

ITO JIROZAEMON SUKETAMI AND SAYADAW U OTTAMA: REFIGURING THE JAPAN-MYANMAR RELATIONS BEFORE WORLD WAR II*

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Abstract

This paper explores the Japan-Myanmar relations before World War II in general and the relationship between ITO Jirozaemon Suketami and Sayadaw U Ottama in particular. For its study, it re-explored the Myanmar and Japanese sources to refigure the existing relations at that time. ITO Jirozaemon Suketami, the founder of Matsuzakaya Department store, was found as a true friend of Sayadaw U Ottama and helped Myanmar students to study in Japan upon the request of Sayadaw. He also visited Myanmar in September 1934. During his visit to Myanmar, he had recorded his tour in film. This recorded film was so interesting to learn about conditions of Myanmar in 1930s. It reveals perspectives of Japanese on Myanmar during this period. This paper, thus, aims to provide both a textual and film study of Japan-Myanmar relations before World War II which could enhance the future relations of these two countries broadened and deepened.

Keywords: Japan-Myanmar Relations, ITO Jirozaemon Suketami, U Ottama

Introduction

“ ... Meanwhile, as the news of my arrival had already spread, the Japanese Christians came with their Captain. They had accompanied the King, in whose guard they were serving. As soon as they had learned where I was they had come to see me. They came dressed in gala costumes, in two Geliās, and no sooner had they reached us than they saluted us with discharges of musketry and falconets, which they had brought with them. Their Captain, called Leon Donno² came forward to me....The initial ceremony over, the Japanese Captain began his discourse. He told me that all the Japanese Christians were delighted at my advent, as being an event long desired, for no priest, their own or any other, had visited them for over seven years on account of the wars and other untoward event s. Relying on our Lord’s mercy they trusted, that since I had now come, they would, through the spiritual food that I should give them, live henceforth in the grace of God and be much consoled. They believed, owing to their trust in His Divine Majesty, that the Magh King would receive us well, and also entertained hopes that, on my intercession, they would be granted permission to erect a church of their own district....³”

This was the earliest historical record of Japanese presence in Rakhine Kingdom in Myanmar recorded by Portuguese Father Fray Sebastien Manrique who visited to the Court of Rakhine in 1639 during the reign of King Thiri Thudhamaraza in Mruak U Kingdom. Marrique’s narrative account of his journey to the Court of Mruak U Kingdom is little known though it is

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² Leon Donno, Donno means “Esq.,” “Mr”, Leon being the baptismal name.

³ *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*, A Translation of the ITBERARIO MISSIONES ORIENTALS with introduction and notes by Lt. Col. C. Eckford Luard, C.I.E, MA assisted by Father H. Hostein, S.J , In Two Volumes Vol. I *Arakan*, KRAUS Reprinted Limited Nendeln/Liechtenstein 1967, pp.128-129 (Hereafter *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*)

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one of the most vivid accounts we possess of old Myanmar from a pen of a European. Father Anthony Farinha, S.J., who went from Dianga to the town of Rakhine (Arakan) in 1639, speaks of three Bandels (settlement) at Rakhine, that of Japanese, and that of the Portuguese and that of other foreigners, Dutch, English, and French. Having received by the King, they (the Japanese) had settled there in large numbers with their families; all were Christians.¹

I: Japanese Presence in Myanmar in Colonial Period

This is what we all know about Japanese presence in Myanmar up to the end of Konbaung period in 1885. However, in the start of British Colonial Administration, few Japanese came and settled in Myanmar with the advent of seaborne trade. According to Furnivall, through the British Empire, direct trade between Myanmar and Japan began in 1899, chiefly for the exchange of rice and sugar². Japan had concluded a treaty of ten years Anglo-Japanese Alliance and in 1905 a commercial treaty Japan and British was concluded³. Thus, the trading relation between Japan and the British colony Myanmar was also legalized. In the beginning of the 20th century, Japan had extended trading to Myanmar, after opening a Japanese line started direct service to Tokyo in 1911, and also cut into the trade between Rangoon and Calcutta⁴. By these years some Japanese came and settled down in Myanmar.

A total of ten Japanese (four males and six females) lived in towns in Myanmar in 1881. The numbers of Japanese presence were increased to 69 in 1891, 100 in 1901, and 676 in 1911 but the numbers decreased to 598 in 1921, 583 in 1922 and 570 in 1931. The number of Japanese presence in Myanmar declined to 570 in 1931. The numbers rose to 732 in 1936 which was the highest numbers of Japanese presence in Myanmar before World War II and the numbers decreased again to 320 before the Japanese troops entered into Myanmar in 1941. Most Japanese were concentrated in Yangon, Bahmo and Myeik⁵.

Most of Japanese presences in Myanmar during these years were largely commercial. Most of them were engaged in miscellaneous business, pearl harvest and running a photo shop or restaurant⁶.

II: U Ottama and ITO Jirozaemon Suketami

In the early years of the twentieth century, Japan's victory over Russia in the 1904–1905 war impressed many Myanmar people, as it did other Asians.⁷ That some Myanmar people were beginning to look towards Japan was manifested by the visit to Japan in 1907 by a young Buddhist Monk named U Ottama.

¹ *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643*, p. 129

² J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice, A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, New York, New York University Press, 1948, p. 79 (Hereafter cited as Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*)

³ Milton. W. Meyer, *Japan A Concise History*, Fourth Edition, New York, Roman & Littlefield Publisher Inc. 2009, pp.171-172

⁴ Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 79

⁵ (a) *List of Permanent Japanese Residents of Burma, National Archive Department*, National Archive Department Acc. 37, 55. 65, 9527

(b) ITO, Toshikatsu, "Nihonjin No Buruma Shinshuta Ni Tsuite", *Myanmar: Kokka To Minzoku* (in Japanese), Edited by ASOMURA Kuniaski and OKUDAIRA Ryuji, Tokyo, Kokon-Shoin, 2016, p. 131 (Hereafter cited as ITO, Toshikatsu, "Nihonjin No Buruma Shinshuta Ni Tsuite") Please see Appendix I for the more detail of Japanese who were living in towns in Myanmar during these years.

