached the charisma of a king [cf. p. 132).[8] Many Burmese politicians of the Educated Class felt their status threatened more by the nativistic upsurge of rural tradition than by the tutelage of their British guardians. A victory of the traditionalism of Burma's rural majority "threatened seriously to undermine the social stratification which had developed under British rule, extending downward from the top government officials to western-trained professional men, ...

[1] Maung Maung Pye, p. 28; Maung Maung, pp. 23f.
[2] Cf. G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, p. 75.
[3] Ba U, *op. cit.*, pp. 109–110.
[4] Maung Maung, p. 25.
[5] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 377.
[6] Ba U, *op. cit.*, pp. 106, 111.
[7] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, p. 75.
[8] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 319, 367.

and finally to minor officials and the police." The collapse of this structure under nativistic mass revolt would have deprived the culturally semi-Anglicized class of Burmese bureaucrats and lawyers of their relatively prominent elite status based on their enlightenment British style. It would have left or restored the traditional elites, and particularly the Buddhist pongyis, with decisive social and cultural influence. Therefore, even the politicians of the most nationalistic faction of the General Council of Burmese Associations, just as Burmans in the dyarchical Legislative Council, "had a stake in the survival of the British fashioned hierarchy, no matter how avidly they might oppose the dyarchy constitution and foreign rule in general." [1]

If, nevertheless, colonial Burma's higher judges had been "reluctant" to sentence figures of the independence movement, it was, according to Ba U who had first-hand experience, more out of fear of unpopularity [with resulting harm to possible political careers] than out of nationalistic principles: [2] There was the experience of Anglicized Burmese collaborators like the magistrate Maung Po Pe who had sentenced U Ottama and had been refused even supplies in the local bazaar. A collaborating Burmese "Criminal Investigation Department" officer, who had denounced speeches of U Ottama to the British authorities, found himself forced to transfer his wedding away from his village because of local pressure against him.[3] Such lack of discipline might have been prevented if gentlemen like U May Oung could have realized their demands that "Asians of Substance and Education" [alone] be given a greater share in every branch of the administration.[4] It was not without reliance on such Loyal Burmans that Governor Innes could afford to reject flatly the land alienation reform proposal meant to counter the rural dissatisfaction that had produced the tragedy of Saya San's peasant revolt.[5] To them the Peasant Revolt of 1930–1932 with its Setkya-Min folklore was but obscurantism and superstition, "pure and simple."

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 251.
[2] Ba U, *op. cit.*, pp. 78f.
[3] Burma Gazette, Part iii (1922), pp. 41ff., cited by A. D. Moscotti, «*British Policy in Burma, 1917–1937: A study in the development of colonial self-rule*» (unpublished Dissertation: Yale University, 1950), p. 29.
[4] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 227.
[5] Burma, *Report of the Land and Agriculture Committee*, Part II: *Land Alienation* (Rangoon, 1949 reprint), pp. 52–55.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BEGINNINGS OF BURMESE SOCIALISM AND BUDDHIST-MARXIST SYNCRETISM

From the standpoint of the principal Burmese politicians of the 1920's such outbreaks of "superstition" were neither intended nor politically relevant.[1] In spite of them, the impact of Saya San's Peasant Revolt was such that for the most important of their successors of the 1930's this "Galon"-Movement became a symbol of Burmese solidarity. U Saw, one of the Burmese politicians supporting the "Galons," took himself the title Galon and under this name of Saya San's army organized a private force. This association with the crushed peasant revolt attracted to Galon U Saw considerable popular following. The same motivation induced him to perform the Plowing Ceremony, associated with the kings of independent Burma (cf. p. 50f.).[2] U Saw's "Myo-chit" ("Patriotic") Party had a rival in Ba Maw, a brilliant counsel for the defense of Saya San in 1931. While U Saw attempted to capitalize on the folkloric symbols of that Galon chief, Ba Maw emphasized the economic grievances underlying the Peasant Uprising of 1930–1932. Ba Maw called his own organization Sinyetha (the Poor's) Party and gave it a platform of far-reaching social and economic reforms. Dr. Ba Maw, the most western cultured of Burma's statesmen, was the first to attempt an application of Marxist socialism to Burmese politics. Though hardly Buddhist-minded himself, he obtained the backing of two prominent Buddhist abbots, the Mingalun Sayadaw and the Thetpan Sayadaw, with their remaining faction of the General Council of Burmese Associations. However, when his opportunity came to be Chief Minister of a coalition, Dr. Ba Maw declared that, as there could be no consistency in politics, he would follow not the Sinyetha Party platform, under which he had been

[1] Interview with U Ba Pe, August 5, 1959.
[2] Maung Maung, p. 44.

elected, but a coalition compromise.[1] He proved a master of politics, a master of the Art of the Possible. But, as he did not reach for the seemingly impossible, he came to be outflanked by those who dared the attempt: The future was to belong to a less practical and less mature group of Burmese radicals who dared to demand for Burma complete independence, who preferred the uncertainties of struggle for Burma's full emancipation to the security of colonial office. This new generation was emerging within the Dobama Asiayon ("We Burmans Association"), first formed during the peasant rising of Saya San, in 1930/31. One of its members, U Ba Thaung, after reading an English translation of Nietzsche (who had already been familiar to the Maha-Bodhi's modernistic Buddhism[2] – cf. p. 117), decided that Burma needed a "Master Mentality" – to do away with the "colonial Slave Mentality": At a meeting of the Dobama Asiayon, in 1930, he proposed that its members should assume the title Thakin (Master) – corresponding to British India's "Sahib" and previously applied to Englishmen only. Initially he was laughed at, and for a time was the only modern Burman titling himself Thakin. Subsequently, others followed his example.[3] The Thakin title came to be a designation of the Dobama Asiayon. It was meant to connote the demand for mastery of the Burmese over their own country and also signified a claim to equality with the "White Sahibs" of the Empire.

The British Empire's hegemony over the Burmese had resulted from that technological superiority which had enabled the utilitarian and worldly oriented industrial England to subdue Buddhist-motivated if not medievally other-worldly Burma (cf. p. 98f.). But, almost half a century after it conquered Burma, the omnipotent industrial England came to provide – in the form of Marxism – an ideological system indirectly vindicating "in modern terms of Science" Burma's culture by "proving" that the capitalistic industrial civilization of the West was not only unrighteous and unholy but also by its own laws headed for crisis and collapse. It was the derivation of British Imperialism from Capitalism that first made Marxism relevant to Burmese nationalism.[4] While Marxism became known in Burma later than in other Asian countries – Marxist literature having been introduced in Burma in 1931 – its acceptance, up to the point of dialectical

[1] Maung Maung Pye, p. 35.
[2] *MBUBW*, XIII, No. 11/12 (March/April, 1905), p. 85.
[3] Interview with Thakin Ba Thaung, on July 26, 1959; Maung Maung Pye, p. 18.
[4] Cf. John Seabury Thomson, "Marxism in Burma," in: Frank N. Trager (Editor), *Marxism in Southeast Asia. A study of four countries* (Stanford, 1959), p. 15.

materialism, was prompted in this Buddhist country precisely by a reaction against the materialistic rationale of Empire, against imported values making acquisitiveness the supreme virtue. In the unrestrained acquisition ethos of colonial economic progress the decisive wing of Burmese nationalism came to see the chief cause of social disintegration [1] (cf. p. 140f.). In this sense the non-acquisitive Buddhist traditions of detachment, Burma's Buddhist ethos that prevented her from acquiring control over both the destructive and the productive forces of nature, seemed to be vindicated by Marxist explanations of history: The Marxist type of materialism seemed to be vindicating Buddhist "idealism." [2] And the Marxist heresy of the West came close to becoming an orthodoxy of the Burmese East.

The most orthodox theoretician of Burmese Marxism, Thakin Soe, studied Buddhist philosophy before taking up the study of the Marxist "classics." [3] He used Buddhist philosophical terminology to explain Marxist concepts. It would hardly have been possible to do otherwise than to explain the unfamiliar new ideology in terms of the familiar ancient religion: The only philosophical terms established in the Burmese language are (largely Pâli) designations for Buddhist concepts. Therefore only Buddhist terminology was available to expound Marxism to Burma – if Marxism was to be widely understood. Thus Thakin Soe attempted to explain the Leninistic unity of revolutionary theory and practice in terms of the Buddhist Abhidhamma's "Priatti, Prâpti, Privedi" (preservation of [Buddhist] scriptures, possession of knowledge, practice based on scriptural knowledge).[4] This principal Burmese theoretician of Leninism used the characteristically Buddhist concept of Perfection (Pâramî) to describe the special perfections that a "revolutionary leader" must possess.[5] In his exposition of Marxist-Leninist theory, the Buddhist term for periodical (cyclical) generation and destruction of worlds (Upathi bin) was used to designate the eternal flux of Matter in the context of Dialectical Materialism.[6]

The Marxist scheme of history presupposes a predictable and immanent regularity of the sequence in which classes are supposed to rise and fall, according to "changes in production." It is a linear

[1] J. S. Furnivall, "The character of Society," in: F. Trager (Editor), *Burma* [unpublished mimeographed typescript of the Human Relations Area Files (New Haven, 1956)], p. 60.
[2] F. Trager, "The impact of Marxism," in: Trager, *Marxism in Southeast Asia*, p. 255.
[3] "*The Communist Builders of the People's Resistance*" (Brief biography of Thakin Soe), Typescript in the Military Science Research Institute, Rangoon, Burma.
[4] Thakin Soe, *Bama-to hla-mu* (Rangoon, 1934), pp. 125f.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

concept of history – like its model, the Hegelian teleology. In contrast, the Hindu-Buddhist world conception presupposes a regular cyclical sequence of world ages, in accordance with periodical waxing and waning. Buddhism's cyclical notion of history seemed to become compatible with the linear scheme of Marxist teleology when the boundlessness of Buddhist cosmological concepts in time and space was disregarded (cf. p. 107): Their compatibility occurred in the sense that the immediate part of a circle with an infinitely large radius can be seen as a straight line. Against this background, starting with a continuity of nomenclature, Burmese Leninist Marxism came to "equate" the Buddhist principle of Causality with Dialectics.[1] Against the background of the Buddhist principle of Causality rejecting the concept of Creation, U Ba Swe, at one time a prominent spokesman of Burmese Marxism, subsequently pointed out that the Marxist "Abhidhamma" (a term traditionally connoting the philosophical part of the Buddhist Canon) too "reasonably rejects the idea which appeared and existed a long time ago [about] Creation." [2] The Buddhist concept of the origin of the world being based upon the principle of Causality, and Causality conditioning Impermanence, among the Burmese Buddhist terms for the Liberation from Impermanence is one ("bhava") that U Ba Swe used to designate the notion of social liberation through revolutionary struggle.[3] His most effective contribution to Burma's independence struggle was a revolutionary organization of Labor, for example, the petrol workers strike of 1938. And the very terminology for Strike (thabeit hmauk) and Strikers (thabeit hmauk-thu) was borrowed by the Burmese revolution from a traditional term for a refusal of Buddhist monks to accept alms (by inverting their bowls as protest against the givers).[4] Of Buddhist origin is the Burmese strike slogan, "turn down, turn down" (the alms bowl: "Thabeit thabeit hmauk hmauk").[5]

Of Buddhist origin is also the term often used in Burmese Marxism and radical nationalism for the goal of the revolutionary struggle, the perfect society: Lokka Nibban ("the Earthy Nirvana") with the political connotation of paradise on earth (cf. pp. 86, 108). Thus Ba Swe did at one time, apparently in the middle of the 1930's, call Stalin – a

[1] Interview with Colonel U Hsaw Su of the Burmese Army's Psychological Warfare Department, August 1, 1959.
[2] U Ba Swe-j, *Bama-to hlan-yei: hniṇ Bama lou'tha: lu-dụ* (Rangoon, 1955), p. 27.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[4] *Chullavagga*, V, 20, 3: *SBE*, Vol. XX (1885), pp. 119f.
[5] Tet Toe, *English-Burmese Dictionary* (Rangoon, 1957), p. 1288.

"builder of Lokka Nibban" ..., attributing to that Soviet dictator the goal of establishing the Lokka Nibban.[1] In this context, the very term Lokka Nibban is assumed by many Burmese modernist Buddhists to be of Marxist origin, a Marxist innovation in Burmese political terminology.[2] Prior to the twentieth century there seems to have been no Burmese term for "paradise" – except "World of Nats" or "World of Gods" (Deva-Lokka), a notion not suitable as a political symbol outside the medieval context (cf. p. 84). Thus the term Lokka Nibban, the earthly Nirvana in the sense of a political ideal of perfect society – having in common with the absolute Nirvana a State of Peace and Harmony – is of modern origin. According to Dr. Hla Pe, the popular use of the word Lokka Nibban began with a Burmese film of that name produced "in the 1930's," though the word must have been used, in the sense of paradise on earth, long before that moving picture.[3] Actually this term appears to have been taken for granted by the time that Thakin Kudaw Hmain used it in his "Commentaries on the Thakins" (published in 1938).[4] As Thakin Kudaw Hmain does not understand English, it can hardly be the result of direct western Marxist influence on him. On the other hand, the anti-socialist Buddhist preacher U Nye Ya referred (apparently even earlier) likewise to Lokka Nibban – to a vow to accomplish Lokka Nibban – and demanded for Burma an independence devoid of greed, hate and delusion but endowed with Metta (universal love), an independence that would establish Lokka Nibban.[5] His concept of Lokka Nibban seems to have developed as an offshot of secularizing trends in Burma's Buddhist thought of the 1920's, apparently echoing the activistic, "nationalistic" Buddhism of U Ottama, whose monastic following among the "political monks" of the 1920's [6] already quite explicitly emphasized the attainment of political and social pre-requisites for the state of Nirvana (cf. p. 125). That Nirvana is to mean not absolute non-existence but a life of fellowship in an atmosphere of Truth, Goodness, Freedom and Enlightenment was claimed already in 1907 by the Buddhist

[1] Ba Swe, "Lokka Nibban-te hsau-ne-thu Stalin," in U Thein Pe Myiṇ Ywei: hce ti: hpyat-tho (Editor), *Hbun-wada hniṇ Dobama* (Rangoon, 1954), p. 122.
[2] Cf. E. Sarkisyanz, "On the place of U Nu's Buddhist Socialism in Burma's history of ideas," in: R. Sakai (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1961* (Lincoln, USA, 1961), p. 57.
[3] Personal communication by Dr. Hla Pe of the Burmese Dictionary Project of the London School of Oriental and African Studies, dated February 19, 1961.
[4] Kudaw Hmain:, *Thakin Ṭ̀kâ* (Rangoon, 1938), p. 181.
[5] Thayawadi U Nye Ya Sayadaw-i, *Lu'la'ye: alin: pya* (Rangoon, 1314/1952), pp. 13, 15. The date of the original publication is not specified in this reprint.
[6] Cf. M. C. Sen, *A peep into Burmese Politics* (Allahabad, India, 1945), p. 18.

modernist Lakshmi Narasu.[1] The general idea of "attaining *in this life* the goal of Nirvana" still plays a role in Theravâda Buddhist modernism,[2] quite apart from Marxist interpretation.

Actually such interpretations of Buddhism remained not unopposed as early as the 1930's. It was to counter anti-socialist objections with Buddhist arguments that "Maung Nu" (U Nu) wrote the essay "Kyan-to Buthama" (around 1935, according to his explanation to the writer). At that time U Nu pointed out that socialism is not more removed from the Buddhist goal than is social (family) life in general,[3] implying that its place was to be sought within the context of a lay Buddhist ethos (cf. p. 36f.). The justifications for contrasts of wealth and poverty as the results of merit and demerit from past lives (cf. p. 68–71) he already then put into question – as constituting only a part of the Buddhist teaching that taken out of context would lend itself to abuse and rationalization of privilege. Instead, emphasis was put on action aimed to overcome suffering in this life: [4] U Nu stressed that even the Bodhisattva in a previous existence (as a Crab) used his force to save his friends from suffering.[5] The root of the social suffering of the countryside in contemporary Lower Burma, the abuses of the economically privileged,[6] he described as the Illusion of the Self (cf. p. 40, 200). In the overcoming of that illusion, community of property was to be the first step,[7] since the accumulation of capital appeared to him as an effect of Greed, Hate and Delusion. An elimination of sharp differences in wealth was to overcome this source of Greed, Hate and Delusion.[8] For traditional Buddhism, Greed, Hate and Delusion caused Suffering. Modernistic Buddhist Socialism stressed that among the reasons for Greed, Hate and Delusion were economic inequities: It tended to assume that economic reforms would help to eliminate these aberrations. Thus U Nu wrote that the capitalistic concentration of wealth reduced the number of those economically capable of performing works of piety (works of Merit) and that, therefore, the impact

[1] Lakshmi Narasu, *The essence of Buddhism* (Madras, 1907), pp. 205f.
[2] J. R. Jayewardene, *Buddhism and Marxism and other Buddhist Essays* (Colombo, 1957), p. 41.
[3] Maung Nu [U Nu], "Cun-do buthama" in: U Thein: Pe Myiṇ ywei: (Editor), *Hbun-wada hniṇ Dobama* (Rangoon, 1954), p. 55.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[6] U Nu, "Man, the Wolf of Men," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), Vol. I, No. 9 (July, 1954), p. 10; Vol. II, No. 2 (December, 1954), p. 21.
[7] Maung Nu, "Cun-do buthama," in: U Thein: Pe Myiṇ ywei: hce ti: hpyat-tho (Editor), *Hbun-wada hniṇ Dobama* (Rangoon, 1954), p. 67.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

of Capitalism on Burma should be considered responsible for the people turning away from the Religion. This led him to the conclusion that the elimination of capitalism's inequities would be a good Buddhist deed. He emphasized that the economic problems of the people must be solved in order to increase the number of the Pious, since people must have their economic support in order to be able to meditate about Impermanence (cf. p. 56–58). Observing that the relative economic decline of the Burmans had caused the number of those meditating in monasteries to decline too, U Nu held Capitalism responsible for the people turning away from Buddhist goals. He thought that common ownership would assure everybody the same well-being and peace of mind through overcoming the fire of Greed, Hate and Delusion, so that more people would be able to perform acts of piety and everybody would be enabled to practice meditation.[1] As the Struggle for Self-preservation was to be reduced, so was Buddhist piety meant to increase: According to U Nu, neither social reforms nor an elimination of Capitalism nor the enrichment of the Poor should be ends in themselves; they could be but economic methods for the achievements of a religious goal.[2]

For such economic methodology U Nu's Thakin group – within which he had become politically prominent through the Student Strike of 1936 – was largely indebted to John Furnivall. This economist and retired colonial official sponsored a Burma Book Club which contributed to the popularization of Fabian and other socialist ideas among the Thakins.[3] Under the influence of Furnivall, a Fabian welfare-state program was taken up by U Ba Choe, one of the first Burmese theorists of socialism. Ba Choe became, in 1936, founder and president of Burma's Fabian League.[4] He edited the Burmese Deedok Journal – apparently an important source for the intellectual history of Burmese socialism in general and its traditionalist elements in particular. "Deedok Ba Choe" delved deeply into Burmese folklore, collected and edited old Burmese songs and was an ardent Buddhist. Ba Choe seems to have exercised strong traditionalist influences on U Nu during his university days.[5] Both U Ba Choe and U Nu were among the disciples of Thakin Kudaw Hmain. This now octogenarian poet, one of the

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 60–63.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[3] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 377.
[4] J. S. Thomson, "Marxism in Burma," in: F. Trager (Editor), *Marxism in Southeast Asia*, pp. 320, 20.
[5] Interview with U Nu, in Rangoon, July, 1959.

most beloved of Burma's writers (who is barely mentioned in the standard Anglo-Saxon works on modern Burma) is a living historical link between the Burmese revolution and the cultural traditions of the pre-British Burmese Kingdom. As a ten-year-old pupil in a Buddhist monastery school of 1885, he had wept bitter tears at the sight of Burma's last king being taken away into British captivity.[1] An authority on Burmese classical lore and the Burmese humanities, he became – through a number of satirical and patriotic works [2] in the course of the 1920's and 1930's (under the name of U Lun and "Mister Maung Maung") – the main literary influence on Burmese "nationalist" politics. By the late 1930's he is said to have become something called "the real ideologist" of the Thakin group,[3] having reconciled the personal rivalries that had caused a split among the Thakins. From Thakin Kudaw Hmain seemed to stem some of the traditionalist symbols that were to become ideologically so effective in Burma's post-war Buddhist socialism with its concept of an ideal Buddhist social order.

Thus Thakin Kudaw Hmain wrote in his "Thakin Ṭîkâ" (published in 1938) that in the beginning of the World Age, when everybody had mastery of himself and man's economic necessities were supplied by the Padeytha (Wishing)-Tree, while no one was bound by a yoke, there had been the Worldly Nirvana (cf. p. 10ff.). In that state, as sung in a poem by the Upper Burman Governor of Paley, all men enjoyed the fruits of the Padeytha Tree in common. As their minds became polluted by Greed, they started to store and accumulate food – and the primeval bounty disappeared: Men's necessities could no longer be supplied by merely picking them up as in the past. Looting and fighting began. Codes of law became necessary. As a result, man voluntarily elected a Future Buddha to be their ruler. They allowed him one-tenth of their produce as his fee – voluntarily taxing themselves to provide for the expenses of maintaining Lawfulness and Government. From this Thakin Kudaw Hmain concluded that those who supplied the taxes and provided the government's revenue had been and once more should be their own masters; that the people paid

[1] Sarkisyanz, "Thakin Kudaw Hmain, Burma's 'Rabindranath Tagore'" unpublished Communication, presented to the American Oriental Society's Annual Meeting, on March 30, 1960.

[2] Thakin Kudaw Hmain: [pseudonym: "Mi'sata Maung Hmain:"], *Bain: kau' Tîkâ-ci:* (Rangoon, 1927); «Mi'sata Maung Hmain:» *Myau' Ṭîkâ* (Rangoon, n.d.); Thakin Kudaw Hmain:, *Hkwei: Ganei'hta* (Rangoon, 1298/1936).

[3] V. F. Vasil'iev, "Put' k nezavisimosti," in: Akademiïa Nauk S.S.S.R., Institut Vostokovedeniïa, *Birmanskiĭ Soĭuz. Sbornik stateĭ* (Moscow, 1958), p. 88.

their government so that it could serve them, patronizing particularly the monastic order.[1]

Kudaw Hmain's radical interpretation of Buddhist tradition about the origin of the state, of political power and of social classes (cf. p. 12ff.) had the effect of vindicating Burma's "indigenous heritage" by deriving from it both precisely those democratic values in the name of which the British colonies now were claimed for the Empire, *and* the socialistic ideals which in Burma's economic situation had been taken up by the most radical proponents of Burmese independence. After Saya San's uprising had failed in its attempt to restore the traditional state and undo the inroads of irresistible alien "modernity," with its liberal economics, Burmese "Nativism" – modified by an acculturation process among the Burmese intelligentsia – produced new and more effective responses to Burma's crisis by accepting the revolutionary symbols and Democracy and Socialism.[2]

On the other hand, continuity with Buddhist political traditions was initially sought even by Burmese Stalinist Marxism: An attempt was made to find in the above-mentioned Buddhist ideas about the ideal society of the distant past a point of departure for the Marxist notion about "primeval communism" and the origin of the state with its class contradictions. In this sense the village educated Burmese Communist, the subsequent "Stalinist" leader Thakin Than Tun, wrote, in an article entitled "Socialist Ideology and Burmese History," about the olden times when people enjoyed as common property the produce of plants growing by themselves (without cultivation), before distinctions between private properties, fencing in of land and individual ownership appeared. For Than Tun this tradition afforded a point of departure for the Marxist claim that it was through private ownership that differences developed not only in property but also in the mind of man, as those of poor character began stealing and looting. This subsequent Communist guerrilla chieftain repeated the Buddhist tradition, handed down in the Pâli Canon, according to which it was to solve these social problems that one man had been chosen as leader and given payments so that he would not have to spend his time in labor – giving origin to government and autocracy.[3] Thus the traditional Buddhist account about the origin of Government coincided

[1] Kudaw Hmain: *Thakin Ṭîkâ* (Rangoon, 1938), pp. 163–165.
[2] Cf. W. E. Mühlmann, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus* (Berlin, 1961), p. 12.
[3] Than Thun, "Hsou-she-li' wa-da hniṇ Bama yazawin," in: U Thein: Pe Myiṇ ywei: hce ti: hpyat-tho, *Hbun-wada hniṇ Dobama* (Rangoon, 1954), pp. 106f.

with the basic idea of the Social Contract Theory of the early modern classics of liberal democracy, as well as with Marxist notions that the rise of private property and the differentiation between classes had given origin to the state.

