

Popular literature of Mandalay in Post-Independence (1948-58)

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ABSTRACT

As Myanmar press established with the introduction of Christian missionaries in the country, it was alike in Mandalay with the intent of Buddha Sasana propagation. Cultural standard of Mandalay came to develop with the Buddha and Pitakas literature. The books that criticized on the religions also appeared in the post-war period in Mandalay and they had stricken a lot upon the people. Under the agitation of Upper Myanmar Writers Association formed Mandalay in 1942, there were strong literacy movements that were able to organize and lead the people towards the literacy realm. This paper is an attempt to discuss on History of Mandalay Popular literature in Post-Independence period (1948-58) and its background.

The epoch of the publication of literary works in printed forms started in Mandalay since the reign of the later Konbaung Dynasty, Mindon Min.² At the British Publishing Presses' solely propagating the benefit of the British colonial rule; At the twentieth century there appeared the Myanmar Hitakaryi Newspaper in (1903), Myanmar Kyeemhon Yetchar (1904), Sasana pyinnyar Thadinzar (society for promoting Buddhism Monthly Review 1906)³, the Burma Critic (1907), the Burma Magnet (1912), Sihayarzar Thadinzar (1920), Bahosi Thadinzar (1920), Mandalay Nayzin Thadinzar (1920), Taingchit Thadinzar (1920), Home rule Thadinzar (1921), The New Leader (1922), Myanmar Mandaing Thadinzar (1923), Myanmar Thamada Thadinzar (1925), Nay Pyidaw Thadinzar (1926), Mandalay Thuriya Nayzin Thadinhtumyar (1929), Myanmar Myochit Thadinzar (1933).⁴ Among these newspapers some of the young editors of those newspapers were well educated and well-informed by reading western literature. Political, educational and international, so much, so that they later became the pivot of the revival of Myanmar modern literature. At the same time, they mentioned ardent need of Myanmar to develop their way of life as well as political concepts and education. Before the publication of the later newspaper after getting independence the Ludu newspaper, the Bahosi newspapers were the most popular ones. The Mandalay Thuriya Nayzin Thadinhtumya also was the one which became popular within short time. Among the newspaper issued in Mandalay, the Mandalay Thuriya Daily newspaper was published as a branch of the Yangon Thuriya Newspaper in 1927-28, but closed in 1933.⁵

The earliest magazine of popular literature type was published in Mandalay as early as 1917 by the name of Commercial press (C.P). the chief editor of its was U KhinMaung who later known as C.P. U KhinMaung. In the C.P magazine, the new and lively articles as well as romantic and detective novels were contained. The reading public took more and more interest in those popular literary up-heavel that there appeared many printing presses. Next to the C.P Magazine, the star of Burma press, 84th street Mandalay published Myanmarpye

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² Tet Katho Htin Gyi: Myanmar-naingan Thadinzar Mya Ah-nhun (Index to Myanmar Newspaper), Volume I, Yangon, Sarpaybeikman Press, 1992, p.63 (Henceforth; Htin Gyi, Thadinzar)

³ The Sasana Pyinnyar Thadinzar (1906) was no other than the popular newspaper although it bears the Sasana Pyinnyar.

⁴ Htin Gyi: Thadinzar, Vol II, pp.489-521

⁵ UPI. U Ba Than, "Myanmar-naingan Thadinzar Thamaing" (History of Myanmar Newspaper) Sanezin Thamaing Sadan Mya (Papers relating to the history of Newspaper, Journal and Magazine, Yangon, Sarpaybeikman press, 1975, pp.52-53. (Henceforth; Ba Than, "Thadinzar Thamaing")

Thamawayamahita Journal in April (1921). Later the Naypyidaw journal (1921) was published in honor of the holding of ninth conference of G.C.B.A.⁶