⁶ ITO, Toshikatsu, "Nihonjin No Buruma Shinshuta Ni Tsuite", p. 133. Please see Appendix II for the various types of occupations of Japanese living in Myanmar.

⁷ Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 143

While U Ottama was in Europe, there was a war between Japan and Russia. Because Japan defeated Russia, East Asian countries especially Myanmar emulated Japan, and their nationalism rose that they were able to fight against the big powers in Europe.¹ Therefore, he felt that the reason why Japan won a war over Russia was technical skill. Having decided to go to Japan instead of living in western countries, he came back to Yangon from France in 1907. After that he left for Japan on 4 February 1907 and he arrived at Yokohama Port on 7 March 1907.² His travelling events and experiences in Japan were written in the book "About Japan" compiled by him.³ This book talks much about Japanese people's diligence, hardworking, intelligence and good behaviour and manner. However, it does not mention about his Japanese true friend ITO Jirozaemon Suketami. This paper intends to illustrate how U Ottama and ITO Jirozaemon Suketami encountered in first instance and how their relationship was cultivated, how ITO Jirozaemon Suketami helped Myanmar students and how ITO Jirozaemon Suketami's visit to Myanmar began in 1934 based on Japanese sources and recorded film.

ITO Jirozaemon Suketami was the founder of Matsuzakaya Department store. He was born in 1879 as the second son to the merchant Ito family. As a businessman, he transformed "Ito Gofukuten," a dry-goods store carrying on since the Edo period, into a limited liability company and opened in Sakae a department-store style shop for the first time in Nagoya in Meiji 43 years or in 1910.⁴

On the first day of the opening of his shop, he saw a person who was wearing strange cloth among the guests. Mr. ITO immediately called his staff to invite that person to the parlor. After introducing each other, it is learned that person was Burmese monk named U Ottama. He came to Japan by the invitation of Nishi Honganji⁵. He dropped in Nagoya before he went to Tokyo. Being a pious person in Buddhism, Mr. ITO invited U Ottama to stay in his residence at Choya quarter in Nagoya. Such an accidental meeting with Mr. ITO, U Ottama stayed at the residence of Mr. ITO's house. At the first beginning, Mr. ITO didn't know U Ottama was a pioneer and pathfinder in the freedom movement in Myanmar. It was appeared so because U Ottama did not talk anything about politics and contact with other persons in Japan but staying aloof being a strict *Vinaya* monk. After having conversations with Mr. ITO for three or four times, U Ottama was aware Mr. ITO was trusted person and he talked about him.⁶

Within one year living in Japan, U Ottama passed the examination in Japanese Language. Thus, Minister Otani, Chairman of Buddhist Institute at Tokyo appointed *Sayadaw* as a Professor of Pali and Sanskrit. He went back to Myanmar in 1911. U Ottama went back to Japan in the

¹ Albert D. Moseotti, *British Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Burma*, Xerox University, Microfilms Ann Arbor Michigan List, 1917, p.16

² Michael Mendelson, E., *Sangha and State in Burma*, London, Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 202

³ Professor U Ottama, ဂျပန်ပြည်အကြောင်းအတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ (*Biography About Japan*), Yangon, *Thuriya Newspaper L.td*, 1914, p.1 (Here after cited as U Ottama, *About Japan*)

⁴ <http://www.yokiso.jp/eng/yokiso/>

⁵ Nishi Honganji and Higashi Honganji are two large temples in the center of Kyoto. As headquarters of the two factions of the Jodo-Shin Sect (True Pure Land Sect), one of Japan's largest Buddhist sects, they are a good place to experience contemporary Japanese Buddhism. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nishi_Hongan-ji

⁶ *Yokisou to Suketami: Yomigaeru Matsuzakaya Sougyoyosha No Risoukyo* (in Japanese), Nagoya, Fubaisha, 2008, p. 199 (Hereafter cited as *Yokisou to Suketami*)

year 1912, and brought younger sister Ma Ein Soe¹, and Oil *Twinsa* (Hereditary Oil pits owner) U Soe Thein² and his wife Daw Thaw and U Ba Sein.³ They are the first Myanmar scholars who went Japan for study. Regarding to these students we have only learned these four students were taken to Japan by U Ottama and nothing more than that.⁴ However, a Japanese source reveals how did studying in Japan by Myanmar youths began and how they were learning in Japan.

While U Ottama was staying in ITO Jirozaemon Suketami's, he showed his concern about the future education of Myanmar youths as follows:

“...In the recent time, science subjects are developing and youths from every countries are taught these subjects but not in my country, Burma (Myanmar). The British did not encourage learning science subjects in Burma and they even restricted learning subjects like Chemistry and Mathematics. I want Burman (Myanmar) youths to send to foreign countries to learn science subjects. How can I do? This makes me concern on youths from my country.”⁵

Hearing the words of U Ottama who was feeling concerns about the youths from his country, Mr ITO sympathized on him and causally said:

“If it is so, how about sending the students (from Myanmar) to study in Japan? It will be very good if they study in Japan”⁶

It was on 26 May 1913, an urgent telegram from Kobe arrived at Mr ITO which read:

“Six Burman youths arrived at Kobe by European Ocean Liner and they brought a letter from U Ottama.”⁷

