

Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

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Material on Eight Books on Ireland

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I Introduction (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

The Irish of the East

On June 18, 2012, Aung San Suu Kyi visited Dublin to collect the Amnesty Ambassador of Conscience Award conferred to her. Bono, lead singer of the band U2 and a long standing supporter of the her cause, presented the price at a concert attended by some 2000 people in which the Riverdance Troupe and Burmese comedian and political activist Zarganar participated. In her short acceptance speech Suu Kyi said:

The British used to refer to the Burmese as the “Irish of the East”. We never quite understood why. Some said it is because we never gave them any peace, we were very rebellious. And others said that it was because our men like their drink and we all are rather superstitious. But for whatever reason, today I'm proud to be your Eastern counterpart.¹

These remarks were accompanied by laughter from the audience and served to rhetorically counterbalance the first part of her speech in which she had expressed how much she was “moved” by the many people showing their support to her and her fight for democracy during her visits to Thailand, Switzerland, Norway and, now, Dublin, after having been confined to Burma for 24 years.

This paper provides some information about why the Burmese nationalists were interested in Ireland and the Irish struggle for independence. The intensity of this interest can be illustrated by some numbers. Nagani and Tun Aye's publishing house brought out seven books indicating in its title that the respective book was about Ireland. Neither Germany nor the Soviet Union received such attention. Aung San Suu Kyi in her essay on the intellectual life in Burma in India even states that from the 101 books published by Nagani, 21 dealt with Michael Collins² (1890-1922) whose life and death shows some parallels with her father. The figure given by her, even if wrong, correctly represents the Burmese interest in Irish affairs and, perhaps even more, in the fate of Irish fighters who sacrificed their life in their fight from independence from Britain.

It is not yet precisely known when and by whom the term “the Irish of the East” was coined. As the foreword to Saya Hein's book on the Irish revolution published in September 1940 shows, the term was already a common phrase then in Burma. Very likely it was an ascription

1 <http://www.rte.ie/news/av/2012/0619/media-3321771.html> [16.8.2012].

2 Suu Kyi 1991 *Freedom of Fear and Other Writings*. London, Penguin: 132.

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from the British side in which the experiences of the colonial rulers with the boycott strategies of the Burmese nationalists was likened to the Irish rebellions after the Easter Rising of 1916. Later, the Burmese side proudly used the epithet as a fitting characteristic of their spirit of independence and an indication that Burma could achieve the goal of becoming a free country if the lessons of fighting the seemingly superior power in the same way than the fighters from the small island of Ireland had done.

The same logic of taking over an attribute used by the superior in a conflict and reversing it against the aggressor happened when Maung Ba Thoung proclaimed himself *Thakin* (master) Ba Thoung in 1930 taking over the title reserved for the European masters in Burma until then. He and his followers in the Thakin movement that developed into the *Do-Bama Asiayone* (We Burman Association) thus symbolically proclaimed themselves as the real rulers of Burma in the succession of the Irish and other formally subjugated nations.³

Various Facets of a Freedom Struggle

Mya Daung Nyo⁴, the translator of one book on Irish bomb squads in England and two other books published by Nagani and Tun Aye's book enterprise, in 1938 summarised his assessment of the development of foreign ideas influencing the Burmese independence movements in a column of a Burmese newspaper:

Slowly, Burma turned towards Ireland, could we not import Sinn Fein? Sinn Fein Movement gave birth to Do-Bama (Thakin) Movement. The experiment was tried; but though there was no lack of Griffiths and de Valeras to reach the efficiency of non-violent ? self-reliance, the iron hand of British Imperialism tried to nip it in the bud. Nietzsche and his superman philosophy cropped up with Thakinism. The old reactionaries said this country was not ripe for Revolution [...] The world outside Burma had in the meantime went beyond the Irish stage. The 1917 coup and Lenin appear on the political horizon. Marxism-Leninism is the new political philosophy for the younger generation, though the elders despise it as something crazy and utopian. [...] „Comrades“ and „Hammer and Sickle“ come out in the streets, in face of Fascist militaristic organisations of some of our old political leaders.⁵

According to the journalist, the Irish independence movement was outdated already at that time as a source of inspiration for Burma's freedom struggle. Consequently, Mya Doung Nyo

3 For the ambivalence of the “language of liberation” that had to made use of the terms used by the former oppressors see Hans-Bernd Zöllner 2000

4 Pen name of Aung Than (1915-1953) meaning “True (*nyo*) Diamantine (*mya*) Peacock (*daung*)”. The peacock being the national symbol of independent Burma the pseudonym indicates that the author was a staunch nationalist. Besides the book on the Irish underground activities in England, he contributed works on secret organisations in the world (no. 43), the Burmese independence struggle (no. 50), revolution (no. 71) and translated a novel of the German author Leonard Frank on the fate of prisoners of war in and after World War I (no. 91). In 1944 the first volume with biographies of the Thirty Comrades was published.

5 *New Burma*, 28.8.38.

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in the foreword on his translation of a book on Ireland's secret activities in England calls the ongoing bomb attacks of the Irish Independence Army (IRA) in England “delibitated” and quotes Nehru who during his visit to Burma in 1937 said “Terrorist acts are ineffectual in the struggles for independence and (are) the reckless acts of the ones without any intellect.” As the dedication of Mya Doung Nyo's publication shows, he sides with the – supposedly intelligent – young members of the *Do-Bama Asiayone* by expecting the true liberation of Ireland by a class struggle à la Lenin whereas Burma's older political generation was siding with European militaristic fascism.

In view of this critical assessment of the Sinn Fein movement and the IRA one may wonder why the Nagani editors and Tun Aye who were regarded as “leftists” published so many books about Ireland in which violent means of a liberation movement were highlighted as the covers of Mya Daung Nyo's and Saya Hein's books illustrate (see below p. 30 and p. 37). The main reason for this observation can be seen in the fact that the development of the Burmese nationalist movements were by no means as unilinear as Mya Daung Nyo's comment suggests. The Irish struggle for independence provided many facets that could serve as positive or – to a lesser extent, as Mya Daung Nyo's remarks show – negative models for Burma.

In the 1920s, it was the demand for Home Rule that was put forward by the Burmese nationalists against the system of “Dyarchy” introduced in 1923 by the British colonial administration in line with the constitutional reforms in India implemented some years earlier. In Ireland, the question of how to establish self-government within the United Kingdom had dominated the political discussion from the end of the 19th century onwards. In 1920, the British Parliament passed a Home Rule Act for Northern and Southern Ireland that however did not work in the southern part of the country and after a bloody and brutal war between Irish rebels and the British forces was replaced by a treaty negotiated by both parties that established the Irish Free State in 1922 as a Dominion of the British Empire like Australia and Canada. The radical wing of the Sinn Fein movement continued to struggle for an Irish republic with no ties to the British Empire which was finally established in 1937. Ireland's development from a British dependency to an independent state outside the British Commonwealth thus can be seen as a precursor of what - temporally delayed - happened in Burma.⁶

6 The same applies to India where a Home Rule movement was created during World War I. It was, however, short lived and became part of the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi in 1920.

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From 1921 on, Home Rule was propagated in Burma.⁷ Shortly later, the first books informing about the constitutional developments in Ireland came out.⁸ In 1930, Ba Thounng co-founded the *Do-Bama Asiayone* after riots between Burmans and Indians in Rangoon had occurred. The name of the association strikingly resembles the name of the Irish party *Sinn Fein* - meaning “we ourselves” - founded in 1905. The party split in 1921 over the Anglo-Irish Agreement of that year on the question of promising loyalty to the British Crown or not - a question that was hotly disputed in Burma as well. In Ireland, a civil war between the supporters and the opponents of the treaty followed. In Burma, Aung San was called a traitor by his political opponents after signing the agreement with the British government in 1947. Shortly after Independence, a civil war broke out.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) had been founded in 1919 as the successor of the Irish Volunteers that had staged the failed Easter Uprising in Dublin in April 1916 that aimed at ending British rule with the assistance of Germany. The army fought the British in a very bloody war which was terminated by a truce in July followed by negotiations that brought about the treaty of 1921. The IRA split after that along with Sinn Fein. The pro-treaty forces became the army of the independent Irish state, the opponents carried on with a number of activities, among them an involvement in the Spanish Civil War and an attempt to fight the British with German assistance in World War II. The IRA was revived later and became prominent again because of its role in the North Ireland conflict from the 1960s onwards.

All books covered in this Working Paper concentrate on the militant struggle for independence by the Irish nationalists from World War I onwards and their fight among themselves after the signing of the treaty of 1921. Nagani and Tun Aye's publishing house were the only publishers in Burma at that time that brought out books on these issues.

The Books and Their Double Context

The first three books on Ireland published by Nagani highlighting the activities of three protagonists of the Irish fight for freedom came out within a short period of time in August and September 1939 shortly after Tun Aye had left the Club he had co-founded and started his own business.⁹ From now on, revolutionary and communist inspired ideology was not the

7 In 1921, Pu, who became Chief Minister later, published a booklet of 31 pages on “The difference between Home Rule and Dyarchy” (Tin Htway, *The Emergence and Development of political Writing in Burmese Literature, 1914-1942*, with Special Reference to U Ln.M. Phil. Thesis, London, SOAS, 1969: 110.

8 In 1924, a book was published on “Constitutional methods of political agitation in Ireland (ibid.: 111). 1929 Thandwe Maung who later wrote some historical books published by Nagani wrote a book entitled “A short history of Ireland and Irish Republic Constitution” (ibid.).

9 In June 1939, the Burma Publishing House had published its first book, *From Sangha to Laity. Nationalist*

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main motif to publish books any more. Shares had been issued and the shareholders had to be satisfied.

At the same time, the strike movement that had started by the *Do-Bama Asiayone* in January 1938 on the oilfields in Upper Burma and extended to peasants and students had come to an end in July 1939.¹⁰ The strikes had resulted in the downfall of the government of Dr. Ba Maw, the first Chief Minister elected by the Parliament under the 1935 constitution. Many leaders of the strikes had been imprisoned and some protesters had died, most notably student Aung Gyaw in December 1938 and 17 people, among them seven monks, in Mandalay in February 1939 shortly before the successful no-confidence vote against Dr. Maw's cabinet. The public living in the great cities had been emotionalised. The anti-Muslim riots starting in July 1938 in Rangoon and spreading to many places in the country had shown the readiness of Burmans to use violence to defend their national interests.¹¹

Furthermore, the international situation which was very attentively observed by the Burmese nationalists had heated up. The *Do-Bama Asiayone* on its congress held in April 1939 in Moulmein had stated:

(a) There are wars going on in the world due to the expansionism of the powerful capitalist nations, wars among themselves also but these wars have no relevance to the affairs of the peasants and the labourers. [...]

In addition, while imperialist wars are taking place, and while the British imperialists are in difficulties, we shall struggle out of the British imperialist sphere and set up our own Komin Kochin¹² state, we shall do everything to gain Independence. [...]

(b) [...] Due to the incitement by the capitalists the whole world is burning with war fever.¹³

Here, the almost proverbial saying "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" which got prominence in World War I¹⁴ is taken up and linked both to the leftist wording of the

*Movements of Burma, 1920 to 1940.*a Hein's "The World of Capitalists" (see Working Paper no.3 of this series).

10 Maung Maung 1982 *From Sangha to Laity. Nationalist Movements of Burma, 1920 to 1940*. New Delhi, Manohar: 193.

11 For an analysis of the riots from a socialist perspective see Thein Pe's account written shortly after the events (WP 12 of this series). For the student movement and the labour strike see Working Papers 11 and 11.1.

12 Literally translated "Our King – our Affair". The phrase denoted independence and was the name of the party set up by the *Do-Bama Asiayone* which took part in the 1936 elections and won three seats.

13 Maung Maung 1980 *From Sangha to Laity. Nationalist Movements of Burma, 1920 to 1940*. MA Thesis, Canberra, Australian National University, Appendix: 655-657.

14 The dictum is attributed to Daniel O'Connor (1775-1846), a fighter for equal rights for Catholics in Ireland, in view of a war between England and France. Bernhard Shaw commented in 1916, the year of the Easter Uprising: "he cry that 'England's Difficulty Is Ireland's Opportunity' is raised in the old senseless, spiteful way as a recommendation to stab England in the back when she is fighting some one else. (*New York Times* (Mag.) 9 Apr.: 2).

