

THE USES OF BUDDHISM IN WARTIME BURMA

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WORLD WAR II HAS FORMED AN EPISODE IN BURMESE HISTORY OF unprecedented change. Short term changes—the precipitate defeat of the British or the destruction of the world rice market—materially affected Burma for the next ten years. Other irreversible changes, such as the mobilization of youth, the sudden availability of guns, the birth of the Communist Party, have shaped Burmese politics ever since the war. It is remarkable that an episode which recast the fundamentals of political and economic life should have left Buddhism unchanged. The combined efforts of Japanese militarists and Burmese nationalists to utilize Buddhism for their own ends merely rippled the surface of the religion, as wind upon water. When the storm of war had passed, Buddhism flowed back to its accustomed tranquility.

At the center of Burmese Buddhism are the monks, or *pongyis*. These men have dedicated themselves to seeking the transcendent goal of all moral development, nirvana. They serve the lay community first as living examples of the way to escape worldly suffering and second by providing opportunity for each layman to build his own store of merit through performing good deeds on their behalf. Since a *pongyi* is not a shepherd to a flock, he is not directly involved in the suffering which a war brings. In times of social upheaval the monkhood, or *sangha*, continues to hold open its door to all who wish to escape the turmoil but does not confront the disruptors. By thus sheltering men, the *sangha* shelters itself from change.

Since the British overthrow of the Burmese monarchy, the *sangha* had changed less than any other institution. Even during the Japanese occupation life in the monastery continued much as in peace time. There was neither a great influx of men seeking refuge in monastic life, nor was there a great exodus of young monks to join nationalist politics. The number of *pongyis* during the war probably hovered near the last accurate count of 65,000 made in the 1931 census.¹ The critical shortages of

¹ India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India*, Vol. 11, *Burma Report*, pp. 170-171 also enumerates 25,000 *koyins* and mendicants in Divisional Burma. Since the 1941 census data was lost, there is no base for evaluating the wartime estimates. The Minister of Religion, Bandoola U Sein, referred without supporting data during a 1962 interview to the 100,000 wartime *pongyis*. The number often given in wartime newspapers was 80,000, see for instance *Myinma Alin*, May 18, 1944, p. 2. My impression of the relatively stable size of the *sangha* between 1941 and 1945 is drawn from countrywide interviews with *pongyis* and villagers.

clothing and all imported items suffered by the general population were hardly felt in the monasteries since the *pongyis* practiced their traditional discipline of limiting their wants and the people were as generous as possible. Only the few months of the Japanese invasion campaign disrupted monastic life when thousands of townspeople sought shelter in the monasteries of Upper Burma. When the battlefield swept north, everyone including *pongyis* fled the path of the British, Chinese, and Japanese armies. Some of the retreating Chinese, reduced to a rabble, regarded the yellow robe as a target not a refuge.²

When the Japanese army had conquered Burma it expected to recast overnight the British colonial order. The *sangha*, as the most prestigious body in the country, could have been instrumental in rallying the population to their cause. Accordingly, the Japanese administrators and the Burmese nationalists whom they had installed tried to draw *pongyis* into secular affairs. They succeeded only when the new activity fitted a role which monks had previously assumed. Thus monks presided over rallies to promote cooperation with Japan, just as they had formerly presided at mass meetings to denounce British rule. However, *pongyis* resisted most pleas for cooperation since these acts required great departures from their former roles.

The Japanese differed from the British in their successful prevention of *pongyi* activity contrary to their interests. The lack of *pongyi* agitation against the Japanese is but part of the larger picture of military rule terrifying to political dissidents. The British, on the contrary, tolerated large scale religious and secular agitation during the 1920's and 1930's. The Japanese were marginally more successful than the British in organizing the *sangha*. They brought about a formalistic amalgamation of all Buddhist sects. British policy had first opposed strong centralization of the *sangha* for fear that it would prove a rallying point for political opposition. Within thirty years the British reversed themselves, hoping vainly to increase the power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy so that it could control the political *pongyis*. In periods of unrest both foreign rulers solicited help in calming the people from the *sayadaws*, heads of individual monasteries. Although the Aletawya Sayadaw performed this role for both British and Japanese, more *pongyis* apparently came to Japanese aid than to British. In the substantive realm the British tried and failed in the course of several decades to introduce a modern curriculum into the monastic schools. Japanese policy during their three years was not so ambitious. They unsuccessfully sought to use *pongyis* on an ad hoc basis in various of their

² Interviews with Burmese eye witnesses, corroborated by foreign observers. Jack Belden, *Retreat with Stilwell* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), p. 233, Maurice Collis, *Last and First in Burma* (London: Faber and Faver, 1956) p. 156, and Paul Geren, *Burma Diary* (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1943), p. 23.

health campaigns. In sum, the *sangha* continued to be the Burmese social organization most resistant to foreign influence.

ORGANIZING THE SANGHA

Three temporary associations.—The first Japanese impulse in utilizing *pongyis* was to organize them. During the invasion campaign between March and June, 1942 three different Japanese officers each founded an association of Burmese monks. The Japanese presumed that once in formal organizations the monks could be mobilized for general propaganda work, teaching, or special health campaigns. Each of the *pongyi* associations was supposed to promote understanding between Burmese and Japanese through their common Buddhist faith. However, the three short-lived organizations ignored each other as each sought to build an exclusive membership.

Probably the least inclined to cooperate with the others was the Buddhist Monkhood Association [*botha batha thathana asiayone*] established by Col. Suzuki Keiji. This dynamic colonel had already made his mark on Burmese history by founding the Burma Independence Army. Assisting him was the monk Nagai of the ultra-nationalist Nichiren sect, who had made friends in Rangoon several years before the war. The Association's headquarters in Rangoon was composed of twenty monastery heads. Among them was the Thadu Sayadaw, U Pyinnyathami, whose prewar *pongyi* organization had been involved in the 1938 riots. The Buddhist Monkhood Association was tied to the *Thakin* political movement through the prewar political activities of some of its members and through the support of Thakin Kodaw Hmine.³

Suzuki's organization was not acceptable to army headquarters in Rangoon because Suzuki himself was continually flouting his superiors' command by engaging in multifarious projects for Burmese independence. Some Japanese officers sponsored a rival *sangha* organization in Rangoon, the Burma Buddhist Association for National Improvement. Headed by an English speaking monk, it also claimed to unite all *pongyis*.

In Mandalay, the monastic center of Upper Burma, Major Kobayashi founded the Burma Buddhist League, persuading U Wisaya, the Nyaungyan Sayadaw to head it. The Nyaungyan Sayadaw had also participated in the prewar nationalist movement, and had been jailed for political activity during the last year of British rule. During the war he continued

³ Japan, Rikugun, Biruma Homengun [Army, Burma Area Army]. *Biruma Gunseishi* [History of Military Administration in Burma] (Tokyo: Gunmu-kyoku at the request of Mori no. 7900 Butai, September, 1943), p. 133 and Sugii Mitsuru, "Minami Kikan Gaishie" [Unauthorized History of the Minami Organ] Unpublished, [1944] ch. 21. An English translation is in the Defense Services Historical Research Institute (DSHRI) catalog no. DR 950 jii (a). Col. Suzuki has a photograph of himself with the *sayadaws* of the association.

his political involvement by becoming a prominent leader of the Maha Sangha Association. The Japanese army made exaggerated claims for membership in Burma Buddhist league, in actuality describing its aims not its accomplishments.⁴

The lack of cooperation and the rivalry among the *pongyi* organizations soon became intolerable to Japanese military administrators. Their distaste for the laxity of Burmese monastic organization was compounded by their need for tighter reins in anticipation of their grant of independence to Burma.⁵ Premier Tojo's instructions for Burmese independence demanded a concentration of authority in one Burmese Head of State.⁶ In Japan itself wartime obsession with control through centralized organization had forced every religious sect to choose a leader who was responsible to the government for the acts of his people. Then the government forced Buddhism, Shinto, and Christianity into a single amalgam, the Great Japan Wartime Religious Patriotic Association, controlled and subsidized by the Ministry of Education.⁷

The lack of a strong Burmese government to impose control upon religious figures presented a dilemma to the Japanese administrators. The Japanese army could not impose restraints upon the *pongyis* without alienating Buddhist laymen, and yet some of the *pongyi* activities had taken an anti-Japanese turn. Burmese punishment of such treasonous acts was belated and haphazard. In one case which gained newspaper coverage the Burmese administration arrested a *pongyi* on the charges of attempting to overthrow the government, supporting criminals, and making hammer and sickle badges. Only afterwards the Buddhist Monkhood Association expelled this monk, who was a namesake of the famous U Ottama, charging him with theft and sale of association property.⁸

If discipline by ecclesiastic superiors and imprisonment by the Burmese administration could have been regularized, the Japanese could have dealt with hostile *pongyis* at arm's length. To bolster the weak Burmese efforts, the Japanese military administration tried exhortation. Col. Iso-mura, chief of the vital General Affairs Department, addressed the *sangha* on December 9, 1942. He advised them that their burden was much

⁴ Radio broadcasts in several languages of the region, significantly excluding Burmese, claimed a 1942 membership of 60,000 for the Burma Buddhist League, 2000 of whom were supposedly receiving special training for instilling "oriental ideas." Burma, Intelligence Bureau, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation* (Simla: Government of India Press), 1943, p. 28. No further information came to light on the training.