Soon after Mr ITO read this letter, Mr ITO remembered his words previously said to U Ottama and he immediately arranged for the accommodation in his house and for their learning in Japan. Mr ITO has five children and he thought it was not an easy job for his wife to look after his own children and six Myanmar students at the same time. Thus, he hired a house at Naka

¹ Ma Ein Soe was born from U Aung Zan and Daw Aung Kywut Phru in 1894. At the age of 18, she was accompanied with her brother U Ottama to Japan in 1912. Since she had learn Japanese in Japan for about six years, she could write and speak Japanese very well. She arrived back Yangon in 1919. During Japanese occupation period of Myanmar (1942-45), she opened “U Ottama Japanese Language School” in Yangon. She was passed away on 6 May 1978 at the age of 84. မြန်မာ့အလင်းသတင်းစာ , (*Myanma Alin Newspaper*) on 8 May 1978

² U Soe Thein was derived from hereditary *Twinsa* family from Yenanchaung. He was born from *Twinsa* U Aung Myat and Daw May in October 1885. By the encouragement of U Ottama, he and his wife accompanied with U Ottama to Japan in 1912. He studied there for a year. Then, he continued his study at Stanford University in United States and obtained M.Sc., M.A, I.M.E for nine years. After his graduation, he travelled to countries in Europe and Asia for knowledge. He returned to Myanmar in 1922 and joined into General Council of Burma Association (G.C.B.A) to take part in politics. He was elected as chairman of G.C.B.A at the 12th G.C.B.A Nationwide Meeting held at Shwebo in 1925. He was retired from politics in 1930 and passed away on 7 September 1944. မြန်မာ့ဝေါဟာရကျမ်း (*Myanma Encyclopedia*), Vol. III, Yangon, Sarpe Beikman Press, 1956, pp. 439-441 (Hereafter cited as *Myanma Encyclopedia III*)

³ (a) U Ottama, *About Japan*, p. 4

(b) U Lay Maung, မြန်မာ့နိုင်ငံရေးသမိုင်း, (*History of Myanma Politics*), Vol. I, Yangon, Sarpe Beikman Press, 1973, p. 142

⁴ U Ottama, *About Japan*, p. 4

⁵ *Yokisou to Suketami*, p. 167

⁶ *Yokisou to Suketami*, p. 168

⁷ *Ibid*

Town in Romatsu Township and this house was named as “Biruma-en (Burma Lodging). Six Myanmar students were started to learn Japanese education from Terokoya (Primary) Level¹.

After Myanmar students had learned little knowledge how to speak in Japanese, they continued their studies in other schools and went back to Myanmar. However, U Ottama’s younger sister, Ma Ein Soe, stayed in Mr ITO’s house for six year and had learned much about Japanese culture and customs as if as a Japanese women. She went back to Myanmar in 1919.²

The meeting of U Ottama with ITO Jirozaemon Suketami at his first visit to Japan in 1907 was an accidental one. But their friendship was lasted and it was a fruitful one from which Myanmar youths obtained learning opportunities in Japan. The patriotic spirit of U Ottama who wanted to upgrade Myanmar youths by learning science subjects can be vividly seen and the nature of Japanese people who keep their words and promise can be found although Mr ITO only causally U Ottama to send Myanmar youths to study in Japan. The ties of their friendship can also be found ITO Jirozaemon Suketami’s visit to Myanmar in 1934.

III: ITO Jirozaemon Suketami’s visit to Myanmar

Before U Ottama’s younger sister was going back to Myanmar, she invited Mr ITO to visit Myanmar and they will warmly welcomed served him well. Mr ITO also promised her to visit Myanmar. In April 1934, Pacific Ocean Buddhist Youths Festival was to be held in Tokyo and schedule was drawn for U Ottama to participate in this festival. Mr ITO was longing for the chance to reunion with U Ottama in this festival but it could not because U Ottama was not able to attend this festival as he was in India under the watchful eyes of the British³. Thus, Mr ITO decided to visit Myanmar to keep his promise to Ma Ein Soe, U Ottama’s younger sister and to India to meet with U Ottama, his old friend. His four months journey was started on 20 August 1934 to the end of December of that year.

Mr ITO and his wife arrived at Yangon on 25 September 1934 and left for India on 6 October 1934. His twelve days visit in Myanmar was recorded with film recorder and Japanese views on each day of visit to different places were subtitled in Japanese.⁴ In order to see the conditions of Myanmar in 1934 and Japanese views on Myanmar, the recorded film of each day of visit will be shown by describing film of each day visit and subtitles in Japanese.

Day 1 (25.9.1934)

(Subtitle in Japanese)

- The person named ITO San who built Mazusakaya Department Store

¹ *Yokisou to Suketami*, p. 168

² Ibid

³ Burma Intelligence Report, ရန်သူတော် အမှတ် (၃၇) ဘုန်းကြီး ဦးဥတ္တမ (ခေါ်) ဆရာတော် ဦးဥတ္တမ (ခေါ်) ပေါ်ထွန်းအောင် , (List No. 37 of Enemy U Ottama (or) Sayadaw U Ottama (or) Bikhu U Ottama (or) Paw Tun Aung), File No. 3 A-1 of 1927 by Burma Intelligence Report

⁴ Fortunately, author has received film document of Mr. ITO’s visit which was recorded, from Japan-Myanmar Association while studying Nagoya University, Japan in 2004. (Hereafter cited as *Recorded Film*)

(Film)

- Arrival of Yangon Harbour and welcomed to Mr ITO by his friends whose once lived in his house in Japan.¹

When Mr ITO and his wife arrived at Yangon Harbour, U Ottama's younger sister Ma Ein Soe and younger brother Shin Ariya² together with some old friends who study in Japan welcome him.³

Day 2 (26.9.1934)**(Film)**

- Welcome ceremony of Mr ITO

Mr. ITO, his wife and guest were entertained by Myanmar dancers and young children wearing *Thindine*. It showed Ma Ein Soe and old Myanmar friends wanted to show Mr. ITO how Myanmar dance was performed.

