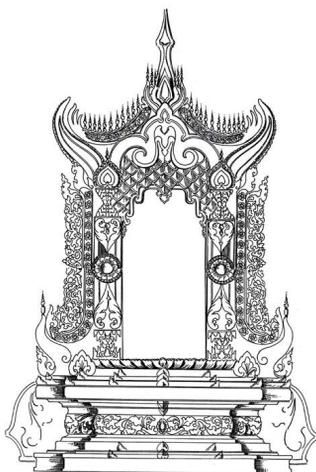


# *The Journal of Burma Studies*



*Volume 9*

*2004*



*Special Issue*

In Homage to  
*U Pe Maung Tin*

*Featuring Articles by:*

*Anna Allott*

*Denise Bernot*

*Tilman Frasch*

*Patricia Herbert*

*Jacques Leider*

*Alan Saw U*

*U Tun Aung Chain*

*The Journal of Burma Studies*  
Volume 9  
2004

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The Center for Southeast Asian Studies  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, Illinois 60115 USA  
ISSN # 1094-799X

*The Journal of Burma Studies* is an annual scholarly journal jointly sponsored by the Burma Studies Group (Association for Asian Studies), the Center for Burma Studies (Northern Illinois University), and Northern Illinois University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

Articles are refereed by professional peers. For Submission Guidelines, please see our website: <http://www.niu.edu/cseas/seap/Submissions.htm> or contact The Editor, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115. *E-mail*: [seapeditor@niu.edu](mailto:seapeditor@niu.edu)

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For abstracts of forthcoming articles, visit *The Journal of Burma Studies* website at: <http://www.niu.edu/cseas/seap/jbs.html>

*The Journal of Burma Studies* will be abstracted or indexed in the following: *America: History and Life*; *Bibliography of Asian Studies*; *Historical Abstracts*; *MLA International Bibliography*.

**THE JOURNAL OF BURMA STUDIES**  
**VOLUME 9**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Anna Allott\*

This volume of the *Journal of Burma Studies* originates from a symposium held in September 1998 at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, to honor the achievements of U Pe Maung Tin. The meeting was organized by his youngest daughter, Daw Tin Tin Myaing (Brenda Stanley); it brought together scholars and former pupils from Burma, England, France, Germany, and Japan. The turbulent year of 1988 should have seen the celebration of the centenary of his birth, but such a celebration only became possible ten years later. Some of the papers prepared for the 1998 symposium, revised and edited, are collected here, together with one by a leading Burmese historian, published in Burma in 1999.

U Pe Maung Tin was the most eminent Burmese scholar of his time and one who pioneered the study of Burmese language, literature, and history in the newly founded University of Rangoon. He was a Christian from birth, yet early on in his career he mastered Pali, the language of Buddhism, and demonstrated an exceptional ability to translate complex Pali texts into fluent English and to interpret Buddhist doctrine to western scholars. Throughout his life he was a stimulating teacher, challenging his students to outdo him in their studies. And he did much to make the Burma Research Society and its journal one of the best of its kind in Southeast Asia.

It is a great pleasure to have been asked to be guest editor of this volume as it gives me the opportunity to put on record my own personal experience of working with the great teacher—Hsaya-gyi—more than 50 years ago. As a beginning student of Burmese language and literature, I was immensely privileged at the age of twenty-three to have been given three hours a week of personal tuition by U Pe Maung Tin from

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November 1953 to January 1954. He had recently written (see U Pe Maung Tin bibliography, this volume, no. 158) a book on Burmese syntax, which had just been reprinted in 15,000 copies for use in schools. I came fresh from the Department of Linguistics at the School of Oriental and African Studies with the latest ideas for the analysis and description of Burmese grammar. As I recorded in my diary, we spent most of the time in amicable discussion and argument about the best way to describe Burmese grammar.

Although Hsaya-gyi's approach to grammatical description was greatly influenced by Pali and English grammar, his inquiring mind was fully open to newer methods of linguistic analysis. When, in March 1954, the Burma Research Society held a seminar in Rangoon on the relatively unfamiliar topic of linguistics, U Pe Maung Tin took part enthusiastically and himself read a paper, "Some Features of the Burmese Language" (see this volume, Allott; Bernot).

My article gives an outline of U Pe Maung Tin's life and work as a Pali scholar, lifelong student of and promoter of Burmese language and literature, translator, historian, linguist, phonetician, teacher, and editor. It also provides a guide to some publications in Burma, in Burmese and English, containing tributes to U Pe Maung Tin by many former colleagues and pupils at two further symposia held in Rangoon in December 1998.

The extensive bibliography compiled by Patricia Herbert in this volume makes clear his prodigious output in Burmese and English over the course of a lifetime of writing from age 23 to age 84. As editor of the *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, he made regular reviews one of its most important features. His first review of the *Report of the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey* appeared in 1913 (see no. 32 in Herbert's bibliography, this volume), and of the *Journal of the Pali Text Society* in 1915 (see no. 40). His early interest in Burmese philology is shown in no. 37, which is a 30-page study of Burmese archaic words and expressions with English definitions. However, far from considering that only

Pali-related, serious academic topics should appear in the *JBR*, U Pe Maung Tin began a series of short articles on Burmese ghosts (nos. 14, 15, 25) and later a discussion on Burmese proverbs (nos. 26, 27, 36). By 1917 he had decided that the *JBR* should also deal more generally with Burmese literature, and in an important editorial survey of Burmese literature, "The Burmese Novel" (no. 51), he announced that there would be regular reviews of contemporary Burmese novels. The first of these reviews, which appeared in 1918 and discusses what is generally considered to be the first Burmese novel published in 1904, is the only review that seems to have been noted by later historians of Burmese literature (see comment to no. 61). What is important is that these reviews, with their many witty and humorous comments, introduced readers to the possibility of writing critically about contemporary Burmese fiction as well as about more scholarly topics.