⁵ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 133.

⁶ Fuwa Hiroshi, *Nampo-gun Sakusen-shi* [History of the Operations of the Southern Regional Army] Tokyo: Government Printing, 1955, pp. 3103-3105, citing the Plan of Guidance for Burmese Independence, March 10, 1943.

⁷ William K. Bunce, ed., *Religions in Japan: Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity*, (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, Co., 1966), pp. 33-43.

⁸ Order of U Pyinnyathami, Thadu Sayadaw, printed in *Bama Khit*, December 13, 1942. Apparently U Ottama was not also expelled from the *sangha*.

heavier than the tasks of even the Imperial Army. Their duty was to become the leaders of the Burmese people by preaching the goals of the Greater East Asia War. However, if they gave the people incorrect guidance, they would cause the people to suffer for one hundred years and would destroy Greater East Asia.⁹

Undoubtedly, exhortation alone was personally unsatisfactory to Col. Isomura, a wily and aggressive militarist who two years later approved a plot to assassinate Dr. Ba Maw, the Burmese Head of State.¹⁰ By April 1943 the military administration was actively promoting the amalgamation of all *pongyi* associations into a single, controlled association. The Japanese had returned to their original impulse to organize Burmese monks.

Cleavages within the sangha.—To unify the sangha three-cross-cutting cleavages had to be overcome, regional, political, and sectarian. Most worrisome to the Japanese military administration was the division between Upper and Lower Burma which it had inadvertently reinforced through the creation of rival *pongyi* associations.¹¹ This cleavage developed after the British annexation of Lower Burma in 1852 when the colonial government denied the authority of the prelate [*thathanabaing*] at the Mandalay court over monks in British territory. Despite the British annexation of Upper Burma thirty years later, the *thathanabaing* never regained authority over *pongyis* in Lower Burma.¹²

The most complicated divisions were among *pongyis* who had become partisans of political parties. Since the 1920's when U Ottama led fellow *pongyis* into grass roots politics, most political parties vied for *pongyi* support. Even the secular *Thakins* numbered *pongyis* among their members. In November, 1942 when Burmese politicians copied their Japanese mentors to form a single official party, all prewar parties dissolved themselves. All politically active *pongyis* were supposed to affiliate with the new Dobama-Sinyetha party. A separate section of the party was formed for monks alone, since Burmese believe it essential for monks to remain physically apart from laymen. Despite the busy activities of the ordinary party members in dispensing propaganda and scarce commodities, the *pongyi* branch apparently existed only on paper.¹³ Clearly, if *pongyis* were to be utilized politically, they needed fresh organization.

⁹ *Bama Khit*, December 10, 1942.

¹⁰ Interview with the Japanese principal in the affair. Nu, *Burma under the Japanese: Pictures and Portraits* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1954), contains an excellent character sketch of the colonel.

¹¹ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 133.

¹² The best history of British religious policy is Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 43-57.

¹³ On the Dobama-Sinyetha Party see my dissertation, *The Political Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Burma* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, International Relations, Yale University, 1966), pp. 278-286.

The most basic cleavage, the one which the Japanese underestimated, was between the majority Thudama sect and the smaller stricter sects founded under the last Burmese kings. The Shwegyin, with an estimated membership of 11,000, the Dwaya with 3,000, and the Kan were reform sects condemning the relatively lax and worldly ways of the Thudama.¹⁴ They refused to mingle with the Thudama, and so far as is known never participated in politics before the war.

The Maha Sangha Association.—The opening fanfare in the campaign to unite the *sangha* was the Burmese government's proclamation of the Maha Sangha Association in April 1943. This new organization was neither blatantly political nor involved with laymen, the two drawbacks of the Dobama-Sinyetha section for *pongyis*. Furthermore, it apparently was initiated without Japanese prompting, in sharp contrast to the associations of the previous year.

The Maha Sangha was thus compatible with the Burmese view that *pongyis* must dwell apart from mundane society. *Pongyis* are not regarded as men engaged in a particular occupation, but as a special type of mankind, as basic and distinct as men and women. Burmese cannot conceive of their society functioning without *pongyis*. Nor can they comprehend a Buddhism, such as Japan's, where the monks enter secular life even to the earthy pleasures of marriage. The 227 rules of conduct for monks as laid down in the Vinaya Pitaka specify the austerity of their lives far beyond the highest expectations for laymen. Burmese tradition has added further barriers between monk and layman, such as a deferential language for the laymen to employ in addressing monks. The separateness but dependence of the laymen upon the monks has been aptly fashioned into an analogy by Paul Mus—society is a compass which is meaningless without the *sangha* as magnetic pole.¹⁵

The Maha Sangha Association began inauspiciously, for the publicity revealed it to be a government scheme for the *pongyis*, not an independent effort of their own. Newspapers announcing that every district, town, and village should form branches to complement the central organization omitted naming any religious leaders, the crucial factor in attaining support. Traditionally, the *sangha* has been wary of government interference and also slow to accept new organization. Without the prestige of outstanding *sayadaws* behind the Maha Sangha it appeared still-born.

¹⁴ In the late 1950's when *pongyis* totaled about 100,000 E. M. Mendelson made the above estimate, "Buddhism and Politics in Burma", *New Society*, Vol. 1, no. 38 (January 20, 1963), p. 9.

¹⁵ Lectures at Yale University, autumn 1958. The best description of public roles for village monks is Manning Nash, *The Golden Road to Modernity* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 104-156. To date no studies exist of the personal relationships between Burmese monks and the laymen they teach, counsel, and cure.

From another quarter, the Japanese administration viewed it as yet another rival to the dormant *pongyi* associations it had sponsored the preceding year.¹⁶ As a fresh start it apparently urged Dr. Ba Maw to appoint a three-man committee to meet with three Japanese civilians to discuss steps for uniting the *sangha*. The three Burmese laymen were Bandoola U Sein, shortly to become the first Minister of Religion, Thakin Kodaw Hmine, patron of the Thakin party and of the Buddhist Monkhood Association, and Saya Lin, of Rangoon College, the only layman to receive a religious title in colonial Burma. Their Japanese counterparts were well chosen to allay fears of military interference, for not one officer was among them. Tagami Tatsuo, a mild-mannered professional educator, was head of the Educational Affairs Department of the Military Administration. Assisting him were Takahashi from the Military Administration's government department and Nagai, the same Nichiren monk who had helped found the Buddhist Monkhood Association.¹⁷ This joint committee selected two prominent Thudama *sayadaws* to initiate discussions, the Nyaungyan Sayadaw who headed the Burma Buddhist League and the Gadagyi Sayadaw of Rangoon.¹⁸ However, the Nyaungyan Sayadaw procrastinated over traveling to Rangoon, intimating that he preferred Upper Burma for a meeting place. Meanwhile, the over eager Burmese government gave public approval to a plan which would have capped the Maha Sangha with a Board of Chief State Sayadaws.¹⁹ At the end of May representatives from the rival Japanese organizations for Upper and Lower Burma met in Sagaing, across the river from Mandalay. On June 1 they formally agreed to merge their organizations.

Once the prominent *sayadaws* had agreed, the government plan for a national organization could be implemented. *Sayadaws* in the districts began selecting elders from among themselves to serve as links between the ordinary *pongyis* and the executive of the Maha Sangha. At best, nominations were haphazard. Some districts never named one *sayadaw*, while busy Shwebo named twenty-five instead of the required ten.²⁰ The unevenness of response reflected the difficulty of communication, the degree of interest of local *pongyis* as well as differential application of Japanese pressure.

An instance of Japanese pressure on the Shwegyin sect occurred in Moulmein. A young *sayadaw* of this strict sect, U Yaywada, refused persistent urging from a Burmese layman sent by a Japanese administrator. Gravely concerned over this improper pressure, U Yaywada hastened the length of the country to consult with the heads of the Shwegyin sect.

¹⁶ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 134.

¹⁷ *Greater Asia*, August 2, 1943.

¹⁸ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 134.

¹⁹ *Myinma Alin*, May 18, 1943, cited in Burma, Intelligence Bureau, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*, vol. 2, p. 141.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 112 and 141.

By the time he had arrived in Mandalay the direct urging of a Japanese officer had already persuaded the venerable Abyarama Sayadaw, U Egga, to join discussions with the Thudama. However, the Sishin Sayadaw of Sagaing firmly refused personal pleas and letters from Thudama *pongyis*.

The basic Shwegyin fear of merger was that once their tight organization cracked, their discipline would fall to the lax level prevailing among the Thudama. At the time of King Mindon the Shwegyin sect had broken from the body of the *sangha* over this very issue of monastic discipline. They thus belonged to the Burmese religious tradition of schism over rules of conduct not over articles of faith.²¹ Shwegyin *sayadaws* feared that if their sect merged with the Thudama ten times its size, their *pongyis* would also break the Vinaya code by attending dramas, riding trishaws and leaving a shoulder bare while on their rounds for alms. Some Shwegyin members even believed that the Maha Sangha Association was a Thudama plot to gain power over the Shwegyin. One *pongyi* raised practical objections to merger, but phrased them in the following philosophic terms.