(Subtitles in Japanese)

- Walking in Royal Lake Garden
- Seeing Shwe Dagon Pagoda from the Royal Lake Garden

(Film)

- Walking in Royal Lake Garden
- Seeing Shwe Dagon Pagoda from the Royal Lake Garden

Royal Lake Garden in 1934 was as if like a little forest. Royal Lake was formerly called as Victoria Lake and it was used as a mainly reservoir to supply fresh water to the people from Yangon in 1884.⁴ Later, its name was changed as Royal Lake. It is now called as Kandaw Gyi.

Day 3 (27.9.1934)**(Subtitles in Japanese)**

- Pay obeisance to Shwe Dagon Pagoda
- The person who entered into Pagoda's prescient should take off their shoes and walked with bare feet⁵

(Film)

- Shwe Dagon Pagoda
- take off the shoes by Mr. ITO

Mr. ITO and his wife visited Shwe Dagon Pagoda that previously had been major tourist attraction. Although it was in September, it was raining on the day they visited to the pagoda. A

¹ Ibid

² Shin Ariya, younger brother of U Ottama, was also a political active monk who was regarded as List No. 3 of Enemy by Burma Intelligence Report.

³ *Recorded Film*

⁴ B.R, Pearn, *A History of Rangoon*, Rangoon, American Baptist Mission Press, 1939, p. 192

⁵ *Recorded Film*

beggar at the pagoda and taking off their shoes before they visited to the pagoda were recorded. It is the custom in Myanmar for the people to doff their shoes before entering on pagoda platforms and other sites associate with Buddhism. The shoe question emerged in the second decade of the 20th century when the Young Men's Buddhist Association and other groups called for strict observance of the ban on footwear in pagodas¹. To Mr. ITO although he was being an Asian such habit was not available in Japan. He might have surprised on such occasion to take off his shoes.

Day 4 (28.9.1934)

(Subtitle in Japanese)

- Arrived at Mandalay which was 386 Li away from Yangon. We see any pagodas and monks.

The Li, also known as Chinese mile, is a traditional Chinese unit of distance. The Li is usually about one third of an English mile. If we converted 386 Li into English mile, it resulted 128.6 miles. However, the real driving distance from Yangon to Mandalay is 396 miles. It might have been some miscalculation of the distance from Yangon to Mandalay.

(Film)

- Horse coach and bullock carts loaded with hays riding on the road
- Mandalay palace and moat
- Monks, novices and young *Kappiya* (Lay attendant) going around to accept alms food
- Cows and goats near Pagoda
- Monks at monastery and lion statue at Mandalay Hill
- Pulling water buckets from the well and bathing children beside the well²

Bullock cart which was the main vehicle for transportation in the olden day in Myanmar was allowed to ride in the downtown area of Mandalay. Mr. ITO and his wife visited Mandalay palace and the monastery nearby. Although lion statue at Mandalay Hill was seen in the film, we are not sure whether they visited Mandalay Hill or not.

Day 5 on 29 September 1934)

(Subtitle in Japanese)

- Went to Maymyo (Town to stay in summer) which is 42 Li away from Mandalay. This town is like Karuizawa³ town in Japan.
- Went around the market place in the hill and dropped to agricultural farm owned by Japanese⁴.

¹ U Maung Maung, *From Sangha to Laity; Nationalist Movement of Burma 1920-1940*, Australian National University Monograph on South Asia, No. 4, New Delhi, Manohar, 1980, p. 8

² *Recorded Film*

³ Karuizawa (*Karuizawa-machi*) is a town located in Nagano Prefecture, Japan. Karuizawa is a popular summer resort area for the residents of Tokyo. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karuizawa,_Nagano

⁴ *Recorded Film*

(Film)

- Maymyo (Pyin Oo Lwin) and Horse coach
- Market in Maymyo (Pyin Oo Lwin)
- Vegetables in market such as tamarind, corns and bitter guards
- Selling food, and Smoking woman
- Visiting Japanese farm of Akimoto Brothers.¹

Maymyo (changed the old name Pyin Oo Lwin after independence) was named by Colonel May who commanded the 5th Bengal Infantry stationed there in 1886. In 1896, it was selected by Mr. D.M. Smeaton, officiating Chief Commissioner as the summer resort of the Local Government. By 1900 the railway was open as far as Maymyo and considerable building activity took place and in 1902 it was notified as an area to be administered by a Town Fund Committee. In 1904, the Army Department selected Maymyo as a permanent station for British troops in place of Fort Dufferin². Mr. ITO seemed very pleased to visit Maymyo because of pleasant weather and he compared Maymyo with summer resort area of Japan, Karuizawa. We have not found any Japanese who were doing gardening until 1913 but found a Japanese in 1911, two Japanese in 1912 and three Japanese in 1913 were doing rubber plantation business. Akimoto Brothers Japanese Fruit Garden seemed to be well organized fruit garden in which local people were also hired as cultivators and cows were also raised³.

Day 6 (30.9.1934)**(Subtitle in Japanese)**

- Crossed Ayeyawaddy River from Mandalay and visited to unfinished Pagoda in Mingun which was largest brick building in the world
- Second biggest bronze bell in the world are available (First biggest bell is in Moscow)
- Visit to Mya Thein Dan Pagoda
- Visit to the village near Mandalay where silk clothes were woven. Silk clothes had good quality and woven by hands.

