

Two Compilers of Myanmar History and their Chronicles

Thaw Kaung*

Introduction

From about the second or third decade of the 18th century to mid-19th century, a profusion of historical works were compiled in Myanmar. It was the great age of Myanmar historical writing. Myint Swe¹ lists (9) works for the late 18th century and (12) works for the early 19th century. Victor Lieberman, in a fascinating new book², has also written of the popularization of historical and legal texts in Myanmar from around 1711. With cultural integration in early 18th century Myanmar, there was wider literacy, and laymen, not monks, began to dominate the transmission of information scene.

The first real chronicle of Myanmar was written in prose by U Kala (c. 1678–1738), the *Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi* (The Great Chronicle)³, probably in the third decade of the 18th century. To cite Victor Lieberman "After U Kala came a rain of [imperial] chronicles" including both private and official histories, by laymen as well as monks⁴.

On 3rd May 1829 King Bagyidaw (1819-1837) appointed a committee of thirteen "learned monks, learned Brahmans [Punnas] and

* Member, Myanmar Historical Commission.

1. Myint Swe. "Kyan-u Nidan" [Introduction] to *Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu. Twin-thin Myanmar Yazawin-thit*. Yangon: Min Yazar Sar-oke Taik, 1968. p. na-nge (န) to na-gyi (ဇ)
2. Victor Lieberman. *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c 800-1830* . . . Cambridge: University Press, 2003. Vol. 1. p. 198.
3. U Kala. *Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*; edited by Saya Pwa. Yangon: Burma Research Society at Pyi-gyi Mandaing Press: Vol. 1, 1926. Vol. 2, 1932.
4. Victor. Lieberman. *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*. . . 2003. Vol. 1. p. 198. Lieberman was quoting Myint Swe who used the term "rain of chronicles".

learned ministers” and other officials to compile an official chronicle of Myanmar kings from records available at the Royal Court. This committee produced the first *Hman-nan Yazawin-daw-gyi*, *the Glass Palace Chronicle*, which relied heavily for its early parts on U Kala, though some statements of this author were rejected by the Committee¹. For the later part, there were the Court Records especially from the establishment of the Konbaung Dynasty in 1752. This Committee was the equivalent of our present Myanmar Historical Commission formed after Independence on 26th January 1955 by Prime Minister U Nu, and placed directly under the P. M. in its earlier years, though now we are under the Ministry of Education with the Minister as Chairman.

The Burma Research Society established in 1910 had a programme to publish, in printed book-form, important texts from Myanmar palm-leaf and parabaik paper manuscripts. BRS in 1926 published vol. 1 of U Kala's *Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*, followed by vol. 2 in 1932. This text was the first standard chronicle of Myanmar covering all periods of history from the earliest times to the author's time.

The *Hman-nan Yazawin-daw-gyi* had also been published in book form much earlier, vol. 1 in 1883 and vol. 2 in 1884 by the order of King Thibaw at the Royal Palace Press and reprinted several times².

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1. A well-known example is U Kala's identification of Chiang Mai with Suvanna Bhumi; the compilers of *Hman-nan* rejected this and stated that Thaton in Lower Myanmar was Suvanna Bhumi.
 2. Zeya. “Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi”, in the author's *Hmat-tan-win Bama a-yei a-khin mya*; Yangon: Gyo Pyu Sarpay [1965?] p. 10.

Two Lesser Known Chronicles

Two important standard Myanmar chronicles remained on palm-leaf and paper manuscripts and could be used only by a few scholars who had access to rare manuscript collections of the National Library, the Universities Central Library and a few other special libraries. These two chronicles were (1) *Maha Yazawin-thit* (the Great New Chronicle), compiled by Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu (1726-1806) and (2) the *Maha Yazawin-kyaw* (the Great "Celebrated" Chronicle) of the Mon-ywe Sayadaw (1766-1835).