Since no man has *atta* [permanent self], no man has *ana* [power over others]. Hence no monastery has power over any other monastery. Before the Shwegyin sect could join the Maha Sangha each monastery would have to agree. However, the unsettled wartime conditions prevent convening a conference of *sayadaws*.²²

This line of reasoning clearly portrays the autonomy of the individual monastery, but it underestimated the determination of the Japanese army and the Burmese government. Just such a conference opened in Rangoon on June 25th to set the seal of ecclesiastic approval on the Maha Sangha organization.²³ For a week the conference of *sayadaws* aired their objections to the manner of creating and organizing the Maha Sangha. Japanese officials remained in the background but Nagai attended the conference as a fellow monk to persuade the Burmese of the necessity for unity. On July 2nd the conference reached an accord. Twenty *sayadaws* evenly divided between Upper and Lower Burma agreed to become the Chief State Sayadaws, responsible for the Maha Sangha Association. The seven points which the conference endorsed would have changed the character of the *sangha* if they had been implemented.²⁴

1. All *pongyis* are responsible to the Buddha, and thus should be united in one organization.

²¹ James Scott, *The Burman: His Life and Notions* (reprinted, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1963), pp. 129-142, and Smith, pp. 29-31.

²² Interview with U Yaywada.

²³ Details of the conference were supplied in 1962 by U Kaythara, the Man Kyaung Sayadaw of the Shwegyin sect.

²⁴ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 135 gives the official Japanese translation of the agreement.

2. All powers of Buddhism should be realized to the fullest extent.
3. The *sangha* should cooperate forever in maintaining Burma's independence.
4. The *sangha* should cooperate to establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.
5. The *sangha* will work to increase friendly relations between Burma and Japan.
6. All *pongyis* should cooperate fully with the Burmese government in all matters.
7. The twenty association members selected as the executive committee will write the by-laws of the Maha Sangha Organization.

ABSENCE OF CHANGE FROM THE TOP

The agreement is obviously a compromise between the traditional insulation of the *sangha* from secular affairs and the driving desire of the Japanese army and Burmese government to involve *pongyis* in active support of the war. In the end, tradition won, for the organization never gained significant cooperation from the vast majority of the *pongyis*.

Lack of unity.—The Shwegyin, Dwaya, and Kan sects found the first article objectionable. Only one Shwegyin sayadaw, U Kaythara of the Man Kyaung, attended the conference. He went specifically as an individual not a sect representative and declined to become one of the Chief State Sayadaws. In the districts a few Shwegyin *pongyis* did join the Maha Sangha, but after the war their sect required them to renounce all connection with it at a conference in Taunggyi.

Naturally the wartime propaganda ignored the boycott of the small sects. Even the official, classified Japanese administrative report falsely asserted that all Buddhist sects were united for the first time in Burmese history.²⁵ In reality, only the Thudama sect adhered to the Maha Sangha, and their new unity began on paper alone.

The ninety year jealousy between the two branches of the Thudama sect in which Upper Burma was unable to assert its traditional authority over Lower Burma, made Upper Burma *sayadaws* restive over Rangoon becoming the seat of the Maha Sangha Organization. The war's disruption of transportation helped the Mandalay *sayadaws* resist domination by Lower Burma. By at least May of 1944 Upper Burma had gained a separate regional headquarters in Mandalay, composed of the *sayadaws* originally in the central executive.²⁶

The Maha Sangha declaration did not even deal with the important dimension of unity, the degree of central authority over the local monas-

²⁵ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 134.

²⁶ *Myinma Alin*, May 18, 1944, p. 2.

teries. In traditional Burma a hierarchy capped by the *thathanabaing* had settled all internal disputes and relied upon special commissioners appointed by the king to enforce their decisions.²⁷ Under the British the power of the ecclesiastic authorities atrophied until by 1935 the Rangoon High Court denied any legal authority to the Buddhist hierarchy and in 1938 the Governor failed to appoint a new *thathanabaing* on the death of the incumbent.²⁸ During the 1930's the only remaining links between the autonomous monasteries were the personal ties between a learned *sayadaw* and his former pupils who themselves had become *sayadaws*. Thus within a limited geographic region an elderly *sayadaw* might have secured the allegiance of most younger *sayadaws* on the strength of his former tutelage and his current reputation for learning. This charismatic style of authority was buttressed only by the traditional prestige that certain major monasteries automatically imparted to their *sayadaws*. A *sayadaw's* ultimate sanction against a recalcitrant *pongyi* was to eject him from his monastery, but the *pongyi* could always find a more compatible home. This looseness permitted many men who did not adhere to the Vinaya code to live within the order. The increasing number of *pongyis* in large towns who lived in a loose style was generally viewed with alarm. A *thakin* satirized the immoral life in a novel, *Tot Pongyi*.²⁹ The epithet, which simply means modern, is used to this day. The increased occurrence of *pongyi* offenses resulted perhaps in part from the increasing attractiveness of modern secular life, but the vices themselves were not modern, ranging as they did from theater going to fornication.

Within the *sangha* the tension was not resolved between the disgrace of unseemly behavior by the few and the basic assumption that each *pongyi* is ultimately and totally responsible only to himself for his conduct. The Maha Sangha agreement did not even attempt to restore the ecclesiastic courts which had had the power to disrobe immoral monks. In fact the agreement produced no binding authority whatsoever. The twenty independently powerful *sayadaws* authorized to draft the association's by-laws apparently never completed their minimal task. What a disappointment to the Japanese, whose own quarrelsome religious sects had each submitted to a single undisputed leader confirmed in office by a government official.

Political affairs.—The principle that the *sangha* should cooperate to maintain the independence of Burma had its fatherhood in the political preaching of U Ottama and its ancestry in the national sentiment that to be Burmese is to be Buddhist. U Ottama's message had been that as

²⁷ The only detailed picture, which probably exaggerates the effectiveness of the system, is in Smith, pp. 12-20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-57.

²⁹ When Thakin Thein Pe's novel was published in 1935 it caused such furor among the *sangha* that the government banned it, Smith, p. 208.

long as Burma was dominated by an alien ruler, Buddhism was endangered. Hence, the *sangha*, whose concern was the well being of Buddhism, was obliged to enter politics to restore Burma to a Buddhist government. U Ottama's appraisal was culturally accurate as well as politically effective. Since Burmese Buddhism is so loosely organized, it needs a Buddhist state to provide the underpinnings of its authority.³⁰ Thus, for twenty years prior to the war, the politically minded minority of the *sangha* had espoused politics for the sake of Burmese independence. The jubilant political current which swept the country during the British retreat may also have penetrated the monasteries, multiplying the minority of monks who thirsted for national independence. Among the *sayadaws* who attended the Maha Sangha conference were those who had been most active in nationalist politics before the war. The other *sayadaws* at the conference who had kept out of the prewar headlines may have found a new duty to protect Buddhism through protecting a Buddhist oriented state.

The innovation in the Maha Sangha agreement was the creation of a duty for the *sangha* to cooperate with the government in *all* matters. Historically the obligation had been the reverse: it was the king's duty to cooperate with the *sangha* to advance Buddhism. In keeping with their personal striving for nirvana the vast majority of *pongyis* have ignored government. Entrance into political affairs has occurred only in crisis periods, when *pongyis* aligned themselves *against* the government.³¹ The revolutionary attempt to enlist *pongyis* on the side of government failed in wartime Burma. By October 1943 the Burmese Head of State was learning that simply creating a *pongyi* association did not accomplish tasks.

The *Sangha* Organization . . . has already been very successfully organized. It now remains to use it for State purposes.³²

Japanese disappointments.—The most interesting feature of the pallid Maha Sangha charter is its omissions. In the pledge to promote friendship between Burma and Japan it made no reference to the Japanese as fellow Buddhists. During their first year in Burma, the Japanese had repeatedly stressed their common religion, through speeches and acts of merit at Burmese pagodas. It would be surprising if the Japanese administrators assisting at the birth of the Maha Sangha had not requested a declaration of religious fellowship. Probably the *sayadaws* declined to

³⁰ Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), see esp. chs. 17 and 27 of this seminal work.

³¹ Sarkisyanz, p. 95, Winston L. King, *In the Hope of Nibbana* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 179-180, and Smith, chs. 1 and 3.

³² Dr. Ba Maw, *Burma's New Order Plan* (Rangoon, State Printing, 1944), p. 20.

recognize Japanese Buddhism because they shared the view of the Burmese layman: Japanese Buddhism is at best a highly corrupted form of the Buddha's teachings, and at worst not Buddhism at all.

The pragmatic Burmese judged Japanese Buddhism by the practices of the Japanese before them. Their first grievance was that Japanese soldiers committed innumerable sacrilegious acts against Buddhist property and *pongyis*. The least serious offense common to all armies in Burma was bivouacking at monasteries, which generally were the most substantial buildings of an area. Sixty years before, the British army had also requisitioned monasteries during their campaign. During World War II even the fledgling Burmese army had requisitioned a monastery as a military hospital.³³ With the first disappointed realization that the Japanese were more conquerors than liberators, horror stories quickly circulated of their defilement of Buddha images and *pongyi* robes. After the campaign, when Japanese commanders could devote more attention to their soldiers' relations with the local population, sacrilege ceased. The memory, however, lingered.