(Film)

- Mingun Pagoda.
- Visit to Mya Thein Tan Pagoda.
- the village near Mandalay where silk clothes were woven⁴

The Mingun Pagoda is a monumental uncompleted pagoda began by King Badon on 9 January 1791. As remark by Mr. ITO, it is a biggest pile of bricks in the world. The bottom terrace in a square of 450 feet and the dome on it raises to 162 feet. Each side of the huge cubical

¹ Recorded Film

² *Burma Gazetteer: Mandalay District*, Vol. A, Compiled by Mr. H.F. Sharle, Rangoon, Supt., Government Printing and Stationary, Burma (Myanmar), 1928, p. 218 (Hereafter cited as *Burma Gazetteer: Mandalay District*, Vol. A)

³ Recorded Film

⁴ Recorded Film

mass is hollowed out to accommodate a small shrine with a slightly projection arch.¹ Huge cracks are visible on the structure from the earthquake of 23 March 1839. King Bodawpaya also had a gigantic bronze bell to go with the huge pagoda in September 1808.² The Mingun Bell weighing 90 tons, and is today the largest ringing bell in the world. The weight of the bell in Burmese measurement, is 55,555 viss or *peiktha* (1 viss = 1.63 kg), handed down as a mnemonic "*Min Hpyu Hman Hman Pyaw*", with the consonants representing the number 5 in Burmese astronomy and numerology. Mr. ITO and wife also visited to Mya Thein Tan Pagoda which was built by Sagaing King or King Bagyidaw in 1802 while he was yet a prince. It has a circular plan and seven concentric terraces parapetted with low walls of wavy pattern. Above the top terrace rises a cylindrical body which contained a vaulted sanctum. The superstructure assumes the common type of tapering pagoda.³ The upper tapering part of this pagoda was lost when Captain Sladen visited this pagoda in January 1868⁴. It seemed to be a renovated one when Mr. ITO visited. The village where Mr. ITO learned silk weaving is Amarapura. The weavers in Amarapura were still very poor.⁵

Day 7 (1.10.1934)

(Subtitles in Japanese)

- Journey to go back Yangon from Mandalay with steam-engine ship.
- Many pagodas are available at the west side.

(Film)

- Bathing women and children at Ayeyawaddy River
- Pagodas in Sagaing Hill and Innwa Bridge⁶

Mr. ITO took waterway when he was back to Yangon from Mandalay. On the way, he had seen many pagodas at Sagaing Hill. This hill has numerous pagodas, monasteries and meditation centers known as a peaceful place for Buddhist studies. The Soon Oo Panya Shin Pagoda is located on the top of Sagaing Hill. The Innwa Bridge below which Mr. ITO crossed is a 16 span cantilever bridge between Innwa and Sagaing. It was built by the British in 1934. The bridge was destroyed by the retreating British Army during World War II and was rebuilt in 1954 after independence.

From the film, the life of the people living along the Ayeyawaddy River at that time can also be learned.

¹ (a) Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Burma*, The Ministry of Union Culture, Government of Union of Burma, 1978, pp. 134-135

² မြန်မာ့ရက်စဉ်သမိုင်း (အကြိုသမိုင်းကာလ မှ ၁၉၄၅ အထိ) (*Myanma Chronological History (Proto history to 1945)*, Vol. I, Nay Pyi Taw, Department of Historical Research, 2009, p. 181

³ U Maung Maung Tin, *တုန်းဘောင်ဆက်မဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး* , (*The Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty (Vol.II)*), Yangon, Ledimandaing Press, 1967, pp. 127-131

⁴ Capt. E.H. Sladen (Political Agent at Mandalé) , “Some Account of the Senbyú Pagoda at Mengún, near the Burmese Capital, in a Memorandum”, *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 2004, pp. 7-8 (Hereafter cited as Sladen, “Some Account of the Senbyú Pagoda”)

⁵ *Burma Gazetteer: Mandalay District*, Vol. A, p. 139

⁶ *Recorded Film*

Day 8 (2.10.1934)**(Subtitles in Japanese)**

- Arrived at Nyaung U and visited to Bagan ancient heritage site
- Ancient Bamar Kingdom was flourished there from 108 to 1390 AD for about 12 centuries
- Several types of pagodas built by many kings were in ruin and scattered in the paddy fields

(Film)

- Thabanyu Temple, Shwezigon Pagoda, Shwe Gu Gyi Temple
- Visit to Shwe Gu Gyi Temple¹
- Scenery of Pagodas and Temples from Shwe Gu Gyi's platform

Being fervent in Buddhism, Mr. ITO did not fail to visit Bagan, the heartland of Buddhism in Myanmar. Subtitle in the film stated traditional saying of the foundation of Bagan in 108 AD and ended in 1390. It seems wrong noting of Mr. ITO that Bagan Dynasty had already ended during the reign of King Saw Hnit in 1334 AD² and 1390 AD that Mr. ITO referred to the end of Bagan period was actually Innwa period during the reign of Mingyi Sawswake.³ Mr. ITO remarked the conditions of Bagan while his visit that most of the pagodas in ruin and scattered in paddy fields. It seems he did not visit all of the pagodas except Shwe Gu Gyi and Ananda temples.

(Subtitle in Japanese)

- Ananda Pagoda is the biggest one
- Drove car by passing peaceful villages in Myanmar
- Visited to oil pits in Chauk and continued to Yangon by ship

(Film)

- Ananda Temple
- Driving car and Oil field in Chauk

Subtitle in film described Ananda Temple is the biggest one in Bagan. As said previously, Mr. ITO did not seem to visit and he might have missed to visit Dhamma Yangyi, which is the biggest temple in Bagan⁴. When he was heading to Yenanchaung to meet his old friend U Soe Thein and wife Daw Thaw and U Hla Maung who once studied in Japan together with Ma Ein Soe, he dropped in Chauk to see oil wells.