Reading through the more than 200 items listed in Herbert's bibliography, together with her illuminating comments, reveals the boundless range of U Pe Maung Tin's interests as well as the extent of his scholarship. He wrote the first book on Burmese phonetics (no. 95). He edited, together with G.H. Luce, five magnificent volumes of *Inscriptions of Burma* (see nos. 137 and 179). He also prepared (no. 133) and revised (no. 140) at the request of the Rangoon Zoo a list of Burmese equivalents of the names of the animals in the zoo. He contributed numerous articles in Burmese to the *Burmese Encyclopedia* (MSK) from 1966 onwards. In Dec. 1972, at age eighty-four, not long before his death, he sent a message to a gathering of writers in Upper Burma to be read out on his behalf, making clear his continuing concern for the future of the Burmese language (see no. 221). This bibliography records the truly magnificent legacy of a great scholar and teacher.

The article by Denise Bernot from Paris highlights U Pe Maung Tin's early interest in grammar, linguistics and phonetics; it also reveals how French scholarship on Burmese has been influenced by him. The article by Tilman Frasch from Germany concerns U Pe Maung Tin's early study of the Pali

language. The contribution by Alan Saw U, executive secretary and editor of the Myanmar Christian Literature Society, reveals U Pe Maung Tin's lesser-known role as a leading figure in the Anglican Church in Burma. And the substantial article by Dr. Jacques P. Leider examines an as yet little-studied period of Burmese history; it is included in this volume as the author is following in the footsteps of U Pe Maung Tin who pioneered the academic study of Burmese history through the editing, translating, and interpreting of primary textual sources.

Finally, I am grateful to Professor Tun Aung Chain, a leading contemporary Burmese historian, for allowing us to reprint his thoughtful and illuminating appreciation of U Pe Maung Tin's translation of parts of *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* (see no. 90). It is an article that is truly in the tradition of Hsaya-gyi himself.

**PROFESSOR U PE MAUNG TIN (1888—1973)**

The Life and Work of an Outstanding  
Burmese Scholar

**Anna Allott \***

U Pe Maung Tin was born on 24 April 1888 (သက္ကရာဇ် ၁၂၅၀ခုနှစ် ကဆုန်လပြည့် အင်္ဂါနေ့) in Pauktaw, in the Insein township in the northern part of Rangoon, the fifth child of U Pe and Daw Myaing. U Pe was a Christian, the son of the first national pastor of Henzada Burmese Baptist Church in the delta region of Burma. It seems that U Pe's family had earlier moved from Henzada to Pauktaw because of disagreements with the Henzada group concerning Christian doctrine. Although his parents were Christian, Maung Tin, as he was known when young, started his schooling at a nearby private school run by Saya Koyin-gyi where he was taught basic Buddhist texts such as the Lokaniti and the Mangala Sutta. At age eight he entered the First Standard of the Rangoon Government High School where, at age fourteen, he won a scholarship. Already the quick understanding and powerful memory that were to carry him so far were in evidence.

In 1906, Maung Tin entered Rangoon College (at that time an affiliated college of Calcutta University) to begin his study of Pali; he won the Jardine Prize for coming in first in the Intermediate Arts examination and, at age twenty-one, graduated with an honors degree in Pali. He was then granted special permission to study for an M.A. and to take the exam from Rangoon College instead of having to travel to Calcutta. Almost at once, he started teaching Pali at the college and, barely one year later in July 1912, was promoted to professor of Pali Studies when his teacher, Charles Duroiselle, left the college to become Superintendent of Archaeology. Maung Tin thus became, at age twenty-four, the youngest-ever professor

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of Pali in Rangoon. With the professorship went the post of librarian of the only free library in Rangoon at the time, the Bernard Free Library, which later became the (Myanmar) National Library.

### **THE BURMA RESEARCH SOCIETY**

A meeting held in the Bernard Free Library in 1910 had seen the inauguration of the Burma Research Society, the result of an initiative by a young member of the colonial administration, John Sydenham Furnivall, a Cambridge graduate who had arrived in Burma in 1902. After spending five or six years as a district officer, he conceived the idea of founding a society that would increase the fund of knowledge about Burma available to those interested in learning more. He discussed the idea with a Burmese friend, U May Oung (a lawyer trained in England and a devout Buddhist), with Charles Duroiselle, and with Maung Tin; in March 1910 the project was launched. In 1911 the *Journal of the Burma Research Society* was started with Maung Tin as editor; in fact he contributed his very first article to it.<sup>1</sup> By 1912 he was elected to the post of honorary treasurer.

The aims of the society were the investigation and encouragement of art, science, and literature in relation to Burma and the neighboring countries as well as the fostering of good relations between the British and Burmese communities. The society saw itself as dedicated to the study of all aspects of Burma's culture, history, and religion, and in particular its language and literature; its regular meetings witnessed many spirited debates, and its twice-yearly journal carried valuable research articles and book reviews on Burma for seventy years.

The title of Maung Tin's first article in the *Journal*, "Missionary Burmese," revealed that his interests lay not only with Pali but also with his own language. While acknowledging the achievements of the pioneer missionary-lexicographer Adoniram Judson (1788–1849), he warned contemporary missionaries that they ought to study the best

examples of Burmese literature before attempting to write their sermons, as their infelicitous use of language often aroused laughter rather than piety in their listeners. Although the *Journal* was written largely in English, almost all of the articles on Burmese literature were contributed by Burmese; only one other colonial servant, J. A. Stewart, was sufficiently master of the poetic language to be able to write an illuminating account of contemporary Burmese verse drama (*zatpwe*).<sup>2</sup>

### TRANSLATIONS FROM PALI

As professor of Pali Studies, Maung Tin was in touch with the Pali Text Society of London, and he began collating, editing, and translating into English certain major Buddhist texts for them. In 1916 he began work on the *Atthasalini*, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dhammasangani*, the first book of the Abhidhamma Pitaka. The Pali title is difficult to translate—literally it means “abounding in meaning”—and it was Maung Tin's editor, Mrs. Rhys Davids, who suggested its English title, “The Expositor.” In Burma this work is one of the best-known works of Buddhaghosa and is widely studied by monks.

