

# Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

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Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

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## I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

### **Travelogue in Various Perspectives**

*Gandalarit*, the book that is introduced in this working paper, contains the report about the first official<sup>1</sup> journey to a foreign country by then Thakin Nu, Burma's future first Prime Minister. As with almost all Nagani books, it has not yet been thoroughly evaluated in an academic paper written in a Western language, once again with the remarkable exception of Tin Htway's thesis on the emergence and development of political writing in Burmese literature. But since only summaries of his thesis were published in scientific journals without any of his quotations from some of the works reviewed and assessed by him, this volume is the first chance for Westerners to get some information about Nu's travelogue. Part of it will include Tin Htway's assessment of Nu's book and the small section of it translated by him.

Nu's work can be put into different contexts. To start with an observation of lesser weight: Considered as a travelogue, it is one of the first accounts - if not the very first - of a Burmese writer undertaking travel by air plane.<sup>2</sup>

Other aspects are more important. First of all, the book highlights the Burmese interest in developments which were taking place in the neighboring countries in the context of the global situation after the outbreak of the war in Europe which happened three months before the journey begun in December 1939. The world situation was watched attentively by the Burmese public. One aspect of this observation was the question of how these global developments contributed to the attainment of Burma's independence.

One prerequisite to achieve this ultimate goal was unity among the Burmese themselves. Here a second aspect of the book comes into the picture. The delegation of which Nu was a member consisted of nine people who represented various segments of Burmese society. A closer look at the composition of the delegation and their performance before,

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<sup>1</sup> For Nu's visit to India in 1937 see vol. 1 of this series..

<sup>2</sup> See the remarks in Tin Hlaing's book report. – Myo Nyunt in his book on the Burma Rd. (Today's Myanma, No. 48 according to Kyaw Hoe's list) provides the information that the flight was the result of an agreement between the British and the Chinese government to open an air connection between Europe and Chungking via Burma. The flight of the delegation was operated by China Airlines and was the maiden flight from Burma to China.

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during and after the journey may cast light on the kind of cooperation - or non-cooperation - between different Burmese persons and groups who contacted representatives of the great neighboring country.

For Nu, the journey was his first trip abroad as a member of a delegation and provided an opportunity for him to get some experience in a field that he would later enjoy very when he had become Burma's Prime Minister. "Travel and Diplomacy" is the heading of the longest chapter of his autobiography.<sup>1</sup> This invites comparisons of *Gandalarit* with Nu's later visit to China in 1954 and deliberations about the style and the foundations of independent Burma's foreign policies that were strongly influenced by Nu's convictions and personality.

In the following, these three perspectives shall be elaborated in some more detail, after some remarks on the character of the whole enterprise that gave cause to writing the book. These remarks are meant to outline some of the issues that might be worthwhile areas of further investigation.

### **Winning Friends and Influencing People**

As Tin Hlaing writes in his book report, it is not yet quite clear, what the "Friendship (or Goodwill<sup>2</sup>) Mission" to China was about. Who invited the delegation? Who was responsible for the schedule? Who had what expectations?

Because of this uncertainty, this paragraph dealing with the impact of the developments in countries that neighbored Burma and the country's struggle for independence starts with some observations on Nu, the author of the book and - in retrospect - the most prominent of the nine-member delegation. He was 32 years of age when the journey started and thus the youngest member of the delegation. He represented the *Dobama Asiayone* and could be considered as one of the oldest of the younger generation of the wing of the association under the patronage of Thakin Kodaw Hmaing that had been joined by many students and ex-students before and after its split in 1938. This wing of

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<sup>1</sup> Nu (1975), *Saturday's Son*. Translated by U Law Yone. Edited by U Kyaw Win. New Haven and London, Yale University Press. The chapter contains 60 pages.

<sup>2</sup> The name "goodwill mission" appears in Mya Sein's biographical note in *Who's Who in Burma. 1961*. Rangoon, People's Literature Committee and House, p. 148. According to this note, Mya Sein was deputy leader of the delegation.

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the *Dobama Asiayone* would develop into the leading force of the independence struggle under the leadership of Aung San.

Nu clearly was a man of many talents: teacher and headmaster, student activist cum functionary, co-founder of the Nagani Book Club, play-writer and - above all - an ardent nationalist.

He had exposed this last quality on different occasions. Nu had been present at the rehearsal and first performance of the *Dobama* Song in 1930 that was to become Burma's national anthem. Together with a rather small group of activists he had burned the British flag on April 1, 1937, the day the new constitution of Burma, now separated from India, became effective.<sup>1</sup> In 1938, he had joined - reluctantly after being pressured by Aung San as he recalls in his autobiography<sup>2</sup> - the *Dobama Asiayone*. Consequently, he became a member of the Freedom Bloc, founded on October 1, 1939 as a reaction to the outbreak of war in Burma - an alliance that demanded the British to promise independence for Burma as a precondition of Burma's support in the war against Germany. In contrast with Aung San, he always had to be pushed to accept official responsibilities. He practiced his nationalism more through writings, speeches and personal communication than through organizational work.

From this information one assumption may be - rather tentatively - derived. Nu might have had three main ideas in mind when he took off to China. He wanted to communicate his nationalistic ideas to the people he would meet in China, learn from their experiences and transmit his own insights back to Burma. In other words, he wanted to practice the title of the book of Dale Carnegie he had translated into Burmese some time before he left for China - "How to make friends and influence people" - both abroad and at home.

The rather soft character of Nu's and his delegation's aims manifests in a comparison with another travel to India, Burma's second great neighbor, which started some three months. In March 1940, a delegation of the *Dobama Asiayone* under the leadership of Aung San left Burma to attend the yearly meeting of the Indian National Congress that

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<sup>1</sup> Maung Maung (1980), *From Sangha to Laity. Burmese Nationalist Movements, 1920-1940*. New Delhi, Manohar, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Nu 1975, pp. 85-86.

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was held in Ramgarh<sup>1</sup> that year. The aim of this journey was political in the strict sense of the word. Aung San and the other members of his delegation<sup>2</sup> wanted to meet the leadership of the Congress and to present and discuss the manifesto of the Association that had been drafted by Aung San at the end of 1939 and endorsed by the organisation's Central Working Committee. It proclaimed the intention to send delegations "to India and other nations, for an unambiguous presentation of Burma's case and our national demand before the bar of world opinion."<sup>3</sup>

The aims of the Thakin delegation thus were part of a deliberate plan to strive for international political support for the achievement of Burma's freedom. This plan was carried out not just at the big meeting in Ramgarh. On the way back to Burma, Aung San met Subhas Chandra Bose, the former president of the Congress, who had parted with Gandhi. This meeting influenced Aung San's strategy and his actions in the time to come.<sup>4</sup>

Other than the Thakin delegation, the party Nu was a member of did not concentrate on political action but on communication about politics across the border. It thus was the composition and the aims of both delegations that made the difference. Nu - like Aung San in India - did not just want to establish friendly relations; he wanted to contact the leading Chinese communists in order to discuss plans to free Burma from colonial rule. But since the delegation was the guest of Chiang Kai Chek's government in Chungking, he was not able to do so.

### **Various Images of a Burmese Nation Between India and Japan**

Communication with the world outside Burma had been a feature of Burmese politics for some time already. World War I had demonstrated that Burma's fate was firmly linked to

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<sup>1</sup> Ramgarh is situated on the slopes of the Himalaya, almost 2000 meters above sea level.

<sup>2</sup> Other members of the delegation were: Than Tun who led the Communist Party of Burma; Ba Hein (see vol. 3 of this series); and Tun Shein, one of the "Thirty Comrades" who became famous under his *nom de guerre* Bo Yan Naing for his participation in a victory over the retreating British forces in 1942. Tun Shein published his impressions of India in 1940 in Tun Aye's Burma Publishing House.

<sup>3</sup> The text of the Manifesto was published 1959 in the Guardian Magazine, vol. 6, no.1, pp. 21-26. It is reprinted in Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000), *Birma zwischen „Unabhängigkeit Zuerst — Unabhängigkeit Zuletzt“*. *Die birmanischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegungen und ihre Sicht der zeitgenössischen Welt am Beispiel der birmanisch-deutschen Beziehungen zwischen 1920 und 1948*. Hamburg, Lit-Verlag, pp 514-523. The quotation is from p. 522.

<sup>4</sup> For details see Zöllner 2000, pp. 440-444.

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global events. The outbreak of another war in Europe had increased the interest in what happened outside the country and how these events could affect Burma's future. Indicators of this increasing interest were travels abroad, such as those of the two delegations mentioned above, and books published on foreign affairs.

It was the monk U Ottama who influenced Burmese nationalism through his experiences in foreign countries. U Ottama had been in Japan shortly after the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 that shook the belief in the supremacy of European over Asian nations. Later, he studied in Calcutta and after his return to Burma in 1921 brought the idea of the Gandhian non-cooperation movement to Burma and started propagating them in aggressive speeches and thus in a rather un-Gandhian style.

It was not just a matter of temperament that made Burmese resistance against the British different from the Indian model. It was the special Burmese situation that caused a particular "Burmese way" to originate. The impact of all big Asian countries on Burma was characterized by a high degree of ambiguity. India was not only famous for political models like Gandhi, Nehru and Bose, but also infamous for the many immigrants who were regarded as a threat to the economic and social development of Burmans. The same applied, as Nu's book reveals, to a future China that could export still more people to the small and not so densely populated Burma than it had done already. And Japan could not only be regarded as a beacon of Asian modernity at eye level with the West, but also as a power with imperialist attitudes, as already displayed in its war against China. These problems were enhanced by the fact that the foreign powers tried to exert some influence in Burma through their representatives in the country as well as through Burmese friends.

The task of Burmese nationalists was, therefore, to utilize the various events outside and the diverse foreign interests inside Burma for the benefit of the country.

That was a difficult task. As Benedict Anderson has shown, a prerequisite for a nation was the existence of a community - an imagined community. Such a community was substantially forged by the print media which expressed the national essentials in comparison and opposition to other nations in a common language. Consequently, newspapers and books had to be printed and distributed to a public as broadly as possible in order to increase the quantity of people who could support the nation by sharing

fundamental qualitative essentials of a common identity. Nu's book can be regarded as a contribution to this mode of nation-building.

### **Books**

The Nagani Book Club and many other publishing houses founded or expanded in the late 1930s supplied a lot of printed information for the interested public, and on the other hand met the demand of this public for information on "World History with Burma Background", as a book published in April 1938 was entitled.

To give another example: in 1938 a book written by the famous monk U Ottama on "China and Japan" was published - or, perhaps, republished, since U Ottama had lost his interest in public agitation already at that time. Without closer investigation, it only can be assumed that rather different views on how Burma was affected by what happened abroad were circulated. For example, it would be interesting to know how a certain On Kin perceived China, whose book "China as a Burman saw it" was published in mid-1939 in English and Burmese.

A cursory evaluation of the "Burma Catalogue of Books" shows that the Nagani and Burma Publishing House enterprises were by no means the only publishers which informed about foreign affairs and their affects on Burma, but were the keenest and most successful in terms of the number of books published and the number of issues printed, respectively. This reflects the aim of the *Dobama Asiayone* to lead all people of Burma. Part of this objective was the attempt to guide and direct public opinion through their publications. This effort was at least partly successful. A book entitled "Japanese Spy", a translation of a Red Book Club publication of Amleta Vespa's "Secret Agent of Japan" describing Japanese atrocities in China, had to be reprinted five months after the first edition in March 1939. Nu must have read this book, along with others which were issued by Nagani on Chinese affairs before and after this best-seller. Among the first 12 books of Nagani publications were three books translating and commenting on two of Sun Yat Sen's "Three Principles" (Chinese: *San Min Chui*): one on Nationalism and two on Peoples' Power (Democracy). In January 1940, "The Inner History of the Chinese Revolution", an adaptation of a book written by representative of the Kuomintang, which related China's history up to the year 1930, was published. As Tin Hlaing has pointed

out, Nu used sources other than just his first-hand impressions of China to write his book. A closer look could reveal, if and what he borrowed from the other Nagani books published before his journey and at the time of his return.<sup>1</sup>

### **Travels**

Thus, books were a means to convey a comprehensive image of Burma's role in the world to prospective Burmese nationals. Travels were another way to serve that purpose. In the first three decades of the 20th century, Burmese delegations traveled westwards, to India and England, to discuss Burma's affairs with the British.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, individual travelers like Ottama went to India and Japan, bringing back new ideas of how to contest the British way of a "guided way to independence". U Saw, who in 1940 was another competitor for premiership in Burma, toured Japan and Manchuria in 1935/1936 and came back impressed by Japan's powerful performance in the fields of economy, military and political dominance.

The Burmese delegations that set out for China and India in late 1939 and early 1940 combined two features of previous travels. Both represented Burma's will to act independently from Britain in the field of foreign relations, a field that was according to the Government of Burma Act of 1935 still reserved for the British administration. Second, the groups going abroad claimed to stand for the whole of Burma, albeit in different ways and in an exclusivist manner. The group of people going to China was an ethnically mixed one, but apart from Burmans, members from only two of the great immigration communities were included. On the other hands, Shans and other ethnic groups living close to the Chinese border were left out. The delegation was in one respect "all inclusive", but in another respect—exclusive as well, because it accepted the British separation between Burma proper and the "Excluded areas".

Here, another difference from the *Dobama* delegation which visited India can be noticed. The *Dobama* association claimed to be the only Burmese organization representing all

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<sup>1</sup> We do not know yet who was responsible for the selection of each Nagani book for publication, but most likely Nu was involved in this process.

<sup>2</sup> Mya Sein, who took part in the goodwill mission to China, had attended the Round Table Conference in London in 1931 which discussed — without concrete results — the issue of the separation or non-separation of Burma from India.

strata of Burmese society, including the ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup> But this claim was ambivalent as well, since it marginalized all other political groups which were seeking political dominance in the country.

It was thus only one of many images of a future independent Burma which the party could represent in China. A look at the members of the delegation will help to clarify the image which the Chinese hosts may have perceived.

### **Homogeneity, Diversity and Threats of Splits**

a) At first glance, the delegation was “homogenously diverse”. All members were well educated and all Burmans were or had been working in educational institutions.

The delegation’s leader, Ba Lwin, born 1892 in Rangoon, was a senior educator who had served as headmaster and superintendent at different schools and colleges, mostly National Schools. Nu was one of his former students.<sup>2</sup>

Ba, born 1898 in Pakokku in Upper Burma, was working at Rangoon University as a Professor for Education.

Mya Sein, born 1904 in Moulmein (Mawlamyine), was a lecturer at the same University at the time. She was the daughter of May Oung, member of the Young Men’s Buddhist Association, co-founder of the Burma Research Society and minister for Home Affairs until his early death in 1925. In 1931, she represented the Burmese women in the delegation that took part in the Round-Table Conference with the British, and on the way to London visited the headquarters of the League of Nations.<sup>3</sup> In 1938, she had published a book on the “Administration of Burma”. Ba Choe, born 1893, had previously served as a school inspector; in 1921, he left government service to become a journalist. Together with Saya Lun, he tried very hard to build up a National University after the students’ strike of 1920.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This was stressed at the end of the Manifesto; see Zöllner 2000, 522.

<sup>2</sup> After the war, he was — under Nu’s premiership — appointed ambassador to Ceylon (1953-1959).

<sup>3</sup> In the documentation of the conference, she is referred to as “Miss May Oung”.

<sup>4</sup> See vol 2 of this series, pp. 39-41.

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Nu, born 1907 in the Irrawaddy delta region, had worked as a teacher and headmaster before he went to Rangoon where, under Ba Choe's patronage, he started his career as a writer and got involved in the student movement.

The professional background of the four non-Burman members of the group is not yet quite known. It is unlikely that they could also call themselves educators. Ganga Singh was from Mandalay and won the uncontested seat reserved for an Indian in the city in the election of November 1936. As a Member of Parliament, he frequently participated in the debates on different subjects. In 1940, he published the "Burma Parliamentary Companion", compendium containing a lot of information about Burma, the parliament and the world (including an overview about the constitutions of other countries).

Information on the three Chinese members shows that they had different professional backgrounds. Saw Taik Leong was a lawyer, William Tseng the Secretary of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce whereas the profession of S.C. Liu is not yet known.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, all members of the delegation represented the educated elites of Burma. The participants shared an interest in "culture put into practice" and, accordingly, the visit of schools and training centres constituted a focal point of the program prepared for the mission. In their many speeches the members could claim that they stood for the whole of Burma in many regards. They came from different regions and different ethnic groups; both sexes were represented, as well as different political orientations within the Burmans. Ba Lwin, Ba Choe and Nu were strong nationalists, whereas Mya Sein wanted to reconcile Burmese and English ways of thinking and acting.<sup>2</sup> Professor Ba may be regarded a "technocrat" in the field of education.

b) Therefore, the delegation was well composed and combined homogeneity and plurality. It represented a modern Burma consisting of different groups all striving for independence following the principle of "unity in diversity". But there are also indications that this surface of harmony concealed serious splits. Two arguments for this

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<sup>1</sup> For details see the appendix to Tin Hlaing's Book Report pp. 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> Her father had left the YMBA because of the association's rude anti-English propaganda. Mya Sein herself left Burma with the British when the Japanese occupied Burma in 1942 and acted as an advisor for the Burmese Government in Exile.

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assumption shall be given, both based on the fact that Nu was a Thakin and on some observations taken from his book.<sup>1</sup>

As a member of the *Dobama Asiayone*, one could expect that Nu championed the association's claim to act for all the people of Burma. According to the self-conception, his role could not be confined to standing for just one segment of Burma's society. As a Thakin, Nu "was" Burma. Of course, as a member of a delegation under the leadership of his former teacher, he could not act according to this belief. He had to play two roles, and apparently he did.