(Subtitle in Japanese)

- Arrived at Yenanchaung and stayed at U Soe Thein's house
- Welcome Ceremony by U Soe Thein and U Hla Maung

¹ Recorded Film

² Than Tun, *ခေတ်တောင်းမြန်မာရာဇဝင်*, (Ancient Myanmar Chronicle), Yangon, Maha Dagon Literature Publication, 1969, p. 120

³ Than Tun, "History of Burma A.D. 1300-1400", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. XLII, Part. II, December 1959, pp. 119-122

⁴ Donald M. Stadtner, *Ancient Pagan Buddhist Plain of Merit*, Bangkok, Sriivatana Interprint Public Co. Ltd., 2005, p. 246

(Film)

- Trained monkey dance at welcome ceremony
- Smoking traditional cheroot by putting it into silver bowl
- Amazon jungle men dance

U Soe Thein and wife Daw Thaw were taken by U Ottama together with his younger sister Ma Ein Soe when U Ottama made his second visit to Japan in 1912. They were looked after by Mr. ITO during their stay in Japan. U Hla Maung might have been late comer to Japan to study after U Soe Thein. He had seen in the photo of Myanmar students and U Ottama in Japan. We have not found any information of U Hla Aung but he seemed to be from a hereditary *Twinza* generation like U Soe Thein¹.

Day 9 (3.10.1934)**(Subtitle in Japanese)**

- Inspected oil pits by B.O.C (Burmah Oil Company) and ancient Myanmar oil pits.
- Bamar people did not use any machine

(Film)

- Inspection of tradition oil wells owned by U Soe Thein by manual workers
- Inspection of oil field owned by B.O.C
- Extraction oil and oil tank in Yenanchaung

It is believed that the oil wells of Yenanchaung have been extracted for at least 1,000 years since monarchical time.² Traditionally, the twenty-four *twinzayo*, or hereditary owners of the Yenangyaung oil lands monopolized oil exploitation from hand-dug wells. The *twinza* (well-owners) had paid a fee to the *Twinzayo* (hereditary owners of the oil) for the right to dig wells.³ U Soe Thein was derived from hereditary *Twinza* family from Yenanchaung.

The extraction of oil from the wells by manual workers was recorded in the film. A digger with some protection cloth and wearing an eye bandage had to go down into the well to fetch oil with bucket. Worker holding the draw-rope would walk opposite direction of the well to lift the bucket of oil.⁴

(Interval; 4 - 5.10.1934)**Day 10 (6.10.1934)****(Subtitle in Japanese)**

- Feeling sorry for the departure from Yangon Harbor to depart with old intimates from Burma
- Left for India with B.I Steam Engine ship named KAANDALLA

¹ *Myanma Encyclopedia III*, p. 440

² (a) MBK (Ba Kyaw), *An Outline of Burma Oil Industry*, Rangoon, Mandalay Press, 1982, p.12

(b) Khin Maung Gyi, *Memoirs of the Oil Industry in Burma 905 A.D to 1980 A.D*, Rangoon, 1989, p.2

³ Marilyn Longmuir, "Yenangyaung and Its *Twinza* : The Burmese Indigenous "Earth-Oil" Industry Re-examined", *Journal of Burma Studies*, Volume 5, 2000, pp. 17-21 (Hereafter cited as Longmuir, Yenangyaung and Its *Twinza*). For the more detail about *Twinza* I refer to "တွင်းရိုး တွင်းစားသမိုင်း" ("History of *Twinzo and Twinza*") submitted by Kyaw Soe for his M.A Degree to Department of History, University of Yangon in May 1987.

⁴ (a) *Recorded Film*

(b) Longmuir, Yenangyaung and Its *Twinza*, p.36

(Film)

- Farewell to Mr. ITO and his wife at Yangon Harbor

Ten days visit of Mr. ITO and wife was terminated on 6 October 1934. He expressed his sorrow to say goodbye to his old intimates. He had a good time with his old friend in Myanmar but he was not able to meet his old friend U Ottama as he was in India under the watch of police. Thus, Mr. ITO continued his journey to India in order to meet his old friend.

Conclusion

With the advent of seaborne trade with Japan, some Japanese came and settled in Myanmar for commercial and business. They might be acquaintance with Myanmar people and some personal relations might have been built. However, the relationship between two people of Japan and Myanmar was clearly shaped by the accidental meeting with U Ottama and ITO Jirozaemon Suketami in Nagoya, Japan in 1907. Because of their cultivated friendship, some Myanmar youths were able to send to Japan for study. The nature of U Ottama and ITO Jirozaemon Suketami were different. U Ottama was anti-colonial activist and Mr. ITO was businessman who played a leading role in the Nagoya business circles by assuming the office of chairman of Nagoya Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In spite of two different natures, they could build their friendship forever. Mr. ITO was a man of promise who kept his promise of supporting Myanmar youth to study in Japan and his promise to U Ottama's younger sister Ma Ein Soe to visit Myanmar. Soon after he had resigned from the office of president of Matsuzakaya and other official positions such as the chairman of Nagoya Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1933 at the age of 55¹, he arranged his visit to meet his old friend like Ma Ein Soe and U Soe Thein in Myanmar and U Ottama in India. We are fortunate to see his recorded film of his visit in Myanmar which shows the conditions of Myanmar in 1930s and the views of Japanese on Myanmar. Five years after Mr. ITO met U Ottama in India, U Ottama passed away on Saturday, 9 September 1939 at the age of 60. However, the friendship between U Ottama's family and ITO Jirozaemon Suketami maintained by Mr. ITO and U Ottama's younger sister Ma Ein Soe. On 19 March 1943, a telegram from Mr. ITO to Ma Ein Soe that he wanted to send 10,000 Yen of donated money by U Ottama for the learning of Myanmar youths in Japan which was kept at Mr. ITO. Ma Ein Soe replied to keep this money at Mr. ITO's hand as before and she was intended to set an oversea association of sending Myanmar youths to Japan to maintain friendship between U Ottama and Mr. ITO's family.²

The Japan-Myanmar Relations has been existed in the form of economic and educational patterns before wartime period (1940-1945). It was formulated as people to people relationships between the two countries. However, these accounts are very interesting to learn how friendship between these two people were cultivated to know more about Japan-Myanmar relations in prewar period which enhance the future relations of these two countries more broadened and deepened.