The Burmese correctly believed the Japanese to place a lower value than they did on every member of the *sangha*. During the campaign Japanese officers had singled out the conspicuous *pongyis* to demand all manner of services from collecting guns to disposing of dead bodies. Whenever possible Burmese laymen intervened to assume these tasks themselves rather than see their *pongyis* thus defiled. During the course of the war some Japanese suggested that *pongyis* were economically unproductive. Burmese resented their applying this wholly inferior standard to men of paramount spiritual worth. Burmese vehemently opposed the twin correctives that individual Japanese occasionally voiced: reduce the number of monks or set them to work.

Beyond misunderstanding Burmese Buddhism the Japanese practiced an impure religion, according to Burmese notions. Burmese considered the daily Emperor worship by Japanese soldiers in conflict with the pre-eminence of the Buddha. They considered the public ceremonies to worship the spirits of the war dead as superstition alien to Buddhism.³⁴ Burmese failed to reflect that these practices might be no more anti-Buddhist than their own propitiation of the *nats*. Historically Burmese have been so immersed in their own religious tradition that they have had no interest in Mahayana Buddhism or any other religion.³⁵

³³ Interview with the sayadaw of the Sinyandone monastery, five miles west of Pyinmana.

³⁴ U Kyaw Min, *The Burma We Love* (Calcutta: Inamullah Khan, India Book House, 1945), p. 107 and Rev. U On Kin, *Burma under the Japanese* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1947), p. 19. On December 1 and 9, 1942 large bi-national ceremonies were held at the Shwedagon in honor of the slain. *Bama Khit*, December 2 and 9, 1942.

³⁵ Winston King, *A Thousand Lives Away: Buddhism in Contemporary Burma* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1964), pp. 53-56.

The aspect of Japanese Buddhism that most strongly confirmed their low opinion of it was the unseemly behavior of Japanese monks who accompanied the troops. Burmese laymen have not yet tired of joking over sights such as a monk riding a girl's bicycle or wearing a woman's sarong around his head. It was beyond belief that a Japanese monk could be married. *Pongyis* in particular were distressed that some Japanese monks were warriors. They were deeply offended at the presumption of these warrior-monks in expecting to partake food with them.

The other great omission of the Maha Sangha Conference was to declare holy the war then raging. The Japanese preoccupation was victory; the Commander-in-Chief had set the tone.

Total victory shall be established as the goal for every aspect of administration. In order to achieve victory in war, requests from the Japanese Army shall be given absolute priority.⁸⁶

Following defeats in the Pacific, the propaganda department of the army in Burma redoubled efforts to promote an enduring fighting spirit among the Burmese.⁸⁷

From the Japanese point of view the convention of *sayadaws* was the ideal body to endorse the war since it claimed to represent the whole *sangha*. In Japan, religious organizations had long been the subservient handmaidens of the state. The Japanese religions preached total dedication of their members to the war effort, raised collections for the purchase of fighter planes, even modified their rituals to incorporate the Imperial Way.⁸⁸ The futile Japanese attempts to wring a war declaration from the *sayadaws* illustrates the supreme power of the *sangha* in resisting external direction.

In their first step, Japanese military administrators had persuaded leading *sayadaws* to form a national association. To keep the *sayadaws* in good humor they pried from the army railway monopoly comfortable accommodations for the journey to Rangoon. Japanese officials greeted the *sayadaws* on their arrival at the Rangoon station. The Nyaungyan Sayadaw, as head of the Burma Buddhist League, received solicitous attention. A succession of Japanese officers called upon him to inquire into the accomplishments and personal histories of himself and the three Upper Burma *sayadaws* who had accompanied him. The Japanese praised Burmese Buddhism and deplored the sacrilege of the Anglo-Americans. They urged the *sayadaws* to cooperate with their own government in fighting

⁸⁶ Japan, *Military Administration*, Appendix 20. Directives of the Burma Area Army, August 1, 1942.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85. The Japanese Premier even stipulated that a formal declaration of war from the Burmese government was a *quid pro quo* for independence. Premier Tojo's Letter of Instruction to Dr. Ba Maw, March 22, 1943 (English translation), Yale collection, serial no. 1.

⁸⁸ *Bunce*, pp. 37-43.

the British. When these arguments for declaring support of the war failed to move the *sayadaws* of Upper Burma, the Japanese convened several joint meetings between *sayadaws* of Upper and Lower Burma. This too failed to evoke a commitment.

The Nyaungyan Sayadaw, one of the staunchest in refusing to endorse the war, once proffered his arm in illustration. To amazed Japanese officers he explained that his religious vows forbid his striking the mosquito which had landed there. Blowing it off he concluded that *pongyis* who must respect the lives of even lowly pests could never countenance the slaughter of men.³⁹

The Japanese did not admit their failure to obtain religious sanction for the war in their official administrative history written immediately after the attempt, but the failure did rankle. After the conference a Japanese monk took up residence in the Shwegyin Man Kyaung and often pestered the *sayadaw* as to why he had refused to declare war. It is very doubtful that afterwards the Maha Sangha Association ever declared the war a holy war, as has been asserted by some historians.⁴⁰

Like every other organization linked to the regime, the Maha Sangha cried its support more shrilly as the war turned against the Japanese. However, its February, 1945 pronouncement seemed mild in the context of Dr. Ba Maw's New Year's message extolling the *kamikaze* spirit and calling upon Burmese "to throw everything we have into the present battle till the scales are securely turned to our side and East Asia is liberated forever."⁴¹

Our Burmese religious devotees were defeated in three wars, and for more than one hundred years the moon of Buddhism was hidden behind clouds while English culture penetrated everywhere. During those hundred years the English were the enemies of religion and of Burma using every means to destroy Buddhism. However, since Burma has become independent the government has been doing everything to promote Buddhism. Now *pongyis* who have escaped from Myitkyina [where the English have reconquered] have reported to our executive council. We eighty thousand *pongyis* must support the Burmese government and the Japanese in order to keep our independence. We must defend Buddhism.⁴²

³⁹ This account is based entirely upon the memory of U Kaythara, the Man Kyaung Sayadaw of the Shwegyin sect who accompanied the Nyaungyan Sayadaw to Rangoon. Bandoola U Sein, the minister of religion, confirmed without details that the Japanese had approached the *sayadaws* for a declaration in support of the war.

⁴⁰ Cecil Hobbs, "The Political Importance of the Buddhist Priesthood in Burma," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. XXI (1956), pp. 586-590 and Fred von der Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia: Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963) give no citation but their source is probably the uneven intelligence report of the Burma government-in-exile, Vol. 2, p. 141.

⁴¹ *Greater Asia*, January 1, 1945.

⁴² Ma-ha san-gha qahpwe, jou'ji:ei. htou'pyan cei-nya-je' [Bulletin of the Maha Sangha Executive Council] February 19, 1945. 2 p. 20,000 copies published. From the archives of the Defence Services Historical Research Institute, DR 1456 iii (c).

UTILIZATION OF PONGYIS

The Japanese army may never have recognized the irony of its efforts to organize the *sangha*. Their purpose had been to centralize religious authority in an executive committee which would transmit Japanese wishes to the body of the *sangha* and thence to the laity. They failed not only to establish a central religious authority, but to obtain the subservience of the very inefficient body which they promoted. The Japanese were able to employ individual *pongyis* and *sayadaws* in their various projects precisely because the *sangha* had no leadership which could refuse on behalf of its members. While the Chief State Sayadaws had refused to tie their cause explicitly to the Japanese, they could not prevent individual *sayadaws* from fervent endorsement of the war. U Mala, the Zeyasein Sayadaw of Pyinmana, who had been politically prominent since the mid 1930's as chief spiritual adviser to Dr. Ba Maw, made commitments which the Japanese would probably have preferred from the Maha Sangha as a body.

We never pass a day without praying for an early and complete victory in the Greater East Asia War. We will continue to extend our cooperation for the common cause. Fortunately, Nippon is a Buddhist country and the Nipponese have a deep understanding with us [and] also have evinced keen interest and deep respect for our monasteries, pagodas, and priests. We feel thankful for this. With this deep understanding between us I am sure that the ties binding the two countries will be further strengthened and bring us nearer to the goal of victory.⁴³

Buddhism was merely one of the Japanese irons on the fire. Japanese officers approached Catholic priests and Baptist preachers during the invasion to explain that the Japanese were also Christians. The military administration officially adopted a policy of tolerance toward all religions in Burma, but it never relied upon religion as the primary means of reaching the people. That privilege was reserved for the unfortunate Burmese government. The secondary sources of Japanese persuasion were the mass organizations, particularly the political party, the National Service Organization, and the Civil Defense Corps. *Pongyis* ran a poor third and Christians trailed behind.

Two other organizations vied for support from among the autonomous *pongyis*. The Burmese government was particularly eager to use *pongyis* to ensure itself a wide popular base. The highly Westernized Head of State fully recognized the hold of Buddhism over the popular imagination, having consciously employed Buddhist symbols during his prewar political career. The Maha Sangha Association served to link Dr. Ba Maw's wartime regime with the pre-colonial Burmese tradition.

⁴³ *Greater Asia*, March 13, 1945, p. 2.

He never desired more from the *pongyis* than staunch verbal support. For the overwhelming tasks of running the war torn country, the government called instead upon its mass organizations.

The third force which attracted some *pongyis* to its cause was the anti-Japanese resistance. During the last year of the war the resistance gathered enthusiastic support on a verbal level among young Burmese. Since this loose coalition was led by secularly oriented socialists and communists, it never offered more than a highly peripheral role to *pongyis*.