On one hand, Nu represented the *Dobama Asiayone* - as one party among others - and at least one other Burmese group as well.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand he acted as a representative of Burma as a whole. He did so by intoning the *Dobama* Song at every occasion possible. This song had been created in 1930 and popularized the new movement. Nu had been present at the first performance.<sup>3</sup> On the second conference of the *Dobama* association, the song was declared the country's national anthem. Obviously, this symbolic rank attributed to it was accepted by a wider public than just the followers of the association, and the song actually became, with an amended text, Burma's national anthem.<sup>4</sup> It is mentioned in Nu's travelogue that Mya Sein, who was definitely no Thakinma,<sup>5</sup> joined in the chorus of the song.<sup>6</sup> She thereby accepted, if reluctantly, the symbolic meaning of the song as an expression of "We-Burmeseness", as one component of an emerging Burmese national identity.

On the other hand, Ba Choe, who was Nu's mentor, admonished him from time to time not to sing the song. Given the fact that Ba Choe was a staunch nationalist, but no Thakin, this intervention can be interpreted in different ways. First, Ba Choe felt that Nu,

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<sup>1</sup> For references from the book, please see the following book reports by Mo Mo Thant and Tin Hlaing.

<sup>2</sup> On one occasion, Nu delivered a message as a representative of Burma's students. A closer investigation into the book could reveal if he spoke for other groups as well.

<sup>3</sup> For details on the song's history and meaning see [U] Ohn (1963), "Face, Butterfly and Two Songs: A Prologue to the Study of the Elements of Myth and Magic in Burmese Politics", in: *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 46,1: 11-25; Khin Yi (1988), *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)*. Ithaca, Cornell University: pp. 6-8, Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000), pp. 145-160.

<sup>4</sup> Despite the many changes in Burmese politics, the decision of 1947 remains valid until today.

<sup>5</sup> The term for female Thakins.

<sup>6</sup> For the Burmese texts of the original and the current national anthem see Khin Yi 1988, Appendix, p. 10-12. For the English text see Tin Htway's translation below (pp. 85-87) and Ohn 1963.

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being the youngest Burman delegate, defied the rules of etiquette by pushing his message to the fore. Second, the rebuke was a reverberation of personal disappointment; when Ba Choe founded a Fabian<sup>1</sup> party before the 1936 election, Nu had joined or even co-founded it. Later, after the party had won only one seat in the election,<sup>2</sup> Nu had joined the *Dobama Asiyone*. Third, Ba Choe was of the opinion that the song stressed Burman nationalism too much in view of the fact that three members of the delegation were Chinese and one Indian, and that Burmese-Indian riots (as well as, to a lesser smaller degree, Burmese-Chinese riots) had recently occurred.

Only after further study of the short history of the “Fabian Movement” in Burma can the motives of Ba Choe’s behaviour can be more clearly assessed. But it is evident that Nu’s performances not only endangered the group’s harmony but also indicated the threat of a fundamental rift within the Burmese nation because of the claim to leadership of one political group.

A second argument substantiates the existence of this danger. In his book, Nu writes extensively about the Chinese communists even though he did not have personal contact with any of their representatives. Tin Hlaing in his book review considers the possibility of a special assignment issued to Nu by the *Dobama* headquarters to contact the Chinese communists.<sup>3</sup> Such an instruction was in line with the Manifesto of the *Dobama* which praised the Russian communists for their policy towards small nations. There would have to have been another reason for Fabian Ba Choe to criticize Nu, because the Fabian approach to social reform was very different from the communists’ revolutionary concept. Anyway, Nu’s – temporary - interest in the Chinese communists foreshadowed the later split within the AFPFL and the tensions between Burma and China after independence.

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<sup>1</sup> On the “Fabian Connection”, see the foreword to vol. 5 of this series.

<sup>2</sup> Ba Choe had not contested the election himself. The name of the Fabian MP is not yet known because the candidates were not affiliated with any organised parties but with certain political leaders.

<sup>3</sup> This deliberation can be corroborated by Aung San’s plan in August 1940, when he left Burma for Amoy in order to get in contact with Chinese communists.

### **Building Friendship through Charismatic Diplomacy**

In his memoirs, Nu mentions his visit to China “in 1940”.<sup>1</sup> He recalls the deep impression of pictures shown to him which depicted the effects of Japanese bombs that killed innocent children and his visits to nurseries, orphanages and schools, where he personally encountered-victims of war. These personal experiences, he writes, motivated his acts in the field of foreign policy after independence, and - as usual - writing in the third person about himself:

Although many years elapsed, this picture of misery, engraved in his heart, refused to fade. In fact, he became so obsessed with this subject that the spectre of innocent Chinese children being once again destroyed in the tens of thousands and in the missions under a rain of bombs and shells, were war to be declared between China and America, haunted him like a ghost.

This quotation can be regarded as a clue to the understanding of Nu’s foreign policy. It was based on personal goodwill and aimed at the attainment of peace through the instrument of a series of “friendship missions”. Nu describes at length how through his trust-building meetings with Chou En Lai and Chairman Mao solved the Chinese-Burma border problem,<sup>2</sup> how he tried to bridge the Chinese-American rift through “undiplomatic” means both in Peking<sup>3</sup> and in Washington<sup>4</sup> and how he helped, against the advice of professional diplomats, to free six Americans who were held as prisoners of war in China.<sup>5</sup> The same basic features can be found in his recollections of visits to other countries. Here is another quotation on Nu’s visit to the Soviet Union:

While in Moscow U Nu went to visit the mausoleum where the bodies of Lenin and Stalin were preserved for public display. U Nu was very disgruntled with Stalin for his interference in Burma’s affairs, but when he looked at Stalin’s earthly remains he felt a change come into his heart. He reasoned that Stalin, who in life had oppressed, tortured, and murdered so many, could not possibly find happiness after death. He must have gone straight to hell and must at that very moment be suffering great torment. U Nu felt pity for

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<sup>1</sup> Nu 1975, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> Nu 1975, pp. 237-238; 252-266.

<sup>3</sup> Nu 1975, pp. 239-241;

<sup>4</sup> Nu 1975, pp. 248-251.

<sup>5</sup> Nu 1975, p. 241.

## Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

him and, according to Buddhist faith, wished him deliverance by extending to him a share of the merit he himself had acquired through alms-giving and other spiritual and corporal works. The efficiency of this merit sharing was such that even gods in their abode could find added bliss, and if Stalin from the nether regions should make the single response “*thadu*”<sup>1</sup> he would be delivered. With this faith, therefore, U Nu invoked the name of Stalin and solemnly diffused merit over him.

Here, Nu depicts himself as a Buddhist saint who practices compassion (Pali: *metta*) towards all, following the example of the Buddha.

Nu’s attitude towards foreign (and domestic) politics was to a great extent based on Buddhist virtues. That leads to the question of what impact this attitude had on Burma’s history during the time of Nu’s premiership - and thereafter.

### **About this Volume**

As with the previous working papers, this one intends to offer material and information which may help to better appreciate developments in Burma and Myanmar and serve as a base for further studies and discussions. As usual, the book on which this paper focuses is introduced through Kyaw Hoe’s short bibliographic information and through two longer book reports which are commented upon by two German scholars.

In addition, two excerpts of Tin Htway’s work on the emergence of political writing in Burma are reproduced here. Both illustrate some of the preceding introductory remarks. The translation of Nu’s description of the Japanese air raid on Chungking gives the background for the recollection of his travel quoted above. More importantly, it indicates a consistency in assessing events in a Buddhist way. What upsets Nu first and foremost in his solemn re-narration of the Japanese air-raid was the fact that the Japanese attacked the Chinese city on and after a high Buddhist holiday. After that they could no longer Buddhists, but only “so-called Buddhists”.

The text of the *Dobama* song is informative because it paints a portrait of the nature of Burmese nationalism displayed for the public inside and outside Burma at that time. According to the editor’s knowledge, this is the first translation of this song into English,

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<sup>1</sup> Nu’s footnote: An expression of joyful approval for a meritorious act.

## Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

which had a great impact on Burmese society and politics in Western publications.<sup>1</sup> The English text of the song reproduced in Khin Yi's book<sup>2</sup> is different from the translation of the original Burmese text. A comparison of both versions illustrates the problem of harmonizing a "Burman" nationalism with a "Burmese" one which had to include other ethnic groups than the Burmans.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the reproduction of the *Dobama* song adds to the translation of the *Nagani* song which was also done by Tin Htway and was reproduced in the first volume of this series.<sup>4</sup> Some other songs translated by Tin Htway and other authors shall be publicised in later volumes and will hopefully stimulate articles on the influence of "political pop songs" (and poems) on Burmese society and politics.

Hamburg, September 2009 (Last update)

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<sup>1</sup> Ohn 1963 translates only parts of the song. For a translation into German by Uta Gärtner see Zöllner 2000, pp.: 147-148.

<sup>2</sup> Khin Yi 1988, p.: 9.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of this question (and a reproduction of the English version in Khin Yi's book) in German see Zöllner 2000, pp. 152-160.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 22-23.

## **II. MATERIAL ON NU, GANDALARIT**

### **1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information**

Translated from his *Nagani Bibliography*, pp. 70-71 by Frankie Tun

Written by Thakhin Nu (1940) Photos, one map

It is a traveling documentary written by U Nu after he went to China as member of the Burmese friendship delegation. He tried to present this as an article to the Burmese people to let them know the present situation of China's independence movements. As members of the delegate group, U Ba Lwin, U Ba , Mr. Gangar Singh, Daw Mya Sein, U Ba Cho , Mr. Saw Tate Lyaung, Mr. William Chang , Mr. Liu and U Nu himself were included.

The journey was noted as the author's first experience of travelling with an air plane. The situation of China around that time (1939) was presented in details. All the details about a meeting with Chang Kai Shek and how Mao Tse Tung and his communists were fighting against the Japanese were included.

The Photos included were:

1. A photo of Chinese play in which one Japanese Captain was beating someone.
2. The photo of which the delegate members talking with Chang Kai Shek and his wife.
3. Mao Tse Tung's photo (Mao's middle age photo).
4. Bin Shin's photo.<sup>1</sup>

At the back of the book one map was attached which showed the over 6000 miles journey marched nearly in one year by the Chinese communists.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This photo was missing in the copy of the book which was used for the book reviews in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The map was not included in the copy used for this paper.

### Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

As a supplementary document, the book included the Chinese National Song, the last will written by Doctor Sun Yat Sen for his wife and children and the last will he wrote for the people.

The book was divided in 21 chapters. The last chapter was written with the heading of “Chinese and Japanese, who would win?”. It also mentioned that the Japanese could not win the war in the long run because they were following the wrong direction and were too greedy; therefore, he urged Japan and China to stop fighting and Japan should try to become a reliable, trust worthy leader of Asia.

The book was published on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, 1940. The first edition was 4000 books and sold at 12 pence per book.



Page 120:

A scene from a Chinese play showing a Japanese captain beating a Chinese

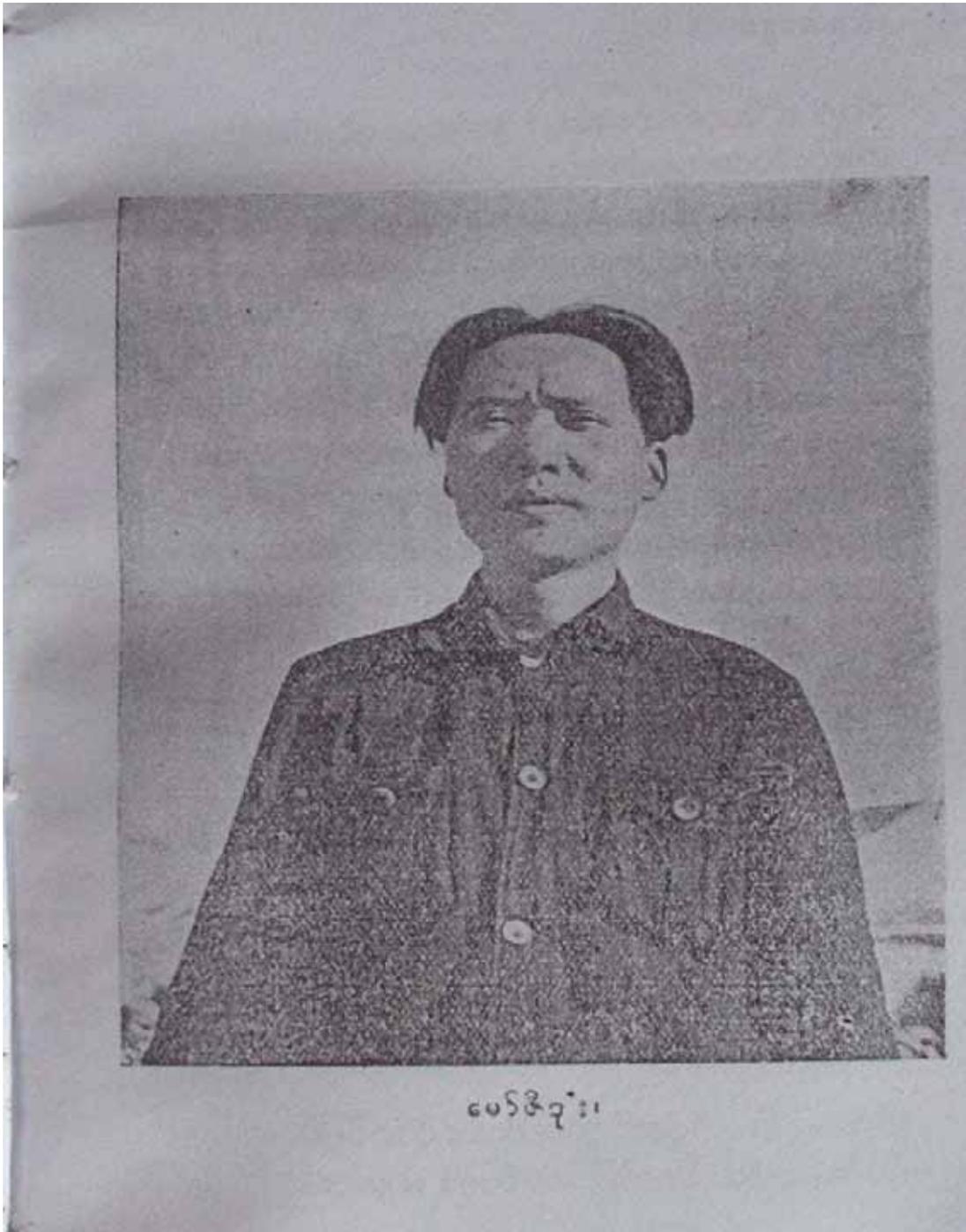


Page 136:

Chiang Kai-shek, Madame Chiang Kai-shek and the Delegation<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> First row (from left to right): Ba Lwin, Chiang Kai Tshek and wife, Mya Sein, Ganga Singh, Ba Choe; second row Ba, L.C. Liu, Saw Leong, William Tseng. Nu is missing on the photo. Maybe, he took it.



Page 248:  
Mao Tse Tung

## 2. Mo Mo Thant: Report on Nagani Book No. 47 *Gandarlarit*

Translation: Georg Noack

Translator's remark: *A major problem during the translation of this paper were the names of Chinese places and persons. Though well known persons like Sun Yat Sen or Chiang Kai Shek could easily be identified, others could be located in reference works or a map. Some however, that were not known to the translator and could not be found in reference works, are almost certainly misspelled or even totally unidentifiable. This is due to the inability of the translator to retrace the original Chinese sounds from transcription in Myanmar script.*

### Biography of the Author

Thakhin Nu, the author of *Gandalarit*<sup>1</sup> was born on 25 May 1907 in Wakema, Ayeyarwady division. His parents were U San Htun and Daw Saw Khin. When he was young, he studied at the English-Myanmar middle school at Wakema. From 1922 he continued his education at Yangon national school and passed the tenth class examinations in 1922. In 1925 he went to Yangon college, passed the I.A. examination in 1927, and received a B.A. degree in 1929.

While attending law classes, he interrupted his studies to become a teacher at Panataw national school. He came back to university in 1930 to continue his law studies, but left again and married. He became the principal of Patanaw national upper school in 1933. When he returned to Yangon University in 1934, he became the president of the university students' union. He wrote articles, dramas and one-act-plays for the *Deedok* journal. After writing for the *Deedok* journal for one year, he founded the *Nagani* Book Club. Because the monthly published *Nagani* books became very popular, he was soon able to publish additional special editions every two or three months. 1942, while he was preparing to start the publication of a *Nagani* daily newspaper the Second World War reached Burma [*bama pyi*] and Thakhin Nu was imprisoned on charge of civil disobedience and sabotage of government military affairs. Not able to continue publications he had to dissolve *Nagani* Book Club.

He assumed the name Thakhin Nu after joining the *Do Bamar asi-ayone* ("We-Bamar association") together with Thakhin Aung San. In 1938, when the *Do Bamar asi-ayone* split into two factions led by Thakhin Kodaw Hmaing and Thakhin U Ba Sein

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<sup>1</sup> *Gandarlarit* [translit. *gandhālaraj*] denotes China here, but is supposedly derived from the ancient kingdom (*raj*) of *Gandhāra*.

## Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

respectively, Thakhin Nu joined Thakhin Kodaw Hmaing's group. During the war Thakhin Nu represented this group in the *Bamar-htwet-yat gaing* (Freedom Bloc) that brought together Dr. Ba Maw's Poor Man's or *Da ma* (machete) party, U Tun Aung, barrister at law of the other *Do Bamar asi-ayon* faction, U Ba Oo of *bahosi* newspapers' and the Karen leader Saw Pe Thar. Thakhin Nu was sentenced to one year in prison for his petition at the Tharrawady conference and another year for a speech he held at Jubilee Hall. He was not released after these two years but kept in custody under the Defence of Burma [*bamar naingngan*] Act. Only when the Japanese army was about to reach Mandalay, Thakhin Nu and other politicians came free. When he had left Mandalay jail he wrote his book "Burma in five Years". In 1946 he became the chairman of the AFPFL. After General Aung San and the other leaders had been assassinated, he became deputy chairman of the interim government. Myanmar became an independent country on 4 January 1948 following the Nu-Attlee agreement signed by the leaders of Myanmar and Britain on 17 October 1947 in London. Thakhin Nu had to face and cope with insurgency during the civil war after independence. He received much help from Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian prime minister. In order to advance the Burmese-Chinese friendship he travelled to China in 1954 when he was prime minister. He attended the Colombo conference that was held 1954 in the Indonesian city of Bogor. He could organize the Asian and African countries' conference, attended the Bandung conference in 1955, and paid state visits to Israel, Yugoslavia, England, the United States of America, and to Japan. When the AFPFL split into two factions, he led the "clean" [*thant shin*] group. He resigned from the post of prime minister in 1956 and resumed his office as prime minister being the leader of the winning AFPFL faction which changed its name to "Union Party" in February 1960. While he tried to reform his party in 1962 there was a coup-d'etat. He spent almost five years in prison until he was released in October 1966. After taking a rest he left for India and spent many years there. Under the 1980 amnesty order, he came back to Myanmar. He passed away on February 14, 1995 at the age of 88.

## **Gandarlarit**

Thakhin Nu's book "*Gandarlarit*" was published by the *Nagani* Book Club as one of its special editions. *Nagani* Press, 120 Montgomery Road, Yangon is given as the publishing address.

It is written as the travelogue of a journey to China that nine members of a friendship delegation including Thakhin Nu undertook from December 12 to December 31, 1939. Twenty chapters inform in detail about the journey. Thakhin Nu wrote about the Chinese leaders of that period he met, their biographies, and policies.

The nine members of the mission were Daw Mya Sein, U Ba Lwin, U Ba, Mr. Ganga Singh, U Ba Choe, Thakhin Nu, Mr. Sao Teik Hlaung, Mr. William Jang and Mr. Liu. Thakhin Nu was a delegate of the *Do Bamar Asi-Ayone*. The journey started in Myanmar with a flight from Yangon to Lashio in northern Shan State, and went on with another flight from Lashio to Chungking in China. The group returned from China by car in five stages on the 860 miles long China-Burma road to Lashio in Myanmar. Thakhin Nu and the members of the friendship delegation visited China during the time of the Chinese-Japanese war. The Japanese army had made air raids and conquered Chinese towns, so the Chinese tried to win the war by spreading the slogan "China's revolution must be successful and the Japanese policy must fall down". About two thousand citizens of Chungking had been killed from Japanese bombings on 3 May 1939 before the delegation's arrival. In the book, Thakhin Nu expressed the opinion that the Japanese could commit such horrible deeds with weapons financed by the profits of the goods they sold to Myanmar. He suspected that Myanmar would be treated in the same way if it didn't meet Japan's demands.

In **chapter two** the reader gets to know how the delegates presented their respective organisations' introductions and policies. U Nu read the introductory paper of the *Do Bamar asi-ayone* and U Ba Choe stated that, according to the doctrine of the Fabianists he represented, the Japanese policy of domination was unacceptable. Daw Mya Sein, the

only female delegate praised the Chinese women who equalled their men in fighting the Japanese enemy.

Thakhin Nu talked about the important issues in Chinese-Myanmar relations at the dinner table of the YMBA at Chungking. Due to the completion of a road and a railway line between China and Myanmar the connections had become much better. He talked about his fear that there might be a mass migration of Chinese into Myanmar. From the Chinese side it was answered that this issue was no reason to worry because China would need much manpower to rebuild the country and would therefore call back all Chinese living abroad. Thakhin Nu didn't have a chance to make further demands.

The **fifth chapter** of the book *Gandalarit* explains in detail the Chinese Kuo Min Tang. If one wants to know about China, one has to know about the Kuo Min Tang. The Kuo Min Tang was founded by Dr. Sun Yat Sen as a national organisation after ousting the Manchu government. "Kuo" means Nation, "Min" means the people and "Tang" means organization. The members were Chinese politicians exiled to Japan. The form of the Kuo Min Tang was similar to the German Nazi party, the Italian fascist party and the Russian communist party. The difference was, that not every member of the Chinese government had to be a member of the Kuo Min Tang. Whether they were members or not, with the exception of socialists, communists or new commune members all had the same rights. Among the members of the delegation U Ba Choe and Mr. Ganga Singh joined the Kuo Min Tang. There were no membership fees and the only duty of those who joined the organization was to learn Dr. Sun Yat Sens testament by heart. It is explained that the organisation had about 10.000 members. Every two years the Kuo Min Tang held a party congress that delegated power to the central executive committee and the central supervisory committee who had to follow the congress' decisions. Under these two committees were the Chinese government and the five administrative bodies called Yuan. During the time of the war against Japan the Kuo Min Tang also formed a central war commission. The system of five bodies ruling the country was developed by Dr. Sun Yat Sen, taking over whatever he found positive in soviet Russia and the democratic countries of the West. If one looks at Chinese history, there were no organizations under absolute monarchy until 1911. After ousting the Manchu dynasty the Chinese republic

had to be founded over night. It is a remarkable fact that the first political elections took place within one month. Of the five U.N. bodies, the first was the cabinet, the second was a legislative body, the third a judicial body, the fourth was in charge of examinations of state personal and the fifth was supervising the work of the other four.

Like in Myanmar, Chinese politics depended very much on the leaders' personalities. There were several subgroups within each political body rivalling for power splitting and reuniting with each other. After the Japanese-Chinese war had begun and the "Chinese National Union" was formed, the internal quarrels became few.

In chapter five there are explanations about six groups in the Kuo Min Tang. The "National Liberation Army" was founded by Dr. Sun Yat Sen and fought the Japanese most intensively. It was founded around 1935 and many Chinese students joined it. Second, the Kin-Tong National Organisation of Chinese hating the Japanese very much. The leader was Ban Fo, chairman of the Chinese government bank, a son of Dr. Sun Yat Sen from his first marriage. Third, the CC or Ching Brothers Organisation, a right wing group of Chinese merchants, bankers and rich who wanted to fight communism.

Fourth, there was the "Political Education Acquirement Group" led by General Chang Chen. It consisted mostly of those who had studied in Japan and wanted a friendly relationship with Japan. Fifth was the Whan Po Wah organisation with officials from Whang Po Wha military school. Their leader was the famous General Chang Chen. The sixth group was the strongly rightist "Northwestern Range Organisation" that was already about to dissolve.

Like in Myanmar politics, these six groups depended on their leaders' personality and the doctrine of the Kuo Min Tang was mostly personality cult. All six groups were allied with Chiang Kai Shek and had much influence within the Kuo Min Tang.

The **sixth chapter** is about the educational institutions that the delegation could visit. There were 108 institutions for higher education, including upper schools, colleges and universities. 77 institutions had to be relocated due to the war. Most Chinese students were anti-Japanese and traveled around to hold speeches and encourage those affected by the Japanese bombings. Therefore the Japanese military attacks targeted Chinese

educational institutions. The universities could no longer operate at their original location but had to be relocated. So the Chinese educational system spread to all areas of the country. The losses of the Chinese educational system caused through Japanese destructions equaled 65,000,000 Yuan. Before the war there were 5 million books at the Chinese universities and colleges, now there were only 2,5 millions left. It is explained roughly how much suffering was caused to the Chinese educational institutions. The visits at upper schools, Chungking University and the central university was only summarized.

The Chinese Institute of Cooperatives (C.I.C.) had been founded on August 5, 1938 in Hong Kong. It supervised the 1500 local cooperatives and organized the provision of clothing to Chinese troops and the competition with imported Japanese goods in the occupied areas. In **chapter seven** it is explained, how the C.I.C. had to overcome the prohibition to trade Chinese goods into the occupied areas. This chapter also shows the success of the Chinese propaganda system through the use of Chinese drama. The late president Dr. Sun Yat Sen had employed Chinese drama as a means of propaganda since the fall of the Manchu dynasty. In order to defeat the Japanese, the Chinese people needed to be strong minded and effective in economy, war and politics. The dramas did not only prompt patriotism and propagate ideology but at the same time taught how to hide weapons or ambush the enemy.

The author wanted to have a similar means to spread ideology in Myanmar and suggested to copy it from the Chinese.

In order to study military affairs in China, the delegation visited a military academy. In **chapter eight** the book shows the academy's two main aims. Those were to spread the Kuo Min Tang's doctrine and to educate the officers needed for the Chinese army. Thakhin Nu spreads the idea that the opening of a *Do-Bamar* workers' academy to spread the *Bamar* doctrine and train workers to ably lead the *Do-Bamar Asi-Ayone*'s affairs.

Most of chapter eight, however, is about Chiang Kai Shek. Together with the experience of dining with Chiang Kai Shek and his wife, Thakhin Nu presents Chiang Kai Shek's biography.

Chiang Kai Shek was born in 1887 into a poor family at Qitou, a small village. His mother played an important role in his life. At school he was not an extraordinarily good student. At the age of 19 he went to Japan to study at a military academy. After completing his education he joined the Japanese army. In 1909 he met Dr. Sun Yat Sen who had been banned to Japan by the Chinese government. He formed the Tang Min Huwei secret association in Japan. It was the precursor to the later Kuo Min Tang. Chiang Kai Shek joined the association. In 1911 when the Manchu dynasty was ousted and the Republic of China came into being Chiang Kai Shek returned to China and joined the Chinese rebels. From 1911-1916 Chian Kai Shek himself fought in the Chinese revolution and even saved president Sun Yat Sen's life once. He left the soldier's rank and became a trader in order to acquire enough wealth to engage in politics. In 1921 he entered politics and resided in Moscow from 1923 on as the Chinese military attaché. While in Moscow he had a close relationship with the Russian revolutionary leader Trotzki. When he came back to China, he became the principal of Whan Mo Wa military academy in Kanton. In 1925 he became the chairman of the Kuo Min Tang's executive committee. When president Dr. Sun Yat Sen died, he became the commander in chief of the Chinese national army. According to Dr. Sun Yat Sens wish, Chiang Kai Shek should become head of the army and Wan Chang Wei should become head of the administration. But Chiang Kai Shek thought that the corruption and struggles for power could not be brought to an end by means of giving talks, but had to be crushed with military force. So during his rule he could unite all China. But from being a leftist, he changed into a rightist and waged ten years of civil war against the communists.

In this chapter besides Chiang Kai Shek also Dr. Sun Yat Sen's biography is retold briefly. Dr. Sun Yat Sen was born in 1867 in Macao, and received a Doctors degree after graduating from the medical college. After the Manchu government had fallen he returned from England to China. His wife and Madame Chiang Kai Shek were sisters.

1921 he proclaimed the three political principles. In brief they meant that the rule of England, France, America, Germany, Italy and Japan over the best places of China, which they had acquired by forcing the Chinese government by military means to sign treaties, should be ended, a constitution making convention of elected delegates should be formed and a democratic government should be build.

In order to successfully lead the Chinese revolution Dr. Sun Yat Sen had to use his martial prowess. After the administration of the country had been successfully implemented he wanted to develop a democratic system of government.

Chiang Kai Shek tried to eliminate the Communists. Due to the intervention of another general, he was forced however to co-operate with the communists and thus end the Civil War. Because of this intervention and the communists' foresight, there were two advantages:

- 1.the civil war ceased and
- 2.China was able to fight the Japanese united

In this very chapter Thakhin Nu also explains the Chinese-Japanese war. After ending the civil war China was able to develop quickly and within 4-5 months the military and industry could compete with the Japanese. The Chinese prime minister himself went to Europe to acquire investments and loans. The fast development of the Chinese military force after the alliance of communists and the Chinese government made Japan tremble. Therefore in July 1937, only 8 months after the civil war in China had ended, Japan waged war against it. But Chinas internal alliance was well established. The inner unity Chiang Kai Shek had tried to establish without success for ten years, came along during one year of Japanese bombings. The pain of Japanese aggression made the Chinese work together closer than they had ever thought they would.

In **chapter nine** Thakhin Nu wrote about a home for children orphaned through the horrors of war. Over 500 children aged 3-11 years had taken refuge and lived in the orphanage. Thakhin Nu expressed his pity with them.

In **chapter ten** he wrote about how the delegation visited a place where Japanese prisoners of war were kept. They were kept well and had to learn about the horrors of war. They lived freely as they wanted. They formed an oiterstion because they had understood. It was called "oiterstion to oppose Japanese imperialism".

General Kong, the head of *Renmin Yu Yi* youth oiterstion, answered Thakhin Nu's question if communism would spread in China by stating that this was impossible because the communists themselves had given up communism. When the author pointed

out that China would have to accept communism in order to rebuild the lives of its lower social strata after the war it was said that this was already included in and would be solved by Dr. Sun Yat Sen's three political ways and there was no need to worry about that.

The essence of Thakhin Nu's introductory speech was that 1. friendship between Myanmar and China was necessary and 2. that the capitalist class in Myanmar included English, Indian and Chinese capitalists. 3. When the Myanmar had driven out the English colonists, the Chinese should not become an obstacle to Myanmar development but develop a Myanmar spirit. On this issue, however, Thakin Nu and U Ba Choe were not of the same opinion.

In **chapter eleven** he wrote on how the delegation met the first Japanese bombers. Thakhin Nu and the delegation had to hide in a stone cave behind the hotel.

In **chapter twelve**, the readers are informed about measures taken to control the opium problem which was very severe in China. In order to prevent abuse, the Chinese government tried hard to control the problem. The government gave two warnings if they found an opium consumer. But caught a third time, a consumer would get the death-penalty.

In Myanmar opium addicts were easy to exploit by the English. Because most of the opium came from China those understanding higher politics hated the Chinese more than the Japanese danger. Thakhin Nu demanded the Chinese government to prohibit and prevent the trading of opium from China into Myanmar.

The communists in China were very strong. Eighty percent of the anti-Japanese fighters were communists. The communists robbed weapons from the Japanese and fought them with their own weapons. As their military strength was weaker than that of the Japanese troops, the Chinese communists provoked the Japanese to follow them into the jungles and robbed their arms, ambushed transports of weapons, ammunition, and provisions for the Japanese camps. The communists lived as the farmers in the occupied areas and fought the Japanese from behind. The Japanese were terrified by the Chinese communist guerilla attacks.

Persecuted and killed Chinese communists. The communists believed that such would not happen again after the war because the political views of the Kuo Min Tang leadership had become more sophisticated. They were certain that, because the people would come to know that the communists were patriots and not bandits, communism would easily spread all over the country. There had been a communist rebellion in the city of Changsha in Hunan province. Because the landowners of this region were wealthy, they were robbed often by dacoits and had to pay protection money to them. As their income was reduced by this, they also reduced their peasants' wages and caused great suffering to them. Additionally, they had to pay various taxes to the Kuo Min Tang and the government. Then, the poor peasant class seized the landowners and government officials and killed them. The governor of Hunan asked the central government for help because of the terrorist activities committed jointly by the communists and peasants. They stormed the jails and released over 300 political prisoners taking control of Changsha. Therefore, the Kuo Min Tang leaders feared the possible dominance of communism after the war.

The British would neither support the communists, nor the Japanese. Though the aims of these two groups were significantly different, both, becoming too powerful, could easily enter the neighboring territories of India or Myanmar.

Because the Chinese people supported communism, the central government and the army could not differentiate between communists and the people, therefore their strife against communism could not succeed. The people were in support of communism, therefore it achieved a victory in China.

When in 1927 the Kuo Min Tang split into a right wing and a left wing group, Chiang Kai Shek was with the right wing. The oppressed left wing fled and set up a communist government in Jiangxi. They began the long march starting from Jianxi on 16 October 1934 arriving in the Shaanxi region after 368 days. They captured 12 provinces and 12 towns, and propagated communism in six tribal areas. The people welcomed them. The communists performed plays and dramas in the areas they captured, seized money from the rich and gave it to the poor. They freed the serfs and taught guerilla tactics to the poor. When they arrived at Shaanxi, they set up a government with the objective of fighting

Japan. They published a communist daily newspaper called Haxinghua in the middle of Chungking, where the central government had its seat.

Within the communist force Mao Tse Tung was the administrative leader and Zhu De was the military leader. Mao Tse Tung was spoken of as equal to Russia's Lenin. Mao Tse Tung had read a lot. Having accepted the theory that imperialism developed out of capitalism, he understood that in order to annihilate imperialism he had to eliminate capitalism. In the 6000 miles march of 1935 he was the leader. The military leader Zhu De had after the 1927 split of the left wing and right wing Kuo Min Tang studied communism in Moscow and joined the communist army. Other important communist personalities were Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai and officer Xu Hai Tang. Thakhin Nu also briefly describes how they became communists.

Compared with Russian communism, Chinese communism appeared Thakhin Nu to be not yet genuine. Genuine communism does not put all affairs in the hand of one leader, but in the hand of a government of representatives of the working and peasants class that works for the benefit of the workers and peasants. In contemporary China the road to communism was first to secure the country's freedom and later to practice genuine communism. As more peasants than workers existed in China, the peasants' living conditions would have to be improved. Even though in Russia the landowners had all been expropriated, in China only the land of those allied with the central government was seized and leased to the peasants. For the land that was still owned by the landowners, new laws were promulgated. According to them the peasants would have to give 25% less of the rice to the landowners.

A communist university was founded in Chinese-Soviet cooperation and books on communism were published and spread. In the communist zones under-age arranged marriages and opium trade were strictly prohibited and economic cooperatives and people's fitness were promoted.