¹ <http://www.yokiso.jp/eng/yokiso/>

² ဗမာ့ခေတ် သတင်းစာ (*Bama Khit Newspaper*) on 20th March 1943

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Appendix I: Total Numbers of Japanese Presence in Myanmar¹
(in 1881, 1891, 1901,1911, 1921, 1922,1932,1936,1941)

District	1881		1891		1901		1911		1921		1922		1931		1936		1941	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Sittwe			1	15	1	7		15		3		1	11	2	7	5	7	4
Kyaikkhami	1				1		1	22	9	5	8	5	9	5	2	5	4	3
Patheingyi					1		15	27	2	9	9	13	13	4	10	3	3	
Bhamo							102		152	1	3	1	3		3		3	
Bago			1				2	15		3		7	3	9	7	5	3	
Hinthada								4					0	1	3	3	4	
Insein									7	1	7	2	9	6	2	4	9	2
Lower Chindwin														1	2		1	
Magwe								1		5		10	2		3		1	
Mandalay			1	3		6	16	5	8	5	17	12	16	6	33	29	23	11
Meiktila																	1	
Myeik					11		42	19	40	16	60	24	38	15	41	24	26	15
Myaungmya							2	11	2	4	2	5	1	0	2	4	1	
Myingyan										2	6	2	4	2	1	1	1	
Myittha															1			
Northern Shan							1		1		3	4	6	1	7	4	2	1
Pakokku													3	2	5	2	4	
Pyaw					4	5		9	1		1	2	1	2	3	3	4	3
Pyaw							1					4	2		2	1	1	1
Yangon	1		11	31	3	57	129	212	144	163	195	165	279	96	310	171	111	51
Thandwe																		2
Shwebo																		1
Southern Shan													2	1	1	2	1	
Dawei									4	5	1		1	1	1	1	1	
Thayawaddy	2	3	5												1		2	
Thaton													1		3	1	3	1
Taungoo		3						10		1	4	3	7	4	4	4	2	
Yamethin			1		3	1		5	2	3	2	1		1	4	2	3	2
Total	4	6	20	49	24	76	310	356	372	226	320	263	411	159	458	274	224	96
Total	10	69	100	676	598	583	570	732	320									

¹ (a) List of Permanent Japanese Residents of Burma

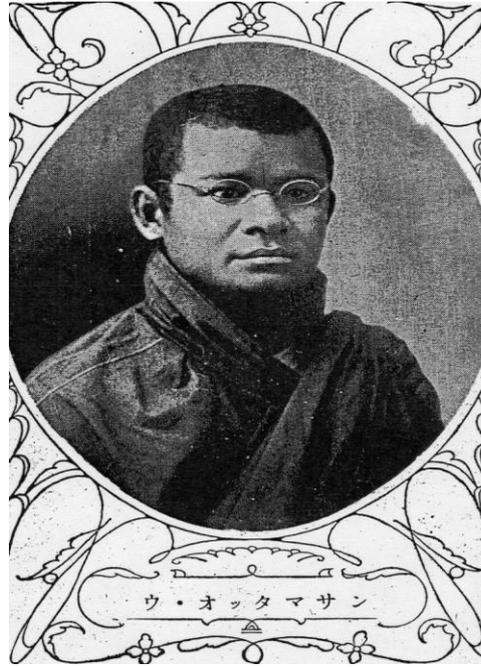
(b) ITO, Toshikatsu, "Nihonjin No Buruma Shinshuta Ni Tsuite")

Appendix II: Occupations of Japanese people in Myanmar¹

(in 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913)

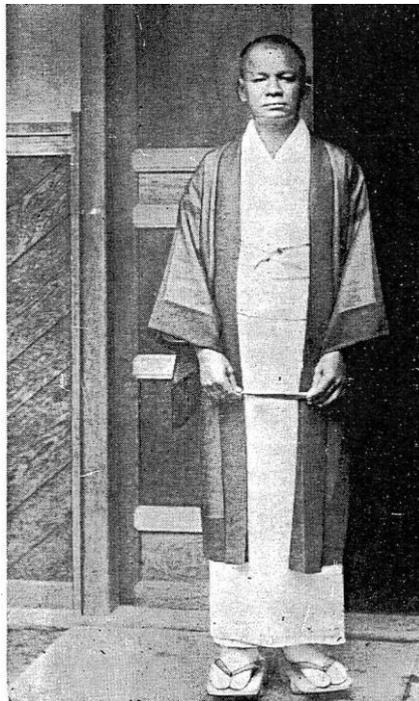
Occupations	1903		1904		1905		1906		1910		1911		1912		1913	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Office Worker											3		5	1	5	1
Merchant (Sundry goods)	5		5		5		6	3	22	4	14	3	10	4	25	4
Export and Import															1	
Electrical Engineers							1	1								
Barber							2									
Tattoo Artist							2									
Coffee Shop Owner							15	1			3					
Medical Doctor									3		8	4	3	2	5	1
Patent Medicine Merchant													7		7	
Dentist													2	2	1	2
Fabric Technician													4	1	2	
Dye Technician									1	1						
Cinematograph Business									1		1					
Translator									5	2	7		7	1	7	2
Photo Business									1		1					
Carpenter									3	2	5	2	6		3	
Sewing Business									1		2	1	1	1	2	
Restaurant Owner									2	1			2	2	6	3
Pearl Harvest Business									7	6	5	2	29	22	47	22
Diving Business									17		44	15	35	2	35	3
Breathing Air Hose Holder									4		4	2	9			
Pearl Harvest Tallier (tallyman)													8			
Lodging Business									1	1			1		1	
Tin Mine worker													1			
Nurse (Midwife)												1		1		1
Rubber Plantation Business											1		2		3	
Confectionery merchant											2					
Laundry Business											3		1			
Soap Making Business																
Miscellaneous Business (Room Lending)	7	80	13	163	13	163	53	269	31	320	42	251	36	227	10	218
None Business									19	11	3	1	1	2		
Total	12	80	18	163	18	163	79	274	120	348	153	283	173	271	169	261

