

## **AN ANALYSIS OF MANUSCRIPTS BY DR. THAN TUN**

KhinThida Latt\*

### **Abstract**

In the field of History in Myanmar, Dr. Than Tun is well known as the one and only of Myanmar. He himself not only wrote research papers but also supervised others'. Besides, several books and articles by Dr. Than Tun were published, but still his typewritten pages and manuscripts left. The topics in his manuscripts, which are presented in this paper, are very interesting and educative to others. In these manuscripts include historical evidence, cultural History, social affairs and so on. This paper aims to share valuable manuscripts by Dr. Than Tun, a rare type of Myanmar scholar, to researchers, librarians and historians. The method used in this paper is literature survey method.

**Key Words:** rare, valuable, historical, manuscripts, evidence

### **Introduction**

Of the works by Dr. Than Tun from 1948 to 2005, his hand written scripts are presented. In doing so include the rare ones such as Literature and YARZAWIN, Mahatma and India Independence and the old irrigation canals at Kyauk-hse region. And is also described Anyein by Ludu Daw Amar, which Dr. Than Tun translated into English.

In Literature and YAZAWIN, his comparative study of Myanmar literature and Myanmar culture is very interesting to the reader. In Mahatma and India Independence, it is found that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the able one who could successfully lead his people to get Independence. It shows his great intention, which Anyein, a Myanmar culture, can be known all over the world, that he translated it into English. In the old irrigation canals at Kyauk-hse region, it is seen that ancient Myanmar kings were very skilful at dealing with dams and irrigation canals that play an important part in Myanmar cultivation.

As a matter of fact, it is deeply believed that the hand written scripts by Dr. Than Tun should be studied as the national heritage.

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University

### **Objectives of the Study**

- to know about Dr. Than Tun manuscripts
- to support the researchers, faculty members and students for their studies
- to support these manuscripts to historians and scholars

### **Literature and Yazawin**

Sayar-gyi (Dr. Than Tun) wrote comments about Literature and YAZAWIN of Myanmar. In this writing, include the beginning of Myanmar Literature, comparing literature with YAZAWIN and the future prospect of literature. They are presented as particular parts.

It is needed to know when Myanmar began to be able to write and read in the culture. Over a hundred years or two hundred years after writing started, it may have become pithy. The scholars considered that writing and reading came into prominence in Myanmar even in the four century, but in those days, there were still no one called Myanmar on the land of Myanmar. Myanmar people were not able to write before the eleven century.

Generally, literature is a kind of writing style based on inspiration. There are two kinds-prose and verse-in literature. So, it should be deliberated whether the prose of MahaYAZAWINGYI is literary style or not. YAZAWIN may be considered as a collection of short- stories or a record of politics, economics and social affairs of the race concerned. Though it is not created with imagination, it is a touchstone of culture. U Kalar's writing was good and masterly prose, YAZAWIN distinctly includes in Myanmar literature as a part.

The writing style of early Bagan era was brief and had a few words. It became improving in the late Bagan era and its syntax and usage also became long. The kind of verse with four syllables in a paragraph is found on the stone inscription of early Ava era . Guta Vei-hman Kyaung Mogun by Shin Maha Silawonsa is a good model for the poetry form above. The prosody became developing very well in Myanmar literature only in Ava era.

Myanmar literature began with Five Hundred and Fifty Jataka Stories. Every Myanmar people is familiar with these stories and, but their writing

style is so good that it can make the reader interest in them. From it, YAZAWIN was written in poetry form such as Mogun, Aye-gin and so on. Nevertheless, based on only imagination, no one presented deep ideas in those days. On the other hand, the deep ideas based on the events of real life were presented in Egypt literature and Babylon literature.

They expressed the poor's trouble, bad deeds, well striving to get good things and so on. The social affairs of those days can be known through the literature concerned, so those who study YAZAWIN should investigate the poems such as pjou (poem of epic proportions), mo gun; (poem of a significant event), and ei: gjin: (classical poem addressed to a royal child extolling the glory of ancestors), jadu (lyrical ode on the seasons, love, etc.) and jagan (satirical poem).