Actually the Thakins' political thought was strongly syncretistic; it was characterized by various degrees of nationalistic, socialistic and Buddhist syncretism and influenced by Western revolutionary models – but also by Burmese traditions. Traditionalist Buddhist influences had affected the Thakins particularly through the preachings and writings of the abbot Ledi Sayadaw Pandita U Maung Gyi (cf. p. 128).[1] While the Buddhism of such popular monks affected the ideological outlook of many of the Thakins, the influence of Thakin radicalism was carried by "political monks" into the traditionalist countryside.[2] In rural Burma of the 1930's the traditions about the ideal Buddhist kingship were apparently still alive; this is indicated by the "royalism" of the peasant revolts of 1930–1932 (cf. pp. 161f.). And a descendent of King Mindon, of Burma's penultimate monarch, the prince Thakin Thei Ku Daw Gyi, who had married a daughter of the last Burmese king, became President of the Thakin Party.[3] Neither did he know the English language nor was he much affected by English cultural influences. He gave up his British colonial government's pension and was a socialist. Socialism was identified with the "traditional Buddhist" (monastic) community of property in the Thakin campaign pamphlet "Samghaka Wada Sadaw" by Thakin Tin.[4] That pamphlet appeared in 1936 on behalf of the Kou-Min: Kou-Chin ("Own King, Own Kind") Party through which the Thakins participated in the elections of November, 1936.

Nevertheless, as they had only belatedly decided not to boycott but to contest the election, they obtained only three seats in the following Legislature. To prove their disinterest in politicians' profits, these deputies refused to accept their parliamentary salaries. They consistently opposed the still "Dyarchical" constitutional settlement of

[1] Ledi Sayadaw Paya: ci:, *Satu thamma di-pani* (Rangoon, 1951); Ledi Sayadaw Paya: ci-i, *Thamma dei'hti di-pani* (Rangoon, 1952); Ledi Sayadaw, *Bodhi pahkiya di-pani* (Rangoon, 1952); Ledi Sayadaw, *Ottama puritha di-pani* (Rangoon, 1952).

[2] A figure of such a "political monk," influencing opinion in the villages in favor of the Thakins' cause, appears in U Nu's drama, "Man the Wolf of Men," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), Vol. I, No. 9 (July, 1954), pp. 12ff.

[3] Not of the (subsequent) A.F.P.F.L., as has been (through a writing error) stated in Sarkisyanz, "On the place of U Nu's Buddhist Socialism in Burma's history of ideas," in: R. Sakai (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1961* (Lincoln, USA, 1961), p. 58.

[4] Interview with Thakin Thein: Maung Gyi: (Rangoon, July 8, 1959), who will deal with this topic in detail in a forthcoming book of his.

1935 [1] – as it left the control of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Finance to the British Governor and not to Burma's parliament. Not only had this "Legislature" to depend, in practice (even for such branches as it was supposed to control – Instruction, Public Health, etc.) on the Governor's ministers for approval, but the British Governor could override Parliament in the most vital matters.[2] Therefore, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the Thakin-Sinyetha (cf. p. 182) Freedom Block alliance declared only qualified support of democratic Britain's struggle against Fascist imperialism, demanding in return a recognition of Burma's right to independence. Among its spokesmen the Thakin Aung San had already risen to political prominence.[3] He was thought to be the grandson of U May Aung (Shwe La Yaung Min:), one of the governors under King Thibaw, a resistance fighter who continued the struggle after the capitulation of that king and was eventually beheaded by the British conquerors (cf. above, p. 106).[4] Aung San had in his adolescence desired to serve as novice in the attempted Buddhist world mission but was not permitted by his parents to do so.[5] Subsequently he became less interested in Buddhism, sceptical about many of its monks and critical of priestcraft.[6] While Thakin Aung San's greatest achievements were pragmatic rather than ideological, Thakin Socialism during the beginnings of his political career was allegedly strongly influenced by the radical social reform projects of the Siamese statesman Luang Pradit (Pridi Phanomyong).[7] This French trained economist, Thailand's subsequent Foreign Minister, Regent and Prime Minister, had justified his very far-reaching planned economy project of 1933 (which at one time was suspected of Communism) on the basis of the Buddhist [Dîgha Nikâya scriptural] prophecy about the future golden age: [8]

When the administration shall have brought the final consummation of the aims set forward by the People's Party in their six point platform, the state of prosperity and felicity ..., which in classical language [Pâli] is called Sriaraya, will have dawned ... They [the people] will be able to feast on the fruits of

[1] Maung Maung, pp. 32, 38.
[2] Cf. G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, pp. 78, 82f.; Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 353.
[3] *New Burma* of September 27 and October 13, 1939, cited by Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 416.
[4] Kudaw Hmain:, *Thakin Ṭîkâ* (Rangoon, 1938), pp. 205, 209, 212.
[5] Bo Thein Swe (Editor), *Bogyoke Aung San Âdipâdi* (Rangoon, 1951), p. 46.
[6] Maung Maung (Editor), *Aung San of Burma* (Hague, 1962), pp. 127f.
[7] J. Leroy Christian, *Modern Burma: A survey of political and economic developments* (New York, 1942), pp. 274f. Pridi Phanomyong's influence on Burmese socialism has not been confirmed in any other source known to me.
[8] Cf. above, pp. 88f.; *Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVI, 21–26: transl. Rhys Davids, pp. 71–74.

happiness and prosperity .... According to this prophecy, every act of devotion on the part of the faithful followers of religion brings that Golden Age nearer .... In this plan [of social reform] we have a system by which *we can press forward to this Golden Age*. And yet there are some people who hesitate, who draw back so violently that one would suppose they contemplate a return to the age of unenlightenment of 2475 years ago, when Buddha had not yet come.[1]

The underlying concept of the waning and waxing of world ages apparently influenced popular Burmese attitudes on the eve of the Japanese invasion. This was observed even by such a pragmatist as Dr. Ba Maw, who is by no means a Buddhist mystic but a sober French trained lawyer. He pointed out that in the catastrophies with which begun the Second World War Burma's Buddhist outlook tended to see the work of laws governing all life, the laws of Impermanence:

The West, strengthened by an early industrial revolution, had stripped the Eastern countries of very nearly everything they could carry away and had grown rich and strong on the enormous gains. In a ceaselessly changing cosmic order such a defiance of the moral as well as historical laws could not go on forever unchanged and unpunished. The laws of retribution would step in some day. So while the illusory world of appearances looked the same outwardly, the forces below were at work to change it all by destroying the great scarlet empires that had destroyed the weaker peoples for centuries; and thus Asia would soon be restored. These forces had made the war inevitable, and they would just as surely bring about a new world order in which Burma together with other colonial countries would rise again. Turning to the heavens, observers noted that the influences there had lately been very active. The planets pointed to the immanence of widespread disasters and changes that would purify the earth before they ended; and afterwards there would be a just, happy life, for all. Thus their oldest beliefs, their equally old sense of fate, and their new frustrations and longings as a people mingled to give the Burmese the feeling that the war had a deep moral and historical purpose; more tangibly, that it would give Burma back to the Burmese and greatness back to Buddhism. As I have said, it was still no more than a mixture of feeling and dream during the first months.[2]

Beliefs and prophecies telling that the British Empire-builders would not leave Burma before the end of the present World Age [3] implied that they would vanish when the decline of the World Age would catastrophically pass its lowest point. After the lowest point of the World Cycle, that is after the disappearance of British rule, according to traditional beliefs, was to follow the era culminating in the realization of Buddhism's perfect society (cf. pp. 152, 88). It is true that by the late 1930's the achievement of this ideal society

[1] K. P. Landon, *Siam in Transition* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 292f.
[2] Ba Maw, "Burma at the beginning of the Second World War," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), VI, No. 12 (December, 1959), p. 17.
[3] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (Editor), Saya U: Po U, *Buddha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik* hniṇ Co Hla, *Than-jou a'hpyei* (Rangoon, 1317/1955), p. 6.

had, in the context of Buddhist modernism, become subject to the human will: Thakin Kudaw Hmain had emphasized that men should not blame this dark "era of decline" (*hsou' ka'*) as they themselves are in reality responsible for it. He compared this World Age to clay that is to be moulded by human beings, shaped by man into the "Ascending Era" (*te' ka'*) that they desire.[1] Yet clearer than in the ideological programs, into which Burma's modernistic acculturation has formulated its "nationalism," do nativistic political expectations arising from Buddhist ideas about the waning and waxing of World Ages appear in Burma's folk prophecies.[2] One of them was referred to in sermons by the popular Buddhist preacher, U Nye Ya, declaring that, when the Buddhist teachings will have been fully followed, there shall appear the personage that is to open the gate of *bygone* abundance and peace (*hcan: dha* – c. p. 206). That gate, he said, was waiting for its opener – in the context of prophecies to the effect that, during Europe's war crisis, the Peacock (royal symbol of Burma) would emerge and British domination come to its downfall. U Nye Ya preached about both prophecies in allegorical terms.[3] But both he and Shwe Myiang Pandita are said to have referred in their political independence sermons of the 1930's to the Setkya-Min (cf. p. 152ff.).

Invocations of traditional prophecies and songs about Setkya-Min popularized the radical social transformation program of the Thakin revolutionaries among Burma's non-westernized rural majority. But such invocations also gave the radical socialistic propaganda a religious folkloric alibi that could but rarely expose it to penalties for "subversive politics," although, in Pegu, Set Kyein Da's preaching about Setkya-Min in 1933/34 had at the time been considered to be an appeal for an uprising.[4] By the catastrophic year of 1942 identity with Setkya-Min was already attributed to Thakin Aung San.[5] The Thakin Party's symbolic Red Dragon (Naga Ni) was interpreted among the people as a forerunner of Setkya-Min.[6] The song about Setkya-Min was popularized by the same performer (Khi Maung Yin) as the Naga-

[1] Thakin Kudaw Hmain:, "Hkit Kala pyu pyin pyaun: le yei:," in: U: Thein: Pe Myiṇ ywei: hce ti: hpyat-tho (Editor), *Hbun-wada hniṇ Dobama* (Rangoon, 1954), p. 13.
[2] Cf. W. E. Mühlmann, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus* (Berlin, 1961), p. 8.
[3] Thayawadi U: Nye Ya Sayadaw-ị, *Dou hpyi' htwei* (Rangoon, no date: 1943?), p. 40.
[4] Interview with U Khin Maung (September, 1959), at Mandalay.
[5] Setkya Min:'s connection with *Aung* San was explained by Bobo *Aung* having saved and protected Setkya Min:. Interview with Dr. Khin Maung Win of the Department of Philosophy, University of Rangoon, August 12, 1959.
[6] Interview with U: Kyaw Sein of the Burma Historical Commission, University of Rangoon, November 4, 1959.

Ni Song, the Red Dragon hymn of the Thakins. This unofficial party anthem announced an era in which Burma would rise again through her struggle for independence, an era associated with prophecies about Setkya Min: [1] The goal was to be the restoration or establishment of Burma's prosperity, so that the people would be freed from poverty, so that the poor would be enabled to perform charities and to build ... monasteries" : This song of the revolutionary Thakin Naga Ni Society – an organization associated particularly with Thakin Nu (U Nu) – specifically reminded of the Gold and Silver Rain that was reputed to have fallen during the Period of Pagan (cf. pp. 49f., 184) and announced the approach of a comparable era of abundance and wealth.[2]

[1] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein (Editor), *Buddha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik*..., p. 140.
[2] Text of the Naga Ni Song as supplied to the writer by courtesy of the Burmese Broadcasting Corporation in November, 1959.

CHAPTER XXIV

BURMA'S VICTORY IN THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE

The actual economic situation of the Burmese people on the eve of the Pacific War was far from prosperous. Seemingly not more than 15% of Lower Burma's cultivated land was by that time still owned by the agriculturalists themselves.[1] About half of the agricultural land of Lower Burma was to remain for years in the possession of absentee owners and non-agriculturalists devoid of interest in cultivation – other than the determination to collect rents. As they tended to rent the land out to the highest bidder, tenants were not even assured the continuity of their tenancies. Thereby tenancy rents were increasing and came to average one-third of the gross produce. After paying such rents and after deducting cultivation expenses, there was "hardly anything" left for the cultivators' subsistence.[2] Not until 1941, not before the last months of colonial rule over Burma, was legislation passed prohibiting the foreclosure of land and its sale to non-agriculturalists.[3] It did not reach the point of enforcement, although since 1938 an "All Burma Peasant Organization" had arisen under the presidency of Thakin Mya.

This peasant league was to remain intimately associated with the Thakin group which was practically alone among Burma's pre-war parties in consistently espousing the cause of the Burmese agriculturists.[4] The rise of the Thakins' Dobama Party to political prominence was accelerated by the wide rift between the Burmese people and other nationalist politicians' leadership of Rangoon: virtually all the re-

[1] J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life*, pp. 8of.; J. R. Andrus, "The agrarian problem in Burma," in: *Pacific Affairs* (September, 1946), p. 265.
[2] Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Agriculture, *The Land Nationalization Act, 1948* (Rangoon, 1950), p. 2.
[3] J. R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life*, pp. 8of.,
[4] Cf. J. S. Thomson, "Marxism in Burma," in: F. Trager (Editor), *Marxism in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, 1959), p. 26.

maining Europeanized nationalist politicians of the Dyarchy eventually compromised their championship of such Burmese vindications and their resistance to foreign rule by coveting or at least accepting office under the colonial system. "Political coalitions within the politician group were formed and dissolved at will, usually on a purely personal basis, all without reference, except briefly at election time, to the wishes of the majority Burmese-speaking urban or village electorate." [1] In February, 1939, a gigantic demonstration of monks, pupils and students, in Mandalay, was fired upon the Police: seven monks "sagged with mortal wounds, hugging the banner that they carried. More volleys were fired, and in a matter of few minutes seventeen were mown down. Seven were Buddhist monks, the rest were students and civilians, of whom one boy, Tin Aung was ... aged twelve." [2] These killings, through the resultant agitation, contributed to the fall of Ba Maw's dyarchical ministry. U Saw, as chief minister, acted with more planned ruthlessness but more acceptably to the British Business Community: He insisted on a class system "as even the Nats" (cf. p. 81) have one, and used the Administration's police powers to imprison systematically the Burmese radicals – his political rivals – and particularly the Thakins. This radicalized them even further.[3]

Thus, the Thakins' Dobama Asiayon's Manifesto of 1940 could dwell upon the "persecutions by the imperialist bureaucracy," by a "small band of our gentry in the lobbys and debating halls of our sham imperialist legislatures ...," claiming that the Burmese politicians in office were "afraid of mass upheaval" [4] (cf. p. 165). It insisted that the Thakins were the only Burmese movement "that has come from the masses and moved with the masses and is constantly preparing the masses for the final struggle for freedom." In the context of rural mass appeal, the Thakins' Manifesto welcomed the efforts of Mandalay's Yahan-pyo League of monks.[5] But side by side with such traditionalist associations as the Dobama's Party Song, with its reference to the glories of the Kings of old Burma and even to their conquests of neighboring countries,[6] this Thakin Manifesto repudiated the sporadic and spontaneous "royalist" peasant revolts of 1930/31 as something

[1] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 367f.
[2] Maung Maung, p. 41.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54; Maung Maung, *A trial in Burma. The assassination of Aung San* (The Hague, 1962), p. 49.
[4] "Manifesto of the Dobama Asiayone," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), VI, No. 1 (January, 1959), pp. 21, 22, 26.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[6] I had not been able to obtain the Burmese text of this song, cited in Maung Maung, p. 35.

"outgrown" – or at least to be outgrown.[1] This position of abstract Enlightenment was taken under radical Marxist influences: The Dobama Asiayon found it necessary to repudiate charges of Communism. Yet, it was "not alarmed by the 'Spectre of Communism'" and declared that its "fundamental policy is aimed at ... a People's Democratic ..., Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasants." [2] The ultimate goal of a classless society (that would consist only of men who were to be their own masters) was now meant to be symbolized by the very title Thakin ('Master' – cf. p. 167).[3]

On the other hand, the Dobama's Manifesto wrongly attributed Masters' Class motivations of Fascism to Finland's heroic resistance against the Soviet Union's [4] incipient imperialism. Into this pro-Soviet stand the Dobama was forced by Burma's situation in the context of the world situation of 1940: The Soviet Union's denunciation of Britain's defense against the Fascist Powers – as "a war between Imperialists" – happened to fit into Burmese reaction to the British government's refusal to promise the Burmese a Dominion Status after the victory of the Democracies – even in return for their assistance in the Empire's war effort. Had Mr. Churchill accepted such proposals made by Burmese nationalists – from U Saw to the Thakins' and Ba Maw's "Freedom Block" – he would almost certainly have caused the Burmese both to fight from the very beginning on the Allied side *and* to remain after the war in the British Commonwealth. But the British refusals strengthened the hand of the Communist-minded among the Thakins, of those who had been – until Hitler's attack on Russia – opposed to assisting Britain's war effort even in return for Dominion Status after victory. As the colonial administration started jailing those who under such circumstances refused to accept the British declaration of war on behalf of Burma, a warrant of arrest was issued against Aung San. But he managed to get out of British Burma on a Chinese vessel, hoping to find support in China. There he was persuaded to cooperate with Japanese agents. Under Japan's sponsorship he helped to recruit, among the Burmans living in Thailand, a Burma Independence Army.[5] When Japan started the Pacific War by attacking the British Empire and its allies, the Burma Independence Army entered the country along with the Japanese

[1] "Manifesto of the Dobama Asiayone," p. 22.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 26.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 21, fn.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 23f.
[5] Maung Maung (Editor), *Aung San of Burma* (The Hague, 1962), p. 47.

invaders, "hurling itself, often with disastrous results, on tanks and machine guns."

In the chaos of the British army's collapse of 1942, the White Man's Burden proved too heavy for most White Men of British Burma. Amidst the Englishmen's flight, the once coldly aloof White Sahibs proved only too human. The Burman civilian population did not fall upon them. Even Harvey attests this: "There is hardly an instance of Englishmen acquainted with the language (and quite a number made their way out for hundreds of miles, always unarmed, often alone and on foot) receiving anything but kindness – and this from a people who knew we were beaten and who were themselves already in fear of the Japanese." [1]

The Japanese army was initially accepted and even welcomed as a liberating force but soon disappointment followed. While Japan seemed to be winning its war against the Allies, her rulers did not consider it necessary to abide by their promises to Aung San concerning Burma's independence. But, by August 1, 1943, the continuation of the Pacific War made it worthwhile for Japan to install a nominally independent Burman government under Ba Maw. A few hours later Burma concluded a military alliance with Japan and declared war on the British Empire: Ba Maw's proclamation of war described this as the opportunity for which the Burmese people had been waiting ever since their kingdom had been annexed by England in 1886. With Burma's last king had been associated Ba Maw's father U Kye, who (apparently in the 1890's) had attempted a revolt against the British conquerors in the Thaton District.[2] Now Ba Maw assumed the title of Âdipâdi (that had been used for princes of the royal house already in medieval Ceylon [3]). Although Thakin Ba Sein was penalized for advocating (as an alternative to Ba Maw's personal rule) a restoration of monarchy, the Âdipâdi's government gravitated in the direction of royalty: Soon he was referred to as A-naShin Mingyi Kodaw ("Lord of Power, the Great King's Royal Person").[4] "Dr. Ba Maw eventually included the title Mingyi (Great Prince or King) as part of his title." [5] Thakin Kudaw Hmain, "misty-eyed with joy" at seeing Burma

[1] G. E. Harvey, *British rule in Burma*, p. 9.
[2] Kyaw Min, U, *The Burma we love* (Calcutta, 1945), pp. 6–7.
[3] *Cûlavaṃsa*, XLI, 34: transl. W. Geiger, Part i (Colombo, 1953), p. 54. Already the oldest son of King Dâṭhapabhuti of Ceylon (about 537 A.D.), Magallâna II, was titled "Adipâdi."
[4] Burma, Intelligence Bureau, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*, Vol. II (Simla, India, 1944), p. 247, cited by Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 455, 456.
[5] Maung Maung, pp. 59f.

restored, administered the oath of office: "Adipadi Ashin-Mingyi, O King!, dost thou solemnly pledge to rule as your forefathers [sic] ruled, upholding the laws of time immemorial?" [1] In the tradition of Burma's kings were also the Âdipâdi's gestures to defend Buddhism like the royal defenders of old.[2] From the home region of the last dynasty, the "Soil of Victory" [aun-myei] [3] was brought for the planting of a symbolic tree. That tree (cf. p. 83) was to symbolize the traditional ideal of the mission of Burma's rulers to unite the entire Abode of Men, to rule over the whole island continent of Jambudvîpa: [4] The soil on which it was planted came from the homeland of Alaungpaya, "the future Buddha" (cf. p. 94) under whom, according to beliefs still current even in Rangoon, "gold and silver showers [shwei mou: ngwei mou:] rained and poured." [5] And it was about that time that the government organ, the newspaper "*Bama-hkit,*" wrote that "if we win this war, we will make our country "*Lokka Nibban,*" the Earthly Nirvana,[6] a term used in Burmese Marxism for the Perfect Society (cf. pp. 169–170).

The Burmese socialists on the whole coöperated with the Âdipâdi's government in spite of its fascistic utterances in the context of the Axis and Japanese alliance. Ba Maw proclaimed the motto, "one Blood, one Voice, one Command," and declared that "the State is definitely an absolute and its defense the same," emphasizing that "action and its results only matter, revolutionary action to suit revolutionary times . . . , the revolutionary will as the driving force." [7] In the course of this revolutionary transformation the social distinctions evolved in colonial times were breaking down. The urban Anglicized could no longer look on the "uneducated" traditionalist rustic with contempt when the villages became a place of refuge from war calamities.[8] Economic hardships under Japan's "Co-Prosperity Sphere" and arbitrary brutalities soon made Japanese domination even less acceptable than the British. Not even members of the Bur-

[1] Ibid., p. 60.
[2] Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 464.
[3] *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku:hni'ka za yue Sâsana pyu yan lu pyi twin yau' shi ne-tho Buddha-Yaza Etaruppatti (mu pain shin Myamma ei: tha we)* (Rangoon, no date), p. 91.
[4] Interview with Dr. Ba Maw in Rangoon, Summer, 1959.
[5] *Sâsana Thakkayaza...* (as fn. 3), p. 82.
[6] *Bama-hkit* of December 20, of either 1942 or 1943 or 1944 (the extant clipping does not contain the date of the year), according to a personal statement of Dr. U Win (University of Rangoon) to the writer, in October 1959.
[7] Maung Maung Pye, pp. 59–63.
[8] Maung Maung, p. 61.

mese government allied with Japan could feel safe from the notorious Japanese Kempetai (military police).[1] The Japanese soldiery, all pan-Buddhist propaganda notwithstanding, offended Burmese Buddhist sensibilities.[2] By 1944 there were prospects that Japan would drag Burma along into defeat. Then Aung San established contact with the Allied Command. In February, the Burma Army Garrison of Mandalay turned against the Japanese and restored to guerrilla warfare. In March, 1945, Aung San's forces began a general attack on the Japanese positions. Almost all Burmese organizations and parties rallied around Aung San's "Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League" (the term "Fascist" referring both to the Japanese militarists and the English racists [3]): Nationalist Burma rose under the banner of Revolution, the red flag with the single star. It was this military action – as sequel to Aung San's army having participated in the expulsion of the British on the side of the Japanese – that proved decisive in the struggle for independence.