Before they joined Chiang Kai Shek, the Chinese communist army was called the "Red Shirt Army" and later changed its name to "Army No.8". There was no difference of class between the officers and the ordinary soldiers in the communist army. The soldiers, the guerillas and the people all three had their role in the communist army, disturbing the Japanese and supporting the communists.

The issue at hand now in Myanmar was to get rid of the English. When they were free and the political power was in the hands of the Thakhins, there would be no need for compensations after nationalizing the whole economy for the people's benefit, the Thakhins believed.

The delegation went from Chengdu to Kunming. Kunming was under French influence, Chungking and Jiangking under American. There were many translated books at Kunming University, even a Chinese translation of Websters Dictionary.

From Kunming the delegation returned to Myanmar. They rested at Baoshan. The mission saw people in ragged clothes, people with oiters due to lack of iodine, the mass of the poor, and the measures taken by the Chinese government to alleviate poverty.

Möng Si, the next station had been an independent state, but when the Japanese-Chinese war began, the Sawbwa of Möng Si came under Chinese influence. Thakhin Nu reminded himself, that China and Myanmar were sitting in the same boat and it was important to assist China's struggle for freedom.

In the **last chapter** (21) of *Gandalarit*, Thakhin Nu assumes that China would certainly win the war against Japan. This assumption rested on the following facts:

The Chinese, suffering from internal strife before the war, had united to fight the common enemy. The Chinese students were very active to raise political consciousness in their country. Although Japan had expected to conquer China within just three months, it was still not able to do so after two years and had agreed on a ceasefire with the Chinese traitor Wan Ching Wei. China, however had enough resources to continue the struggle for another 20 years. Japan, however, was already very exhausted by the war.

Japan, demanding "Asia to the Asians" before had abandoned its principles in China. During the time of western colonialism in Asia, no country was as strong as Japan. Therefore the other Asian countries had to rely on Japan. Japan, with the faith of the Asians placed on it, should help them to get freedom from the domination by the Europeans. But Japan dashed the faith placed in it and followed the footsteps of the Europeans. If only Japan put the Asian continent in the hands of the Asians, Japans role in the rebuilding of Asian Nations would have been an extraordinary one. But because of Japans misled ways, Chiang Kai Shek and the Chinese communists, who had fought each other for 10 years, were reunited. Thakhin Nu concluded that in Asia, still exploited by

the Europeans, the war between China and Japan should stop as soon as possible and Japan should return to the position of a leader Asians can place faith in.

### **Critique**

The Author of the book, Thakhin Nu traveled as a member of a Myanmar friendship delegation to Kunming, Chongqin and Chengdu. That was in December 1940. It was the time when Japan had entered the Second World War and, with the slogan “Asia for the Asians”, had begun to conquer the southeast Asian countries. The colonized Southeast Asian countries also took the European difficulties during the war as a good chance to get rid of colonialism and intensified their struggles for independence.

In Myanmar, many of the young politicians from the *Do Bamar asi-ayone* wanted to pull down British colonialism and accepted the Japanese slogan. When Thakhin Nu traveled to China it was the time of the Chinese-Japanese war. Advancing one step further from the battles of the first world war, Japan started its aggressions against China slowly. 1932 the country Manchukuo was founded and recognized by Japan. When the Chinese men and women didn't want to bear the Japanese behavior, violent protests evolved. Instead of fighting Japan, Chiang Kai Shek and the Kuo Min Tang set out to destroy the communists. So when China was ravaged by civil wars, it was like an invitation to Japan to invade it. When Chiang Kai Shek's policy was not only hated by the Chinese people but also by the Kuo Min Tang Army, the communists and the Kuo Min Tang army formed an alliance opposing Chiang Kai Shek's orders. Following the negotiations between the communist leaders and Chiang Kai Shek, the civil war stopped immediately. The alliance between communists and Kuo Min Tang fastened the Japanese aggression. Though the Japanese destroyed the city of Nanking totally, this didn't bring the Chinese down to their knees as the Japanese had expected but only made the Chinese government move into a mountainous region. Though the Chinese troops were in disorder, the desire to defend their motherland made them reorganize fast.

The Kuo Min Tang government, moving from Nanking to Hankong, from Hankong to Chungking fought ferociously against the Japanese. The author praises the admirable Chinese attitudes that helped the Chinese to resume their industrial productions in the mountains near Hankong and Chongqin within one year. Seeing the bombings and

atrocities committed by the Japanese fascists in China, Thakhin Nu writes how he became aware that although in Myanmar's struggle for independence it had to depend on Japan, one day the Myanmar people also would have to face Japanese fascism. When Myanmar revolted against the English for independence, the Chinese living in Myanmar should cultivate a Myanmar spirit and join instead of disturbing the struggle. Thakhin Nu's sorrow that the building of a China-Myanmar road would lead to an increasing migration of Chinese people into Myanmar and a domination of the Myanmar economy by Chinese in the future has proven justified.

As a conclusion one has to remark that the book supports – like the other books published by the Nagani association – a leftist ideology. Its assumptions that the majority of the Chinese people were pro-communist, that the communists played a most important role in fighting Japanese fascism and that therefore communism would come to dominate the whole country after the war have proven true. It has, as an exemplary travelogue the qualities to depict several cities of wartime China and the atrocities of war.

The author's critique, that Japan has deviated from its role as a savior of the Asians and his opinion that Japan, if it had behaved correctly, would have played a major role in the reconstruction of post war Southeast Asia were right. The book *Gandalarit* as a good travelogue paints a vivid portrait of the political systems at that time

## 2.2. Commentary on Mo Mo Thant's Book Report by J. Wahoff

Dear Dr. Mo Mo Thant

Thank you for making this travelogue by Thakhin Nu available. I enjoy reading travelogues as they are always unique settings of a *weltanschauung* carried into a world it was not designed for. This may blind the author, but it also makes him see aspects that could not have been seen before.

I found it very helpful to include a short biography of the author. Given the complexity of the political constellations and events unfolding at the place and time the travelogue is set, however, I think that an even broader outline of the historical events, notwithstanding the various present time interpretations thereof, would help the reader to appreciate the book report to an even greater extent.

There are two aspects in the book report and its ensuing critique, which I find to be of rather high actuality. The first one being the background of the journey: Learning about policies and their implementation. If one accepts that values (and reason, as Joseph Ratzinger points out) are born of a specific cultural background, can policies and ideas be transferred into other cultural contexts at all?

The second aspect which is closely related to the first one is that of regional leadership, a role that – as many point out – Japan failed to fulfil not only during post war reconstruction. Nowadays the established (global and regional) authorities – be it nation states or international institutions – lose authority, due in part to moral problems and problems of legitimacy. Not to talk about economic and military might, what might be a starting point to define moral standards that legitimate leadership, when values across cultural borders are so diverse? On what basis do we even start to talk about these?

Residing in Japan, I grew aware of the fact that the historical events around the time the journey took place remain a constant topic in public debates throughout Asia. Your critique of the travelogue reveals yet another standpoint and provides a lot of insight.

Kind regards,

Jan Wahoff, Tokyo, March, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007

### **3.1 Tin Hlaing: Book Report on Nu, Gandalarit**

(published by Nagani Press, Rangoon)

The book 'Gandalarit' constitutes an important document in the history of the development of Modern Burma. Because of its contents, as well as for the popularity of the author.

#### **The Author**

At the time of writing *Gandalarit*, Thakin Nu was a writer, book publisher, left-leaning politician and an independence fighter. A few years back, he was already well known, nationally, as a radical student leader, and an emerging politician, who stood up against the British government of Burma. A few years after *Gandalarit*'s publication, Thakin Nu became the Foreign Minister of so-called Independent Burma, under Japanese occupation. Then in 1948, Thakin Nu became the first Prime Minister of Independent Burma.

Born in the Irrawaddy delta town of Wakema, on Saturday, May 25, 1907 (the full-moon day of the month of Nayum, 1269 Burmese era), Mating Nu grew up as a problem child, unruly, quarrelsome and stubborn. His parents were U San Tun and Daw Saw Khin, relatively well-off business people in Wakema. "A Saturday born first son stirs like a flame", says a traditional Burmese belief, and Maung Nu definitely proved to be an example for that. But he had sympathy for the weak, disregard for authority and antagonism for any one he supposed was a bully.

Maung Nu<sup>1</sup> started education at the Anglo-vernacular Middle School in Wakema. At 13, he joined the students' strike which spread nation-wide. In 1921, aged 14, he took part in

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<sup>1</sup> Thakin is a prefix to a name used by members of anti-British Dobama Asi-ayone, a political party. Maung is similar to Mister applied to a boy or relatively young man. Alternatively Ko is applied to the name of a young man. The prefix U, by contrast is used for a man, of some status generally, or age. Thakin is a rather defiant prefix, used by Dobama politicians, aiming to tell the British rulers, 'I am not your subject. I am my master. We are masters of our nation.' The common prefix U, pronounced the European way, means a grown-up 'Mister' with some respectable credentials, by virtue of age or position.

demonstrations, by beating drums, against the visit of British government's Whyte Commission to Wakema.

Maung Nu continued his secondary education at Myoma National High School in Rangoon, whose Principal U Ba Lwin is the leader of the Burma Friendship Delegation to China, which is the subject of *Gandalarit*.

"I've got a big heart and a small brain", writes U Nu, in his autobiography, revealing his mischief, rebellious nature and lack of judgment, leading to reckless behavior.

But after joining the University of Rangoon in 1925, Ko Nu changed his manners. Partly due to the influence of his father and also due to self-realization, Nu transformed to become a better man. He became a devoted Buddhist.

After graduating in 1929 from Rangoon University Ko Nu studied for a law degree, but didn't finish. He became Principal of Pantanaw National High School. U Thant, who later became Secretary-General of United Nations, was his friend and colleague. U Thant was Headmaster of the School. But Nu didn't make a great Principal. He ran into problems with the School Board, the Inspector of Schools and also the teachers. In his autobiography, Nu confesses his various inappropriate actions as a school principal.

Ko Nu returned to Rangoon University to read for BL degree. Following his organization of a campus function, which included the singing of the nationalist 'Dobama song', to the annoyance of University Principal D. J. Sloss, an Englishman, he left the university. Nu antagonized Sloss, who was really good to him. Sloss offered to get him a job as Registrar of Cooperatives and also a scholarship to study in England, a great privilege in those days.

Nu declined Sloss' offer. He left the law class and briefly worked on the editorial staff of *Thit-sa-wady* newspaper. Then he left to become Principal of National School at Khayan. While still a Principal there, following a dramatic development, he got married to Ma<sup>2</sup> Mya Yee. He again took up the Principal's position at Pantanaw, the reappointment being facilitated by his father-in law, who was Chairman of the School Board.

But Ko Nu couldn't remain a Principal for long. He resigned in 1934 to try once again for BL degree. At Rangoon University, Ko Nu's friend Ko Ohn, a hall-tutor, introduced him to Ko Thein Pe, Ko Aung San and Ko Kyaw Nyein, radical students who would soon

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<sup>2</sup> Ma is the female counterpart of Maung. A girl changes from Ma to Daw when she becomes a woman.

emerge as top student leaders. “It’s a strange quartet”, says Ko Thein Pe<sup>3</sup> about Ko Nu plus the three. They made Ko Nu become Vice-President of Students’ Union in 1934. In 1935 academic year Ko Nu got elected President, unopposed.

As Students’ Union president, Ko Nu proved to be provocative, stirring and problematic. But, generally, his actions tended to be anti-British. For a speech he gave, which the authorities considered an insult, Ko Nu was dismissed from the university. Almost simultaneously, Ko Aung San, the editor of students’ union journal O-wai, was also expelled for another issue. The expulsions led to the students’ strike of 1936, projecting the ‘strange quartet’ to national prominence.

Ko Nu did not come back this time to the university. After renouncing his BA degree, he took up writing, contributing one-act plays in *Deedok* magazine. (Its editor U Ba Cho was also a member of the delegation to China, and also became a national leader just before independence.) Ko Nu also became a member of ‘Fabian Party’ headed by U Ba Cho.

Then in cooperation with a friend, Ko Tun Shwe, and assisted by other friends, Thakin Nu established the Nagani Publishing House and Nagani Book Club. Upon Ko Aung San’s urging, Nu had now joined Dobama Asi-a-yone, whose members adopted the prefix Thakin (meaning Master, not in the sense of a school master, but rather a dominating authority). Effectively, a Thakin means to say to the British rulers, ‘I am not your subject. I am the master; we are masters of our nation’.

Very quickly, Nagani made a great name in Burma. Its books were popular. Business thrived with regular productions every month and special publications every two or three months. In spite of this successful business, Thakin Nu involved himself deeply in Dobama politics. He was imprisoned twice before the war by the British government.

When the Second World War came to Burma, his friend had become General Aung San, leading the Burma Independence Army, under the Japanese Army. In spite of his strong anti-Fascist, anti-Japanese sentiments, Nu had to cooperate with his political colleagues, under Japanese occupation. He became Foreign Minister of the so-called Independent Burma during the war.

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<sup>3</sup> Thein Pe Myint's 'Kyaw Nyein',

After the war, he shunned politics and took up writing, away from Rangoon. But he was called back to politics in 1946, to take up the Deputy-Chairmanship of AFPFL, the dominant political party, leading the country for independence. By then, General Aung San, AFPFL Chairman, had become Deputy-Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Council, effectively the cabinet of government.

Following the assassination of General Aung San and other ministers, Thakin Nu was called upon by the British Governor to lead the Provisional Government. As leader of the Provisional Government of Burma, Thakin Nu finalized the 'Nu-Atlee Agreement' by which Burma was granted independence by the British. Nu became the first Prime Minister in 1948. In 1950 he dropped the prefix Thakin from his name, to be called U Nu. In spite of many challenges to the government, following independence, Nu remained Prime Minister, involving himself in the Non-aligned Movement, working with such well-known figures like Chou En Lai, Nehru, Soekarno, Tito, Nasser etc. In this sense, U Nu reached the status of an international statesman.

In 1958, following a split in his party, the ruling AFPFL, U Nu lost his Prime Minister's office. But he came back in 1960 by a landslide in the elections. But, in 1962, he was removed in a military take-over.

In spite of his political preoccupation, U Nu has published a number of books, enough to rank him among writers. Before the war, his works include, translation of Dale Carnegie's 'How to Win Friends and Influence People', 'Way Out of Poverty', etc and some plays. After the war, he promptly produced 'Burma Under the Japanese'. After losing the Prime Minister's office, U Nu produced some novels with religious inclination. The biography of this remarkable man, student leader, author, independence fighter, national leader, and international statesman, social and religious worker, is best described in his autobiography, 'Saturday Son' which covers up to 1962.

There is another biography by Richard Butwell. Thein Pe Myint, Nu's friend and well known author has written a book, 'Ko Nu and I', some time around 1960. Although the reviewer remembers having read it, it is not easily available now. However, no noteworthy work is known to exist about U Nu's life after 1962.

U Nu died in 1995, after his wife, leaving three daughters and three sons.

## **The Book**

Gandalarit, pronounced Gan-da-la-rit, is the old Burmese name of China, used more officially than the present usage *Ta-yoke-pyay*.

The book 'Gandalarit' written by Thakin Nu gives an account of a Burmese Friendship Mission to China in December 1939. It should be noted at the outset that the author was destined to become independent Burma's first Prime Minister.

It is a special publication by the Nagani Press, 120, Montgomery Road, Rangoon and recognized by the Nagani Book Club. The publication date is not available. But the book seems to have been produced rather speedily, definitely in 1940. The author, a member of the delegation and also a co-proprietor of Nagani Publishing, would have thought it very important promptly to report to the Burmese public about the friendship visit. As will become clear later, the mission taking place during Japanese aggression against China on the eve of the Second World War, was expected to have political significance. Indeed, it is this political aspect in an urgent situation, that makes the book merit special publication.

Otherwise, special publication by Nagani seems rather ordinary. "At the time, Nagani books were getting popular and the business was producing, apart from the regular series of books, special issues every two, three months", writes Thakin Nu in his autobiography 'Saturday Son'. This implies a number of 'Nagani Specials' published during the few years of Nagani's existence.

## **The Backdrop**

### **Nationalism**

Burma was colonized by the British in four pieces after three wars. Arakan and Tenassarim in 1824, Lower Burma in 1852 and finally Upper Burma in 1885. After Japanese aggression the intense, but never united resistance following the final annexation, the British government ruled Burma, from India, unchallenged until 1942. That was a year of awakening. University students boycotted the first university set up by the government. Their example led to students' strikes in schools across the country and resulted in the

establishment of national schools in many towns. But apart from the awakening of nationalism, the students' strike produced no administrative impact.

Almost perfect peace reigned for a decade. In 1930, peasants' revolt led by Saya San, failed. But the Burmans awakened by the 1920 strike had come of age. Educated young men started to organize the Dobama Asi-a-yone,<sup>4</sup> an anti-British political party, whose members adopted the Thakin title. The party did not do so well in its early years.

The second university students' strike, 1936, led by Ko Nu and friends, was a logical follow up. This time they had a sharper aim – not just anti-British demonstration for its sake, but national liberation. Having left the university without the law degree, Nu became a writer and politician, joining the Dobama party in 1938, a violent year of student and labor unrest.

With student leaders of 1936 coming into the Thakin party, the anti-British movement gathered momentum.

### **Politics and War**

Politics then went two ways. There were political parties organized on the basis of personal allegiance, which functioned meekly, under the British constitution for Burma. Thakin radicals, on the other hand, were in total defiance against the British. It was about to climax in an armed rebellion when the Second World War came.

In the west, World War II had erupted in 1939. Britain, the major contestant, was in bad shape. Europe was crumbling under Nazism and Fascism. "Britain's woes – our opportunity" was the slogan adopted by Thakins. This was a moment for all out exertion for independence.