The Burma Research Society at its Executive Committee Meeting on 1st February 1940 decided to publish the Twin-thin Taik-wun's *Maha Yazawin-thit*, edited by U Hla Aung, Lecturer in the Burmese-Pali Department of University College, University of Rangoon. Unfortunately, this did not materialize due to the upheaval caused by the Second World War and the edited manuscript was lost during the Japanese Occupation Period, 1943-1945.

After the Second World War, historians like Dr. Than Tun again tried to publish both the Twin-thin *Maha Yazawin-thit* and the Mon-ywe *Maha Yazawin-kyaw*, through the Text Publication Programme of the Burma Research Society. As publisher of the BRS Text Publication Programme for the last fifteen years of its existence, the author of this paper also tried to get these two important texts published, but the Society did not have sufficient funds to do so up to the end of 1980 when it was dissolved by the BSPP government.

But I continued with my efforts and was successful in obtaining funding from the Myat Mi-gin Wuntha-rakheta Foundation in 1997¹ to publish under the auspices of the Universities Historical Research Centre, volumes (2) and (3) of the *Maha Yazawin-thit*, by Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu. Volume (1) of the *Maha Yazawin-thit* had been published in 1968 by the Mingala Printing Press of Yangon with a useful introduction by the owner U Myint Swe, who inserted the word "Myanmar" in the title, though it is not found on the existing manuscript texts.²

Volume (2) of *Maha Yazawin-thit* covered the Toungoo Period (1531-1609) and was edited by Professor Dr. Kyaw Win of the History Department of Yangon University, with a (65) pages introduction by the editor. There is an overlap of about 20 pages between vols. (1) and (2), because vol. 1 ended with the early years of the Toungoo Dynasty up to the death of Min-gyi Nyo in AD 1530, while vol.2 began around AD 1279 with the establishment of Toungoo city. This volume ended in AD 1609.

Volume (3) of the *Maha Yazawin-thit* is on the Nyaung-yan Period (1597-1752) and was edited by the former Deputy Director-General of the Universities Historical Research Department, U Thein Hlaing.

Myat Migin Foundation is willing to fund a further Vol. (4) of the *Maha Yazawin-thit*; it is probably the text of what is at present known as

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1. We owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Myo Than Tyn, President of this Foundation for providing the necessary funding, to get these important historical texts published.
 2. This has resulted in Victor Lieberman's statement "the Twin- thin- taik- wun, whose 1798 chronicle may have been the first to put Burma" "*(myan-ma)*" in its title". Vols.(2) and (3) edited under the guidance of Dr. Than Tun do not have "Myanmar" in the titles. In fact none of the main chronicles up to U Maung Maung Tin's *Konbaung- set Maha Yazawin-win-daw-gyi* have "Myanmar" in their titles.

the *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon*, by Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu, though up to now no separate manuscript for the Alaungpaya Period (1752-1760) has been positive identified as a continuation of the *Maha Yazawin-thit*. The late Senior Researcher of the Myanmar Historical Commission, Dr. Yi Yi, was of the opinion that the early versions of the *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon* published by the Okkalapa Press and the Hanthawaddy Press¹ are actually the last part of the *Maha Yazawin-thit*.² More research needs to be carried out to disentangle the various texts and conclusively identify the authorship of the three *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon kyan*.

As for the Mon-ywe *Maha Yazawin-kyaw*, the important parts of the text has been edited under the guidance of Dr. Than Tun, by Dr. Toe Hla, the Deputy Director-General of the Universities Historical Research Centre over thirty years ago in 1970 for the Bodawpaya (Badon Min)'s reign, and by U Maung Maung Khine in 1976 for the Alaungpaya's reign, as M. A. in History theses, but up to now none of the volumes have been published in book form. The rest of the chronicle is on palm-leaf and paper manuscripts. We are now trying to get the edited texts published.

Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu's Life and Works

Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu was born in M. E. 1088 (AD 1726)³ during the reign of the Myanmar King Tanin-ga-nway (1714-1733) of the Nyaungyan Dynasty (1597-1752). His birthplace was the

1. *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon*. 1st ed. Yangon: Okkalapa Press, 1883. Also 2nd ed. Yangon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1900, and later editions.