In vain did the colonial government of British Burma, after having fled to India before the Japanese advance in 1942, expect that the Burmese

> "nationalists ..., undoubtedly at present thrilled by 'independence' ..., will realize that it will have to be surrendered again ...; although they will be disappointed, they are neither rowdy nor desperate enough to fight for it."

It was fond but wishful thinking when British Intelligence reported that the Burmese ...

> "will be disappointed but in many cases their experiences will have convinced them that a further period of political and administrative tuition will not come amiss." [4]

The British government planned to benefit war-torn Burma by suspending even the pre-war dyarchical constitution for a period of reconstruction, promising to restore it at some suitable future time. British-Indian forces reoccupied Burma and the British governor

[1] Thakin Nu (U Nu), *Burma under the Japanese* (London, 1954), pp. 22f., 46, 49f., 80ff., 93. When questioned about the brutalities of the Japanese soldiery, Dr. Ba Maw told the author that they were accustomed to such treatment among themselves and mentioned the example of a Japanese Major who had shown him traces of lacking teeth with the explanation that his own Colonel had knocked them out!

[2] Burma, Intelligence Bureau, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*, Vol. I (Simla, October, 1943), p. 29.

[3] Cf. Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma. A study of the first years of Independence* (Oxford, 1957), p. 18, fn. 3.

[4] Burma, Intelligence Bureau, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*, Vol. I, p. 16.

brought with him his Executive Council: Most of its members were pre-war Burmese politicians who had collaborated with England to the point of leaving Burma in the hour of catastrophy with the retreating British when, in 1942, British responsibility for the defense of Japanese invaders had fallen short of fulfillment.[1]

But the Burma of their pre-war colonial days could not be restored. In those days [in 1906] the British colonial official Fielding Hall had written that nothing could do the Burmese so much good as to distinguish themselves in one of Britain's wars, that this would open new vistas of life for them.[2] These words proved to be prophetic – but in a sense different from what Fielding Hall had meant: In 1945/1947 Aung San's guerilla forces refused to hand over all of their arms and continued their military drilling quite openly.[3] Against this background the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League refused to cooperate with the governor. Although British colonial administration was initially restored, its writ ceased to run in the country. The British authorities issued a warrant for Aung San's arrest – but it had to be cancelled in the last moment: British military opinion remained opposed to his arrest.[4] "The quantities of hidden arms, the League's organization that reached every village, would spell a national uprising .... The idea of having to find troops to fight him was abhorrent." [5] As India's independence had become a certainty by this time, Indian soldiers could no longer be available for a colonial war against Aung San's Burmese guerilla force. And only one battalion of Englishmen happened to remain in Burma by that time of the Empire's demobilization.[6] For the first time since 1824, British forces in South Asia had no decisive military superiority over the Burmese.[7] "On [Governor] Dorman-Smith enquiring what troops would be available, Mountbatten replied that there were few British or Dominion regiments in S.E.A.C. [South East Asia Command Area]. It was not clear what troops could be sent. In the circumstances every effort should be made to avoid a rebellion." "The Cabinet would have to come to an agreement with Aung San, unless it proposed to send a British expeditionary force, hardly likely with an empty treasury, a war-weary country and an adverse opinion

[1] Ba U, pp. 184f.
[2] Fielding Hall, *A People at School* (London, 1906), p. 264.
[3] Cf. Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, pp. 531, 541; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[4] Maurice Collis, *Last and First in Burma* (London, 1956), p. 279.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[6] Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[7] Cf. E. Sarkisyanz, *Südostasien seit 1945* (Munich, 1961), p. 88.

in America." "... Where the troops, where the money, where the support for such a high-handed policy?" [1]

A soldier, Sir Hubert Rance, was appointed as the last governor of British Burma. He could appreciate the facts of Britain's and Burma's respective military situation: After a corresponding agreement between Aung San and the British Labor Prime Minister Attlee (1947), he handed over power to Burma's Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League government (January 4, 1948). But the League's President and founder of Burmese independence was no more: Aung San and almost his entire cabinet were murdered on July 19, 1947 by disguised assassins sent by U Saw, who in the twilight of colonial Burma, on the eve of the War, had been helped by the British Business Community to the Prime Ministership (cf. p. 181): In 1947 he hoped to regain that position by the assassination of his rivals and expected British assistance.[2]

Aung San's charismatic personality had helped to unite the divergent components of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League and the non-Burman ethnic groups. U Nu, who succeeded him, was soon faced by civil war. Britain's transfer of sovereignty to U Nu's government in practice meant a transfer of the costs and responsibilities for putting together a social system disarrayed by the impact of colonial rule, its transfer at a point when the human and material costs of holding it together had become prohibitive to the weakened Imperial Power: [3] Under the impact of the colonial system, Burma's economy had become geared to the world markets for rice, making the collapse of her exports and the breakdown of the communication system during the Pacific War a catastrophy. It resulted in the isolation of many rice producing areas of Burma from their overseas rice markets and reduced numerous districts to economic dependence on their own resources, long after colonial development had destroyed their pre-modern self-sufficiency. Against the background of this economic vacuum, an entire generation had come to depend on war for employment. And the government's appeal for internal demobilization and disarmament (1948) was followed by uprisings led by Communists. These uprisings were in line with the Soviet government's global strategy of delaying the post-war reconstruction of Western European industries by disorganizing the supply of raw materials from their former Southeast Asian dependencies. In vain did U Nu attempt to persuade

[1] M. Collis, *Last and First in Burma*, pp. 258, 271.
[2] Maung Maung, *A trial in Burma. The Assassination of Aung San* (The Hague, 1962), p. 30f.
[3] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 13.

the Communists – by arguments from Marx and even Lenin – that in Burma there was no basis for violent class struggle through armed revolt. In vain did he repeatedly offer the Communists an opportunity to participate in the government and to pursue their goals by peaceful democratic means.[1] Thakin Soe (cf. p. 168) had resigned from the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, and Than Tun with his "Burma Communist Party" (cf. p. 174) was expelled from it.[2] One after another they went into open rebellion, plunging Burma into a civil war that has not been fully overcome to this day.[3] Many of the "People's Volunteers" mutinied too. The Karens, a non-Indianized tribal group probably related to the pre-Buddhist Burmans, having suffered under the Burmese kings and therefore siding with the British rose against the restored Burmese state (1948/1949).

Almost the entire country was overrun by the various factions of Communists, mutineers, Karens and other separatists. Little more than the capital Rangoon remained to the Burmese government in February, 1949. And the American State Department at that time wrote Burma off as lost to the Communists. U Nu's socialist ministers offered to hand over the government to the Communists – on condition that they themselves would be left alive. In this situation – which looked more hopeless than the circumstances under which Kerenskiĭ had left Russia in 1917, and more desperate than the crisis under which Mr. Churchill had considered a possible withdrawal to Canada during Hitler's aerial attacks of 1940 – U Nu held out, with "determination to carry on with the struggle irrespective of success or failure," [4] His steadfastness at that time saved Democracy in Burma. On April 24, 1949, loyalist forces recaptured Mandalay; in the course of 1950 they reconquered the main bases of the Communist, Karen and other insurgents.[5] Thereby the Burmese army under General Ne Win, a comrade-in-arms of Aung San, preserved Burma's independence that Aung San had won first from the British, in 1942, and then from

[1] U Nu's speeches of April 3, May 25, June 13, October 20, 1948, February 1, February 27, April 5, 1949, in: Burma, Ministry of Information, *Towards Peace and Democracy: Translation of selected speeches by Thakin Nu [U Nu], Prime Minister of the Union of Burma* (Rangoon, 1949), pp. 60, 96, 125f., 160, 169, 186f., 199f.

[2] Government of the Union of Burma, *Burma and the Insurrections* (Rangoon, September, 1949, reprinted 1957), p. 5; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[3] Government of the Union of Burma, *Burma and the Insurrections*, pp. 8f., 21ff.; Government of Burma, Ministry of Information, *Is this a People's Liberation? A survey of the Communist Insurrections in Burma* (Rangoon, 1950).

[4] U Nu's speech of December 11, 1949, in: U Nu, *From Peace to Stability. Transl. of selected speeches* (Rangoon, 1951), p. 47.

[5] *Burma and the Insurrections*, 61; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

the Japanese, in 1945 (cf. p. 185): A Communist victory would have made Burma a dependency of China and the Burmese victims of Chinese population pressure.

By 1951 Burma's democracy and independence was no longer in immediate danger of being overthrown, as the insurrections were eventually reduced to local banditry, still leaving outlying areas of the country insecure. Thus, under U Nu, Burma was probably the only country that succeeded in resisting, if not overcoming, Communist (and simultaneous other) insurrections without emergency suspension of basic democratic civil rights. Again and again U Nu appealed to the Communists to fight the Government by ballots and not by bullets:

> If the Government becomes vicious and you want to remove it, go to the people and ask for power by means of the democratic method ... [Only] when it is made impossible to obtain power from the masses by lawful methods, when democratic remedies are denied and there is no alternative to seeking power by violence, then seek it by that method ..." [1]

It was not before 1953, after having continued a ruinous civil war for more than five years that the Burma Communist Party was eventually banned,[2] though still tolerated under another name.

It was not so much this prohibition of the Communist Party as the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League's radical social program, particularly agrarian reform – remission of mortgage debts, rent limitations, agricultural loans, price supports,[3] – that deprived the insurgents of mass following by largely matching their promises through constitutional implementation: The state declared its right to resume possession of such agricultural land that was not owned or inherited by the cultivators themselves (cf. p. 53f.).[4] Agricultural land is to be held by Burmese citizens only. The State was declared to be the ultimate owner of all land, with the right to resume possession or alter tenures with a view to redistribution. Large land-holdings were declared illegal and provisions made for expropriation and nationalization "in the public interest." Private monopolistic organization was prohibited. The Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy aimed at a Welfare State. The State was to give material assistance to

[1] Burma, Ministry of Information, *Towards Peace and Democracy*...by Thakin Nu, pp. 55–64 U Nu's speech of Dec. 11, 1949 (as p. 188, fn. 4), pp. 50f., 64.
[2] Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[3] L. J. Walinsky, *Economic Development in Burma, 1951–1960* (New York, 1962), p. 364.
[4] Land Nationalization Act of 1948, Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5, in: Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Agriculture, *The Land Nationalization Act, 1948* (Rangoon, 1950), pp. 34f.

economic organizations not working for private profit, with preference for coöperative enterprise.[1] Simultaneously with the Constitution, has been drafted a Two-Year Plan for economic development in the direction of a Welfare State. It explicitly postulated the goal of a socialist state and sought to plan an evolution towards a socialist economy, so that the profit motive was not to be allowed to determine the development of the basic industries.[2]

Even quite recently, most of the Burmese interviewed by Pye, regardless of their education, continued to "think of economic activity as little more than an attempt of people with excessive self-interest to cheat and exploit others." [3] Such attitudes resulted partly from the not exactly fortunate experiences that the Burmese had had with free enterprise as practised under British colonial rule (cf. p. 140f.).[4] They also were inherited from older predispositions against privately controlled economic activities, predispositions derived from the traditions of pre-colonial Burma long used to basic state monopolies under her Kings. Such a traditional state monopoly had been among the causes of Britain's invading and annexing the last Burmese Kingdom in 1885/86: State control of a planned economy appeared less as an innovation than as a restoration of traditional social values,[5] as the economic effects of British rule were being largely undone. The War had upset Burma's market economy of export crops; production was cut and exports ceased. The collapse of British control in 1942, the subsequent fighting and upheavals, resulted in trends towards village self-sufficiency: "The Burmese peasants is now tenaciously clinging to his nearly self-sufficient village economy, which resembles more and more the Burmese village under the kings than the partially modernized rural scene of the immediate pre-war period." [6] This "retrogressive" development contributed to reviving pre-colonial Burma's popular disregard for business values (cf. p. 142), the reviving of Burmese pre-colonial attitudes something short of very high regard for merchants and businessmen.[7] These economic entrepreneurs had been

[1] Constituent Assembly of Burma, *Constitution of the Union of Burma*, Paragraphs 23, ii-v and 30, i-iii (Rangoon, 1948), pp. 5, 7; Maung Maung, pp. 261–263.
[2] Union of Burma, Economic Planning Board, *Two-Year Plan of Economic Development in Burma* (Rangoon, 1948), pp. 2, 40.
[3] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 202.
[4] U Nu's speech of September 24, 1947, with the motion to adapt the Draft Consitution, in: Maung Maung, p. 254.
[5] U Nu, *Burma Looks ahead. Collected speeches* (Rangoon, 1953: Ministry of Information), p. 112, quoted in R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma*, pp. 112–113.
[6] L. Pye, pp. 88, 89.
[7] Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 63f.

and largely remained non-Burmese. And socialist limitations of their private enterprise met with little opposition within Burmese society: There is hardly a Burmese middle class that could have been hurt by socialist legislation (cf. p. 143). Almost unopposed did Socialism become the main current of Burmese Nationalism.

CHAPTER XXV

IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES OF BUDDHIST SOCIALISM

Aung San wanted Burma's constitution to be "essentially Burmese in ideology and purport," ... "thoroughly adapted to suit Burma's aspirations and Burmese genuis." [1] His successor U Nu declared, when summing up the balance of European rule, that inclusion in the British Empire had given Burma an opportunity to align her civilization with world developments without losing in that process Burmese individuality and tradition.[2] Association with Britain has left to Burma a heritage of constitutional government: Burma's Constitution had originally been drafted in English and had then to be translated into Burmese. Its political goals of Democracy and even the formulations of Welfare State Socialism had come from Occidental sources but were accepted within the context of a traditional Buddhist social ethos. In Burma the degree of Anglization, even of the elite, was never as great as in Ceylon or even in India; therefore ideological syncretism was inevitable and marked. Precisely the independence from England, the model state of liberalism, increased the dependence of the Burmese government on Burma's traditionalist majority for whom the unfamiliar abstractions of Democracy and Socialism could become comprehensible only in the familiar Buddhist context. Against this background, Buddhism could not but leave deep imprints on the way in which the Western concepts of Democracy and Socialism were absorbed by the Burmese public. This absorption process found expression in political folklore or myth (cf. p. 208) among the rural masses and in rationalizations derived from Buddhist modernism among the acculturated intellectual elite. The latter phenomena can be illustrated by polemics about Buddhist evaluations of Socialism as reflected in Burma's English language press. Thus, U Ba Yin, at

[1] Maung Maung Pye, p. 119.
[2] U Nu's Broadcast to the Nation, January 4, 1948, in: Maung Maung, p. 85.

one time Burma's Minister of Education, wrote that Karl Marx must have "directly or indirectly been influenced ... by Buddha." [1] And he claimed that Europe could not understand this, as "European philosophy is still in the primary stage and their much exalted science is still in its infancy on *essential matters* ... Europe has lost its old morality and is now a moral void." [2] U Ba Yin made Theism, the basis of Occidental religion, responsible for the spread of Marxist atheism, materialism and authoritarianism:

"God is all-powerful and all-knowing ... He is the great dictator whose will is supreme.[3] By knocking the god-idea on the head (sic) Buddha tried his best to free humanity from the bondage of a dictatorship because he saw that as long as there is a dictatorship and its superior ruling class there can be no real democracy ...[4] If there is God whose will is supreme, then there can be no freedom for the human will ... *Dictatorship – whether God's or Man's* – is totalitarianism *with all the seeds inherent in such a system ... Buddha* clearly saw what a dictatorship was in essence, a tyranny, and *by his denial of the existence of the Great Dictator he freed mankind from the bondage of all forms of dictatorship and killed the germs of human tyranny. Buddha* gave to humanity its charter of equality and freedom from fear and laid foundations for the establishment of a real world-wide democracy.[5] For everything man must rely on god ... His slave mentality develops to such an extent that he must even have an earthly dictator, the representative of the great dictator, to regulate his life. It was possible for Hitler to rise in the way he did because the ground of Christendom (sic) was suitable for the growth of dictatorships ...[5]
Lenin thought that he could dry up the spring of human greed and selfishness by the use of force but he found to his sorrow that he was wrong and the only way to uproot greed and selfishness was Buddha's way ... rather slow but absolutely sure ..." [6]

The very alternative between Dictatorship and Democracy appeared to U Ba Yin as an alternative between "the Dictatorship of God (sic) and the Democracy of Buddha" [7] (cf. pp. 111, 117).

The well-known Buddhist monk and philosopher U Thittila claimed that the world had no more time for religious dogma, while Buddhism – by virtue of its rational and scientific nature – would have nothing to fear from Science.[8] It was in the same sense that U Ba Yin contrasted

[1] Po Yarzar [U Ba Yin], "Letters to a Communist Nephew. Letter IV," in: *The Burmese Review* of December 6, 1948. For the access to post-war files of the "Burmese Review" and "The Burman" I am indebted to Dr. Virginia Thompson Adloff who permitted me the use of her collection.
[2] Po Yarzar [U Ba Yin], "Letters to a Communist Nephew. Letter IX," in: *The Burmese Review*, of January 10, 1949.
[3] U Ba Yin, "Buddha's Way to Democracy," in: *The Burman*, April 12, 1954, p. 7.
[4] *Ibid.*, April 19, 1954, p. 8.
[5] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1954, p. 5.
[6] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1954, p. 8.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] U: Thittila's lecture of July 5, 1952, in: *The Burman* of July 8, 1952, p. 1.

Buddhism, based on natural laws of Causality, with Christianity, based on (Divine) Command – so that in Russia the Communists could displace it from its commanding position and instead exercise command themselves.[1] Yet he thought that their materialism had rendered a "valuable service" against Theism.[2] The materialist Occident's scepticism of the Enlightenment was welcomed as a counterforce against Theism which Buddhism rejects [3] (and by which Buddhism had been long attacked – cf. p. 113).

It was in Ceylon that such modernistic Buddhist defensive reactions against the imperial powers of historical Christendom had the most radical effects on a Nationalist-Marxist political alliance.[4] These trends found their most vehement theoretical expression through "Dhamma Vijaya or the Revolt in the Temple" which declared that "the nations of the West are all 'sick societies,' disintegrating under the impact of the advancing technology ...": [5]

"British imperialism has been the *Mâra* (Evil One) of Buddhism; in its short career of 150 years it has destroyed more Buddhist kingdoms than any other single agency had done during the last 2500 years ... In their greedy quest of material wealth, they destroyed the Buddhist kingdoms, the guide-posts on mankind's path of happiness; now the destroyers themselves are lost in the wilderness." [6]

In the context of that "Revolt in the Temple," Democracy is supposed to be a

"... leaf from the book of Buddhism, which has ... been torn out and, while perhaps not misread, has certainly been half emptied of meaning by being divorced from its Buddhist context and thus has been made subservient to reactionary forces. The democracies today are obviously living on spiritual capital; we mean clinging to the formal observances of Buddhism without possessing its inner dynamic." [7]

"Marxism is a leaf taken from the book of Buddhism – a leaf torn out and misread." [8]

[1] Po Yarzar [U Ba Yin], "Letters to a Communist Nephew. Letter XI," in: *The Burmese Review*, January 24, 1949.
[2] U Ba Yin, "Buddha's Way to Democracy...-VI: Buddha's Materialism," in: *The Burman and Pictorial News Supplement*, March 29, 1954, p. 5.
[3] U Hla Maung, "From Dogma, via Science, to Truth," in: *The Burman*, October 3, 1953, p. 4.
[4] Cf. W. H. Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton, USA, 1960), pp. 342–348.
[5] [D. C. Vijayavardhana], *Dharma-Vijaya (Triumph of Righteousness) or the Revolt in the Temple* (Colombo, 1953), p. 529.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 469.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 595f.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 595.