Rhys Davids writes in her editorial note of June 1920: “It is now fully four years since the translation of this important commentary was begun by Mr. Maung Tin, the representative of the Pali Text Society in Burma. With training and a diploma got at Calcutta University, and a proficiency in Pali, Burmese, and English as well as in Sanskrit and Prakrit, he was anxious to prove himself in the field of the ancient classical literature adopted by his native land. . . . It is no light effort, all who know the text will agree, for a man to have accomplished this pioneer translation of such a work into a foreign tongue. We should look around for a long time to find an Englishman capable of such a task. The translator is hoping soon to renew university study at Oxford.” In his preface to the translation, dated 4 May 1920 and signed Maung Tin, he writes, “I tender my best thanks to Mrs. Rhys Davids who first encouraged me to undertake this difficult work . . . and . . . my thanks are due to a kind friend who has helped me with the verse translations.”<sup>3</sup>

This friend was surely the then teacher of English at Rangoon College, Gordon H. Luce, who had married Maung Tin's younger sister, Ma Ti Ti, in 1915.

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### TIME STUDYING IN ENGLAND

Maung Tin spent four years in England, two at Exeter College in Oxford followed by two years in London attending Dr. C. O. Blagden's lectures on Old Mon inscriptions at the School of Oriental Studies, and reading law at the Inner Temple. At Oxford he studied and translated part one of the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purity*), for which he was awarded the degree of B.Litt in 1922. While studying in London he met the leading phonetician, Daniel Jones, at University College and became interested enough in this relatively new field of language study to prepare a small book on the pronunciation of Burmese, in collaboration with Liliastrom, a colleague of Daniel Jones. He also found time to pay a short visit to Prague where he met the scholar Dr. Winternitz.

### HISTORICAL RESEARCH

So far we have only mentioned Maung Tin's work in the literary and linguistic fields, but a groundbreaking translation published in 1923 revealed him to be also a painstaking historical researcher.<sup>7</sup> The important fifteen-page introduction to *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* tells how Maung Tin had set about the task:

When I began the translation, I followed the example of the compilers (of the *Chronicle*) of examining all available records which bear on history, in the hope of discovering the sources and tracing the development of Burmese historical literature. After collecting as many materials as I could get, I made a detailed comparative study of them, embodying the results in the form of footnotes and appendices to the *Glass Palace Chronicle*. But this apparatus of notes . . . would entail a higher cost of printing than the Burma Research Society was prepared to defray. Besides, the materials I was able to collect were far from complete. . . . For this

reason I have decided to print nothing but the plain translation, divested even of explanatory notes on some words and expressions which might have demanded exposition.

We can wonder whether all this critical material still survives somewhere. It is clear from his introduction that Maung Tin had done almost all the work on this translation before leaving for England in 1920. He found time while working on his study of *The Path of Purity* at Oxford to complete this historical translation and to write the introduction, which is dated 1 November 1922 and signed, for the first time, Pe Maung Tin.<sup>8</sup> Though printed in London, the work is included in the Text Publication Series of the Burma Research Society, which appears to have borne the publication costs and to have fallen considerably into debt by doing so, as we learn from a very informative article by Tun Aung Chain, "U Pe Maung Tin and Luce's *Glass Palace* Revisited," written as part of the 1998 celebrations.<sup>9</sup> The work also carries the name of G. H. Luce, and U Pe Maung Tin makes clear in his introduction their respective contributions:

I thank . . . Mr. G.H. Luce to whose collaboration the translation owes its English style. But I wish to make it quite clear that I alone am responsible for the correctness and final form of the translation.

Only a few primary sources on Burmese history are available in translation. Professor Tun Aung Chain concludes his perceptive reappraisal with the words:

Whatever its faults and blemishes, *The Glass Palace* is still a great monument. And as, seventy-five years on, we have not gone any further along the way in the translation of the *Hmannan*,

or the elucidation of its historiography, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* also stands as a monumental reproach all.

### **A NEW DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RANGOON**

U Pe Maung Tin returned to Burma on 31 August 1924. He was reappointed professor in the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Rangoon and also appointed chief editor of the Text Publication Subcommittee of the Burma Research Society.<sup>10</sup> The scene was set for the first course in Burmese literature to be taught, but there were still almost no texts from which to teach. He was blunt with the members of the committee—if Burmese was to be taught at university level, they must have texts, he said—and ignoring the squabbles about spelling, went ahead with printing.

U Pe Maung Tin's next goal was a course leading to an honors degree; for this he introduced the teaching of Burmese inscriptions from the eleventh through twelfth centuries, modeled on the teaching of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford University. Under the guidance of Charles Duroiselle, and with the help of his brother-in-law Gordon Luce, he visited Pagan and took rubbings of stone inscriptions, thereby initiating the serious study of Burma's earliest written records. Together they published several volumes of inscriptions; the most easily available work is *Selections from the Inscriptions of Pagan*.<sup>11</sup> By 1927 the first student selected for the Burmese course had graduated with honors; he was Sein Tin (pen name, Theik-pan Maung Wa), a talented writer whose refreshingly clear style and new approach to prose writing became very popular in the 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

### **BURMESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT**

U Pe Maung Tin's departure for England in September 1920 meant that he had no involvement in the university student strike (called "boycott" in Burma) in December of that year. The strike was a decisive moment for education in Burma,

because student opposition to the entrance requirements for the newly established University of Rangoon led to the setting up of national schools as rivals to the schools run by the colonial government; in these schools there was special emphasis on the teaching of Burmese. U Pe Maung Tin never involved himself or his department directly in political activity; nevertheless he probably did more than any other Burman to raise the standard of teaching and study of Burmese language and literature in schools and colleges.