2 Dr. Yi Yi. "Ayedawbon kyan mya pyat-thana," in *Kantha Sein-lei sardan mya*. Yangon: Min Hla Sarpay, 1969. p. 45.

3. This date was given by the author himself in the concluding part of his *Maha Zanetka Pyo*. For a fuller life of Twin-thin see Bohmu Ba Thaug (Maung Thuta). *Sarsodaw-mya athtokepatti*. . . 5th ed. rev. by U Khin Aye. Yangon: Yarpyi Saroke Taik (distributor); Lawka Sarpay (publisher), 2002. p. 152-154.

village of Maung Htaung near Monywa in the present-day Sagaing Division of Upper Myanmar. He was named Tun Nyo, and when he became a novice and later at age twenty, a Buddhist monk, he received the title Shin Lingathara (Lingasara). His writing career started while he was a monk and he wrote poetry (*pyo* poems mainly),¹ some *dhammathat* (customary law)² texts and he made a name in orthography with his *Wibazza-pita* text to differentiate spellings of similar words. His nephew U Aw (1736-1771), who was ten years younger, also achieved fame at the early Konbaung Court for his poetry and especially for his orthographic work *Kawi-letkhana that-pon kyan*, written at the young age of (15) under the guidance and teaching of Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu.

Twin-thin Taik-wun had his basic education in the Buddhist monastery of his village like most men of his time, but he went on to learn the art of prosody and rhetoric and could write superb poetry and give interesting sermons.

He did not, however, reside long in the monastery as a monk; he lasted only about six years. When he was about twenty-six, U Aung Zeya, the Headman of Moksobo Village, not far from Maung Htaung, started to muster men of ability, learning and military prowess to re-take the Myanmar capital of Innwa (Ava) and repulse the Mon invaders from Upper Myanmar. Soon after that time (AD 1752-53) Shin Lingara probably left the Shwekan monastery; he had fallen in love with a

1. e.g. he wrote *Nga-yant Min Pyo*, *Mudu-lakkhana Pyo*, *Mahaw Kyee-tha khan* verses.
 2. e.g. *Manu Dhammathat Shwe-myin Linga*, *Manu Wunnana Dhammathat Linga*, and *Dhammathat Linga*. For criticism of Twin-thin's writings, especially his *pyo* poems see U Pe Maung Tin. *History of Burmese Literature*. . . 5th ed. Yangon: Thudhamawadi Press, 1958. p. 214-224. Also Minthuwan. *Myanmar sarpay pyin-nya-shin Twin-thin Min-gyi*. Yangon: Hnin-oo Lwin Sarpay, 2004.

beautiful young maiden who used to come to listen to his Buddhist sermons with her mother, a devout supporter of the monastery. There is an oral history account written down by Shwe Gaingtha of the young, brilliant monk falling in love with the charming girl, leaving the order, and after getting married the couple travelled together to the capital to find employment under the new Myanmar King Alaungpaya¹, the title that U Aung Zeya assumed on becoming king. This account was later written down on a parabaik, paper notebook manuscript by Dutiya Nawade Wetmasut Myosa (U Nu), a protégé of Maha Sithu. This manuscript was found by Shwe Gaingtha in Hsadaung Inn Village, U-yin monastery among the parabaik manuscripts of U Wisara. The lovely *Mudu-lakkana pyo* that Shin Lingara wrote is supposed to be based on his passionate love for the young maiden.

King Alaungpaya recognizing U Tun Nyo's learning assigned him as tutor to his third son, the Badon Prince, who later became the famous King Bodawpaya (1782-1819) the longest reigning king of the Konbaung Dynasty. It was King Bodawpaya who appointed his former teacher as the Twin-thin Taik-wun with the high title of Maha Sithu, after first conferring on him the title of Maha Thinkhayar with the rank of Kyi-wun when the King first ascended the throne in 1782. At the time there were seven Taik-wun in the country, and Maha Sithu was the most powerful out of them all. He was also the most trusted advisor of the King and was like a Minister for the Interior, advising the King, his former pupil, on

1. U Chit Pe. *Twin-thin sar-hso*. Yangon: Yangon Arts and Science University, Myanmar Literature Society, 1975. p. 16-20. See also Nan Nyunt Swe's Foreword to *Twin-thin Min-gyi*, U Tun Nyo's *Mudu-letkhana pyo*. Yangon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1963. p. nga (င) and sa (ဆ).

important matters of state as well as looking after the King's personal matters.

