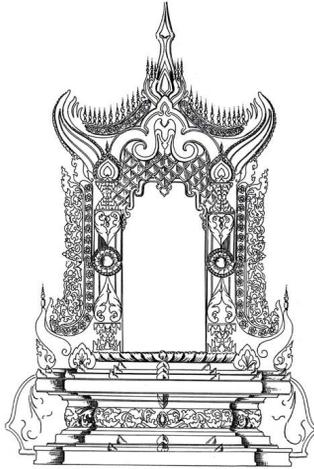


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Special Issue

*In Homage to
U Pe Maung Tin*

Featuring Articles by:

Anna Allott

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TEXT, LINEAGE, AND TRADITION IN BURMA
The Struggle for Norms and Religious Legitimacy
under King Bodawphaya (1782–1819)

Jacques P. Leider*

The wide range of interests and scholarly endeavors of a man like U Pe Maung Tin is astounding. For a historian of Burma working at the beginning of the twenty-first century, U Pe Maung Tin's legacy continues to stand out for one main reason. He pioneered the academic study of Burmese history as he engaged himself in that critical and essential task of the historian: the editing of text sources and, to a somewhat lesser degree, their translation. We do not honor a pioneer like U Pe Maung Tin by merely eulogizing his work and relating the events of an outstanding academic career. We may honor him best by taking inspiration from his work and walking in his footsteps.

At the University of Rangoon, U Pe Maung Tin defended Burmese history as a serious subject for scientific research and instruction. A hundred years later, compared to Southeast Asian history in general, Burmese history has remained an undervalued field and is still regrettably little studied. Many more documents have now become available in printed form, though they are sometimes difficult to locate. Praiseworthy work has indeed been done, such as the *Royal Orders of Burma* prepared by Professor Than Tun, but much more of Burmese

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history needs to be uncovered.¹ U Pe Maung Tin's work raised the banner decades ago; many tasks in the field of editing, translating, and analyzing historical sources are left to be done nevertheless. This article explores a poorly exploited field of pre-colonial Burmese Buddhist history, namely the origins of the monastic reform movement in the nineteenth century.

Historians of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand and Burma know that the *sangha*, the order of the monks as we know it today, was shaped by reform movements that gained strength in the second half of the nineteenth century. What was common to these reform movements was (1) a greater emphasis on textual knowledge, which required in-depth Pali studies, and (2) an appeal for greater monastic discipline, which meant a return to a strict application of the *vinaya* rules.² Kings with a strong interest in religion such as Mongkut in Siam and Mindon in Burma were instrumental in raising the standard of religious studies and the monastic life in their realms. These kings took important initiatives that went beyond the usual copying of the Tipitaka, the enshrining of relics, and the foundation of pagodas that had long been essential religious deeds of kings who called themselves *mintaya* or *dhammaraja*. The initiatives of the kings were successful because they were implemented by reform-minded monks who intermittently faced tremendous resistance while enforcing their mission. In nineteenth-century Burma, reform-minded monks occasionally went their own way and this led to the foundation of the so called "Mindon sects" (*gaing*). The origins of this monastic reform movement in Burma are found in the early Konbaung period, particularly during the long reign of King Bodawphaya and his radical attempts at religious reform.³

My larger interest as a historian lies in the period during which King Bodawphaya reigned. This article is concerned with the king's religious policy and the way this policy is reconstructed in the religious chronicles.⁴ In line with its title, the article focuses more particularly on *sangha* history and again, on how the *sangha* is represented in the religious historiography. It offers a preliminary analysis and does not aim to be a comprehensive account of Bodawphaya's religious

policy. No attempt is made in this paper to discuss the king's own religious conceptions, occult beliefs and practices, or Bodawphaya's claim to be Arimetteya [Maitreya] Buddha.

Recent scholarship shows signs of rehabilitating Bodawphaya, a king commonly discredited in the literature of the colonial period and somewhat disregarded even by nationalist native writers.⁵ He is revealed notably as someone who reinforced the conception of the Theravada Buddhist State.⁶ In his own time, he was called both a heretic and a bigot (Gouger). He was said to have been ultraconservative at some times and a destroyer of the monastic order at other times. Thus, studying Bodawphaya's religious policies raises a great number of questions from the outset.

This article is constructed in three parts. The first section is entitled "Monastic Policy" and tries to provide an overview of some of King Bodawphaya's actions in the religious field, emphasizing monastic policy. The second part, titled "Monastic History," focuses on the representation of Bodawphaya's religious policy in three religious chronicles, the *Vamsadipani* (ca. 1790),⁷ the *Sasana-linkaya Satam* (1831), and the *Sasanavamsa* (1861).⁸ In a third part, "Monastic World," I analyze a selection of the material introduced in the two first parts. Stretching the scope of this paper, I look forward to opening a field of discussion regarding the possibility of truly knowing the early modern history of the *sangha* in Burma.

MONASTIC POLICY:

BODAWPHAYA, THE MONKS, AND THE SASANA

The numerous orders of King Bodawphaya that have survived and been published in five of the ten volumes of Professor Than Tun's *Royal Orders of Burma (ROB)* provide a precious source of information on the king's religious policy.⁹ They also provide a rare view into the king's mind, which is all the more interesting as Bodawphaya has entered mainstream history as a bloodthirsty, uncontrollable, and vainglorious despot.¹⁰

The king's general religious policy can be conveniently presented under four headings: (1) the renewal and the

unification of the monastic order, (2) the improvement of the morals of lay people, (3) administrative investigations, and (4) royal works of merit. Bodawphaya's religious zeal fits into a general impression of the religiosity of Konbaung kings, but his endeavor clearly went beyond the one of his predecessors. It was grounded in the king's personal interest in religious affairs and ideas and in his intellectual curiosity. He was a deeply religious man who, it is said, did not shy away from austerities (Symes 1800, vol.2: 228). From his own beliefs and spiritual doubts sprang the motivation for his tireless action.

Renewal and unification of the monastic order

From the very early years of his reign, Bodawphaya was extremely critical of the *sangha*. He was scandalized both by their lack of discipline and their ignorance of the scriptures. He believed that monks who did not follow the rules of the *vinaya* or who did not master their texts should be expelled from the order. Another danger lay in the influence that lay people wielded over the monks through donations or favors granted to the monks. For twenty years the king tried to implement his monastic reform program aiming at a standardized code of behavior and a strict obedience of the scriptures. This policy of *sangha* unification has been conveniently called "Sudhamma Reformation" (Pranke). But the king's radical approach hit the public nerve. The *sangha* came to resist the king's ideas and changes.¹¹ The result was that, probably starting about 1807, the king relaxed his policy of eliminating monastic variance. After failing to have the whole monkhood re-ordained according to principles he considered as the true ones, he completely abandoned his reform policy after 1812. He again allowed all of the monks to follow their traditional ways.¹²

*Enforcing greater respect for monastic rules*¹³

To ensure a better control over the *sangha* and fight the influence of lay people over the monkhood, he created a council of four superior monks to enforce greater discipline. When this council did not give him satisfaction, he enlarged

it to the number of twelve.¹⁴ They met regularly at the Sudhamma pavilion, and it is for that reason that the council of appointed monastic reform leaders is generally known as the Sudhamma Council. Its members were requested to take unanimous decisions submitted to the Mahadan-wun, the religious censor or minister of religious affairs (ROB 27 June 1786).¹⁵ But the king was still not happy, so he put the task of implementing his view of a more disciplined order into the hands of the Maung-daung Sayadaw, by then a relatively young monk the king put at the head of the *sangha* (*sasanabaing*). His monastic title, conferred to him by the king, was Ñanabhi-sasanadhaja-Mahadhammarajaguru (SL 135), later he received the title of Ñanabhivamsa-dhammasenapati Mahadhamma-rajadhirajaguru (ROB 19 March 1787). To enforce religious policy, the *sasanabaing* was allowed to use the office and the resources of the Royal Council (*lhwat-to*) and of the Mahadan-wun who, as has been said, had traditionally been checking the *sangha*. He could, for example, summon any monk from the province to come to the capital, and provincial officers had to defray the costs (ROB 19 March 1787; 7 March 1788). The reform process in the province was tightly linked to central supervision. Mèthi Sayadaw's detailed description of the reform process points out that the process of re-ordaining monks involved both disciplinary re-education and a close examination of monastic careers that were checked by the Mahadan-wun. Any open questions regarding serious breaches of the discipline such as parajika offences were discussed with the candidate in the Sudhamma Council at the capital and action was taken (VD 175; Pranke 276).

Generally, it is true that the monastic reform movement of the nineteenth century was most successful in the monasteries of the capital and its surroundings. Other major cities with a strong monastic tradition such as Pegu followed. This is not difficult to explain as there were many monks in the cities and there were means to control them by inspections. No studies have up to now produced insight into the way the reforms that flowed from the capital had penetrated the monastic population of the countryside. While there are signs that at the

start of the twentieth century, monasteries in the Irrawaddy valley had come under the sway of reform, reformers did not progress without fighting local resistance.¹⁶

Bodawphaya was fully aware of the problem of spreading the reforms. He arranged for monks from the capital to meet their colleagues from the countryside so as to advance their ways of living in harmony with monastic standards. The monks who did not conform to the prescriptions were expelled from the order (*ROB* 31 May 1810; *VD* 175; *Pranke* 276). Provincial authorities were required to sponsor selected monks from the provinces to come to the capital to follow religious teachings (*ROB* 12 March 1784).

The king's policy in reforming the monkhood culminated in the literal suppression of the *sangha*. Asking the senior monks (actually the elite reformers assembled around the first Maung-daung Sayadaw) if there were divisions in the order, the monks agreed. So the king recalled the Buddha's interdiction of schisms inside the monkhood and compelled the monks to disrobe and become laymen once more. This event is not clearly dated, but it could be linked to the introduction of the king's own ordination procedure, the Suttanta way, in 1812. Bodawphaya rejected the traditional ordination, estimating that taking refuge in the Three Gems (Buddha, *dhamma*, and *sangha*) was sufficient to enter the monkhood. Some royal orders point to monks who were ordained following the king's procedure (*ROB* 9 and 12 August 1812; *MMOS* § 388-389; 391).