In fact from the colonial rule of British to the independent period, in Mandalay, there appeared so many mushrooms like printing presses. The earliest printing press was the Gunawadi Press and the Yadanadipan Press founded in 1887 simultaneously. Among those Mandalay printing press the most durable and popular up to present days were Thukawaddi Press (1922)⁷ and the Ludu Press (1940). Next to these popular presses the other conspicuous and slowly entrenched press is the MaungHtunPe& Sons (1950) which still enlisted as the long-lived press in Mandalay. During the Second World War (1939-45) and the post war time the shortage of paper supply especially newspaper printing became more difficult for those printing presses. The white paper was available only in Yangon and the price was too high. As for Mandalay publishers, the colored packing paper from the Swedish Match factory was the only available source for printing newspaper.⁸

Apart from those difficulties, the most important event happened which would give impetus for the development of literary upheaval, during the war. Next the whole enterprise of Keepway Magazine and publishing printed books was shifted to Mandalay in 1940. From the time onwards it continued the whole printing business until now except some intervals of short terms. In fact the Ludu journal was published as volume number one and continued up to 1 May 1946 and stopped when the internal insurrections among the various indigenous rebels occupied Mandalay on March 1949. After getting independence it was republished on 1 August 1950 and since 1951 January it was issued once in a month, but the number and volume did not continued previous volumes. Instead it began again as volume 1 No 1 and ended after eight years, number 105.⁹ Younger authors gave birth the translated novels of western, eastern and central Europe. But the foreign contacts with the Myanmar publishers like keepway and Ludu, Dagon press, Hanthawadi Pitaka-taw Pyantpwaye press, were likely to be more easier with the south eastern world and the Asian countries like Red China, Russia and newly created democratic central European countries. This foreign contact led to the ardent urge for the Myanmar publishers to print popular literature.

During that period, conspicuous authors are Shwe U Daung, M.A. Daw Ohn and the late Physician Dr. TunShwe who wrote Malaoka and Nhaung Chit Waile respectively. Daw Ohn's Malaoka was the most advanced book and interesting one for the Myanmar public as it is about the womanhood especially the sexual emotion of the female in general.¹⁰ During the first decade of independence, the literary development in upper Myanmar seen to be more conspicuous than other part of the country. It was due to the efforts of Ludu U Hla, U PeThein (Shwe U Daung), Chit Nyo, Daw Ah Mar, U Kyi Mya, Thuriya U Than Maung, Shwe Gaing Thar and Dr. Tun Shwe. All of these popular author's novels were published by LuduKyeepwaye press although some of the authors were from Yangon with light caliber. In fact the impetus for the literary upheaval especially popular literature of various kinds, was the formation of the other literary association apart from the Myanmar Writer Association (1937), which was founded during the post war period, there appeared many kind of literary

⁶TheinKha, Myanmar-nainganSanezinHmatsuMya, (notes of Myanmar's newspaper) journal and Magazine), Yangon, Sarpaybeikman press, 1990, p.158 (Henceforth; TheinKha, SanezinHmatsu)

⁷ As it was publishing and printing all sort of literature since 1898 by the name of MandalabommiPitakatTaik. In 1922, it took the name Thukhawaddianf it is most long lived press among other few presses.

⁸U Win Tin; Ludu Kyeepwaye Sar Oaktaik Thamaingh nit yin Taikhotook Sar Oak mya SarsuSayin (History of Ludu Kyeepwaye press and list of the Books published by that press), A paper submitted for the Diploma of library science, Yangon University library science, 1993, p-28 (Henceforth; Win Tin, LuduKyeepwaye)

⁹ Win Tin, LuduKyeepwaye, p.82

¹⁰M..A. DawOhn, Malaoka (Female world), Third edition, Mandalay, Shwemann-Sarso press, 1948.