King Bodawpaya in Sakara 1155 (24 July 1793) passed a Royal Order to collect all stone inscriptions from monasteries and pagodas all over his realm and to make new inscriptions for those which had deteriorated.¹ This meant moving the inscriptions to the new capital, Amarapura. Twin-thin Taik-wun, at the time aged (67), was placed in charge of this Royal Project together with the Thet-pan Atwin-wun. The duty to collect stone inscriptions, to study them, and make copies whenever necessary, sometimes making some faint or illegible words more legible and even replacing some difficult to understand obsolete and archaic words with words in current use at the time, took a number of years to carry out.² Hundreds of lithic inscriptions were moved to Amarapura; they are now housed in sheds erected by the Archaeology Department on the eastern and western sides of the Maha Muni Pagoda, now a part of Mandalay, and also some in the Mandalay Palace compound.

The Royal Project to collect and study the stone inscriptions was for the purpose of re-demarcating the religious lands to differentiate glebe lands from taxable lands, but for Twin-thin Taik Wun it most probably made him keenly interested in Myanmar history. He soon found that some of the events and dates in the chronicles like U Kala's *Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*, were at variance with contemporary records inscribed on stone.

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1. Maung Maung Tin (KSM). *Konbaungset Maha Yazawin-Gyi*. . . 4th ed. Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre, 2004. vol. 2, p. 77.
 2. Dr. Than Tun. "Manuha Inscription", in *Missing Links in Myanma Chronicles*. Yangon: Mon-ywei Sarpay, 2003. p. 1-2 (English section).

He would have reported this to the King, for the King ordered him to compile" a new chronicle of the realm which would be more in accord with the stone inscriptions"¹. Professor of History Dr. Kyaw Win of Yangon University gives the date for the *Maha Yazawin-thit* as 1780,² but this seems to be too early because the collection of the stone inscriptions started only in July 1793. Professor Victor Lieberman's date for this history is 1798³ and this would be more acceptable because the collection of the inscriptions was abandoned after a few years, and the compilation by Twin-thin of the New Chronicle probably began about that time. U Chit Pe of the Myanmar Department of Yangon University who studied the writings of Maha Sithu and wrote a Masters thesis gives the date for the compilation of the New Chronicle as sometime between 1782 and 1794.⁴

The Twin-thin *Maha Yazawin-thit* is said to be in (15) fasciculus, or parts of a palm-leaf manuscript bundle⁵, but at present only up to fascicule (13) have been found and published. Fascicule (14) is probably one of the two published texts of *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon*⁶ and fascicule

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1. Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu. *Twin-thin Myanmar Yazawin-thit*. Vol. 1. . . 1969. p. 2.
 2. Dr. Kyaw Win in "Editor's Introduction" to Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu. *Maha Yazawin-thit*. Vol. 2. Toungoo Period. Yangon: Daw Myint Myint for UHRC, 1998. p. gu (၇).
 3. Lieberman probably mentioned the year 1798 as it was first given by Prof. U Tin Ohn of Yangon University see Tin Ohn, U. "Modern historical writing in Burmese, 1724-1942," in *Historians of South East Asia*; ed. by D.G.E. Hall. London: Oxford University Press, 1961. p.88.
 4. U Chit Pe. *Twin-thin sar-so*. . . 1975. p. 155.
 5. *Ibid.* p. 155. See also. Dr. Yi Yi. "Ayedawbow Kyan mya pyat-thana" . . . 1969. p. 45.
 6. U Thudathana. *Nyaungan Thathanawin* (Sasanavumsa). Mandalay: Kyi-pwa-yei Press, 1969. p. 42.