Religious missions

A broader measure to ensure the propagation of reform was Bodawphaya's large-scale missionary policy in which he saw himself as a worthy successor of the great Buddhist missionary king Asoka.¹⁷ In March 1784, monks specially trained in the *vinaya* were sent to the provinces to enforce monastic standards. In June, the king asked the members of the royal council to make a list of those places "where the religion was not flourishing" to send monks there to preach (see the extensive list of fifty-

six places in KB II, 18–21). Any opposition or schism had to be physically crushed (ROB 12 March 1784; 15 June 1784). A well-known example of Bodawphaya's missionary zeal was newly conquered Arakan. At the end of the eighteenth century, Arakan's *sangha* was divided among *gamavasi* monks, who practiced a more relaxed interpretation of the monastic rules, and the stricter *araññavasi* monks. Bodawphaya sent alternating groups of four or five Burmese monks to Mrauk U (Arakan's old capital) and Ramree (an island off the Arakanese coast) to change the ways of the Arakanese *sangha* and re-ordain them. These missionary monks all came from monasteries whose leaders formed part of the supreme religious council (SL 198). Local officers escorted these monks on their way to Arakan and back and helped them build ordination halls (ROB 3 January 1788; 25 July 1787).

Monks from Sri Lanka flocked to Bodawphaya's court and participated in religious discussions. One result of these religious exchanges was the foundation of the Amarapura *nikaya* in Sri Lanka, which was facilitated by the climate of religious reform stimulated by the king.¹⁸

Ensuring the reliability of the scriptures and commentaries

Bodawphaya was not only critical of the monastic practice and the quality of textual knowledge of the monks. He also took an extremely critical stance toward the validity of the religious texts as they existed in his time because he doubted that the Buddhist scriptures had been faithfully transmitted over the generations. He notably criticized Buddhaghosha, the famous commentator, as someone who, while translating the Tipitaka from Sinhalese into Pali, had possibly made up his own version of the words of the Buddha.¹⁹ This was in Bodawphaya's eyes an unthinkable crime, and he ordered a group of learned monks to submit a treatise to clarify the matter.

Bodawphaya also heartily despised Shin Arahan, the acclaimed reformer of Pagan's Buddhism who has traditionally been considered an arhat (ROB 30 December 1811; see the

various traditions recorded by the SV 64–68). Bodawphaya saw Shin Arahan merely as an ignorant monk who was starving when a hunter picked him up and brought him to Pagan. Shin Arahan gained influence over King Anoratha so that this king and his successors changed the original teaching, which had been introduced to Burma by Shin Punna in Lord Buddha's time, into a new religion (ROB 7 August 1817; MMOS § 392). Bodawphaya saw nothing glorious in conquering Thaton (from where Anoratha is said to have brought full sets of the Tipitaka) as the Mon country was by then far less developed than Upper Burma.²⁰ By considering Shin Arahan's influence on the *sangha* of Pagan rather as a disaster than as a boon, Bodawphaya threw heaps of doubt on seven hundred years of Burmese monastic tradition.

The king wanted to discuss his often radical ideas with the monks and asked them to submit reports on the issues he raised (26 June 1795; 11 August 1797; 5 October 1806). But there is a general impression that most monks preferred to keep silent either because they were not ready to accept radical criticism as formulated by the king or because they were afraid of the king who was well-known for his choleric nature and harsh treatment of those he deemed guilty of a fault. When monks disagreed, the king could ask a group of discussants to manufacture a decision on who was right (ROB 16 February 1811). Visiting monks from Sri Lanka were also invited to discuss religious matters with local *sayadaws* (ROB 4 February 1810). One can only imagine how painful it may have been for courtiers of all ranks to attend religious debates every day at the audience hall (ROB 26 December 1812).

The king himself had the reputation of being a devout Buddhist. Sangermano attributes the king's extended stay at Mingun, on the spot north of Amarapura where he built an enormous pagoda, to his proclivity for ascetic practice. The king's own practice was surely linked to the way he saw himself as someone exceptionally favored by the destiny, a lord of white elephants, a true conqueror (Arakan) and a future Buddha. It is not surprising that he wanted to impose

on his surroundings an above-average respect of Buddhist tenets. In 1795, Michael Symes, the English ambassador to the court of Amarapura, suspected a climate of religious bigotry at the capital. Noting that four days per month were religious holidays where all trade stopped,²¹ all work was forbidden and people should fast, the English ambassador tells us that the ambitious who craved the king's favors, tended to outstrip each other in religious zeal (Symes 1800, vol. 1: 227–228).

At the heart of the king's religious thought, we find the reflection that only the knowledge of authoritative texts could ensure the correct practice of the Buddha's teaching.²² But to be reassured that the message was authentic, the texts needed to be thoroughly checked and edited. As for the king, the supreme guarantee for a correct transmission of the Buddhist teaching was the possession of reliable texts, he was critical of his royal predecessors whom he suspected of not having done enough to maintain the purity of the texts.

Eliminating monastic variance and religious heresy

The great similarity of the way of living of Theravadin monks that we observe in the twentieth century should not distract us from the fact that in King Bodawphaya's time, and despite earlier reforms, there were many monks who wore their robes in different ways, distinguished themselves by the hats and fans they were wearing, occasionally led lives without the restrictions that the *vinaya* normally imposes on the members of the Buddhist order, and periodically nurtured beliefs that were inconsistent with traditional Buddhist concepts. A recurrent reproach was, as we have stated, a notorious closeness with lay people's affairs.

The elimination of such divergent belief and practice was one element of Bodawphaya's reform policy during the first half of his reign.²³ The king was determined to eliminate any kind of belief or practice that he felt diverged from the religious texts or questioned the established monastic institutions. But, in orders regarding deviating monks, there is often no clear mention if they were doing so on the level

of behavior, formal dress, way of life, or doctrine. Non-conformists could be disrobed and sent to areas of deep forest, which meant places where they incurred a high risk of losing their lives (ROB 10 March 1782). Despite the triumphalism in Mèthi Sayadaw's account of the reforming mission he led in the province of Taungngu-Ketumati, general success was probably limited and did not extend beyond the capital and a number of major cities in the Irrawaddy plain.²⁴

Bodawphaya unconditionally persecuted the Zoti (also *Joti/ Zawti*) sect about whom we find some information in three royal orders from 1783 (15 July, 17 July, 8 September). In Western sources, they were first referred to by Father Sangermano who notes that they were annihilated by the king. He writes:

“Their religion is totally different from that of Godama. They reject metempsychosis, and believe that each one will receive the reward or punishment of his immediately after death, and that this state of punishment and reward will last for eternity. Instead of attributing every thing to fate, as the Burmese do, they acknowledge an omnipotent and omniscient Nat, the creator of the world: they despise the Pagodas, the [...] convents of Talapoins, and the statues of Godama” (Sangermano 1893: 111–12).

The sect was already persecuted under the king's predecessor Singu but may still have existed under later kings. John Crawford writes in his *Journal of an Embassy to Ava* of 1827 (p. 392) about the execution of “certain reformers of the existing Buddhism” who “were generally, or I believe always, laymen. They principally decried the luxury of the priesthood, and ridiculed the idea of attaching religious merit to the building of temples.”

How did the persecution of the Zoti sect tally with the king's own increasingly critical attitude towards the way the monks were ordained, how they lived, and how they

transmitted the teaching of Lord Buddha?²⁵ It is likely that the Zoti sect was not dangerous because it criticized the luxuriant way of life of the monks, but because it questioned the monastic institution as such and it presented thus a challenge to both the authority of the king and the monkhood. As disagreement on formal matters was more often at the heart of inner *sangha* conflicts than doctrinal debates, kings were systematically called upon to settle such conflicts. One may surmise that in a Theravada Buddhist environment heretical views did not attract persecution as long as they remained a private matter. The Zoti may have been considered by the king and the leading monks as a socially relevant and potentially threatening movement. One may also observe that persecuting lay people for heretic beliefs was probably not as challenging as trying to control and standardize monastic practice and behavior.

Before we move on to the debate that was center stage at the beginning of Bodawphaya's reign—the One-shoulder/Two-shoulder debate—we may anticipate that during the last twelve years of his reign, the king was moved by a sudden spirit of tolerance that led him to backtrack on a number of points regarding divergent monastic practices and to recall earlier orders. It is difficult though to give precise dates (see particularly ROB 14 March 1574,²⁶ 3 and 8 November 1807, 23 July 1813, 7 August 1817). Bodawphaya's policy failures and possibly his personal doubts on certain matters may have softened his stance. Seen over the whole period of a long reign, the king's measures may thus sometimes look inconsistent as they followed changes in the king's beliefs. Variant monastic behavior in the Burmese *sangha* lived on at least until the reigns of Mindon and Thibaw and probably until today.

The One-shoulder/Two-shoulder debate

When he became king, Bodawphaya raised once more the One-shoulder/Two-shoulder debate that had been at the center of a conflict splitting the monkhood since 1698. Western students of Burmese Buddhism have generally shown surprise at the fact that a clash of opinions regarding the dress code divided

the monkhood. But it could well be that these questions of formal detail recovered other matters of dissent and that internal power rivalries were also underlying the debate. The conflict between the One-shoulder and Two-shoulder factions centered on the question if novices had to cover two shoulders or not when they left their monastery to enter a village. King Alaungphaya (1752–1760) had supported the One-shoulder party under the influence of his favorite monk, the *sasanabaing* Atula-yasa. Under King Singu (1774–1781), the One-shoulder party was officially proscribed and the conflict seemed resolved. But Atula-yasa, who under King Sinbyushin had been exiled to the forest, grouped followers around him. Bodawphaya reopened the case and, according to the *Sasana-linkaya Satam*, sent a group of sympathizers of the One-shoulder party under the direction of the highly respected minister U Htun Nyo to collect the opinions of their supporters. Strangely enough, the author of this chronicle tells us that the One-shoulder party unanimously confessed their error and did not enter at all into a discussion as the king had requested them to do. As they did not argue their case, the king considered that there was actually nothing further to decide, the One-shoulder monks having disapproved themselves.