Realizing that the standard needed to be raised from the earliest school years, U Pe Maung Tin helped to prepare a series of graded Burmese school readers for use from primary school up to the Fifth Standard. For the senior classes he selected some of the versions of the ten major *jatakas*, which had been rendered into elegant Burmese prose in the eighteenth century. These texts were only replaced by more modern ones in the 1950s.

There were those among the English staff at the university who spoke scornfully of Burmese as a language suited only for the writing of poetry and love letters but completely lacking in modern scientific and technical vocabulary. It was true that much Burmese prose tended to be verbose, but in the newspapers and journals of the 1920s and '30s it was changing and new terms were being coined. U Pe Maung Tin urged all Burmans to use and write in Burmese, and himself headed a committee (in 1928) set up to coin Burmese equivalents for all the bodies and procedures connected with a university.

### **THE BURMA EDUCATION EXTENSION ASSOCIATION**

The Burma Education Extension Association (BEEA), founded by J. S. Furnivall and supported by U Pe Maung Tin and Gordon Luce, was of great importance in encouraging and developing the use of modern Burmese. J. S. Furnivall, who had been closely involved with the founding of the Burma Research Society in 1910, retired from government service in 1924 but stayed on in Burma to found the Burma Book Club and to open the Burma Bookshop. Instead of a book catalogue, he decided to publish,

from February 1925, a monthly periodical called *The World of Books* (WOB). Not content with this, in 1928 he founded the BEEA, with the challenging aim of promoting the intellectual advancement of the country. The BEEA was to encourage the publication of translations into Burmese, establish public libraries, form reading circles and study classes throughout the country, and to publish the monthly *World of Books*, which was to include articles on social problems, political economy, and international affairs as well as modern literary articles and stories. By August 1928 the WOB monthly had been enlarged to include a Burmese section, and in February 1930 it began to appear under the Burmese title *Ganda Lawka*. Through the 1930s this most influential literary periodical was edited by a succession of young Burman writers, pupils of Pe Maung Tin, whose names now read like a roll call of Burma's leading poets and critics.

The year 1928 was also important in the personal life of this incredibly hardworking scholar and teacher for he found time, at the age of forty, to marry Daw Kyi Kyi (Edith), who was thirteen years his junior. During the years 1925–1929 U Pe Maung Tin had been extremely productive; he wrote numerous articles in English, edited or oversaw the editing of seventeen literary texts for the Burma Research Society's publication program, and edited or translated several works for the BEEA, including the Kin-wun Min-gyi's London and Paris Diaries (see Herbert, this volume).

### **THE KHIT-SAN MOVEMENT AND MODERN BURMESE LITERATURE**

Maung Sein Tin (better known as Theik-pan Maung Wa), the first student selected for the Burmese literature degree course, had graduated with honors in 1927; later students taught by U Pe Maung Tin were Maung Thein Han (Zawgyi) and Maung E Maung, who graduated in 1929, and Maung Wun (Minthuwun) and Maung To Aung in 1933. Encouraged by their professor, these five had been writing articles, short stories and poems for college and student union magazines as

well as for the monthly *Ganda Lawka* (WOB). At the suggestion of the committee of the BEEA, U Pe Maung Tin put together a collection of short stories by the five young graduates, which was published in 1934 under the title *Khitsan Ponbyin*, vol. 1.<sup>13</sup>

It is possible to detect a slightly defensive note in U Pe Maung Tin's foreword to the work. He says (in Burmese) that he offers these examples of modern literature by his own pupils to readers as part of a search for a new direction in Burmese literature, and in the belief that they will help it to flourish and develop. He also explains that he has chosen the phrase "khit-san" (ခိတ်ဆန်) to describe these new-style stories, sketches, and poems (in *Khitsan Kabya*, no. 3 of the series), as he wants to try them out on the reading public to see their reaction; they are a sort of experiment. And he has called them "pon-byin" (ပုံပျဉ်း) to indicate that they are tales about ordinary everyday events, to distinguish them from Buddhist stories based on *jataka* and *vattu*. He continues with a stout defense of the academic qualifications of his five pupils, pointing out that each has an honors degree in Burmese and is at present studying for an M.A. He spells out that this means they have made a thorough study of Pali, Burmese, and English as well as Burmese and Mon inscriptions; that they have studied how language changes and the various ways of investigating language change. So, he wonders, is their new style of writing perhaps the result of studying other languages? Finally, U Pe Maung Tin asks the readers to enjoy the best things in the book and to judge it benevolently. It is on record that a few scholars raised objections to the new style, but most readers approved.

Even today there are few Burmese who have not read the "tales" by Theikpan Maung Wa,<sup>14</sup> humorously ironic sketches of the life of a district officer, Maung Lu Aye, working under the colonial regime during the years 1929 to 1936, and based on the author's own experiences. Of the short stories written by Maung Wun, a particular favorite is "You Lied to Me, Uncle Aung," about a child's disappointment when an adult fails to keep his promise to give him a beautiful little

figurine.<sup>15</sup> The attractive quality of these tales was that they were about contemporary life and personal relationships, and were written in shorter sentences and a simpler prose style than had been standard hitherto.