Japanese attempts to use pongyis.—The Japanese army began its conquest of Burma in ignorance of the Burmese people. Insofar as officers gave a thought to social affairs they naively believed that monks would form a bridge between themselves and the “newly liberated” people. The Japanese officers who founded the three *pongyi* organizations during the campaign each believed he was inspiring Burmese-Japanese friendship. However, these organization apparently rendered no significant assistance in pacification. Rather, a handful of individual *pongyis* toured the disrupted areas to restore order. For example, the Yahanbone Sayadaw, of a young and politically oriented faction of the Thudama toured four Upper Burma districts from June through August, 1942. He went at the request of a Japanese officer who had given him six certificates written in Japanese which allowed him to pass all military checkpoints. Beyond that the *sayadaw* was on his own, traveling in a car provided by a former pupil. One of the chief difficulties he resolved was the equitable division of irrigation water during this rice planting and transplanting season. He persuaded by calling out the township officer, headman, or any responsible layman and urging them to do their work properly. The preaching of a *sayadaw* so encouraged villagers that they put to rights their disrupted affairs.

How many other *pongyis* provided leadership during the troubled change of regime is not known. This seeking and solving of social problems was a new role for *pongyis*, created in crisis. The sense of social responsibility exhibited by the Yahanbone Sayadaw ran counter to the prevailing ethic that a *pongyi's* overriding responsibility is to detach himself from the inevitable suffering of the world. The more common form of *pongyi* participation during the first months of Japanese rule was coerced. Japanese officers obliged *pongyis* to name local men who could perform whatever task the Japanese had in mind, be it procuring chickens or burying bodies. In Moulmein, at the beginning of the invasion the army jailed a monk, holding him responsible as local leader for the theft of arms by townspeople.⁴⁴ Probably Japanese officers seized

⁴⁴ Information on the Japanese use of *pongyis* in the districts is drawn from interviews with the Yahanbone Sayadaw, June 14, 1962 and with U Pandita of Moulmein, May 1, 1962.

upon *pongyis* as local leaders because the people showed them such deference and because their saffron robes made them conspicuous. At first the Japanese failed to realize that the physical symbols which rendered monks conspicuous to them symbolized to the Burmese the total separation of the *pongyi's* life from the layman's.

The impromptu Japanese demands upon *pongyis* had ended by the time the Burmese government was established in August, 1942. Thereafter, the Japanese confined their attempts to gain *pongyi* backing to matters where genuine popular support was essential. Public health was such a case. Had the Japanese succeeded in convincing the *pongyis* of the need to change popular health habits, the *pongyis* would have converted the whole population. In limited areas the Burmese government of the 1950's successfully employed this mode of persuasion. For instance, in some rural areas government health assistants have used *pongyis* to supervise school children in taking their weekly malaria suppressing pill. The Japanese, on the contrary, were far too bold in pushing *pongyis* into new roles. The result was popular indignation.

Immediately after their campaign, Japanese soldiers began inoculating any Burmese who passed major checkpoints, such as railway stations. Although inoculation was essential to halt the spread of cholera and smallpox, Burmese resented being grabbed and jabbed. Japanese officers in Mandalay, where conditions were the worst, then organized a class of *pongyis* to teach them inoculation techniques. A number of *pongyis* who felt sympathetic to the new government of Dr. Ba Maw attended, received a completion certificate in Japanese, and actually went into practice. Other *pongyis*, however, deeply resented the Japanese for prodding any of their order into this mundane task. They were appalled at the necessity to come into bodily contact with women, for of all worldly ways, physical contact with women is the most likely to undo a monk's spiritual progress. Resentment within the *sangha* continued, and after the Burmese government appointed a Minister of Religion in August 1943, *pongyis* brought their complaint to him. Bandoola U Sein in turn raised the issue with Japanese Army headquarters in Rangoon, and apparently the practice was finally stopped.⁴⁵

The rat extermination campaign aroused greater outrage in laity and *sangha* alike. Most Burmese shelter even pestilent rats under the Buddhist injunction against taking life. The Japanese military administration mounted a campaign in the hot season of 1943, issuing rat traps to residents of major towns and requiring delivery of a quota of dead rats. In Rangoon the Japanese persuaded the Aletawya Sayadaw, a founding member of the Maha Sangha, and some other *pongyis* to preach in

⁴⁵ Bandoola U Sein, interviewed August 9, 1962 and also by Fred von der Mehden, p. 152.

the campaign. The Aletawya Sayadaw apparently urged the people to catch rats so that Burma would become a disease-free paradise like Japan and so Buddhism would be realized.⁴⁶ In Mandalay, the military administration approached the *sangha* to convey to the people the necessity for killing rats. Mandalay *pongyis* immediately protested that the Japanese had no respect for the Sangha or Buddhism. They and other conservative *pongyis* were heard by Dr. Ba Maw, who carried the complaint to the Japanese Commander-in-Chief. The army then resigned itself to combatting rats with its own resources rather than relying upon the Burmese.⁴⁷

A new duty more in keeping with the *sangha's* traditional role of teacher was teaching the Japanese language. The military administrators especially welcomed *pongyis* into their language classes and rejoiced when some graduates opened a school of their own.⁴⁸ A further illustration of the small ways in which *pongyis* helped the Japanese army was in connection with the greatest project that the Burmese undertook for the Japanese—the Burma-Thailand railway. As the Burmese government whipped up an enthusiastic recruitment drive, a few *pongyis* went quietly and apparently on their own volition to the railway site to minister to the needs of the conscript laborers.⁴⁹

The Burmese government's use of pongyis.—In contrast to the specific tasks which the Japanese army required of *pongyis*, the Burmese government basically desired the *sangha's* blessings in order to prove its legitimacy. Dr. Ba Maw's use of religious symbols and ceremony was part of his appeal to tradition, linking his regime with the reign of ancient kings. The modern equivalent of the ancient tie between King and Buddhism, the declaration of Buddhism as the state religion, was apparently not considered during the war by Dr. Ba Maw. The devout Buddhist Prime Minister Nu achieved that union only in 1961.

The wartime relationship between Buddhism and the state was mutually advantageous, the religion gaining protection, the government, legitimacy. The various ways that the government protected Buddhism from Japanese exactions will be covered in the next section. Here, in discussing how the government utilized the *sangha* for propaganda purposes, it is important to recognize that the wartime government did not narrowly exploit the *sangha* as did the Japanese army. Dr. Ba Maw sought only their general blessing in order to overcome the stigma of his initial installation as a Japanese puppet. He desired the *sangha* to place his gov-

⁴⁶ *Greater Asia*, May 16, 1943.

⁴⁷ Interview with Takano Genshin, chief of the secretariat in the military administration and Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 120 and interviews with Takano Genshin and U Kuthala, Yahanbyo *pongyi* in Mandalay.

⁴⁹ *Greater Asia*, June 27, 1943 and interviews with two *sayadaws* and a sweat army laborer.

ernment in the legitimate succession of Burmese rulers which had been interrupted by British colonialism.

It was no chance occurrence that the Minister of Religion was also the Minister of Propaganda. The Burmese government consistently sought *pongyi* cooperation in the realm of mass persuasion, and never once made the Japanese mistake of expecting them to perform any physical work. The government regarded the Maha Sangha organization as the ideal instrument for *pongyi* propaganda work. However, the wartime regime could not duplicate the effective political preaching of the 1920's when *pongyis* inspired village *wunthanu* organizations to resist government demands. Despite its national organization on paper the Maha Sangha did not have active village *pongyis* to carry messages to the villagers. As a whole the Ba Maw government failed to reach the population through the personal contact of organization membership.⁵⁰ Instead it relied upon the inappropriate means of the mass media under conditions where newspaper and radio hardly reached beyond the capital city.

Within the Maha Sangha the brunt of the propaganda work thus fell to the executive committee members living in Rangoon. These Chief State Sayadaws presided over rallies at the Shwedagon, attended government functions, and issued statements which the ministry printed, all in support of the "independent" Burmese government. When the government honored the Chief State Sayadaws as in the ceremony of March, 1944, in reality the *sayadaws* honored the government since their prestige was secure. Dr. Ba Maw invited the *sayadaws* to the great peacock room of his residence, entered to the accompaniment of royal drum music, and presented them certificates for meritorious service to Burma.⁵¹

Even the government honors to a martyred *pongyi* redounded to the glory of the government. On October 2, 1943 Dr. Ba Maw dedicated a statue of U Wisara at the head of one of Rangoon's major avenues. The cabinet, the Japanese ambassador, and ranking Japanese army officers attended, but the crowd was reported at only six thousand, including three hundred *pongyis*.⁵² Was the government making a token claim to independence from Japan by honoring U Wisara who had fasted to death in a colonial prison? The logical choice of martyr would have been U Ottama, who had studied years in Japan and India before leading the first mass campaign against Britain.

The Maha Sangha executive committee continued to issue pleas in support of the wartime government even when all could see that it would disintegrate the moment the Japanese army was defeated in

⁵⁰ For a timely analysis of organization as medium and message see Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1967).

⁵¹ *Greater Asia*, March 30, 1944.

⁵² *Bama Khit*, October 3, 1943 filed in the DSHRI as DR 75 iii (c), and *Greater Asia*, October 5, 1943.