The question was once more debated in April 1784 under the inspection of religious examiners between a group of *sayas* and Atula. Atula still figured as one of the main defenders of the one-shoulder doctrine and he used the *Culagandhi* as a reference.²⁷ The religious chronicles tell us that Atula was defeated on the basis that the *Culagandhi* was not an authoritative text and defrocked because of a *parajika* offence (VD 156–58; Pranke 255–58; ROB [25] April 1784).

Moral exhortation and re-education

To ensure a better level of knowledge of the rules and of the doctrinal texts among the monks, monthly recitations of *vinaya* texts were held in front of religious teachers at the capital or provincial religious inspectors (*gaing ok* or *gaing dauk*) in cities and villages (ROB 27 June 1786). Regular examinations were

also organized (ROB 11, 12, 17, 28 October 1787; 8 and 10 May 1801). Monks had to master a curriculum of texts that were officially approved,²⁸ and they were required to declare that they were ready to pass the examination (see the detailed ROB 8 July 1785).²⁹ These examinations were a lasting heritage of Bodawphaya's reign and later Konbaung kings referred to Bodawphaya's regulation when they organized such examinations (see for example ROB 27 May 1836).

When monks repeatedly failed, punishments were harsh. The monks were expelled from the order, but their teachers and their lay supporters were also considered as responsible and summoned (ROB 12 March 1784; 23 July 1813).³⁰ A teacher could then also be expelled from the order. Monks were also tattooed (ROB 9 October 1787). The *Mahadanwun* had to make a biannual report on the progress of the candidates at the examinations.

On the other hand, as a type of reward, the kings sweetened the life of the relatives of monks who were successful at their examinations. They did not need to pay any more taxes as long as their relative remained a disciplined member of the order (ROB 8 July 1785).³¹ This policy was not particular to King Bodawphaya. It is ascertained before his times and after. Since the time of King Sinbyushin (1763–1776) for example, the relatives of monks well qualified in the knowledge of the Tipitaka had been made members of the royal horsemen, an elite unit (ROB 30 May 1810). The rule that a monk does not need to pay any tax or fee at city gates, toll gates and ferries or on his private property, as stated in the famous, quasi-constitutional order of 28 January 1795 (Than Tun 1983), is most likely a confirmation of a long-standing practice. Finally a mention should be made of Bodawphaya's calendar reform that involved both *punnas* and monks and that took a lot of energy on the side of the king. Just as in the case of other policies, the king finally abandoned his reform as he failed to enforce it.³²

Improving the morals of Buddhist lay people

Bodawphaya did not only want to have a more disciplined and more knowledgeable monkhood. He also wanted to change the habits and the behavior of people and raise the moral standard of his subjects. About a week after he ascended the throne, the king decided that there should be no production, no selling, and no consumption of alcoholic drinks, of cannabis or opium (ROB 20 February 1782). A few months later, the slaughtering of animals inside the city was forbidden (ROB 16 November 1782). Over the next years, regular appeals were made to lay people and novices to respect the *pañcasila* (Five precepts: not killing, not stealing, not destroying one's property, not lying, not consuming intoxicating drinks), the *atthangasila* (Eight precepts) during the Buddhist Lent (ROB 29 June 1783; 5 April 1784; 17 June 1784) and to abstain from the ten acts that cause demerit (*akusalakammamapatha*) (ROB 29 May 1817 and 30 May 1817).³³ And as in earlier centuries, orders regarding administrative matters included appeals to the ministers and governors to be morally responsive (ROB 21 August 1785).

The king saw himself as a missionary who would not merely invite people to respect Buddhist morals, but who would also closely follow the implementation of his religious policy. At the court, the princes had to assist religious speeches (ROB 7 January 1807) and lists were made with the men and women who followed the king's way of religious practice (ROB 3 December 1807).³⁴

The king's severity in matters of human failure that had, shall we say, a religious dimension, was breathtaking. In April 1794, a monk and a minister were executed because they had taken away from its due place a Tipitaka set that was later lost in a fire.

Administrative investigations

Bodawphaya's name is associated with two major initiatives in the field of administrative reform. Two times, in 1783 and in 1802, he made extensive inquiries into the social, economic, and administrative life of his subjects (ROB 17 November 1783; 25

December 1783; 16 August 1784).³⁵ Though these reports (*sittan*) may not live up to the criteria of modern investigations and statistics, they provided the king with precious information on local conditions and gave him a tool for raising his revenues through taxation (Trager/Koenig 1979). This first initiative was not directly linked with religious matters, but information regarding religious lands and labor obligations was also occasionally included.

The second initiative was an investigation into the extent of religious lands in the kingdom (*ROB* 24 March 1783; 27 July and 22 August 1785). In the context of administrative investigations, “land” means essentially agricultural land. To get a better hold over the lands that all belonged theoretically to the king, Bodawphaya needed to know which lands had been given by former kings and lay people to religious institutions. Once this point could be proven, the lands were not confiscated by the king for his own use. One order at least shows that the possibility existed to change religious lands against other land (*ROB* 3 December 1787). In this case, the king wanted to exchange religious land situated inside the city limits with land in the provinces.

To trace the donations of lands back in time, Bodawphaya had stone inscriptions from earlier centuries collected and put near the Mahamuni pagoda.³⁶ On some religious lands, the taxes went to the monastic establishment; on others, it was only the agricultural produce. Agricultural produce of religious lands that went to the king could be sold (*ROB* 11 February 1788). All taxes that were collected on religious lands were given to the *Mahadan-wun* who managed these funds for religious purposes (*ROB* 24 March 1783). The king also kept control over the payment of religious taxes to the monasteries to which they were due (*ROB* 5 January 1788). Besides the minister for religious affairs (*Mahadan-wun*), there was a minister in charge of religious lands (*Wut-mye-wun*) and a royal treasure for revenue from religious lands (*kathaung-myaung taik*).³⁷

Works of merit

The performance of works of religious merit being an integral part of the role of a Theravada Buddhist monarch, there is little surprise to see that Bodawphaya made numerous works of merit during his long reign.³⁸

Offering food to the monks

Food offerings to the members of the *sangha* accompanied many festivities and ceremonies held at the court. From the few royal orders that refer to food offerings to the monks, we obtain no pattern of food distribution and an imperfect idea of the yearly calendar of food donations to the monks. At special occasions, such as the birthday of the king, food was offered to monks following a list established by the *Mahadan-wun* (ROB 22 March 1788). Monthly rations of paddy rice were distributed to monks of the monasteries in the capital (ROB 21 August 1813).

Building and offering of monasteries, construction of pagodas

It is particular construction works associated with the name of a king, such as the construction, embellishment, maintenance or repair of pagodas, temples, and monasteries that best enter the collective memory of succeeding generations. Bodawphaya is particularly remembered for the Patho-daw, the giant pagoda in Mingun, north of Amarapura. After 1797, the king himself resided for several years on an island opposite the construction site to follow the progress of works, as has been mentioned.

After the king moved the capital from Ava to Amarapura, the new capital underwent a wave of pagoda and monastery constructions. Some monasteries were constructed by the king and dedicated to learned monks (*sayadaws*). Some were built by members of the royal court and offered by the king to a particular sayadaw. A list of such monasteries is found in the *Sasana-linkaya Satam* and there are records of these donations in the *Konbaung-set* chronicle.³⁹ From the beginning of his reign, the king had a special favor for the Maung Daung Sayadaw who, in 1788, got full authority to investigate the

monkhood and to whom he offered the Asokarama-taik.⁴⁰ Many more monasteries were built by the queens and other members of the court. Some orders of 1811 show that the king frequently sent banners and umbrellas to a selected number of pagodas and religious places.⁴¹

Copying the Tipitaka

At the beginning of their reigns, the Konbaung kings generally ordered new copies of the Tipitaka on palm leaf and on *parabaik* (folded paper).⁴² For King Bodawphaya, revising and copying were, as we have said above, an integral part of his monastic reform program. He paid enormous attention not only to the copying of the Buddhist scriptures itself, but he also formed monastic commissions and committees with dozens of chief editors and auxiliary monks to revise the texts (ROB 30 June 1783; 5 July 1784). Rules approved by the king had to be respected to ensure correct spelling (ROB 14 and 29 December 1785).⁴³ One order specifically approves the use of the Burmese alphabet for copying the Tipitaka (ROB 10 July 1810). Michael Symes, the 1795 English ambassador to the Amarapura court, was allowed to visit the royal library and he was much impressed by the size of Bodawphaya's collection of thousands of manuscripts kept in wooden chests.

The Tipitaka copyists were all registered as such. Nobody employed in copying manuscripts could be employed in any other function (ROB 30 June 1784; 6 February 1785; 20 September 1785; 14 December 1785).⁴⁴ Orders recalling this rule were issued frequently as ministers and officers tried to take away these men for other employment. The Tipitaka copyists lived together in a community and had to follow an official work schedule (ROB 10 March 1806). An order of Bodawphaya's successor Bagyidaw later praised the quality of the groups of scribes that were formed under Bodawphaya's reign (ROB 27 April 1829). Once the copies were finished, the king's and the queen's seals were put on them (ROB 10 May 1806) and they would be maintained in the royal palace in Amarapura or Mingun. In January 1807, the king ordered the

Tipitaka set from his library in Mingun to be sent to Amarapura and the revised set to be put into the Candamuni Library at Mingun (ROB 15 and 17 January 1807). It looks as if editing and copying projects of the Tipitaka extended over a long time or either, such projects were undertaken several times under Bodawphaya's reign. Once an edited version had been finished, further copies could be made (ROB 30 July 1806).

From a historical point of view, copying projects of the whole Tipitaka have also to be seen as important economic activities involving hundreds of people who had to prepare, cut, and smooth the palm leaves (ROB 25 September 1785); prepare the gold leaf and the lac to decorate the wooden panels; and assemble the wooden boxes to keep the manuscripts. There were also further sets of religious texts that were inscribed on precious ivory tablets, written with gold on lacquered plates, and many more written with ink on *parabaik* books.

The meritorious foundation of bird and animal sanctuaries requests due mention. These sanctuaries can be interpreted with modern eyes as the predecessors of national parks or national conservatories. The king would approve such sanctuaries because particular monks petitioned him for granting them the permission to forbid any hunting in a certain surrounding or he would himself take the initiative for doing so.⁴⁵

Royal pardons

Lastly, we may also mention among the works of religious merit, the royal pardon granted on request of the monks for people who had been condemned to death (ROB 14 February 1788).