Comparing with YAZAWIN, literature continues to develop, but no literary forms advanced. It means that the stories from India were presented on the stage of Myanmar in those days, but now, the ones from Europe, India, China, Malaysia and Thailand. As a result, it is said that, though literature develops, no its forms change. Yet, the experience and thought of real life can be more presented than those days. It is firmly believed that they will be able to be more done in text in the future.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mahatma and India Independence**

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the leader of India Independence Movement. He was the able one who bravely participated in revolting against the British, organising his people. He made workers, farmers and the educated take part in the association ruled by the colonial capitalists and native feudal lords. This could cause the movement that change India in any way. It was a thought for Sayargyi (Dr. Than Tun) whether the people nurtured Gandhi or Gandhi led the people to the Independence Movement.

Seeing the events under the British rule, Gandhi wanted to be against the oppression. In this way, he valiantly participated in the movements. As a result, it can be said that there is an interrelation between the leaders Mahatma Gandhi and the people's movements.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Than Tun. "Yazawin". Special Collections, Ludu Library, Mandalay.

Mahatma Gandhi never lost sight of the people. He lived like the poor in India, his country, and considered their problems as his. He came to know that there could be no Independence without the India people and did regard the people must have got determination, but not lose kindness. Then, he addressed that the people could get Independence only when they had the two qualities above- determination and kindness. Gandhi wrote that he himself did not hate the British. He told that the India people would be skilled at home rule when they had helped the British in World War I.

The conflict between Hindu and Muslim in India was an obstacle for getting Independence. So, he did emphasize to join the movements together. And then, Gandhi started the civil disobedience with the Salt March on April 6, 1930. This continued to the succession of the people's strikes and the violence also broke out. Gandhi said that he wouldn't take part in the India movements at India Congress on December 30, 1934. But, in October, 1940, he led the civil disobedience again and proclaimed to drive the British out of India. On August 8, 1942, so did he again. At that time, most of the leaders including Gandhi were arrested. During the five months, 940 people were killed and 1630 people were hurt. On May 6, 1944, Gandhi was released from prison because of his poor health. Though the war ended, the British army did not leave India straightforwardly. Accordingly, in the late 1945, the strikes were continuously called. And, the unrest, violence and starvation started to break out all over the country on November 22, 1945. In the early 1946, the Royal Indian Navy mutiny occurred and so did the workers' strikes in 1947. Under the leadership of Gandhi, the India people could get their independence on August 15, 1947. But, their motherland was divided into two states – India and Pakistan. So, Gandhi had to go on with the activities for India. Then, Gandhi, the leader of India, said that we could not conquer the British with any weapon, but only our mental faculty. As a result, the victory of India is Gandhi's. On the day when India got her Independence, Gandhi was spinning without eating any food. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Than Tun. "Mahatma and India Independence ". Special Collections, Ludu Library, Mandalay.

### **The old irrigation canals at Kyauk-hse region**

Through Myanmar history, It is found that getting enough water has been very important in cultivation since the ancient times. So, the irrigation has been earnestly done in Myanmar since. A Myanmar king very famous for it was the king Anowrahtta in Bagan in the eleven century.

The king Anowrahtta, who founded the First Myanmar Naing Ngan in unite, did emphasize on the farming so that Kyauk-hse region could be called Myanmar's granary. Before his times, it was difficult to cultivate in this region, for it is a hot, dry region. Though there are the rivers such as Myint Nge, Panlong, Zaw-Gyi, Samone in Kyauk-hse region, the cultivation could be done only in Nayon, the third month on Myanmar calendar, for water can be got only in this month. It means that the cultivation depended on rain.

As a result, the king Anawrahtta built the irrigation canals very well in order to develop Kyauk-hse region. It shows that he was farsighted. For the development of Kyauk-hse region, the king built up the four dams-Kin-tar, Nga-line-zin, Pyaung-pyar, Kyee-mae - on the Panlong river, and the three dams-Nwa-tat, Nga-pyaung, Kun-sae - on the Zaw-gyi river.