The achievement of the Burma Education Extension Association and of the *Ganda Lawka* (WOB) magazine was to encourage young Burmans to read widely in English for knowledge and ideas, to translate and to enrich and develop their own language, and thus to prepare the ground for the growth of an indigenous critical tradition. U Pe Maung Tin had led the way with his numerous reviews of books in the *JBR*. From 1936 on, articles on classical Burmese poetry by Maung Thein Han (Zawgyi) began to appear in the *Ganda Lawka* (WOB); he would choose previously ignored classical poems, show where the writers had broken new ground, look for the human feelings concealed by the archaic words and complex rhyme schemes so beloved by traditional scholars. Today, more than seventy years after the emergence of the first graduates in Burmese literature under the guidance of U Pe Maung Tin, Zawgyi is looked up to as the country's most respected literary critic and U Wun as perhaps the best-loved poet. By 1938, U Pe Maung Tin was able to gather together the notes and material built up during his years of teaching and, together with additional material contributed by his senior students, publish a *History of Burmese Literature* (မြန်မာစာပေသမိုင်း). Sadly for students, it covers only the period up to 1885, but it is still today the standard text on the subject.

As well as encouraging new talent, he was equally interested in recording and preserving the oldest Burmese linguistic records; for many years, both before and after the war, he worked together with Gordon Luce on the recording and editing of stone inscriptions, which were published in five huge portfolio volumes by the University of Rangoon<sup>16</sup> and printed at Oxford University Press.

### **PRINCIPAL OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, RANGOON**

U Pe Maung Tin, now nearly fifty, was at the age when administrative duties could no longer be avoided and in 1937 he was appointed Principal of University College in the University of Rangoon, the first Burman to be appointed to this high post. He also held the Chair of Oriental Studies, that is, of Burmese and Pali, and was warden of the Thaton student hostel. At this time of increasing nationalist fervor following the 1936 strike, the students of University College were elated to have a greatly respected Burman, handsome and of commanding appearance, as principal.

A 1939 disciplinary incident handled by U Pe Maung Tin left a strong impression on those who knew him at the time.<sup>17</sup> An Englishman, a physics professor named Peacock, known for his very short temper, became enraged at a small mistake made by a lab assistant and lashed out at him. The young man, after treatment in hospital, went to see the principal, as did the professor, still so angry that he was unable to contain himself from grossly insulting U Pe Maung Tin, who felt he had to report the matter to the vice chancellor, Archibald Cochrane. The vice chancellor upheld U Pe Maung Tin's action and the professor was asked to hand in his resignation. There were not so many Burmans at that time who would have had the courage to take up a complaint against an English member of the administration.

In 1939 U Pe Maung Tin was elected president of the Burma Research Society; during the Japanese occupation he was summoned to Rangoon from the village where he had gone to escape the fighting and asked to serve as chairman of the Rangoon University Administration Board. At the end of the war, in 1946, available records simply state that he retired from the university at age fifty-eight.<sup>18</sup>

### **AFTER OFFICIAL RETIREMENT**

Whatever financial hardships he encountered after his retirement, they did not stop U Pe Maung Tin from continuing to research and publish in even more academic fields than

before. His wide knowledge and experience also continued to be recognized. He was appointed first principal of the University of Adult Education in 1947, and in 1948 became chairman of the University Translation and Publication Advisory Board. He was named professor emeritus of Pali in 1948, elected president of the Burma Research Society for the second time in 1950, and awarded an honorary doctorate (LL. D.) by the University of Rangoon in 1952.

### GRAMMAR AND LINGUISTICS

U Pe Maung Tin's early interest in grammar and linguistics bore fruit in the 1950s in an important series of books on Burmese grammar and syntax, intended both for school and general use (see U Pe Maung Tin bibliography, this volume, nos. 158, 162, 164-167, 174, 175). Although the approach to grammatical description in these works was still much influenced by Pali and English grammar, U Pe Maung Tin was unexpectedly receptive to newer methods of linguistic analysis. In March 1954, the Burma Research Society held a linguistics seminar in Rangoon.<sup>19</sup> It was held in the lecture theatre of the Medical College and organized by Professor Myo Min and Virginia Geiger, cultural attache at the U.S. Embassy.

The three-day program included many well-known names from the fields of Burmese history and language studies. The opening address was given by Dr. Htin Aung, rector of the University of Rangoon and president of the Burma Research Society; then came an introductory talk entitled "What is Linguistic Science?" by Professor Aileen Kitchin of Columbia University Teachers College. After lunch Professor U Pe Maung Tin presented "Some Features of the Burmese Language,"<sup>20</sup> under the chairmanship of Professor Gordon Luce. The second day was opened by U Wun, then chief editor of the *University (Burmese) Dictionary*, with his talk, "Problems of a Dictionary-maker in Burmese," chaired by his *saya*, U Pe Maung Tin, followed by Gordon Luce presenting "Introduction to the Comparative Study of the Karen Languages."<sup>21</sup>

On 6 March 1954, the Saturday edition of *The Nation* carried a well-informed and well-written article headed

“Linguistics,” which pointed out, among other things, the importance of linguistics for the study and classification of the indigenous languages of the country—“a task which becomes increasingly important with the necessity for making dictionaries, compiling historical and archeological records, and conducting comprehensive ethnological surveys of our peoples.” It is possible that the newspaper article was written by U Pe Maung Tin himself (see appendix for seminar details).

### **VISIT TO AMERICA**

Some time after this, an invitation to visit America to lecture on Buddhism in the Department of Bible Studies at the University of Chicago arrived from Dr. R. Pierce Beaver. As a lifelong Christian and Pali scholar, U Pe Maung Tin was ideally qualified to lecture in such a forum; in October 1957 he left Rangoon with his wife and daughters to cross the Atlantic for the first time. As well as these lectures he was also invited to speak at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. In 1958 the University of Chicago awarded him an honorary doctorate.

