Myanmar Literature Project

Material on Thein Pe: Indo-Burman Conflict
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III. **APPENDICES** ..................................................................................................................................... 59
About the Contributors

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**Hninsi von Marschall** studied Medical Science in Yangon and worked there as a lecturer and physician. She is now living in Freiburg / Germany.

**Georg Noack**, born 1977 in Hannover (Germany) studied at Hamburg University and Humboldt University Berlin (South-East Asian studies, ethnology) specialising himself in Burma studies. He perfected his language skills in Myanmar and in 2005 received his MA from the Humboldt University with a thesis on the exposition of gender in Burmese novels. He is now working on his Ph.D.

**Tin Htway**, born 1930 in Monywa, attended the University of Rangoon from 1947 to 1952 and finished is I.A. and B.A. (English, Burmese Language, Literature, History) there. From 1967 to 1969 he studied at SOAS in London and obtained a M. Phil (Burmese Language and Literature). From 1969 until his retirement in 1995, he was Lecturer for Burmese language at the University of Heidelberg. He now lives in a small town near this city.
I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

Numbers, Genres, and Emotions

This small paper has some similarities to its predecessor in this series: Ba Hein’s work on the “Students’ Revolution”. It is a short booklet dealing with a current event happening in the year 1300 of the Burmese era (A.D. 1938), circulated in rather great numbers and reprinted in successive editions.

The riots described and analyzed in the booklet started on July 26, 1938, with a mass meeting attended by some 10,000 people, including 1,500 monks, at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon, which spread to all over Burma and continued until mid-August. On September 2, new incidents broke out in Rangoon which lasted until September 9.¹

The first edition of Thein Pe’s book was printed in September 1938 with an initial print run of 5,000 copies. Since the booklet mentions the renewed outbreak of riots in September, it can be assumed that the first edition of the booklet was published around September 15. The Burma Catalogue of Books mentions that on September 19, 1938, 10,000 copies of the book were printed. As the cover indicated, the first edition comprised 5,000 copies. Since Thein Pe needed both some time to write the text and the use of a printers’ shop to print it, one can conclude that the pamphlet was written shortly after the events and that within some 14 days in the second half of September at least 45,000 copies were printed, as is shown by the cover of the 5th edition, from which the copy used in this paper is taken. Kyaw Hoe tells us that some 100,000 copies in total were printed by Nagani, and - at least - 1,000 copies were printed by another publisher. By contrast, some 50,000 copies of Ba Hein’s work may have been distributed.

This booklet, therefore, can be regarded as the print product with the highest recorded circulation in Burmese history, not only over a one-month period but over a full year. The high circulation was not due to the literary quality of the brochure, but because of its topic. It was a pamphlet on a current and hotly debated issue, as was Ba Hein’s work on the “Students’ Revolution” several months later. The high numbers in which this booklet was printed thus reflects the degree of public significance accorded to the issue dealt with in the text. It reflects the enormous emotional charge

connected with the attacks of Burman Buddhists on Indian Muslims and some other Indians.

**Additional Information on Nagani**

Looking at the book’s topic from an academic angle, it can be discussed in a variety of ways. Before pointing out some of them, a peek shall be taken at some additional information on the “Nagani enterprise” given on the jacket of the book (see below, II.2).¹

The front and back page of the booklet inform the reader about the people, who agree with the author’s assessment of the riots. On the front page, three names are given: Ko Nu, Ko Aung San, and Thakin Tin Maung. These three names are mentioned again on the back page, this time together with their function, and, accordingly, in a different order.

Nagani was thus conceptualized as a collective entity, a dragon with many heads, so to speak. This assumption is underlined by the summary of the aims of the enterprise: The Book Club’s aim was to pave the way for a new era based on freedom for all, development, and peace, having eliminated the evils of poverty, sickness, and backwardness through proper education.

On the other hand, the “heads of the dragon” were not equal and were thus used for different purposes. Nu, Aung San, and Thakin Tin Maung were regarded as the most prominent by the editors as indicated by the mention of their names appear on the booklet’s cover. The mentioning of the first two can be regarded as a case of noteworthy foresight, given that Aung San led Burma’s struggle for independence and Nu became the country’s first Prime Minister in 1948 after Aung San’s assassination. Both of them became prominent during the students’ strike of 1936. Thakin Tin Maung, born 1918, was the youngest of the three.² He was still a student at that time and became a member of the *Dobama Asiayone* before Aung San and Nu joined the organisation in early October 1938. He therefore can be regarded as one of the first students who entered the organisation. It has not yet been discovered what kind of personal fame led to his name being placed alongside those of the other (ex-) student leaders. Maybe it was simply the fact that he was regarded as one of the young “progressive leaders” of that time who had already joined the avant-garde *Dobama* organisation and thus represented youth and commitment to the national cause. Nu and Aung San had proved their dedication during and after the student strike. Both of them joined the organisation shortly after the riots and the publication dealing with it in early October 1938. Tin Maung must

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¹ For a general overview of the Nagani Book Club, see vol. 1 of this series. A supplementary volume containing some more documents and assessments of the Book Club will be published in due course.

have been attributed with great qualities because in early 1939 he was elected General Secretary of the Dobama instead of Aung San for a short time after the arrest of all members of the association’s Executive Committee.  