"'Buddha is not content with taking away a man's property and giving it to another. That is patchwork, like social service,' writes Bhikkhu Dhammapala [cf. p. 114], 'Buddhism takes away from people their instinct of possessiveness ...'" [1]

"As a model of this ideal society, the Buddha set up his Samgha, consisting of a minority within the state, to live voluntarily a selfless life, non-attached to possessions or social position and communally sharing whatever necessaries of life they received ... The problem of applying this Socialist way of life, to a wider community the Buddha left to his followers; and today, in Marxian Communist countries, the experiment is being tried to make their entire populations live this kind of life under State compulsion and direction." [2]

As builder of the examplary Buddhist welfare state, for "The Revolt in the Temple," Ashoka was "the Lenin of Buddhism" (sic), as he was the first to "translate the Buddha's way of life into a polity." This interpretation of the Buddhist social ethos was presented as a new Commentary on the Buddhist scriptures, claiming to be in line with the classical Commentaries on the Pâli Canon, "the first new commentary since ... fifteen centuries" : This "Revolt in the Temple" claimed to "translate the Buddha's doctrine from its common interpretation of a 'pie in the sky after you die' to happiness here and now in this actual human world." [3] Its radicalism is to be seen against the background of Ceylon's four and a half centuries of exposure to the hegemony of the succeeding naval powers of Western Europe and that island's long history of defending Buddhism against Hinduist and Catholic attacks (cf. p. 3–4, 48). Less long and less deeply exposed to the political, cultural and ecclesiastical impact of Western Europe than had been the Ceylonese "Island of Buddhism," Buddhist Burma did not elaborate as radical and militant political apologetics. Yet along the same lines as in Ceylon, in the context of Buddhist modernism, in Burma too, developed the idea that the Buddhist message calls for a break with the established business society that "is purely acquisitive ..., the sickness of an acquisitive society," the competitive struggle for acquisition based on the "Self as the dominant factor," [4] with its material values, more radically than does any revolution, (cf. p. 40). Thus in 1948 the newspaper "The Burman" printed a letter which claimed that Buddhism goes much further than Marxism, since it aims *not only* at the abolition of social classes but at the overcoming of "being" as such. Therefore, according to this letter, Buddhism

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 431.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 593.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 5, 557.
[4] J. R. Jayewardene, *Buddhism and Marxism* (Colombo, 1957), p. 44.

is not subject to the present order of things. Its goal is "to reach beyond the dualism peculiar to this worldly order." But in as far as this "dualism of the worldly life" had remained unaffected by Buddhism's striving after the overcoming of transitoriness, Burma would profess besides Buddhism also socialism ("leftism").[1] This argument implied that Buddhist ethics can – but may not in themselves necessarily – inspire social reform. Inversely, the Buddhist writer U Kun Zaw pointed out that the solution of social problems, including the socialistic solutions, would presuppose the overcoming of the Self in the sense of the Buddhist Metta (cf. p. 65): "Unless the person has absolute love for his neighbor, it is against human nature to expect him to share the fruit of his toil with others. Hence love or myitta (Metta], as we Burmese say, is one of the essentials we must possess in order to achieve our object [the socialist state] ... Anybody seriously thinking of *building* the heavenly world "Lawka Neikban" [Lokka Nibban] knows how essential it is to overcome the self ..." [2] As Burmese socialism's Lokka Nibban (cf. p. 170) presupposes the overcoming of the urge of acquisition, selfish acquisitiveness being the effects of the Illusion of the Self, the socialist goal of economic welfare was thought to depend on the overcoming of the Illusion of the Self. On the other hand, the socialistic state of economic welfare was to contribute to this Buddhism goal of meditation to overcome attachment (cf. p. 172). In that sense Marxism was meant to provide an economic methodology for Buddhism. U Ba Swe, leader of the Burmese Socialist Party, Minister of Defense and subsequent Prime Minister of Burma, said in 1950, in a speech before the Burmese Trade Union Congress, that his acquaintance with Marxist ideology had strengthened his Buddhist convictions:

"As [I] pry [hcu' hcu'] more and more into Marxist ideology ..., I come more and more to acquire the true Buddhist way: I come to be convinced of the exalted Buddhist law; [I] come to [have] a great veneration for the exalted Buddhist attributes. Together with this, and by means of a correct view and teaching and fulfilling the law of Buddhism, a person would also have no hardships [hpou] to become studiously [an adherent] of Marxist ideology ..." [3]

As the Buddhist aim is the overcoming of *universal* suffering and the Marxist aim is the overcoming if *economic* suffering, Marxism at one

[1] May Aung's letter, printed in *The Burman* of July 6, 1948.
[2] U: Kun Zaw, Speech broadcast over Radio Rangoon, "Wanted an Ideology," in: *The Burman* of November 11, 1948.
[3] U: Ba Swe-i, *Bama to hlan yei: hniṇ Bama lou'tha: lu-dụ* (Rangoon, 1955), pp. 27f.; E. Sarkisyanz, "Marxism and Asian cultural traditions," in: *Survey* (London), No. 43 (August, 1962), p. 64.

time came to be accepted in Buddhist Burma as a *partial* or lower truth:

"If this Marxist Abhidhamma is separated [from Buddhism], it would be found to retain characteristics [and] nature of a lower plane. This Marxist Abhidhamma [philosophy] is distinguished [by a] mundane approach. It gives abundance [pyeị wạ -Judson's *Burmese-English Dictionary*, p. 666] to the aggregate of elements that constitute the body [you' -Judson, p. 844, the Pâli *rupa* of Theravâda philosophy]. The Buddhist Abhidhamma exceeds in contrast [by its] approach [to] freedom from all kamma [Lo:kou'tara -Judson, p. 927]. It qualifies [pyeị wạ -Cornyn, *Burmese Glossary*, p. 95] the mind for the [liberation from] existences through transmigrations resulting from deeds [and causing] suffering. It can be said that it gives liberation and release from the existences throughout transmigrations. After that, it is found that these two Abhidhammas stand and remain connected [and] related one to the other ....[1]

"If, in accordance with what I reported, Marxist ideology can give material satiation [pyeị wạ], [it] gives this without satisfaction to the Mind, [which] still cannot be reached [merely by material satiation]. Now, at the present time, men are lost in thoughts because of ... concern over food, because of concern over clothing, because of concern over shelter. [They]cannot reflect about the matter of Aging, [the phenomena of Impermanence]. Likewise they cannot see the matter of Disease, also they remain unable to free themselves from the fact of Death. [But] coming to obtain satiation for the corporeal frame [you' peyị wạ -Judson, p. 844] by means of distributing [material well-being, one] shall be able to meditate [over] Aging, Disease and the fact of Death, breast to breast [confronting them face to face]. Reflections over these phenomena cannot be clearly answered by the Marxist Abhidhamma [philosophy]. [Marxist] knowledge about the World of Impermanence [lo: kạ da' pyin-nya] cannot answer clearly these ponderings. [Only] the Buddhist Abhidhamma would give clear answers to them. When men ponder [over] this, [in order] not to decompose [ma-qu], they may observe the Buddhist Precepts. Thus, seeking satisfaction for the Mind, one wins Release and Liberation. And one can seek to become free from the [present and future] States of Existence." [2]

"Particularly this Marxist Abhidhamma [philosophy] and the Buddhist Abhidhamma are not contradictory [to each other]. Very definitely speaking, [they are] not only similar: these two Abhidhammas [philosophies] are a thing of one nature." [3]

To be received by Buddhists as "Our Abhidhamma" (philosophical part of the Buddhist Canon) was one of the aspirations of even totalitarian Marxist propaganda.[4] In the heydays of Communist Marxist influences in the late 1940's, some Thakins interpreted Communism in the context of their Buddhism. They claimed that "Buddhism is the most scientific religion in the world, its principles are commu-

[1] U: Ba Swe-ị, *Bama to hlan yei: hniṇ Bama lou'tha: lu-dụ*, p. 28.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 44–45.
[3] U: Ba Swe-ị, *Bama to hlan-yei: hniṇ Bama lou'tha: lu-dụ* (Rangoon, 1955), p. 27.
[4] Thein Pe, "*Over the Ashes: A play about resurgent Burma*" (Bombay, 1945), quoted by F. Trager (Editor), *Marxism in Southeast Asia*, p. 263.

nistic." [1] Such associations referred to the general ideal of overcoming Suffering, economic suffering through Marxism, universal suffering through Buddhism. Thus, the above-quoted ex-Minister U Ba Yin wrote in 1948 that "Buddhism is Communistic" ; it rejects any kind of domination and exploitation.[2]

"Some countries are trying to experiment with that classless society with varying degrees of success and at the cost of much money, labor, blood and lives. But if you really want to see a classless society which has not been forged by blood and iron but which is the result of natural growth and which stands in peace and harmony, visit a Burmese village and see the society there which is older than Communism ... All people [there] belong to the same class, or in other words, there is a classless society." [3]

Buddhist Burma was claimed to have achieved "unconsciously" the equalitarian state, "so far as this can be achieved" – long before Marxist ideology of class struggle, expansion by force and repression of individual liberty.[4] In this sense U Ba Yin wrote that "the Burman in the villages is by nature, by tradition and by his religion, a communist and it is therefore *not* necessary to introduce alien ideology into the Burmese village." [5] Accordingly, he emphasized that Communism as Marxism should be absolutely rejected.[6]

Thus, the modernistic thesis that Buddhism contains within itself socialistic values was accepted by prominent Burmese critics of Marxism as an argument against the necessity of Marxist innovations – and by Marxists as an argument in favor of their ideology. Similarly, the thesis that materialistic philosophy had been anticipated in early Buddhism – one of the "nationalistic" claims of Buddhist modernism, countering notions about Oriental inferiority – has repeatedly served as an argument for and also against Marxism. It was in the latter sense that U Ba Yin saw in modern materialism a version of Buddha's theory about matter [7] and claimed that Buddhism "knows more about

[1] U Tun Pe, *Sun over Burma* (Rangoon, 1949), pp. 36f.
[2] *The Burmese Review*, October 14, 1948; cf. G. P. Malalasekera & K. N. Jayatilleke, *Buddhism and the Race Question* (UNESCO Pamphlet: Paris, 1958), p. 72.
[3] Maung Maung, *Burma's Teething Time* (Rangoon, 1949), pp. 5f.
[4] F. Story, *Buddhism answers the Marxist challenge* (Rangoon, 1953), p. 49.
[5] U Ba Yin (Meiktila), *Our Fight for Freedom* (unpublished MS, used by courtesy of its author) Chapter V, p. 1.
[6] *The Burmese Review* of October 14, 1948.
[7] Actually, the now extinct Sarvâstivâdin (Vaibhâṣika) School of Prome's early Hînayâna Buddhism taught that the material phenomena were real but that the ego and the soul were not real, a kind of "positivistic realism." Cf. A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule* (Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Vol. XXXVIII: Paris/ Saigon, 1955), p. 206.

Matter than some modern scientists and materialists," so that if science is to make rapid progress, the facts of "Buddhist materialism (sic) would have to be applied." [1] In contrast, the Buddhist abbot U Okkata (Taun-twin:–Gyi: Sayadaw), attributing to Gautama Buddhas epistemology (which denied that the Self is real) a primacy of Matter,[2] saw in the "service to the Poor" "a service to the Buddha." [3] His associate, the Abbot U Pa Mauk Kha of the U Yin Tauk Monastery, told the writer that "politics is Buddhism and Buddhism is politics," pointing out that, according to the Buddhist prophecies about the future Golden Age, the satisfaction of material wants also would overcome Greed (lobha); the overcoming of Greed would destroy Attachment, and the overcoming of Attachment would liberate man for the goal of Nirvana, "the eternal rest." [4] Within the Burmese Samgha, there was an "Association of Marxist Monks"; in such circles the advent of Socialism was allegedly welcomed as the dawn of the age of the Cakkavattî and of the coming Buddha Mettaya.[5] In Northern Thailand, if not also in Burma, rural rumors had identified earlier "the spiritual world of Buddha" with the "world of common ownership and inexhaustible wealth" in a Communist sense.[6] During the Marxist ascendency in Burma some of the Thakins' proselytising aimed not so much at Nirvana as at the so-called "modern Nirvana – the Sovietized Burma." [7]

Nirvana is too abstract a goal to have attracted the main aspirations of *popular* Buddhism.[8] For this there was evidence even during the medieval culmination period of Buddhist Burma (cf. p. 71) and much more at the time of the secularizing trends of the twentieth century. It was not Nirvana, it was not the ultimate goal of the Buddhist quest that exercised the most effective mass appeal. Much more popular stages of Buddhist eschatology were happier future lives in paradises

[1] U Ba Yin, "Buddha's Way to Democracy and Peace," in: *The Burman and Pictorial News Supplement*, March 29, 1954, p. 9.
[2] Oukkahta Taun twin: ci: Sayadaw, *Kaba Abhidhamma le' swe* (Rangoon, 1959), pp. 105f.
[3] Taun-twin: ci: Sayadaw Athin Oukkahta yei:, *Kappa pya thana* (Rangoon? n.p., n.d.), title page; Buddha-dakka thou-i, *Dhamma-setkya Pa-li ane' amei: apyei hniṇ tagwa thadin:...* (Taung-dwin-gyi: Burma, n.d.) title page.
[4] Interview with Sayadaw U: Po Mauk Kha of the U: Yin Tauk Kyoung:, Rangoon, July 8, 1959.
[5] Walter Persian, "Religionspolitische Krisis des Buddhismus," in: *Europa Archiv*, VI, No. 23 (December 5, 1951), p. 4546 (sic).
[6] Virginia Thompson & Richard Adloff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1950), pp. 56f. As Dr. Thompson kindly informed me, this information was taken from the *Bangkok Times*, but I do not know from which number of this newspaper.
[7] U Tun Pe, *Sun over Burma* (Rangoon, 1949), pp. 36f.
[8] Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. II (Tübingen, 1921), p. 262.

– or on earth under more prosperous conditions. A future life in happier worlds, which for scriptural Buddhism is only a stage in endless Change or a step in the ultimate Release, and material utopia in a future Perfect Society (cf. p. 90f.), which in the canonic and post-Ashokan Buddhist tradition is only an auxiliary means for the pursuit of Nirvana, in modern folk Buddhism appears to be frequently taken as an end in itself. In twentieth century *popular* Buddhism material well-being is frequently thought of not – or not only – as a means for the achievement of Nirvana but also as a goal in itself.

In the canonic tradition, the ideal Buddhist world state of the future only creates conditions to enable every being to save *itself* from Suffering (cf. p. 56). Ultimately deliverance from Suffering is left to the "individual's" will: The Theravâda Buddhist methodology of Universal Liberation is "existential" (in the sense of its immanentist eschatology), not deterministic nor dependent on Grace. It is precisely this non-theistic character of Buddhist salvation that makes it less authoritarian than the post-Hegelian deterministic Marxist methodology of liberation from economic suffering. Both Buddhism and Marxism are comprehensive methodologies for the overcoming of suffering, the former by psychological, the latter by sociological means of applied insights into causality. But the Buddhist quest for liberation is by far more comprehensive than the Marxist quest in the sense of what it aims to overcome: Profit motivation and capitalistic acquisitiveness that Marxism strives to overcome are only a particular instance of Attachment and of Consciousness of the Self that Buddhism aspires to conquer. From the classical Buddhist standpoint, the very craving for wealth, both the "conservative" *attachment* to wealth already possessed *and* the "proletarian" *desire* to acquire property not yet possessed, spring from the delusion that the ego (the self which craves) is real.[1]

Thus, recent Burmese official polemics against Communist Marxism emphasized that a mechanical prohibition of acquisitive greed, a government prohibition of private accumulation, has not produced any less worldly or more spiritual society in the Soviet Union – and that the restriction of Greed has not reduced Hate and Delusion, the other two Immoral States.[2] Just as Burmese Marxism tended to

[1] Po Yarzar [U Ba Yin], "Letters to a Communist Nephew. Letter IX," in: *The Burmese Review*, January 10, 1949.
[2] Union of Burma, Ministry of Information & Ministry of Defense, *Dhammântarya* (*Buddhism in Danger*) (Rangoon, 1959), p. 37.

emphasize that it was restating the truths of Buddha, so did official polemics against Communism maintain that its aberrations were repetitions of errors that Buddha had already refuted.[1] That the Burmese Communists had come to repeat them was attributed "in the first place ... to an imperfect understanding of Buddhism, and in the second to slavish veneration for Western materialism." Contrary to these Burmese Communists, who had fallen away from Buddhism out of sterile imitation, the Atheism and Materialism of the West were credited with independent inquiry and intellectual emancipation [2] (from non-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist authorities). That to the satisfaction of material needs Marxism could possibly contribute, this was not directly denied even in these anti-Communist polemics of the Burmese Army's Psychological Warfare Department. But it was reiterated that "there are still spiritual needs to be satisfied and for these Marxism does not have the answer nor can science fully satisfy them. It has been pointed out that only Buddhist philosophy can provide an answer for such spiritual liberation. And that only when there is satisfaction of spiritual needs can solace in life be found. And that, only then, can liberation from this mundane world be found." [3]

Thus, the above-quoted thesis of Ba Swe (cf. p. 196f.), formerly Minister of Defense, were directed by the Army's Psychological Warfare Department against the doctrines of Thakin Soe (cf. p. 168). In 1959 they were presented under the motto "Dhammântaraya: Buddhism In Danger" (from Communism). Buddhism has been for the Burmese people the historical rationale of their state: To defend endangered Buddhism, the exemplary kings of old Ceylon had fought against Hindu invaders. When, in 1885, Burma's last king appealed to the people to resist the British invaders, it was in the name of the defense of endangered Buddhism (cf. p. 8). It was in the name of defending Buddhism that the independence movement of the 1920's and 1930's rallied the Burmese people. Now the Burmese Communists had in the course of the civil war (for instance in 1950) confiscated lands of Buddhist monasteries and publicly humiliated Buddhist monks.[4] Still, in 1959, neither the Buddhist Order as a whole nor even the most influential monks would take a political position on the Army's behalf. The majority of the Burmese monkhood reiterates the

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 30: The opinions of Ajita, a contemporary of Gautama Buddha, and of the "Niyata-michaditthis."
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[4] *The Burmese Post* of May 24, 1950.

medieval scholasticism of Theravâda Buddhism and hardly participates in the modernistic reinterpretation of the Ashokan lay ethos. Such reinterpretations, on the whole, tended to remain a lay affair. The monastic Samgha as an institution (individual monks notwithstanding) abstained from taking ideological positions in political controversies. Characteristic for the present attitude of Burma's Buddhist monkhood, confronted by political crisis, remains a declaration which Sayadaw U Nanda Thami, Abbot of the Sasana Linkar Monastery, made in 1949. In it he states that, as a member of the Buddhist monastic community, he has had no interest in the political situation of the country or in party politics.[1] This attitude of political passivity stands out in sharp contrast to the former leading role of Burma's Samgha in the country's politics.[2]

On the other hand, individual monks and particularly modernistic Buddhist lay thinkers repeatedly attributed to imported materialism the blame for apathy and even antipathy against Buddhist values. Thus the Burmese monk and philosopher U Kelatha emphasized in the summer of 1949 that Marxism, with its materialistic contempt for the overcoming of Impermanence, was a continuous threat to Buddhism.[3] It was one of the objectives of the Buddhist Central Organization for the Union of Burma to combat intellectual inroads of Communist materialism.[4] However, such materialistic attitudes towards human problems are frequently seen in Buddhist Burma as a feature common to the acquisition ethos of both Communism and Capitalism; they are seen as important factors in the threat of a third world war. In line with Buddhist modernism (cf. p. 203f.), this has been frequently expressed in the Burmese press.[5] In Burma as in Ceylon, Buddhist modernism responded to the polarization of the industrialized world into Communist and Anti-Communist blocs by claims of Buddhism's mission for contemporary humanity.

Buddhist social values were thus invoked in a Rangoon broadcast:

> The Mingala Sutta has led us to remain in a lowly condition, humble in one's demeanour, not seeking to be conspicuous or important in the eyes of the world – but behind apparent insignificance, to let one's mind climb high above all

[1] *The Burman* of April 29, 1949.
[2] Cf. R. van der Mehden, "The changing pattern of Religion and Politics in Burma," in: R. Sakai (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1961* (Lincoln, 1961), pp. 63f., 72.
[3] *The Burman* of July 31, 1949. Cf. Brohm, p. 365, citing *New Times of Burma*, Sep. 18, 1951.
[4] Summary of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's Speech delivered in Parliament on 3rd of October 1950, in support of the Union of Burma "Buddha Sasana Council Act," in: *The Light of the Dhamma*, No. I (Rangoon, 1952), pp. 31f.
[5] For instance, by U: Thananda in: *The Burman* of February 4, 1950.

wordly power and glory. That is why we laugh at the westerners who used to look down on our little bamboo huts. We are born to plain living and high thinking, just as we are born democrats.[1]

The Buddhist message for the world is seen as a Middle Way between the two 'isms, aspiring to mediate between the extremes of the Cold War: "We in the East are convinced that only through clearer knowledge of the fundamental spiritual values of existence can international understanding be reached. We believe in a Way of life which I may be permitted to call the Middle Way and in which the rule of the moral law founded on firm faith in the 'oneness' of human life would hold sway ..." [2]

Even the outright anti-socialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics by U Tun Hla Oung saw the Buddhist Middle Way as an intermediate position *between* Capitalism and Communism. "Burma can give a lead to the rest of the world and prove that the wisdom of the great Sage of the East and his moral influence can help to save it and the world from the appalling disaster threatened by the conflict between capitalistic and communistic powers ..." [3] Similarly, even such an anti-socialistic association as the ephemeral Buddhist Democratic Party of 1959/60 opposed both Capitalism and Communism.[4] In 1961, the "Guardian Magazine," reputed to be close to the viewpoint of the Burmese Army formulated such philosophical neutralism in the following words:

"It is a strange and curious thing: although my enemies and I fight, two cold warriors that we are, we have factors in common ... Both of us self-righteous, materialists, imperialists, interventionists ... Only our catch-slogans differ: I operate on liberty, my enemy on equality. The result is that there is no fraternity in the world." [5]

In the context of the ideological controversies of the Cold War, Buddhist Burma on the whole tended to emphasize the partial nature and the one-sidedness of both materialist Marxist and utilitarian Capitalistic values.

[1] U Nyo Mya, "Mingala Sutta and modern civilization," in: Union of Burma, Ministry of Information, *Burma Speaks* (Rangoon, 1950), p. 19; Cf. *Mahâ Maṅgala Sutta* (*Sutta-Nipâta*, II, iv), in: *SBE*, Vol. X, ii (1881), pp. 43f.

[2] D. S. Senanyake, "On the 'Middle Path' in Politics," in: *Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. V, No. 1/4 (July/October, 1955 & January/April, 1956), p. 114.

[3] U: Tun Hla Oung, "The Economics of the Middle Way" (Discussion at the Buddha Sasana Samagana, May 10, 1959: unpublished typescript, used by courtesy of Dr. W. King of Grinell College), pp. 2, 4f., 9.

[4] Dr. W. King's interview with U Tun Sein, Secretary of the Buddhist Democratic Party, kindly communicated by Dr. King.

[5] Maung Lu Pain, in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), VIII, No. 5 (May, 1961), p. 27.

And Buddhist modernism tended to stress that Buddhism contains within its own traditions the solution of the world's social problems. Aung San had asked that Buddhism give its message, "to the people, not only of Burma but of the world, ... one of love and brotherhood ..., the message that the world also needs to hear and heed increasingly these days." [1]

In this sense Thado Maha Thray Sithu U Chan Htoon, at one time Burma's Attorney-General, said (1950) that

... Buddhism is the *only* ideology which can give peace to the world and save it from war and destruction. I found there that the western countries are longing for Buddhism now. What is the cause of it? They find in Buddhism the real truth which can save man from the endless sorrow and suffering into which they have been plunged by following ideologies which they have now found out to be false and inadequate. The world is now full of greed, hate and delusion which those false ideologies encourage ... For that reason *the peoples of the world are looking up to Buddhism to save the world.*[2]

In 1952 U Win, Minister of National Planning, Culture and Religion said in the Burmese parliament:

If today the whole ... great world is ... following .... the fire of Greed, the fire of Hate, the fire of Delusion, are not such fires and burning desires to consume countries arising because of man's craving for things, craving for armed strength? For this reason the Self is [after] things and is not content, and cannot be satisfied. One country and another country come into contact, countries invade territories imperialistically with great force. In that way the small powers inside of one's own sphere are forcibly and unlawfully annexed and crushed, finding (themselves) ... in various miseries.[3]

At the time of the great king Ashoka ... military might was in a position of letting the world shake and perturb, and was capable of victory. [But] consolidating the provinces (that he had been able to take in the struggle) through moral enlightenment ... was enough victory and thus over the great Dhamma-

[1] Aung San, inaugural address at the A.F.P.F.L. Convention, January, 1946, in: Maung Maung (Editor), *Aung San of Burma* (Hague, 1962), pp. 127f.

[2] *The Light of the Dhamma*, Vol. I, No. 1 (Rangoon, 1952), p. 33. The idea of Buddhism's mission to save modern humanity was particularly developed in contemporary Ceylon, the Island of the Dhamma (cf. above, p. 3f.), even before the victory of a Buddhist-Marxist alliance in the Election of 1956. Senanyake, Ceylon's late Prime Minister, had declared, on occasion of his country's independence anniversary, over the radio that this Island which had preserved Buddhism in its pure shape would be destined to show to the world the true values of life: *Ceylon News Letter* (mimeographed), Colombo, February 9th, 1951, p. 2. In Ceylon there had even been illusions that after its victory in China, in 1949, Communism would be absorbed by East Asian Buddhist traditions, so that "this synthesis of Buddhism and Marxism should succeed in conquering the mind of Russia, and replace the present Materialist system in that region": *Dharma-Vijaya (Triumph of Righteousness) or the Revolt in the Temple* (Colombo, 1953), pp. 7, 9.