MONASTIC HISTORY: BODAWPHAYA'S POLICY IN THE MIND OF THE CHRONICLERS

Introducing the religious chronicles: success stories and didactic narratives

The various religious chronicles are important sources for the study of the royal policy in religious matters.⁴⁶ The information

of three of these chronicles concerning the religious policy of King Bodawphaya in *sangha* matters: the *Vamsadipani*, the *Sasana-linkaya Satam*, and the *Sasanavamsa*, will be discussed in this second part.

One should immediately highlight the fact that there is an enormous gap between the variety of information that we can collect in the royal orders (and that has been used in the first part of this article) and the more limited information contained in the religious chronicles. What we call 'chronicles' are records of past events generally written by contemporary observers following a simple chronological order, but also frequently noted down by later authors recording various oral or written traditions. The Burmese chronicles are reconstructions of the past that follow a certain model and shape facts in a particular mold. Religious chronicles fit into this definition. They subordinate facts to the object of their discourse, the common aim being to establish the original foundation of the Buddha's teaching in Burma and the truthful transmission of this teaching through monastic lineages. When we read the religious chronicles against a general political and religious context we know (which we do rather well in the case of Bodawphaya), we may discover the chroniclers' choices while writing their works. The chronicles have a very narrow approach towards religious policy. They focus largely on *sangha* affairs and the chronicling of, so to say, a maximum of 'facts' was never a desideratum. By interpreting the chroniclers' choices, a historian may understand the way in which a religious author is weaving royal policy into the fabric of an orthodox Buddhist record.

By whom, when and why were the *Vamsadipani*, the *Sasana-linkaya Satam*, and the *Sasanavamsa* written? The *Vamsadipani* was written by Mèthi Sayadaw, one of the leading reform monks during the first years of Bodawphaya's reign. The work was finished not earlier than 1799/1800. As it is said that Mèthi Sayadaw died in 1797/1798, it is likely that he did not himself finish the work (Pranke 2004: 301, note 257), and/or that he is not the only author. Mèthi Sayadaw

says in the epilogue that he wrote his work “for the later generations to know about the lineage of elders who followed the rules laid down by the Buddha” (Pranke 2004: 279). The *Vamsadipani* gives an overview of religious Buddhist history from its beginnings in India, Sri Lanka, and Burma down to the contemporary period of reformation led by Bodawphaya persistently concentrating on the triumphs of Theravada orthodoxy over corrupt or undisciplined monastic factions. The last part of the work is dedicated to his own missionary work (obtaining the surrendering of monastic goods, examination of monastic careers, re-ordination of former monks) in the area of Taungngu in Central Burma. The *Vamsadipani* is a great piece of monastic rhetoric as the author strenuously ties together traditions regarding the origins of Buddhism in Central Burma and Lower Burma so as to emphasize his core argument: the faithful transmission of the doctrine and practice of the Buddha as defined by the early councils through a succession of correctly practicing monastic teachers.

The *Sasana-linkaya Satam* was written in 1829 by a minister, Mahadhamma Thingyan (ex-First Maung-daung Sayadaw), at the request of King Bagyidaw (1819-1837). The king deplored that whosoever wanted to learn anything on Burma’s religious history had no general account at his disposal and faced confusion. But the core question at the origin of the *Sasana-linkaya* can be formulated like this: Has the teaching of the Buddha that we practice today in Burma been truly transmitted through an uninterrupted line of teachers and has it come down to us in its true essence?

The *Sasanavamsa* was composed thirty years later (1861) in Pali by Ashin Paññasami, the third Maung-daung Sayadaw. It purports to be a history of the spread of the Buddhist religion in the nine countries where King Asoka allegedly sent Buddhist missionaries. Actually, seventy percent of the text deals with Suvannabhumi and Aparanta, these two countries being identified as Lower and Upper Burma.⁴⁷ The *Sasanavamsa* is strongly inspired by the *Sasana-linkaya*, but it was composed with a different aim. Written in Pali, it was meant to impress an

audience of Sinhalese monks with an extensive presentation of the faithful transmission of the Buddhist teaching in Upper Burma.

The *Sasana-linkaya Satam* makes better reading and is more useful to historians than the *Sasanavamsa*. First, Mahadhamma Thingyan's style is less tiresome and verbose than Paññasami's;⁴⁸ second, Mahadhamma Thingyan based his work on chronicles, poems, and inscriptions. He refers to his sources and it is generally possible to draw a line between the information he takes from a source and his eventual comment; another advantage of the *Sasana-linkaya Satam* is the organization by its editor into 103 paragraphs and its frequent dating of events. The *Sasanavamsa* has one big extensive chapter describing the "history of the religion in the Aparanta country" and it is not always easy to perceive the chronological order.

Both authors invest a great effort in giving an orderly account of the succeeding missions that established, according to the common belief, the Buddhist teaching in Burma. This account ends with the "triumph" of Theravada Buddhism in Pagan. In both chronicles, religious history is a sometimes loosely structured, but mostly incoherent compilation of accounts and summaries regarding political events, monastic biographies, works of merit done by the kings, monastic literature (religious exegesis, translations, grammatical works), and conflicts in the *sangha* on formal questions of dress and behavior. Unsurprisingly, both chronicles provide information that is more detailed once they come closer to the contemporary period of their authors, but regrettably, the scope of their descriptions becomes narrower.

Neither the *Vamsadipani* nor the *Sasana-linkaya Satam* nor the *Sasanavamsa* make an attempt to give a general description of the situation of the *sangha* over the centuries. They stress lineage, but do not provide any overview of religious institutions at all. They provide didactic narratives driven by a single underlying motive: the triumph of a pure religious tradition, thanks to orthodox lineage of monks and meritorious kings. They focus on successive lines of monastic

teachers many of whom were also known as writers of comments on the scriptures and as translators (*nissaya*). The chronicles signal corrupting influences on the *sangha* and vaguely refer to shameless, fake, or corrupted monks, but their essential message is that at any time there were *sangha-daws* (venerable monks) who truly followed the precepts taught by the Buddha and thus ensured the faithful transmission of the *dhamma* thanks to royal protection.

Monks' perceptions of Bodawphaya's religious policy

What do these three chronicles have to say on King Bodawphaya's outstanding religious policy? One could expect especially long chapters from the two later authors who must have had an excellent knowledge of what had been going on during the thirty-seven years of Bodawphaya's reign.

Remarkably, one finds that the authors of the three chronicles give only a limited account of Bodawphaya's religious work. For our three authors, the most important event was the triumph of the Two-shoulder (*ayon*) over the One-shoulder (*atin*) party. It makes up a quarter of what the *Sasana-linkaya* has to say with regard to Bodawphaya's policy in the field of religion and two thirds of what the *Sasanavamsa* says.⁴⁹ In the case of the *Vamsadipani*, Mèthi Sayadaw is *only* talking about the reformation of the *sangha* during Bodawphaya's time, which is coherent as this was essentially the subject he wanted to deal with while writing his work.

As the *Sasana-linkaya* and *Sasanavamsa* are works with a more general scope, they will be dealt with first. The contents of the *Sasana-linkaya's* chapters concerning Bodawphaya's reign can be summarized as follows:

(1) Before he underwent the consecration ceremony, Bodawphaya wanted to put into order the religious and administrative affairs of the country. Thinking that the One-shoulder party had been afraid to expose its arguments under former kings, in 1782, he trusted a widely respected minister with an investigative mission in the monasteries. The supporters of the One-shoulder should come forward and

speak out. But, as the king noted with some disappointment, the One-shoulder merely confessed its error so that the king endorsed the Two-shoulder doctrine.

(2) The foundation of Amarapura, a new capital, according to a prophecy of the Buddha.

(3) Prosperity and success following the king's consecration ceremony

(4) The appointment of guardians of the religion (*sasana-pyu / sasanabaing*) who had the mission to purify the religion; at first Bodawphaya appointed four elder *sayadaws* as *sasanabaing*, soon enlarging the group to include a total of twelve *sayadaws*, finally handing over the purification of the *sangha* to the Maung-daung Sayadaw.

(5) The Maung-daung Sayadaw: the king calls him to the capital where the young monk resides first in a provisionally built monastery near the Sin-kyo-shwe-gu; the vow taken by the Maung-daung Sayadaw, after he was appointed *sasanabaing* in 1788, to purify the religion; the works written by the Maung-daung Sayadaw himself; a list of twenty-three works that were translated by the Maung-daung Sayadaw among the 253 books that were brought from India and Sri Lanka.

(6) Atula, a highly respected monk in the times of Alaungphaya, the king's father, defends the One-shoulder doctrine, basing himself on a text called the *Culagandhi*. He is defeated in a discussion with other *sayadaws* because he is unable to give satisfactory answers to their questions.

The *Sasanavamsa* follows the order of presentation of the *Sasana-linkaya* and literally copied the points (1), (2), and (4). It gives a very elaborate description of Atula's triple defeat, illustrating the nature of every single defeat with a story. Regarding the information on the Maung-daung Sayadaw, the *Sasanavamsa* is less precise. It does not recall particular points such as the conquest of Arakan and the construction of pagodas that are mentioned in point (4) of the *Sasana-linkaya*. Some other details are also left aside by the author of the *Sasanavamsa*.⁵⁰

None of the two chronicles contains any information on the king's religious mind, his convictions and ideas on change and reform, on his meritorious works such as the construction of the monumental pagoda in Mingun, on the calendar reform, or on the steady copying of the *Tipitaka*. Nothing is said on the administrative enquiries that had such a great impact on the revenue policy. Regarding the history of the *sangha*, the way that the king's policy of monastic reform developed is distorted by the fact that Bodawphaya is only portrayed as somebody who was glad to see the unity of the *sangha* reestablished regarding the division between the One-shoulder and Two-shoulder factions.