In the eastern horizon, clouds of war were emerging. Japan, the newly emergent Asian world power, had already been at war with China since 1937. With the main regions of the country along the Pacific coast occupied by Japan, the Chinese government under Chiang Kai-shek withdrew and set up the war-time capital at Chungking.

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<sup>4</sup> DO- Bama = We-Burmese, Asi-a-yone= organization

With military aid from USA coming via the Burma Road, the Chinese brought Japan to a stalemate. In a sense, Burma was already involved in the Sino-Japanese war, because of the use of the Burma Road.

In the mean time, as a logical consequence of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, interest in socialism and communism developed among the new crop of Thakins. The Nagani Book Club, imitating the left book club of Victor Gollenz in England, was established to promote knowledge, in particular left-leaning political ideologies. For many a youth, the guiding light, at the time, had been socialist ideology, for some communism.

Unable to bring China to its knees, Japan was now antagonizing Britain and America, China's supporters. Japan's entry into the war, in alliance with Germany and Italy – the Axis powers – was, in 1939, just a matter of time.

As war threatened Burma, with the growing likelihood of Japan coming to fight Britain, to block the Burma Road, old politicians remained inert. But Thakin radicals were excited. But there was a dilemma, whether to side with Japan and fight the British out, or to resist the Japanese who had already proved to be fascist aggressors in East Asia.

In this scenario, the importance of China to Burma loomed large. Would China be relevant to the cause of independence of Burma? Many believed so. In the long run too, Burma had to be friendly with the great neighbor. If war came, China's friendship would be more important than ever. But, there were some who looked to Japan as a saviour.

This is the scenario under which leading Burmans paid a friendship visit to China, more specifically, to the Kunming base of Chiang Kai-shek's China. But Thakin Nu, Dobama representative in the delegation, took instruction from his colleagues to meet and get in contact with Mao Tse Tung's communists.

### **A Different Gandalarit**

A brief literary survey reveals another book with the same title. "I know Thakin Nu wrote a book with the title Gandalarit. I thought of using another name. But Thakin Nu deals with a Burmese Friendship Mission to China under Chiang Kai-shek; mine is about one to Mao's China", writes Htay Myaing (Dagon Tar Yar) in his preface to the book. Published in 1952 by Jaounal-gyaw Ma Ma Lay Press, the book covers a

non-governmental Burmese Goodwill Mission to China. Apart from the quotation in the preface, Htay Myaing makes no mention of Thakin Nu's book.

There is yet another Gandalarit: 'Gandalarit Mhat-tan (or, Gandalarit Record), published in 1955 by Sar Pay Beik Man. Published by U Nu with six others, it records the events and impressions of the authors about China from a Friendship Mission, but a governmental and official one, headed by U Nu, in 1954, as Prime Minister, in response to an invitation by the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai.

### **The Contents of the Book**

The coverage of Gandalarit is very broad. Basically, it can be said to be a travelogue, but it contains a lot of personal observations on geography, politics and political figures, education, culture and society. The contents are also interspersed with digressions, some irrelevant for the purpose of the trip, but nevertheless, they provide variety and humor as well as information.

### **The Delegation**

Thakin Nu begins the book quite abruptly by mentioning the departure date and time (December, 12, 1939, 5.45 a.m.) of his flight. Only after a number of pages, the reader gets informed that the book is about the Burmese Friendship Mission's visit to China.

To get to the airport in time to check-in, Nu got up early at 3.00 a.m. when Thakin Hla Pe<sup>5</sup> arrived in a hired taxi to take him to the airport. With no experience of air-travel, which was uncommon in those days, Nu describes his worries about air-sickness, the remedy for it, the scene in the airport building, the noisy roar of engines, his young daughter clinging to him and nagging, 'Daddy mustn't go'.

Thakin Nu spends a few pages before mentioning that he was traveling as a member of a group. When the plane got in the air, somewhere outside Rangoon boundary, U Ba Lwin made a roll-call of his group, including

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<sup>5</sup> An important leader and Nu's friend and colleague during the independence struggle. He is known by the name Bo Let Yar after he joined the Thirty Comrades who went to Japan, for military training to organize the Burma Independence Army (BIA). He was the second man in BIA after General Aung San.

- 1.U Ba Lwin
- 2.Daw Mya Sein
- 3.U Ba
- 4.Mr Ganga Singh
- 5.U Ba Choe
- 6.Thakin Nu
- 7.Mr Saw Teik Leong
- 8.Mr William Tseng
- 9.Mr Liu

### **Obscure Origin of the Mission**

Who are these people? Where are they going?

The plane is bound for Chungking, then China's seat of government, with stopovers in Lashio, in north-east Burma and Kunming in Yunnan.

Only very gradually, it becomes clear that this was a Burmese Friendship Mission to China. But, as far as the book reveals, the origin of the mission is a mystery. Nowhere in the book does Thakin Nu mention how it comes about. Who initiated the visit? Who sponsored it? How were the delegates selected?

In view of the high level nature of the delegation and its' official reception by the highest levels of Chinese government, the origin of the Friendship Mission and its later impact deserves specific research as an important historical factor in Burma's struggle towards independence. We do not propose to go into the details of the subject here, because we mean only to review Thakin Nu's book. But, a few points in this aspect are noteworthy.

1. *Gandalarit* (the version made available to the reviewer by the Nagani project's resource centre) starts its chapter I on page 3, with pages 1 and 2 missing. Do the missing pages carry a pre- face of some sort explaining the origin and purpose of the mission?

The reviewer (TH) searched for the missing pages, without success. One book, available at the National Library, also does not contain these pages. But the book looks quite original! Copies in other libraries are not available yet.

- 7.The following excerpt from 'History of Dobama Asi-a-yone' (volume 2, 1976, Sar-pay Beik-man people's books series) is of some relevance.

“The successful opposition against a modern, well equipped army by the coalition of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse Tung forces, by guerrilla warfare, was an admirable feat (for the Dobama Asi-a-yone members). As Thakin Nu was going to China as a member of Friendship Mission, the Central Executive of Dobama, expecting closer relations with leaders of Chinese Communist Party, instructed Thakin Nu to meet them and have discussions.”

“As the British and US governments have been sending military supplies to China via the Burma Road, they considered it important to get the support of the Burmese people. In order to avoid trouble making., on the road, the government approved the visit of the Friendship Mission to China.”

The implication is that Dobama Asiayone was responsible, at least in part, for arranging the visit, although it had only one member (Thakin Nu) in it. It is evident from the names of delegates that the mission was non-governmental, and not party specific.

3. There is a small book entitled ‘Ta-yoke Bama Ayay-daw-bon’ (China-Burma Conflict) by Hanthawaddy U Ba Yin. In the preface, he writes, “The fact that two friendship missions had been to China before the World War II, and that after the war, friendship activities have been resumed, reminds one about the historic relations between the two countries in the long past.”

The point to note is the two previous missions, which leads to the question ‘Is the mission reported in Nu’s *Gandalarit* the first or the second?’

U Ba Yin deals only with the history of past relations in the days of kings. But, out of context, he does include the photographs of U Ba Lwin (Delegation Leader) and Dee-doke U Ba Cho (Deputy Leader), without a word about the delegation itself.

8. ‘Dee-doke U Ba Cho’, a biography of U Ba Cho, by Thin Khar (1976, Khit Mhe Sar Pay Taik) mentions, only very briefly, the Friendship Mission to China. “Before the Japanese occupation, a Chinese Friendship Delegation visited Burma.

The delegation consisting of university professors and writers is supposed to be a return visit for the previous visit of Saya Cho's delegation", says the author. Apart from giving the names of delegates, the book gives no other information.

### **Chapter-wise Summary of the Book**

The book consists of twenty one chapters and an appendix of three short items in a total of 310 pages. Following is chapter-wise contents.

#### **Chapter I**

Mainly, this is about the air journey from Rangoon to Kunming with stop over at Lashio (northern Burma) and Kunming, capital of Yunan. Apart from his own observations, some of which we will discuss later, Nu spends about five pages to describe the arrival at Chungking airport. Following that he writes a further 10 pages to describe the May 3, 1939 bombing of Chungking by the Japanese, with dramatic expression and a number of data. This chapter also contains a number of short digressions which are meant for humor or for dramatic effect in his presentation.

#### **Chapter 2**

It is about the delegation's activities on the first full day in Chungking. The first occasion is the collective reception, in a large hall, by all Chinese associations. In response to welcome speech by the Chinese representative, U Ba Lwin, the leader of the Burmese delegation gives a reply, followed by Daw Mya Sein, the deputy leader, and U Ba Cho. After that Thakin Nu reads the prepared greeting message of Dobama Asi-a-yone to the Chinese people. He is followed by Mr. Gangar Singh who gives a short speech. Then, Nu describes the friendly conversation with the Chinese, including Nu's discussion with the Foreign Minister about his concern about the Chinese migration into Burma.

They have a busy agenda that day. They visit the British embassy. Nu doesn't say, why the delegation visits it, or what their business is. Probably, they are obliged to visit out of courtesy, as British subjects. Then comes courtesy calls upon Chinese President Lin Sen, Defense Minister Mr. Ho, and Finance Minister Dr Kung respectively. Nu describes Chinese tea in places and digresses about a funny episode that results from frequent tea.

### **Chapter 3**

This chapter gives the brief bio-sketches of Chinese leaders they have met. After two paragraphs about the Yale educated Foreign Minister, Nu describes the official reception by President Lin Sen. Then comes his biography. The next important person they meet is Dr Kung, Prime Minister as well as Finance Minister. Nu describes Dr Kung, also Yale educated, and his marriage to Ai Lin Soong, eldest of the famous Soong sisters. He mentions Chin-Lin Soong, wife of China's first President Dr Sun Yat-sen, and Mae Ling Soong, Chiang Kai-shek's wife. The chapter ends with a short account of Defense Minister Ho Ying Ching and the Public Works Minister.

### **Chapter 4**

It begins with the luncheon hosted by General Lin and the Chungking Mayor. Nu describes the lunch and the lively conversation. In the evening, the delegation goes to the headquarters of Kumington (KuoMinTang) party. At the reception they meet some heroes of the Chinese revolution. In particular, Nu mentions General Feng Yuhsiang, about whom he devotes a number of pages.

### **Chapter 5**

This chapter is about the Kuomintang party, its origin, party membership and party organs, the Yuan. Nu explains the functions of the five Yuans:

- 1.The Executive Yuan, which is the cabinet of the government.
- 2.The Legislative Yuan
- 3.The Judicial Yuan
- 4.The Examination Yuan, or Civil Service Board
- 5.The Control Supervisory Yuan

Nu then describes Chinese politics, the importance of personal relationships over ideology, like in Burma. Finally, Nu gives a short sketch of six important political groups.

## **Chapter 6**

This is about a visit to a school. But Nu takes time to describe the disruptions in education brought about by the Japanese invasion, schools and universities having to move to unoccupied territories. Nu writes elaborately about how professors and teachers salvaged their universities from destruction by bombing. A list of 20 universities is given along with the number of miles each one had to travel through carrying equipment and books to safety. The destruction is immense, in terms of buildings destroyed and millions of books and manuscripts lost. After the school comes the visit to Chungking University and Central University. The Vice-Chancellor of Central University welcomes the delegation and they are told about the survival tactics of the university.

The chapter closes with a short discussion between Thakin Nu and Daw Mya Sein about an affair of women which Nu makes an issue. We will mention it later.

## **Chapter 7**

The day starts with a visit to the Chinese Industrial Cooperative centre, an important industrial program promoted by the government to counter the economic effects of Japanese occupation and exploitation. The Coop receives donations from home as well as abroad for investment. Impressed, Thakin Nu donates \$ 100.

In the evening, the delegation visits a theatre. Nu describes the hearty welcome by the audience on their arrival.

We note here Thakin Nu's interest in drama, his desire to become a playwright, a George Bernard Shaw of Burma.

Nu goes on to discuss the importance of theatre as a propaganda weapon and how it is employed in China to promote nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiments. He remarks that the Burmese people should also use theatre as a propaganda instrument for the independence struggle.

Thakin Nu is absorbed in the play that evening. He uses about 10 pages to retell the drama of "Long Live China". The theme is about resistance to Japanese aggression, highlighting their disregard of human rights, rape of Chinese women etc. and the gallant Chinese, both men and women, who organize to fight the Japanese.

## Chapter 8

The delegation visits the Military Academy, in its temporary campus. It happens that Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek is coming, there on his routine visit to speak to the cadets. The delegation cannot talk to him before the official meeting that has been planned. They are taken to the hall to observe Chiang's meeting with the cadets. Everyone keeps standing. The Generalissimo acknowledges their presence with a nod and hand waving. They take part in the salute to the leader and the proceedings which include singing of the national song, respects to Dr Sun Yat-sen, and reading the text of Dr Sun's will. But the Burmans do not stay long to listen to the leader's speech in full. They go on to look around the campus, the large caves of rock dug in the hill side, where cadets take shelter during Japanese air-raids.

At mid-day comes the climax of the Friendship Mission. They have an official meeting and luncheon with Chiang Kai-shek. The Generalissimo and Madame welcome them. U Ba Lwin gives him a present of a multi-coloured Burmese flag, adorned with peacock embroidery, wrapped in a silver tube.

U Ba Lwin reads the delegation's message of friendship, followed by U Ba Cho who reads the message of his Fabian party. Then Daw Mya Sein delivers the message of Burmese women.

Chiang speaks in return which Madame translates into English. She is not well and she does not sit at lunch.

During lunch, they meet three or four prominent Chinese, among them the author of Chiang's biography, in English. They discuss literary matters. When informed about Nagani's production of Burmese translation of Dr Sun Yat-sen's work, Sun Min-chui, Chiang nods in approval. He urges translation of another one of Dr Sun's work and promises to make the text available.

An important agreement is reached with Chiang Kai-shek. U Ba Lwin asks the Generalissimo about the possibility of giving Burmese boys military training at the Chinese Military Academy. Chiang agrees to accept Burmese boys.

Thakin Nu then spends seven pages on Chiang's biography. Then come another ten pages about Dr Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese revolution, and the Chinese republic that emerged, and Chiang's rise to the top which does not conform to Dr Sun's will.

A lot more is written about Chiang's family life and his wife Madame Mai Ling Soong. It is followed by Chiang's kidnap and hostage, ending, in an eight point agreement Chiang gave in return for his release. The episode is mentioned in detail.

Nu concludes the chapter with the unity of the Chinese people, the Communists and Chiang's Kuomintang. The Japanese blunder, by aggression in China, unites the people, writes Nu.

### **Chapter 9**

After lunch with Chiang Kai-shek, the delegation visits the war-orphans' asylum in the outskirts of Chungking. Nu describes the journey. They look around the asylum, the building for lodging, dining room, clinic, the class rooms etc. Nu comes back feeling great sympathy for the orphans, who entertained them with theatrical performances.

Great opportunity comes in the evening. They get a chance to broadcast to Burma via the Chinese Radio. U Ba Lwin and Daw Mya Sein get five minutes each and the rest, three minutes each. Thakin Nu broadcasts, for the first time in his life, a bit scared before the microphone. But he manages to sing the Dobama song, defying U Ba Cho's bid to the members of delegation, not to sing during the tour.

The delegation proceeds to dinner at the residence of the Minister of Public Works. "The dinner here is quite strange", writes Nu, about the 'buffet dinner'. He has no previous experience. He gets his plate filled up with food, and goes to the sitting room with the brother of the Minister. Nu gets engaged in talk without eating. After thirty minutes, a waitress comes to take away his plate. Nu is reluctant to say he hasn't finished eating. He misses the dinner.

### **Chapter 10**

The delegation is taken on a visit to the Japanese prisoners-of-war camp across the river from Chungking. They go by car, then cross the Yangtze river by boat, with their car on a raft tugged behind the boat. Nu describes an unpleasant scene on the road, while their car breaks down. A boy, about nine years old, falls off a speeding truck. The truck does not stop. No one looks at the boy, in blood and pain. The delegation finds the prisoners-of-war treated well.

Back in Chungking, U Ba Cho and Nu go to Sun Min Chui Youth Club, to give speeches. The occasion starts with the Chinese national song, followed by Nu's Dobama song, as Burma's national song, to which everyone including U Ba Cho stands up for respect. Following the welcome speech by the club president General Kou, Thakin Nu reads the message of the All Burma Students' Union. U Ba Cho also gives his speech.

Back at the hotel Nu has a row with U Ba Cho, who admonished him for three blunders of speech the past few days. Nu objects to U Ba Cho's dislike for singing at a gentlemanly gathering. U Ba Cho insists it's inappropriate. But, Thakin Nu says he understands U Ba Cho's good intentions.

In the evening, they are entertained to dinner by the Fukianese, in honor of delegation member Sao Teik Leong, whose ancestors came from Fukian province. The chief host is the General Manager of Chungking branch of Ein Ang Tong medical store, a Burma based business. Nu describes how he is unable to respond to the toast proposed by the young hostess. She raises her cup many times, but I do not drink, says Nu. Then Nu is asked to sing a Burmese song, to which he responds by singing the Dobama song, with U Ba Lwin's approval. (U Ba Cho is not present there). Daw Mya Sein and U Ba Lwin joined the chorus. When Daw Mya Sein raises her arm and shouts 'Dobama' (We Burmese!), the audience joins her.

## **Chapter 11**

In this chapter Nu describes a personal experience of an air-raid. Nu stays behind at the hotel for an appointment with a friend. Then comes the air-raid siren, first warning. On next warning, Nu joins a crowd in a bomb shelter, a tunnel in the rock of a hillside. He stays there almost half a day. Three bombs are dropped that day.