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resolutions as well as to the nationalist fever of the day that called for doing “everything” to achieve the goal of independence that Ireland had already won. The foreword of the first book of Nagani's “Irish series” refers to the events of those years as well as to the socialist wording and terminates with the call “May the revolution succeed!” (see below p. 18)

On this background, the three books on Michael Collins (1890-1922), Dan Breen (1894-1969) and Èamon De Valera (1882-1975) deal with models of how to gain independence through the portrait of independence heroes whose lives were suitable to make interesting reading. All three books were based on English models.

The book written by Batt O'Connor (1870-1935) on Michael Collins was published in 1929, seven years after the leading member of the IRA, member of the Irish delegation that negotiated the treaty of 1921 and Finance Minister of the Provisional Government was killed in an ambush of anti-treaty IRA activists on a travel in Cork country. The civil war between the two factions war had already broken out and Collins had resigned from his ministerial post to lead the official Irish Army against the rebels.

O'Connor, twenty years older than Collins, gives an account of his involvement in the Irish freedom struggle which includes his relationship with Collins which started in 1919 after the latter had become Finance Minister of the provisional Irish government and intelligence chief of the IRA.

As noted above, Michael Connor's short life shows striking parallels with Aung San's. Both used military means to achieve independence, negotiated terms of independence with the British government that were not accepted by some of their early allies which caused a civil war. Both were killed by rivals at the age of only 32, albeit under very different circumstances. Aung San was murdered by gunmen employed by a political rival, Collins in a shoot-out with a military unit of his former comrades in arms. - For a detailed comparison see Timothy Harding's essay in section X.

Dan Breen's book “My Fight for English Freedom” was first published in 1924. It concentrated on the fight against the British between 1919 and 1921 in which the author participated as a member of the IRA.¹⁵ The author is less known than Collins and De Valera, but his book seems to have a greater impact than the other two on the readers. 5000 copies were printed compared to only 1000 of the book on Collins. The book is an autobiography which might be one reason why it is said to have had a special impact on some Thakins (see

15 For a short overview on his later life see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Breen.

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below p. 26).

The publication about De Valera is about the man who can be regarded as the most important statesman of modern Ireland. Born in the USA from an Irish mother and a Cuban father and raised by his grandparents in Ireland, he took part in the Easter rising, was sentenced to death and escaped execution. Later, he opposed the treaty of 1921, founded a new party as a rival of Sinn Féin. After his party won the elections in 1932, he became Prime Minister and served in this capacity until 1948 and later from 1951 to 1954 and 1957 to 1959. After that, he served as President of Ireland until 1973.

The next book was published almost half a year later after the war in Europe had started. Mya Doung Nyo (pen name for the journalist and writer Aung Than) translated the book “Ireland's Secret Service in England” under the title “The Irish Rebel's Bombing Squad”. According to the author's foreword, the book was not encouraging similar means in Burma but teach the readers about important concepts to find a “way out” of poverty. The Burmese term for the phrase – *htwe'ya'* – had already been used by Nu in the titles of his books on the Russian Revolution¹⁶ and was taken up in the Burmese name of the Freedom Bloc, *htwe'ya' gaing*, founded shortly after the outbreak of the European war as a coalition of three parties, among them the *Do-Bama Asiayone* to which Mya Daung Nyo dedicated his book. As Dr. Ba Maw, the leader of the Bloc, recalls in his memoirs,¹⁷ the name alluded to a famous mystic named Bo Bo Aung who was very popular those days and whose name was mentioned in the Nagani Song which ended with the words “Way Out”.¹⁸ The book thus was a blend of motifs taken both from the Burmese and the Irish struggle for independence.

Another half a year later Myoma Saya Hein's third book on Ireland was published which according to the author was a follow up of a book published by another company before.¹⁹ Both books were based on the publication of an English reporter of the Daily Mail called “Mr. Memory” who had covered the civil war in Ireland. The model that could not yet be identified obviously dealt with the split in the Sinn Féin and the IRA which were seen as a warning to the Burmese freedom fighters.

Finally, two more books were published at the turn of the years 1940/1941, one by Nagani the other by Tun Aye's Burma Publishing House. The first was the biography of Sir Roger

¹⁶ See Working Paper 9 of this series.

¹⁷ Ba Maw 1968 Breakthrough in Burma. Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946. New Haven and London, Yale University Press: 67-68.

¹⁸ See Working Paper 1 of this series, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ The Catalogue of Books compiled by the British administration does not contain this previous publication.

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Casement (1856-1916) who served the British government as a diplomat, became a supporter of the independence movement of the country in which he was born and tried to help the Irish nationalists to obtain weapons from Germany for the uprising in 1916. The shipload with weapons was intercepted by the British, Casement was arrested when he entered Irish soil in April 1916. He was charged in London of treason, sabotage and espionage against the Crown and received the death sentence. He was hanged in August 1916. The adventurous life story of the “Irish Martyr” fitted the reports about the contemporary war in Europe and the veneration of the Burmese martyrs that had died in their protests against the British and to whom Myoma Saya Hein had dedicated his first book.

Finally, there is Thakin Hla Baw's translation of O'Hegarty's “The Victory of Sinn Féin” first published in 1924 in Dublin. The Burmese version was produced by Tun Aye's Burma Publishing House. The book covers the period of the Easter Uprising in 1916 to the emergence of the Irish Free State in 1923 and is based on conversations of the author with some of the protagonists

Revolution and Adventure

The blurb of the reprint of Batt O'Connor's memoirs published in 2004 states that “[h]is recollections of that War read more like an adventure story than history”. The Burmese translation faithfully renders the 34 short chapters of the model. Chapter XI, entitled “We Hear We Are to be Shot”, retells an episode happening in a Dublin jail after the Easter Rising of 1916. O'Connor was one of the men arrested in connection with the rebellion.

That day was Wednesday. In the afternoon a military sergeant unlocked the door. I was standing by myself near it as he entered. We took very little notice of the comings and goings of our guard but this fellow began to speak to me. He told me that three of our leaders had been shot that morning at dawn. This was the first news we got of the executions.

“I am sorry for you chaps”, he said, “I am afraid the same fate is in store for you. A ton of quicklime came in this morning and they are digging a large trench outside big enough to hold a hundred”.

As soon as he went out my companions gathered round me to know what he had been saying. I told them.

Up to that moment there had been a babel of voices in the room but now silence fell upon us all. Every man was thinking hard. Then suddenly one moved over towards the wall and fell upon his knees. We all followed suit

We had a few prayer books amongst us and in some cases two men read out of the same book, holding it between them. I made a fervent act of contrition and then, having finished my prayers, I chanced to look over the shoulder of my companion. He was

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reading the Litany for the Dying!

One of the men whom I knew amongst us was Leo Rinn. He was a carpenter by trade. He had been badly wounded in the fight and was still in his uniform which was covered with bloodstains. He was not kneeling. He was sitting on the ground with his back to the wall. He was the first to break the silence:

"We have prayed long enough now", he said: "whatever our fate is to be, we cannot avoid it. Let us cheer up and have a song".

He sang the first verse of *The Soldiers' Song* (which is now our National Anthem) with a clear steady voice, and by the time he reached the chorus we had caught his courage and were all ready to join in.

The door was again opened and the same Sergeant entered.

"Well, I'm blown", he said, "here are all you fellows going to be shot any minute, and you spend your time singing and enjoying yourselves".

"Why not?" said Leo Rinn. "Irishmen can die singing as well as any other way".

Amongst us were some men who had had nothing to do with the Rising. They had been arrested for looting. When they had heard what the Sergeant said about the quicklime, they went deadly pale. They drew away at once by themselves into a corner as if our nearness would contaminate them. We were condemned men and they were terrified that they might share our fate. They did not pray at all but began damning and cursing us.

"Oh, you bloody rebels", they whimpered, "you are the cause of all our troubles. Here we are, poor innocent men, and maybe we will be shot, and we have nothing at all to do with your bloody rebellion".

"All I got was a pair of boots", wailed one of them, "and them too small for me!"

But none of us was shot.

Next day we were sorted out. The 'innocent' were set free, and I was transferred to Richmond Barracks with some other prisoners to await court martial.²⁰

This style of writing heavily contrasts the pathetic foreword of Myoma Saya Hein's translation in which the spirit of sacrifice and martyrdom of the Burmese demonstrators who suffered death is evoked and his final words "May the revolution succeed!". This contrast however must not be regarded as a contradiction. The religious fervor inspiring the revolutionaries kept the two sides together. One could merrily die for a noble cause – and pity the poor souls who were just striving for petty material gains. In Burma, this attitude was expressed in a slogan taken from the German philosopher Nietzsche which was shouted on the streets: "Live dangerously!". This spirit of mixing revolutionary zeal and personal bravery can be seen in some speeches and resolutions brought forward in December 1938 during the last stages of the march of the striking oilfield workers towards Yangon:

²⁰ Batt O'Connor TD 2004 *With Michael Collins in The Fight For Irish Freedom*. Aubane, Aubane History Society: 56-57.

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Slogans shouted by the marchers when attacked by the police:

Failure means death and burial, yet the throne itself is reward for success;
To be born is to die;
Show your valor when faced with danger;
Victory shall be ours.²¹

From a manifesto of the Dobama Asiayone issued December 12, 1938:

The proletariat in Burma are well aware of all labor movements of the world.
[...] We are aware that very soon Burma will be free, but at present the government is using every possible means to break the power of the proletariat.
Let us run forward and face these now and strive towards independence.

The manifesto concluded with the following maxims:

Be it failure, be it success. To defend, we must fight our best;
Don't get killed with your back to the foe;
Noble is he who takes the blow to the chest.²²

Such statements show that there was a fertile soil in Burma of the late 1930s and the early 1940s for the mix of adventure and revolution that was offered by the books on Ireland published by Nagani.

About this Volume

Different from previous Working Papers, this volume does contain only one extensive book review on Thandwe Maung's book on Michael Collins, the "genuine leader". At the time of the first call for such reports some years ago, the English models of the books on Ireland were not yet known and could thus not be compared with the Burmese translation or adaptation. It is hoped that this paper will stimulate readers to take an interest in detailed studies about how the Irish revolutionary adventures were linguistically, culturally and politically adapted to the Burmese context of the time.

In place of book reports, this volume contains the forewords and introductions to the books besides the basic bibliographical information provided by Kyaw Hoe's MA thesis. They give a vivid illustration of how the Irish experiences could be used for Burma's freedom struggle in a variety of ways.

Three essays throw light on different aspects of the books introduced here. The first is the translation of a term paper on the works on Ireland published by Nagani submitted at Yangon University in 1970. It informs about what one could call the official perception of why the Burmese adaptation of the Irish freedom fight in the early periods of Burmese independence. Second, there is an essay written by Dr. Timothy Harding who compares Michael Collins and

21 Khin Yi 1988 *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)*. Ithaca, Cornell University: 102.

22 *ibid.*: 105.

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Aung San in detail from the point of view of a Western historian. Finally, some extracts of a lengthy work on Irish studies and knowledge are reproduced which inform about the views of two Irish writer on Burmese Buddhism. These essays may be regarded as a virtual dialogue between Myanmar and Ireland which could develop into a real one some day.

II Material on Myoma Saya Hein, *Michael Collins and Me*

1 Kyaw Hoe, **Bibliographical Information**²³

Translation: Georg Noack

21) Hein, Myoma Saya *Michael Collins and Me*. Yangon. Nagani. 1939. 259 pages.

The book is a translation of “With Michael Collins in the Fight for Irish Independence” by Batt O’Connor TD²⁴. It contains a note that the Nagani Club holds the copyright of the Myanmar translation and that the book is not to be sold to people who are not members of Nagani.

The book states that it has been translated in memory of the 21 martyrs who lost their lives fighting for national independence. It contains list of the names of these 21 martyrs.

The book was written about how the Irish people died serving the cause of national independence, about the Sinn Féin organization and about Michael Collins. It has 34 chapters. The [translated] book was meant to fuel the flames of Myanmar resistance as both colonies, Ireland and Myanmar suffered from oppression by the English.

Just as the Irish people didn’t bow their heads to English oppression, the Myanmar people shouldn’t do so either.

Reportedly the book was banned by the English.