The British government repaired and upgraded the dams built by ancient Myanmar kings from 1890 to 1905 with the help of modern technology. In the late 1905, as a diverging point of current, the main canals of the Zawgyi river - Ta-mot, Min-yè, Thin-twae, Kun-sae, Nwa-tat-were connected with the small ones that sent out water to the remote fields for cultivation. And, in 1925-26, not only Zee-taw dam but also the dams and irrigation canals of the Panlong river were repaired. Under the British government, especially Kin-tar dam was also done. Only at the original place, the British and today's technicians usually continued to use the dams and irrigation canals built by ancient Myanmar kings. It shows that the Myanmar kings could rightly choose the places for dams.

Besides, the canals in those days could not be equipped with floodgates like nowadays, but in the lowlands, the creeks were made in order to control the overflow of the river. And, the canals were curvedly constructed to protect bank erosion and speed of water flow. As a result, ancient Myanmar

kings' idea concerned with their canals and dams is very admirable to modern people.<sup>3</sup>

### **Anyein**

ANYEIN is a kind of Myanmar entertainment that developed quite recently. Here is the story of its development. Unlike Zat or Yokethay that plays the whole night, an Anyein performance usually begins at 9:00p.m, and it would be over to enjoy it. Elaborate preparations are not necessary to stage this show and a few yards square of open space would suffice. And there are several excuses to get it performed. The sound of Anyein music could easily lead one to its source and to witness on Anyein one does not have to make reservations or to buy tickets. If you do not feel like retiring to bed early or if you find the night stuffy or if you feel that you need a walking exercise, go find an Anyein. The audience would be sitting on mats and you just stand for a few minutes at the edge of the seated crowd and "do the sampling". If you find the performances nice join the crowd. You would be only welcome. And if you allow yourself to stay on till the end of the show, give anyone of these excuses; the Lubyeks were so clever; the nautch-girls know their art very well; they were pretty; their voices so sweet or the songs are so mourning-full and you would be well understood. It is easy to enjoy on Anyein.

An Anyein is a conglomeration of these three; (1) the nautch-girls called Minthamees (2) the male companions called Lubyeks and (3) the music troupe. The girl sings and dances. Her songs are not necessarily composed about love and romance only. She has been given a wide licence. Any topic of popular or current interest could be the theme of her sing. No one has set any limits to the scope of such songs nor such a limitation is considered necessary. Thus there are Anyein songs of love or war, and all social aspects of life, not excluding politics. Then what about Lubyeks? The freedom of speech is theirs and it is the most notable feature of the Myanmar Anyein. In an interval between one spree of singing and dancing and another by the nautch-girl, the male partners of the show talk and act funny. They provide a breather of five

---

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Than Tun. "The old irrigation canals at Kyauk-hse region ". Special Collections, Ludu Library, Mandalay.

to fifteen minutes, and they might talk anything blasphemy, lewdness or satire, even to ridicule the liege lord.

Now you would like to know what are the occasions that called for an Anyein performance. Again, there is no limit, the excuse is there when a child get to be named or a special man is employed to say the prayer with offerings for the household called Phaya Koe Zu or the wonderful triumphed in the local tug-of-war or a good officer is being transferred to the Shan State or the father of a local tug-of-war monk died or a pretty good percentage of students of a local school pass the final examination this year or three candidates from the superman's tutorial school pass the examination with distinctions, etc. The reasons are many and varied.

This four-poster bed would be moved to a required place and using the four corner posts a cloth canopy was fixed above the platform. A few lamps of big glass bowing or six-sided glass cases to hold big candlesticks were hung down from the curtain rods. That was the stage of the show.<sup>4</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The articles and books Dr. Than Tun, a researcher on History wrote in his times are very valuable to those who are interested in History. According to a term paper, only a few hand written scripts by Dr. Than Tun can be presented though there are many. I do intend to carry on with his works later.

His hand written scripts including the ones in this paper are not still printed, so they should be published for the sake of the people. I think the authorities concerned are responsible to do so. In short, I'm so pleased if the reader may get any knowledge and idea through the hand written scripts in this paper.

### **Acknowledgement**

First of all, I would like to mention my sincere gratitude to U Aung Myint Oo (Librarian, Ludu Library). Dr. Zaw Soe (Lecturer, Department of International Relations) and U Yè Yint Soe (Poet Nay Yu) for the supervision and approval.