associations. The advanced modern popular literature reflected the contemporary conditions of the decade after getting independence. Those literature romance, love, tragic and comics were mostly based on the conditions that they had experienced during the war and the peoples struggle for independence. The number of publishing all sorts of literature, which seem to be interesting writing by the popular authors or the favorite of the readers, appeared leap and bound. The impetus for the writers as well as the publishers of Mandalay to develop their literary field was the Sarpaybeikman literary Prize which was to honor the best book from the various type of literature in 1948. Besides the Shumawa Magazine press also gives ShumawaTahtaung Su¹¹ to encourage the new authors by holding novel writing competition annually (1954-62)¹²Ludu U Hla and SayadawAshinThawbita whose pen-name was Shwe-gyaing-thar were awarded Sarpaybeikman prize for their book U Hla's, Htaung hnit Luthar (Human and prison) in 1957 and Shwe-gaing Thar's Sinyin Htonphwe-hmu (Myanmar costume) in 1951, respectively.¹³

Since 1948 the popular literary works published by Ludu press were Shwe U Daung's Thuyegaung Thone-york (original of which is the Alexander Duma's three musketeers) vol I and II, in March 1948, Eindani's Po-toke Galay December 1950, Zawana's Zawana Ponpyin (zawana's Anetdo) vol I, II, 1951, Shwe U Daung's Seikhta Watain (original of which is the Sir walter Scott's Old Morality) in June 1951, ShwegaingThar's Sinyinhtonphwemhu (Myanmar costume) in may 1951, P.Moenin's Withtu toe Myar (P.Moenin short stories) in September 1951, Pathein Ko Lay's Plato September 1951, Shwe U Daung's Kotwe Tayoke Pyithit (self-experience in New China) in march 1953, Shwe U Daung's U PeThein's Shwe U Daung (Autobiography of Shew U Daung) in march 1953, C.D Shamar's Mikhin Hnin Kalaynge Aharya Dirt (Mother and Child's nutrition)December 1953, C.D. Shamar's Kalay Nge Aha No Bu Taik Kywe Chin Pyatha nar Myar (The problems of feeding milk bottle to baby) October 1954, C.D Shamar's Kyanmarye Nyunt Paung (Health care) August 1955, U MyaSein's Myanmar's Buddhist laws, September 1955, Ludu U Hla's Layne ahtu (together with the wind) August 1956, Ludu U Hla's Hlaung Chink Twin Hma Nget nge Mya (small birds in the cage) January 1958, and U Hla's Zani hnit Tha-tha-mi-Mya tho Hlaung dwin Hma pay-sa Mya (letters from prison to wife, sons and daughters) 1956, and Htaung hnit Luthar (Human and prison) in 1958 which were the best sellers of those days.¹⁴ Among the popular novels and short stories the most striking short stories composed and published by U Hla was P.Moenin's selected short stories. The motive of Ludu U Hla was for the benefit of young authors or story-writers. He got those collected short stories from Perrot U San Ni and the total number of stories was thirty. Among these "Ma-Kaung-Nyan hnit Bay-Dan"(the wickedness and its effect) and other short stories were prescribed for middle schools by the text book in 1978.¹⁵

The publication of modern popular literature in Mandalay can be traced back to ninety-thirties as the well-known author Mya Myo Lwin wrote such a plenty of popular novels during short time and published of a low price of four Annas pen book. That period was called as Lay-

¹¹A prize which had given one thousand kyats to first prize winner.

¹²U HokWam and U Khin Aye, "Myanmar Withtu", (Myanmar novels) Myanmar-Hmu, Volme-1, Yangon, Universities Press, 1975, pp. 153-155 (Hence forth, Hok Wam, Myanmar Withtu)

¹³Dagon Shwehmya, Myanmar-naingan Sarpaysu-Mya (literary awards of Myanmar), Yangon, Sarpaybeikman press, 1972, p. 35, 60.