The struggle for Myanmar independence testifies however, that Myanmar people were just as brave as the Irish.

The book was published again after independence.

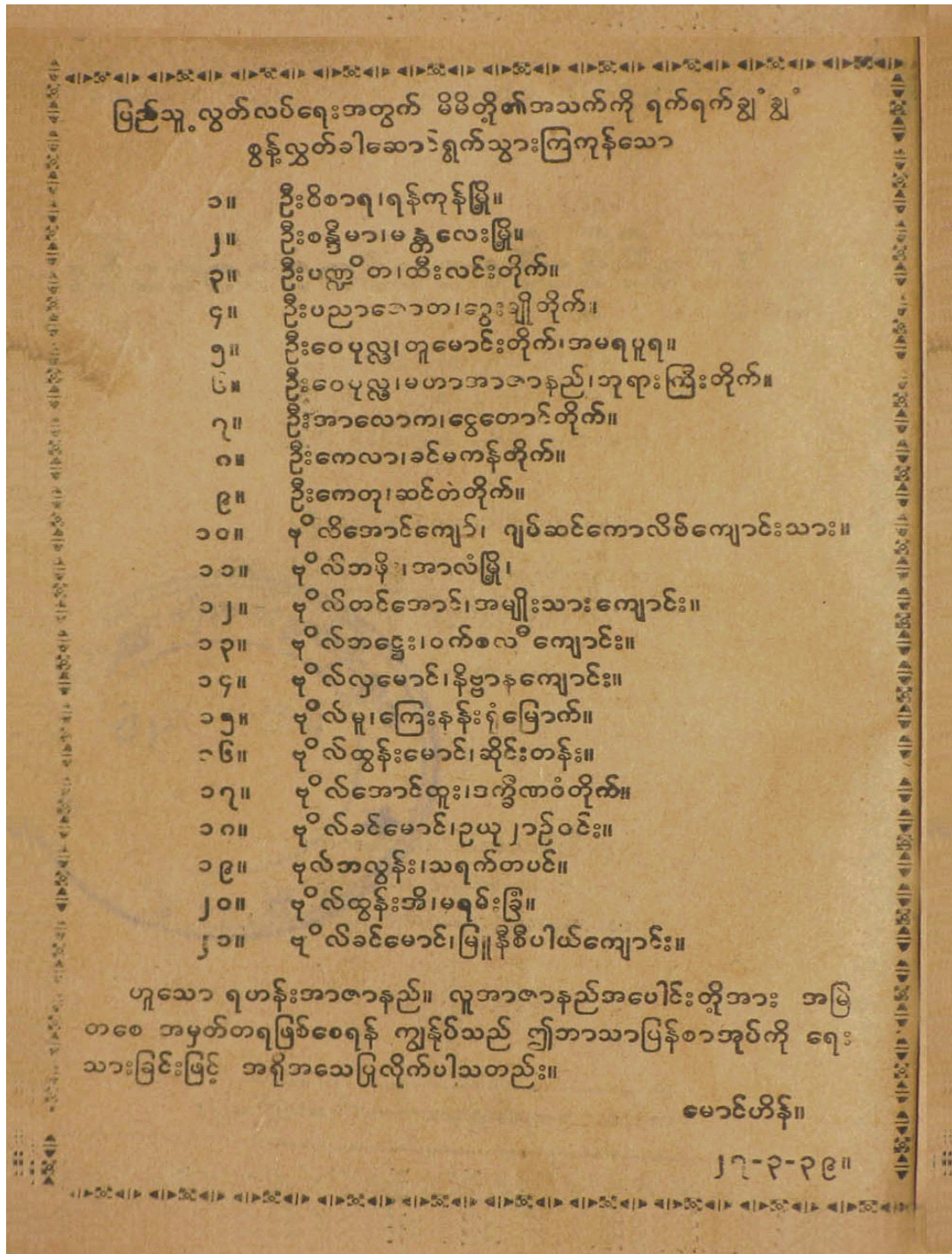
²³ Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 40-41.

²⁴ ThD is the abbreviation for Teachta Dála, the official designation for a members of the Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish parliament.



Title Page

2 Dedication to the Burmese Martyrs



Material on Eight Books on Ireland

Translation (Ye Nyunt)

I have translated this book to always remember, and to pay my respects to, the martyrs, monks and lay people, who have courageously sacrificed their lives for the independence of the people:

- U Wisera, Rangoon.²⁵
- U Sandima, Mandalay.
- U Pandita, Hteelin Monastery.
- U Pyinyar Zawta, NN Monastery.
- U Waipolla, Toomaung Monastery, Amarapura.
- U Waipolla, Mahaarzarni Hpayagyi Monastery.
- U Arlawka, Ngwetaung Monastery.
- U Kaylar, Khinmakan Monastery.
- U Kaytu, Hsinte Monastery.
- Bo Aung Kyaw, Judson College.²⁶
- Bo Ba Hpo, Arlan.
- Bo Tin Aung, National school.
- Bo Ba Htay, Wesley school.
- Bo Hla Maung, Nivirna Monastery.
- Bo Mu, north of Telegraph Office.
- Bo Htun Maung, Saing Dan.
- Bo Aung Htoo, Dakkhinawun Monastery.
- Bo Khin Maung, Ooyin (Garden) compound.
- Bo Ba Lun, Thayet Dabin.
- Bo Htun Ei, Mayan Chan (compound).
- Bo Khin Maung, Municipal school.

25 U Wisara (1895-1929) was a nationalist monks who went on a hunger strike after having been sentenced for his seditious speeches. After a hunger strike of 166 days against the conditions of his imprisonment, he died in September 1929.

26 Bo ("comrade") Aung Gyaw was a student who participated in picketing the Secretariat Building on December 20, 1938. He was hit by the baton of a policeman and died two days later in hospital. Myoma Saya Hein gave the speech at his funeral. Aung Gyaw is commemorated as the first student martyr in Burmese history. The street in central Yangon where he was hit bears his name

3 Introduction

Translation: Ye Nyunt

From about 3000 years ago Myanmar had its own kings and its royal emblems like the royal umbrellas, drums and golden palaces; ill luck and misfortune had made it a state under the rule of another; Lower Myanmar had been under domination of another for over a century and Upper Myanmar for over 50 years; the expansionist system and its government, in combination with foreign capitalists, monopolized the economy and exploited the cream of the land so that the Myanmar were impoverished and suffered much hardship like fish in ever diminishing mass of water.

And when the native Myanmar had no rice to eat, no money to spend, and no place to live, some monks and lay people made speeches to the poor who were of their own flesh and blood. The government of the expansionist system charged that it was seditious and imprisoned the monks and the people who made the speeches. Such restriction of free speech had the smoldering conscience struggle to find an exit and about eight years ago there was unrest and upheaval in Myanmar.

In the past eight years there was in Rangoon, the riot and conflict between the Myanmar and the Kalinga Indians; the riot and conflict between the Myanmar and the Chinese; the Tharrawady uprising and the 1936 Student Boycott. Now, in 1938-39 there have been the riot and conflict between the Myanmar and the Muslims; the oilfield strike; the affair of the peasants; the boycott of the students and various strikes by the workers. These have been cropping up in succession and have spread to the whole country; the poor proclaimed so loudly that the earth almost cracked when the slogans came out in unison 'Torch it! Torch it!' 'Let's strike! Let's strike!' 'May the revolution succeed! May the revolution succeed!'

It could not be denied that these loud proclamations by the poor resulted from the restriction by the expansionist government, in collaboration with the capitalists, of freedom of speech, writing and movement of the nationals. We have witnessed that the stimulation of those loud proclamations had made many like Bo Aung Kyaw in Rangoon, Bo Ba Htay in Arlan, and the 17 monks and lay people in Mandalay, sacrifice their life blood/lives in the non-violent, peaceful attempts to obtain independence for the people. We have also clearly seen many monks and Myanmar people both male and female including children enduring without complaint, the cruel acts of brutality of the police, who were public servants; we have seen them stubbornly jostling to go to prison, making sacrifices for the independence of the people.

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

With the passing of every day, courageous sacrifices for country and race and the patriotic spirit were increasing. With the intention that we might strive for the absolute independence of Myanmar, I have translated an account by the Irish patriot O'Connor of how the Irish patriots sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their country.

May the revolution succeed!

27 March 1939

Maung Hein
Rangoon

III Material on Myoma Saya Hein, *My Adventures*

1 Kyaw Hoe, **Bibliographical Information**²⁷

Translation: Georg Noack

22) Hein, Myoma Saya *My Adventures*. Yangon. Nagani. 1939. 343 pages.

The title of the original book was “My Fight for Irish Freedom by Dan Breen”. This book was translated. “Nagani Press Ltd. holds the copyright of this translation” is remarked inside the book. And: “I have translated this book into Myanmar language for the future generations”.

It is a book about the Irish struggle for independence, about Dan Breen, a leader in this struggle, and his comrades written by Dan Breen himself.

The book is signed 1939, 18th of May, Maung Hein, Yangon.

Nagani sought to propagate revolution indirectly by publishing books about the Irish revolution. They wanted to show Myanmar people that they should act like the Irish who, though small in number were very courageous. This aim was achieved.

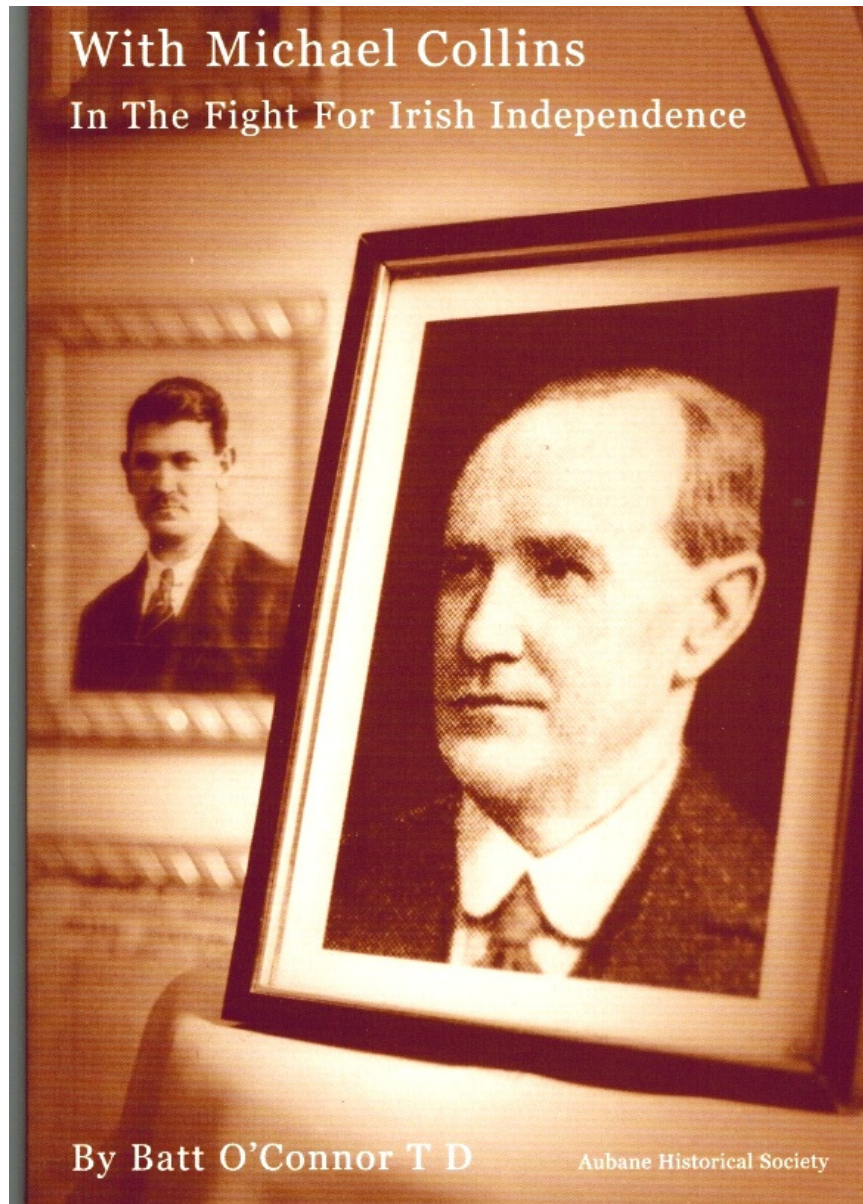
²⁷ Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 41-42.