## **Chapter 12**

The delegation visits the Chinese Boy Scouts' Headquarters, where they are entertained with music and tea and cakes. Then Nu describes, at length, the dinner at the residence of the Minister of Defense. The procession into the dining room is to be ceremonial. Nu is requested to take the wife of the Mayor by her arms and U Ba Lwin the Minister's wife. This is strange in Burmese Culture, and Nu has no guts to take a lady by her arms. Seated

beside Madam Liu, the Mayor's wife, Nu feels embarrassed for his awkwardness. He apologizes to the lady and gets into friendly talk with her.

They talk about many things, chilies and hot stuff, system of Burmese names, which does not discriminate between a married and unmarried woman. Nu invites Madame Liu to Burma. He gets a reply to visit after the war.

An important issue, the sale of opium by Chinese in Burma, is taken up for discussion with Chinese officials at the dinner. Nu complains about the Chinese part in addicting Burmese people to opium. He asks the Chinese government to somehow take action against Chinese citizens doing opium business in Burma. "I have forgotten to discuss the matter with Chiang Kai-shek when I met him. Can you please take up the issue with important officials", Nu requested. "OK", replies the officer. "Then please don't forget it", said Nu.

### **Meeting with Communist Representatives**

After dinner, at about 10 pm, three Chinese men come into Nu's room at the hotel. They are communists, whom Nu has been looking forward to meet. Nu tells them about his desire, according to instructions from his party, to meet Mao Tse Tung and Chu Teh. He gets a sorry reply because there is not enough time. Then they discuss policy and tactics adopted by the Communist Party in confronting the Japanese and their relationship with Chiang Kai-shek.

Impressed by the communists, Nu describes the history of the communist victory in the battle of Changhsia. He spends eleven pages on it.

Then Nu expresses his worry. Regardless of who emerges as victor, the communists or Kuomintang, Nu predicts, one day when they are strong enough, they will turn to Burma and India.

## **Chapter 13**

### **A brief History of the Chinese Communists**

Thakin Nu devotes the whole of this chapter to information about the Chinese Communists. Quoting Edgar Snow, he describes about the historic Long March under Mao's leadership.

Then Nu gives account of biographies of communist leaders, Mao Tse Tung, Chu Teh, Chou En Lai, Peng Teh-huai, etc. Nu goes on with the adopted uncommunist policy of communists during the war period. They have not yet made the means of production government monopoly, landlords have not yet been confiscated their land, though China is mainly an agrarian nation. Building communism is next to repelling the Japanese aggressor. Nu also describes the soldiers of the Red Army and its tactics in battle.

#### **Chapter 14**

This chapter deals with the delegation's journey, by air, from Chungking to Chengdu. At the airport, Nu meets a man who has been to Thailand, Singapore, Hongkong and is informed about the Thakins of Burma. Asked about Thakins' policy after independence, Nu explains plans to nationalize businesses, without compensation. After arrival in Chengdu, the delegation pays courtesy calls upon the Officer Commanding at Chengdu, General Ho, the Kuomintang office and the Mayor. In the afternoon, with free time available, they walk around the town sightseeing. Nu describes how they lose their way and how they get back to the hotel.

#### **Chapter 15**

Thakin Nu describes the visit to the military training school, where they observe a training parade and shooting demonstration. Then they have lunch hosted by the Commandant of the training school. Nu describes the dishes, in particular the live swimming shrimp, to be eaten alive after immersing it in gravy.

After lunch, U Ba Cho and Nu go to an art exhibition. While strolling back through a garden, they are followed by a crowd, mostly children. They are admiring U Ba Cho's *gaung-baung*, the head wear, with a protruding part rather like a rabbit's ear.

In the evening they attend a dinner collectively hosted by organizations. With U Ba Lwin feeling not well, U Ba Cho takes his place and gives a speech.

### **Chapter 16**

Thakin Nu writes about the visit to the air force training centre. There he meets an officer in uniform, who speaks Burmese. After looking around the training facilities, they go to the runway to observe the pilots' training.

They visit Chengdu University twice, first after the visit to the air force training centre. In the evening, the delegation divides; U Ba Lwin and Nu go to the musical entertainment at the University, U Ba Cho and others to the Mayor's dinner.

Thakin Nu describes U Ba Lwin's wonderful English in his opening speech, comparing it to the fluency in Chinese of an American present there. Then Nu writes about a beautiful young Chinese girl who sings with a wonderful voice. "She has already made a name in New York", says Nu's American companion.

### **Chapter 17**

The delegation is leaving Chengdu, by air. Due to bad weather, their take-off is late. At a brief stop at Chungking, an official representing Chiang Kai Shek, and others tell them good-bye. After a rather turbulent flight they reach Kunming in the late afternoon. They go to have tea with the Commissioner of Police. Then they give a courtesy call on the Governor of Yunnan, who entertains them with drinks. Then they end the day with dinner given collectively by associations in Kunming.

### **Chapter 18**

This chapter starts with a visit to a Buddhist monastery, followed by a vegetarian lunch with the Mayor. The date being December 25, the national day of China, the delegation joins a public meeting at which the Governor gives a speech. Upon request by the Governor, U Ba Lwin also speaks, after which, air raid warning sends women and children hurriedly into a forest nearby.

In the evening they are given a dinner attended by about 200 people. Nu cannot appreciate, due to language difficulty, the performance by a cultural troop famous in Yunnan.

### **Chapter 19**

Nu writes about the delegation's visit to a university, particularly about the library. In the afternoon, they are given tea by the association of young 'bilat-pyan'<sup>6</sup>. They proceed to dinner given by the Rotary Club and Banker's Association. U Ba Lwin leaves early to give a broadcast speech requested by the Governor. Nu meets an Englishman, an agent of Steel Brother's Company in Burma. They talk in Burmese. Nu objects to the man's business of purchasing without paying fair prices to the farmers in Burma. Then Nu writes about how he argues with the Englishman why Burma should not join in Britain's war effort. He also mentions U Ba Cho's sickness that night due to poisoning by the gas from the fireplace in his room.

### **Chapter 20**

This chapter is rather an anti-climax. It is mainly about the return to Burma by car. They drive in three cars. At the first stop for the night, Nu writes about U Ba Cho singing classical songs. After they resume the journey, their car breaks down again and again. Nu observes the poor people in the region. After the third night stop, they cross the suspension bridge over the Salween River. Nu mentions some 'uncivil songs' they sing in the car during the journey. Finally on the fifth day, they arrive at Lashio. They have traveled a journey of 860 miles from Kunming to Lashio. It's the Burma Road they traveled.

### **Chapter 21**

This chapter does not concern the China visit. It is about a speech Thakin Nu gives at Taunggoo after he returns from China. Thakin Nu discusses who will win in the China-Japan war. He predicts China will win, giving three reasons: (1) the growing unity of the Chinese nation, (2) the enlightenment of the Chinese people, and (3) Japan's relative weakness and China's capacity to pursue the struggle.

But, why does he not mention China's alliance with the USA and Britain? Is it because he is too nationalistic to reveal the importance of Westerners?

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<sup>6</sup> Means 'returner from England'. The origin of the word *bilat*, for England, is Indian.

Thakin Nu ends the chapter and the book with a discussion of Japan's role in China. 'Asia for Asians' is his theme.

### **The Appendix**

It consists of three sections: the Burmese translation of China's national song, Dr. Sun Yat-sen's will for his family, and for the nation.

### **External Sources of Information in the Book**

The author is a graduate (although he had renounced his degree), a former school principal, a former student leader, law school drop-out, a former journalist, practicing politician, book publisher. It is reasonable to assume that he is well read, especially about politics and war and leaders.

In *Gandalarit*, Thakin Nu mentions four references at the end of the book.

1. Inside Asia by John Gunther
2. My Country and My People by Lin Yutang
3. Red Army Marches by Agnes Smedley
4. Red Star Over China by Edgar Snow

Apart from the listed references, the author certainly would have drawn from his store of assorted knowledge.

The main component of the book, approximately about 60 percent, comes from the author's own observations during the China visit. He writes what he has seen and heard and felt.

However, a substantial portion, about 40 percent of the book is found to be information retrieved from the references mentioned.

The author takes extensively from John Gunther. Many paragraphs from it have been translated expertly, and blended with his stuff.

Does Nu plagiarize? We mustn't say he does, for he gives the references. He only doesn't mention passage by passage its origin, i.e. in the form of formal referencing. But, *Gandalarit* is not a scholastic effort. It is a popular book. We believe that referencing as Nu does is justified.

However, it is informative to draw out a few examples of paragraphs which Nu puts in translation.

### **Specific Instances – Examples**

Having discussed about the authors sources of external information, we now like to give specific extracts from English books he refers to.

We have so far been unable to locate the source of his information about the May 3, 1939 bombing of Chungking, about which he as written elaborately. But it has been easy to identify the sources of material concerning Chinese leaders. We will give a few examples only.

The last paragraph on page 61 of *Gandalarit* and following passages check identically with the paragraphs starting on page 278 of *Inside Asia* by John Gunther. Here is the extract:

“President Lin, a native of Fukien, was born in 1864; he lived in California for many years, and returned to China in 1911 to join Sun Yat-sen’s revolution. He has been a good Kuomintang wheel horse ever since,

Once, tramping up the mountain walk to Chiang’s house in Kuling, he sat on a stone bench to rest, and scribbled on it, “Those who have concubines, don’t sit”. His salary is \$800 (Chinese) or \$64 US per month.

For Chiang Kai-shek’s biography, which Nu writes starting page 139 in *Gandalarit*, he closely adopts material from John Gunther, starting page 200. It reads:

Chiang was born in the village of Chikow, in the seaside district of Fenghua, Chekiang province, in 1887. - - - He was certainly not of a rich family. - - -

He went to Japan when he was about nineteen to become an officer. He wasn’t allowed, however, to enter a Japanese military school without recommendation from the Chinese government; --- He met someone much more important than any Japanese officer. He met Dr Sun Yat-sen.

Identical information is recognized about Mao Tse-tung's biography in *Gandalarit* (which starts on page 241) and in *Inside Asia* (page 236 ). About Mao, John Gunther writes:

Mao was born in 1893 in a village in Hunan. His father was a peasant. He writes, "I went to the library in the morning when it opened. At noon I paused only long enough to buy and consume two rice cakes, which were my daily lunch. I stayed in the library every day until it closed."

--- One-book that influenced him was called '*Great Heroes of the World*', which contained biographies of Napoleon, Peter the great, Rousseau.

He read about the American revolution and came across a pregnant sentence: "After eight years of difficult war, Washington won victory and built up his nation."

About the political system, comprising the five Yuans of the Kuomintang Nu writes in page 84 of his book, while we find the source of his information in page 275 of John Gunther, which says:

Of the five Yuans which comprise the government, the first, the Executive Yuan, is the Cabinet; Second, Legislative Yuan; Third, Judicial Yuan; Fourth Examination Yuan; Fifth, Control or Supervisory Yuan.

We can cite a lot more. We find that Thakin Nu borrows heavily from John Gunther. But he does it with expert translation. We do not find that he takes so much from Edgar Snow, or Lin Yu Tang.

Then, there are also a few parts, whose source of information we cannot trace to any book yet, for example, the episode of May 3, 1939 bombing of Chungking

### **Translation of Terms and Concepts**

*Gandalarit* is an original work by Thakin Nu based mainly upon his personal experiences from travels and meetings and information from references which he translates. Inevitably, he introduces a number of translated terms and concepts.

As the first chapter abruptly deals with air-travel, which was quite new at the time, we find new words related to it in the early pages. Here are some we noticed.

*Passport:* The Burmese term used in the book is different from the current term. He used '*naing ngan char let hmat*'.

The present usage '*naing ngan ku let hmat*' seems to be not yet introduced at the time. Foreign travel was uncommon then and a generally accepted term was uninvented yet.

*Airport building:* The term used by Nu was '*lay-yin-pyan-yon*' different from current usage '*lay-seik*'. The newer term seems to have come up rather late. We find that Shwe Oo Daung, one of the greatest translators in Burmese language, uses the same thing as late as 1960. We find '*lay yin pyan yon*' in Shwe Oo Daung's 'Records and Ideas of a Life Time', a monumental autobiography written before 1960.

In fact the Burmese word '*yon*' referring to a public building seems to be more common. It is still in wide use. Examples are '*dhammar yon*' for a place of sermon; '*bu tar yon*' for railway station; '*zat yon*' for a theatre etc., all in current use.

Rather than adopting the option above, the Burmese people settled on option '*seik*', which relates more commonly to a travel terminal. '*hlay seik*' for *boat* terminal; '*thin baw seik*' for a port; '*ga toe seik*' for a ferry terminal. In the case of a bus terminal, it is '*car gate*' rather than '*car seik*'.

*Air-steward:* There is no word for it. Nu writes, "An 'aero-plane officer' comes to tell us we are already above the city of Chungking." Neither would there be a Burmese term for air-hostess in those early days of air-travel. We now have the word, '*lay yin maung*', and '*lay yin mae*' literally Mr. Airplane and Ms Airplane.

*Buffet:* Thakin Nu is unable to translate this term. Apparently, he has not heard about it. 'Dinner at that place was quite strange. There were various dishes laid on a table, but no chairs', writes Nu. He is forced to explain a buffet dinner. It seems buffet eating wasn't common in Burma, not even among the educated people those days. Yes, it's strange then.

Today, we have the Burmese equivalent of 'buffet'. '*Ko mbar sar*', meaning take for yourself and eat, in common usage.

*Toast:* Thakin Nu writes 'When a friend raises his cup, one raises his in return and drinks'. There is no appropriate term even today.

*Hotel:* Thakin Nu uses the word '*tae ein*' for hotel or hostel. This is rather inaccurate, because '*tae ein*' refers to a house where one stays with the host, usually a friend or relative. It's not commercial. Thakin Nu's repeated use of it, while he is actually referring to a hotel may be due to the transliterated usage '*haw tae*' being not yet well accepted those days.

*Official designations:* There are differences from today's usage. '*wun gyi choke*', meaning a chief minister was the term applied to a government minister those days. Now, '*choke*' meaning Prime, or Chief has been dropped. A minister is '*wun gyi*' now. ,

Thakin Nu's *military terms* are also a bit different, although no confusion can arise. Instead of '*bo gyoke*' for a general he uses '*sit bo gyoke*', with '*sit*' emphasizing 'military'. Rather than translating 'generalissimo', Nu transliterates it.

*Political terms:* Nu uses the term '*da-na-shin*' fashionable those days for 'capitalist'. Later, '*ah-yin shin*' has become more preferable. *Da na* generally refers to one's assets, but *ah-yin* for capital is more appropriate. The word '*gaing*' for party or faction used by Nu was common before the war. It's proper Burmese usage. Today, '*gaing*' is rarely used in Burmese politics.

*Academic terms:* Thakin Nu uses the transliteration '*uni-bar-city*' for university. '*tak-ka-tho*',

from Taxila, hasn't been widely accepted for the modern university in those days. Nu has no word for '*finance*'. He just refers to it as 'a subject dealing with money.'

For '*science*' the usually accepted Burmese usage those days, '*law ka dat pnya*' is adopted by Thakin Nu. Today, it is '*theik pan*', which some scholars, learned in Pali language, had objected unsuccessfully, arguing that it actually means 'arts'. Today, '*law ka dat pnya*' has given way to '*theik pan*'.

### **Aim and Impact**

Obviously, the aim of the book is multi-fold. At the time the book was written, Thakin Nu and his colleagues have been preparing the country for war and the struggle for independence. The author makes it his mission to inform the people about the war that is already raging in neighbouring China, the atrocities of the Japanese aggressor and the heroic resistance of the Chinese people.

Equally important is political ideology. Thakin Nu, already a confirmed leftist and communist sympathizer, wants to propagate leftist ideas. He quotes Karl Marx early in the book, saying “Capitalism thrives only by exploiting from the ignorance of the working people.” He describes the feudalism operating in the Shan States and the prospect for revolution.

The author aims to impart as much knowledge as possible to the public. Rightly, he begins with air-travel, quite a new fashion those days. His mentioning of check-in, take-off, smooth flight, scenery from air, turbulent flight, and landing are informative.

His mission for anti-Japanese propaganda and pro-Chinese sentiments is obvious from the length of the description he writes about the May 3, 1939 bombing of Chungking. The wickedness of the aggressor, and the author’s sympathy for the Chinese people is vivid.

Thakin Nu wants to tell his countrymen how the Chinese are resisting the Japanese aggression. In this connection, the role of Chinese leaders is important. So he writes a ‘Who’s Who’ of the Chinese leadership, political as well as military, from both left and right.

As a representative of Dobama Asi-a-yone in the Friendship Mission, Thakin Nu wants to project his party’s role in the struggle for Burma’s independence. Despite U Ba Cho’s objections, he makes use of every opportunity to sing his party song, which he regards as the national song,

He wants to inform the public about education and culture in China. He writes about Chinese universities, passing through hard times, and about the theatre.

Thakin Nu is a man of varied interests. Hence, his various digressions in the book. As the translator of Dale Carnegie’s famous ‘How to Win Friends and Influence People’, the art of making friends is important for him. He writes about Mr. Ganga Singh’s use of name cards in making friends. Perhaps irrelevantly, he writes about a college student who is an expert at making friends.

Thakin Nu is keen to pioneer social reforms. He discusses the need for flat-breasted Burmese women to allow their breasts to grow, by not wearing bodices that are too tight, or wrapping the breast too tightly in clothes. Coming back from visiting a university, he tells Daw Mya Sein in the car, “Sister, it’s a bit embarrassing, but I have to say it. I am

concerned about the flat breasts of our Burmese women. How can their breasts grow properly? They wear their bodice too tight, or they wrap cloth too tightly around the breast. This ought to change”. “Let’s take up this issue once we get back home, and we need your participation”, concludes Nu about the ‘breast promotion revolution’.