Anyway, the names on book’s the cover reflect the popularity of the promising leaders of that time. The names on the back page, however, point to another complementary criterion. There the functions of six of the book’s supporters are listed. First the names of two Nagani functionaries (Tun Aye and Tun Shwe) are listed, followed by Tun Ohn as secretary of the “University Cooperative Society” 2, Thakin Tin Maung representing the Dobama association, and Aung San and Ba Hein, who were the head of the national and Rangoon’s university unions. Finally, the names of three other “progressive leaders” are presented: Htein Win 3, Maung Nu, and Ba Swe 4. They, however, did not hold any office at that time.

All these men were in their early twenties, Maung Nu, born 1907, being the only exception. They represented the “Young Burma” on which many people pinned their hopes. 5 The older politicians, however, even those in the Dobama, were regarded as selfish by the public. This selfishness, it was argued, had resulted in the split of the organisation shortly before the outbreak of the riots. 6

Thein Pe’s book on the riots was thus endorsed by the future leaders of Burma. The booklet was turned into a semi-official document and the Nagani Book Club became not only the publishing agency, but also the mouthpiece of the progressive movement.

1 Khin Yi 1988, p. 122.
2 According to Nu, Tun Ohn was a close friend of Nu and worked with him after the students’ strike of 1936 together with Hla Pe on the project to establish a national university (Nu, Saturday’s Son. Memoirs of the Former Prime Minister of Burma. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 80 and 292,
3 Htein Win was a co-founder of the Nagani Book Club and a Thakin. He had joined Nu, Tun Ohn and Hla Pe in burning the Union Jack on April 1, 1937 on the occasion of the implementation of the constitution under which Burma was separated from India. In late 1938, he accompanied Thakin Soe to meet the striking oilfield workers on their march to Rangoon (see Working Papers 3 and 11).
4 Ba Swe, born 1915, was a student at that time. He became prominent in December 1938 when he went to Magwe together with Ba Hein to meet the striking workers (see Working Papers 3 and 11 of this series) and was elected General Secretary of the All Burma Students’ Union in 1939. After the war, he was minister in Nu’s cabinet and Prime Minister between June 1956 and February 1957 in place of Nu who retired for some time in order to reorganise the AFPFL.
5 Ratana Sein, a columnist of the newspaper New Burma, wrote on October 5, 1938, after Aung San, Nu and Hla Pe, had joined the Dobama: “Speaking of Thakin, it is not a wonder to hear that eccentric socialist baker, that bachelor of struggle for existence (B.S.E) student Aung San turns himself into a Thakin. Why a sudden resignation? [from students’ politics; editor’s note] [...] Dobama Asiayone, is becoming day by day, a refugee of unemployeds, an asylum of the humiliated, a shelter for the poor, a stronghold and the shrine of Thakinism - a cult of Dobama - the Neo-Alaungpayism [Alaungpaya was the founder of the last Burmese dynasty; editor’s note] which sometimes sounds fascistic. - The three new Thakin musceteers - Thakin Nu (Nagani Nu elsewhere); Thakin Aung San, Thakin Hla Pe (Calcutta) - leader, organiser, propagandist (perhaps in consonance with the teachings of MEIN KAMPF) have recently vowed to heaven to fight imperialism at all risks. I admire their outspokenness [...] In place of veteran workers as Thakin Ba Sein and Thakin Thein Maung, three young workers have come up. Will there be a turn towards the Right in Thakin Movement?”
6 On the split of the Dobama see Khin Yi 1988, pp. 84-94.
This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that some of these young people represented “Nagani” in political meetings. As early as March 1938, Htein Win represented Nagani in a committee inviting people to a mass meeting in support of striking workers.\(^1\) Author Thein Pe represented the Nagani Book Club in a meeting of parties on September 15 opposing the Burmese government, under the leadership of Dr. Ba Maw as one of two Secretaries. At the meeting resolutions were passed condemning the government’s actions during and after the riots.\(^2\)

In the end the Nagani Book Club turned into a political institution in the second half of 1938 in connection with the diverse forms of unrest happening that year. Three aspects of this “institutionalisation” can be distinguished.

**Another Invitation for Further Studies**

As with the other papers of the Myanmar Literature Project, this volume also intends to provide study material. The Burmese text of Thein Pe’s booklet may be used in Burmese language courses on a higher level, and Tin Htway’s translation of 1969 may serve as a stimulus to test alternative translations of the text. In both cases, the linguistic exercise can be easily combined with some other stimulating assignments.\(^3\) The following remarks point to some subjects of interest and should be seen as a call for essays that may be published in this Working Paper.

First of all, the texts provide an opportunity to contrast the two volumes that contain the findings of the official Committee established by the Government and the view of the young and progressive future leadership of Burma contained in the booklet introduced here. The official report was published much later as a result of a very thorough investigation by a group of Burmese and (Burmese-)Indian members and a British lawyer. The group published a preliminary report very quickly because the events that had happened were considered very sensitive and dangerous. This underlines the observation on the high numbers of copies printed and the high degree of passion that fueled the riots.

As a starting point for such a comparison, two contrasting remarks may be helpful. Thein Pe’s analysis as well as the Committee’s report concentrate on the rationally ascertainable root causes of

\(^1\) Khin Yi 1988, p. 72.
\(^3\) For the same purpose, it is intended to complement Working Paper 8, which contains two translations each of two articles from a booklet on “World War and Burma” written by Aung San, Ba Maw and Ba Khine with the original Burmese text. The Burmese originals of other Nagani books are available as well. For details, please contact the editor (habezett@t-online.de).
the conflict. Nevertheless, both draw antithetical conclusions. This is indicated by one of the resolutions passed during the meeting of opposition leaders on September 15, in which Thein Pe participated. It stated that the official Committee should be boycotted by the people because its members were close to the government. This resolution was passed even before the members of the Committee were named.