Material on Eight Books on Ireland



Title Page

Material on Eight Books on Ireland



Title of the Reprint of O'Connor's Book (2004)

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

2 Foreword

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Ireland, with its pleasant forests, mountains, gorges, gullies, plains and grassland, is 32531 square miles in size and has a population of about 5 million people; it is a separate island over 50 miles to the west of the island that is Scotland and England.

It was stated in the history of the world by H. G. Wells that the first people to come there were from the Mediterranean region. Then about 2500 years ago, Celts came to Ireland and the Celtic language spread. Later, Picts from Scotland, Northman or Danes from (the peninsula of) Scandinavia, Anglo- Norman from France gradually came to settle throughout the island and after a long period of time, the people intermarried and settled down as the Irish people. In the past Ireland was known as 'Eire' in Celtic, and later as the English gradually came to settle, it lost its old name of 'Eire' and came to be known as Ireland in around about 400 A.D. In 342 A.D. an Englishman by the name of St Patrick came to the island 'Eire' and sowed the seed of Christianity.

If one looks at the topography of Ireland, there are the Donegal Mountains in the north, the Wicklow Mountains in the east, Comeragh Mountains in the south, Connemara Mountains in the west and broad low plains in the centre of the island. In the mountains and the plains, the natives congregated and hunted and grew agricultural products. These people established states like Ulster in the north, Leinster in the east, Munster in the south, Cork in the west and Meath in the central part and lived and ruled as contemporary kings/ lords.

The relatives/ descendants of these kings/ lords were not on good terms with each other and there were many frequent wars among themselves. Because of that, in 1172 the English king, Henry II attacked the island 'Eire' with his soldiers and seized some of the land. He then gave the land to his men and made them feudal lords. The natives were deprived of the land they had cleared for cultivation and were made to work on the land as tenants under the English feudal lords.

But the English were unable to enter the states of Tyrone and Armagh counties where the O' Neill, and the Donegal county where the O' Donnell, and the Cork county where the MacCarthy dynasties were still powerful and influential.

At opportune times, later descendants of the English kings also made attacks on the island of 'Eire'. And whenever the English kings entered the land they would give it to their men and the Irish were left without land for cultivation (landless). In addition, the English soldiers built

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

colonies and they gradually increased in numbers. But the English kings had waged the Hundred Years war with the French, and later the 'War of the Roses' for 30 years among themselves and were not able to significantly interfere with the affairs of Ireland and their influence gradually diminished/ faded. In the reign of James I who ascended the throne in 1603, the northern part of the state of Ulster was divided and given to the English and the Scots and the natives had to let go of the land for cultivation.

At first, well known English lords gathered and consulted and governed the land where they had influence and power. The earliest Irish parliament was known to have taken place in 1374. Lords/ representative ministers from only some of the states were included and there were only about 20 who attended the meeting. The English kings increasingly had more influence over the Irish Parliament. The Irish parliament held its meetings in Ireland.

The Irish became impoverished because the English took their land, controlled the economy and increased the taxation; the problems between the 'Catholics' and 'Protestants', the dissension and fighting among themselves and the gradual loss of land for cultivation made their conditions unfavourable.

The population reached over 2.8 million in 1785. The people were poor and miserable and in 1798 the Irish patriot Theobald Wolfe Tone founded the Society of the United Irishmen and staged a rebellion. In 1801, the Irish and the English were again brought together and the history of the Irish was compounded with the state affairs of the English, the Irish parliament was abolished and the Irish parliament members attended the English lower house of the parliament. The population increased to 5.3 million in 1803 and to 8.2 million in 1845, and the natives faced famine as there was a shortage of potatoes, the staple of their diet. Although the English were said to have tried their best to deliver them from this disaster, about 300,000 Irish perished because of famine and epidemics. This famine and the oppression of the 'Protestant' English drove many 'Roman Catholic' Irish to emigrate to America. The said immigrants couldn't be indifferent to the suffering of the Irish at home and started to establish the Fenian organization in order to free them from the domination by the English. Their doctrine was to overthrow/ attack and destroy those who were unjustly ruling them.

Again in 1848, because of various disasters, educated patriotic youths formed organizations and staged rebellions. The rebellions didn't succeed but John O' Mahony managed to reorganize the Fenian organization/ Irish Republican Brotherhood in America. In round about 1867, the members of this Fenian organization were able to greatly disturb the English.

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

In the 1874 parliamentary election, 54 Irish Home Rulers were elected; led by Isaac Butt, they attended the English Parliament but were always overwhelmed by the many English Conservative members.

In the 1880 elections, the 'Land League' members led by the Irish patriot Parnell won the election and attended the English parliament. Parnell combined the Fenian members in Ireland and America with the members of the Clan na Gael and urged the whole country to boycott and destroy the Irish landowners who had the backing of the English so that the power and influence of the English would diminish.

In 1881 the British Parliament enacted the 'Land Act' which Parnell and 35 followers supported and had it passed.

But they didn't get the autonomy that they wanted and members of Parnell's party were in disagreement among themselves and their power and influence waned. Then Unionists attended the British Parliament as members and in 1893 tabled the Home Rule bill which passed the House of Commons but was vetoed in the House of Lords.

In 1900, the expansionism of the English led them into war with the Boer. The Irish patriots organized themselves and established Sinn Fein and carried on the old business of trying to gain freedom for the country.

When in 1914 the English fought the Germans in the World War, some leaders, led by John Redmond, urged the Irish to fight on the side of the English, hoping that the English would show their gratitude and give the Irish 'Home Rule'. But some leaders of Sinn Fein like Tom Clarke and Arthur Griffith, however, didn't think so and believed that they should attack the English while they were in difficulty and didn't help the English in the World War and exhorted the Irish Volunteers to stage the fight for the freedom of Ireland.

Therefore, during the World War, in April 1916 they staged the Easter Monday uprising which the English quashed with force.

After the World War, in 1918, Irish republican forces planned to fight for their freedom.

And so in 1919 patriots from Tipperary County like Dan Breen, Sean Treacy and Sean Hogan, started armed attacks on the English government's police and English soldiers. When I read the book 'My fight for Irish freedom' by Dan Breen, I found it very interesting and translated it for the benefit of the Myanmar people.

1 May, 1939

Maung Hein, Rangoon

3 Khin Aye on the Impact of the Book²⁸

It is worthy of mentioning a significant instance that highlighted the impact brought upon the youths who risked their lives for regaining independence. It was a time when a group of Thakin youths, including Thakin Nu, was serving sentences in Insein Jail. In the jail, they did activities against the jail authorities—conduction courses on politics and English and holding ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the King Hsipaw's being taken captive. Included in the group was Thakin Than (better known as Thakin Than Lay). Because he was interested in Dan Breen, an Irish leader, in "My Adventures," published by NBC, he made speeches about Dan Breen. From then on, he was named by his colleagues "Dan Breen Thakin Than." Later, "Dan Breen" changed to "Dan Palin" (Literally, aluminium bottle). Thakin Tin Mya included a story about Dan Palin Thakin Than in "Bone Bawa Hmar Phyint."

Thakin Tin Mya says:

"Thakin Than Lay was called Dan Palin. The reason was he talked so much about Irish patriotic leader Dan Breen that his audience applauded him 'Hey.. Dan Palin! Dan Palin.'"

Thakin Nu (U Nu) had respect on his mentality. In memory of Thakin Than, Thakin Nu (U Nu) writes in the introduction of his play "Puhtu Zanaw Ohnma Takaw" about "Dan Breen Thakin Than."

"That young man did not remain just in talk. After he had read the biography of Irish leader Dan Breen, he usually said to every audience that we, like Dan Breen, must hold weapons to fight against the British. He was sentenced to four and a half years in prison by the British government for his instigative talks. After he was released from prison, he took part in a battle and died in action. The bereaved colleagues had a pity on him."

U Nu dedicates the book to Thakin Than as follows:

"In dedication to "Dan Breen Thakin Than, who sacrificed his life for regaining Myanmar's independence, who fought the British with weapons when he could lay his hands on, and who fearlessly attacked the colonialists intellectually.

²⁸ The text is an extract of a speech given at the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Nagani Book Club on November 5, 2012 at the National Theatre, Yangon. (Translation: Ye Nyunt).

IV Material on NN, *De Valera*

1 Kyaw Hoe, **Bibliographical Information**²⁹

Translation: Georg Noack

29) **Nyi Pu**, *U De Valera*. Yangon. Nagani. 1939. 120 pages.

On the page where the title of the book is written, no author is mentioned, but the cover image was drawn by U Nyi Pu.

The cover shows a statue of De Valera by U Ngway Kaing.

It is the biography of Ireland's president De Valera. It is divided into 12 chapters.

First chapter: How the Irish became enslaved. Second chapter: De Valera's youth. Third chapter: How De Valera joined the Irish's final struggle for independence. Forth chapter: DeValera's first imprisonment. Fifth chapter: De Valera as a member of the parliament and as chairman of several organisations. Sixth chapter: How De Valera could only got out of prison after making three keys. Seventh chapter: How president De Valera hid on a ship and got to America where he resided impressively in a Hotel. Eighth chapter: How De Valera after got out of prison, another uprising happened and the English gave up. Ninth chapter: How De Valera split up with other Irish leaders and had to take much critique for his beliefs. Tenth chapter: How De Valera immediately after receiving administrative powers fought the English. Eleventh chapter: De Valera as chairman of the league of nations, and serving as chairman of Ireland. Twelfth chapter: A man called Eamon De Valera.

De Valera was not unknown to Myanmar people. They had read about the Irish revolution and about him. But Nagani apparently wanted to let them know more about this leader to freedom and president of a state that had already attained independence. Therefore they decided to publish his biography as well.

The back cover features an advertisement for the book *pan:tha ma.sa u*³⁰

²⁹ Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 49-51.

³⁰ Book Nos 30 and 31. See Working Paper 19

Material on Eight Books on Ireland



Title Page

V Material on Mya Daung Nyo, *The Irish rebel's bombing squad*.

1 Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information³¹

Translation: Georg Noack

41) Mya Daung Nyo *The Irish Rebel's Bombing Squad*. Yangon: Nagani. 1940, 224 pages.

U Aung Thein (Mya Daung Nyo) was a writer who joined the Nagani Club. The book is a faithful translation of the IRA book *Ireland's Secret Service in England* by Brady. [...]

In the title the words *Irish rebel's* are written in small letters; *Bombing squad* is written in big letters, expressing Nagani's attitude towards the imperialists.

A list of books written or translated by Mya Daung Nyo is included

- 1) *luhmyapati.nyin* by the world famous French philosopher *Gyu-hsu*:
- 2) 'Zadig or the Book of Fate' by the world famous French poet Voltaire
- 3) *wa.thoun i. myei* (two volumes)
- 4) Communist [*bounthu.kha.mein kyi: si'bgayin kyi: mya:*] and Marx' and Engel's Communist Manifesto (1938)
- 5) *lakun's parei'tha' sei'thabo* [Lakon's 'The opinion of the audience' ?]
- 6) *adi.ka. goun: hnin. acha: khi'pyaung: sa* (1938)
- 7) Nehru's autobiography 'Towards freedom' (unfinished)
- 8) *boun taya:* - questions and answers
- 9) 'The Mother' by the famous Russian author Maxim Gorki
- 10) 'Mata Hari' (1940) etc.