[3] Myan-ma Naingan-to Tain: pyei pyu Hlu' to (Pa-li-man), *Suddatha-manyi la hkan hma' tan:*, Sa-twei 14 -asi: awe: ahma' 24 (1951 khu-ni' O'to-ba la 1 ye') (Rangoon, 1952), p. 1258.

pronouncing King [Ashoka] came a consciousness of remorse ... He said, ... "our victories do not give protection against Death." In order to attain ... the inner victory, it is urgent to increase and elevate peace and the happiness of the human multitudes ... Accordingly, he advanced the great, exalted Buddha's Community and in the same measure peace and happiness for the world.[1]

In accordance with the saying [of the] exalted Buddhist Law, happiness and delight [are] obtained only [by] learning Wisdom [with] steadiness of endeavour, knowledge, higher instruction. The foundation of our knowledge is obtained by unanimous meditative exercise and spiritual insight. If one cultivates meditative exercises, one can arrive even at the cool peace of Nirvana.[2]

In the same spirit it was said in a parliamentary speech in 1955:

If it is inquired about the world of man as to what is [the cause of] hardship, of the desire for wealth in order to be happy without toil, the task is to teach the people of the world that man should meditate about Birth, the Irreality of the Self, of the Mind, [and] the nature of Desire. Some incorrect notions cannot be transcended because knowledge about the totality of wisdom [of the] Lord [Buddha] is lost: Lokka Nibban is on behalf of worldly peace only. The other-worldly future state of freedom from all Kamma [lo: kou'tara -Cornyn, *Burmese Glossary*, p. 148], Nirvana, is for Spiritual [lo:kou'tara] peace and happiness ...[3]

Buddhism was to stimulate such qualities that "the country in which such qualities preponderate ... will be a model to the whole world, will be a paradise on earth ..." [4]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1264.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1265.
[3] Pyi-daun-zụ Myan-ma Naingan-to, *Pa-li-man Pyi-dhu Hlu'to nyi la hkan hma'tan*: Sa-twei 4 – asi: awe: ahma' 3 –1315 hku ni' –Wagaun-la̤ hsan: 9 ye' (Rangoon, 1955), pp. 361f.
[4] Nyanatiloka Thera, "Influence of Buddhism on a people," in: *Light of the Dhamma*, I, No. 4 (July, 1953), p. 32.

CHAPTER XXVI

POLITICAL EXPECTATIONS AROUND THE 2500TH YEAR OF THE BUDDHIST ERA

Such ultimate goals of the Buddhist state could never be consistently realized in the past (cf. p. 93) but have remained an ideal, the realization of which folk tradition anticipates from a glorious future. Such expectations became to a considerable extent focused on the attainment of independence. The reëstablishment of independent Theravâda Buddhist states, Ceylon, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia fell within the decade preceeding the 2500th year of the Buddhist Era, the 2500th anniversary of Gautama Buddha's Nirvana (1956/57). With the 2500th year of Buddhism became connected vague expectations held among the Buddhist peoples awaiting the advent of universal harmony. A Sinhalese monk wrote that "in accordance with an old tradition, there is in the Buddhist countries a firm belief that the great renovation of Religion and a great expansion of its Law shall come 2500 years after the Pari-Nirvana of the Buddha ... The year 2500 of the Buddhist Era is to mark the beginning of this renovation." [1] According to a related tradition current amongst the Sinhalese, there shall, when Buddhism will have completed 2500 years, be established a Buddhist state in Ceylon: "Then, it is said, the faith will shine forth in glory and be a beacon to the whole world, and Laṇkâ [Ceylon] itself will be prosperous and joyful." [2]

The decline of Buddhism and the demand for a Buddhist state became a rallying cry in the Ceylonese election of 1956; the victory of a Buddhist-Marxist coalition resulted in Ceylon's turn to Neutralism.[3] The underlying socialistic re-interpretation of Buddhism (cf. p. 123f.) was most radically expressed in the above quoted manifesto-like book

[1] G. Coedès, "Le 2500e Anniversaire du Bouddha," in: *Diogène*, No. 15 (July, 1956), pp. 116, 129.
[2] [Vijayavardhana], *Dharma-Vijaya or the Revolt in the Temple*, p. 3.
[3] W. H. Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton, 1960), pp. 342ff., 397f.

"Revolt in the Temple, the Victory of Dhamma," which one of the most prominent Ceylonese abbots, Pahamune Sri Sumangala, Maha Nayaka Thera of the Malwatta Monastery of Kandy, called "a blueprint for the next 2500 years .... We see the wrongs in our present social order and we believe that this work indicates both a way out of them and a way in, to a new Dhamma Samaja," to a new Society based on the Buddhist Dhamma.[1] Ideologically comparable was the Sri Ariya Metrai Party which was founded, in January, 1957, in Thailand by an ex-official of Pridi Phanomyong (cf. p. 176). This Leftist party was named after the future Buddha (Mettaya) and the ideal society associated with his advent [2] (cf. p. 90f.). The Mettaya (Maitreya) expectation had been important in medieval Burmese epigraphy (cf. p. 63f.). Mettaya's image (very similar to Gautama's) is still common in Burma. Even the celebrated Mahâmuni image (now at Mandalay) possibly represents Mettaya.[3] Yet Mettaya does not seem to occupy a very prominent place in the living Buddhism of contemporary Burma,[4] in spite of some surviving expectations of "the future Araya Mettaya whom to behold the exalted prophetic intimation deigns to give sublime leave." [5] Mettaya, the Fifth Buddha was strikingly symbolized by the Fifth entrance, the Fifth Bodhi Tree and the Fifth Lotus of the World Pagoda of the Burmese capital.[6] It was built for the sixth Buddhist World Council which assembled for 1956, the 2500th year of the Buddhist era. In 1953 it could be reported from Burma that "... there is some belief even here that the 2500th anniversary of the Mahaparinibbana of the Buddha will mark a great Revival of Buddhism and there is some feeling that the "Golden Age" for which all men long, may dawn with this." [7] 2500 years have long been taken for half the life span of the Buddhist community: "The [duration] of the Buddhist community's one half [having passed], a good Ruler's [new] line [shall come]." Thus reads a famous prophecy ["Sâsana ta-we 'min: kaun: ta se'"].[8] "In the year 1314 [of the Bur-

[1] *Dharma-Vijaya*, pp. 15f.

[2] J. H. Brimmell, *Communism in Southeast Asia. A political analysis* (London, 1959), p. 350.

[3] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma* (Amsterdam, 1936), pp. 42, 43; Annals of the *Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1909, p. 10 were not accessible.

[4] G. Appleton, *Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta, 1943: Longmans & Green, *Burma Pamphlets*, No. 3), p. 49.

[5] *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku. hni' ka za yue Sâsana pyu yan lu pyi twin yau' shi ne- ne-tho Buddha-Yaza Etaruppati* (*mu pain shin Myamma ei: tha we*) (Rangoon, no date), p. 75.

[6] Ernst Benz, *Buddhas Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens* (München, 1963), pp. 91f.

[7] Personal communication by U Ohn Ghine (Mettacittena), former Editor of the *Light of the Dhamma* of Rangoon, dated December 30, 1952.

[8] U Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (Editor), Saya U: Po U:, *Buddha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik* hniṇ Co Hla, *Than-hcou a'hpyei* (Rangoon, 1317/1955), p. 127.

mese Era: 1952 A.D.] everywhere in the land of Burma, everywhere in the world, is to come [forth] a good, noble ruler to set up strong natural [da'] pillars of the Buddhist community." [1] U Nu, initiator of the Buddhist World Council, referred to the belief of Burmese Buddhists that the 2500th year of Buddhism is to be the most auspicious since its expansion.[2] During its Jayanti celebrations, organized by U Nu in Burma's capital, 2500 men at a sign dropped their dress of a uniform color and donned the Yellow garb of Buddhist monks,[3] not unlike the countless soldiers of the ideal Cakkavattî Ruler who at the advent of the future Buddha are to become monks, replacing battle dress with the yellow robe.

U Nu's Burma of 1956, celebrating the completion of two and a half millennia since the Buddha's Nirvana, had overcome the worst crisis of her civil war without having yet restored full internal peace. To the calamities of Burma's Insurrections were supposed to apply the traditional prophecies, "to warn, remind and direct" how to avert the various disasters.[4] That U Nu's government had from Rangoon successfully held out against the insurgents (at Insein) was seen in the light of such prophecies.[5] Such traditional prophecies (cf. p. 9) were in 1959 explained to the writer to mean that Buddhism would spread throughout the world as humanity would be peacefully unified in an ideal world state under the perfect Buddhist ruler Setkya Min (cf. p. 152). This universal state of Setkya Min was for my informant specifically associated with political and social revolution; at his advent – which was to take place "within six years" – the people were to overthrow the corrupt governments, parties and politicians, and make him their chief. The power of his Dhamma would create prosperity and wealth for all (cf. p. 153) – assured through the wise legislation of Setkya Min. This vision, communicated to the writer by an astrologer in one of the pagodas of Mandalay, described a kind of Buddhist socialism, perhaps not without influences of Burmese popularizations of western science-fiction.[6]

Influences of modern rationalism are evident in comments that the

[1] Hpoun-ji: caun: tha: Maung Than Nani, *Bo: Bo: Aung Thaik* (Rangoon, 1316/1954), p. 69.
[2] The Nation (Rangoon), December 1, 1952, cited by H. Tinker, *The Union of Burma* (London, 1957), p. 173.
[3] Ernst Benz, Lecture at Freiburg im Breisgau, July 3, 1962.
[4] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein:'s Preface to his edition of Saya U: Po U:, *Buddha-Yaza Min: Setkya Thaik* hniṇ Co Hla, *Than-jou a'hpyei*, pp. 2–3.
[5] *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku. hni'* . . ., p. 93.
[6] Interview at Mandalay, September 2, 1959.

Setkya Min of the Konbaung dynasty has been actually killed (cf. p. 154) and that the future Setkya Min would be simply a good ruler and not necessarily of dynastic descent. Modernist rationalizations of the ideal social order that he is to bring may be seen in the explanation that under him "Kamma, intellect and labor alone" would determine prosperity. Yet this prosperity is still to be assured by the ethical conduct and Buddhist observances of the ideal ruler (cf. p. 49f.): Through Dhamma alone and not through force (by which earlier rulers, popularly identified with the future Buddha, had achieved their conquests) would Setkya Min achieve universal domination.[1] "... At Insein District, ... for treading the Victory Soil, this great lord is the genuine Buddha Setkya Lord." [2] The 2500th year of Buddhism was to be "the time to long for the Promotor of the Sâsana," of the Buddhist Community.[3] He was to promote the Buddhist community and the Buddhist religion in the tradition of Burma's pre-British rulers.[4] It was U Nu whom popular imagination most freguently identified with the ideal Buddhist ruler expected about the 2500th year of the Buddhist Era, "the time to long for the Promotor of the Sâsana." [5] He was believed to become a Buddha in a future life. U Nu was said to seek "the re-sacralizing of the government as significantly advancing Burma along the road either to a Lokka Nibban (perfect world ...) or ... into greater readiness for the Maitreya Buddha, the coming Buddha, in whose near advent some Burmese believe." [6]

[1] Interview with U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (cf. p. 208, fn. 4), Rangoon, August, 1959.
[2] *Sâsana Thakkayaza 2472 hku hni*' ... (as p. 207, fn. 5), p. 74.
[3] U: Maung Gyi: Do Thein: (Editor), Saya U: Po U:, *Buddha-Yaza Min*: *Setkya Thaik*, p. 139.
[4] Speech of U Win, Minister for Home and Religious Affairs of the Union of Burma, delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Buddha Sâsana Organization on August 26, 1951: in *The Light of the Dhamma*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1952), pp. 25f.
[5] Personal interviews in Mandalay and Rangoon in the Summer and Autumn of 1959. The names of those who communicated to the writer this identification are withheld in their interest. Cf. Brohm, p. 394.
[6] Winston L. King, "Buddhism and political power," in: S. D. Browne (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1962* (Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, 1962), p. 17; R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, 1963), pp. 67, 220.

CHAPTER XXVII

BURMA'S SYNTHESIS OF TRADITION AND REVOLUTION. U NU'S BUDDHIST SOCIALISM

U Nu said about the welfare state aspirations of the Burmese people, after the achievement of independence, that they are "outbursts from their very hearts in the form of 'thanchat' songs." "... Our welfare state will be like the abode of nats" [1] ["devas," meaning the Paradise of Indra, prototype of the ideal state – cf. p. 81f.].

In the context of folk traditions, Independence was to usher in the ideal Buddhist society. In the tradition of Burma's folk-Buddhism, the power of the ideal ruler's observance of the Dhamma was to insure also economic welfare for the entire people (cf. p. 149). And Rains of Gold and Silver were symbolically shown during the celebrations of Burma's restored independence in 1948 – after which they were popularly expected to come at once: [2] According to old folk beliefs, showers of gold, silver and precious stones were to fall in the ideal Buddhist State – under Setkya Min (cf. p. 153) and in the reign of just and upright rulers in general. Under them, or whenever men illustrious for holiness and virtue shall flourish, the Padeytha (Wishing) Tree is expected to grow (cf. p. 57).[3] The political significance of these beliefs U Nu explained in the following words to the people:

You all did hear [how] people and classes lived in what is known as the Era of the Padeytha Tree [4] .... Verily, it is said [that] precious things were [then]

[1] U Nu's broadcast of May 16, 1953, in: Union of Burma, *Forward with the People. Translation of selected speeches of ... U Nu* (Rangoon, Ministry of Information, 1955), p. 18.

[2] U Nu's speech of September 28, 1949, in: U Nu, *From Peace to Stability. Transl. of selected speeches (Rangoon, 1951)*, p. 19; J. S. Furnivall, *An introduction to the political economy of Burma* (Rangoon, 1957), Introduction, p. "ax" (sic); Furnivall, *The governance of modern Burma* (New York, 1960), pp. 110f.; cf. U Saw Tun, Broadcast of May 26, 1949; Maung Maung, Broadcast, February 12, 1948, in: Union of Burma, Ministry of Information, *Burma Speaks* (Rangoon, 1950), pp. 106f., 21.

[3] Sangermano, *A description of the Burmese Empire*, p. 32; *Râjâvaliya*, p. 4.

[4] Thakin Nu-ị mein gun: 1950 hku zulain-la – 19 ye' a-za-ni neị twin cin: pa-tho lu-du asi: awei:ji mwe'-ca: tho Nain-gan-to Wun-gyi: hcou Thakin Nuị- mein gun: *Myan-ma Nain-gan Thadin: zin*, 1312 hku-ni' dutiya wa-zou-la hsan: 13 ye' (27–7–50), ahma' 26, sa-mye' hna 7.

attained and found plentifully. In the beginning of the World Cycle [Kaba], [when] the age of the Padeytha Tree had matured, the inhabitants of the world found on it enough perfect, healthy and comfortable things that were sufficient for them. These objects were obtained freely from the Padeytha Tree in its past season of blossoming [hki tun:] [1] .... As this great era arose, things were [simply] to be found inside and outside the earth. The women and men of that World Age found and used them without clinging to them.[2] .... They were not taken as individual property: only what one wanted for oneself was fetched and plucked as the immediate need for it arose.[3] ... In that bygone period the system of possessing private property did not exist: The male and female beings of that World Era picked simply up the things that existed. In that period they desired only what was necessary and took only as much as they used without clinging to it.[4] ... They were not to be sold for profit to be taken out of them. As men began to find the things that appeared, it occured to them to leave these objects, in accordance with nature, upon going away. There was abundance and satiation in that World Age.[5]

But that era passed its season of blossoming [toun:], the great World Age [6] .... As men found these objects, Greed came to them, [craving] to make the things they found on the Padeytha Tree their private property.[7] ... When the people of the world had obtained possessions, they developed Greed (Lobha), they came to calculate. Then they took [for themselves] more than was necessary, in excess of their own needs.[8] .... Then men pulled and plucked from each other to eat; a great evil system came into being. At the time in which this began, the great Padeytha Tree fell and disappeared.[9] .... And the Padeytha Tree fell and vanished and was lost. Men [were] befallen [by] clinging to misery up to this day.[10] .... There came the decline of that world cycle, a decline which followed the clinging [to possessions], alas, to this day.[11] ... And in that World Age the great Padeytha Tree vanished and disappeared. Thereafter the things obtained by the people of the world are not sufficient for their own use; to take care of their own needs they have been exerting their hands ever since. Thus it is said that the seeds of the state of existence in which the women and men of the world found an abundance of food and plenty to drink have come to be exhausted.[12] ...

Burma begins to think about growing what used to be called the Padeytha Tree, in accordance with this Era; our duty and responsibility does not lie elsewhere. In this Era people seek things in order to pursue profit and their mind does not cross over [towards Nirvana]. [But] it is [only] for the sake of

Typescript of the Burmese text supplied to the author by courtesy of the Union of Burma Information Department. On the Padeytha Tree cf. U: Po Sein-tyi, *Hpya'-thyi kan-pę hpon: to-gyi: thyi pyin-hnya kahtein can:* (Rangoon, 1252/1890), pp. 295f.

[1] U Nu's speech of June 13, 1948, in: *Thakin Nu, Meiṇ gun: mya:* (Rangoon, 1949), p. 108; Cf. E. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients. Sendungsbewusstsein und Chiliasmus des Ostens* (Tübingen, 1955), pp. 352f.

[2] Thakin Nu, *Meiṇ gun: mya:*, pp. 69f.

[3] Thakin Nu, *Mein gun: mya:*, p. 108 (Speech of June 13, 1948).

[4] Thakin Nu-ị meiṇ gun: 1950 hku zulain-la 19 ye'..., p. 7.

[5] Thakin Nu, *Mein gun: mya:*, pp. 69f.

[6] Thakin Nu-ị meiṇ gun: 1950 hku zulain-la 19 ye'..., p. 7.

[7] Thakin Nu, *Mein gun: mya:*, p. 108.

[8] Ibid., pp. 69f.

[9] U Nu, *Forward with the People* (as above, fn. 1, on page 210), p. 18.

[10] Thakin Nu, *Mein gun: mya:*, p. 108.

[11] Thakin Nu-ị meiṇ gun: 1950 hku zulain-la 19 ye'..., p. 7.

[12] Thakin Nu, *Mein gun: mya:*, pp. 69f.

this natural task [of pursuing Nirvana] that things should be held .... In that way the Padeytha Tree shall come to grow .... The era of the Padeytha Tree is to return triumphantly. Still, the successful action for the [restoration of the] Great Padeytha Tree, which disappeared and vanished, is deplored by the reactionaries. The people of the world have lived following the wrong road. How to come back to the correct road [leading] effectively towards the Great Era of the Padeytha Tree's return, this is conveyed to the great earthly world [Kaba-lokka] by the ideology called, accordingly, Leftist Ideology. Now the said leftist ideology is like something we hold to derive instructions ..., 'to make us capable to accomplish successfully the growing of the great Padeytha Tree in the great state of the Union of Burma ....[1] The ideology that, if victorious, would effect the return of the vanished and gone great Padeytha Tree to this World Age is the Leftist Ideology. In accordance with the aforesaid leftist ideology, private possession and property shall come into non-existence.[2] .... Therefore, what is called socialist ideology is, to say it briefly, not a thing to be feared, not an ideology to be detested and despised. Verily, the thing so called is the great ideology of effective teaching [for] the citizens of our Union [on] how to bring back successfully the Era of the vanished Padeytha Tree. At the present time I surely said enough for us to know sufficiently why we wish to establish a socialist state ....[3]

Social conflicts had made it necessary to establish a state, to preserve order, after the delusion of the Self had produced private property, according to the tradition invoked by U Nu. To head that first state, men were said to have unanimously elected a being called *Mahâthammada* ("the Great Unanimously Elected").[4] And this title of *(Mahâ)thammada*, "Great President," became in the new Burma one of the designations of the Head of State.[5]

Even more than such symbolic associations of the new Burma's parliamentary constitution, did its social welfare state elaborations receive Buddhist connotations. According to the Pyi-daw-tha ("Pleasant Royal Country") welfare state program of 1954, "the new Burma sees no conflict between the religious values and economic progress. Spiritual health and material well-being are not enemies: they are natural allies."[6] Most of the criticism of such welfare policies

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[3] Thakin Nu-ị meiṇ gun: 1950 hku zulain-la 19 ye'..., p. 7.

[4] A. Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*, p. 1004; Agañña Sutta (*Dîgha Nikâya*, XXVII), 20–21: transl. Rhys Davids, p. 88.

[5] Tet Toe's *English-Burmese Dictionary* (Rangoon, 1957), p. 1099.

[6] Union of Burma, Economic and Social Board, *Pyidawtha, the New Burma. A report from the Government to the people of the Union of Burma on our long-term programme for economic and social development* (Rangoon, 1954), p. 10; Cf. Union of Burma, Economic Planning Board, *Two-Year Plan of Economic Development for Burma* (Rangoon, 1948), p. 2; U Nu's speech of July 19, 1952, in: *The Burman*, July 21, 1952, p. 1 (and Editorial, p. 2); Burma, Ministry of Information, *Burma Weekly Bulletin*, I (1952), No. 18, pp. 2, 1; No. 19, pp. 3–6; No. 20, pp. 3–7; No. 21, pp. 3f.; President Ba U's speech on the fifth Independence Anniversary celebration, in: Burma, Ministry of Information, *Burma, The Fifth Anniversary*,

as land nationalization, even when coming from Buddhist monks like U Nye Ya, was not on Buddhist grounds.[1] Buddhist arguments against the Land Nationalization Act of 1948 were refuted by U Nu in a parliamentary speech, emphasizing that property has only a functional place, as means for the attainment of Nirvana (through meditation), and that the Class Struggle has arisen out of the illusion about the inherent value of property, so that the overcoming of this illusion would open the road to Nirvana through a perfect society. To show how the effects of economic want cause dissolution of society and moral and religious deterioration, U Nu quoted from the Cakkavattî Sutta of the Dîgha Nikâya (cf. p. 150), the prophecy attributed to Gautama Buddha in the following words:

Thus if property is not given to those without property much misery is caused, when much misery results then theft of property ... becomes rife. When there is theft on a huge scale, a large quantity of arms appear. When a large quantity of arms becomes available, a lot of murders take place. When there are a lot of murders, then there is much falsehood. When there is much falsehood then there is much slander ... giving rise to much covetousness and malice, which in turn lead to the holding of wrong views. When wrong views are prevalent then there arise on a large scale these three breaches of moral conduct ... When such offenses are very much in evidence, then the span of life of men diminishes ... When the life-span of mankind is only ten years, there will be a war of weapons in which men will kill one another for a whole week, treating one another as game deer, and their hands will hold sharp weapons with which they will slay their fellow-men ...[2]

U Nu explained that "if ... the correct views concerning property are not perceived, men become fiercely angry. Greed has risen like a fiercely burning fire. One by one has been endarkened, seeing little, killing and hitting [instead]. This great world came upon what has been called evil in Buddha's preaching."[3]

Surely, a systematic review to investigate and clarify would tell that the great world history, when recorded, is no other thing [but] an unbroken and very persistent struggle and battle between one class of men and [other] classes .... Concerning this great struggle, actually, in the light of my opinion it should be said ... that when one class of people was deluded, these masses were deluded [too], because they did not arrive at correct views concerning the world's

III, No. 2 (Rangoon, 1953), pp. v, vi; U Nu's speech on the sixth Independence Anniversary celebration, in: *Burma. The Sixth Anniversary*, IV (Rangoon, 1954), No. 2, pp. i, iv; Burma, *Information Bulletin of the Burmese Embassy in Washington*, IV, No. 4 (February 15, 1954), pp. 1of.

[1] Thayawadi U: Nye Ya Sayadaw, *Da dou pyi* (Rangoon, 1319/1957), pp. 108f.

[2] Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Agriculture, *The Land Nationalization Act, 1948* (Rangoon, 1950), p. 30 (Paragraph 36).