He arrived home in January 1959. Unlike many 70-year-olds, U Pe Maung Tin showed no sign of feeling his age; he attended a meeting of the East Asia Christian Conference in Kuala Lumpur in May, followed by a visit to the People’s Republic of China as a member of a cultural exchange delegation led by U Chit Thaug, Minister for Culture in the caretaker government of General Ne Win.

### **WORK FOR THE BURMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

In 1960, at the age of seventy-two, he was appointed full-time chairman of the Burma Historical Commission, an influential position in which he served until October 1964; through these times of political change and uncertainty he acted not only as the administrative head, but also wrote and edited a number of research articles and monographs (see Herbert, this volume).<sup>22</sup> At this time he also led the Burma Translation Society,<sup>23</sup> which in 1948 had embarked upon compiling the first *Burmese*

*Encyclopedia*, as chairman of its advisory board of scholars. He himself wrote many key scholarly articles for it in Burmese on such topics as the Burma Historical Commission, the Myanma Min Ok-chok-pon Sa-dan, and Myanma + thamaing (see Herbert, this volume). The first volume was ready in 1953, but the final and fifteenth one was only completed in 1976, after U Pe Maung Tin's death.

### FINAL YEARS

The Burma Research Society marked U Pe Maung Tin's eightieth birthday in 1968 with a special celebration. In 1972 he acceded to the Pali Text Society's request to become their English editor for the *Atthakatha* publication in fifty volumes that they were to publish. One of his last articles, "Some Aspects of Theravada Buddhism," was a contribution in 1972 to the felicitation volume for I. B. Horner, chairman of the Pali Text Society. Even in the last months before his death in March 1973 at the age of eighty-four, he was still tackling new work and he completed several more translations from Pali and English.

Rather than attempt to sum up myself the achievements of this outstanding scholar and teacher, I would like to finish by quoting a short tribute written by a younger pupil of U Pe Maung Tin's, U Aung Thin, now himself a respected writer and literary critic in his seventies, for the September 1998 symposium at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London:

I have often felt that our literary establishment and the education department in Burma have not yet fittingly acknowledged the great debt owed to Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin. Although he is universally acclaimed for his successful efforts to promote the study of Burmese language and literature, there are still only relatively few people who understand the true nature of our debt to him. In reality he is someone to whom

the nation should show the same respect as is shown to Thakhin Kodaw Hmaing. Because (in the past) the whole nation was giving all its attention to the struggle for independence from the colonial power, people did not give so much thought to education. One might even say we are suffering the consequences of this until the present day. But when we come to write the history of education in Burma, we must hope that Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin will be accorded his rightful place, and that the immense debt we owe him will be acknowledged.

In 1960-61 Maung Htun Myint (the poet Tekkatho Min Maw) and I were attending the M.A. qualifying class in the Burmese department of Yangon University. The professor of Burmese was U Wun (the poet Minthuwwun); his colleague U Thein Han (the poet Zawgyi) was giving him all possible advice and assistance. At that time U Pe Maung Tin was over seventy years old and had already retired. U Wun and U Thein Han decided to infuse some new ideas into the department and asked Sayagyi if he would come and teach the new postgraduate students. He acceded to their request and came to take our class, which is how I came to meet this famous scholar, whom we could not normally have hoped to have had as a teacher. I have never forgotten the way he taught us to think about our own language... I felt as if we were asleep and he had shaken us and woken us up. It was as if he had taught us that when one learns a language one should not only study the grammar and syntax but also be interested in the character, way of life, and history of the people who speak the language. I remember that he taught us how to study a subject, whatever it might be.

Sayagyi not only taught us facts, he also trained our minds. This, surely, is the purpose of a university. I have been the recipient of Sayagyi Pe Maung Tin’s teaching and for that reason I venture to say that I have received a university education. I consider myself most fortunate to have been his pupil!<sup>24</sup>

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U Tin Lwin. Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin: his life as a Pali scholar.

U Hla Thein. The vitality and kindness of Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin.

Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt. Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin’s talk. (This is a translation from Burmese of a very personal and revealing talk given by U Pe Maung Tin in 1968, soon after his 80th birthday, to an audience of teachers and students, on how Burmese history was introduced as a discipline at the University of Yangon.)

U Tun Aung Chain. Pe Maung Tin and Luce’s *Glass Palace* revisited.

U Thaw Kaung. U Pe Maung Tin (1888-1973)." (A brief chronology.)

ဒေါက်တာလှတေ- “ပါမောက္ခ ကျောင်းအုပ်ဆရာကြီး ဦးဖေမောင်တင် B.Litt နှင့် D.Litt.”

ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်- လယ်တီပလ္လိတ ဆရာဦးလှတင်၏ ဦးဖေမောင်တင်၏အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ စာတမ်း လေ့လာချက်စာတမ်း

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Includes in English:

Maung Zay Yar. A brief life of U Pe Maung Tin (also in Burmese).

Professor Than Tun. U Pe Maung Tin and history of Myanmar literature. U Pe Maung Tin and Myanmar novels (also in Burmese).

Maung Htin. In memory of Sayagyi U Pe Maung Tin" (also in Burmese).

Dr U Hla Pe. U Pe Maung Tin: patron of Myanmar language and literature studies (also in Burmese).

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U Thaw Kaung. A Bibliography of U Pe Maung Tin's Writings.