¹⁴Win Tin; Ludu Kyeepwaye, pp.3, 4

¹⁵P.Moe Nin, whthtu toe myar (short stories) Mandalay, Ludu Kyeepwaye Press 1952.

pe-tan Withtu Khit (the era of novels which worthy four annas) .the books of Mya Myo Lwin were published by Pyi Gyi Mandala press.¹⁶

The young people of pre-war day read the new and breath-taking novel, of cheap price the old people especially those parents who were very backward and worried about their offsprings not allowed them to read those novels. The old and extreme parents of the four Annas novel period, they collected all those novel and burnt down, to show their objection by force. Besides orthodox priest like Leti Saya Daw also objected to read these novels as those books were obstruction to attain Nirvana or good enlightened mind.¹⁷ Whatever the efforts of worried parents and religious preaching forbidden to read popular literature, the development and advance knowledge of the young-sters were still stronger enough to read them at their parents' absence. The decade after the anti-popular four Anna's novels movement, the natural upheaval of the interest of the readers to know what they believe to be modern and up-to-date. So the well known novelist of Upper Burma and Lower Burma as well as obliged to write and publish novels so much so that one may call Golden Age of novel prevailed in Upper Burma in nineteen thirties.

Sayagyi Mya Myo Lwin participated as executive number when the upper Burma writer association¹⁸ was founded in 1942.¹⁹ He took active part in the fields Newspapers, journal publication and seen in the film production.

The next popular writer was U Kyi Mya among the young promising authors and experienced journalists like Mya Myo Lwin, Ludu U Hla and Hnin Oo. He was the editor of Pyi Nyut Sar Soung published in 1947 at mandalay. Besides he was the editor of Nagani Journal, Youngni Journal and Myanmar La Zin Newspaper at Mandalay. His first novel Thi Kway Hlu Phan (1946) was his stepping stone for his literary success.²⁰ Before 1946 he wrote short novels in periodicals like Shwe-mann Sar So and Pyi Nyunt. Then in 1952 he wrote the novel Thet Htar as co-writer with Hnin Oo, Mhon Daing and Kan Thaya (Storm and Pleasant Beach) in 1961, collected short stories Maha Bodi Mye hmaThanThayarTeik Pwe in 1960. Among those novels Thet Htar and Ma Ma Lay Pyan Sayar novels were successfully transformed as films. In novel the main theme was based on the class struggle or difference between capitalist and worker and some of the ideas were in this novel the inclination towards Marxism can be clearly seem.²¹

Another well-known author was U Hnin Oo who was the contemporary of U Kyi Mya. They were very closed and intimate in friends between the writers of those days. U Hnin Oo as a young man used to write some articles in Dagon Magazine, Sanay Nagani Journal and Journal Gyaw were before the world war. In pre-war days his pen-name was Min Kay Tu and after the war he used his own name no more pen-name. He being a man of talent he entered the arena of popular literature he did published Water loo and Thu Ma novels which proved to be

¹⁶ (a) Maung Aye Ngwe, MyaMyoLwin's collection, Yangon, a pater submitted for Diploma of library science, 1981, p.2-3 (Henceforth; Aye Ngwe, MyaMyo Lwin)

(b) Maung Swan Yi; SayaGyiMyaMyo Lwin Lay-pe-tan WithtuKhit", SarpaySadanMya, Mandalay, LuduKyeepwaye press, 1967, p. 296 (Henceforth; Swan Yi)

¹⁷ Ah-mar-tin, MyaMyo Lwin ei Ba-wa hint Sarpay (the life and works of MyaMyo Lwin) Mandalay, the thesis submitted for M.A. degree to Mandalay University, 1968, p.39

¹⁸ It was founded at Thuriya Press (the sun) and Zeya Maung served as its first charman. The association performed plays, and hold literary conferences to increase its journal.