[3] U Nu's speech of October 11, 1948, in: Tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pali-man), *Myan-ma naingan-to tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man) satamanyi la hkan hma'tan*: Sa-twei 6 -asi: awe: ahma' 30 (1948 hku-ni' -O'to-ba la - 11 ye') (Rangoon, 1949), p. 1181 (Paragraph xxxv).

various rights to land. What are to be called correct views concerning the ... land rights? For this class and these masses among the world's inhabitants, what is [their] most important affair [lou'ngan]?* Both among this class or among these masses (or among the different inhabitants of the world), the most important affair, like no other, is to cross over the states of existence [into Nirvana] well and successfully, verily to toil on this task. To the various people, whenever they believe in the Four Noble Truths of the Moral Law, the effort for the task of arriving successfully in the Fruition of the path leading towards Nirvana is surely the most important task .... Indeed, it is to be said, lacking this insight ..., classes and masses, the deluded inhabitants of the world, cling to fields, fighting (over them), over elephants, horses, slaves. Clinging to such belongings ... envelopes into evil, ... produces the states of contention that confuses and surely exhausts ... The most important thing, the various actions toward reaching Nirvana, are [thereby] forgotten and not remembered.[1]

Property, whether it be in the form of lands, buildings, motor cars, steamships, pieces of diamonds or nuggets of gold, cannot confer more than five benefits, at the utmost, upon its owner or possessor. These five are: – (1) What is pretty to see with the eyes; (2) What is delightful to hear with the ear; (3) What is fragrant to smell with the nose; (4) What is savoury to taste with the tongue; and (5) What is nice to touch with the body. These are the only five benefits which material things can produce, apart from these, nothing else, no matter what kind of property it may be. Therefore, are these sense objects, *viz.*, pretty sight, delightful sounds, fragrant smell, savoury taste, and nice touch lasting or permanent? No! Now it is pretty to see and now it vanishes; now it is delightful to hear and now it vanishes; now it is fragrant to smell and now it vanishes; now it is savoury to taste and now it vanishes; now it is nice to touch and now it vanishes. None whatsoever is lasting or permanent.[2] These truly impermanent things are followed and great errors are reached; the various inhabitants of the world have forgotten to remember the most important task which is to reach the permanency of Nirvana .... [Instead] these impermanent things are sought after with very great tenacity ....[3]

Men have been chasing these transitory pleasures with a dogged tenacity of purpose mainly because of the reason that they hold false views regarding property. We have become men not to seek pretty sights, delightful sounds, fragrant smells, savoury tastes and nice touches, but above all to seek a way of deliverance from the whirlpool of Saṃsâra [cycle of rebirths], in the case of men who have faith in the Four Noble Truths .... If mankind would look upon material things with such right views in their true perspective, there would be no more cases of any group of men trying to hold sway over property, no more cases of exploitation, nor of any class of men oppressing the other. There cannot also be any more cases of warfare, viz., the rising of one class against another class, involving bloodshed.[4]

* Not to be rendered as "duty" -as is translated inexactly in Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Agriculture *The Land Nationalization Act, 1948* (Rangoon, 1950), p. 27 and quoted in E. Sarkisyanz, *Russland und der Messianismus des Orients* (Tübingen, 1955), p. 346, Footnote 26.

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 1178–1179 (Paragraphs xx-xxiv).

[2] Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Agriculture, *The Land Nationalization Act, 1948*, p. 27 (Paragraphs 25–26).

[3] U Nu's speech of October 11, 1948, in: Tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man), *Myan-ma naingan- to tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man) satamanyi lạ hkan hma'tan*: Sa-twei t -asi: awe: ahma' wo (1948 hku ni' –O'to-ba lạ -11 ye') (Rangoon, 1949), p. 1180, Paragr. xxvii.

[4] Government of the Union of Burma, *Land Nationalization Act*, 1948, p. 28 (Paragraphs 28, 30).

"In future the inhabitants of the world will not always lack such tenacious, good effort and pass through endless change emptily for no other reason. Wrong theory concerning these belongings [causes] men to cling to land, to fragrant flavor, to cling confusedly because of their not going after and looking for [the truth]. Men who believe in the Four Noble Truths, the Sublime Law, do empty the whirlpool of future existence in order to be liberated ...." [1] "Property is meant not to be saved, not for gains nor comfort. It is to be used by men to meet their needs in respect of clothing, food and habitation in their journey towards Nirvana ..." [2]

As to the surface of things, in accordance with this, the inhabitants of the world are to be able to see and find the correct view [on how] in this great world one group of men made sure to dominate property .... This pattern explains by what method and by what means [it is brought about that] the said class struggle shall be no more. According to Buddhist views, it is said that like the Four Great Elements aggregate, so do the Beings aggregate .... One by one [they] plundered [and] grabbed; men of one class extended perversely the dispute with men of another class [about] gathering and consuming. There was a separation [of classes] and class struggles took place. It is correct to blame this; indeed, nothing else [but suffering] was produced. The wrong views remained on the surface of things .... The correct view was not accepted. For one group of men went on dominating property. A large quantity was [thus] secured [by them]. Men perceived this and came to ... resist. This great world's history became but one thing, without interruption, and remained it: a great struggle taking place and persisting .... If the correct view concerning property is achieved, the bloody struggles between classes would not merely end [but in] this great world here the masters, the so-called slaves, class [distinctions], overworked toil, theft, fighting, deception, and so-called seduction practices too would [all] be eliminated .... To freedom from such calamities the great world shall ascend.[3]

Such visions of social harmony with human equality, when the hearts of men will be equal in the same disposition, "without difference between great and small," also occur in prophecies about Maitreya,[4] the Bodhisattva Mettaya.

Bodhisattva-like qualities of selfless abnegation were attributed to Aung San, the revolutionary founder of Burma's independence, in a memorial speech by U Nu: "[Among] human beings it is notable

[1] U Nu's speech of October 11, 1948, in: Tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man), *Myan-ma naingan-to tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man): satamanyi lạ hkan hma'tan*: Sa-twei 6 –asi: awe: ahma '30 (1948 hku ni' –O'to-ba lạ –11 ye') (Rangoon, 1949), p. 1180 (Paragraph xxviii).
[2] Government of the Union of Burma, *Land Nationalization Act, 1948*, p. 28 (Paragraph 29).
[3] U Nu's speech of October 11, 1948, in: Tain pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man), *Myan-ma naingan-to tain: pyei pyu Hlu'to (Pa-li-man) satamanyi lạ hkan hma'tan*: Sa-twei 6 –asi: awe: ahma '30 (1948 hku ni' –O'to-ba lạ – 11 ye') (Rangoon, 1949), pp. 1180f. (Paragraphs xxx, xxxi, xxxiii, xxxiv).
[4] E. Leumann, *Maitreya-Samiti: Das Zukunftsideal der Buddhisten* (Strassburg, 1919), p. 246.

[even] to plan acting as acted this martyr – who has been as the Man Under the Bodhi Tree [the Bodhisattva]. What is seen only about Lord Buddha, [that] in history we recognize in a Rahat [1] who boldly offered and courageously gave up his life-blood. Into the history of upright beings enters uprightly the Martyr who exceeds the royal line of the Kings, the possessor of superhuman power known only to kings." [2] The charisma of Burma's rulers was traditionally associated with gnostic insight (cf. p. 64), with superior knowledge about the Causality of deliverance from Suffering. To the same extent as deliverance from Suffering came to be seen as social liberation (cf. p. 126), these attributes of the ruler's soteriological Gnosis came to be transformed into the charismatic statesman's superior insight into the causality of social reform: The charisma of U Nu sprang to a large extent from the didactic emphasis of his speeches.[3] U Nu's exhortion that "we must also be beacon lights that can lead the people towards the right deed, the right speech, and the right thought," [4] aimed at making Burma's crisis understandable to her traditionalist people by expounding it – sometimes in didactic Abhidhamma style – in the context of "new" (modern) knowledge. This ranged from his using illustrations from early Soviet diplomatic history (as a lesson in compromise with foreign economic interests) to Germany's social development (as an example of the consequences that arise when political unity is lacking) or to an exposition of post-materialist developments of twentieth century philosophy and the genesis of modern Democracy in the West.[5]

Such communication problems of elucidating unprecedented situations in terms of traditional concepts became a political issue ever since the democracy that followed Independence had made the governance of Burma to some extent dependent on the approval of the governed. More than during the British period – when modern political articulation had been confined to an Anglicized minority (cf. p. 131), concerned with an Anglo-Saxon frame of reference and appealing to English audiences – were Burma's governments of the

[1] One who attained the 4th of the paths leading to Nirvana; he is subject to bodily pain, but his mind is free from Sorrow. At his death he enters Nirvana: Judson, *Burmese-English Dictionary*, p. 1092.

[2] U Nu's speech of April 16, 1948, in: Thakin Nu, *Mein-gun: mya:* (Rangoon, 1949), p. 42.

[3] R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, 1963), p. 80.

[4] Speech of Nov. 29, 1953, in: U Nu, *Forward with the People. Transl. of selected speeches* (Rangoon, 1955), p. 73.

[5] For instance, Burma, Ministry of Information, *Towards Peace and Democracy. Translation of selected speeches by the H'ble Thakin Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma* (Rangoon, 1949), pp. 15, 29, 57, 34, 72f., 111, 203.

post-independence years confronted by the non-westernized majority with its traditionalist outlook. This confrontation with the traditionalist majority stimulated a reinterpretation of imported ideologies in the Burmese Buddhist context. U Nu saw that "socialism in Burma must be fully harmonized with the religious beliefs and cultural background and heritage of the people." He insisted: "The new era must not be imposed on the people from above." [1] Sensitivity for the unmodernized people's longings, expressed in intuitive synthesis of imported revolutionary ideologies with deeply rooted Burmese lore, does account for much of U Nu's charismatic standing in Burma's politics. To political science it was obvious that U Nu "as a politician also displayed an almost uncanny sensitivity to the aspirations of the Burmese people. He clearly knew what they wanted ..." He bridged politically the gap between the English educated Burmese elite and the traditionalist majority that has hardly been exposed to occidental political terminology. He met the cultural outlook of the traditionalist majority "on a level of mutual understanding, which only a few of the Western educated can do." [2] U Nu's particular conciliation of tradition and revolution was the more effective as it followed customary lines: It had been long customary in Hindu-Buddhist intellectual history to present innovations as reinterpretations or elaborations of orthodoxy. In the lands of Indic culture new thoughts were traditionally tied in with old established authorities and from them received their rationalization. The tradition about the Buddha's omniscience had already in early Buddhism led to the notion that *any* idea in so far as it is good and correct must have been part of Buddha's teachings. "The ancient Buddhists thought that *whatever* is true should have been taught by the Buddha." [3]

These thought patterns converged with a reverse process typical for nativistic "revivals" of tradition under the impact of alien modernity: Ideologies of the irresistible modern impact are reinterpreted in such a way that they can be derived from certain aspects of "indigenous" tradition. And these selected aspects in turn become nativistic symbols for the preservation of tradition.[4] Thus, within modernistic Buddhism, a book by the Abbot San Kyoung Sayadaw attempted to endow the productive activism of labor with a Buddhist ethos – by

[1] Speech of December 1, 1953, in: U Nu, *Forward with the People*, p. 74.
[2] R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma*, pp. 136, 79f.
[3] H. Nakamura, *The Ways of thinking of Eastern Peoples*, pp. 87, 111; Cf. S. Paranavitana, "Mahâyânism in Ceylon," p. 67.
[4] Cf. W. E. Mühlmann, *Chiliasmus und Nativismus* (Berlin, 1961), p. 11.

reinterpreting the meditation effort (viriya) so as to identify it with the effort of toil.[1] Such phenomena appear the more significant as the bulk of intellectual activity within Burma's monastic community still seems, on the whole, limited by Budhaghosa's classical sixth century commentaries of Theravâda Buddhist scholasticism. It was in reference to this intellectual conservatism of the monks that Nihar-Ranjan Ray could conclude that the "Burmans have hardly any creative contribution to Buddhist logic and metaphysics to their credit. Buddhism as an intellectual and emotional discipline certainly engaged their attention; but there is hardly any evidence throughout the centuries of their having ever made any conscious attempt to expound or interpret creatively the Buddhist way or philosophy of life." [2] These generalizations about Buddhist Burma disregard U Nu's modernistic reinterpretation of historical Buddhism in the Ashokan tradition (cf. p. 171). In the Ashokan tradition was U Nu's convocation of the Sixth Buddhist Council (1954–1956) after Burma had been "without a Sâsanadayaka King (Promoter of the Faith) for a period of sixty eight years." [3] In the Ashokan tradition [4] was U Nu's patronage not only of Buddhism but also of non-Buddhist "minority" religions (whose position deteriorated when U Nu was out of power). In the Ashokan tradition (cf. p. 27) was U Nu's emphasis on their ethical common denominator as a unifying link consolidating the state.[5] In this sense, U Nu's charisma sprang from the revival of the traditional state ideals (cf. p. 60) that had been submerged by the British conquest and re-emerged into political effectiveness when the dependence on Britain was broken (cf. p. 192). The political effectiveness of traditional ideals of government found expression in U Nu's welfare state ethos of Buddhist Socialism.

Ashokan Buddhist ideals of society, English Labor Party influences together with objective sociological and economic facts of Burma's situation (cf. p. 190), all combined as factors in the socialist welfare state programs of Burma's post-war governments. Initially Marxism was accepted as an economic methodology for the establishment of con-

[1] San Caun: Sayadaw Paya: gyi: *Kan: Nyan Viriya* (Rangoon, 1314/1952), p. 148.
[2] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *An Introduction to the study of Theravâda Buddhism in Burma*, pp. 262, 264.
[3] U Nu's Address of Veneration, delivered on May 18, 1954 at opening ceremony of *the Sixth Great Buddhist Council*, in: *U Nu, Forward with the People: Translation of selected speeches by the... Prime Minister of the Union of Burma* (Rangoon, 1955), p. 166.
[4] Ashoka's 12th Rock Edict, in: J. Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka*, pp. 121f.
[5] U Nu's speech of February 11, 1950, in: Thakin Nu, *From Peace to Stability: Translation of selected speeches...* (Rangoon, 1951), pp. 72f.

ditions meant to facilitate the application of Buddhism's psychological methodology of Liberation from Suffering by overcoming Attachment, a methodology applying the laws of causality. Marxism's goal of deliverance, in spite of its limitation to deliverance from economic ills only, had appeared attractive to Burma with its Buddhist ideal of deliverance from Universal Suffering. But precisely Buddhist Burma's introduction of Marxism, with the very parallelism of direction between Marxism and Buddhism, led to an attempt to substitute what, in the Indic tradition, was meant to be a partial, economic, "Lower Truth" for the religious "Higher Truth": Though Marxist ideology is only concerned with the causality of economic suffering, that is only with one particular case of universal suffering, its most radical champions were not content with having Marxism accepted as a limited economic truth within Buddhist socialism. The Burmese Communists were not content with Buddhist-Marxist ideological partnership, just as they had refused to be satisfied with a coalition partnership in Burma's Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League government and provoked a civil war (cf. p. 188f.). Their victory would have transformed Marxism from an economic sub-structure for the Buddhist quest into an ideology monopolizing totalitarian power.[1] In these attempts the Communists failed. And Buddhist Burma eventually rejected Marxism. On January 29, 1958, U Nu declared that the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League rejects Marxism as an ideology.[2] Politically this demarcated the government's ideology from that of the Communist insurgents; their differences – which previously had been more marked in methods than in socialistic theory – were now to be drawn in philosophical content as well. Ideologically this made the non-acceptance of materialism explicit. U Nu said on that occasion: "Comrades, I believe that the examples and proofs ... made it quite clear that the more science advances, the more support there is for the Buddhist belief that in nature there is no such thing as Matter." [3] "In this world, everything, whether living thing or inanimate, must change, must decay, and must disappear. There is no living thing or inanimate object which is stable, unchanging and indestructible. This is our belief." [4]

[1] E. Sarkisyanz, "Marxism and Asian cultural traditions," in: *Survey*, No. 43 (August, 1962), pp. 64, 129.
[2] U Nu, *Towards a socialistic state* (Union of Burma, Department of Information: Rangoon, 1958), p. 42.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Actually, this was a shift of emphasis and terminology more than a shift in ideological content: The Marxist philosophy of Materialism – though not without precedent in Indic intellectual tradition and in the classical Buddhist frame of reference [1] – had never been accepted by U Nu (even when, in 1948, he had been advocating "Marxist Unification"). Already in 1950 U Nu had intended the organization of the Buddhist Sâsana Council to counteract precisely Marxist materialism (cf. p. 202). On the other hand, when he formally rejected "Marxism" in 1958, he did not thereby fully reject Marxist *economic* theory, as he declared that the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League approves "some parts of the economic doctrines of Marxism." [2] The political implications of this terminological shift have been largely overestimated in the world press. In the same speech in which U Nu had rejected Marxism, he confirmed that the "fundamental objective which we shall always keep in view is to build in the Union of Burma a socialistic state in which capitalism will have no part ..." [3] These shifts of terminology came to be followed by the political party rivals of U Nu as well as by the forces which eventually supplanted him. While such political shifts have been pragmatic enough even in the case of U Nu, they have been mistaken for shifts of basic goals. If they have been overestimated and the inherent consistency of his thought underestimated, it may be largely because, apparently, his writings have never been collected and examined in their totality. Such pre-war essays as "Kyan-daw buthama" (U Nu told me that he wrote it in 1935 or 1936) indicate that already at the beginning of his political career his image of capitalism was based on its underlying utilitarian primacy of the Self in which Buddhism sees the basic illusion. Already in 1935/6 he blamed it for people turning away from Buddhism and maintained that not the elimination of capitalism nor even the prosperity of the people were ends in themselves, that only Buddhist goals were (cf. p. 171). Throughout U Nu's ideological adjustments between Buddhism, Fabianism and Marxism, Socialism and the welfare state have remained for him consistently economic means for Buddhist eschatological goals.[4]

[1] Cf. Brahmajâla-Sûtta, III 10; III, 20: *Dîgha Nikâya*, transl. Rhys Davids, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, Vol. III (London, 1956), pp. 461, 53; Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (London, 1921), Vol. III, p. 73.

[2] U Nu, *Towards a socialistic state*, p. 42.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[4] Sarkisyanz, "Marxism and Asian cultural traditions," in: *Survey*, No. 43 (August 1962), p. 64.

In as far as Buddhism's ethical maximalism influenced the political ethos of U Nu, it may have contributed to delays in the restoration of order in war-torn Burma: "Unlike the theistic creeds, ... [Buddhism] cannot sanction [even] such acts of violence that are necessary for the preservation of public order and society." [1] Since 1954, up to the end of U Nu's regime, all death sentences were commuted.[2] Buddhist ethics were a factor in U Nu's extremely lenient treatment of surrendering Communist insurgents: [3] In 1955, U Nu's government again offered the Communist rebels an opportunity to contest the general elections and gave them assurances that their political parties would be legalized. Interned Communist insurrectionists were released and sent to negotiate with their guerilla colleagues in the jungle.[4] Such policies were in line with widely shared hopes to resolve the crisis of contemporary politics by universal application of Buddhist ethics (cf. p. 204f.). Thus shortly after the Buddhist World Council, about the 2500th year of the Buddhist Era, Bo Khin Maung Hkalei advocated, in a parliamentary debate, that a consistent application of Buddhist ethics to politics should effectively counteract crime and lawlessness (bou'da badha yin cei: hmụ).[5] This was in the traditions of the state ideals of pre-British Burma. Among her rulers Mindon (1853–1878), whose reign is still remembered as an exemplary approximation to the Buddhist ideal of state, had attempted to reform the administration of justice by an application of Buddhist ethics – exhorting his officials to maintain Buddhist virtues in their bureaucratic practice.[6] From this tradition also sprang U Nu's popular Buddhist charisma; among the Anglicized elite he was accused of acting in accordance with the Buddhist monarchic inclinations of the Burmese people.[7]

U Nu's educated opponents objected to his representing the "uneducated" Burma which, as they thought, should have already been "out-

[1] F. Story, *The Twenty-fifth Century: Buddhism and the New Age* (Rangoon, 1956), p. 50.
[2] *The Nation* (Rangoon), June 15, 1959, cited by J. Furnivall, *The governance of modern Burma* (New York, 1960: Institute of Pacific Relations), p. 146, fn. 35.
[3] Cf. L. J. Walinsky, *Economic development in Burma, 1951–1960* (New York, 1962), p. 385. L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 155 claims that "it is nearly impossible to demonstrate any connection between the manifestations of ideology and significant Burmese political behaviour," Was U Nu's Buddhist leniency toward the insurgents insignificant political behaviour?
[4] U Nu's speech of June 8, 1957, in: Union of Burma, Director of Information, *Premier U Nu on the Four-Year Plan* (Rangoon, 1957), p. 16.
[5] Pyi-daun-zụ Myan-ma naingan-to, *Pa-li-man dụtiya Pyi-dhu Hlu'to nyi la hkan hma'tan*: -sa-twei 2 – asi: awe: ahma' 8 – 1318 hku ni' –to-dhalin: lạ – 6 ye' (Rangoon, 1957), p. 535.
[6] Mindon's Edict of April 24, 1853, in: H. Yule, *Mission to the Court of Ava*, pp. 363f.
[7] U Tun Pe, *Why I resigned from the Cabinet: Statement before Press Conference on August 13, 1953* (Rangoon, 1953), p. 2; Ba Maw's letter, in: *The Nation* (Rangoon), March 29, 1955, quoted by R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, 1963) p. 65. Cf. Brohm, p. 394.

grown." When, in 1958, the ruling Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League split in connection with personal rivalries, its divisions had long ran along the contradictions of "two distinct classes": the "Educated" or "College Socialists" and the "Uneducated" or "Pongyi-kyaung [Monastery School] Socialists." The "Educated" were led by Kyaw Nyein and Ba Swe (Stable Faction of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) and the "Uneducated" (Clean Faction) by Thakin Kyaw Tun. The latter declared that the people on his side were "uneducated but sincere." Thakin Tin Maung Gyi of the same faction ... referred to the "exploitation by the educated class of the uneducated class." [1] The "Educated" Group had emphasized industrialization while the "Uneducated" considered agriculture the mainstay of the country's economy. Accordingly, the "Educated College Socialists" had been administratively associated with such ministries as Industry, Mines and Cooperatives, that is with the modern branches of economy, while the "Uneducated" (the "Monastery School Socialists") were in charge of agriculture, land nationalization and the democratization of local administration, that is of the traditional spheres of society. While Ba Swe of the "Educated" Group was in charge of Labor Unions, Thakin Tin and Kyaw Tun of the "Uneducated" Group controlled the All-Burma Peasant Organization,[2] the largest component of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. This "Uneducated" Group – the more traditionalist [subsequent "Clean"] Faction of the A.F.P.F.L. – received the backing of U Nu; but the party machine turned against him. In the autumn of 1958 he resigned in favor of the Army commander, General Ne Win, whose military government safeguarded new elections. In the training courses of the "Clean Faction," U Nu elaborated a platform for the elections of 1960, a program of Buddhist socialism:

He explained that, in accordance with Buddhist tradition (cf. p. 11), there had been no private ownership before men started taking more than they immediately needed and storing it up for the future. He narrated the Buddhist tradition on how the fencing off and demarcation of property had been followed by theft so that man were induced to elect one of themselves to judge and punish, renumerating him with one-tenth of their produce.[3] This was Mahâthammada, the Unani-