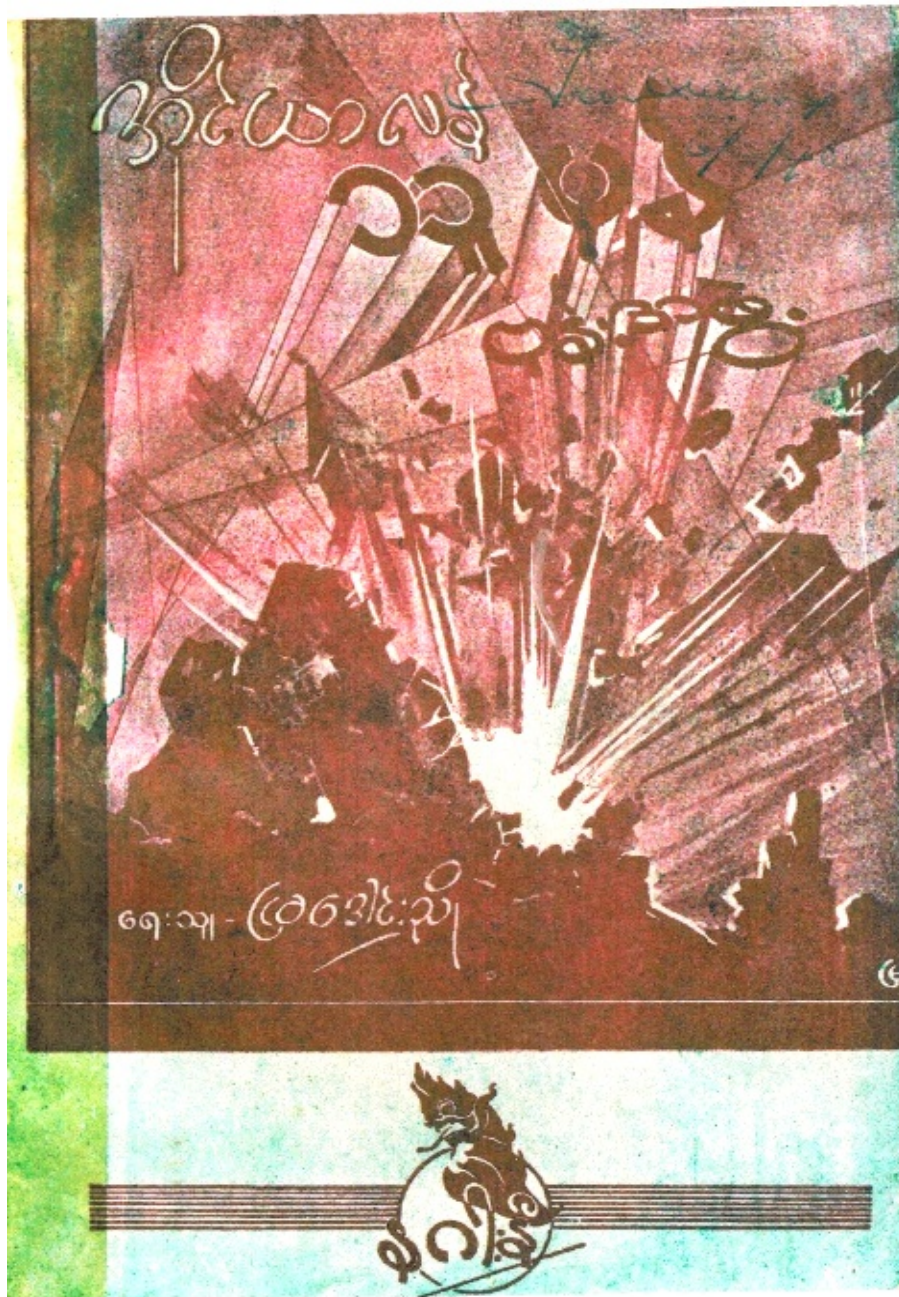
The book contains the dedication “For a way out for the poor and destitute, to the Do-Bama Asiayone [We Burman Association] that leads the forces of the people” that relates the reasons for writing of this book to the words of the leaders of the world. The book states that it uses important terminology of the time like *htwe'ya'* [way out, escape], *ayei:to poun* [uprising], *le'youn:da'* [special forces], *asi: ayoun:* [association, bond], *nyilakhan* [convention], *atwin yei: mu:* [(party) secretary], *ngatou.* [we, composition of the pronoun *nga* (I) that is normally only used to imply superiority/higher status relative to the person one is talking to and the inclusive plural particle *tou.*], *bama* [Bamar] and *ye:bo* [comrade, colloquially used for soldiers and policemen].

The book was confiscated by the imperialist government.

The appendix features newspaper news that it barely escaped being burned.

31 Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 62-63.

Material on Eight Books on Ireland



Title Page

2 Dedication and Foreword

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Dedicated to:

Doh Bamar Asiayone, the organization leading the mass for the “emancipation” of the impoverished, the trampled and the displaced in Myanmar

Should he be a hero, he will sacrifice his life.

Should he be a hero, he won't love his life.

He who loves his life cannot be a hero.

(Venerable) Ashin Maha Silavamsa³²

Foreword

This publication is a revelation of the IRA story for the period from 1920 to 1922 through a translation of the “Ireland’ Secret Service,” authored by Brady, a former IRA member.

The violent means of IRA of the Irish rebels, who are involved in the news reports “Bomb Explosion in London” that occasionally appear in the newspapers, have become debilitated as the saying goes, “Running short of arrows before the war comes.” Thus, criticisms liken the struggles for the independence of Ireland to “A boat sinking while being rowed.”

Ours is not an era of the past when people used to long for a would-be king, decipher a rarely found cryptic guide to a treasure trove and be engaged in jousts. Ours is an era in which a master or servant can be a king, and independence is wrestled back with the force of the proletariat mass. Ours is an era in which a republic of working mass is established.

Under the reign of King Bayintnaung, three wars were won by using stout bamboo rods as weapons. However, people of this era understand that imperialists and capitalists cannot be driven out with a single gun or a sword.

In his review of the Irish revolution in an article “The Rights of the Nationals to Legislate” in 1914, the late Soviet leader Lenin writes, “The liberation of Ireland is dependent upon the radical revolution of the proletariat mass in the entire Ireland with the assistance of English workers.”

³² Famous monk and poet (1453-1518).

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

Lenin reminds, “Anarchism (a belief that government is not necessary), terrorism (acts causing bloodshed) and nihilism (lack of thought and faith) are extreme ideologies that go against communism and do not do anything good to the poor mass.”

When Nehru, the leader of India’s Congress Party, visited Myanmar in 1937, members of the Doh Bamar Asiayone raised a question, “Are terrorist acts by one or two selected ones necessary in the fight for independence?” Nehru replied, “Terrorist acts are ineffectual in the struggles for independence and (are) the reckless acts of the ones without any intellect.”

English communists alleged in a newspaper that IRA was a sequel of Nazism.

In this publication, words in vogue as the following are used:

“htwet-yat”	(escape or emancipation)
“Eh-yay-daw-boun”	(revolution)
“Eh-see-eh-youn”	(organization)
“Nyi-lar-khan”	(conference)
“Eh-twin-yay-hmu”	(Secretary)
“Nga-doh”	(We!)
“Ba-mar”	(formerly, meaning Myanmar people)
“Ye-baw”	(comrade)

Aung Thein (Mya Daung Nyo)
January 24, 1940

3 APPENDIX

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Ireland: The Rebels and the Bomb Squad
Bomb explosions taking place up to this day

Almost every day, readers may see news reports in Myanmar newspapers with headings such as “Bomb blast in London,” “IRA Insurgency in Dublin,” etc involving the Irish rebels who are putting up open challenge and resistance against the British government and the De Blaire Irish government under it. The Myanmar author (Mya Daung Nyo) deals with the plots of the Irish bomb squad during the period from July 28, 1939 to February 9, 1940 with extracts from newspapers as instances.

The Myanmar author mentions that the IRA has been active since 1916 up to 1940, and that the original author Mr Brady’s “My Escape” work is not yet finished, which instead is smoldering like the fire burring the rice husks.

Irish Premier De Valera, who has maintained good relations with the British government, is also concerned every day about the IRA issue. On January 4, 1940, the Rebellion Suppression Bill was submitted to the (Dale) Irish Parliament and passed into law with the aim to quell the Irish rebels. The bill was approved, the De Valera government winning 62 yes votes with seven no votes. This new law has endowed Prime Minister De Blaire with dictatorial power. Chairman of the Irish government Mr Hyde signed the bill into a law, under which the Irish government has the right to send any Irish national to prison without interrogation or court trials. Despite the enactment of the law, the IRA remained unchanged in its movements. Despite the enactment of the law on February 5, 1940, bomb blasts took place at Isetan Railways Station in London, at Birmingham Post Office and at Manchester Post Office on the following day on February 6.

Officials concerned still believed that the incidents were orchestrated by the IRA, which bared the fact that IRA connections were spread across the entire British island. The bomb explosion in the very centre of Britain revealed the fact that the IRA structure is not so small. (Rangoon Gazette) According to a December 30, 1939 report in a Dublin newspaper, it is learnt that the IRA has a clandestine radio transmission station. Again, according to a February 4, 1940 report, a detective was

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

shot to death on a main street in a city while the Rebellion Suppression Bill was under discussion in Dale Parliament. It would be endless to write about the foolishly daring IRA.

Translator: Mya Daung Nyo

Editor's note: On the following pages, newspaper reports about ongoing bomb attacks in Britain are printed.

4 Mary Montaut (Burma Action Ireland) Brief report on 'Ireland's Secret Service in England' by Edward M Brady, Talbot Press, Dublin & Cork 1924

This book is an account of the author's involvement with Sinn Fein which began when he attended a meeting in Liverpool in 1919 which was held in support of the political Irish prisoners held in British prisons. He was recruited by a friend and subsequently took up active duties in the 'secret service' which included orders to plant bombs, etc. In short, Brady worked in Britain to create 'outrages' or terrorist attacks, as we would now call them.

However, the most surprising thing about this account is the tone the author takes towards his own exploits: he maintains a 'derring-do' attitude, as if the whole thing had been a Great Adventure, more in the style of the fiction of the time than with the air of realism. For example, when he was in custody in Scotland Yard and facing trial on serious charges, he accidentally cut himself while shaving. He comments: "I managed, to my disgust, to gash myself, and the wound was such, and bled so freely, that had it not been for the knowledge the police had of my temperament and general light-hearted and humorous outlook on life, I might have been charged with an attempt to commit suicide."

There is almost no discussion of politics, still less about philosophy or history, in this volume. Unlike more recent Sinn Feiners, he barely mentions Britain's historical abuse of Ireland, but instead concentrates on a racy narrative which is very exciting to read. He takes a practical attitude to almost everything. An example is the discussion, late in the book, about hunger strikes: "I am not defending hunger-striking. It is a fearful thing, and cannot be defended on any ground. It was a policy imitated to an alarming extent from the 'votes for women' enthusiasts." It is hard not to feel that he disapproved of such womanish tactics.

It is interesting to speculate what the Burmese independence fighters made of this adventure yarn. Luck and personal courage seem to be the chief ingredients of Brady's heroism. Certainly they would not have found in it a text to instruct them in their own struggle. Perhaps they enjoyed the book as a good read.

VI Material on Myoma Saya Hein, *The Irish Uprising*

1 Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information³³

Translation: Georg Noack

52) Saya Hein (Myoma) *The Irish Uprising* (*ayei:topoun*). Yangon. Nagani. 1940. 203 pages.

The book is about the Irish uprising as the English journalist Mister *Memory* saw it- It was an uprising that happened because the English had unjustly expanded their territory. It was a rebellion [*to-hlan hmu.*] by the Sinn Féin organization that had been founded in 1900. It describes how later the people who wanted complete independence and the ‘free state group’ spit up. One can assume that it was written with the intention that the Myanmar independence activists may take the Irish revolution (*to-hlan yei:*) as an example. Nagani wanted the Irish revolution to become the Myanmar revolution. The English, who had colonized Ireland were still ruling in Myanmar. The enemy of the Irish was also the enemy of the Myanmar people. Therefore Nagani translated the book. Among many translators Myoma Saya Hein translated most.

The book was published by Nagani on 28 September 1940 in 3500 copies. The price for non-members was 10 annas.

³³ Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 67-68.



Title Page

2 Advertisement and Forewords

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Books by Myoma Saya Hein

- 1) The modern era and the German youths (Myanma Alin Daily press)
- 2) Michael Collins and I (Nagani Publishing House Limited)
- 3) My adventures (Nagani Publishing House Limited)
- 4) Military spy (about the German spy Hxxxx) (Myanmarpyi Book Distribution)

I have translated this book in order to remember forever the Alma Mater, the Myoma high school, which had introduced me to the fountain of knowledge and sowed the seeds of love for my country and race and make it flourish.

Nagani Printing House
Number 229, 30th Street
Rangoon

2.1 Foreword by National Education Official U Pho Kyar

I got to read the translation of ‘the Irish Rebellion’ by Saya Hein of Myoma boys’ school.