Another interesting exercise would be to find out whether or not Thein Pe’s writing fits into the many works on Burmese-Indian relations. It can be noted that in Moshe Yagar’s work, the only one available up to now dealing exclusively with Indian Muslims in Burma, Thein Pe’s work is not taken into account.

Furthermore, a study of Thein Pe’s exposition could be considered in various contexts. First of all one may wonder how it relates to the novel that made him famous — Thetpongyi, Modern Monk. Reformist monks started the unrest, but their role is - in contrast to the official report - rather downplayed by him. Moreover, the impact of this widely distributed book on Thein Pe’s further career as a writer should be evaluated in an as-yet unwritten authoritative biography of the political writer. Finally, it can be mentioned that the time of the riots is the setting of a short story written by Ba Hein that is published in Working Paper 11.

Lastly, the booklet could be useful for further investigation into the triad of communalism, religion, and ethnicity that did not only heavily influence the course of history in Burma, but in other multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies as well.

Hamburg, September 2008

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II. MATERIAL ON THEIN PE, INDO-BURMAN CONFLICT

1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information

Translation: Hninsi von Marschall

12) Thein Pe Myint: Indo-Burman Conflict, written by Maung Thein Pe. Yangon, Nagani 1938; 24 pp. (Kala-Bamar-Taik-Pwe, translated as “Indo-Burman Conflict”)¹

On the cover of the book, it was mentioned that young rising leaders such as Ko Nu, Ko Aung San, Thakin Tin Maung have approved of what was written in this book. About 45,000 books have been published in many editions.

On the inner side of the cover it was written “Testimony” – we agreed and supported what Maung Thein Pe has written in “Indo-Burman Conflict” and we took responsibility in publishing the book. Beneath, the names of nine persons who belonged to Nagani members and young rising leaders were mentioned. Many copies of this book were published so that it should be known who was the main culprit of the conflict and the crisis through which the Burmese people were suffering in the Colony. The book was distributed among the Nagani members free of charge and was sold with 2 pyas in public. It was also requested to print more copies and distribute them. On September 19, 1938, Nagani had printed 10,000 copies. But later altogether more than 100,000 copies were printed. On October 7, 1938, publisher Maung Ba Khant has published 1,000 copies.

¹ The title of the pamphlet is bi-lingual; see the reproduction of the original text below.
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
2. English Text of Cover and Back Pages

Cover Page

Indo-Burman Conflict
Maung Thein Pe

Ko Nu
Ko Aung San
Thakhin Tin Maung
And other progressive leaders agree with and support the opinions presented in this treatise.

Distributed for free to the members of the Nagani Book Club. Please reproduce and distribute in many places.

2 Pya per book

First edition (September) 5000
Second edition (September) 10000
Third edition (September) 10000
Fourth edition (September) 10000
Fifth edition (September) 10000
Support

We support the book „Indo-Burman Conflict“ written by Maung Thein Pe and together with him take the responsibility for its publication:

1. [print] Htun Aye  Nagani Book Club
2. Htun Shwe  Nagani Secretary for Education
3. Htun Ohn  Secretary of the University Cooperative Society
4. Thakhin Tin Maung  We-Burman Association
5. Aung San  Chairman of the National Students Union
6. Ba Hein  Secretary of the University Students Union

OTHER PROGRESSIVE LEADERS

7. Htein Win
8. Maung Nu
9. Ba Swe
Books by Thein Pe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saya Lun’s Biography</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Modern Monk</td>
<td>8 Annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Advisers</td>
<td>8 Annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Boycotting Student (Volume 1)</td>
<td>10 Annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume 2 of “The Boycotting Student” to appear soon!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political History of Myanmar (U Ba Khine)</td>
<td>2 K 8 Annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Dramas (Maung Nu)</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism (Dr. Sun Yat Sen)</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Rizal (Moegyo)</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialism (Maung Soe)</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burman Affairs (Selected Authors)</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of the People (Moegyo)</td>
<td>2 K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nagani Book Club

Myanmar (Bama Pyi) is full of poverty, sickness and uneducatedness. The Nagani Book Club is providing the knowledge necessary to begin a new era based on the freedom of everybody, development and peace after eliminating these three evils through suitable education.

Become a member of Nagani Book Club and help the Club to accomplish its task!

Nagani Book Club

151 Scott Market

Yangon
3. Text

Translation: Tin Htway

INDO-BURMESE RIOT

by

Maung Thein Pe

(1)

The Indo-Burmese conflict was unavoidable. Sooner or later it had to be faced.

Concerning this matter! Mahatma Gandhi said, “It shows that both parties prove that we have not yet overcome the stage of uncivilized savagery.” We can’t ignore this matter merely by speaking like this. "It vas a sad event and I feel so sorry for what has happened" said the Governor of Burma who showed no initiative in solving the crisis. This sort of helpless remark will do no good. And it wasn’t a wise thing to put all the blame on U Shwe Phi on the grounds that this Indo-Burmese riot was caused by his booklet. The most important thing for us is to find and to analyse systematically and logically the real cause which led to this disastrous event.

Why did it happen? Why are the people in turmoil? Why are people attacking and killing each other? Why they are burning the houses and the mosques and the buildings? Why?