[1] Sein Win, *The Split Story. An account of recent political upheaval in Burma with emphasis on AFPFL* (Rangoon, 1959), pp. 14–15; R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma*, pp. 151, 166, 197.
[2] Sein Win, pp. 14–15.
[3] U Nu's speech delivered, on November 16, 1959, before the Training Classes of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League's Clean Faction (Burmese typescript kindly given to author

mously Elected One. From this tradition U Nu derived Government by Election.[1] According to U Nu's interpretation, Mahâthammada was called Yaza (Râja) because he had sympathy for the people, when their Padeytha Tree, the Wishing Tree on which food, drink and all necessities had been growing, vanished as private property appeared (cf. p. 12f.). Upon the beginning of property, followed the appearance of theft. On account of quarrels and fighting the rulers came to be regarded as enemies by the people (cf. p. 78). From the primeval classless society emerged the different classes, according to Buddhist scripture. Referring to the ensuing struggles between them, U Nu emphasized that the natural resources of the world are sufficient for all but that only a handful of man actually enjoy them. The poverty of the majority was, in his interpretation, caused by the conversion of common property into private property followed by the separation of exploiting and exploited classes: [2] As Greed, Hate and Delusion appeared, there began the mutual fighting and killing of Class Struggle and there emerged the Oppressors and the Oppressed, the Powerful and the Powerless. The majority of the people became poorer and poorer, in spite of the abundance of natural resources. So poor have men become, said U Nu, that they are obliged to sell their bodies as in prostitution.[3] The remedy for this misery U Nu saw in a system of sharing the fruits of man's labor according to the ability and toil that had gone into producing them. This system he identified with Socialism.[4] Under Socialism – as he understood it – there would be no oppressed and no oppression, and (therefore eventually) no need for government machinery; there would be no Capitalism, Imperialism and Blooshed, just as in the ideal future envisaged in the Buddhist scriptures.[5] Everybody's task is to free himself from Saṃsâra, reminded U Nu and asked how many people do follow this main task: not more than one per cent of the Buddhists; ninety-nine percent of the Buddhists work on the task of earning property. He asked why these ninety-nine per cent do not realize that property is not dependable, that it is not permanent, that they cannot take it (along) when they die, that property is the cause of suffering. The main cause for this ignorance he said to be the acquisitive principle of accumulation:

by U Nu: its text was to be largely reprinted in the *Bama-hkit* of November 17, 1959), p. 8.
[1] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

The primacy of Acquisition distracts all human energies and leaves no end to Greed.[1] The main task, Deliverance from Saṃsâra (Impermanence), is being forgotten because secondary economic tasks of securing a livelihood distract man from the principal goal. U Nu reminded that, according to the Cakkavattî Sutta of the Pâli Canon (cf. p. 90f.), in the ideal state of the perfect Buddhist ruler – whom the Burmese call Setkya Min – there would be no such material worries and no theft. Only when the rulers no longer supported the poor and no longer provided for them, did theft appear; the appearance of Theft caused Murder. The Precepts were broken and lying began. Thus the chief cause for the appearance of crime and evil actions seemed to U Nu to be Want, the lack of necessities. Therefore, according to him, in the coming socialistic world there was to be plenty, so that there would be no stealing and no crime.[2] Under the Great Charity (Buddhism's Mahâ Dâna, identified by U Nu with common ownership) everybody would take only what he needs without seeking profit. Contrary to the present state of society, in the socialistic world earning a livelihood was no longer to be the main task: the evil practices would disappear (with their economic causes) and there shall be freedom from the Three Calamities of Famine, War and Disease. To establish such a world is the duty of Great Charity, emphasized U Nu, referring to a commentary on the Maṅgala Sutta.[3] (Cf. p. 202.) By doing Dâna Charity (in observance of the Dhamma) the material welfare of the Cakkavattî's and Setkya Min's ideal states could be brought about, said U Nu,[4] just as it had been (uncharitable) evil conduct that had caused the disappearance of the prosperity-bringing Padeytha Tree (cf. p. 50). In this sense U Nu declared (in contradiction of all Marxism) that the main difficulty for the establishment of a socialistic world is low morality. Therefore, the main task was to be the establishment of the *ethical* basis for it.[5] Only ethical beings can establish such a socialistic world; an application of the Four ethical Principles of Kingship (thamprateya le: ba: or of Ideal Statesmanship) and of Metta (Universal Love) would put the socialistic world within human reach.[6] If the antagonistic classes could be united [by such ethical means], then Lokka Nibban, the Earthly Nirvana, can be achieved.[7] This socialistic

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

world, in U Nu's formulation, was not to be an ordinary world but an abode of saintly hermits (Rahans) and of the Future Buddha (Mettaya), a world in which the highest stages (of Deliverance) are reached by meditation.[1] Whereas traditionally the perfect society was expected to result from the maximalization of Dhamma observances through the perfection of man at the time of the Future Buddha Mettaya (cf. p. 58), in U Nu's vision of Buddhist socialism the establishment of a perfect society was to permit a maximum observance of the Dhamma to the point of human perfection, making possible man's sublimation into future Buddhahood. ("It was U Nu who was looked upon by many people as a Buddha in the becoming." [2])

While U Nu's socialism was thus meant to lead to a Buddhist goal and derived its inspiration from Buddhists values, the – *politically* almost identical – socialism of the rival (Stable) Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League's faction came from revisionist Marxist sources: Kyaw Nyein, its chief theoretician, explained to the author that the rejection of Marxism (cf. p. 219) referred only to its totalitarian form and not to the democratic revisionist Marxism of Central European type which he still affirmed as a source of ideological inspiration.[3] Thus, while there was hardly any difference in political content between the socialistic programs of U Nu's Clean and Kyaw Nyein's Stable Factions of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, they did differ in cultural emphasis and theoretical derivation. It is true that occasionally the Stable ("Educated") Faction too attempted to use notions of Buddhist socialism for its election campaign: Kyaw Nyein's campaign literature likewise promised a welfare state that was to bring back the lost Padeytha Tree of Buddhist folklore [4] (cf. p. 88f., 210ff.). But, as Kyaw Nyein himself explained to this writer in November 1959, this was consciously done after the pattern of Occidental Christian Socialist and Christian Democratic Parties – and not on the basis of models from Burmese tradition.[5] Yet neither his competence nor superior party machine was appreciated by the voters. In the culturally almost un-Burmese Rangoon – this capital being still strongly affected by colonial developments – U Nu was also

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[2] F. von der Mehden, "The changing pattern of Religion and Politics in Burma," in: R. Sakai (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1961* (Lincoln, 1961), p. 71.
[3] Sarkisyanz, "U Nus Sieg: Der geistige Hintergrund der neuesten politischen Entwicklung in Burma," in: *Europa Archiv*, XV, No. 15 (August 5, 1960), p. 481.
[4] HPA, HSA. PA. LA., Ni: no hpa hle pwe ahtein: ahma' atu: dou', *Lu-nge Sa-zaun* (Rangoon, 1959), p. 11.
[5] Sarkisyanz, "U Nus Sieg...," in: *Europa Archiv* XV, No. 15, p. 481.

opposed by politicians of the so-called Buddhist Democratic Party which rejected socialism (and particularly heavy taxation on high incomes) – as un-Buddhistic.[1] Economic inequalities were supposed to be caused by Kamma,[2] if not by predestination (cf. p. 68ff.). Elements of a middle class ethos, for example, Buddha's sanctions for rational management of income, may be found in the Sigâlavâda Sutta of the Pâli Canon. However, the Buddhist Democratic Party's free enterprise interpretation of Buddhist social ethics had no relation to Burma's folk ideals and, in the elections of February 1960, it suffered a crushing defeat.

Of influence in the outcome of that election was the position taken by the Burmese monkhood – which is still frequently consulted in rural Burma, even on secular issues. All the principal abbots of the main monasteries of Sagaing, Ava, Amarapura and Mandalay, in the historical centers of Burmese culture, aside from one exception, declared themselves in favor of U Nu's platform. In a series of interviews they told the writer that among the living statesmen of Burma it was U Nu who (at that time, in 1959, being out of power) in their opinion was the closest approximation to the ideal of the perfect Buddhist ruler in the Ashokan tradition.[3] The Sayadaw U Zagaya of Mandalay said not only that U Nu was Burma's closest approach to an ideal Buddhist ruler but that his socialism made him the highest among the Buddhist laymen, even though lower than the monastic Arhats (cf. p. 37): This Abbot called Socialism only a Lower Truth (cf. p. 219), the Pyidawtha Welfare State being only a partial application of Buddhism. He emphasized Buddhist Burma's dependence on the country's political development and stressed that to separate Buddhism from Burma's politics would be wrong.[4] In vain did the rivals of U Nu urge the people to vote against him, arguing – quite logically *if* canonical Buddhism alone had been involved – that his deprivation of political power might facilitate his development as the Future Buddha [5] (cf. p. 45). It was of no avail: Too strong was the folk tradition of the Buddha-Yaza, the Buddha *Ruler* (cf. p. 152) – or simply of the Enlightened Buddhist Ruler. The majority position was and remained that "if Buddhism is not directly concerned with promoting political activity, it does not

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 482.
[2] San Caun: Sayadaw Paya: Gyi:, *Kan*: *Nyan Viriya* (Rangoon, 1314/1952), p. 26.
[3] Sarkisyanz, "On the place of U Nu's Buddhist Socialism in Burma's history of ideas," in: R. Sakai (Editor), *Studies on Asia, 1961* (Lincoln, 1961), p. 60.
[4] Interview with Thi'ssa Thin-dan: Paya: Sayadaw Nan-you U: Zagaya, in Mandalay, September 28, 1959.
[5] F. von der Mehden, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

mean that political activity should not promote Buddhism": [1] "To preserve the treasure of Buddhism constitutes traditionally the very raison d'être of the Burman state, the rationale of its historical mission" [2] (cf. p. 4ff.). When U Nu was induced, as a result of his election campaign of 1959, to declare Buddhism the State Religion of Burma, he was giving expression to the majority of Burmese public opinion.

On the other hand, such demonstration of U Nu's Buddhist sentiments shocked many well-meaning American observers – as they happened to conflict with unquestioned American assumptions that Democracy should involve a separation of "Church" and State. That a statesman as effective as U Nu could mean something as "unrealistic" as Buddhist ideals in earnest, was for such American pragmatists too unaccustomed a phenomenon to seem credible: In such circles there again and again arose the question as to the sincerity of U Nu ...[3] However, a more qualified British observer saw that

> In the person of U Nu, Buddhism has utterly confounded the dictum that power corrupts .... Plunged into supreme responsibility, supreme power ..., amidst unceasing trials and upheavals he has emerged a selfless being, completely relaxed, without tension, inspired by vision and compassion; and his driving force is a Buddhism which permeates his every thought and action.[4]

But apparently there were some who had reasons to feel provoked by U Nu's Buddhist moralistic injunctions: Thus, such a representative American Southeast Asia expert as Lucien Pye found that Burmese moralistic injunctions could "appear provocative to others." He found it noteworthy that the Burmese "seem peculiarly unaware that many non-Burmese dislike and resent being preached to. The Burmese insensitivity to the fact that their moralizing might be annoying to others suggests that such activities are designed less as a means of possibly controlling others than as a means of suggesting the innocence of their own intentions." [5] Aspirations to politics of morality being a demonstration of innocence and innocence not being counted among the factors of practical politics, the expressions of U Nu's Buddhist ideals were not taken too seriously by the sophisticated majority of Burma Experts. This is not surprising: The bulk of political science's source material on contemporary Burma is from "The Nation" of

[1] J. R. Jayewardena, *Buddhism and Marxism and other Buddhist essays* (Colombo, 1957), p. 41 ("Buddhism and Politics").
[2] Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 50.
[3] Sarkisyanz, "U Nus Sieg..," in: *op. cit.*, p. 482; cf. Brohm, p. 368
[4] Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma. A study of the first years of Independence* (Oxford, 1957), p. 177.
[5] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 142.

Rangoon, a Chinese Protestant's newspaper in the English language, whose interest in Buddhism is largely confined to situations in which it might serve as a barrier against Communism. The Buddhist social ideals of U Nu were not taken too seriously by such articulate opinion of the culturally Anglicized nor by its political observers.

But if the Buddhist Socialism of U Nu has been rather lightly dismissed by such particular Burma Experts, it has been taken very seriously, indeed, by the Burmese people themselves, whom they reminded of what have been for many centuries cherished ideals of Ashokan Buddhism: U Nu was given an overwhelming majority in the elections of February 6th, 1960. His victory meant for most Burmese the triumph of charismatic personality over a party machine, of oriental tradition over imported slogans.[1] Still such cultural contradictions continued to operate among U Nu's party even afterwards. In it prevailed the less "educated" and traditionalist – yet more socialistically minded – "Thakins" over the Anglicized moderates [the "U's" and "Bo's"].[2] Thus the tendency which triumphed in Burma's last free election prevailed again within the party that won them.

[1] Sarkisyanz, "On the place of U Nu's Buddhist Socialism in Burma's history of ideas," in: *op. cit.*, p. 61.
[2] R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, 1963), p. 240.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SUCCESS OF EFFICIENCY CRITERIA AGAINST THE SYMBOLS OF BUDDHIST DEMOCRACY

U Nu's electorial triumph resulted from his Buddhist charismatic appeal in the context of a revival of the traditional sanctions of government. Though the structure of government in post-colonial Burma followed closely the patterns developed under British rule, the spirit in which authority was exercised owed much to survivals of pre-colonial attitudes to power.[1] In *some* cases, the British colonial system reinforced Burmese authoritarian traditions of government, confirming the officials of the state in their elite positions.[2] The Burmese administrative class – who passed into British colonial service since the annexations of 1852 and particularly 1886 – had come from the better families as understood in Burma's social order under her Kings. Being accustomed to an elite role, they combined traditional bases for authority with a command of modern skills – acquired through cultural Anglization [3] (cf. p. 108): "The ungoverned masses" remained an *object* of policy.[4] In administrative practice this remained so even after Burma's independence from Britain was restored. "Except for the substitution of Burmans for British officials, the administrative pattern ... has remained practically unaltered till the present time. Accusations have been made, most persistently immediately after Burma's attainment of independence, that the government machinery is bureaucratic, and the entire system is 'colonial,' but no constructive and far-reaching reforms have yet been introduced." [5] In vain did U Nu ask the government servants "to

[1] Cf. J. Cady, *A history of modern Burma*, p. 4.
[2] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 83.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[4] Cf. Maung Tha Aung & Maung Mya Din (H. R. Alexander, Editor), "The Pacification of Upper Burma. A vernacular history," in: *JBRS*, XXXI, ii (1941), p. 91.
[5] Maung Maung, p. 4.

show a change of heart towards the people." [1] "The structure of the civil service is a legacy from the British time when it ... acted as a representative of the British Raj [Empire] .... Its outlook was rule-centered (sic)." [2] It remained "rule-centered" as the class of Westernized officials absorbed much of the Burmese Kingdom's traditional secular elite. Precisely the very small number of modernized Burmans permitted to develop into managerial technicians, during Burma's half-century of British-Indian administration, made this social group so crucial in the post-independence period. Their very indispensability left this bureaucratic and managerial elite – even under universal sufferage – with power out of proportion to their number.

This bureaucracy's separation from the traditionalist majority, which it continued to administer, widened in proportion to the administrators' Westernization: For most members of the administrative class, cultural Anglization is part of the heritage from their preceding generation. This means that "for the administrator, traditional Burma's ways were already slightly alien to his immediate family." [3]

"On the contrary, most of them still reflected the attitudes of their former British mentors, who, in the tradition of the British ruling class, had a well-articulated distrust of ... specialized knowledge and ... intellectual pretension." They even had to learn "the proper British custom of always appearing to be slightly less intelligent and less informed than one really is." [4] This enlightenment left them with a pragmatic heritage of scant regard for abstraction and ideologies.[5] Thus the "mystical," magical, "unreasoning and emotional" ideologies of nativistic folk movements like the Saya San Uprising of 1930 (cf. p. 160) appeared to this particular Educated Class "repulsive" and "degrading." [6] It confirmed the Anglicized Burmese administrators' class in the notion that the less acculturated (majorities) are more "dangerous" than the more acculturated (minorities).[7] These apprehensions were thought to be confirmed when the British-trained administrators found themselves – as a result of the

[1] U Nu's speech of August 5, 1949, in: Union of Burma, Ministry of Information, *Towards Peace and Democracy. Transl. speeches of Thakin Nu* (Rangoon, 1949), p. 234.
[2] Theippan Soe Yin, "The future of the Civil Service," in: *The Guardian* (Rangoon), VII (October, 1960), p. 18.
[3] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 257.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Englishmen's flight from Burma, in 1942 – supplanted in running the country by the revolutionary statesmen of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. These victors in Burma's independence struggle had – unlike British Burma's native administrators – not inherited cultural Anglization from their families and were much closer to the traditionalist majority of the Burmese people. Against this background such nationalist revolutionaries continued to be despised by the "Higher Class" Burmese, the main native ruling group within the colonial system – even when, with the achievement of independence, they came to overshadow the administrators in political influence. "The Educated Class" that had been so prominent in the colonial bureaucracy, looked down on the revolutionary statesmen [1] "for not having an [English] Education" and resented their pronouncements on behalf of the "uneducated" majority of the Burmese people.[2] The most effective of such pronouncements were U Nu's.

Thus it was precisely U Nu's traditionalism and Buddhist charisma that made him largely suspect among the bureaucratic elite of British education. It is true that to these old-time native administrators of what had been British Burma there was eventually added a new "progressive" generation which was increasingly shaped by the utilitarian type of socialism imported from the London School of Economics. But this new elite's claim to the Progressives' Avant Garde superiority, *in practice,* perpetuated the hierarchical criteria of colonial and pre-colonial society: the imported English Socialism did not contribute much to bridging the gap between the intellectual bureaucracy and the people. Instead of the elite status inherited from the Burmese Kingdom, social superiority came to rest on the Educated Classes' Enlightenment of progressive Anglo-Saxon style – and on corresponding notions about the backwardness of the rural masses who had remained culturally Burmese, preserving an "unprogressive" Buddhist outlook (cf. p. 135). In this sense Dr. Hla Myint, Rector of the University of Rangoon under the Army Government, in 1959, tried to convince me, with all the weight of his authority, that ... "Buddhism is unimportant for Burma politically" and that "Burma has no original ideas worth studying." [3] In the eyes of such successors

[1] U Nu's speeches on September 29, 1949 and at the Divisional Conferences at Rangoon, Moulmein and Mandalay in October and November 1950, in: Union of Burma, Ministry of Information, *From Peace to Stability. Transl. speeches of Thakin Nu* (Rangoon, 1951), pp. 32f. 35, 112–115; J. S. Furnivall, *The governance of modern Burma* (New York, 1960), p. 67.
[2] Pye, pp. 235, 257.
[3] Sarkisyanz, "On the place of U Nu's Buddhist Socialism in Burma's history of ideas',, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

of the British rulers, a statesman like U Nu – who takes folkloric (that is "superstitious") notions of the "uneducated" masses seriously and even orientates his program in their direction – committed treason against the "Educated Class." [1]

Among this Anglicized elite, U Nu's Buddhist Socialism could not even be seriously discussed as a research topic in intellectual history of the Ashokan tradition of Buddhist ideals of state (cf. p. 33ff.): It was precisely his "neo-Ashokan" ethos – in which the people recognized old folk ideals and which in the eyes of the people endowed U Nu with his Buddhist charisma – that shocked the Educated Class as unliberal and immodest. Even the modernistic Buddhist part of the elite is far removed from the folk-Buddhism of rural Burma with its messianic expectations, almost as far removed as the orthodox Theravâda Buddhism of the Canon is from Burma's animistic Nat cults.[2] Culturally the traditionalistic masses of the Burmese people are so remote from the Anglicized elite that this Educated Class could preserve into the present Victorian aspirations "to improve the outlook of the uneducated class." [3]

The educated man's elite status is the cardinal article of faith of the Burmese administrative class: the entire Bureaucracy's claim to superiority over the masses of the Burmese people [4] rests on an *English* type of education.[5] "To know English was to be educated. By *this* standard, the great brains of the Buddhist Sangha ... were not educated." [6] To establish such enlightened claims of superiority for even subordinate Burmese officials proved possible already in the colonial period – since the British authorities delegated to them some powers, particularly in the outlying Districts. From the British colonial administrators the Burmese bureaucracy inherited a "cold, impersonal approach to the common people." [7] Being excluded from social equality with their English mentors, the Burmese bureaucrats "tended to express their frustration, their sense of denial, by unconsciously turning upon their own people and treating them in

[1] Sarkisyanz, "U Nus Sieg..," *op. cit.*, p. 482. Cf. Brohm, p. 180.
[2] Cf. Maung Htin Aung, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism* (London, 1962), pp. 2–4, 83–113, 120–124 and particularly Dr. Mendelson's forthcoming book on Burmese Buddhism.
[3] *Guardian* (Rangoon), VI, No. 11 (November, 1959), p. 41. Cf. Brohm, p. 128.
[4] U Nu's speech at Kaba Aye Pagoda, on June 5, 1959, in: U Nu, *We must defend Democracy* (Rangoon, 1959), p. 22.
[5] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 218.
[6] Kyaw Min, *The Burma we love* (Calcutta, 1945), p. 37.
[7] Pye, pp. 99, 222.

increasingly harsh ways," "haughty and swaggering." [1] Denied a full place in the elite world, they needed to reasure themselves that they were the superior ones in their society." [2] The cold aloofness of social superiority was justified by Service to the Country [3] – no matter whether the people of the country could appreciate it or not.

What the Burmese people did appreciate were Ashokan Buddhist ideals of social control – regardless of whether they proved pragmatically effective or not. In Ashokan style U Nu tried by exhortations to induce the people to practice righteousness and social virtues, endeavoring to promote national union within a Buddhist state by concessions to insurgents and minority nationalities. Apprehensions that such appeasement of centrifugal forces would jeopardize the integrity of the Burmese state induced its Army to depose U Nu, early in 1962, not in the name of Democracy – "U Nu is still the most popular Burmese of all time" [4] – but in the name of effectiveness and efficiency. U Nu's emphasis on Buddhist admonitions was now replaced by summary disciplinary actions and penal measures against offenders violating the laws and emergency decrees. Naturally, the military government's sober and pragmatic policy of penalizing the numerous transgressors against legal minimum standards, a policy differing only in degree from what is taken for granted by the governments of all countries, achieved in practice more conformity with the laws than could U Nu's endeavor – rare in the whole of history and almost unique in the contemporary world – to reform society by exhorting the people to live up to the ethical maximum. (U Nu saw that his exhortations were "a mere cry in the wilderness." [5]) Profiteering, black market activities and corruption – which had not been effectively deterred by U Nu's Buddhist limitations on the use of force – were within a short time largely stamped out by the Military Government, by means of dismissals and penal sentences. Order is effectively restored – at the price of numerous deportations to the tropical penal colony on Cocos Island. The streets of Rangoon became again almost as clean as they had been under British rule, with the poisoning of their stray dogs, as systematically practiced in the colonial period, being resumed –

[1] U Nu, *We must defend Democracy* (Rangoon, 1959), p. 22; U Nu's speech of October 17, 1953, in: U Nu, *Forward with the People* (Rangoon, 1955), pp. 65, 66; L. Pye, *op. cit.*
[2] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 223, fn. 2; Boh Min Gaung's Resolution for Devolution of Powers, in: *Pyidawtha Conference, Resolutions and Speeches* (Rangoon, 1952), p. 1.
[3] Pye, p. 101.
[4] R. Butwell, *U Nu of Burma* (Stanford, 1963), p. 246.
[5] U Nu, *From Peace to Stability* (Rangoon, 1951), p. 121.

no matter how it violates the people's Buddhist sentiment about the sanctity of all life.