Includes in Burmese:

Maung Pauk SI [Man Teggatho]. စာတမ်းဖတ်ပွဲနေ့ အဖွင့်မိန့်ခွန်း

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Professor Than Tun (retd). ဆရာကြီး ဦးဖေမောင်တင်၏ ဘဝနှင့် ဂုဏ်ရည်နှင့် ခြင်္သေ့တံဆိပ် မြန်မာဖတ်စာများ

U Myint Than. ဆရာကြီး ဦးဖေမောင်တင်၏ မြန်မာစာပေသမိုင်းအပေါ် ဆန်းစစ်အကဲဖြတ်ချက်များ

U Kyaw Aung. ဦးဖေမောင်တင် တစ္ဆေတစောင်း ရုပ်ပုံလွှာ

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Daw Khin Khin(Pyi). ဆရာကြီး ဖေမောင်တင်အား ဂုဏ်ပြုခြင်း

Pantanaw U Khant. ဆရာကြီး ဦးဖေမောင်တင်

Alan Saw U. နူးညံ့သိမ်မွေ့ပါရမီရှင် ခန္တီပါရမီခေါင်းဆောင် ပါမောက္ခ ဒေါက်တာ ဦးဖေမောင်တင် (see main English article in JBS).

Also includes reprints of articles by U Pe Maung Tin:

"Buddhism in the Inscriptions of Pagan"

"Women in the inscriptions of Pagan"

"The Text Publication sub-committee of the Burma Research Society"

"The Burmese Novel"

"Book Review of *Thakin KodawHmaing Tikas* (U Lun:  
*Man and Poet*) by Zawgyi"

မြန်မာစာ အရေးအသား တိုးတက်စေနည်း

### *Appendix*

#### A. "Linguistics"

*The Nation*, March 6, 1954

A seminar on linguistics convened by the Burma Research Society has just completed its sessions in Rangoon. The gathering which attended the three-day meeting was composed of university faculty members from various fields, archeologists, musicians, teachers of English, translators, lawyers, journalists and lay scholars. This widely representative group reflected the fact that while linguistics may appear to be an abstruse subject, known only to a few 'long-haired intellectuals,' it has in fact a very practical bearing on the work of many practicing professional people.

Linguistics is the scientific study of languages. Linguists are occupied with analyzing and describing the various languages that are spoken in the world today, with the aim of setting forth in a clear and understandable way, the manner in which these languages function, the pattern on which they have grown up and the processes by which they change. This work of analysis and description is similar to the usual methods of science in all fields, that is, it is divided into three operations of observation, classification and interpretation. When this has been done, the findings of such work can be applied in the practical field.

We in Burma are very much concerned at the present time with the findings of linguistics because they can be of immense help to us in certain entirely new tasks which we have undertaken. One of these is the teaching of English as a foreign language. We know that English is essential as a second language for the people of this country. At the same time, less time will be given to the teaching of English in the

future, while Burmese naturally takes first place. We need therefore to find the most efficient means of teaching English to our people, so that they will gain a working knowledge of the language in a relatively short space of time. The findings of linguistics which indicate to us how to approach a language which is entirely new, have contributed much to this field in other countries, and can be applied here also.

Parallel with this, and equally important, is the writing of textbooks for the teaching of English. Linguistics shows us that it is not enough to expose students to well-written books in English, and that it is unsuitable for people who do not have English spoken around them in their homes to be taught from textbooks which are based on this presumption. With the advent of the teaching of English as a second language to Burmese-speaking pupils, the need for a new set of textbooks is obvious, and the scientific basis for these books is provided to a large extent by linguistic analysis.

Besides this, linguistics can help us in the study and classification of the indigenous languages of the country, a task which becomes increasingly important with the necessity for making dictionaries, compiling historical and archeological records, making translations in all fields of knowledge, and conducting comprehensive ethnological surveys of our peoples. Linguistics is an important key to efficiency in all these tasks since it provides an understanding of one of the most complex, yet most basic activities of any group of people, their language, which means their method of communicating with one another.

The Burma Research Society is a learned body where high academic attainment and advanced intellectual development are taken for granted. For this reason perhaps, some of the world-famous experts who read papers at the Seminar, presented their material in terms which were too technical and abstruse for the non-initiated listener. While this may be the mark of scholarship, we think it is a matter of regret that the new and relatively little-known subject of linguistics was not made more readily assimilable for the average person who attended, because it is a subject which is

not only fascinating when lucidly handled, but also of great practical value.”

- B. The program of the groundbreaking March 1954 linguistics seminar at which U Pe Maung Tin read “Some Features of the Burmese Language.”

**Burma Research Society Linguistics Seminar,**  
*held at the Medical College, Rangoon, March 1-3, 1954*

**Monday, March 1, 1954**

- 10:00-10.30 Opening address  
Dr. Htin Aung, President, Burma Research Society
- 10:30-12:00 What is Linguistic Science?  
Prof. Aileen Kitchen; Chairman: Dr Htin Aung
- 2:00-3:00 Some Features of the Burmese Language  
Prof. Pe Maung Tin; Chairman: Prof. G. H.Luce
- 3:00-4:00 Contributions of Linguistics to the Writing of English Readers  
Prof. Virginia Allen; Chairman: Prof. Myo Min
- 4:00-5:00 An English Teacher Looks at Linguistics  
D. Y. Morgan; Chairman: Prof. U Ba

**Tuesday, March 2, 1954**

- 10:00-11:00 Problems of a Dictionary-maker in Burmese  
U Wun; Chairman: Prof. Pe Maung Tin
- 11:00-12:00 Introduction to the Comparative Study of the Karen Languages  
Prof. G. H.Luce; Chairman: U Kan Gyi
- 2:00-3:00 Variations in the Occurrence of Voiced Consonants in Burmese  
Prof Myo Min; Chairman: U Kun
- 3:00-4:00 Place Names in Burma  
Prof. E. Maung; Chairman: Dr. Htin Aung
- 4:00-5:00 Burmese Studies at the University of London  
Anna Allott; Chairman: Prof. E. Maung