(15) has been seen and mentioned only by U Thudathana in his history of the Nyaungan Sasana, and can no longer be traced up to now. The *Maha Yazawin-thit* covered the history of Myanmar from the earliest times to probably the early years of King Bodawpaya's reign. It is especially valuable for recording the period from about 1711 where U Kala's Great Chronicle ended, covering the last years of the Ngaungyan Dynasty which ended in 1752 and for the early years of the Konbaung Dynasty from 1752 to about 1785, though at present the published texts of the *Maha Yazawin-thit* end with the execution of King Maha Dhamma Yaza Dipati in 1754.

Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu passed away in 1806 at the age of 80 while still attending on his king Bodawpaya at Mingun constructing the huge pagoda which was never completed.

Significance of Twin-thin Maha Yazawin-thit

Before Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu wrote his new chronicle, there was only U Kala's chronicle and a few smaller chronicles for different regions and periods like the chronicles of Tagaung, Bagan, Toungoo and so on. U Kala felt that he had to write a kind of explanation, an "Apology" for writing the chronicle, by stating that he wanted to illustrate the Buddhist concept of impermanence, that great kings and queens and those in high positions of power cannot evade death and decay and are eventually reduced to dust. Twin-thin, on the other hand, makes no such "Apology". He even went on to point out the mistakes of the earlier chroniclers, like U Kala, before him, which some devout Buddhists of his time would have regarded as ignoble, because it amounted to

criticizing one's elders, a notion frowned upon by the religion.¹ But Professor U Pe Maung Tin comments that in spite of being most critical, Twin-thin's *New Chronicle* "with all its criticisms, on the whole follows the *Great Chronicle* of [U Kala]"²

The late Dr. Yi Yi, a prominent researcher of the Myanmar Historical Commission, points out that though the *New Chronicle* was written at the request of the king, it was not recognized as an official history.³ She praises Maha Sithu for his bold thinking and sound reflections and for being one of the first Myanmar historians to use source materials, especially lithic inscriptions to support his statements. She, therefore, ranks the *Maha Yazawin-thit* as one of the best chronicles of the early Konbaung period.⁴ Maha Sithu not only used inscriptions, but also contemporary records and the writings of other authors. He would not spare any author if he thought that the writing was incorrect, and was severe in his criticisms. Dr. Yi Yi thought that the compilers of the *Hman-nan Yazawin-daw-gyi*, twenty-one years after Maha Sithu's death, still frowned upon the *Maha Yazawin-thit* as being too harsh in its comments,

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1. Dr. Than Tun. *Myanmar Yazawin Sardan*. No. 1. "Nidan" [Introduction]. Mandalay: Arts and Science University, History Department [1980?] Mimeographed. p. khe (၈)
 2. U Pe Maung Tin. "Introduction", *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*. Yangon: Burma Research Society at the Rangoon University Press, 1960 (reprint). p. xvii. 1st pub. 1923.
 3. Dr. Yi Yi. "A Bibliographical essay on the Burmese sources for the history of the Konbaung Period, 1752-1885" *Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission*, vol.III (1963) p. 152-153.
 4. Dr. Yi Yi. "Konbaung-khit hnint nauk khit yazawin kyan mya", in *Seinban Myaing sardan hnint sit-tan*. Yangon : U Nyunt Htay, 1965. p. 247-250. A paper written by Dr. Yi Yi in 1961. Maha Sithu is supposed to have used over 1,000 inscriptions for his chronicle.

and therefore, did not use it much for their compilation.¹ But this is not entirely true as Prof. Tun Aung Chain (Secretary to the Myanmar Historical Commission), one of the best historians in Myanmar today, has pointed out in a recent article. The Hman-nan Royal Commission in writing about the late Nyaung-yan period chose to base itself on the *Maha Yazawin-thit*, rather than on the *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon*,² though in Dr. Yi Yi's opinion both texts were written by Maha Sithu.