Burma. Perhaps some of the *Sayadaws* felt morally obliged to continue supporting a losing cause, as did top leaders in the East Asia Youth League. Possibly some shared the opinion of Dr. Ba Maw and his Minister of Religion that all gains would be lost if the British reconquered. Most likely, the inertia of the organization kept it on the Japanese side to the end. Some individuals among the Chief State Sayadaws had quit by 1945, perhaps as many as half the original twenty. They were replaced by as many other *sayadaws* to keep the original geographic balance.⁵³

Pongyis in the resistance.—A handful of *pongyis* joined the anti-Japanese resistance, playing a smaller part than they had in the Saya San rebellion or in the Third Anglo-Burmese war. Local resistance organizers welcomed any assistance they offered in recruiting or collecting donations. The national leadership, however, had a strictly secular outlook which excluded *pongyis* from the political arena. The Anti-Fascist Manifesto of 1944, setting the goals of the resistance, declared,

The state should be neutral on religious questions. Religion should not be used as a means to exploit the masses as is being done by the Japanese.⁵⁴

Resistance propaganda did not single out religious grievances as a cause of hatred against the Japanese. The Burmese army order detailing the wrongs committed by the Japanese stressed the physical suffering of the people and the national loss of independence. Buddhism received only a phrase which it shared with Islam and Christianity.⁵⁵ Even the *sangha* received no special attention in resistance literature. When the movement claimed support from every quarter, the *sangha* were mentioned in the same breath as the communist party.⁵⁶

Members of the Yahanbyu, or Young Monks Association, within the Thudama sect seem to have had more ties to the independence movement than other monks. U Kuthula, the secretary-general of the Yahanbyu, helped prepare for the resistance in the Mandalay area by accompanying Burmese Army officers in soliciting funds for arms purchase. Although he wore trousers on these rounds, his status as a *pongyi* made refusal

⁵³ Further research on the personnel and activities of the Chief State Sayadaws would provide considerable insight into the political attitudes of the more prestigious *sayadaws*. Unfortunately, the two available lists of Chief State Sayadaws are not easily comparable, since both proper name and monastery are not given. Japan, *Military Administration*, pp. 135-6 gives the list of July, 1943. The February 19, 1945 Bulletin of the Maha Sangha gives the other list, DR 1456 iii (c).

⁵⁴ Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, *From Fascist Bondage to New Democracy: The New Burma in the New World* (Rangoon: Nay Win Kyi Press, [1946], p. 14.

⁵⁵ DR 28 iii (d) Order number 1 from the Burma National Army to all Officers Non-Commissioned officers, and privates [undated], mimeograph, 12 p. A similar version is DR 111 iii (d) from Thakin Zaw Tin of Toungoo.

⁵⁶ DR 112 iii (d) *Hpetsit taithpay pyithu lutlatyay aphwejoke* [Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League], [April (?), 1945].

next to impossible.⁵⁷ When fighting broke out in March, 1945 U Kuthala actually fled Mandalay with the Burmese garrison. He lived with the troops in the nearby hills until the leader, Bo Ba Htu, died, and then returned to Mandalay with his ashes.⁵⁸ In postwar Burma U Kuthala has been proud to be the only *pongyi* to hold a gun license.

Since the communist party was the best organized civilian resistance group, a few *pongyis* even recruited for it. One Arakanese *pongyi*, U Seinda, joined the communist party, and followed Thakin Soe underground after the split. Although still claiming to be a *pongyi*, he fought against the Burmese government until he surrendered in the mid-1950's. Another *pongyi* who had worked for the party during the war, U Thuzada of Pyinmana, quit after the resistance. He continued his social concern by founding an orphanage where he taught a trade to his one hundred boys.

The exceptional participation of these monks was weakly echoed by a minority of the *sangha* who provided food and shelter to resistance fighters during the three months before they were provisioned by the British army. This support hardly exceeded the monastic tradition of providing shelter to every army which sought it.

The subsidiary and individual role which *pongyis* played in the resistance did not entitle them to a voice in the postwar independence movement. Only the core of the resistance, the army, the communists, and the socialists, became significant figures on the political stage of independent Burma. Particularly important in minimizing the political role of *pongyis* was General Aung San's firm personal opposition to their participation in politics.

THE PROTECTION OF BUDDHISM

Throughout Burmese history the issue which time and again drew *pongyis* into the political arena was the protection of Buddhism. Protection and propagation of the faith was also one of the prime responsibilities of Burmese kings. In colonial times even laymen felt the need to protect their religion from the encroachments of the Christian colonizing power. They were proud that after a century of Christian missionary work only a handful of ethnic Burmese had been lost to Buddhism. During the turmoil of World War II Buddhism seemed in great danger, as did the whole social fabric. Each side in the conflict claimed to be the true protector of Buddhism.

The Japanese claims.—A running counterpoint to the all-pervasive Japanese theme that they were fellow Asians was their claim as fellow Buddhists. From the lowest Japanese private to the Commander-in-Chief,

⁵⁷ Interview with a Mandalay lawyer, U Ba Thin, who was approached by U Kuthala.

⁵⁸ Interview with U Kuthala.

all were supposed to show deference to Burmese Buddhism. Rangoon headquarters forbid all soldiers to wear boots while visiting pagodas, thus attempting to gain Burmese confidence in a matter which had become the first political issue between the Burmese and the British.⁵⁹ Whenever a religious holiday was celebrated at the nation's greatest pagoda, the Shwedagon, newspapers pointedly observed that Japanese soldiers gathered to do homage together with the Burmese.⁶⁰ Japanese officers rivalled the Pharisees in the conspicuous manner of their donations. A gift of fifty kyats from a Japanese Major in Mandalay, as well as 500,000 kyats from the government in Tokyo received thorough newspaper coverage.⁶¹

The Japanese used every opportunity to contrast their piety with the sacrilege of the British. Their propaganda hammered upon British destruction of religious buildings. All the large Japanese religious donations were to rebuild pagodas leveled by the bombs of the "brutal British." The fact that military administrators actually believed they were strengthening Burmese Buddhism only made them more self-righteous.⁶²

After one of the early bombing raids the government newspaper reported older monks choked with sorrow over the ruins of a pagoda and monastery. The young monks, steeling themselves to avenge the death of their brothers, told the reporter to seek permission from the Japanese Commander-in-Chief that they might join the Japanese air force.⁶³ Such colorful and spontaneous outpouring of faith in the Japanese protectors dried up after the first year of the war. The Japanese then conceived of a grandiose project to reinforce their protective image. They would erect in Japan a replica of the Botataung pagoda destroyed in a British air raid on the Rangoon docks. For weeks Burmese newspapers featured stories and pictures of the proposed pagoda. The Japanese believed they would further cement their bonds with the Burmese by observing the custom of enshrining priceless relics deep in the interior of the new pagoda. They sought these relics in Burma with the full support of Dr. Ba Maw, who had no Buddhist roots of his own. His Christian brother ceremoniously took to Japan more than two hundred relics including the reputed remains of the Buddha's cremated body which had been worshipped by former Burmese kings. The May, 1944 ceremonies in Tokyo and the gratitude of the Japanese ambassador to Burma were fully reported in the Burmese press.⁶⁴

Instead of gratitude for enshrining the relics, the Japanese earned hatred for stealing them. Had the Burmese still believed in the Japanese,

⁵⁹ Interview with Colonel Nasu Yoshio, Director of the Military Administration.

⁶⁰ See for instance, *Bama Khit*, November 24, 1942, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Bama Khit*, December 1, 1942 and *Greater Asia*, August 8, 1944.

⁶² Japan, *Military Administration*, p. 133.

⁶³ *Bama Khit*, December 29, 1942.

⁶⁴ Burma, Intelligence Bureau, vol. 2, p. 133 *Greater Asia*, June 8, 1944.

they conceivably might have entrusted the safety of the relics to Japanese protection. However, their deepening hostility to the Japan army made them regard the Japanese as the despoilers of Burma's finest treasures. Word of mouth spread the shocking tale to upcountry towns where twenty years later the act was still so resented that it was spontaneously recalled as one of Japan's worst crimes against Burma. Dr. Ba Maw shared the opprobrium for surrendering the irreplaceable relics.⁶⁵

The British claims.—The British position was the mirror image of the Japanese. Their propaganda promised to protect Buddhism from the ravishes of the Japanese. A leaflet apparently dropped from British planes was more vituperative than the Japanese had been.

The dirty beasts tell *pongyis* and *sayadaws* to eat an evening meal. They order *pongyis* to work for them on the battlefield. They recognize neither religious buildings nor religious leaders. They wrap their horses' legs in religious robes. They destroy, scatter, burn. . . . Why are people so indifferent to these Japanese ogres?⁶⁶

Burmese citizens protecting Buddhism.—The competitive defamation by Japanese and British confirmed the Burmese view that these imperialists were cynically exploiting religion. The British had corroded Buddhism under the guise of religious neutrality, while the Japanese had subordinated Buddhism to their war effort. To the Burmese their Buddhism was as unique as their national identity, and the most important element in their sense of identity. If Buddhism were to be protected, it would be by the Burmese themselves.