I am also grateful to Dr. Sandar Oo (Professor and Head), Department of Library and Information Studies, Yadanabon University for her guidance to complete this paper.

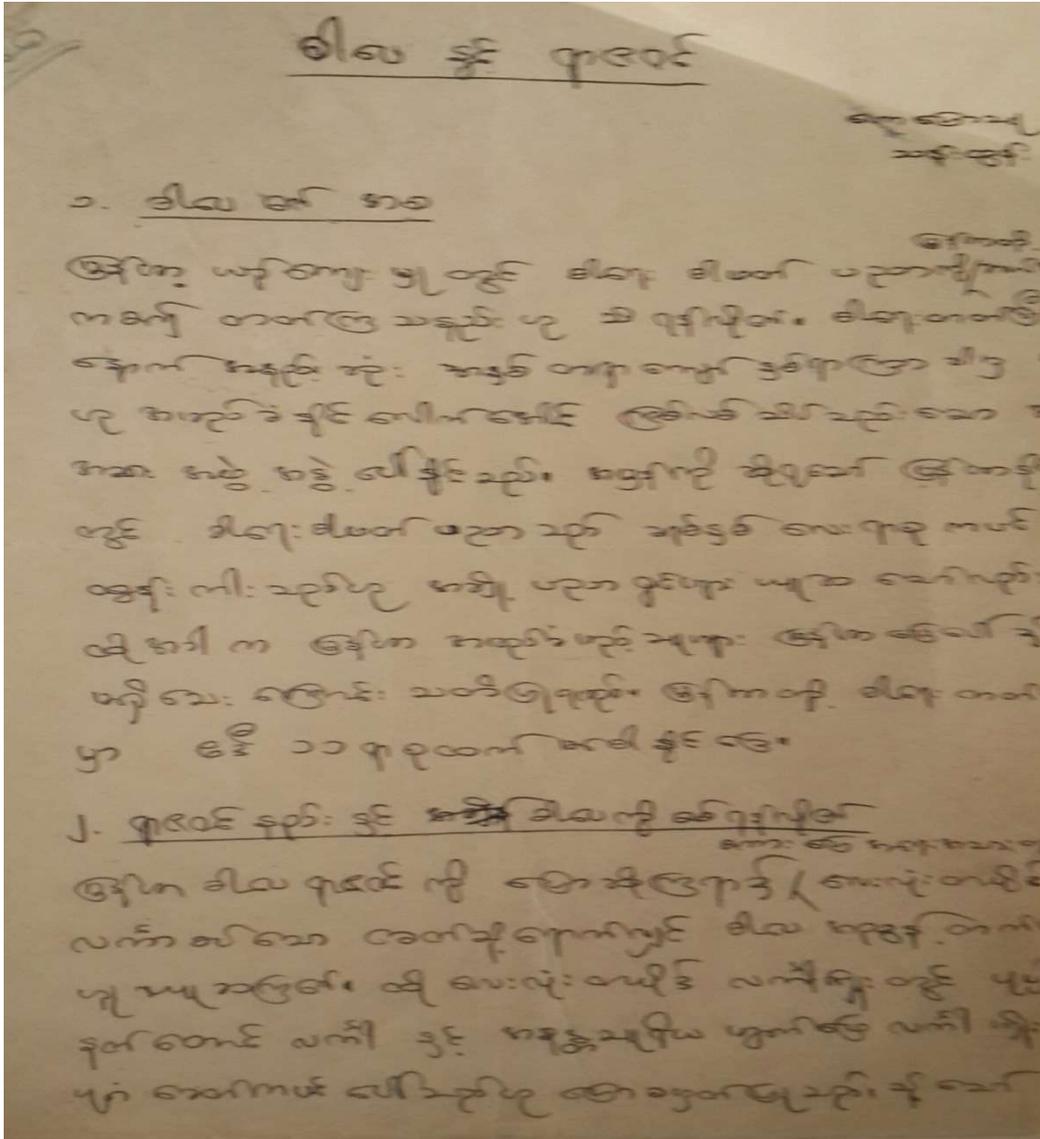
---

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Than Tun. "Anyein ". Special Collections, Ludu Library, Mandalay.