Professor Pe Maung Tin praises the New Chronicle of Twin-thin as a work of literary merit, stating that Twin-thin had, "the splendid opportunity of checking the chronicles by means of inscriptions. And as he was a scholar well versed in other branches of learning also, his New Chronicle is a welcome addition to the literature of the chronicles,"³

Mon-ywe Sayadaw's Life and Works

Mon-ywe Sayadaw was born at the village of Mon-ywe (also called Kyay-mon village) in 1766. He was forty years younger than Twin-thin Taik-wun, and unlike Twin-thin, he spent nearly all his life, from age fifteen, in the seclusion of Buddhist monasteries, until he died in 1835 aged 69.⁴ His parents named him Maung Noe and when he became a novice his title was Ariya-wuntha (Ariya-vumsa) to which was added the

1 *Ibid.* p. 156.

2. U Tun Aung Chain. "Chronicling the Late Nyaungyan", *Myanmar Historical Research Journal*, no. 14 (Dec. 2004) p. 9. This paper should be consulted for insightful comments on the *Maha Yazawin-thit* and other contemporary Myanmar chronicles and historical texts.

3. U Pe Maung Tin. "Introduction", *The Glass Palace Chronicle*. . . 1960 (reprint). p. xvi.

4. Bohmu Ba Thaug (Maung Thuta). *Sasodaw-mya athtokepatti*...5th ed. 2002. p. 195-197. Note that the entry for the Mon-ywe Sayadaw has the date of death wrongly printed as Myanmar Era 1190; it should be 1196 as shown on p. 197.

title Adicca-yanthi (Adicca-ramsi) when he became a monk at age twenty. But because he became head abbot of the Ledat Maha Zetawun Monastery at Mon-ywe, he was popularly known as the Mon-ywe Sayadaw.

Like Twin-thin, he was also from the same area near Monywa, and he also had his education in the local monastery, but continued to study and write many *pyo* poems, travelling to monasteries in Hsalin, Hsaton, Badon and Monywa to study under learned monks. By age (27) he had become one of the most learned monks himself. King Bagyidaw (1819-1837), son of Bodawpaya under whom Twin-thin served, hearing of his learning both in religious and secular affairs, invited him to the newly rebuilt capital at Innwa (Ava) where the Mingala Bon-tha brick monastery, near the Hti-hlaing Shin Pagoda, was specially built for him to reside in. The King gave him a special title “Einda-waziyabi-lingara Thiri-daza Maha Dhamma Yazadi-yaza-guru”, with the position of a royal advisor much revered by the King and the Royal Family.¹

The Sayadaw was assigned to advise the King’s delegation sent to discuss with the British at the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826. A few years later the King appointed the Sayadaw on 3rd May 1829² to head the Royal Historical Commission which was given the task of compiling the First *Hman-nan Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*. He also wrote a standard chronicle himself entitled *Yazeinda Yazawaya-mandani Yazawin*, or *Maha Yazawin-kyaw* (popularly known as the *Mon-ywe Yazawin*) and also a few other historical texts like *Maha Yazawin Than-*

1. *Ibid.* p. 196.

2. *Hman-nan...* 1956 (reprint). Vol.1.p.23.

khate, and *Lakkhana-Rama Yazawin* which is probably a Ramayana text in Myanmar.¹ The Mon-ywe Sayadaw made a significant contribution to religious history because he compiled an important concise history of the Buddhist sasana, concentrating on the history of pagodas (*chedis*) in Myanmar, entitled *Chediya kahta*, or *Yazawin-chote*²

The Mon-ywe Sayadaw who compiled these historical texts was actually the Second Mon-ywe Sayadaw, because his mentor the First Mon-ywe Sayadaw, U Wisitta-yama, presided over the Maha Zetawun Monastery at Mon-ywe, until 1802 when he passed away. This First Sayadaw also wrote some literary works³. Like Twin-thin, the Mon-ywe Sayadaw was over 60 (actually 63) when he was entrusted by the King to compile the first official chronicle, the *Hman-nan Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*, together with twelve others. The *Hman-nan* has been the most widely used Myanmar Chronicle up to the present by Myanmar as well as scholars from other countries.