The typical hero story of the wartime which Burmese most enjoy recounting concerns some individual act of merit to save Buddhism from defilement. When all the world was fleeing Rangoon, as ordered by the evacuating British governor, the pagoda trustees remained to keep watch at the Shwedagon. On the eve of the Burma campaign, a highly placed Japanese officer asked one of the thirty comrades then in Tokyo how much the Shwedagon was worth. He recorded with shame that under any other circumstances he would not have named a price for the priceless, but that he had replied fifty million rupees because he feared that the Japanese would bomb it.⁶⁷ Laymen also protect the person of *pongyis* by hiding them from the wrathful retreating Chinese army. When Japanese soldiers commanded *pongyis* to do menial work, laymen quickly substituted themselves to save the *pongyis* from degradation.

On the rare occasions when laymen failed, *pongyis* had to act to protect Buddhism. When Mandalay burned in March, 1942 the trustees of

⁶⁵ Interviews in small towns confirmed the wartime judgment of U Tin Tut that this propaganda stunt would backfire, *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶⁶ DR 58 iii (a) *Thangadawmya Ahnososa* [Note to Arouse the Sanghal], [undated].

⁶⁷ Thakin Tun Oke, *Kyunnoke Sunsakhan* [*My Adventures*] (Rangoon: Doba-ma Printing Company, 1943.)

the Mahamuni pagoda fled. They abandoned an image of the Buddha so richly covered by the gold leaf of thousands of devotees that the features were entirely obliterated. Yahanbyu *pongyis* stood guard over the priceless statue until order was restored.⁶⁸ A month before the British recapture of Mandalay, widespread, but unconfirmed rumors depicted *pongyis* joining laymen to beat back Japanese soldiers attempting to strip the image.⁶⁹

The government as protector of Buddhism.—The head of the wartime government eagerly revived the role of promoting Buddhism which had lain vacant since the last king was deposed. Dr. Ba Maw stepped into the royal role of donating to pagodas on behalf of the whole nation. He justified the formation of the Maha Sangha as in accordance with royal custom of the past and for the welfare of Buddhism. He introduced the modern equivalent of the royal religious commissioners in the form of a Ministry of Religion. Most important in the daily business of government, he frequently intervened to protest Japanese actions detrimental to Buddhism. In each case what was good from a Buddhist viewpoint was also good politics. Dr. Ba Maw saw his responsibility to protect all peoples of Burma from Japanese exactions while at the same time cajoling them into support for the Japanese war. Whenever possible, he used religion to enhance the support for his government. Just as he had relied upon *pongyi* support for his prewar popularity, so he tried to assume the role of Buddhist king in order to solidify Buddhist sentiment behind his regime.

Dr. Ba Maw's use of Buddhism was opportunistic in that he used religion to serve his higher goal of a strong Burmese state. In this difficult matter of assessing the motives of a shrewd politician, Dr. Ba Maw can best be understood in comparison with the postwar politician who made most use of Buddhism, U Nu. Dr. Ba Maw came from a Christian family, and took his schooling as a boarding student at St. Paul's, the Catholic boys' school of Rangoon. After years of study in Europe, he passed the British bar and received a Ph.D. from Bordeaux. U Nu's parents were small town traders who sold religious articles, and educated him in national schools. His higher education was at Rangoon College. Whereas Dr. Ba Maw's only writing on Buddhism has been analytical, a thesis comparing the mysticism of Joan of Arc to Buddhist mysticism, U Nu's writing is always laden with religious exhortations. Dr. Ba Maw's basic outlook is secular and eclectic, embracing all of world history.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Interviews with the Yahanbone Sayadaw, the Minister of Religion, and the Mandalay Sub-District Officer, U Thaug Tint.

⁶⁹ *Greater Asia*, February 10, 1945.

⁷⁰ Both his wartime pronouncements and his well-aged memoirs attest to his secular and sweeping outlook. See his speech printed as the introduction to *Thadingyut Kyaungpaityay Khit Thit Pyinnya Thinda* [Modern Education Course

Dr. Ba Maw is a foreigner to U Nu's Buddhist cosmology which places history in ethical perspective.⁷¹ In fact U Nu's basic purpose in promoting a welfare state was to provide an environment where people could easily engage in Buddhist acts of merit. Dr. Ba Maw's New Order Plan, on the contrary, places a strong and independent state as the sole political objective, making no reference to religion. These two skillful politicians differed most in their attitude toward *pongyis* in politics. U Nu consistently maintained the orthodox view that *pongyis* were above politics, while Dr. Ba Maw prided himself in his political manipulation of *pongyis*.

The Head of State was of course the chief patron of Buddhism. He often donated to pagodas which had been damaged in bombing raids, an ideal circumstance to emphasize that Britain was the true enemy of Burma. He made his largest donation, 150,000 rupees, in August, 1943, immediately after the Japanese grant of independence.⁷² His occasional visits to the Shwedagon were ceremonies in which he vowed to protect Buddhism. The government even convened a special rally on August 17, 1944 which condemned an alleged British scheme to steal the relics from the Shwedagon and approved a list of damaged religious buildings so that reparations could be collected when the war was won.⁷³

It is interesting to note that the two greatest ceremonies of wartime Burma were not religious. There was the independence ceremony, which was nationalist and modern. The declaration of independence even omitted reference to religion. The only Buddhist moments in the day of ceremony were when Dr. Ba Maw swore to protect the three gems, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, as had the Burmese kings. The most elaborate ceremony of the war, planting the victory earth, had no religious overtones, but was a curious *pastiche* of ancient and modern national lore. Soil from Shwebo, the home of the founder of the last dynasty, was carried in a golden box, under a royal white umbrella to Rangoon where it then bequeathed the spirit of Burmese independence to the wartime government. Since the ceremony took place early in the war, the government was able to invest considerable time and effort in a ceremony to give psychological unity to the nation.⁷⁴ The fact that Buddhism did not figure in this ceremony provides a sharp contrast with U Nu's nation building in postwar Burma. U Nu erected a pagoda, a mandatory act of piety for Burmese kings, and convened the Sixth Buddhist Synod, an act performed by only exceptionally devout kings. Dr. Ba Maw did not even build a sand pagoda

during the Thadingyut School Holidays] (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1943), pp. i-vii, and *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁷¹ Sarkisyanz, ch. 27.

⁷² *Greater Asia*, August 15, 1943.

⁷³ DR 91 iii (c), *Myinma Alin*, August 19, 1944, p. 2.

⁷⁴ See Nu, *Burma under the Japanese*, pp. 44-46 and *Bama Khit*, November 19 and 20, December 9, 12, and 13, 1942.

da, which Burmese kings and U Nu built in quantity when the country was endangered. Dr. Ba Maw apparently never thought of the ultimate in protection, making Buddhism the state religion.

A wartime innovation applauded by devout Buddhists was the government's creation of a Ministry of Religion. The ministry opened the day Burma declared independence, but the postwar government waited two years after independence from Britain to reestablish the ministry. The ministry institutionalized the state support essential to Buddhism which had been denied by the British.⁷⁵ The colonial government's own department of ecclesiastic affairs was linked to the Church of England. The Saya San rebellion played upon the fears arising from the popular misconception that the British meant to exercise exclusive control over Buddhism, not merely over the irrelevant Church of England.

The Ministry of Religion became the rightful home of the official examination in the Buddhist texts by which monks obtained certificates of ability. This royal institution had been revived by the British, but inappropriately housed in the Ministry of Education.⁷⁶ The ministry held at least two examinations during the war despite the disrupted state of affairs.⁷⁷

The Minister of Religion worked closely with the Maha Sangha, receiving complaints from the *sayadaws* and publicizing their pronouncements. In 1944 the department appointed two deputy directors, dividing their jurisdiction between Upper and Lower Burma just as the Maha Sangha had done.⁷⁸ On the recommendation of the Chief State Sayadaws the minister also issued passes to *pongyis*, averaging one to a township. These passes were supposed to protect *pongyis* on propaganda tours from Japanese harassment and provide them assistance from the Burmese district administrators. It is not known how many *pongyis* toured or whether the passes were ever honored.

The most significant protection which the government afforded Buddhism was its protests against Japanese incursions. Three officials shared the thankless tasks, Dr. Ba Maw as Head of State, Bandoola U Sein as Minister of Religion, and U Tun Aung, as Minister of War Cooperation. Four religious issues were among the complaints to the Japanese Commander-in-Chief. The rat campaign of 1943 was discussed above under uses of Buddhism. In 1944 the government attempted to prevent cattle slaughter and the desecration of a Rangoon cemetery. The last and proudest act was saving the Shwedagon pagoda.

⁷⁵ Sarkinsyanz, chs. 16-18.

⁷⁶ Smith, pp. 66-71.

⁷⁷ *Bama Khit*, November 14, 1942 and *Greater Asia*, December 21, 1944.

⁷⁸ DR 91 iii (c), *Myinma Alin*, March 23, 1944.

To curb excessive cattle slaughter for Japanese consumption the government passed legislation. Shortly it used the same technique to protect economic and social rights of Burmese, but also with limited success. The act prohibited slaughter of any cattle less than ten years old, so that the livestock essential for farm and transportation work could be maintained. The added benefit was that the *sangha* considered this law in keeping with the Buddhist precept against killing. The Maha Sangha association praised the government, and preached that the people should abstain from eating meat. The Minister of Religion claimed that the Maha Sangha organization was successful in convincing holders of slaughter house licenses to give them up as acts of merit.⁷⁹ For six months the Burmese government thus restricted cattle slaughter, but then had to cut the heart from the law in yielding to Japanese pressure. The amendment excluded from the protection of the law any cattle slaughtered for the Japanese army.