The book, and indeed the Friendship Mission which it describes, has great impact when the war comes. No doubt, the book contributes to the debate among young nationalists about who to side with, Japan or China and the allies, during the war and the struggle for independence. Nu favored the anti-Japanese stand and an alliance with China. It would indeed influence the thinking of some young people, but not what they actually did. The force of circumstances was so strong. The war brushed aside individual thoughts; Nu the pro-Chinese had to join the Japanese side.

Gandalarit is a concrete evidence that Thakin Nu is pro-Chinese.

When the Second World War came two years after the book’s publication, Thakin Nu’s principal friend and colleague, Thakin Aung San, had returned to Burma, as head of the Burma Independence Army (BIA), in alliance with the Japanese Army. Thakin Nu was in Mandalay prison then. Only when the Japanese army’s entry into Mandalay was imminent, the British government let out Thakin Nu and other political prisoners.

Thakin Nu’s visit to China, and by implication his book *Gandalarit*, had some effect here. General Wang, the Chinese General, whom Nu met in China, came to meet him in prison, with British government approval. After discussions, General Wang promised to assist Thakin Nu to go to China, to take part in anti-Japanese activities. Nu actually tried to go after his release. But the Burma Road was cut-off by the Japanese, so he could not proceed.

U Ba Cho, Daw Mya Sein and Mr. William Sen, Thakin Nu’s friends and delegation members of the China Friendship Mission, came into the prison to meet him just before he was released. U Ba Cho gave him some money, and Mr. William Sen offered a lot, which Nu declined to accept.

Then, what Thakin Nu has written in *Gandalarit* constitutes solid proof of his liaison with the Chinese, as well as U Ba Cho, who is also staunchly anti-Japanese. Thus, the book is there to put the two men, Nu and Cho, in harm’s way when the Japanese army comes in. In fact, there already have been criticisms and accusations of U Ba Cho as China’s man.

“Some people said, ‘U Ba Cho is a *ta-ya-ah-htoke* thu”, writes Thin Kkar, Cho’s biographer. This is a Burmese spoonerism, i.e. a Burmese usage in which vowel sounds ‘a’ and ‘oke’ are transposed. Read this way it becomes *ta-yoke-ah-hta* thu, literally meaning ‘one who relies on China’, whereas the original *ta-ya-ah-htoke* thu means a person who meditates.

But, the Japanese had taken the whole country. U Ba Cho, in particular, was in trouble. His anti-Japanese propaganda had been well known. He had to remain in hiding for some time. But they were fortunate; U Ba Cho and Thakin Nu both were protected by Dr. Ba Maw, the Head of Provisional Government of Burma, set up by the Japanese army, and also the BIA under General Aung San. Thakin Nu then joined Dr Ba Maw’s government, with approval of his colleagues, as foreign minister.

Irony of fate has made pro-Chinese Thakin Nu a Foreign Minister in Dr. Ba Maw’s government under the Japanese, China’s antagonist.

Gandalarit is useful in the sense that it prepares the country for the eventual anti-Japanese resistance, by informing the people about Japanese atrocities in China and the Chinese resistance. It gives fore-warning about what the Japanese would turn out to be in Burma.

The book Gandalarit has other impacts. Thakin Nu had written a number of books before it. But, Gandalarit would certainly have added to his name as a politician.

In just eight years Thakin Nu became the leader of newly independent Burma. His China visit before the war paid off. It helped him to establish friendship with the communist leaders of the newly established Republic of China, especially in solving the boundary demarcation problem between the two countries.

### **Assessment of the Book**

Doubtlessly, Gandalarit is a landmark in Burma’s political literature and recent history.

The literary style is good. The contents are informative. It is notable for its variety of contents:

- travel by air (a new mode then), and by car on an important road
- politics and war
- leaders and people
- education, culture and social problems

- drama
- eating and drinking
- humor

Foreign travel is a rare experience in those days. Air-travel is rarer. The author's description of traveling by air is informative. Thakin Nu may have been among the first Burmese writers about to travel by air. It is a great contribution to public knowledge.

Apart from some trivial digressions like, 'After drinking tea so many times, every one has an urgency to urinate. They rushed for the loo, unable first to greet the hosts, the Minister of Public Works and wife' (page 57), the book makes lively reading, with the author's observations, history and personalities taking turns. In addition, Thakin Nu provides some sense of humor. For example:

"U Ba Lwin – (looking at his trousers) 'Oh my God! I haven't buttoned up my trousers until now. Really, I have come out in such hurry, I forgot to button up. I'm telling the truth. I kept talking to people in the airport without noticing it. Great blunder that is.', says U Ba Lwin as he buttons the trousers."

And Nu takes note of U Ba Lwin's School-Principal-like behaviour.

The most noteworthy aspect of Thakin Nu's work is his political predictions, which came true.

Nu foresees a time when Shan people will become enlightened and rise up against the unfairness, to set aflame the Shan States and Burma. Thakin Nu, the rising politician and independence fighter, deplores the inability of the officers to realize that the prohibition against Thakins coming to Shan States and delivering political speeches was like a sand dam against a rising tide. "Poverty", he remarks, "is the greatest leader of the workers".

Certainly, such contents in the book, in many places, are characteristic of Thakin Nu, the left-leaning political radical.

There are a number of things Thakin Nu worries about, concerning the future of Burma. With the Burma Road built, and a railway construction planned, he worries that more Chinese will immigrate into Burma. He has seen the Chinese in Burma as one of three capitalist groups, after the British and the Indians, who are exploiting Burma. We find his concern quite legitimate.

Thakin Nu also predicts an important political result. “Whoever wins, the Kuomintang or the Communists, one day, when China becomes strong, it will turn toward Burma and India. Despite their opposite ideas, their policy for Burma and India is the same; surely the Chinese will come into Burma one day.” Writes Nu. This is a superb prediction. We see it has come true. Chinese Kuomintang forces came to Burma twice, during the war, to oppose the Japanese, after the war due to their defeat by the Communists. Then, in the time of Mao Tse Tung, the Chinese came to Burma, in the form of political influence. It supported the Burmese communist insurgents.

Thakin Nu draws attention to the need to develop friendly relations between China and Burma, for mutual benefit. He worked at it when he became Prime Minister.

In *Gandalarit*, Thakin Nu makes clear his anti-British feelings, and justifies it. On meeting a youthful and polite Englishman, the director of a production centre of China Cooperatives, he is reminded about the arrogant Englishmen in Burma. ‘Englishmen change behavior when they step on Burma’s soil. Burmese people who have traveled abroad with Englishmen used to notice the changed behavior of Englishmen when they enter or leave Burma. Englishmen behave one way when they go out of Rangoon river (into the ocean), and another way when they come into the mouth of Rangoon river. This is an observation for future generations.

But, Thakin Nu writes almost nothing about the British government in Burma, and its role in the China-Japan conflict. The Friendship Mission visits the British embassy in Chungking. But Nu mentions it only as a clause, not even a full sentence. Why do they visit? Who receives them, the ambassador, or a lower rank official? What do they discuss there? The author should have given information, which can be of historical significance. Above all, the author has left a mystery, the origin of the Burmese Friendship Mission to China, in which he was a member. Who initiated it? Who contributed to it? How was the British government involved? Etc.

It is a topic that merits separate research.

#### **Additional Note: Who’s Who in the Friendship Delegation**

Among the nine members of the delegation, five are Burmans, all of them prominent.

**U Ba Lwin** , the leader is Principal of Myoma National High School. He is a strong nationalist and influential with the Burmese youth. Thakin Nu is his former student.

**Daw Mya Sein** is a lecturer in Rangoon University. A pioneering woman, she was a Burmese representative at the Burma Roundtable Conference in London, 1931.

**U Ba** is an educationist from Rangoon University.

**U Ba Cho** is a well-known writer. He publishes *Dee-doke* magazine, and he is known as Deedoke U Ba Cho. He was taught in the National College. Which functioned only briefly. Influential among the young leaders, U Ba Cho founded the Fabian Socialist Party. After the war he served in General Aung San's Provisional Government of Burma as a Minister and was assassinated with him in 1947. U Ba Cho is a great friend and mentor of Thakin Nu, and many of his younger friends.

**Mr. Ganga Singh** is known to be a Member of the House of Representatives, Burma's parliament under the British.

**Saw Teik Leong, Mr. William Kian and Mr Liu** are Chinese. Probably they represent the Chinese community in Rangoon. Not much is known about them at present. A search in *Who's Who in Burma, 1938-39*, may tell us about them. But, the reviewer has not done it at present.<sup>7</sup>

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2. U Nu and six others: *Gandalarit Hmat-tan, 1955*, Burma Translation Society, Rangoon.
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## APPENDIX: Additional Information about the Members of the Delegation

### a) On the Chinese Members

Editor's Note:

Through the family of one of the Chinese members of the delegation, Mr. Saw Taik Leong, some material about these three delegates could be obtained. Whereas the information on the other members is rather scanty, for Saw Taik Leong there is some biographical information apparently from a "Who's Who" compiled in 1929.

Here is the information:

**William** (Kiang) **Tseng** was the Secretary of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

**S. C. Liu** was a former Rangoon College student. After independence, he was appointed general manager of the Office of Inland Water Transport.

Here is the biographical information given on **Saw Taik Leong** :

**Mr. Saw Taik Leong**, B.A., Barrister-at-Law was born in Burma in 1895 had his early education in St. Paul's Institute and graduated from the Rangoon College in 1917 with honours in English.

In the same year he joined the Subordinate Civil Service and served as Township Officer in Mandalay, Pinlebu, Wuntho and Myothit.

After some years, Mr. Saw Taik Leong took extraordinary leave and proceeded to England where he entered the Middle Temple and was called to the Bar in 1922.



On his return he resigned from Government services and since then has been practising as an Advocate of the High Court of Judicature in Rangoon. For the third term he has been returned to the Municipal Corporation of Rangoon. As a Councillor he always tried to help the Chinese and the Burmese in the matters concerning to Municipality. He has secured the reduction of the Municipal Taxes of the Chinese High School and also those of other Chinese Schools and public properties of the Chinese.

When war broke out in China he took keen interest in helping the organisation of War Relief Fund and tabled a resolution to obtain Rs. 5000,- from the Municipal Corporation for Chinese Red Cross Society and was eventually successful in obtaining Rupees 1,000 towards the same aim. Later he set the movement of Boycott of Japanese goods in motion and organised many public meetings in Rangoon as well as in the districts. He was elected as the chairman of the Commission for boycott of Japanese goods, the office he still now holds.

Mr. Saw Taik Leong is a member of the Executive Committee of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Rangoon. He takes great interest in the affairs of the Chamber and always gives good council concerning them. He is also an office bearer in many other organisations and associations.

b) On Ganga Singh



Singh, Ganga, Government Contractor, Mandalay. Born on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1891 at Bihta, Ambala District, Punjab. Education at the Khalsa College, Amritsar, and joined the Punjab's Police Force as Cadet Sub-Inspector of Police. He was transferred to the Burmese Police in 1935 as Inspector C.I.D. He investigated two well known Conspiracy Cases, and visited the Malay States, Siam etc., in connection with the Investigation of German activities against the British, before the Siam Government and other Eastern Countries declared War against Germany. -

- He was posted as Bolshevik Officer in Kashmir State to watch the Bolshevik Propaganda in the Kashmir Frontier. He was again transferred to the C.I.D. Burma. On

Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

account of his extensive touring on Government Duty he broke down and he had to retire on an government pension. On his retirement he settled in Mandalay as a Government Contractor. Mr. Ganga Singh comes from a very loyal Sikh, Jagirdar family of the Punjab. His great-grandfather was one of the Cis-Sutlej Chiefs who helped the British Government on their entering the Punjab, and establishing British Rule. For his loyal service he was awarded a certificate of Honour, Double Barred Gun, and a Pistol by the Bangal Government. He is a Freemason, and a member of the Theosophical Society. Club: Mandalay Club.

*Address:* Mandalay.

### **3.2. Commentary on the Book Report “Gandalarit” (by Lydia Seibel)**

“Gandalarit” or “China” is a political travelogue combining political education on China during the Sino-Japanese war with entertaining travelling accounts. The reviewer, Tin Hlaing, succeeded to draw a lively picture of U Nu’s book on the Burmese Friendship Mission to China in 1939 even for those who do not have the chance to read the original Burmese text.

Very helpful to the reader is the embeddedness of the chapterwise content summary in various contextual frames. Tin Hlaing makes great effort to explore “Gandalarit” from different angles: U Nu’s personal side, its role within the Nagani Book Club, the linguistic and cultural particularities, external sources of information, and certainly, its political background and influence. For this task the reviewer draws on many additional materials besides the book *Gandalarit*.

Frequently mentioned both in the introductory part as well as in the summary are the Dobama Party, the Dobama Association, and the Dobama Song. It would be interesting to learn more about the Dobama’s aims, organisation and activities. Were Dobama members ideologically homogenous, or was nationalism and the struggle for independence their common ground? How influential was the group at the time of the Friendship Mission compared to other political associations? Why did the leader of the delegation to China U Ba Cho dislike the singing of the Dobama Song in China? Did he oppose the singing or the content of the song?

Another interesting aspect is the political relationship between the Burmese delegation and their various Chinese hosts. Does the book elaborate on U Nu’s or Dobama’s attitude towards Chiang Kai-Shek’s Kuomintang? – The summary emphasises especially their desire to exchange ideas with the Chinese communist party. Nevertheless it does not comment on conflict lines amongst the Burmese delegation and delegation members’ potentially heterogeneous attitudes towards the politically diverse Chinese groups.

In his assessment of the impact of *Gandalarit* Tin Hlaing claims that the book influenced the thoughts of many through taking a clear anti-Japanese position but did not influence their actual decision to side either with the Chinese or the Japanese during the

war. How did the inner conflict of the Burmese political elite show concerning this question? Why did the national elite have no choice from collaborating with the Japanese?

Finally, Tin Hlaing, himself, poses many questions for further research on Gandalarit, regarding the origin of the Friendship Mission, its later impact, the role of the British during the journey, and also the backgrounds of the non-Burmese delegation members. Gandalarit certainly leaves room for additional explorations on Burmese relations with her large neighbour China, and the intellectual history of Burmese independence fighters. I am looking forward to read more on this topic.

Münster in February 2007

### **3.3 Tin Hlaing's Reply to Lydia Seibel's remarks on the book report on Gandalarit**

1. I first wish to thank Lydia Seibel for her favorable remarks on my book commentary which she expressed in the first two paragraphs.

2. As for her interest in learning more about Dobama Ahsiahyone, I have the pleasure to be able to suggest a readily available source. I have translated U Ba Khine's Political History of Burma for Dr Zollner's Myanmar Literature Project. It contains a large portion about the Dobama, from its origin in 1930, to the time of the book's publication, i.e. 1937. I believe Dr Zollner will make it available to all who are interested. Eight papers which outline the Dobama policy are very stimulating. And Dr Zollner also may have the translation of the Dobama song. If he doesn't have it yet, I would be prepared to make the attempt.

Were Dobama members ideologically homogeneous? Well, they were in the beginning, every one being motivated only by nationalism.

After 1937, when former student leaders, Ko Nu, Ko, Aung San and company joined the party, and adopted the prefix Thakin to their names, the party no longer was homogeneous. When the new fellows became prominent in Dobama, with their mentor Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, the literary grandmaster, the party split. One faction was led by older members Thakin Ba Sein, Thakin Tun Oke and others; they seemed not to have been ideologically indoctrinated, but were inspired only by nationalism. And they did not like the young new-comers who had robbed the leadership. By the way, Thakin Ba Thaug, the founder of Dobama, was in jail by this time, for the offence of printing counterfeit currency notes; he seemed to be in desperate need for money for his political activities. The young Thakins brought in socialist policies. Thakin Nu had also been a member, along with Deedoke U Ba Cho, of the Fabian Socialist Party. Thakins Aung San, Soe and Than Tun were to become founders the Communist Party of Burma in 1938.

Yes, of course, nationalism remained the common aim of both factions. But their strategies, tactics and ideologies had diverged.

At the time of the Friendship mission to China, the Dobama party was strong enough for the British government to pay attention. Within a year or two Thakins were sent to jail. Thakin Aung San and some comrades escaped to Japan, to become the 'Thirty Comrades' who came back alongside the Japanese and drove the British out. Both factions of Dobama separately sent young men to Japan. But they met there and were united as Thirty Comrades with leader Thakin Aung San. But that is another story.

Deedoke U Ba Cho objected Nu's singing of Dobama song, because he was leader of a group representing a broad spectrum of Burmese society. The delegation did not represent the Dobama party, so he would have seen it inappropriate to promote a single party. The delegation members like U Ba Lwin, Daw Mya Sein were not members of any party, just nationalists who had their own jobs. It was the presentation of Dobama item that he objected, not the song's content.

3. They went to make friendship with Chaing Kai Shek's China; but Thakin Nu, in particular had been instructed by Dobama colleagues to make contact with Mao Ze Dong's communists. He failed doing that, but he came back friendly with Kuomintang General Wang. When the Japanese entered Burma, Nu was in Mandalay jail; General Wang came to take him out, with British approval, to be taken to China to cooperate in resisting the Japanese. On the other hand U Ba Cho became an ardent supporter of the Chinese. He wrote anti-Japanese stuff. When the Japanese came, he was in grave danger, and he had to remain in hiding some time. It was only later, when Dr Ba Maw, Thakins Nu and Aung San got friendly with the Japanese, that they could convince U Ba Cho poses no danger to the Japanese.

4. It was indeed a tough decision to make whether to take sides with the Japanese, or British. Dobama wanted to oppose any foreign power. So they sought to ally with both Chinese factions.