We can see how the *Hman-nan* was compiled with the Mon-ywe Saza acting as a kind of Chairman of the Royal Historical Commission of thirteen, in an article by the bibliophile, and a collector and lover of

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1. Hla Thamain. *Gandawin pokeko-gyaw-mya athtokepatti baung-choke*. Yangon: Hanthawaddy, 1961. p. 60-61. For criticism of the Mon-ywe Sayadaw's writings see U Pe Maung Tin. *History of Burmese Literature . . .* 5th ed. 1958. p. 265-273.
 2. Mon-ywe Sayadaw (Ariya-wuntha Adicca-yanthi). *Chediya kahta myi-thaw Yazawin-chote*. [Sagaing]: Theda-gu Buddhist University, Research and Publication Department, 2003. Privately printed for the Buddhist University.
 3. U Po Kyaw Myint (Myan-sar-gon). "Pahtama Mon-ywe Maha Zetawun Sayadaw", in the author's *Sarpay tawun*. Yangon: Aung Mye Sarpay, 1967. p. 69-81. See also this author's articles "Mon-ywe Zetawun Kyaung-daw, *ibid* p. 156-168 and. "Mon-ywe Sayadaw hnint Kyi-gan Shin-gyi", *ibid*. p. 179-188, for accounts of the Second Mon-ywe Sayadaw.

books, writer Zeya. According to records seen by Zeya, the Mon-ywe Sayadaw and the Thaw-ka-pin Sayadaw were given the task of scrutinizing the *Maha Yazawin-thit* of Twin-thin Taik-wun, and earlier histories written in verse. They "acted as consulting editors."¹

The two Sayadaws were assisted by Minister Maha Dhamma Thingyan (former Maung Htaung Sayadaw) who also checked the *Maha Yazawin-thit* for historical sources, and weighed the statements of Twin-thin Taik-wun and decided what to accept and what to reject in the text of the *Hman-nan*. The Minsu Wun-gyi Minister U Yauk and Thandawsint U Chain scrutinized the twelve old *eigyin* poems, the nine earlier yazawin chronicles and the five *ayedawbon* texts to get the correct historical facts. The other officials of the Commission were recorders and those who made the drafts, like Sayei-gyi U Hpyaw who helped U Yauk and U Chain, two Ponna Brahmins who checked Nagari and Bengali sources for records of court ceremonies like royal coronations, ceremonies for building new royal palaces, together with sources from inscriptions, and so on.²

The Mon-ywe Sayadaw was compiling his own Chronicle the *Maha Yazawin-kyaw* at the same time. He probably completed this chronicle by about 1831³ at about the same time as the *Hman-nan*; it covered the history of Myanmar from the earliest times to probably the early years of his own life. He passed away a few years later in 1835.

1. U Tin Ohn. "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724-1942" ... 1961. p.88.

2. Zeya. "Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi," in the author's *Hmat-tan-win Bama a-yei a- khin mya*. Yangon: Gyo Phyu Sarpay, [1965?] p. 3-4.

3. There is a handwritten copy made in 1960 under the supervision of Dr. Than Tun for the Burma Historical Commission Library (Accession no. R 7945) whose original copying date for the palm-leaf manuscript was 1831. The palm-leaf mss. from which it was copied used to be in the Mon-ywe Monastery.

Significance of Mon-ywe Sayadaw's Maha Yazawin-kyaw

For most parts of the *Maha Yazawin-kyaw*, the Mon-ywe Sayadaw did not differ much from the *Hman-nan*¹, which in turn had been based mainly on U Kala's *Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*, up to the latter part of the Nyaungyan Period, i.e. up to about AD. 1711. The Court Records of the Nyaungyan kings were probably lost when the Royal Palace at Innwa was torched by the invaders from Hanthawaddy in 1752. But even as early as 1810, the Sayadaw had already compiled the regnal dates of Myanmar kings up to the early Konbaung Dynasty.² The Sayadaw, being a meticulous scholar, had studied many inscriptions and was well aware of the discrepancies between traditional dates from the chronicles and those found in inscriptions. He stated that the dates he compiled were the best, at least for his time, but knowing well that later scholars might be able to improve on his compilation.