¹⁹ Malika, Myanmar SarpayAbidan (Dictionary of Myanmar literature) first Volume, Yangon, thitsa Press, 1977,pp 157-159

²⁰ Malikha, Myanmar SarpayAbidan (Dictionary of Myanmar Literature) first volume, Yangon, Thisar Press, 1977,pp. 157-159 (Henceforth; MalikhaAbidan)

²¹ KyiMya, ThetHatr, Mandalay, Shwe Mann Sarso Press, 1952.(Henceforth; KyiMya, ThetHtar)

successful ones. He also worked as the editor of Gwa²² journal and he sponsored the publication of Pyi Nyunt press again in 1947, 1948 he became editor of the Bawa Thit Newspaper published by Mandalay division Pyi Thu Ye Baw newspaper by the name was also published. He became famous cartoonist since 1964 and also acted as representative of Hanthawaddy newspaper.²³

During the decade after independence, the late comer in publishing business was Chit Nyo Press. The owner of that Press was U Chit Nyo, who by that time was the associate editor of Ludu Journal, who was in charge of translation section. By that time onwards he tried to translate the popular literature but it never appeared in book form nor printed articles. As he was the younger brother of Kyar Ba Nyein who was the best player of Myanmar chess, naturally he published the first book of Myanmar chess-playing method.²⁴ Chit Nyo's translated works are still popular among the young readers and those books were now regarded as the classical type. His translated books *Lut luck yay Khaung Laung* (Bell of independence) 1948, *Ah-may* (mother) 1950, *Chit-ta-nay-Thay-ta-nay* (A time to love and A time to die) are very famous. The last novel was, written by a German author, *Ray mark* was the anti-war book, which was the story about a German soldier's love affair and war experience when the power of the Nazis was at the climax.²⁵

His own novel *Thone-ta-luct* was the most popular books, that he had, because he severely criticized and attacked the muslim tradition of the divorce who has to marry another man before she remarries to her first husband.²⁶ This book was written about very awful practice of making love with another man so as to be remarried again with the first husband. Although U Chit Nyo was the son of muslim parents he dared to condemn such awful tradition of muslim religion. Later he published this novel together with his translated play, translated short stories among those most of them were of Pushkin and Gorki.

By studying the above mentioned literature of novels, plays, translated novels and journal, magazine and newspaper that had been published between 1948-1958 it may be proved praise worthy and beneficial to mankind as a whole. In fact the development of literary advance after the world war may be seen especially in the translated literature. Besides these novels there were many short and long novels published in the various magazine, journal, periodical and some literary books which did not name as magazine nor journals.

Some magazines published from various presses in Mandalay were *Gaba Yin Kyay Hmu*, *MyatYadana*, and *Pandawset*, most of which were short-lived.²⁷ Some magazines are still published by the well-established press like of Mandalay Hill which still continued its publication *MyatYadanar Magazine* (January 1955) till to ninety sixties. The chief editor of it was U Than Htun and consulting editors-Dagon *KhinKhin Lay*, *Thakhin Ba Thaung*, *Moe Gyoe* took charge of it publication.²⁸ Apart from this magazine, the conspicuous type of literature, which never bears the name magazine or journal, was *Shwe Mann Sarso Sa-Soung*. The chief editor was U Aye Maung and the consultant editor was *Mya Myo Lwin* and associate editors were *M.A. Daw Ohn* and *Daw Mar Lar*. It also consisted the music notes of the famous

²²Gwa Journal was short-lived and was published by martamyang press, Mandalay.

²³Malikha, Myanmar SarpayAbidan (Dictionary of Myanmar literature) Third Volume, Yangon, Aunglandaw press, 1977, pp-303-304

²⁴Malikha, Abidan, pp.220-221

²⁵ I Bid; pp.221-222

²⁶Chit Nyo, *Thone-Ta-luct* (Thone-Ta-luct and other short stories), Mandalay, Chit Nyo Press, 1958, pp-319-321. (Henceforth; Chit Nyo, *Thone-Ta-Lact*)

²⁷ U KhinMaungTun, Myanmar Magazine, Myanmar HmuSarzin (I), Yangon, Universities Publishing Committee, 1975, pp. 239-257.