Isn't it true that the Burmese do not hate the Indians? Isn't it true that they are always grateful to the Indians because their religion and most of

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their culture is derived from them...? Isn't it true that the Burmese have shown their admiration of the Indians by voting against the issue of separating Burma from India?

I am pretty sure that the Indians in India are asking each other these questions. I myself, when I was in India, have faced these questions numerous times. Yes, it is true that we got our religion and most of our culture from India. But the India which gave religion and culture to Burma was the India of long ago. It is not the India which exists today. Present-day India has already destroyed her own religion and culture which she gave to Burma a long time ago. This religion and thin culture no longer exist in present-day India. At present, Burma and India are far apart. We no longer have common ground in religion or culture. We cannot be grateful eternally for the culture which we have got from them, a long long time ago. Yes, it is true, we voted for anti-Separation when the Separation crisis was on us. But, remember, the reason why we voted against Separation was not because we admired the Indians so much, nor because we are so grateful for what we owed them long ago. We thought that if we stayed within the Indian Empire, we would be able to get rid of the British and gain the independence which India is going to achieve in the foreseeable future. We thought we were going to gain some benefit if we stayed together. We voted against Separation out of self-interest. Even so, that was only a temporary measure, of course.

Therefore, it is very important to see clearly in this Indo-Burman problem. Let us have no, illusions. We must try to see this logically.

(2)

History has proved that Indians creased the ocean and came to Burma and settled here a long time ago. But those settlers have proved that they were cultured end civilized citizens. They brought their noble religion, for the benefit of Burmans. They brought their highly developed medical knowledge, architecture, various arts etc. to Burma. Some Indians came to Burma to serve as mercenaries under the Burmese Kings.
But now the situation is very different. Those who arrive in Burma come here just to destroy the achievements and reputation of their ancestors, the ancient Indian settlers.

When the British attacked and occupied Lower Burma as well as Upper Burma by unlawful force their work was done mainly by the Indian Sepoys. For this reason, we Burmese hate them. Some of these Indian soldiers did not bother to go back to their country. They continued to stay in our country. Not long after the British annexation of Burma, the Suez Canal was opened. This gave English traders a golden opportunity to export rice from Burma which they obtained at the minimum costs. Naturally they were anxious to set a lot of rice grow in Lower Burma. But the peasants had no money to extend their cultivation. English traders did not bother to give direct loans; instead they brought the blood-sucking Chettyar money-lenders from Madras. Since 1830, with the help of English traders, these Chettyars started their money lending-business at extortionate rates of interest. They argued that they could not get enough Burmese labourers or that Burmese labourers' wages were high, and they imported Indian labourers into Burma. To serve the rigid caste system of the Indians, Indian small traders arrived in Burma to sell bha-ya-kyo, tea, coffee, Dhotis, loin-cloths, etc.

In this way, these Indians entered Burma as exploiters in every field. They came to our country not to offer their help, not for our benefit. That much is very clear.

The English and the Indian capitalists also imported a huge number of Indian coolies into Burma. They paid very small wages to those poor coolies, but they are making a colossal amount of profit out of the hard labour of the coolies.

In this way the number of Indian immigrants rose rapidly in Burma. Now, there are

\[ \text{bha-ya-kyo} = \text{fritters} \]
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>565,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>396,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>962,203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are approximately one million Indians in Burma. As our population is approximately only twelve millions, there is a ratio of 12 Burmans to 1 Indian. It is really alarming.

The table for the entry and departure of Indians for the past ten years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>OUT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>324,000</td>
<td>278,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>370,000</td>
<td>398,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>273,000</td>
<td>365,000</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>252,000</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>219,000</td>
<td>184,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>199,000</td>
<td>159,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the 1930 Indo-Burman riots, the immigration rate in that period seems to have dropped a little, but you can see that immediately after that it rose steadily. According to the statistics, the rate was increased by 12% annually.

Moreover, the union of Indian males and females has produced their
offspring at the rate of 10 per cent Indians yearly. If these rates continue, after 50 years in Burma, the ratio of the population will be 3 Burmans to 1 Indian.

At this time, under this present English government, which holds firmly to the capitalist system, there is a huge number of jobless educated and uneducated. A lot of people are facing hunger in our country. Yet, if the Indian immigration rate continues to rise, Burma, under this capitalist regime will have to face the increasingly severe problem of unemployment. Therefore it is not only our duty to take the necessary action to meet this immigration problem, but it is also the responsibility of the government. Although the facts are undeniable, when the Burmese asked for the restriction of the Indian immigration, the Indians in Burma protested and demonstrated up to the highest level – that is to the British government in London – as if demanding their own legal rights. They also demanded that if there were some restrictions on Indian immigration they must first be approved by the Indian government. This gained the support of the Indians in India those who knew nothing about Burma and the prevailing situation. The Indian capitalists, realising that they would no longer get cheap Indian labour if the restrictions were imposed, also gave their vociferous support. They claimed that they were ardent Indian nationalists ready to protect the rights of the Indian.

As for the Indiana, they come to Burma solely to make money and to exploit as much as they could. Naturally they were far better than then unaware Burmese in business matters. Most of the trade and commerce fell into their hands and they controlled almost everything.