That Buddhist sentiments of this nature have in the past obstructed the power pragma of preservation and consolidation of the Burmese state has been recently pointed out in justification of the coup d'etat by the Burmese Army. An article, in a publication associated with the Military's viewpoint, recalled the deterring example of the Buddhist piety of King Mindon, who is so dear to the memory of the people of Mandalay, "who was so pious and devout that he entirely neglected the economically deteriorating conditions of his country, not to mention the gross inattention to .... the defensive capacity of the country" [1] (cf. p. 8). [The *practical* results of the activity of Mindon's prototype ,Buddhism's exemplary ruler Ashoka, may have been very similar: Less scrupulous powers seem to have taken advantage of his Buddhist policy of non-violence (cf. p. 97) to depose him or to overthrow his state.[2]] That Ashokan aspirations towards the ideal Buddhist state swayed the majority – and the majority's choice in general – seemed not too relevant in the context of the Administrators' tradition of guiding the people for their own good. To counter such Administrators' tradition, U Nu had reminded that even "Buddha could not prevail against the collective wish of the Samgha" [3] (cf. p. 15,4). Such arguments of Buddhist democracy notwithstanding, the present "official viewpoint" is that U Nu's government did not know "what it means to care *for* the people, far less [was] capable of carrying out what little it knew ..." [4] It was elected by a majority of the people. But:

"Sometimes what a man desires to have is not what he actually needs ... It happens that what a man desires is actually dangerous for him and for society. So also with nations ..." [4]

The logical conclusion is that the tutelage type of "democracy ... in the ... pre-war years" of British colonial rule "and during the war and post-war pre-independence days" [of Japanese and British authoritarian executive hegemony] "was incomparably more genuine and more real than the successful parliament [sic] which we had so long suffered." [4] So reads one of the justifications for the overthrow of

[1] Ko Ko Lay, "Hail the Revolution," in: *Guardian* (Rangoon), IX, No. 6 (June, 1962), p. 33.
[2] Cf. L. de la Vallée-Poussin, *L'Inde aux temps des Mauryas et des barbares*... [(M. E. Cavaignac, *Histoire du Monde*, VI (Paris 1930)], pp. 115, 118, 177.
[3] U Nu's speech of Feb. 12, 1954, in: Union of Burma, Minstry of Information, *Forward with the People*, p. 135.
[4] Ko Ko Lay, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

U Nu's elected government by the Army. Indeed, the Military succeeded to "reëstablish to a degree the conditions of the pre-war colonial government." [1] Yet the Burmese coup d'etat of 1962 – in contrast to an abortive military attempt in Ceylon during the preceeding year – was not anti-socialistic. If some Western correspondents welcomed the overthrow of U Nu in the premature assumption that it would turn Burma away from socialistic internal policies, such hopes were soon disappointed: In fact, General Ne Win's army justified its coup precisely by claiming that parliamentary democracy handicapped the achievement of Socialism. Of Burma's parties it was precisely the pro-Communist "National United Front" that approved the coup.

Socialistic policies did not spell economic loss to the highest Burman income group, the bureaucratic and managerial elite, whose power can only increase in a planned economy. Its traditions of bringing Western civilization to Burma, without too much regard for the traditionalist preferences of the majority, made this Anglicized class of administrators natural allies for the Army's endeavor to streamline the direction of Burma's economy to force the pace of development.[2] The pragma of British political models, including Socialism, thereby again takes the place of the pragma of *effective* government power which pre-British Burma's Kingship could not derive from Buddhism and which it had sought in Hindu concepts (cf. p. 81). Modernized applications of such Burmese non-Buddhist traditions of a pragmatic ethos of power and power effectiveness have for the time being supplanted Ashokan ideals of state. U Nu's American biographer concludes that U Nu's "goodness may have stood in his way"; he lacked the ruthlessness that seems necessary even for the purpose of Democracy.[3] This political outcome is rationalized in widespread Burmese folk-beliefs that the Hindu god Indra, known in Burma as Thagya Min, Ruler of the dreaded or propitiated Nats, will in an age of declining Buddhist morality (after the 2500th year and culmination of the Buddhist Era) use non-Buddhist means of physical force to insure observance of the Dhamma Law, "to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked," to destroy the evil and to protect the good ones.[4] The Burmans'

[1] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 117; J. S. Furnivall, *The goverance of modern Burma* (New York, 1960), p. 137.

[2] Cf. *Pye*, pp. 63, 225.

[3] Butwell, *U Nu of Burma*, pp. 90, 250.

[4] Hugh Tinker. *The Union of Burma. A study of the first years of Independence*, p. 173; Zeyawadi Kyaung Sayadaw (U: Wunna), *Kaba lu' la yei: can: lu-tain: hmyo liṇ nei ca-tho Bodha Yaza Setkya Min: la-pi* (Mandalay, 1314/1952), p. 55; John H. Badgley, "Burma, the nexus of socialism and two political traditions," in: *Asian Survey*, III (February, 1963), No. 2, pp. 90–92, 94.

habits of dread and propitiation of the pre-Buddhist Nat spirits have culturally conditioned their attitude to physical force as authority.[1] Such forces the Buddhist U Nu had hoped to transform when he spoke about the hornbills: "If a bird hunter shoots down either of the two, the remaining hornbill dives to the ground close to the dead hornbill and gives up his life. The bird hunter who witnesses the scene changes his mind and gives up his bird hunting." [2] Such ethics of non-resistance have been more effective as a force of opposition to reigning power than as government policy. Still, the exemplary Buddhist ruler must like Vessantara (in the Jâtaka of that name) put the ethics and morality of Dhamma above the (ultimately transitory) national interest – up to the point of his state's ruin – even if this had meant for Vessantara being deprived of power and banished.[3] The existential tragedy of the Ashokan Buddhist political ideal is inherent in its aspiration to base the state on an ethical maximum, while the state by its very nature can only safeguard an ethical minimum. Yet, without aspirations to transform morally political power, History's balance would be hopelessly gloomy indeed.

[1] This mental relationship is strinkingly formulated in Kyaw Min, *The Burma we love* (Calcutta, 1945), p. 130 and Brohm, pp. 17–18.

[2] U Nu "Stages of battle against oppression" (Burmese, Rangoon, 1959–Clean AFPFL Pamphlet), p. 4, quoted by Butwell, *op. cit.*, p. 215. Cf. Cowell, *Jātaka*..., Vol. V, pp. 180, 191f.

[3] Vessantara (who subsequently was to be born as the Buddha) is said to have given away the state elephant, „giver" of rain and good harvests, "the victor over famine" (cf. p. 53) . Therefore his subjects banished him. This Jataka legend is one of the most popular in Burma: Min: pu: Sayadaw U: Aw Ba Tha, *Wethandaya Za'-to-gyi:* (Rangoon, Hanthawaddy Pitaka Hnei' tai', 1957), pp. 33, 36f., 43–53.

POSTSCRIPT

In things Burmese, as in other areas, concern for the ultimate has been called concern for inherently innocent things.[1] It has been reiterated by Experts that "in almost all ... issues upon which Burmese political leaders write or speak, ideology played a very small role and was throughly subordinated to the realities ...": The conventional axiom is that "the test of theory is in its application. In its actions the Burmese government has never worried overmuch about ideological basis." [2] The writer thought that even under these circumstances the "ideological basis" might be worth an investigation attempt.

A student of Southeast Asian intellectual history of the calibre of Paul Mus insisted that "one can – and we believe one should – look for even the metaphysical context" of such phenomena. "What is so fearful about this word metaphysics?", asked Mus and concluded that it does matter to insure that the metaphysics [or "anti-metaphysics"] one encounters should not be those that are projected into the subject from the researcher's own environment.[3] I remember to have been seriously questioned by an American Burma Expert whether I really believe that there is such a thing as Burmese intellectual history. Paradoxically, it is still necessary to emphasize the affirmative. This book was started on the presupposition that Burma too has its intellectual history. Its culture may be derivative. But so is ours. The relevance of cultural values differring from our own has not always been taken for granted in Burma area studies. The facts of Burmese history have been too frequently measured by Anglo-Saxon values.

[1] L. Pye, *Burma's search for identity*, p. 189f.
[2] John Seabury Thomson, "Marxism in Burma," in: F. Trager (Editor), *Marxism in Southeast Asia* (Stanford, 1959), pp. 45, 49.
[3] P. Mus, p. 602.

"Most western conceptions of Asian political thought appear to be ethnocentric and inappropriate; knowledge of Buddhist political thought in particular has been exceptionally meager ...," wrote Richard Gard.[1] Cultural deviations from our own patterns have been interpreted as a sign of lacking sophistication in Burmese socialism [2] with its acceptance of Buddhist values.

Still frequent is the tacit assumption that politically relevant religious ethics are confined to the Judaeo-Christian tradition – just as in an earlier age the path of Salvation, and later of Progress, has been thought to be the exclusive privilege of Christendom and Western Civilization. Max Weber's methodology in the sociology of religion, though available in translation for many years, has been little applied in Burmese studies.

This is mentioned *not* in order to claim merit for the attempt of this book. On the contrary, this is only being mentioned to explain why the working hypothesis contained therein has not been systematically investigated before. Even *if* it had ever been actually proved that for a statesman like U Nu Buddhism had not been more than a mere tactical instrument of public relations, it still would be an indispensable subject for the understanding of the public that he so successfully related himself to. Even *if* it could be assured that the political effectiveness of Buddhist social ethos in Burma is limited to a merely manipulative function, the latter in itself would justify serious investigation of the content of the ethos to be manipulated, even in terms of the Political Science that produces most current books about Burma.

However, in the context of the present book, the relevance of Buddhist thought to Burmese politics is only a secondary issue. Although this book may contain material of relevance to political science, it is *not* meant as a political science study but rather as an attempt to elucidate some phenomena of Burma's intellectual history. Not being primarily concerned with the pragmatic power effect of ideas, my investigation attempted to perceive through the Buddhist pronouncements of Burma's rulers something of the – rarely directly accessible – outlook of the passive people they ruled. In spite of the separation of a modernistic elite from the traditionalist masses, a

[1] Richard A. Gard, "*An introduction to the study of Buddhism and political authority in South and Southeast Asia*" (Typescript), p. 4.
[2] G. O. Totten, "Buddhism and Socialism in Japan and Burma," in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, II, No. 3 (April, 1960), pp. 297, 303.

separation so characteristic of "underdeveloped" countries, in periods of democratic rule by consent, the outlook of the ruled is bound to affect the pronouncements of the ruling group. Buddhist pronouncements of U Nu directed to folk-audiences give indirectly some picture of Burmese folk-visions about a Buddhist political order. Precisely because the direct documentation of this political folklore of rural Burma is so extremely difficult and scanty, U Nu's utterances directed to such audiences can serve as an indirect guide for the investigation of such folk-notions – in proportion to their political effectiveness and regardless of his motivation.

For the ruling modernistic elite the socialistic use of Buddhist concepts may often be an instrument of rationalizing and presenting the unfamiliar new in terms of the familiar old. What for them may be thus a manipulative instrument and only secondary rationalizations, may be primary goals for the traditionalist masses: for *them* Buddhist values come before rational economic values. But within the semi-Anglicized urban elite itself political communication has to be couched in terms culturally completely different from those with which it addresses folk-audiences. Therefore, in the modernistic context of inter-elite communication, the traditionalist notions (for example, the Bodhisattva ideal of Buddhist – even Theravâda Buddhist – statesmanship) would be passed over, self-consciously shunned, outrightly denied or ridiculed – as culturally embarassing, from the standpoint of Maturity, Enlightenment, Modernity and Progress. This creates a kind of conceptual double track.

History of *ideas* was not among the subjects that modern Burma learned from its British mentors. Under these circumstances, some of the gaps that remain in the above material on recent and contemporary intellectual history of Buddhist socialism in Burma could not be clarified – because I was unable to explain to potential informants the purpose of this investigation. In some quarters the motives for my research seemed outright suspicious. Considering that even "higher criticism" of scriptural exegesis has by no means found general acceptance in Buddhist Burma, the entire topic of Buddhist political ideologies was received by Rangoon University's Rector of 1959 as a subject much too hot to handle. These misgivings about the "timeliness" of the topic found expression in his vivid value judgements about the pointlessness of my pursuit.

I hope that the publication of this book will help to explain the purpose for which I had been trying to collect material from Burmese

informants. I wish to present this work to the Burmese people in remembrance of the unforgettable days that I experienced in Burma. They more than compensated me for the refusal of the Fulbright Foundation and of the Ford Foundation to support this research.*

* The refusal of *The Journal of Asian Studies'* Editor to print the main points of this book was founded on these arguments:

"... It seems best to ask you to consider some rather substantial revisions. Let me pass the referee remarks on to you verbatim as follows. His main thesis is not at all supported in my opinion by his data, and either the thesis should be changed, or it should be presented as a "data" paper. He claims that the *historical* in contrast to the Buddhist *canonical* evidence refutes Weber's thesis that there is no nexus between Buddhist ideology and social action. He supports this contra-Weber thesis by showing that, in the medieval period Burmese kings, in official inscriptions, styled themselves in accordance with Indic-Buddhist ideals of royal behaviour. True, but there is no evidence presented that they *behaved* in accordance with these ideals. For the modern period, he supports this thesis by showing that leaders in the independence movement and in post-Independence socialist politics appealed to Buddhist concepts to support their programs. True, but the use of Buddhist idioms and symbols to gain mass support for a political program is not the same as a systematic relationship between social action and a religious motivational basis for such action – which is Weber's point. In short the fact that U Ba Swe, or others, tried to make Marxism acceptable by showing that it is also good Buddhism is quite different from a man becoming a Marxist because Marxism stems from Buddhism. In sum, as a documentation of the role of Buddhist rhetoric in political life, and of the necessity which revolutionaries felt to cast their programs in a Buddhist idiom to win support from the masses (indicating thereby the importance of Buddhism in Burmese society) this is a useful paper. As a "refutation" of Weber, it fails. (Not that Weber is necessarily right, but this paper does not show that he is wrong). The paper should present some summary conclusions. The last paragraph is indefensible. The author ascribes too much importance to abstractions and too little to actual details of political organization and process. It would seem desirable in addition for him to refer more adequately to the work of contemporaries in this field. The literature on contemporary Burma seems to have been used only partially. There certainly should be some mention, for example, of the very significant Young Buddhist Association and The General Council of Buddhist Associations which appeared in the inter-war period. These and other important elements are presented in John Cady's *History of Modern Burma*, among many other sources. The paper may be too dependent on citations from religious texts, and too little on intimate acquaintance with Burmese history and culture. For example, Burmese peasants are all practicing Buddhists, yet there has been no great enthusiasm among them for a policy of state socialism or of the sorts of things the author suggests should somehow be the case given the socialist elements in Buddhist theology. The land reform program has in fact been much less than a success in the areas where it has been applied. Finally, there is not a clearly developed argument which supports the paper's thesis, and the material is not as coherently and logically presented as it might be. Some of this difficulty may stem from stylistic problems, but I suspect that a clearer organization would also help. No editorial board can of course claim to be omniscient, and I realize that you may prefer to submit your paper in its present form to another journal... Rhoads Murphey".

On November 9th, 1964 I replied:

PROFESSOR RHOADS MURPHEY
EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL OF ASIAN STUDIES

Dear Professor Murphey,

This is in reply to your letter of October 24th, about my article "Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Socialism". Your Referee wrongly attributes to me a refutation of Max Weber – in order to refute my alleged "refutation". There is "no contra-Weber" thesis involved but Weber's method applied in my one sentence stating that new materials (which Weber could not have used) have not confirmed his generalization. (If a refutation had been intended I would have plainly said that my material refutes Weber and devoted more than one sentence to him.) The anonymous referee having chosen this point, I shall go into it now. He writes: "HIS MAIN THESIS IS NOT AT ALL SUPPORTED IN MY OPINION BY HIS DATA... HE CLAIMS THAT THE HISTORICAL, IN CONTRAST TO THE BUDDHIST CANONICAL EVIDENCE REFUTES MAX WEBER'S THESIS THAT THERE IS NO NEXUS BETWEEN BUDDHIST IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL ACTION... THERE IS NO EVIDENCE PRESENTED THAT THEY [Burmese rulers] BEHAVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE IDEALS." I have not spoken about historical evidence proving Buddhist behaviour but on the contrary written that "many of Burma's rulers conquered by methods of blood and iron." I have only stated that their historical lay Buddhism proclaimed such a nexus as a goal. There is quite a difference between *Historical Buddhism* (epigraphical material) and historical evidence for Buddhist action (just as Historical Christianity is not the same as historical evidence for Christian behaviour). I did claim that my material does not confirm ("does not bear out") Max Weber's contention that there is no bridge between Buddhist ethics and social action. (To prove this does not require proving that all rulers claiming Buddhist goals acted accordingly. I have stated specifically "that the pragma of power... worked as an obstacle to Buddhist renunciation.") If there were no such "bridge," this would have meant that no social action had been *conceived* for Buddhist goals. Only *if* I had claimed that this bridge was actually passed, by those who proclaimed it would I have had to prove that rulers professing Buddhist ethics acted in accordance with them. (This was not the purpose of my paper: Otherwise king Mindon of 1853–1878 who, in modern times, is known to have acted by Buddhist ethics, would have been pertinent. Pertinent would have also been the fact that U Nu's leniency towards insurgents and ethnic minorities is attributed – even by his worst enemies in Burma – to applied Buddhism.)

"THE USE OF BUDDHIST IDIOMS... TO GAIN MASS SUPPORT FOR A POLITICAL PROGRAM IS NOT THE SAME AS A SYSTEMATIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL ACTION AND RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONAL BASIS FOR SUCH ACTION – WHICH IS WEBER'S POINT...," writes your qualified referee. Assuming that the statesmen in question used Buddhist idioms to gain mass support for a political program in itself (inadvertently) presupposes that *for those whose support they solicited* the Buddhist idiom must have been among the motivational bases for political behaviour. (Otherwise those who "used Buddhist idiom to gain mass support" were merely wasting their time, for more than two thousand years, ever since Ashoka.) Your letter instructs me: "THE FACT THAT U BA SWE OR OTHERS TRIED TO MAKE MARXISM ACCEPTABLE BY SHOWING [your referee must have meant *claiming*] THAT IT IS GOOD BUDDHISM IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM A MAN BECOMING A MARXIST BECAUSE MARXISM STEMS FROM BUDDHISM." Nobody has ever claimed that it was not quite different. Nor did I quote anybody to *prove* "that Marxism

stems from Buddhism." (Such quotations can only be meant to show that in an acculturation context the unfamiliar modern is absorbed in terms of nativism through the familiar and traditional. If I had claimed that Marxism *stems from Buddhism*, I would have called the article "Buddhist causes of Burmese Marxism." But I did not happen to do so.

I was unaware – until your letter instructed me otherwise – that the political ethos of religious traditions can only be relevant for investigation if those professing them *behave* in accordance with such ethos. If this is so, then I presume that the political ethics of Christianity, Liberalism, and Communism should not have been investigated or documented because those professing them did not always act in a Christian, Liberal, or Communistic way (while their political actions were not always primarily caused by their Christian, Liberal, or Communist ethics). Nor had I realized that, because Burma is mainly studied by political scientists, somebody whose main interest happens to be the history of *ideas* should like they abstain from "ASCRIBING TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ABSTRACTIONS AND TOO LITTLE TO ACTUAL DETAILS OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS."

Precisely because it is not customary to ascribe "TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ABSTRACTIONS" when dealing with Burma, it is not possible to refer about abstractions to the "WORK OF CONTEMPORARIES IN THIS FIELD". It is not possible for the simple reason that the contemporaries in "THIS FIELD" deal with "DETAILS OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS" while my paper happens to be concerned with abstractions (there are few things as abstract as Buddhism – and it has "Buddhist backgrounds" in its title). Somehow, contemporaries who have worked, from Burmese sources, on the impact of Buddhist ideas on Burmese socialism are, for some strange reason, not mentioned in our bibliographies.

A book remotely touching the subject is Van der Mehden's, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia* (from which I learn new material *about Indonesia*). It establishes a common model between Philippine Catholic, Indonesian Moslem, and Burmese Buddhist religious politics. I might have been impressed by its author's conclusion about the small bearing of Buddhism on recent Burmese developments, if he had shown some evidence of having consulted sources expressing Buddhist political ethics or even mentioned such sources in his bibliography. Insistence that utterances are not relevant because they did not determine action would seem more convincing if those who insist that way had shown familiarity with such utterances.

"THESE AND OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS ARE PRESENTED IN JOHN CADY'S *History of Modern Burma*, AMONG MANY OTHER SOURCES," thinks your referee. Indeed, "OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS" are presented by Mr. Cady. *But this particular element* (the impact of Buddhist thought on Burmese political idea) is not.

Your referee finds that my paper "MAY BE TOO DEPENDENT ON CITATIONS FROM RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND TOO LITTLE ON INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH BURMESE HISTORY AND CULTURE." *If* noting Buddhist texts indicates ignorance of Burmese history and culture, *then* I must plead guilty to such ignorance. And *if* disregarding ideas from Buddhist texts (in favour of ACTUAL DETAILS OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS," I presume) implies "INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH BURMESE HISTORY AND CULTURE," *then* your referee must certainly have INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH BURMESE HISTORY AND CULTURE, not to mention the Burmese peasantry. Thus he states that "BURMESE PEASANTS ARE ALL PRACTISING BUDDHISTS, YET THERE HAS BEEN NO GREAT ENTHUSIASM FOR A POLICY OF STATE SOCIALISM OR OF THE SORT OF THING THE AUTHOR SUGGESTS SHOULD SOMEHOW BE THE CASE GIVEN THE SOCIALISTIC ELEMENTS IN BUDDHIST

THEOLOGY." I am aware neither of the existence of Theravada-Buddhist *Theology* nor of *socialist* elements in it (though some Buddhist modernists cited have insisted on them). There is considerable material on Burmese peasant movements in the name of a Messianic Buddhist perfect society (during the entire century up to 1932 and to a reduced extent even now, as Michael Mendelson's research has proved. The fact that such post-war Burmese parties as opposed state socialism attracted only a negligibly small percentage of votes, seems to indicate rural majority preference for state socialism. As far as there was recent Burmese enthusiasm in politics, it *was* enthusiasm for U Nu with his Buddhist Socialism. I would love to know where your referee became so intimate with Burmese peasants... I know only two monographs (unpublished American dissertations) about Burmese villagers; they do not deal with peasant political folklore. But "THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM HAS IN FACT BEEN MUCH LESS THAN A SUCCESS..." *If* this lack of success had been due to the peasants rejecting socialism, then recent elections would have shown it, I presume. Nor have I ever claimed that such political facts were necessarily *caused* by Buddhist traditions about a welfare state. I have only pointed out that such traditions exist (though mostly disregarded in the literature *about* Burma) and that they are among the factors of Burmese development.

The above indicates that it was not primarily Reasoning that motivated the "objections" of your particular referees. Nor was it demonstrated knowledge of materials not used by me, evidence of such materials as would counterbalance my documentation, which prompted their "counter-arguments" ...

Yours truly,
SARKISYANZ

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INDEX OF DYNASTIES, INSTITUTIONS, RELIGIOUS TERMS, ETHNIC NAMES

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