The *Vamsadipani* is, as we have seen, quite a different work from the foregoing. Mèthi Sayadaw was himself a prominent actor in the *sangha* reformation initiated by King Bodawphaya and his book serves the purpose to put himself and his king in a long line of kings and monks who contributed to reform and to the purification of the monastic order. This is clearly expressed in § 115 with the king's reflection upon the history of the *sasana* and in § 122 with Mèthi Sayadaw's own reflection upon the history of the *sasana* previous to their taking action.⁵¹ Mèthi Sayadaw's account is particularly valuable as it provides us with some detailed and practical information on the action undertaken by the reformers. Two thirds of what he says on religious policy in the 1780s concerns his own mission in Taungngu.

King Bodawphaya's meditation on the *sasana* as expressed in Mèthi Sayadaw's account recalls the action of preceding meritorious kings such as Dhammasoka, Devanampiyatissa, Vättagamani, and Sirisankhabodhi Parakkamabahu in India and Sri Lanka, and King Anoratha and Dhammazedī in Myanmar, who all figure as reformers in the Theravada historical record. This is likely the way that the king indeed saw his own action and it is a bit more than we may find in the *Sasana-linkaya* and the *Sasanavamsa*. But it does obviously not reflect the full scope of the king's religious ideas that we may learn about in other sources.

Mèthi Sayadaw summarizes the purification of the *sasana* undertaken by the king in a short paragraph stating that it focused on monks who did not wear their robes properly, the so called *acaryavadin* monks who merely followed their teachers (this group is identical with the *atin* or One-shoulder faction), and monks who were unfrocked because they lived by practicing medicine and astrology.

A general analysis of the contents of the three chronicles underscores our initial statement that there is a vast gap between the information on Bodawphaya's religious policy provided in the royal orders on the one hand, and in the religious chronicles on the other hand. In the context of religious reform, the three monastic authors essentially paid attention to the suppression of the One-shoulder *gaing* whose practice was seen as being in contradiction with the *vinaya*. But, as we have seen in the royal orders, the *sasana* reformation and the suppression of non-conformists appear as a much more entangled affair than the religious chronicles do reveal.

MONASTIC WORLD: FACING A COMPLEX REALITY

At this point of his investigation, the historian faces two major questions. The first one is of a historiographical nature, the second one is historical. The first question is how do the chronicles rhetorically construct a conflict that, in their eyes, was a major issue for the existence of the *sasana*? The second question is how do we have to imagine the reality of the monastic world of Burma at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century?

The start of an answer to the first question is that the strategy of the religious authors was to simplify and nail down the situation of the *sangha* in eighteenth century Burma to a conflict between, on the one hand, pure monks who faithfully stick to the letter of the scriptures which they apply and, on the other, corrupt monks who can only refer to their lineage of teachers or to apocryphal texts to legitimize themselves. Despite this artificial dichotomy, the religious chronicles suggest (and the royal orders consistently confirm this impression) that the

sangha was, at that time, of a composite, rather than divided, nature.

Before we proceed, we have to be aware that while investigating monastic variance and the debate on orthodoxy inside the early modern *sangha* in Burma (and this author thinks that the problem has not been clearly addressed), we only hear the voices of the “winners.” We do not hear the voice of those who lost the contest. This does not mean that the losers had nothing to say and their books did not exist. What we know for sure is that Bodawphaya systematically burnt the books written by non-conformists⁵². Books that existed may have been rare at any time. At the beginning of the twentieth century, unorthodox books were hidden away⁵³ and may probably have completely disappeared by now as dissident monks faced an increasingly hostile environment since the nineteenth century.

Authority of the texts versus authority of the teachers

Let us now turn to the argument of the chroniclers. Particular use will be made of the *Vamsadipani* as its account is more elaborate than the two other chronicles. Mèthi Sayadaw writes that at the end of the seventeenth century, there were three separate monastic factions in Burma: “1. The hat-wearing faction of *gamavasi* monks; 2. The Tum One-shoulder lineage that did not wear hats;⁵⁴ 3. The faction of the Two-shoulder Theravada of Shin Vicittalankara⁵⁵ from Taungngu.⁵⁶ What does he tell us about these factions?

Much more even than the later authors of the *Sasana-linkaya Satam* and the *Sasanavamsa*, Mèthi Sayadaw wants to point out that at many occasions in the past, the Theravada orthodoxy that stood in the succession of Moggaliputtatissa had been threatened by monks who did not want to apply the full set of rules that had been laid down for the members of the order. Despite all the vicissitudes of the centuries, this orthodoxy had been maintained in India, Sri Lanka, Ramañadesa, and Burma thanks to kings who, like Asoka, Vättagamani, Parakkamabahu, Anoratha, or Dhammazedī had

intervened on their own or on behalf of true monks to purge the *sangha* of undesirable elements. The legitimacy of this monastic tradition was based on a succession of teachers who had fulfilled the requirements of the disciplinary texts to the letter. At any time, says Mèthi, the orthodox monks could claim for their own cause the authority of the texts and in Mèthi's eyes (and the eyes of his equally fundamentalist colleagues), it was the reliance on the scriptures coupled with a faithful line of teachers that endowed the reformers with the weapon to destroy any claim to legitimacy of their adversaries.

In eighteenth century Burma, we are led to believe that the opposition between orthodoxy and dissident monks crystallized in a conflict over the monastic dress code. Regarding this formal matter, Mèthi wanted to convince an elite public of his rightful arguments derived, as they were, from the scriptures and their commentaries and from a legitimate lineage. He did not want to portray the rival factions nor did he intend to describe the contemporary monastic variety as a social reality. In a historical perspective, his contrast of good and bad monks is a poor format that does not adjust to changing historical situations because it does not need to do so to impress his readers. Dissidence, schism, non-conformism, and heresy were evils that remained always partly hidden. Whatever form they may have taken over the centuries, the chroniclers reduced them, confused them, and ultimately fused them into a typology that was borrowed from the Tipitaka and its commentaries.

Once we realize that Mèthi's *Vamsadipani* is not a dispassionate account of religious history, but a powerful piece of rhetoric to mark points in a war for legitimacy against adversaries who may have been stronger and more resisting than is sometimes suggested in the chronicles, we may go on to reflect on the second historical question.

**Knowing the *sangha*:
confronting the past and its reconstruction**

When we look at divergence and variance not as an evil (i.e., as a problem to be solved), but as an enduring feature of the monastic society, we may wonder what we can know about the social reality of the *sangha* in eighteenth century Burma. And if we set aside for a moment the community of those who, like our chronicle writers, occupied the moral high ground of orthodoxy (and about whom we know basically not very much), then who were the others, their adversaries? Neither Mèthi nor the later chroniclers give explicit information on them and we are left to imagine who they were and how many they were.

Mèthi's preferred term to discount his adversaries is *acaryavadin* ("someone who adheres to the doctrine of the teachers"), because those he sketches as his main adversaries, the One-shoulder faction, had no other authority to refer to as their own teachers (and apocryphal texts such as the *Culagandhi*). But lineage alone could not legitimize a tradition. In that regard, Mèthi reflects pure Bodawphayan thought of the early reign (as it is variously found in the royal orders). Any tradition without a textual basis in the scriptures discredited itself in the King's, just as in Mèthi's, eyes.

In all the contemporary Burmese chronicles, we find a series of terms that are used alternately and vaguely synonymously to refer to heteropractic monks. The most common one is the unobtrusive term "*gamavasi*"⁵⁷ whose actual meaning is not resuscitated by a literal translation as "village-" or "town-dweller." "*Gamavasi*" in Burmese religious literature are monks who live in close contact with lay people.⁵⁸ The *gamavasi* may frequently be called so in opposition to monks labelled as *araññavasi* who, it is implied, follow a stricter style of monastic life. But in many instances, such as the donations of food made by the kings to the monks, the collective use of *gamavasi* and *araññavasi* merely refers to all the monks. Beyond the familiar definition of the *araññavasi* monk⁵⁹, *araññavasi* are also frequently those who follow the *dhutanga* (ascetic practices).⁶⁰

A lack of respect for the observance of the full set of rules is described in the scriptures as a lack of shame. *Alajji* or “shameless,” (or combined in the stronger expression *alajji-dussila*) may be the single most frequent qualifier in our texts for monks further described as corrupt. Their “tradition,” so to say, was derived from the *chabbagiya* monks who, at the time of Lord Buddha himself, had opted for not following a certain number of rules. Mèthi Sayadaw also refers to the Vajji monks, who were at the origin of the first dissent in the community. From a historic point of view, these references are rhetoric figures rather than historic precedents though in their vagueness they obviously keep a grain of truth and arguable potential.

As pointed out, Mèthi fits the members of the *sangha* into three factions. But the world of the Burmese *sangha* in the eighteenth century was more extraordinarily diversified than Mèthi would concede. The hat-wearing monks, for example, were not a single unified group. When Alaungphaya called for the unity of all monks under the authority of Atula-yasa and wanted them all to adopt the doctrine of Gunabhilankara⁶¹, the Tum village sayadaw (i.e., the leader of the One-shoulder faction) mentions round hat-wearing monks, flat hat-wearing monks, and monks wearing headgears like the *yathe* (hermits). Besides them, there were monks who were carrying red or white fans⁶². Mèthi roughly identifies the One-shoulder faction with the monks who also bound their chest (*yin si* or *yin-phwè*). If this is historically fully correct, it is interesting to note that a monastic dress code that remained popular and acceptable in Thailand in different historical circumstances became the outward sign of heteropraxy and nonconformity in Burma.

The most bedeviled image of the heterodox and heteropractic monk in the Burmese accounts is the Ari (*arañ*) monk. The Ari monks figure as fully corrupt and immoral people for the first time in the accounts on early Pagan history, but the few lines that portray them were written centuries later.⁶³ Historians have since long attempted to put right the picture.⁶⁴ In any case, the popular cliché of the scandalous Ari

monk became another tool of rhetoric in the fight for unity brandished against a diffuse front of adversaries.

The royal orders also contain a number of other terms that refer to specific monastic traditions that have still to be closely investigated. One somewhat mysterious group is the “*Ti-si mi-nhet*,”: the “drum beating and fire eating (?)”⁶⁵ monks.” The appellation “*Mo-ti Mhan-si*” likely refers to the eponymous Mo-ti and Mhan-si monasteries, but we are left guessing the particularities of their inhabitants. A slightly more comprehensible term is “*pwè-kyaung*,” literally festival monastery, which is commonly associated with the *gamavasi* monks.