Betel-quid shops were owned by the Indians; the bha-ya-kyo were sold by the Indians; textile shops were owned by the Indians; textile shops were owned by the Indians; the big bazaars were owned by the Indians; the wholesale trades were run by the Indians; shoe-repairers were Indians; the hosiery-factories were owned and manned by the Indians; sand-soap /access-chap-pra/ was sole also by the Indiana; the luxurious perfumed soap was
also sold by the Indians; the capitalist money-lenders were Indians; Indians; Indians - everywhere Indians - nothing but Indians. The darawans\(^3\) were Indians; the High Court Judges were Indians; the compounder (dispensers) were Indians; the Medical Superintendents (doctors) were Indians; jail warders were Indians; and the Prison Officers were also Indians. Wherever you go you will find Indians, nothing but Indians.

Indians in Burma sent back colossal sums of money to India. Through the Post Office alone not less than 50 million rupees leave the country yearly.

Only poor Indians used the Post Office. The well-off sent the money back either through banks or took it with them. There are shipping companies, owned by an Indian Abdul Choudry, such as 'Manskji' popularly known by its Burmese name of Ma Khin Zi, many of the umbrella factories, kitchen-ware (especially aluminium pots and pans) factories, hosiery-factories are also owned by the Indians. Most of the banks are owned and run by the Indians. Twelve to thirteen million rupees worth of Burmese rice exported to India is handled mostly by the Marawnri Indian traders. Not only that: these Indians even own the oil-fields as well. Most of the gold and silver trades are run and owned by the Gujarati Indians. I don't think it will be too wrong to estimate that the Indian capitalists are making a yearly profit of at least 100 million rupees out of our country.

There are many Indian capitalists who are domiciled and live permanently in Burma and yet they never behave or regard themselves as Burmese citizens. They are scattered all over Burma. They make a lot of money and they have a lot money and they are enjoying-the best of everything. This type of Indian is making a yearly profit of not less than 50 million rupees.

There are from 40,000 to 60,000 ‘civil servants’ in Burma from the lowest level darawans up to the highest level, the High Court Judges. There are also many on the salaried staff of business firms and companies. I think

\(^3\) doorkeeper
there are more than 30,000 whose earnings are Hot less than 50 rupees per month.

The majority of the staff in the Burma Railways, Public Works Development Department, the Hospitals and the Medical fields are Indians and we can assume that at least 15,000 posts which carry a salary of more than 50 rupees are in the hands of Indians. It was justifiable and true to say that more acid more educated Burmese are becoming jobless because the majority of the posts which they can hold are occupied and controlled by these Indians,

If we assume that the average cost or living for one Indian is Rd. 7-7 as per month, it will be Rs. 90-0 per year, and Rs. 90 millions for one million Indians. Therefore – (the total expenditure will be) ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money sent through Post Office</td>
<td>Rs. 50 millions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>” ” by the poor themselves</td>
<td>Rs. 20 ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>” ” through banks by the rich people</td>
<td>Rs. 100 ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma domiciled Indians’ profits</td>
<td>Rs. 50 ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of living expenses in Burma</td>
<td>Rs. 90 ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rs. 310 ”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Burmese point of view, because of these 1 million has to spend this colossal sum of as Rs. 310 millions. In other words, every Burman has to pay more then Rs per year as Indian Tax.

So a family of five persons has to pay Rs. 125 as Indian Tax and the yearly income of an average Burmese family (consisting of five members) is only Rs. 240.

There is an obvious imbalance between Burmese income and expenditure and that Indian Tax. It is said that that in the reason why nowadays the peasants' deff is mounting from 700 to 600 million rupees.

Because of this, at least ¼ of Burmese agricultural lands have gone into the hands of the blood—sucking money-lender Chettyars. To add to that
another of the lands is already in the hands of Chettyars and other money-lenders as surety. So the peasants were stripped of everything.

The result was that the more the Burmese became helpless and desperate, the more: they blamed the Indians and the more their hatred increased.

Because of their economic position, because they were well off, these Indians coined the upper hand and took advantage of the poor helpless Burmese girls. In Burma the ratio of Indian males to females was 7 to 1, and because the proportion of Burmese women was higher than men between Indian men and Burmese women was natural. I am not complaining about that and it is no use objecting to it either. But what I can't stand is that these Indians regard this matter frivolously. And those Indians have already arranged that no Burmese Buddhist can become a legal wife according to rules and regulations and legal procedures. If a Buddhist girl wants to become a legal wife, she must be converted to Islam, otherwise she is only a mistress. Therefore, Burmese Buddhists proposed to Parliament a new marriage law, between Buddhists and non-Buddhists with certain clauses, protecting the. Buddhist party because of the strong protest of the Indians, this bill is now in deadlock.

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

Therefore, it is very funny that some of the Indian leaders and the Indian newspapers lay the blame for the Indo-Burman riot on the Europeans who separated Burma from India by force. It is a great joke. In the economic field, the Indians always suppressed the Burmese. They gave no room for any sort of progress.
One of my friends became a retail agent for a foreign perfume and toilet goods firm. But a group of Choliya Indians claiming that this line of business was not suitable for Burmese, tried to obstruct him in every way they could. Yes, it is true. Not only that: another friend of mine manufactured some cosmetics and sold the goods by himself. But the Indian traders did all they could to ruin him. At last the poor fellow was forced to allow one Indian as his sole agent for trade and then only could he carry on his business. When the Wunthanu movement reached its height, Burmese home-spun cloth became very popular and the demand for textiles from Madras and Bombay fell badly. To take counter action, the Indians, being the wholesale dealers for cotton raw materials, raised the price to squeeze out and strangle the Burmese weaving industries. When the government, with the aim of promoting industrial know-how in Burma, proposed to establish a technical institute it met strong opposition from an Indian capitalist. By these and similar methods those Indians had a strangle-hold over the Burmese and, albeit without bloodshed, were working for our ruination and destruction, the method propounded by Gandhi.