About 20 years ago, in the rebellion to free them from the English government there was internal dissension, and there was much loss of human lives in Ireland from fighting with the English government and among themselves in sectarian violence.

During this unrest and rebellion while there was no peace, ‘the Daily Mail’ newspaper of London sent a reporter to gather news.

The reporter, Mr. Memory with disregard for his life, courageously tried to get the true news. He wrote of the daring with which he gathered the news and what he witnessed. Now Saya Hein has translated into Myanmar these written statements.

It must be said that Ireland had attempted the rebellion and now more or less has freedom. For a race / people to gain freedom from the rule of another, no ordinary measure would bring success; even life or limb must be risked and extreme measures taken to bring success. It is truly inspirational and worth emulating how the Irish gained their freedom. The Irish and the Myanmar have quite similar attitudes and national spirit, and Myanmar have been called ‘the Irish’ of the East. In trying to gain independence, we should take good examples from any people and since we are in some way similar, we, ‘the Irish’ of the East, should emulate the Irish the more.

This statement is correct. For the present, Russia, Italy, Germany etc. are trying in ways, which they think is best for their country, to become prosperous. Saya Hein had selected and translated about

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the freedom of Ireland that is in some ways similar to Myanmar and it is very fitting that he did so.

Another matter of fact was, at the height of activity in Ireland, there was also much unrest in Myanmar for independence, especially in 1920 when we had the students' boycott in the whole country which made history.

Since Ireland and Myanmar have similar occurrences, it is to be pondered whether this translation by Saya Hein of the book about the freedom of Ireland, might be a good omen for the independence of Myanmar.

When we read how the reporter Mr. Memory carried out his task, not perfunctorily but with utmost diligence, we see that we Myanmar, especially our youth, should very much emulate him.

In addition, the reporter wrote it like a detective novel, an adventure story; it was like a novel and very good reading.

It was so written that it's good reading and on top of that there are facts that should be noted and emulated, especially by the youth, and I am very glad that such a book has appeared.

Pho Kyar

4th waning day of Tawthalin, 1299

2.2 Introduction of U Thein Maung (Thuriya Magazine Editor)

People love to read and praise the subjects and biographies about the brave and their daring thoughts and acts. Therefore we couldn't forget and have forever kept in our memory things about Columbus, who found the New World, about Stanley, who went into the deep jungles of Africa inhabited by cannibals, about the biography of Marco Polo and his travels, about Professor Pxxxx and his ascent to rarified heights in a hot air balloon, about Colonel Lindbergh who, with daring, flew non-stop across the Atlantic, about the voyages to the North and South poles, etc.

Reading such biographies of brave people or their adventures could, at the very least, lift the spirit of those who are despondent and these people should especially read such biographies.

I think that the book we have edited, "The Irish rebellion", should be read with respectful attention by the Myanmar who unfortunately are still ruled by another people.

In the book 'the Journalist', that we published, we mentioned the qualities that a reporter should possess that included being courageous, and you'd clearly see, and we needn't elaborate, why a reporter should be so if you read 'The Irish rebellion', a translation by Saya Hein.

The book was written by an English reporter like a novel of what he had witnessed of the armed

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struggle of the Irish patriots who fervently wanted to be freed from English rule. Though it was presented like a novel there were facts that those active in politics should know, take note of and ponder and it must be said that it is one of the books suitable for the indigenous Myanmar youth. Since Myanmar are described as ‘the Irish’ of the East, shouldn’t ‘the Irish’ of the East eagerly read and think of how the ‘Irish (of the West)’ had planned to obtain their freedom?

Thein Maung
Editor, Thuriya Magazine
20.12.38

2.3 Foreword by the Author (Maung Hein)

I was able to publish the first volume about the Irish rebellion from the Lawgadan Printing House that had the title, ‘The Special Reporter’. Due to unfavourable circumstances, I was unable to bring out the second volume and friends have requested me in person and by mail, time and time again, to do so and I have, with the acknowledgement of the Nagani Book Club, published the second volume entitled, ‘The Irish rebellion’.

The book, ‘The Special Reporter’ or ‘The Days of Bloodshed’ is out of print and couldn’t be purchased,

.There may be those who have read ‘the Special Reporter’, and many who haven’t read the book, and so as not to irritate those who haven’t read it, the 9 chapters of the first volume have been reprinted as the first 6 chapters of this book by omitting some non-essential paragraphs and chapters and retaining the chronological order.

And so, those who have read ‘the Special Reporter’ are requested to start reading from chapter 7 of ‘the Irish rebellion’.

And again, members who have read about the struggle for Irish freedom in the book number 17, “Michael Collins and I” of April 1939, and the book number 18, ‘My Adventures’ of May 1939 will greatly appreciate this book because the subject of the two books was about how the Irish gave their lifeblood in exchange for their freedom. Because they so courageously sacrificed their lives, the Irish, with its steely patriotic leader Michael Collins, were offered on 8 December 1921, to sign a truce with the English government and given a new administration as a free state.

Then there was dissent between those who accepted the new administration as a free state like Michael Collins and those who would only be satisfied with a republican administration with De Valera as its leader, and the book even describes how the two factions were hostile towards each

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other even though they were from the same family home. In the book 'The Irish rebellion', only the first three chapters revealed how the Irish patriots fought the British government servants and from chapter 4 to the end, the English reporter Mr. Memory described as he had witnessed, how on obtaining the new government as a free state, the patriots had dissent among themselves and fought each other with such bloodshed that the whole country was left devastated.

After reading this book the Myanmar, who are still under the rule of another country, should take it as a lesson in politics and that we nationals should be united and there should be no disagreement if we are to succeed and gain the desired independence. 'The Irish rebellion' was published with the intention that we should take note of the mistakes of the Irish and heed the lesson of (one of the life stories of the Buddha in which) the 90,000 Brahminy ducks which were destroyed because they exploited their own kind.

Myoma Saya Hein

VII Material on Thandwe Maung, *The Irish Martyr*

1 Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information³⁴

Translation: Georg Noack

60) Thandwe Maung *The Irish Martyr*. Yangon. Nagani. 1940. 150 pages.

Nagani aimed for independence and made it their priority. They presented the Irish, who had managed to get rid of English dominion, as an important example. They published the most books about the Irish struggle for independence and the Irish leaders.³⁵

This book is about an Irish leader named Sir Roger Casement. While we can assume that it is a translation, this is not stated explicitly in the book. The author was Thandwe Maung.

The book is divided in several chapters. 1. Kongo, 2. In South America, 3. Ireland's Home Rule, 4. The Great European War 5. Followers, 6. In Berlin, 7. Death.

It is written about how he took great risks to serve Ireland and finally even died for it. At the end of the book there is an introduction to the Nagani Club, asking people to join it and avail themselves of the club's selected books, a new one every month.

Finally, there is an advertisement for Dagon Tarya's book 'May'.

³⁴ Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 87-88.

³⁵ Here it's not really clear if the author means that most of Nagani's books were about Ireland or that most books about Ireland were published by Nagani – both would probably be an exaggeration, but the author wants to stress the important role that the Irish example played for the Myanmar activists. (Translator's note)



Title Page (black & white copy)

2 Thwe Thwe Nwe, Assessment³⁶

This book on the Irish martyr on its publication was a source of encouragement for the people in Myanmar to strive for their country and to risk their lives for her independence. The book portrayed how Sir Roger Kate Smith diligently implemented his duties and responsibilities while in the service of the British Government and how he was awarded with knighthood and other bestowments, how he joined forces with Irish nationalists to fight for Irish independence, of how he had not committed treason against the British government but striven solely for his country and people, how he met difficulties and privations in his endeavors, especially of how he went to America and Germany to muster support for their cause and look for funds and arms for the nationalists, of how he overcame the challenges and obstacles, of how eventually he gave up his life for his country and people. It was a source of inspiration and a role model for emulation for the Myanmar people. We know that Sir Roger Smith was intolerant of injustice and we learn of this from his efforts at helping the Africans from exploitation by the Europeans. His feeling of desire to wreak revenge for injustice can also be seen in his mental suffering from the machinations of the British diplomat at Christiania in Norway on his sojourn from America to Germany. That he willingly and trustfully let the youth in America to delve intimately in his affairs can be taken as a weakness on his part but it is also a manifestation of his kindness and helpfulness towards someone in need. When he was caught and was waiting for British justice, he spoke courageously of his beliefs and of his readiness to confront whatever punishment was meted out to him. From this, we can assume his willingness to give his life for the country and appreciate his stance of not shirking away from what was due to him. By reading the book at this present time, we can emulate and take inspiration from the efforts exerted by Sir Roger Kate Smith and his martyrdom for his country and people. We can also understand more about the relations between England and Germany during the First World War as well as the politics and policies of those times in this highly readable book.

36 The paragraph is the final part of a book report informing about the contents of the book.

VIII Material on Thandwe Maung, Irish Martyr - Genuine Leader (Dageh gaung hsaung Ai-rit arzani)

1 Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information³⁷

Translation: Nwe Ni Aung

90. Thandwe Maung. Real Leader. Yangon. Burma Publishing House. 5th July 1940. -
Number of printed books: 2000. Price: 8 Pya. - The book is missing.

³⁷ Kyaw Hoe, Nagani Bibliography: 117.

2 Aye Mon Kyi, Book Review

Translation: Ye Nyunt

The real name of Thandwe Maung who translated the book “Dageh gaung hsaung Ai-rit arzani,” literally translated “Irish Martyr, Genuine Leader,” was U Tun Khaing. He was born to father U Po and mother Daw Shwe Chein in Thandwe, Rakhine State, in the Myanmar month of Tazaungmone, 1250 ME. He passed away at age 61 in January 1949. While attending a police officer training course in Mandalay, he met Saya Lun, and had the opportunity to come to Yangon where he worked as an assistant editor for the Thuriya Daily (The Sun Daily).

Despite his education only up to the 7th Standard at a bilingual (English and Myanmar) school, he read with deep interest a lot of classic novels in English, and translated some of them into Myanmar. The following are his translated works:

- 1 Napoleon Bonaparte
- 2 Turkish Dictator
- 3 Irish Martyr
- 4 Keith, Dominion Home Rule
- 5 RN Gilchrist, Political Science
- 6 Mazzini, Duties of Man
- 7 Thomas Paine, Rights of Man
- 8 Tolstoy, Evils of Government
- 9 Macchiavelli, The Prince
- 10 Gandhi, Hind Swaraj
- 11 Asoka

There are altogether 238 pages in 12 chapters in “Irish Martyr, Genuine Leader”: 1) Young life of Michael Collins, 2) Battle for independence, 3) The spirit of patriotism, 4) Police newspaper, 5) Fleeing the prison, 6) The National Detectives Organization, 7) Establishment of the National Fund, 8) The President Army, 9) English murderers, 10) The final suppression, 11) Free State Administration, and 12) Misunderstanding.

The foreword of the book started with Myoma Saya Hein’s description of Michael Collins as a hero in legend or a creator-like person who was a member in Gallic League, a branch of Sin Fein, Gallic Health Association and the Irish Amateur Police Force. It is mentioned in the foreword that his logical decisions are a significant quality of his. It says Michael Collins, without affiliation to any group or gang, carried out any duty, small or serious, for

the independence of Ireland. This was a factor for him to emerge as a National Hero. The biography of Michael Collins allowed the then Myanmar people, who were followers without a leader, to know the qualities of a leader, and to enjoy other benefits.

Translator Thandwe Maung, to reflect the hero-like description in the foreword by Saya Hein, mentions thus: "He was born of O'Collins by heredity. The O'Collins were the ones who attacked the O'Lary's and had settled in a town at Kabari beach in Cock province for many years." As he studied at a national school and grew up under a patriotic teacher, his mind was impregnated with patriotism. Collins loved literature, and "The Our Ireland Daily" was his favourite newspaper. He had arrived in London since he was 14 years old. While working as a post office clerk, he joined the Irish National Association and studied the Irish literature.

In 1909, he became a member of the Irish President Branch Association, and also Sin Fein, an Irish association. In 1914, he enlisted himself in the Irish National Police Force. When the First World War broke out, the British promulgated a compulsory service law, which he went against. Having got a contact with the Central President Association and returned to Ireland. There, he arranged for the Ireland Island Rebellion. All these are mentioned in "Chapter 1: The start from the childhood" in which the causes for his awakening of the patriotic spirit and his activities have been translated in chronological order. It seems that the translator's aim in writing Michael Collins' childhood life was to illustrate the point that he was descended from ancestors of heroic qualities. The translator also points out his studies at a national school to highlight a cause for his nationalistic fervor.