There was no choice apart from joining the Japanese, because they were overwhelmingly strong, as attested by war history. In fact Thakin Aung San and a friend had gone out to Ahmoy to contact the Chinese communists, but they fell into Japanese hands. They had to

change the plan, to ally with the Japanese and drive out the British first. The Japanese for the time being was considered the lesser evil.

5. Yes I have made suggestions for further research. The origin of the mission should be fully explored. Its later impact, now known to some extent, should be documented, and more facts added. The involvement of the British government is clear from the fact that the delegation visited the Consulate of British-Burma in Chunking. And the composition of the delegation also suggests that. Also I agree that the backgrounds of non-Burman members should be sought out.

February 2009

#### **4. Excerpt: The Japanese Air-Raid on Chungking, Translation by Tin Htway**

U Tun Pe of the Sun Daily wrote a book called The Inner History of the Chinese Revolution published by the Nagarni Book Club. ..... Again from the Nagarni Book Club publication, there appeared Inside Asia written by U Ba Khaing. U Thein also contributed a book called Eastern Problems which was published by Aung-lan-daw Press, Rangoon. The most interesting of these books was China, by Thakhin Nu published by Nagarni Book Club as a special issue. It was a personal account of his own experience as a member of the Burmese Goodwill Mission to China in December 1939.

The book Ganda-layit (classical Burmese name for China) indicated that Thakhin Nu was not only familiar with Sun-Yat-Sen's San Min Chu I (Three People 's Principles) but also with the opinions of the rising Chinese Communists. Although he was definitely pro-Chinese, it is rather difficult to estimate whether he took the side of Chiang-Kei-Shek or of Mao Tse Tung, because his group's good-will trip was to Chiang-Kei-Shek's China - and there was very little chance for him to see the then Communist China. In his book he mentioned that he had only met three Communist, (unnamed) in Chungking. But there is no doubt of his feeling against the Japanese, frequently referring to them as 'Imperialist Japanese'. Here is his own remarkable description of bombing raids on Chungking, May the 3rd and 4th of 1939. (pp. 33-41)

Japanese bombers came and attacked the City of Chungking mainly on moonlit nights or at mid-day when the sky is clear. The citizens have to dig long trenches under the mountains as air-raid shelters to protect their lives. In one air-raid shelter there is room for 100 to 150 people.

As soon as the Japanese bombers leave their stations, Chinese espionage agents send a warning by wireless to the Chinese authorities. Then, as soon as the message is received an air-raid siren is sounded in the appropriate areas. When the people heard the first siren, they understood that they had to gather their valuables, and go to the air-raid shelters to get protection.

When the Japanese planes come nearer the towns or the areas, there comes the second siren. This siren means that except for the soldiers and the firemen everybody in the city must enter the shelters. The Japanese bombers leave either when they have accomplished their missions or when they have been driven out by the Chinese fighter-planes. Then there comes the third siren, the 'all clear'.

So in China every citizen clearly understands that the first air-raid siren means 'be prepared' the second siren 'take shelter' and the third and final siren means 'all clear'.

It was May the 3rd 1939. According to the Burmese lunar calendar it was the day of the full moon of *Ko-son*, the *Wesak Day*. As *Wesak Day* was Buddha's Birthday, it was the holiest day for all Buddhists. On that particular holy day, Buddhists observe their *sīla*<sup>8</sup>, practise their *Bhawana*<sup>9</sup>, and spread their *Metta*<sup>10</sup> to gain merit. These meritorious deeds are normally strictly observed by most Buddhists on that particular day.

**BUT THE JAPANESE SO-CALLED BUDDHISTS, HAVE CHOSEN THIS DAY TO BOMB, TO KILL THE PEOPLE.**

On that day, the bombers arrived in the City, an hour or so after the second air-raid siren. So, when they dropped their bombs most of the citizens of Chungking had already taken shelter. As a result there were very few casualties, only some buildings including banks, factories and shops were damaged. Some were destroyed by a direct hit, but most of them were damaged or burnt down by incendiary bombs.

On the next day, May the 4th, that is, one day after the Full Moon Day of *Ka-son*, the citizens of Chungking, feeling that the Japanese bombers would not attack on two consecutive days went about their normal duties, saw to their business etc.

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<sup>8</sup> Footnote [Tin Htway]: *sīla* = morality

<sup>9</sup> Footnote [Tin Htway]: *Bhawana* = meditation

<sup>10</sup> Footnote [Tin Htway]: *Metta* = loving kindness, universal love or all-embracing kindness

But the citizens of Chungking were unaware that the Japanese bomber crews would never be satisfied until they had devastated them totally and were trying rigorously to seize their chance to bomb the city again. Therefore, on that day at about 2 p.m. they were surprised to hear the first air-raid siren. About half an hour later, they heard the second and as usual took shelter.

But – the time was 3.30 p.m. - there was no sign of bombers, not one. At 4 o'clock there was still no sign. Time passed – 6 p.m.: there was no sign of a singular Japanese bomber. Then the people who had been in the shelter for such a long time became restless inside their uncomfortable trenches. Some reckless individuals came out of their shelters to stretch themselves - and quite a number of people followed their example. Nothing happened for quite a long time. Then more people came out of their shelters to ease themselves. Again nothing happened for quite a long while. Then the foolhardy ones not content with getting some air, wanted to stretch their legs well, and began to stroll in the streets. Some said: "Oh, these Japanese bombers - they could not afford to come and bomb us for the second day running." – and returned to their homes. Those who felt the same way also went back to their houses. In this way more and more people left their shelters and left their protection.

But if they only knew that the Japanese bombers, the envoys of the King of Death, were suspended hiding among the clouds, waiting for the time to kill them – by burning them alive – with their terrible weapons the incendiary bombs, how frightened would they be?

When almost all the people were out of their shelters and gathering on the roads, then the envoys of the King of Death, the Japanese, came out of their hiding place, from among the thick clouds, so swiftly as they could in jubilant mood. Those in charge of the warning system in panic saw the people strolling in the streets. The siren was sounded once more to warn them that the bombers were on their way. But for the people – this was the third siren and for them, the 'all clear' siren. So everybody thought there was no more danger and those who hadn't taken unnecessary risks came out of their shelters and went to their homes. Then only the Japanese shamelessly dropped their 72 bombers' full load of bombs with all their

might to kill innocent people. Alas! Many died, thousands and thousands – numerous – countless – unthinkable. It was a disaster.

Of that day's bombing, there stands out one particular event as the most emotive of all. Within the precincts of the City of Chungking, there was one separate area for the diplomats – the diplomatic quarter. This quarter was separated from the surrounding locality by a high concrete wall. The quarter adjacent to the diplomatic quarter was a poor Chinese area.

On that day, while the Japanese were dropping their bombs, people from this poor area, a mixed crowd of more than 300 Chinese adults and children, were looking at the sky and the bombers quite unperturbed because they believed that the Japanese would not bomb the diplomatic quarter. While they were gazing at the sky, the Japanese dropped the incendiary bombs right behind the innocent crowd. As the bombs were incendiary - highly inflammable - the fire was no ordinary fire. As soon as it exploded the fire or the flame reached near them. It was almost impossible to escape. There was only one way to save themselves. That was to climb that high concrete wall of the diplomatic quarter which stood majestically before them. Some members of the German Embassy kindly dropped down some ropes to help them climb the wall to save themselves. But only 4 or 5 people managed to escape this way. The rest, more than 300 of them, found no way out and burnt to death alive helplessly. Oh! It was the most horrible and unrivalled scene of tragedy. Among the victims, the most pathetic were the dead bodies of a mother and child. The child was trying to cling to the mother, while the mother was trying to seek escape for herself first. Oh! This scene portrayed one of the most notable Burmese proverbs – kuiy na-khyi a-mi sô lai sâ: tô khai (when in agony a mother will even deny being related to her son).

The death toll on that day, according to the Government list, was well over 20,000 people. Among them many women, children and old people were included. Although the fire-brigade and the fire-fighters did their best with the most modern methods at their command, the fire caused by the Japanese bombs did not die down for over three long days. Soldiers, with the help of many surviving civilians dug a big ditch for the mass burial of those whose lives had been destroyed inhumanely

by the Japanese and even after three days of continuous burying their work was still unfinished. There were cases of people who became insane or lost their senses after witnessing the deaths of their brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, etc. The scene was most appalling and unbearable. Even after three days of that bombing many people were still wandering around restlessly not knowing where they were going or what they were doing. The shock had almost deprived them of their sanity.

When we arrived at Chungking, we saw only a few ruined buildings as the remaining scars of the Japanese bombing. Only a very few. About everything had been rebuilt by the Chinese. Not only that, the people including women and children showed no sign of fear now. They seemed very brave and fully understood that it was their duty to crush the imperialist Japanese aggressor once and for all – and they were making their very best efforts to fulfill their duty.

I was sitting in the car and looking at the ruined buildings and listening to that day's bombing raids. While I was listening, it occurred to me that 'I too bear a certain responsibility for all these disastrous events – for this death toll and these ruined buildings. We buy Japanese goods – and out of the profits they get from me, these Japanese make bombs and they attack the Chinese with their bombs. No, on the day we have cause to quarrel with them – we will suffer the same way as the Chinese' – and I feel full of regret and repentance.

U Nu was always highly critical of the Japanese. In the last chapter of the book, chapter 21, he clearly mentioned that after World war I, the Japanese, instead of combining the strength which they possessed and the favorable opinion the Asians had of them for providing the leadership for the liberation of Asia from the European overlords, they followed in the same footsteps of the western imperialists and totally destroyed the favorable opinion of their fellow Asians.

In his book, he vividly described the lives and the achievements of almost all the prominent Chinese figures including Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Chiang Kai-Shek, Mao Tse Tung, Lin Piao, Wan Chin Wei and the Chinese Communist Party. In one instance he described a Chinese propaganda play of that time – Eternally live China - all four acts in detail with an account of the Chinese drama.

There is one very remarkable description in Chapter 19 of the book concerning Chinese Communists' guerilla warfare against the comparatively well-armed modern Japanese army, which I am sure gave some encouragement to reckless young nationalists in their case.

Thakhin Nu tries to deal with various subjects in his book. This shows his interest not only in current Burmese political affairs, but also in wider educational, social matters etc. For example, he gives a detailed description of Chinese universities and the war-time system of Chinese education. And in the same chapter he discusses with Daw Mya Sein, the only female delegate in the mission, the size of Burmese women's breasts. He had evidently noticed that the Chinese girl students were better endowed in this respect. He did not want to see Burmese women with flat chests, because they were the mothers-to-be of future generations and future national heroes.

Like most of the Thakhins of that day, he, too, never missed an opportunity to complain about imperialism. The following extract from page 97 of his book is one of several examples:

Oh! Imperialism - You are a great evil and dreadful dangerous demon.

Whenever your spirit approaches somebody – whoever the person may be, however good and virtuous in the past - they lose their genuine personality and qualities and they become devil-like.

Oh! bestial demon - you don't hesitate to kill. You have no compunction to eat alive - you have no mercy, not even for innocent children no scruples to steal or grab or rob.

Oh! dreadful devil - because of you, universal disaster like epidemic diseases, hunger end starvation, the deaths of millions of people - are like shadows in human society. Wherever you go these disasters follow in your wake.

Oh! YOU... You are disgusting, appalling devil demon. There are no words for you. Just one word. E V I L ...

He writes vividly and forcefully. His Burmese is not remarkably striking. He uses simple and straight-forward sentences with no rhymes and no . . .<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The rest of the text is missing (editor).

## 5. The Dobama Song<sup>1</sup>

From Abhirāja , the founder of Tagaung  
we Burmese are of the Sakya Clan.

Our pride and power never fade.

We fought Thailand and India as well and we conquered.

Yes, it was We Burmese.

Although we were the true diamond pinnacle

Now, as the old proverb says we are as brittle as fire-wood.

Well, this is partly the law of nature.

We are most unlucky to suffer.

Nevertheless - let us examine the root of our suffering.

Burma is OURS - OUR LAND.

Our traditions must never perish

We must place our blood, our race on record in history.

Throughout the world,

We Burmese had our place of distinction,

And is it in our time that our traditional pride must fade?

Dear Burmese, ARE WE NOT BURMESE ?

Yes, we Burmese – WE BURMESE.

we Burmese – WE BURMESE.

True, we are Burmese, WE ARE BURMESE.

All together, be united.

Be brave like real men, we Burmese

We are working for the sake of posterity,

What we are doing is not for our self-interest.

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<sup>1</sup> Tin Htway 1969, pp.: 318-321.

We seek nothing for ourselves.

Be brave like real Burmese

Burma is for US, We Burmese.

So behave like the Thakhins.

Yes, we are Thakhins, we are Burmese.

On this earth under this sky

We Burmese are as brave as yaks,

And we always keep our spirits high.

CHORUS: Until this very earth crumbles

We shall remain BURMESE.

This is our country, this is our land,

Yes, THIS IS OUR COUNTRY.

This is our country, this is our land,

Yes, THIS IS OUR COUNTRY.

This is our country, this is our land,

Yes, THIS IS OUR COUNTRY.

OUR BURMA, OUR BURMA, OUR LAND

Each and every native MUST realise that THIS IS OUR LAND,

Yes, this is our duty

And, We BURMESE do love each other.

VERSE: Do the best for the sake of the nation

We Burmese – yes – We Burmese

As the rising sun always appears in the East

Sooner or later our time must come.

There is no doubt.

We Burmese – yes – We Burmese

Burma, throughout the country, every inch,

IS OUR HOME - OUR LAND,,

Let this be written in your heart.

Yes, this is OUR BURMA, OURS.

Then only we can become WE BURMESE.

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CHORUS: Until this very earth crumbles

We shall remain BURMESE.

.....

.....

.....

And, We BURMESE do love each other.

### **III. APPENDICES**

#### **SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS**

CHOSEN BOOKS from the bibliography will be provided on a lending basis by the manager [or for people in Myanmar through the Myanmar Book Centre in Yangon (55 Baho Road; telephone 221-271, 212-409)].

TWO REPORTS on each book by different persons are accepted.

LENGTH: 8,000 to 12,000 words (plus special space, if desired);

LANGUAGE of PUBLICATION: English; manuscripts in Myanmar language will be translated;

CRITERIA (must not slavishly be observed):

1. Biographical information about the author/translator, and other contributors;
2. Information about the non-Myanmar sources used in the book; (if the book is a translation, the original English version will be provided, too, if possible;)
3. Summary of the book's contents;
4. Information about the special aim and intended impact of the book at the time of publication;
5. How are foreign terms and concepts translated or transformed into the Myanmar language and the Myanmar context? (May be omitted!)
6. Personal assessment by the reviewer of the book, its impact on later times and its meaning for today

DEADLINE of DELIVERY of the REPORT: December 31, 2005 (the deadline can be extended);

DELIVERY of the REPORTS DRAFTED: Directly to the manager of the project by email or through the Myanmar Book Centre.

COMMENTS and EDITING: The reports will be commented upon by another person. The reviewer may react on the comments and answer the questions as he or she likes. The responsibility for the final editing of the reports is with the project manager.

Material on Nu, Gandalarit

**REWARD:** As a financial reward, each reviewer will receive 50 US \$ at the time of submitting the book report and 30 US \$ after the final editing.

**OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS** like recollections of elder people, who remember the impact of Nagani on their life, and essays on subjects related to the club (Nagani Song, Nagani Magazine, the role of literature in disseminating knowledge in Myanmar, etc.) are very much appreciated.

## **INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS**

1.The commentaries asked for shall serve two aims:

First (and most important): To start a dialogue on Myanmar's intellectual and literary heritage between interested people inside and outside of Myanmar.

Second (and important, too): To check the clarity of the report with regard to the intended publication.

Therefore, the commentator should be interested in Burma affairs and in the general topic of the respective book, but must not know anything about its specific content.

2.Length of each commentary: Must not exceed the space of this paper.

3.Some hints that may be useful to observe in writing a commentary:

Are there any questions that are brought up by reading the report?

If yes, what kind of questions do arise?

Are the criteria listed in the “Short information on the making of book reports” (see attachment) met by the book report?

What information on the book report do I find interesting/exciting or unnecessary/redundant?

Is there anything that I would recommend to the author of the report?

Delivery of the commentary: It would be appreciated if the commentaries could be sent by email to the above mentioned email address. If the author of the report chooses to react on the commentary, the commentator will be informed.

Affairs to come: All participants will be informed about the development of the publishing process of the reports and are invited to participate in future deliberations and activities. - Questions and recommendations are very much appreciated!

Material on Nu, *Gandalarit*

MYANMAR LITERATURE PROJECT



Starting with an investigation into the NAGANI BOOK CLUB

The project's

**Working Papers**

are published by

the **Department of Southeast Asian Studies of Passau University**

Already Published:

No. 10:1, *An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club*

No. 10:2, Thein Pe, *Saya Lun and Member of Parliament*

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

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

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

No. 10:100, Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore 2006

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Some Nagani Books  
were scanned and are available on CD.

For details contact  
habezett@t-online.de

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All Working Papers published until now are available  
at

**<http://www.zoellner-online.org/mlp.htm>**

and at the Online Burma Library

**<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=2083>**

## INVITATION

Readers are invited to participate in the project by

- writing **comments and criticisms** on the contents of this and other volumes of this series;
- contributing **essays** on Burmese/Myanmar literature as a medium between the international world and Burmese society;
- providing **material** that sheds more light on the Nagani Book Club, its context and impact on Burmese intellectual and literary life;
- offering **assistance** as translators and commentators of book reports.

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For contributions and questions, please contact:

Dr. Hans-Bernd Zöllner

University of Passau

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Fax: 0049-40-84051735

Mail: [habezett@t-online.de](mailto:habezett@t-online.de)