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

(3)

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

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

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

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

As usual, capitalist groups and capitalist’s stooges, the middle class groups, were those to start to attack. U Shwe Phi was a school teacher who had a lot of free time to think and to exercise his brain. He wanted to relieve his boredom by raising some religious arguments, or contradictions. So he wrote a sarcastic article about Buddhists and Buddhism. Then an Indian capitalist publisher called Mr. Patel published and distributed U Shwe Phi’s article in booklet form.

This booklet was read by a Buddhist monk who felt as strongly about religious problems as U Shwe Phi, and this was the beginning of the religious controversy. Unfortunately, this matter was fanned into flames by so called ‘scoop newspapers’, and they wrote a lot about U Shwe Phi.

Some accused Dr. Ba Maw and his followers of conspiring and arranging the protest meeting at the Shwe-da-gon Pagoda. Some condemned it as
political exploitation. Well, I don’t know whether it was true or not. The government cannot be blamed for failing to avoid this riot, but I would like to criticise it strongly for the way it handled the matter once it had started. The Premier and his Cabinet never realised how profound now was the dislike the Burmans felt for the Indians. They never thought, that the religious argument ‘the Mawlawi and the Yogi Problem’, the popular Burmese caption for the root of the Indo-Burman riot, could explode to the minds of the Burmese, which were filled with the dislike for Indians. So they had no idea how urgent and important it was. They ordered this booklet to be translated from Burmese into English for the Burmese Ministers to read but not before it had passed through all the usual channels from the C.I.D. Upwards to the minister. I think the government made a grave mistake in allowing the delay involved in following the red tape procedure in this matter. Surely, nothing could be worse than this terrible mistake.

(4)

When the riot broke out, the government became restless. They did not know what to do and how to handle the situation properly and wisely. They never notices how the Burmese hated the Indians because of their cold blooded oppressions. And they had also omitted all considerations of the volatile nature of the Burmese. Instead they thought the riot was fanned by the newspapers and they persecuted the press.

The Indians accused the Burmese of launching a planned and organized attack against them; they were astonished that the attacks had been so widespread throughout the country and they could find no reason for it. In fact, apart from the general dislike of the Indians because of their behaviour, there was no organisation of the riot in the country. It is in accordance with the Burmese personality that when one person starts something, others soon join in; when an incident occurs in one place, it soon spreads to others; witness their behaviour during the Festival of Lights, the birthday of U Wisara or strikes, etc. It is important to understand that although the
Burmese may lead badly, they follow well. If they find an individual or an organisation with effective leadership, they will suddenly follow in unity. For these reasons, the riot appeared to be planned and organised. People volunteered to patrol their own Burmese quarters during the riots, evidence of their surprising unity; they kept watch over their own streets. Although the Indians were unaware of this aspect of the Burmese nature, there is no excuse for the Burmese Ministers' ignorance of it.

(5)

On the 26th July, there was a protest meeting against U Shwe Phi's booklet on the foot of the Shwe-da-gon Pagoda. There were clashes on that day between the demonstrators and the police. It was quite peaceful on the 27th. On the 28th when some Chuliya Indians stabbed a Burmese Buddhist monk, the race riots began. Later, it spread throughout the country. August was peaceful. On the 2nd September, Indians started stoning the buses and on the next day, speared a Burman to death. Then another riot flared up.

The Burmese being more hot-blooded, reckless and impetuous than the Indians can easily turn the tables against their aggressor.

But the Indians, being more financially powerful, can manipulate the situation to their advantage. Many of the Burmese outside the city, who had no chance to attack Indians, were shot by the military and civilian police. At the same time as the censure motion against the government was tabled, I heard that the Premier had authorized the district officers to suppress the riots with any methods at their discretion. Many monks were shot; many people were shot dead; some three or four hundred people were imprisoned in mass arrests; they were indiscriminately accused of assault and theft. After the riots were over, despite the request of the leaders for the release of these prisoners, the government refused.

During the riot up to September 9th, 165 people died and there were 816 injured. Of these, 55 deaths and the injuries suffered by 108 people were caused by the military and civilian police. Of the 55 dead, only three were
Indians and the rest were Burmese.

The unnecessary piece of cruelty not only increased the hatred of the people against the Indians, but believing that the government was favouring the Indian population, hostility against them increased. In these ugly circumstances, the government remained in power, with the support of the Indian M.P.s. Seeing this, the feeling against the government increased. People became more agitated. Before the riots began, the government should have announced the banning of the booklet, they should have announced that they were unhappy at being kept in power by the Indian and Burmese votes and resigned. Only when a government, unaided by the votes of minority (i.e. foreigner M.P.s) interests, was in power, would the tension relax; the hostility against the government would disappear. Then the new government would be able to stop the riot without the use of force but by persuasion. That government cannot destroy the influence of powerful pressure groups; although it is only the duty of the governor to protect the interests of minorities M.P.s (bee use mostly they were selected and appointed directly by him), the Premier is exceeding his duty unnecessarily in this respect.

When it has calmed down, an investigation committee can be set up to work effectively. If this committee investigates the riot using my method, then they will be on the right path.