Burmese ministers further protected Buddhism by convincing the Japanese army not to run a new road out of Rangoon through the Kyan-daw cemetery and two monasteries. The Minister of Religion understood the Japanese intention in building this new road was to use it as a decoy for British bombers and thus maintain the major artery, Prome Road. His telling argument in dissuading the Japanese apparently was that the people would be so enflamed over the destruction of the religious grounds that they would render ineffective any camouflage of Prome Road.⁸⁰

The greatest religious act of Dr. Ba Maw's career was attempting to save the Shwedagon pagoda from destruction.⁸¹ Apparently a Japanese plan for the defense of Rangoon called for using Shwedagon hill for a system of bunkers and a half dozen monasteries as ammunition dumps. After much discussion on the Burmese side, Dr. Ba Maw protested to the Commander-in-Chief, but in vain. Then in November, 1944 Ba Maw accepted an invitation to Tokyo to promote the *kamikaze* campaign. There he brought his case personally to the attention of the highest authorities. Field Marshal Sugiyama heard him attentively, and replied after two days that the Japanese army would do its utmost to spare Rangoon and the Shwedagon. However, he warned that if the Allies sus-

⁷⁹ This account is based upon Bandoola U Sein, *Kyunnok Atwinyay* [Our Internal Affairs], vol. 2 (Rangoon: Thiri Zeyon Pon Press, 1946), pp. 97-100. Unfortunately the first volume of these fascinating memoirs has not yet come to light. The law is number 3 of 1305 B. E., printed in Burma, *Ordinances* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1944).

⁸⁰ Bandoola U Sein, vol. 2, pp. 64-65.

⁸¹ This account is based upon Burmese sources alone. Dr. Ba Maw, *Break-through in Burma*, pp. 372-380, and Bandoola U Sein, vol. 2, pp. 131-141 for a more colorful version. The official Japanese military histories edited by Fuwa Hiroshi, *Biruma Sakusen-shi* [History of the War Operations in Burma] and *Nampo-gun Sakusen-shi* [History of the Operations of the Southern Regional Army] (Tokyo: Government Printing, 1955), neglect this phase of the campaign.

pected that Rangoon would not be held, Japan would fight there. From the Burmese point of view at least, the protection of Buddhism was a powerful argument in changing the Japanese tactics for retreat.

THE GLACIAL PACE OF CHANGE IN BUDDHISM

The Japanese occupation did not destroy a long-standing pattern in Buddhism as it did in economics and politics. This lack of change in the *sangha* during the cataclysmic three years was not for want of effort by Burmese and Japanese alike. Rather the lack of immediate change was due to Buddhism's long time horizon of 2,500 years historically, and countless ages, worlds without beginning or end in cosmic terms. Whatever new features can be found in the Buddhism of independent Burma are either the fruition of long term change begun under British colonial rule, or the reaction to that one hundred year foreign interlude.

In attempting to employ the *sangha* in government activities the Japanese received a firm rebuff. On the verbal level they were more successful, since the Maha Sangha charter provided that all *pongyis* should cooperate with the Japanese-backed government. The victory was hollow because the Maha Sangha supported government policies it approved on religious grounds, such as the ban on cattle slaughter but otherwise consistently gave less support to the government than did the non-clerical organizations, such as the National Service Organization and the Dobama party.

The tradition of *sangha* involvement in politics had been at the top of the order when the *thathanabaing* advised the king on religious matters, interceded with him in criminal cases, or even criticised his overweening pride. These traditional forms of peaceful protest were not available to the *sangha* during the Japanese occupation since the "monarch" was neither sovereign nor strictly Buddhist. Apparently *pongyis* never attempted to use their powers of moral suasion on the foreign authorities, maintaining the same distance from the Buddhist Japanese as from the Christian English.

Individual *pongyis* did not enter into the resistance against the Japanese in the numbers or with the vigor that they had in previous uprisings against the British. So little is known of *pongyi* participation in the Third Anglo-Burmese War or in the Saya San rebellion that any number of factors might account for the difference. Was the duration of the anti-British uprisings crucial, with *pongyis* entering only after the initial stage? The resistance, lasting two months, may not have provided time for *pongyis* to become sufficiently aroused to leave the monastery. In the earlier uprisings did the lay leaders, each at the head of his own band, actively

seek *pongyi* recruits? If so, what a contrast to the desire of the central resistance leader to exclude *pongyis* from politics. A factor which probably weighs as heavily as any is that despite all grievances against the Japanese, *pongyis* saw them as fellow Buddhists. *Pongyis* probably considered them less threatening to Theravada Buddhism than the totally alien British. A final factor is that the lack of *pongyi* leadership in the resistance may be part of a long term trend in which laymen are displacing *pongyis* from leadership across the board. To determine this point, longitudinal studies should be made of the informal influence of *pongyis* as well as the degree and quality of their political involvement.

The persistence of Burmese Buddhism unchanged in any important respect by the Japanese occupation may be an example of a general phenomenon that religion changes more slowly than other spheres of life. Burmese conceive of their religion as changeless, identical with the Buddhism that Gotama Buddha preached. The intellectual endeavors of the *pongyis* are still bounded by textual commentaries dating from the sixth century.⁸² A *pongyi's* moral worth is still judged as he circumscribes his actions in strict accordance with the ancient Vinaya Pitāka. The war period itself was a particularly inopportune time for change, since through its very stability a religion affords shelter to the storm tossed. The major religious innovation of the period, the reorganization of the *sangha* into the Maha Sangha, was initiated by government. This impetus for change from outside the *sangha* was in the tradition by which kings had reformed the order, not the *sayadaws* themselves. However, this reform did not take hold, failing to outlast the reign which had initiated it.

In postwar Burma the new status of Buddhism can in no way be attributed to the Japanese occupation, but was a reaction to a century of British domination. As in traditional Burma the initiative for religious change came from the ruler. U Nu restored the sacred foundation to the Burmese state and elevated religious goals as the ultimate goals of the state.⁸³ Perhaps the climate of independence was ripe for a revival of Buddhist underpinnings for the state, but U Nu himself contributed immensely to this climate. His genuine piety expressed in meditation, political speeches in the style of religious exhortation, and innumerable acts of merit making, convinced ordinary people of his exceptional sanctity. They honored him with the faith that he was a future Buddha, thus placing their new ruler in the best tradition of Burmese kings.

A national tragedy had brought U Nu to the Premiership when the cabinet including the architect of independence was assassinated. Had Aung San been Prime Minister it is doubtful if the state would have gained its sacral character. He had shared the view of some Burmese

⁸² Sarkisyanz, p. 218,

⁸³ See Sarkisyanz, especially chs. 25-25.

Communists that *pongyis* were an economic drain on society. In a war-time speech he had regretted that Burma had so many *pongyis* since they neither worked nor reproduced children. He concluded,

The surplus *pongyis* and nuns must be told to leave the order so that the population problem will be solved.⁸⁴

After the war Aung San muted his criticism, but continued to insist on the strict separation of religion from affairs of state.

The people's acceptance of U Nu as the protector of Buddhism enabled him to create a new religious role for the state, which popular rejection had denied Dr. Ba Maw. However, U Nu, like Dr. Ba Maw before him was unable to prod *pongyis* into new social responsibilities. He could not interest more than a handful in social service work among the laity. His state religion bill did provide that government schools could be housed in monasteries. This might in time have opened monasteries to modern educational thought had not the army coup swept away the constitution, including the state religion amendment.

U Nu did initiate an organization of *sayadaws* in 1955, the All Burma Presiding Monks' Association. His purpose had been to secure *sayadaw* support for the Sixth Buddhist Synod. This organization came into conflict with the Yahanbyu Association, the young monks' association which had survived the war and independence still headed by the same individual who had founded it in 1938. After the split in the ruling AFPFL party the Presiding Monks supported U Nu's faction, while the Yahanbyu supported the other. This situation obviously drew no inspiration from the wartime Maha Sangha. Research into the character of *pongyi* politics is necessary to determine whether the 1958 configuration of *pongyi* factions backing separate political parties is in the same pattern as the *pongyi* factions and parties immediately before the war.

Plus ça change.—After the Burmese army took over the government in 1958 it utilized a technique for gaining popularity that had been well-worn during the Japanese occupation. The army became the protector of Buddhism. The Psychological Warfare Department prepared an illustrated pamphlet, *Dhammantaraya* [Buddhism in Danger], portraying the menace of Communism. The surge of popular wrath against the Burmese Communists brought thousands of *pongyis* and laymen together in mass meetings to denounce these desecrators. Ironically the army was showing its virtue in defending Buddhism at a time when the Communists had never been weaker. Of course the army had not previously taken the reigns of government and thus had not felt so strongly the need for widespread popular support.

⁸⁴ Address, printed in the *Modern Education Course during the Thadingyut Holidays*, 1942, vol. 2, p. 104.

Buddhism remains the firmest foundation for any government of Burma. Future governments will have to handle *pongyis* with utmost tact, as did the Japanese. As the World War II recedes into the past, the political upheaval of those years can be better seen in Buddhist perspective—but one of the countless changes in this world of impermanence.