"Chapter 2: Battle for Independence" details how the British cracked down on the Irish Rebellion, which Collins had arranged by contacting the Central President Association, how Irish Amateur Forces resisted, causing many deaths on the part of the British and many arrests of the Irish, and the release of the captives in December 1915.

Although the Irish did not show much interest in the fellow Irish people's opposition to the compulsory military service, their patriotic spirit was rekindled when the British passed death sentence to the patriotic Irish leaders with the enactment of law, and when they heard that the member of the Parliament elected from the Irish Island supported the British's suppression of the rebellion. Collins had accepted and gave encouragement and support to the representative from the Irish Island from the Irish Parliamentary Party in his contest in the British Parliament. With the support from the Irish people, the candidate

won the election with a lot of votes. In 1917, the name of Joe McGuinness, who was then in prison, was nominated for contest for an MP vacancy in the Long Ford constituency in Ireland. Collins also helped McGuinness. Collins took up the post of secretary in the National Support Association when his predecessor resigned. While attempts were being made to put forward requirements of Ireland at the Peace Conference towards the end of WWI, the Irish were split in two—conventional left and unconventional right. Collins belonged to the conventional left group. After the completion of the conference, Collins served as Adjutant General, who managed the Amateur Police Force, and also as supervisor for food rations.

Chapter 3 was translated into “Reawakening of patriotism.” When election was held to fill the leadership post at an annual meeting of Sin Fein, the left and right groups nominated leaders in their favour. Arthur Griffith, who was concerned about the possible Irish national unity, withdrew his nomination, and just supported De Blair from the left group. The same occurred in Myanmar, and the translator wished the Myanmar people to know about the leadership spirit and qualities. Especially, the translator compared the leftist and rightist persons.

Under the title “The Police Newspaper” in Chapter 4, it is mentioned that the British arrested leaders of Sin Fein. Michael Collins, who had escaped the arrest, served as the administrator of the police force. In 1918, a police newspaper was published, and Collins wrote articles every week. As the munitions had to be purchased secretly, his rich network of friends had a contribution in this regard. Just before the end of WWI, Michael Collins left the police force to enter the politics again as requirements for the Irish Island had to be submitted at the Peace Conference. He continually attended annual meetings of Sin Fein. The MPs elected from Ireland did not recognize and attend the British parliament and instead, held the Irish Parliamentary session, at which a declaration in Irish, French and English was issued to nations of the world that Ireland was an individual country. It was mentioned in the Police Newspaper that Ireland had its government, as provided in the Law of Administration, and Michael Collins had been appointed the Prime Minister for Home Affairs.

Although the war ended, the British did not release Irish prisoners including De Blair. It is mentioned in the Myanmar publication that Collins, despite his ill health and the advice of doctors to take rest, participated in the activities for the liberation of Irish prisoners. Collins, who then took up the portfolio of Prime Minister for Finance, arranged for obtaining

loans in the national interests. When the British detectives raided the Irish Parliament and arrested Irish leaders, three leaders including Collins escaped. All these are mentioned in Chapter 5, titled "Fleeing the prison." In this chapter, the translator would like to place emphasis on the spirit of Collins, who, despite his ill health, worked for the liberation of compatriot Irish from prison.

In Chapter 6, titled "National Detective Unit," it is mentioned how Collins helped De Blair abscond to America. While he had correspondence with De Blair, he also became friendlier with Arthur Graffig, who was the Acting President. Collins also served as the administrator of the National Detective Unit, and commander of the police force. Michael Collins' capabilities included formation of the armed forces, and arrangement for the police force to manage the munitions factory. He came to know how to read the encrypted English letters as he visited his friends of the National Detective Unit weekly. On the other hand, some Irish served in the British police force. As they were actually acting as the Watch Force for the perpetuation of the British Government, the Irish Amateur Police combatted them. As he was on friendly terms with some of the members in the British government, he came to know the secrets of the British police.

In his position as the Prime Minister for Finance, Collins arranged for making guarantee agreements to obtain loans. It was amidst difficulties in his exertion of efforts for the increase in the national fund. Mentioned in Chapter 7 (Establishment of National Fund) are search by the British police in his workplace; prevention by the British of the people from contributing to the fund by announcing that the fund was unfair; the gradual increase of the fund despite the British's prevention; and the difficulty of the rural people to transfer their cash contributions to the city. The following arrangements were made for the national reconstruction while fighting for independence - to do commerce for the Irish Island with the National Fund and loans obtained from America; to station Irish consulates in other countries; to help and encourage the Irish people in engaging in sea fishing, forestry and operation of machinery; to set up juries to administer court cases; to open bank for mortgaging land for those who wish to do cultivation; to form the National Services Committee, etc.

While the bill for giving Home Rule to Ireland was submitted at the Parliamentary session, some members of the British government met Sin Fein and held discussions with Irish leader De Blair for making peace. The Irish were not interested in the Home Rule as it could disintegrate Ireland. Altogether 124 members of the Irish President Association,

without having to contest, won the election, which was disturbed by the British. As the parliamentary session called by the British was not attended by those elected from Sin Fein, the session was not in order. When Chief Minister Lloyd George sent a proposal to Irish leader De Blair for discussing Ireland Island affair, De Valera also responded with a letter, some extracts of which are mentioned as follows:

If the solidarity of Irish Island is rejected, and if the authority to self-legislation is not given to Ireland, the said path to peace cannot be seen. It is still needed to hold discussions with the representatives of the minority ethnicities in Ireland.

With this, the translator let the Myanmar readers know the tactics of the colonial administrative system.

De Valera rejected the proposal by Chief Minister Lloyd George for treating Ireland as a dominium within the British Common Wealth. As Ireland became a ruler-less country during the discussions, Michael Collins mentioned at Armagh in Ulster, which had been seceded from Ireland:

It is important for Ireland Island to be united as one. The fact that the British has seceded Ulster from Ireland is an act of disintegrating its unity. Ulster, separated from Ireland, will become a small area which the British government would treat it as the water in their cupped hands.

The goodwill of the translator can be seen in this mention of the ploys of the colonial ruling system.

The translated work also mentions the division of opinions while fighting for independence. It is expected that this would be helpful to the Myanmar politicians in their consultations with the British. While Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and other Irish leaders were attending a conference in London, and discussing the Ireland affair, De Blair announced the emperor of England as the presiding patron of all the countries within the British Empire. It is mentioned in Chapter 11 (Free State) that Lloyd George signed an agreement with Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins on the Irish side for recognizing Ireland as a free state. As what is mentioned in Chapter 11 were the political situations similar to those in Myanmar at that time, it is worthy of note for Myanmar politicians and average people.

Chapter 12, titled "Coming to misunderstand" deals with division of opinions among De Blair, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins; conflicts within the Irish President Army; contradictions between the followers of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, who were from the government side, and those of De Blair on the Irish Island; holding of a futile plenary meeting called by the Christian archbishop to alleviate this contradiction; and eventually,

the assassinations of Arthur Griffith first, and soon afterward Michael Collins.

Assessment

The translated work “Irish Martyr, Genuine Leader” was published in 1940, which was an important year for Myanmar. This publication let the readers know in advance foreseeable difficulties in their fight against the British for independence, for which they were struggling with the slogan, “The time of difficulty for the British is the time of opportunity for Myanmar.” Thus, it is felt that this publication was a supporting document to overcome the tactics of the British ruling system. The fact that Myanmar could not resist the overpowering British ruling system can be seen in the fact that our national leader Bogyoke Aung San and other leaders fell while struggling for independence, before independence was regained. It can be assumed that books published by Nagani Publishing House did not penetrate into the people. Had the Myanmar politicians read this book, they would have avoided the ploys of the British, by engaging themselves in the struggle for independence and national reconstruction at the same time.

While all the patriots were entering battles for regaining independence, there were divisions of factions and gangs, lacking in leadership. At that time, Thakin Aung San, grandson of Bo La Yaung or Bo Min Yaung, had come to take an active part in the political movements, and was elected the National Leader at the Pha Hsa Pa La (Anti-Fascist People’s Liberation League—AFPFL) conference. Veteran politician Thein Pe Myint (Tet-phone-gyi Thein Pe) spoke of, in his work “Ko dwe naing ngan yay” (The politics in my first-hand experience), Bogyoke Aung San as “an unchallenged leader.” Saying that it was a piece of pleasant information, Myoma Saya Hein mentioned in the foreword of “Irish Martyr, Genuine Leader” the younger life, ancestry and the activities of Michael Collins who did not have affiliation for any group or faction. The Myanmar readers might have read the life of Michael Collins deeply, and ploys of the British administration very superficially. That was why Bogyoke had been assassinated by compatriots just as Michael Collins. In fact the background history of Ireland and that of Myanmar are not the same. In Myanmar, different nationalities of different faith have co-existed. All throughout the monarchic era, various ethnic groups have lived under respective ethnic leaders with their own cultures and literatures. (Some minority ethnic groups began to have their own literature only when Christian missionaries arrived in their areas.) After the Third Anglo-Myanmar War, these different ethnic groups put up resistance against the British, but as they could not match the weapons of the enemy, they had to give in. Despite different

Material on Eight Books on Ireland

histories, the ploys and tactics of the colonial British were same for both Ireland and Myanmar. To put it briefly, it is expected that the publication “Irish Martyr, Genuine Leader,” translated by Thandwe Maung would have benefited the Myanmar political world to some extent. However, it is assumed that the penetration of the book into the entire mass of people was very weak.

IX Material on Thakin Hla Baw, *Sinn Féin*

1 Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information³⁸

Translation: Georg Noack

96) Hla Baw, Thakhin *Sinn Féin*. Yangon. Myanmar Book Distributors. 1940. 207 pages.

Both publishing and printing were done by Myanmar Book Distributors (*myamapyi sa ou' hpyan chi yei:*). It was published on 15 December 1940 in 2000 copies selling at a price of only 8 annas each. It is about the Irish revolutionary organization Sinn Féin. Just as Sinn Féin has achieved complete independence of Ireland from England the book aimed at making Myanmar people able to jointly achieve the same for Myanmar. In this it is similar to books published by the Nagani Club such as Myoma Saya Hein's *My Adventure(s)*, *Michael Collins* and others. The original book from which it was translated is not mentioned.

³⁸ Kyaw How, Nagani Bibliography: 121.



Title Page

2 Information about the Author

Translation: Ye Nyunt



He was the son of U Taw and Daw Soe Chel and was raised in Motesoebo or Shwebo town. He graduated in science from Yangon University and left school in 1916.

After leaving school, he made a living as a chemistry expert, second to none, at petroleum and chemical plants. He was interested in politics even in his youthful days and at last he was with Thakin Ba Thaung and his people when they established the Dobama Asiayone. He supported and guided the organization. He has sacrificed his business and possessions and for more than the past three years, has been personally carrying out the tasks of the organization. He was very much involved in the organization and management of the Asiayone during the Thakin uprising that happened about 2 years ago, and last year, he was elected as the Asiayone chairman of the whole country. This year, he is the Bama Letyone General. Thakin Hla Baw is a person who wants to establish Burma that achieves great glory for the 'fourth' time before he dies.

3 The Preface of the O'Hegarty's Book on Sinn Fein³⁹

THIS book is not a history. The true history of a passionate period such as that dealt with cannot be written by any contemporary. We are all too near it. Nor can anybody who has lived through the Split and the Irregular War ever really look at them with that fair-mindedness which the historian must exercise.

It will be at least a generation before the factors that admit the writing of a real history can be present – the fair-mindedness and all the necessary documents and data. The only thing a contemporary can do is to record such material as he can as may help a future historian.

What this book is, then, is a book recording the impressions which the whole thing has made upon a contemporary who has worked hard for Ireland, whose hobby has always been the study of history, and who has thereby been accustomed to estimate forces and tendencies and to attempt to relate Irish happenings to the general principles behind them.