(6)

Indians are also demanding the formation of an investigation committee whose members were not from Burma – in other words, they were to be from India. These Indians, motivated only by self-interest, should take a warning. They insisted that the Indian Government should demand reparations on their behalf. They also demanded a separate state for themselves in Burma. Never satisfied, they continued the agitation knowing that the Burmese Government could be manipulated. Now the Indian representatives are asking the help of Muslim League and the Indian Congress Government. It is
likely that they will intervene.

We are not in favour of the present Congress which is controlled by right-wingers.

The Indians in Burma consider the country their colony; they regard it as their own land. Those who, perhaps not encouraging this attitude, yet do nothing to stop it, are the present Congress.

I have heard many times of the policy of the leaders of this Congress; they believe that we should be grateful because the prosperity of Burma largely depends on the imagination and wealth of the Indians. The British have said exactly this in relation to their presence in India. Indian newspapers voice the same opinions. When I was in Calcutta, I read in a newspaper that the leaders were protesting against the British saying such a thing and yet they themselves did exactly the same; and I also read in another article that the Indian should not say this to the Burmese. While Congress is controlled by leaders such as Gandhi, Desai, Patel, Burma will never hold it in respect. Only when people like Nehru, Dr. Ahmed and others control Congress will the Burmese respect it. Together with congress, we will fight for independence; together, we will solve Indo-Burman problems. Until the time arrives when the left wing are in power in Congress, the Indian will never understand the Burmese and thus we will never understand the Indian.
4. Burmese Text
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
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Thein Pe, Ind-Burman Conflict
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Conflict*
Thein Pe, Indo-Burman Conflict
Ba Myint withdrew the paint-brush hovering over the still unfinished picture, and soaked it in the glass of water on the table next to him.

Having concentrated on the one-foot-square painting for a long time, his eyes became lethargic and strained, and suddenly blurry. Then he, seated on a stool, straightened his back. He looked across the painting towards the back window where breezes swept by, and then, his eyes darted to the calendar on the wall fluttering in the wind. On an impulse, he looked back over his shoulder to his friend, Thein Lwin, who was sleeping, lying on his side, in the drawing room, with his head towards the window.

The upper half of Thein Lwin’s face was lit by the bluish beams of light that spilt through the window. Overcome by physical exhaustion and mental stress on consecutive days for a certain period, he had lost his original feature slightly, his complexion a little sallow. The deep-set eyes had dark brown eyelids, streaked with long, dry strands of hair falling over the forehead.

Upset by his friend’s suffering, he returned his look to the painting, and picked the paint-brush half sunk in the glass to resume his work. On that instant, he heard his friend stir in the bed, and set the paint-brush down again. Looking back, he saw Thein Lwin sit up, stretching out both legs, and tying up his loose longyi.

Smiling at him, Ba Myint asked, “Had a good sleep?”

Thein Lwin looked up at him while rubbing both eyes with one hand.

Ba Myint asked him again, “How’re you feeling now?”

“Oh, I’m well. I’m much better than yesterday. It seems I’ve regained strength.” Thein Lwin answered, stretching the clasped hands upwards and straightening the body.

Ba Myint was much satisfied with his friend’s response that he felt comfortable again.

“Well, you’re going to recover completely by tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. The problem is you feel small easily. You’ve fallen ill because of your weak mind, as the saying goes, ‘Mental stress debilitates the body.’ Just cheer up, dismissing the thoughts of disappointment! It was not only you who lost the job. If you’re dismissed there’ll be another job. Who has decreed that we’ll be staying disappointed all the time until we die? We can be well off just at one stroke of luck. And then, I’ve repeatedly fold you not to be hesitant to seek my help. If things go well for me, it is same to you. I’m happy that I can help you. Let’s stay happy whether we are full or starving.” Thus, Ba Myint preached a long sermon, grinning. This made Thein Lwin feel comfortable and smile a smile of relief.

In a minute, memories of his distress crossed his mind and his face turned dismal.

“Friend, I tried to rally myself, feeling that I’m a man. But I lost the job that I had intended to rely on for my entire life. No sooner had I lost the job, then I heard the news that my old mother without any relative in the rural area had died. The spirit I had braced up had collapsed. Because I had no money to spend on my mother’s funeral service, the community cooperated to do it. How can I forget this incident?” Thein Lwin lamented, staring out of the back window. He felt choking and tears welled up in his eyes.

“Hmm… I’ve just told you to brace yourself up. Now, your mind has returned to the dismal

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1 Dagon Magazine. 40, University Section: pp. 313-320.
situation,” Ba Myint moaned, feeling sorry for his friend. Only then did Thein Lwin recover and change countenance in cheerful mood straightaway.

“Okay…friend! I’ve just forgotten to control myself. I won’t think of any miserable things in future,” Thein Lwin said, pretending to have regained composure. For distraction, he asked, “Have you finished the painting for the novel book cover?”

“I’m not slow in doing things for many. I’m about to be off, and send the cover picture and only that I’ve been waiting for you to wake up. It’ll fetch at least 10 kyats,” he said while standing up and reaching for the overcoat from the hanger on the wall.

“Hey…is it safe to go out? Just yesterday, monks and the military police had a clash at Thein-gyi Market. It is also rumored that there will be a clash between the Indians and the Bamars today. Be considerate!” Thein Lwin reminded.

“Oh, just forget it! I’ll do anything for money—be it beating by the Indians or the chase by the God of Death, I’m not afraid of.” Saying this he kept wearing the overcoat.