**Wednesday, March 3, 1954**

10:00-11:00 Linguistic Science as Applied to the English Language

Prof. Aileen Kitchin; Chairman: Dr. Htin Aung

11:00-12:00 Drill Procedures in Teaching English

Virginia Geiger; Chairman: Mr. D. Y. Morgan

2:00-3:00 Phonemic Drill Techniques

D. Soergal; Chairman: Mr. W. A. Philipsz

3:00-4:00 Linguistic Analysis as Applied to the Teaching of Grammar

R. Allen; Chairman: Sao Saimong

4:00-5:00 Symposium: Linguistic Science as Applied to the Teaching of English

Participants: U Kaung, Prof. Myo Min,

Prof. Aileen Kitchin, Prof. V. F. Allen,

Mr. D. Y. Morgan, Mr. W. A. Philipsz;

Chairman: Virginia Geiger.

Standing Committee for the Seminar:

Virginia Geiger (Convenor),

Prof. Myo Min, Prof. Tun Thin.

**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> "Missionary Burmese," *JBR* 1 (1911): 87.

<sup>2</sup> "Burmese Drama," *JBR* 2 (1912): 30-37.

<sup>3</sup> No. 8 in the Pali Text Society Translation Series, published in 1920.

<sup>4</sup> See the article by Pe Maung Tin in *ဦးဖေမောင်တင် သာန္တစိပြည် ဂုဏ်ပြုစာတမ်းများ* (Rangoon, 1999), 143-62.

<sup>5</sup> No. 11 in the Pali Text Society Translation Series, published in 1923.

<sup>6</sup> *A Burmese Phonetic Reader* (London: University of London Press, 1925).

<sup>7</sup> *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

<sup>8</sup> *ဖေမောင်တင် သို့မဟုတ် ဘသက်ရှည်* (Yangon: Hsway Tin Nu, 1975), vol.1: 400.

This change of name is explained in U Pe Maung Tin's biography by Ma Lay Lon thus: "There were two students from Burma with the name Maung Tin living in the hostel at the time and the authorities

kept confusing them. To bring an end to this confusion, Maung Tin decided to add 'Pe' to his name in memory of his father U Pe."

<sup>9</sup> *U Pe Maung Tin: A Tribute* (Yangon: Universities Historical Research Centre, 1999), 45–60.

<sup>10</sup> He held this post until 1941, during which time forty-six major literary and historical texts were published under his guidance.

<sup>11</sup> Publication No. 1 from the Department of Oriental Studies, University of Rangoon, printed by the British Burma Press, 1928.

<sup>12</sup> Sein Tin was selected to join the Indian Civil Service and followed his teacher to Oxford for training. On his return he wrote an amusing book about his stay abroad, *အောက်စဖို့တက္ကသိုလ် မှတ်တမ်း* [Oxford Diary] (Rangoon: Burma Education Extension Association, Modern Literature Series, 1937).

<sup>13</sup> No. 2 in the Modern Literature Series (*ခေတ်စမ်းစာပေကျမ်းစဉ်-၂*) of the BEEA.

<sup>14</sup> Continued in *Khitsan Ponbyin* vol.2 (*ခေတ်စမ်းပုံပြင်-၂*), 1938.

<sup>15</sup> *ဘကြီးအောင် ညာတယ်*

<sup>16</sup> The volumes of *Inscriptions of Burma* were published between 1933 and 1956, in conjunction with the Oxford University Press.

<sup>17</sup> See the tribute by Shwebo Mi Mi-gyi in the book mentioned in note 18, below.

<sup>18</sup> In a short tribute by Professor Hla Pe in a book of memoirs and tributes both in Burmese and English, dedicated to U Pe Maung Tin, *ဦးဖေမောင်တင် သာ-နှစ်ပြည့် ဂုဏ်ပြုစာတမ်းများ* (Rangoon, 1999), 50, Hla Pe states, "Because of the intervention of a British officer who hated him, he was pensioned from service on the day he was fifty-eight in 1946. . . . Three years of war had reduced his savings to zero. While he was trying to straighten out his finances he was retired from service . . . one of the hardest blows he suffered during his career."

<sup>19</sup> I was myself taking part in this seminar and have a record of it in my diary, where I have noted, "This lecture was chiefly about the topics U Pe Maung Tin and I had talked about when reading together his *Burmese Syntax*: about subject, object, noun-verbs, and submerged subjects. He did start by saying that Burmese consists basically of nouns, verbs, and particles." I had been immensely privileged, on my first visit to Burma as a very beginning student of the language

and literature, to have been given three hours a week of personal tuition by U Pe Maung Tin from November 1953 to January 1954.

<sup>20</sup> See Bernot, this volume.

<sup>21</sup> Anna J. Allott's paper, "Burmese Studies at the University of London" (which does not survive), was chaired by Professor E Maung, then head of the Department of Burmese at the University of Rangoon.

<sup>22</sup> In a talk in Burmese, given just after his eightieth birthday and printed in *Ngwe-ta-yi* magazine (September 1968, 79–83) and referred to in an article in English by Dr Khin Maung Nyunt in UHRC (1999, 43), U Pe Maung Tin says, "In 1964 I took retirement and Luce returned to his homeland." This bald statement conceals much, including the shameful fact that Gordon Luce and his wife Daw Ti Ti were ordered by the then-ruling Revolutionary Council to leave Burma at short notice.

<sup>23</sup> For the early history of the Burma Translation Society, renamed the Sa-pei Beik-man in 1963, see Anna J. Allott, "Prose Writing and Publishing in Burma: Government Policy and Private Practice," in *Literature and Society in Southeast Asia*, ed. Tham Seong Chee, 6–7 (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> By U Aung Thin, translated by Anna J. Allott.