The picture of a monastic world of diversity gets even more colorful when we turn away from categories of monks and have a look at texts that list particular faults against the *vinaya*. In this regard, the late fifteenth-century Kalyani inscriptions are extremely instructive and it is bewildering that late nineteenth-century royal orders contain a quite similar enumeration of various socio-professional activities and divergent dress customs of members of the *sangha*. This similarity underscores that there were traditions, which have by now disappeared, that had a long life under the Burmese monarchy. Different factions of monks may have had different ways to pass monastic examinations (ROB 14 April 1807). Indeed, difference did not necessarily mean a notorious lack of discipline among the dissidents.

How can we fit all this into a general picture when no single source helps us to clearly do so? It is obviously a challenge to take up a more complex approach of the past than the one that orthodox authors want to convey to us.

Take for example astrology and alchemy that can be interpreted as marginal activities on the sideline of monastic life and as a picturesque detail in a larger picture. There were likely no factions of monk astrologers or monastic schools of alchemy. But the practice of martial arts and of magic and medicine (ascribed to the *pwè-kyaung* monks) may well have been part of elaborate traditions of particular monasteries.⁶⁶ It

is striking that when the chronicles refer to the Ari monks or other heteropractic monks that were unfrocked by kings, they state that the kings put them into their armies or posted them as elephant keepers. This would be a profound humiliation but can not be called a harsh punishment. Why should the kings affect men to such posts if they were not useful and experienced in such functions? However speculative this may sound, one may wonder if there is not a connection with the martial arts tradition of certain monasteries and the deployment of unfrocked monks in the military service groups.

To further sharpen our perception of monastic realities, we should turn once more to the case of Atula-yasa, the former *sasanabaing* and favorite of Alaungmintayagyi (1752-1760). Atula's common name was Nga Pan Htwe. He was, as we said earlier, exiled under Sinbyushin (1763-1776) and remained in exile under Singu's reign (1776-1781). At the place where he had been exiled (apparently at a place called Ok-shit-kye), Atula again assembled followers around him, thus forming a *gaing*. Nothing further is known about his activities there. But Mèthi Sayadaw, quoting oral sources, says that Atula's own *gaing* (*atin* or *acaryavadin*, according to the writers) had thrown him out because he had embezzled funds of lay people in the time of Alaungphaya when he passed judgments in monastic and civil disputes (VD § 187, Pranke 2004: 257). In 1784, Bodawphaya summoned Atula to explain his ideas and discuss them with a group of monks under the supervision of five senior monks who were religious examiners.⁶⁷

In the religious chronicles, the presentation of this showdown between the orthodox monks in power and Atula who had spent close to twenty years in the wilderness suggests indeed, as P. Pranke writes, a "show trial." In the words of our hard line reformists, Atula was repeatedly pointed out as a liar and as a heretic. He was humiliated and suffered a crushing defeat.

However the impression we get is very different when we have a look at the few royal orders referring to this case (ROB 21₁, 21₂, 23, 24, [25] April, [25 April], 26 April 1784).⁶⁸

The royal orders suggest an extraordinary muddle and the part of the story we may reconstruct from them ends with an anti-climax. The following is an exercise at summarizing what information is found in these orders.

It seems that at first Bodawphaya had given an order to interrogate Atula with reference to scriptural evidence (regarding his doctrine). The result of this interrogation had to be submitted with a judgment on Atula's case. The documents repeat several times that Atula had been initially exiled because of a petition (*metta-sa*) sent by a couple of monks to king Sinbyushin. We also learn that the mother of King Singu wanted to donate a monastery to Atula and that the petitioners had stopped her from doing so. As for Bodawphaya, he wanted to know why exactly Atula had been considered as being "outside the religion" and why he had been sent to the forest. As the report the king received remained unsatisfactory, he angrily recalled that Atula had not been exiled accidentally. He complained that the writers of the report did not speak the truth and refused to come up with a decision on Atula's case. He then instructed the *Mahadan-wun* (through whom all the orders of the king concerning religious matters ran), to insist that a board of examiners (the *sa-me-saya*, among whom was his chief reformer, the Maung-daung Sayadaw) continuously attend the interrogation. Apparently, the reporting monks were equivocating and the examiners had remained slightly evasive. Nonetheless, a couple of days later in a formal order ([25] April 1784), the king, recalling Atula's nefarious reliance on the apocryphal *Culagandhi*, portrayed him as a heretic (*adhammavadi*), a "thorn in the flesh of the *sasana*." But it was also because of a second *parajika* offence about which we learn no further details that he was condemned as being "outside the religion" (*sasana-to mha apa*).⁶⁹ Just like some of his close followers, Atula *alias* Nga Pan Htwe was to be defrocked and exiled to the dangerous jungles in the north. So far so good.

Then not later than the next day, the religious examiners themselves (who had written the report and pronounced the judgment), petitioned the king to pardon Atula and his

followers. The petition was granted! None of this is mentioned in any of the three chronicles.⁷⁰

The least one can say is that in terms of pushing a reform agenda tending to eliminate nonconformism, this is a curious end to a major initiative taken by the king. Indeed, the king's formal order had also stated that when Atula's students were allowed to stay around the capital, they would corrupt the lay population and the monks "who would drown in the four hells."⁷¹

There are more strange aspects that need to be pointed out. In the above-mentioned royal order, it was not only Atula and some of his followers who were condemned. The same order contains as well an ample list of thirty-four individuals⁷² (laymen and monks) and comprised the population of sixteen monasteries who are referred to as "fake monks who are like *sasana-paccuttika* with wrong views" and who were condemned to be defrocked and to join the elephant fodder collecting service groups at the court. If we consider that any of these monasteries would have had, say, a modest population of five to ten monks, the total of men condemned to cut the grass for the elephants would be over one hundred.

Unlike what the religious chronicles describe as the inevitable defeat of a lonely and failing defendant, the royal orders point to a large-scale attempt at a radical cleansing operation. The fact that all (!) these men were pardoned just a day later and without any explicit reason given, raises questions that are not easily answered. However, there are a number of things that we learn from this quick look at the way that the reform was handled.

The down-to-earth reality of monastic variance was more complex than suggested in the chronicles. Between the lines, the religious chronicles suggest that the orthodoxy defended by their authors was something that any well-intentioned Theravadin would agree with. They also impress the idea of an orthodox mainstream faction that had been successful in the long run because it identified itself with a reliable transmission of the texts and an uninterrupted

lineage of faithful monks that set itself in the tradition of the Mahavihara and referred to Moggaliputtatissa. But the simple fact that the king (with the support of hard-line reformers like Mèthi) tried to unfrock monks by the hundreds in a single day shows that dissident monks were not just a marginal group. Further questions appear: How could such radical decisions be practically enforced? Is the collective pardon a day later not a clear indication that there was a resistance to the king's general policy? What we see in Atula's case may be interpreted as a classical compromise. The king backtracked on the level of punishment and Atula and his close followers who had nonetheless been defrocked, disappeared from public life and ultimately faded away.⁷³ But was it not the radicalism, which was the order of the day at the beginning of Bodawphaya's reign that was the precise reason the reform later failed?

Going on with our analysis, we run into another, much more perplexing fact. In the above mentioned list of men worthy to be defrocked, we also find the names of the two monks who had written the petition to King Sinbyushin that, in the first place, had landed Atula in his jungle exile fifteen or twenty years before! Both of them, U Pum (from Bhumkyaw monastery⁷⁴) and the In-gyin-pin Saya were moreover still directly involved with the case two or three days before as they belonged to the group of monks who had to do the interrogation of Atula. Another interrogator, Shin Janinda, was also to be defrocked. This is indeed mystifying and throws once more a strange light on the interrogation process. We naturally wonder what was going on behind the scenes. Was this all due to the king's earlier dissatisfaction or to his occasional arbitrariness? Does it reflect basic disagreements on how the reform leaders engineered the reform process? The Sudhamma Reformation was not only the implementation of a formal process of moral and disciplinary restoration, but is also visibly worked as a political process where the struggle for the definition of orthodoxy hit the shifting ground of daily human politics.

The fundamentalist idea conveyed by the religious chronicles that there were clear-cut divisions between monastic factions and that monks fit into the compartmentalization of pure and corrupt monks simply does not stand up to the facts. It is plainly wrong. So the history of Theravada Buddhism in Burma should not, as has been generally done, be paraphrased along the lines of the religious chronicles.

CONCLUSION

To understand the struggle for religious legitimacy in the time of King Bodawphaya (and to ultimately understand its partial failure), we need to take a critical approach to our foremost sources, the religious chronicles, and to contextualize their composition. Regarding the period of Bodawphaya's reign, we have a major alternative source, the royal orders who, for this king, have survived in a sizable number⁷⁵.

Bodawphaya saw the *sangha* in crisis and felt the need for more discipline, more control, more unity, more education, and better texts. To understand the challenge that awaited the king who wanted to unify the *sangha* (and to do what his immediate predecessors had greatly failed to do!), we have to appreciate in a fair measure the complex social reality of the *sangha* which is, regrettably, only hinted at in most sources. The resistance the king had to confront, the contradictions he had to resolve -- it is only his capitulation after more than twenty years of strenuous engagement that gives an idea of it all.

In the field of religious historiography, historians confront the issue of a monastic debate where a royally acclaimed orthodoxy categorized monks according to a very simple scheme of "they" and "us." This is hampering our reconstruction of the religious world in the time of King Bodawphaya. But it is also vastly challenging to take stock of these problems and look forward to promising research on Burmese Theravada history in the near future.

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Abbreviations

SV	<i>Sasanavamsa</i> , see PAÑÑASAMI
SL	<i>Sasana-linkaya</i> , see MAHADHAMMA THINGYAN
VD	<i>Vamsadipani</i> , see MĒTHI
ROB	<i>Royal Orders of Burma</i> , see THAN TUN 1983-90
MMOS	Myanma Man: Ok-khyup-pum Satam, see U TIN
KB	Konbaungset Maha-yazawin-dawgyi; see <i>ibidem</i>

Footnotes

¹Than Tun, ed., *The Royal Orders of Burma (1598–1885)*. 10 vols. (Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1983–1990).