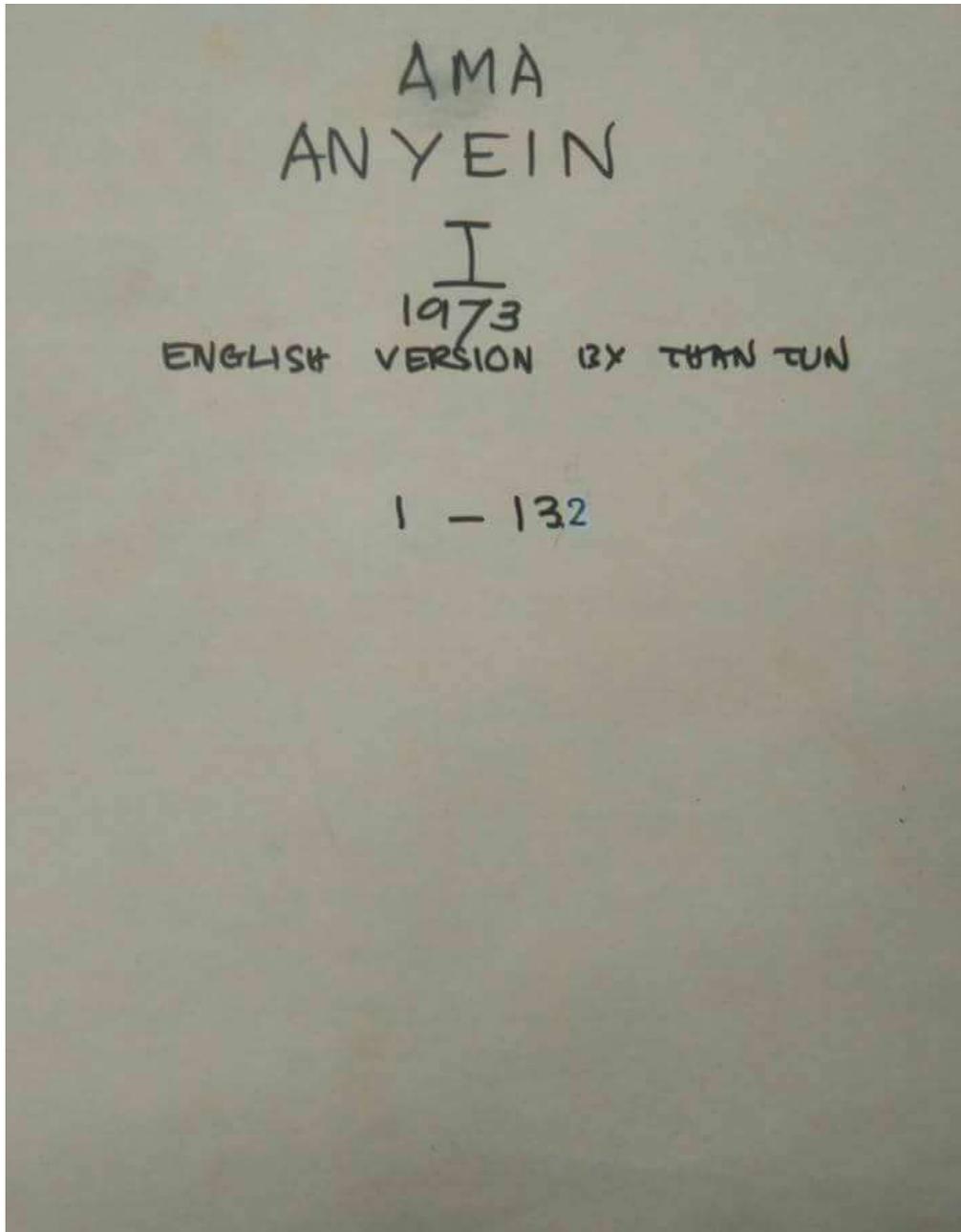
### References

a'gufwmoef;xGef;\ vufa&pmrlrsm;

Tables for the transliteration of Burmese into English with Illustrations.(1930.) Rangoon: Supdt., Govt. Printing and Stationery, Burma.







**Figure 3:** Manuscript of Dr. Than Tun