²⁸Myatyadana Pictorial and photographic Magazine Mandalay, Pitakataw Electric printing press, no-10 Oct 1961.

composer Saya Myoma Nyein.²⁹ Like Shwe Mann Sar Soung, Pyi Nyunt Sar Sin collected poems and novels. Next journal was Nagani journal published by Nagani journal press at the corner of 80th and 19th street, Mandalay. The Chief editors of it was Yawai Soe Min (Maung Htang) and the associate editors were Myin gyan Tint Lwin and U Tin Win. It was the journal of high quality as it was used to publishing editorial, articles, novels, poems, plays and advertisements. It used to publish the well-known author like U Ba Thaug, Thuzana, ThiriSwe, Nat New and other poets used to composed poems of high standard.³⁰

The Htoo Sar Saung was issued by the Htoo Printing Press, 35th street, Mandalay. The price of it was seven pyas only and its size was somewhat big as the present day magazine with twenty pages of various types of writing, advertisements, astronomy, news about movies and sports as well. It even mentioned the scheduled time-table of Mandalay Railway station. The most remarkable thing was the lists of Racing Horses.³¹

During 1948 to 1958 there were increased number of newspaper can be seen Bahosi newspaper, Bama-Thit newspaper were published and 18th may 1949, Shwe Mann Aung Si and Yan Aung newspapers on 28th may 1949, Myanmar Lanzin newspaper and on 21st August 1949, Sanday evening newspaper, Mandalay Hittaing on 7th June 1956, Mandalay Thuriya on 15th July 1956, were published but the old newspaper like Myanmar Taryar, Taing Chit and Myanmar Oo soon closed on May 1959. Those newspaper published up till March 1954 were Ludu, Myanmar Lanzin. There were some printing press existed till to the end of the decade between 1948-58, were Padaythar Pitakat press, Zabu Meik Swe press, Thu kha wadi press, Tet Ne Lin U Sein and sons Myo Sai press, Shwe Mann Sar So press, Yu Wa color press, Hla Khin and sons press, Saya Nyo and Sons press, Ratanadipan press and Kyar press. Among these press Padaythar Pitakat press used to publish religious literature and book depots published popular novels and articles.³²

As for the role of press owners and publishers, they achieved their urge for the publication of popular literature by publishing novels since 1920. But the outbreak of the Second World War seemed to be an unavoidable obstacle for the advancing literary upheaval even after the end of second world war. One may notice the urgent need for literary revival was retarded by the outbreak of insurgencies within the various parts of Myanmar country. Due to the civil-war the number of the printing press and publishes decreased especially in Upper Burma. The newspaper and journal of Yangon resumed their pre-war day works fifty years earlier than those publishers of Mandalay. Besides it was the center of anti-imperialism and struggle for independence together with the political movement, the literary movement started in Yangon very earlier than Mandalay. It also was the birth place of young authors of modern views and ideas who were later known as Khit San Sapay writers. But if compared to the publication of popular literature in Yangon and Mandalay it seemed to be a success as there appeared all kinds of modern and popular literature, even the authors from Yangon with formerly published works or books in Mandalay. The most favourable course for these developments in printing and publication of popular literature was the absence of censorship by that time. Naturally various kinds of literature, even politics flourished in Mandalay within such a short period of one decade. But after 1960, some of those press, which published books or religion and LuduKyeepwaye and Pitakat Press were the few surviving presses. At present Ludu Press is the only survivor to publish popular literature in Mandalay.

²⁹Shwe Mann Sar-so Sasaung, Mandalay, Shwe Mann Sar –So press, vol I, no-4, 1947.

³⁰Nagani journal, Mandalay, Nagani press, vol II, no.5, 4. 1. 1957.

³¹HtooSar-Saung, Mandalay, Htoo press, 1957.

³²ShweGaingTha, A HnitTaya-pyi Mandalay (Mandalay in centenary) Mandalay, Kyeepwaye press, 1954, p. 327. (Henceforth; ShweGaingTha, Mandalay)

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