² The expression “monastic reform movement” is conventional. What we see, from a historical point of view, is a transformation of the *sangha* starting in the eighteenth century and evolving over the nineteenth century. The term “reform movement” seems valid if we look at change merely from the point of view of individual actors such as kings or monks, the way events are usually described from a top-down perspective. But its use can be critically questioned if we see change inside the *sangha* also as driven by a broader intellectual

endeavor and under social constraint. This approach has been regretfully neglected but can be, for example, empirically sensed in descriptions such as Scott's depiction of inner-*sangha* conflicts in the third quarter of the nineteenth century in Lower Burma (Shway Yoe 1989, 149–52).

³ King Bodawphaya was the third son of Alaungphaya (born Aung Zeya), the founder of the Konbaung dynasty. He was born on 11 March 1745 and died on 5 June 1819. He reigned thirty-seven years, from 11 February 1782 until the moment he passed away. Bodawphaya is a posthumous name (“Venerable Grandfather”); the king was known as Badon in his own time and appears most frequently in his orders with his title “Sinbyumyashin Bhawa-shin Mintayagyi” (Lord of Many White Elephants, Lord of Life, Righteous King). Besides his official title, the *Vamsadipani* mentions the king as the “donor of the Aung-mye-loka pagoda.” The *Sasana-linkaya Satami* refers to him as “Sagaing Min” (Prince Sagaing), the title he bore before he became king. The *Sasanavamsa* (1952, 134) calls Bodawphaya “the king’s second son who built Ratanasikha [=Ratanasingha, Shwebo]”; this should correctly be: “the second son of the king who built . . .” Nagabo Hteik Tin Htwe (1967, 274) says he was the fourth son and Bode (1966, 74) calls him the fifth son of Alaungphaya!

⁴ Regarding Bodawphaya’s religious policy, Western language accounts include Mendelson (1975, 74–77), Stewart (1949), Than Tun (1960), Ray (2002, 231–36), and Ferguson (1975, 196–208). Pruitt (1994, 23–30) gives a precious account on *nissaya* literature under Bodawphaya’s reign.

⁵ People familiar with Myanmar history know that the quartet of kings that have always enjoyed the favor of writers and columnists are Anoratha, Dhammazedi, Bayinnaung, and Mindon. Though J. P. Ferguson follows most earlier and a number of later authors by using a range of emotional and superlative terms regarding Bodawphaya (e.g. “one of the most mercurial, opinionated, and powerfully dramatic monarchs in Burmese history”; “a king who relished the exercise of an iron hand”), he characterizes him justifiably as a “master at using Buddhist symbolism” and considers him as “a serious Buddhist rather than an egocentric showman politician” (1975, 200–207, *passim*).

⁶ See Ryuji Okudaira’s studies on the *Manugye Dhammathat* of 1782 (Okudaira 2000).

⁷ I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Don Stadtner who drew my attention to P. Pranke’s recent translation of the *Vamsadipani* and

to Patrick Pranke (University of Michigan) for transmitting a copy of his Ph.D. dissertation. Thanks to its learned comments, Pranke's analysis of the *Vamsadipani* is a milestone in our investigations on Konbaung-period *sangha* history.

⁸ See Mèthi Sayadaw (1967), Mahadhamma Thingyan (1956), and Paññasami (1956).

⁹ Professor Than Tun's *passim* notes regarding Bodawphaya's religious policy are essential reading. Of particular interest are the introduction to volume VII of the *Royal Orders of Burma (ROB)* and the note to *ROB* 29 July 1812.

¹⁰ The two best-known contemporary western accounts on Bodawphaya's reign are Michael Symes' sumptuous account of the English embassy to the court of Amarapura in 1795 (Symes 1800) and Father Sangermano's book on the Burmese empire (Sangermano 1893). Sangermano lived from 1783 to 1806 as a Catholic missionary in Burma and composed an essentially negative description of Bodawphaya's personality. Symes' account is sympathetic and open-minded regarding the Burmese court. The unofficial account of his 1802 mission, on the other hand, offers a depressing description of the kingdom with sharp criticisms of the king. In their appreciation of Bodawphaya's reign, Western historians were strongly influenced by the anti-Burmese tendency of British sources on the origins of the first Anglo-Burmese war related to Burma's conquest of Arakan and its penetration into Manipur and Assam during Bodawphaya's reign.

¹¹ "The opposition was tacit but strong. After his death his reforms were forgotten except some stray references as to how the religion suffered through some whimsical reforms" (Than Tun 1983–1990, vol. VII: xvi).

¹² I do not share Ferguson's view that, "in terms of the *sangha*, one could conclude, as many have, that Bodawphaya really did unify the *sangha* at last" (1975: 208).

¹³ Orders to enforce the respect of the monastic rules were not an innovation of King Bodawphaya. We find appeals to a greater respect of the *vinaya* in seventeenth-century royal orders (see for example *ROB* 5 August 1636) as well and they were likely issued by kings at any time since Pagan. What is new is the massive effort undertaken since Bodawphaya's reign and the ever more detailed injunctions by the kings up to Thibaw listing what monks should abstain from doing.

¹⁴ The date of the creation of this council is not clear. One may note that the lists of the twelve *sayadaus* in *ROB* 27 June 1786 and in *Sasana-linkaya* (1954: 198) which refers vaguely to the year 1784 are not identical.

¹⁵ Regarding the duties of the *Mahadan-wun*, see *Scott British Burma Gazetteer* 1900 (Part I, vol. II: 5).

¹⁶ We may think of such progress in terms of the following and the implantation of the reform sects (such as Shwe-kyin nikaya, Hnggetwin, or Dwara-nikaya). It may also be traced through the eyes of the general public. Most nineteenth-century travel accounts of Burma provide a generally positive picture of the lifestyle of the monkish population. Most writers of the colonial period may not have spent a long time in a monastery, but the contrast is striking with some contemporary descriptions of monasteries in northern Thailand and the surrounding mountainous Tai areas (Shan country, Yunnan) which had not yet been penetrated by the reform movement either from the Thai or Burmese side.

¹⁷ See for example *VD* 153, *Pranke* 251, or *ROB* 15 June 1784.

¹⁸ On a mission of six (namely mentioned) Sinhalese monks who brought ten relics to Amarapura in 1800, see *Sasanavamsa* 138; *Sasana-linkaya* 204–205. The two chronicles do not refer to what followed the return of the six monks to Sri Lanka. Regarding the frequent arrival of Sinhalese monks at the court, Burmese missions to Sri Lanka and the intense relations with the king, see *ROB* 12 and 18 March 1806; 1 and 29 May 1806; 3, 4, 6, and 30 July 1807; 21 and 31 January 1810; 4, 5, 9, and 21 February 1810; 26 December 1810; 3 and 10 February 1811. Of particular interest is the order of 16 February 1811, which refers to a Sinhalese monk who wanted Bodawphaya to install a new king in Sri Lanka, and an order of 29 July 1812 that refers to a Sinhalese mission that called for Bodawphaya's support to reform the *sangha* in Sri Lanka.

¹⁹ Readers may appreciate Bodawphaya's original voice in the following extract: "In the treatise they have submitted, the respected monks make reference to the Pali scriptures. Concerning the Pali *atthakatha* [commentaries], they follow the tradition by referring to the texts that were written by Buddhaghosa. It is said in Buddhaghosa's biography that because his teacher knew that Buddhaghosa had ideas such as 'Is my teacher as qualified as I am? Was Buddha also as qualified as I am?', he punished him by sending him to Sri Lanka to copy the Pitakat. It is also said that Buddhaghosa burnt all the Sinhalese manuscripts and left a Pitakat composed by himself. If we base ourselves on what is said about an action that sprang out

of pure arrogance and that was unthinkable, nay, should not have been thought about, not even by Sakra-Brahma, less so by a human being [such as] Buddhaghosa, it cannot be that Buddhaghosa would have written according to what Buddha said and one should not accept that what he has written as true. One should consider that Buddhaghosa wrote according to his own conceptions. The respected teachers should submit a treatise to clarify this issue." *ROB* 30 December 1811 (Than Tun, *ROB*, vol. VII, 266). This seems to be Bodawphaya's personal interpretation of the beginning of chapter three of the *Buddhaghosuppatti* (Gray 1998).

²⁰ The precise geographic term used is "Tambawati Tharekhetaya," which can be reasonably interpreted as Upper Burma in this context.

²¹ Full moon day, the last day of the month, the eighth day of the waxing moon and the eighth day of the waning moon. There was nothing extraordinarily bigoted in the respect of religious holidays as such.

²² Besides purely religious matters, current practices at the court (ceremonies and rituals) also had to be checked against authoritative Sanskrit texts. The acquisition of texts by several missions sent abroad (northern India, particularly Benares) is a well-known fact of Bodawphaya's reign. Nothing precise, though, is known on the eventual transmission of texts from Sri Lanka at this time.

²³ A historian may consider the historical success of the Mahavihara School in the long term as the political triumph of a particular school which mustered enough lay support to eliminate competing doctrines and practices. Theravadins would rather historicize this development as the progressive triumph of the "pure doctrine" represented by their school. But there is no infallible authority or instance of appeal in Theravada Buddhism that can be invoked to state the correctness of a doctrine. In terms of "true" doctrine and "true" practice (orthodoxy and orthopraxy), only particular texts and a consensus on basic tenets of belief and interpretation can be referred to.

While the schematic representation of *sangha* history in the chronicles, discussed in the second part of this article, appears occasionally like intellectual dishonesty due to its "pure"/"corrupted" molding of monastic behavior, discussions based on the scriptures and the commentarial literature were, on the other hand, hair-splitting (see for instance *Vamsadipani* § 110). Regarding the correct translation of Burmese terms referring to variant forms of monasticism, the terms

“schism” and “heresy” occasionally raise problems as the Buddhist authors deal more with formal questions than matters of doctrine. A schism involves a formal division in the monastic order involving at least eight monks that secede collectively, a heresy generally points to divergences in essential matters of belief and doctrine. ‘Heresy’ seems to be a perfect translation for *adhammavada*, but as far as I can see, its use in Burmese historiography does not systematically refer to matters of doctrinal beliefs.

²⁴ Any statement regarding this matter is hypothetical. That the result of the “Sudhamma reformation” under Bodawphaya was a mitigated success is my working hypothesis that is inspired by the fact that immense efforts were apparently still needed in the later Konbaung period to discipline and bring into conformity the *sangha*.