Then, turning to Thin Lwin, Ba Myint told him to eat something for breakfast as he must be hungry the whole morning.

“Don’t worry about me! I’m not hungry. Let’s eat when you come back.”

In fact, Thein Lwin was feeling hungry because he had not had anything the whole morning. He knew that Ba Myint had not had any penny left since they had dinner together the evening before. He just told a lie to Ba Myint lest he might be embarrassed.

Thein Lwin made for the kitchen, and washed his face, taking water from the tub. He pulled the towel from the clothesline, and wiped his face with it. Ba Myint’s words that he had not eaten anything the whole morning resounded in his ears. A sense that there was no food inside him made him feel hungrier. The hungrier he felt, the more intense attack the sense of starvation brought on his brain.

As convalescents do Thein Lwin felt out of place and would be restless until a morsel of food got into his stomach. Thus, he went into the kitchen to look for any remnant of food.

The fact was there was not any pot or plate to hold food, left over boiled rice or curry as both Ba Myint and Thein, single and free family care, would have their meals at road-side shops, as appropriate to time and money, without taking the trouble of cooking at home.

Just a 15-step descent down the stairs would bring him to an Indian restaurant where there were plenty of foods and drinks. But for Thein Lwin, who did not have even a dime, all these rich, oily foods such as parata, biriyani, bread, etc. were far away.

Knowing that there would certainly not be any leftover of food, he was searching every nook and corner of the kitchen just to deceive his hungry stomach. But as it was obviously an ineffectual attempt, he was compelled to devise a means that did not entail money.

First, he went to the drinking water pot, and gulped down the water to his fill. Then, he dismissed the thought of hunger and moved to the drawing room to divert his attention to other things. Sitting down on the stool that Ba Myint had occupied, he gazed at the still uncompleted picture.

While gazing at the picture, his mind floated along with the breezes that carried him to the reminiscences of the past, penetrating the thick layers of years and mountains of clouds.
The thoughts came into his mind piece by piece like pearl beads on a string: his loss of daily bread owing to the structure change made by the department store where he had worked; the death of his mother while he got into the pit of trouble and the life of mutual dependence of the son and mother; and eventually, his closest friend Ba Myint’s rescue of him from trouble.

It was rather like the incident of a person drifting in the sea without seeing a shore or an island. He was finally saved by a rowing boat which itself was exerting to escape the giant rolling waves. Thein Lwin could not feel happy completely, thinking of this analogy. He felt sorrow and hesitation at the help of Ba Myint, who himself was struggling to make ends meet, irregular for daily meals, and had had a heavier burden because of him.

In an instant, the sense of hunger, lost for a moment, struck his brain again, giving a notice, by the grumbling inside the stomach, that he still needed food. His throat felt burning. And he hurried back to the drinking water pot.

While drinking the water draught after draught, he heard indistinctly the rising and falling sounds of pandemonium and shouts of Indians about the corner of the street. Hurting towards the front window out of curiosity, he heard three or four shots of fire amidst the screaming of children.

Looking out the window, he caught sight of people running to the fro and the clash of Bamars and Indians wielding rods and swords in a small battle.

The scene suddenly reminded him of Ba Myint, and his eyes became blurry. Extremely worries, he as restless, are shutting between the interior and the front window, mumbling what would happen to Ba Myint.

Meanwhile, the sounds of crashes and impacts and the shouts of Indians surged up from the ground floor. Looking down the window, he saw about 20 Bamar youths destroying the Indian restaurant.

He was dazed for a while, but on an impulse, he girded up his loins with his longyi and jumped down the stairs, without even knowing what possessed him.

Thein Lwin was shouldering a bundle of bread, packed in a piece of cloth, towards the entrance when an RET truck carrying Indian military police pulled up in front of the restaurant. He was startled, feeling a momentary loss of consciousness. Then he was mid way down the stairs, about three of four steps, when he heard a piercing boom of a gun-shot. Then, Thein Lwin was found lying on his side, curving like a prawn, at the base of the restaurant stairs.

xxxxxxx

It was a morgue….

The footsteps of the two persons on the glistening marble floor sounded eerie in this completely quiet hall.

The two persons walked across the hall to the south-west corner where there was a dead bed. The nurse moved to the head of the dead person, and pulled the shroud to uncover the face, and looked at Ba Myint who nodded at her. Just then, the nurse went out.

Ba Myint stood motionless, gazing the dead body of Thein Lwin, who was covered under the shroud. It seemed as if he were sleeping soundly with a serene, peaceful face without being buffeted by any trouble.

“What a bad fate you met, Thein Lwin!” The words came out slowly and gently, in a heartrending voice, from the depths of his heart.
Warm tears rolled down the cheeks, and fell to the dead person’s feet.

With the eyes welling up with tears, Ba Myint gave a last look at the bed, pushed by the nurse, disappearing by a corner.
III. APPENDICES

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. 10:1.1, Additional Material on Nagani
- 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. 10:4.1, Additional Material on Students and Politics
- No. 10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Burma*
- No. 10:6, Nu, *Gandalarit*
- No. 10:7, Mogyo, *José Rizal*
- No. 10:8, Three Books on World War and Burma
- No. 10:9, Three Works on the History of the Russian Revolution
- No.10:10, Soe, *Socialism* and Chit Hlaing, *Memories*
- No.10:11, Ba Hein, *Students’ Revolution*

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](http://www.zoellner-online.org/mlp.htm)

and at the Online Burma Library

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.

For contributions and questions, please contact:

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