¹ ITO, Toshikatsu, "Nihonjin No Buruma Shinshuta Ni Tsuite", 133



Source: *biruma dokarisu shittata* , n.p.

Photo (1) U Ottama



Source: *biruma dokarisu shittata* , n.p. p. 1

Photo (2) U Ottama with Japanese Kimono



Ito Jirozaemon Suketami

Source: <http://www.yokiso.jp/eng/yokiso/>

Photo (3) ITO Jirozaemon Suketami, Founder of Matsuzakaya Department Store



Source: Historic Choshokaku, Nagoya

Photo (4) Matsuzakaya Department Store owned by : ITO Jirozaemon Suketami



Source : <https://www.google.com/search?q=Matsuzakaya+,+Sakae+Nagoya>

Photo (5) Matsuzakaya Department Store of today

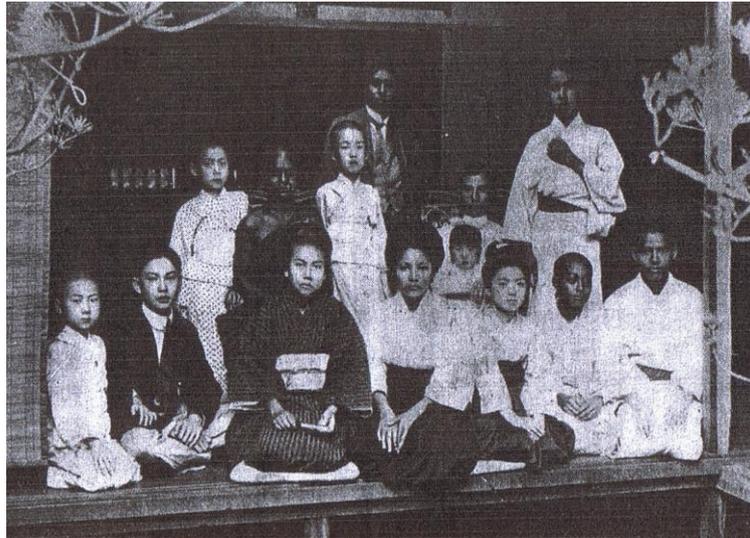
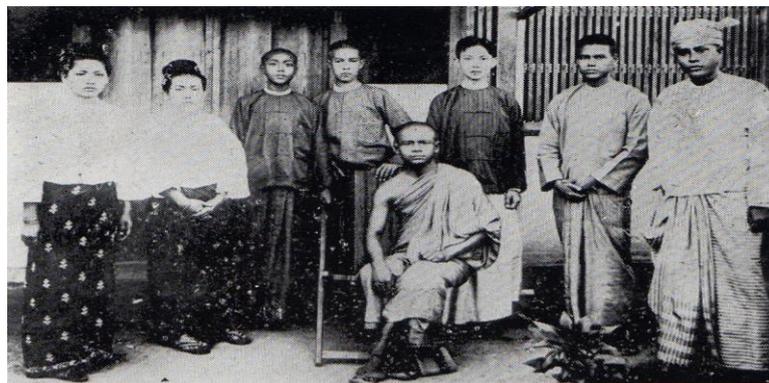


Photo (6) U Ottama, Myanmar Students and ITO Jirozaemon Suketami's family at his house
Source: *Yokisou to Suketami*, p. 168



Source: Historic Choshokaku, Nagoya

Photo (7) U Ottama and Myanmar Students at Burma Student Lodging at Romatsu, Nagoya
From left to Right; Soe Thein, Sein Aung, unknown, U Ottama (Sitting), Chan Tun, Hla Maung, Ma Thaw and Ma Ein Soe



Source: Historic Choshokaku, Nagoya

Photo (8) U Ottama and Myanmar Students at Burma Student Lodging at Romatsu, Nagoya
From left to Right; Soe Thein, Sein Aung, unknown, U Ottama (Sitting), Chan Tun, Hla Maung, Ma Thaw and Ma Ein Soe



Source: Historic Choshokaku, Nagoya

Photo (9) Mr. ITO and his wife and two others on board at “SUWA MARU” Ship on the way to Myanmar in 1934



Source: Historic Choshokaku, Nagoya

Photo (10) Mr. ITO and his wife with his old friends in Yangon during his visit



Source: Historic Choshokaku, Nagoya

Photo (11) Mr. ITO and his wife and U Soe Thein’s family and U Sein Aung’s family at Yenanchaung in 1934 (Circle 1. U Soe Thein, 2. Daw Thaw and 3. Sein Aung)



Source : *Yokisou to Suketami*, p. 166

Photo (12) Reunion with U Ottama and Mr. ITO and his wife at Calcutta in India in 1934



Source: *Yokisou to Suketami*, p. 169

Photo (13) Mr. ITO and U Ottama in front of Emperor Asoka Stone Pillar at Lubami, India