²⁵ Mendelson defines the Zoti as “Shan Paramat Sect”, a definition I would not agree with. He identifies them with the doctrinal heresy of “the Paramats” established by a certain Shin Tabaung in Sinbyugyun in the early nineteenth century as described by Scott. Scott’s short account is for the least confusing; see also Ferguson who pointed to other inconsistencies in Scott’s descriptions regarding Bodawphaya (1975: 207, fn. 1). It is doubtful that the term ‘paramat’ could or can be applied to any kind of sect as the term (as opposed to *sammuti*) qualifies the way a textual meaning is understood. Mendelson is right to say that “the matter is far from clear” but it is not surprising that Stewart does not mention them during Bodawphaya’s reign. (1975: 74–76 and glossary)

²⁶ The date of this order is certainly wrong but was provisionally kept by Than Tun. By its content, it is clearly an order of Bodawphaya.

²⁷ On the *ganthipada* texts, see Pranke’s comment (2004: 293, note 156).

²⁸ In an order of 8 May 1801, it is said that this curriculum was the one that had been used during the reigns of the ten kings of the Nyaung Yan dynasty (1597–1752).

²⁹ For references on the monastic education system, see Cho Cho Thein (2000: 44–47).

³⁰ Supporting a corrupt monk is a demeritorious act for a layman. Knowingly supporting such a monk could be a sign that there was an exchange of special favours between the layman and the monk.

³¹ See also Cho Cho Thein (2000: 45) quoting Than Htut *History of the Monastic Education System in Myanmar* (Yangon: 1980: 128–29).

³² Among the orders of Bodawphaya that have come down to us, there are as many orders dealing with the calendar reform than orders

relating to the reformation of monastic life. Together they form a bit more than thirty percent of the surviving orders of Bodawphaya relating to religious matters. On the calendar reform, see Than Tun's comments, *ROB*, vol. IV, introduction.

³³ *Akusalakammappatha*: Life-taking, theft, sensual misbehavior, lying, slander, harsh language, frivolous talk, covetousness, ill-will, and wrong views.

³⁴ Should the Tipitaka be made available to the wider public? King Tharrawaddi (*ROB* 21 November 1837) decided that it should neither be sold nor bought. When a printing press was available, King Mindon (*ROB* 15 August 1873) decided that it should be printed by the thousands, obviously not only for the benefit of the monks.

³⁵ Doubts remained on the identity of religious lands, so that a few decades later, new investigations were undertaken as an early order of King Mindon shows (*ROB* 21 and 22 July 1854). On Burmese sittans, see Trager, Frank N./Koenig William J. 1979. *Burmese Sittans (1764–1826) Records of Rural Life and Administration*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press; Iro, Toshikatsu 1995. 'Rural Administration in late 18th and early 19th century Myanmar' *Aidai Shigaku (Aichi University Historical Journal)* 4: 167-186.

³⁶ The collection became an essential source for the study of Burma's early religious history and for checking chronicle accounts.

³⁷ Several orders relate to the employment of funds from this treasure (*ROB* 19 February, 10, 24, and 28 April 1810).

³⁸ A summary list of works of merit of Bodawphaya that does not only include religious but also public works such as road-building is found in Nagabo Hteik Tin Htwe's *Ratanasiha Konbaung Mahayazawin Akhyin* (1967: 305–8).

³⁹ The Aung-mye-loka pagoda was built between 1781 and 1783; the Shin-byu or Mya-thein-tan pagoda was built between 1802 and 1807, in 1804 work started on the Padanatthan Set-taw-ya pagoda south-east of Mingu. One may also mention the pagodas at the four corners of the palace, the Shwe Kwan-ok at the north-east, the Shwe-saga at the south-east, the Shwe-lin-pin at the south-west and the Sin-kyo-shwe-gu at the north-west. Cf. Cho Cho Thein (2000: 40–43).

⁴⁰ Note the historical "quotation" of Asoka's homonymous monastery.

⁴¹ Sixteen places appear altogether in ten orders of 6, 12, 19, 31 January 1811, 20 and 21 February 1811, 5 and 9 October 1811, 31 December 1811, and 4 January 1812: Candamuni (10), Aung-mye-loka (6), Guggyi (4), Mahamuni (7), Sin-kyo-shwe-gu (7), Shwe-kwan-up (7),

Shwe-saga (6), Shwe-lin-pin (7), Putho-daw-gyi (10), Set-taw-ya (*ou ra*) (10), Shin-phyu (9), Mahabodhi 2 trees (9), Siha-daw (4), Shwe-tant-tit (5), Kaung-laung-daw-gyi (1), and Kaung-mhu-daw (1). The numbers in brackets indicate how many times a place appears in these orders.

⁴² See for example *ROB* 2 January 1820 (King Bagyidaw) and 19 May 1837 (King Tharrawaddy), 16 October 1878 (King Mindon).

⁴³ The use of circular and square scripts was also regulated (see *ROB* 10 May 1806₂)

⁴⁴ Later orders recalling this frequently broken rule are *ROB* 24 January 1825, 20 December 1828, 28 March 1829, 11 July 1837, 8 May 1839, 7 March 1843, and 16 October 1878.

⁴⁵ There is admittedly little evidence for this during Bodawphaya's reign. But an order of 9 August 1837 refers to a sanctuary that had existed since King Bodawphaya's reign. Regarding the granting of a permission for sanctuary, see *ROB* 2 March 1788.

⁴⁶ This is a preliminary study and not all the materials that would have needed investigation have been studied by the author at this moment.

⁴⁷ In the *Sasana-linkaya Satam*, three-quarters of the text deal with the history of Buddhism in Burma.

⁴⁸ The author of this paper would like to stress that he used B.C. Law's translation of the *Sasanavamsa* only.

⁴⁹ The *Sasana-linkaya* does not use the king's usual name, Badon. It calls him Sagaing-min, prince of Sagaing, a title later commonly applied to Bagyidaw (1819–1837). Badon *aka* Bodawphaya had stayed for several years in Sagaing prior to his succession on the throne.

⁵⁰ The *Sasanavamsa* does not give the Burmese titles of the monks that the king honoured and to whom he dedicated particular monasteries. It is thanks to these titles that are cited both in the *Sasana-linkaya* that it is possible to identify monks in the royal orders.

⁵¹ Mèthi Sayadaw's monastic name was Paramasirivamsabhidhaja.

⁵² See for example *ROB* 6 July 1799 ordering the destruction of the *Garudhamma Gambhira mhat su* written by Shin Indasara, accused of being a sophist (*vidandavadi*) and of the *Culagandhi* of which copies had to be collected to be burnt.

⁵³ MMOS § 368.

⁵⁴ Tum refers to the village of Tum (Tum-ywa; "Tunna" in the SV) where the Venerable Gunasiri resided. Gunasiri was the "founder" of the *Atin gaing*, the One-shoulder faction (see VD § 111) as he consciously opted for, as Mèthi puts it, the *Acariyavada*.

⁵⁵ On the Venerable Vicittalankara who is not mentioned in any of the other chronicles, see Pranke (2004: 286, note 67).

⁵⁶ Mèthi's triple division suggests at least some of the inner complexity of the *sangha*.

⁵⁷ An investigation of the term "*gamavasi*" (associated with a number of other terms) has been attempted in my "*Araññavasi and Gamavasi – Variant Forms of Buddhist Monasticism in Myanmar*" at the *Buddhist Legacies: Mentalities Interpretations and Practices* conference in Bangkok, Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Centre, 18-20 December 2003. *Forthcoming*.

⁵⁸ This raises a question of right or wrong without necessarily implying an answer. My feeling is that the frequently negative connotation of the term "*gamavasi*" in Burmese historiography (that is referred to in my argument on heteropraxy) remains nonetheless a contextual issue: How is it used? What meaning does the context imply?

⁵⁹ See for example Malalasekera, *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, "*araññaka*"; also *Myanmar-English Dictionary* (1980).

⁶⁰ It is interesting to see that at the very end of the *Vamsadipani*, the author explains that he taught the newly re-ordained monks ascetic practices and he encouraged their use. But he does not explicitly use the term *araññavasi*.

⁶¹ Called Gunasiri in the *Vamsadipani*.

⁶² KB 1989, vol. 2: 63-64. It is in non-religious sources that we occasionally get a slightly more detailed look at the variety of monastic life.

⁶³ The scandal they represent in the eyes of their detractors is sleazy enough to be uncritically carried on in tourist brochures and tease the imagination of casual visitors of Burma.

⁶⁴ One may refer for example to Than Tun 1959, Frasch 1996 or Win Htan Tun 2002.

⁶⁵ This is purely speculative. Professor Than Tun suggests "lantern turning."

⁶⁶ It is said that today the boxing tradition is still carried on in particular monasteries in the Mon and Karen country and in northern Thailand.

⁶⁷ The Ratana-sam-lwat Saya, the Maung-daung Saya Shin Obhasa, Shin Kalyana from Nga-ywa, Shin Parama and Shin Dipa from Salin-gyi.

⁶⁸ Dates in brackets are not indicated in the text, but, as attributed by Than Tun, are strongly suggested by the inner evidence of and the connections between the texts.

⁶⁹ This statement is followed by the damning sentence: "The omniscient Buddha cannot save heretics who remain attached to their wrong [views] because of their exceeding demerit."

⁷⁰ On unconfirmed accounts of Atula being sent naked in a cage down the Irrawaddy, see Ferguson (1975: 197-198).

⁷¹ True, the order of 26 April forbids the followers of Nga Pan Htwe to stay "at the pavilion" which seems to suggest that they had to live the capital.

⁷² Some names are found in the other orders and can be clearly identified as followers of Atula.

⁷³ Four months after the events related above, the king considered that on balance, his engagement for religious peace and for the re-establishment of monastic discipline in the country, unlike his successors', had been successful. He ordered that this should be commemorated in a stone inscription (ROB 28 August 1784).

⁷⁴ *Nota bene* that the name of this monastery is connected to heretics in the *Vamsadipani* and the *Sasanavamsa*.

⁷⁵ Sixty percent of all the royal orders that have come down to us are orders from King Bodawphaya.