While serving on the Royal Commission to compile the *Hman-nan*, the Mon-ywe Sayadaw disagreed on some important points in recording and interpretation of certain events, assessments of the roles played by certain kings and high officials and so on. The Sayadaw must have noted these down and later in his own chronicle given his own interpretations and assessments. He also wanted to record in more detail events which took place around Mon-ywe as he had much attachment to

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1. Dr. Yi Yi. "Konbaung-khit hnint nauk khit yazawin kyan mya," . . . p. 252. The concept of plagiarism was not well defined or observed in the writing of these chronicles.
 2. U Tet Htoot. "The nature of the Burmese Chronicles " *in* *Historians of South East Asia*; ed-by D. G. E. Hall London: Oxford University Press, 1961. p. 54.

his birthplace, and he also put in more information about officials and other elites who were from this area.

To give a few concrete examples, the Mon-ywe Sayadaw did not write disparaging remarks about King Maha Dhamma-yaza Dipati (1733-1752), the last king of the Nyaungyan Dynasty, who was taken captive to Hanthawaddy; in fact he defended the King's conduct. This was in sharp contrast to the *Hman-nan* where much blame was heaped on the King for being unable to defend and repulse the invasion from the Mon land of Lower Myanmar.¹ The Sayadaw has given us in his chronicle interesting details about Letwe Nawrahta who wrote an important *Ayedawbon kyan* on Alaungpaya. Letwe Nawrahta's and the Mon-ywe Sayadaw's lives overlapped by (33) years, and since they both served the King and the Royal court as advisors, they probably knew each other.

The Sayadaw also gave in his Chronicle some further details than what was included in the *Hman-nan*. For example *Hman-nan* recorded how Alaungpaya conquered and obtained suzerainty over areas to the north of the capital. In *Maha Yazawin-kyaw* we can find details of how Alaungpaya also obtained the loyalty of regions to the south of the capital, especially from around Maung Htaung, Badon, and Mon-ywe, the Sayadaw's own area.² Also there are much more information in the chronicle about religious matters, about pagodas, monasteries and monks.

1. For further details see Maung Maung Khine. "Editor's Note" in postscript to his M.A. thesis, editing the Mon-ywe Sayadaw's *Yazeinda Yazawaya-mandani (khaw)Maha Yazawin-kyaw*. Mandalay: University of Mandalay, 1977. p.431. Unpublished typescript.

2. *Ibid.* p. 432.

Conclusion

Out of the two compilers of standard Myanmar chronicles covered in my paper, Twin-thin Taik-wun Maha Sithu for the first time in Myanmar historical writing made "a serious attempt to check history by means of inscriptions. That the Glass Palace Chronicle quarrels with some of its decisions does not signify that they are wrong."¹ He was ahead of his times; "he had such a scientific outlook that his writing would do credit to a modern historian".²

The Mon-ywe Sayadaw also had the courage to differ on certain important points with the Royal Historical Commission appointed by an autocratic king to compile an official history of the realm. He then produced his own Chronicle and bravely stated his divergent views.

We as Members of the Myanmar Historical Commission, celebrating our (50) years of existence, still need to produce a standard history of our country, on modern scientific lines, based on inscriptions, on chronicles including the two lesser used chronicles mentioned in this paper, and on other writings. We should emulate the two compilers of Myanmar history from early 18th century and try to "recount the past with impartiality," in consonance with the seal and motto of our Commission.

1. Pe Maung Tin. "Introduction", *The Glass Palace Chronicle* . . . 1960 (reprint). p. xvii.

2. Dr. Yi Yi. "A Bibliographical essay on the Burmese Sources 1752-1885. . . 1963. p. 152.

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