In compiling the book, I have not used the Treaty Debates nor any of the documents about a particular event issued after the event. I have put down events exactly as it seemed to me they happened; and I have drawn such conclusions from

known facts as the information in my possession seemed to warrant. The conversations which I report are reported in their exact words. I did not note them down at the time, but I knew their importance and I memorised them carefully. I happen to have a good memory.

The book will be deeply, and perhaps deservedly, unpopular. I have had to say things about the Movement, both before the Truce and after the Truce, which will not be relished. I have had to write hard things about some of my friends directly, and even harder things about others by implication. But what I have written I have written because I believe it to be the truth, and because the Cause we all – those who shot Mick Collins and those who shot Cathal Brugha alike – stand for ultimately can be helped only by truth and honesty.

I have said nothing about the Six-County question in the book, because the boundary position, as I write, is at a stage at which writing can do no good. But the essential facts about Ulster are given in my 1919 pamphlet (*Ulster: A Brief Statement of Fact*), and they cannot be altered by any transient English juggling with Ulster territory, or by any muddling which any particular Irish generation may accomplish.

December, 1924.

³⁹ The preface is not included in Thakin Hla Baw's version. His book does not have any foreword or introduction. Its first pages contain information about the next books published (Mya Sein's "Women" and Ba Thoung's "Oil" - see Working Papers 18 and 19).

X Essays

1 Yi Yi Mar⁴⁰, **Exploits of the Irish Revolution. Term Paper**

The paper I'm going to read is the *Exploits of the Irish Revolution*, published by Nagani Literature House, which was founded in 1938, towards the outbreak of World War II, by student leaders and politicians such as U Nu, Thakin⁴¹ Soe, Thakin Than Tun, Myoma Saya⁴² Hein, etc. It was a literature house, not set up by average persons.

I will not dwell at length on the main purpose of establishing this institution—to contribute, from the literary sector, towards political activities for regaining national independence - which is known to all. It had brought out various publications related to revolution, espionage, and political ideology, including the six volumes of the *Exploits of the Irish Revolution*.

The six books are:

1 "Ai-rish Ah-yay-daw-bone" (Irish Revolution), source publication written by Mr. Memmori, British reporter, was translated by Saya Hein and published in 1938.

2 "Kyun note hnint Michael Collins" (Michael Collins and I), source publication written by Batt O'Connor, was translated by the same person, in 1939.

3 "Kyun note eisuntzar chin" (My Adventures), source publication written by Dan Breen, was translated by the same person, in 1939.

4 "Irish Arzani" (Irish Martyr) was translated by Thandwe Maung.

5 "Irish Bomb Squad" was translated by Mya Daung Nyo, and

6 "De Valera" by an anonymous translator.

The last two books cannot be traced today. Hence, my paper is referred only to the first four books. The time and situations of the publications should be studied so that we can see whether these books reflect the time or were contributory to the related cause. These translated works were brought out around 1938, 1939 or 1940 when WWII began. The situation in Myanmar was also not steady. It was the time when Myanmar-Coringee

40 Yi Yi Mar wrote the essay in her final year of the Master of Art program at Yangon's Art's and Science University. The topic of the course dealt with the Nagani Book Club. For another term paper on Germany see Working Paper 15.

41 The word "Thakin" was an honorific put before the names of independence fighters, in defiance of the British, as it means "master" or "lord." (Translator's note)

42 "Saya" means "teacher." (Translator's note)

(Indian) Conflict, Chinese-Myanmar Conflict and Tharawaddy Strike (Peasants' Strike) were just over. In 1936, Students' Strike took place. In 1938-39, the country was inflicted with strikes and demonstrations such as Myanmar-Muslim Conflict, Oilfield Strike, Peasants' Strike, Workers' Strike, etc. Altogether 21 martyrs including Bo Aung Kyaw, U Visara, and U Ketu had fallen.

While people were actively engaged in political activities for the liberation of Myanmar and while others were sacrificing their lives, "The Exploits of Irish Revolution" served as a piece of firewood that would keep the flame of revolution still high. The Irish and the Myanmar had the same characteristics—both under the rule of the British, both courageous and both having the will to liberate themselves. The Nagani members believed that they were the Eastern Irish. The Irish had enjoyed the good consequences for their *modus operandi* during World War I. This translated book was brought out with the aim of emulating the Irish. This book served in two ways—exposing the injustice of the colonialists and instigating the suppressed.

What were the Myanmar leaders up to? They were repeatedly saying, "En-ga-leik ah-khet, bamar ah-chet" (literally, the time when the British are in a tight situation is the time opportune for the Myanmar.) When WWII broke out, Britain would go to war. On that occasion, Myanmar would seek the help of the Japanese to dislodge the British from the Myanmar land. Thus, Myanmar were thinking. The Myanmar were to emulate the Irish, who openly resisted the British and achieved success during WWI. Likewise, the Myanmar would repel the British during WWII, taking advantage of the prevailing situation. Nagani had paved the future road for the Myanmar with the publication of the Irish Revolution.

All the four books deal with the persons and their exploits for the liberation of Ireland. But their aims are different. The second book, written by Buck O'Connor, is devoted to Irish revolutionist Michael Collins. In the third book "Kyun note eisuntzar chin" (My Adventures), Dans Bring mentions his own adventures and his ideas. Irish Revolution depicts the condition in which Ireland was split in two. Irish Martyr is about Sir Roger Katesmith who sought *weapons* assistance from Germany. All the four books are set in the background of the revolution for the liberation of Ireland.

The revolution could be attributed to the unjustified expansion of land. Ireland and England are divided by a strait. Both are Europeans. But the British did not harbour any sympathetic consideration for a small country, about 30,000 square-miles wide, with a small

population. As the British started colonizing other lands since monarchic times, the servitude of Ireland was longer than Myanmar. At long last, some Irish fled their land to America. Their revolts against the British were not successful. In 1908, Sinn Fein, an Irish patriotic organization, emerged. The young Irish men who appeared in the four books joined Sinn Fein, and became leaders. Their resistance led to the Irish Revolution.

What we have to review is whether the choice of Nagani for translation was correct or not, and how success was achieved. What were needed for resistance fighting? The needs - comrades with the spirit of camaraderie, military ploys, valour, etc - are fully mentioned in the book "Irish Revolution."

I would like to discuss a section in the book "My Adventures" about the spirit of camaraderie. Members of the Irish police force never stood with folded arms when one of them was arrested and brought by the British. They did one thing or another to rescue the arrested member. When King Hogen was nabbed, the police members traced, riding their bicycles, the place where King Hogen might be detained. They did it day and night for five consecutive days during which they passed the nights without sleep. One night, some Irish policemen were walking along a street, chatting, when one of them, called Benson, fell from his bicycle, and was found lying asleep by the street. So they woke him up and went on looking for the place where Hogen might be kept. This showed their spirit of camaraderie and undaunted mind. It is essential for the military to have good leadership. "Michael Collins and I" highlights the characteristics of good leadership. Buck O'Connor mentions that Michael Collins's zeal of a leader was unique in that he was the most courageous and could practise restraint.

Even when the police were tracking down on him, Collins moved about normally, conspicuously among the people, without any disguise. This showed his self-confidence. When one of them was nabbed by the British, they sought every available means to rescue him while giving words of encouragement to his family regularly. The British police had even announced an award for those who could catch him and hand him over to the police. Collins rarely spoke. If he spoke, his words were noteworthy.

"We needn't thank Irish people who are working for their own lives. Ireland is a country not solely for me. It is for all the Irish."

What he said was right. It clearly showed that Collins did not work for fame or for self-seeking. His words were really valuable for the Myanmar people, who were convinced that

they must work out of their own conscience.

His military tactics were more outstanding than those in detective stories. His ploys of misleading the British soldiers were laudable. There was an example of a simple trick found in "My Adventures."

Once, Dan Breen and his police colleagues on a car were confronted with a car-load of British soldiers. The Irish policemen pretended to look on the British soldiers with meaningful stares as if they were respectful, reliable ones who were protecting the lives, shelters and property of the Irish. Thus, they made themselves free from possible suspect. On reaching a corner, they were blocked by two broken cars. The British officer on duty told them to turn back. The Irish policemen told him that they were suffering from rheumatism because of hard work, and were very tired and could not walk. Then, the British soldiers helped push their car on to the road. Had the British searched their car, they would have discovered weapons.

Such was a ploy they played on the British.

Two more persons who were the praise-worthiest were Mr. Memmori and Sir Roger Casement. Mr. Memmori is a reporter who wrote "Irish Revolution." Though a British reporter, he did not disparage the Irish. He openly and boldly praised what or who was worthy of praise. It was worth emulating for the journalists. He executed his duties amidst the bullets and artillery rounds. When he covered news from De Valera, leader of the Thamada gang, he found gunmen, lying in wait, before and behind him. Once he had made a mistake in his speech, he would have been finished. Even in such a difficult situation, he managed to ask questions and sent a news report. He was such a person who had set an example for the young persons.

Sir Roger Casement was really a courageous man. He was an Irish who had served the British government and been conferred the title of "Sir." There was no cause for him to hate the British. However, he became a liberation fighter when he heard that his compatriots were entering independence battles. He went to Germany without any company for arms assistance. Later he was caught by the British and sentenced to death. He ascended the hanging platform without any timidity. In our country, such people as those who enjoy a salary of K 5,000 should be conscious of this.

As mentioned above, the books on Irish Revolution deal not only with consciousness for revolution, the spirit of camaraderie and a sense of leadership and note-worthy individuals

but also with political awakening.

The point is not to be divided after regaining independence. In the aftermath of signing the Reconciliation Treaty signed with the British in Ireland, Ireland was split in two—the De Valera group which claimed “No Reconciliation Treaty Wanted,” “We want the complete independence,” and the Free State group led by Michael Collins, who signed the Reconciliation Treaty. Following the split, domestic battles broke out. Time was spent by the battles raging between the two groups without the opportunity to work for rehabilitation of the country. Eventually, Michael Collins, the valuable leader, fell at the hand of a compatriot Irish. Nagani was concerned that Myanmar might be faced with a similar situation. Hence, it had put into the mind of the people the dreadful consequences following the disintegration in the country once it had regained independence.

But this attempt failed. The attempt could not deter members of Nagani themselves—U Nu, Thakin Soe, and Thakin Than Tun. After that, Myanmar met the same fate as Ireland.

In considering the knowledge shared by the publications on Irish Revolution and aims of Nagani, it can be noted that Myanmar could go as far as the aims set. Myanmar was perspicacious in disseminating the revolutionary propaganda. Myanmar skipped the Conciliation Treaty and wrestled back the independence. The momentum of resistance was accelerated. Nagani complied with the times by publishing appropriate books.

The translated works of Nagani are found lucid in the presentation of the revolution literature. The prose is smooth. In some places, sayings that reflect Myanmar are included.

In an overview, it can be said that of all the publications of Nagani, those on the Irish Revolution are found to be the best and suited to the political situations in Myanmar. This thesis is concluded with a serious note that the publications on the Irish Revolution served as an effective reinforcement in the Myanmar's struggle for independence.

2 Timothy Harding, In the footsteps of Michael Collins? — Aung San and the fight for Burmese independence, a comparison of two leaders - Delivered Sat. 20 June 2009 at the Open University/ NUI Maynooth “Ends of Empire” conference in Maynooth, Ireland⁴³

A recent paper on Burma in an academic journal included the following:

If Aung San is reminiscent of Ireland’s Michael Collins—a young mastermind of independence from Britain who was murdered by rivals angry at his willingness to compromise—then his daughter Suu Kyi’s situation resembles that of Nelson Mandela under apartheid.⁴⁴

It’s hard to disagree with the second statement, but the assertion that political rivals murdered Collins can most kindly be described as an over-simplification - if not downright wrong.

Conspiracy theories claiming London had Aung San killed also do not withstand investigation.

The End of Empire in Burma during the 1940s was in some respects analogous to 1920s Ireland. The parallel between their two doomed leaders has already been noted. Legends develop around young men who die with their work incomplete.⁴⁵

Michael Collins and Aung San rose rapidly in times of national crisis after apprenticeships in underground movements. Both their careers had military and political phases. Both, leading negotiations with Britain, became architects of the new states they were striving for.

Both men had extraordinary organising talent and charismatic appeal — as testified by not only their compatriots, but also by British leaders who had dealings with them. Their own people killed them when close to the height of power. Both have been the subject of speculation, on the theme of how much happier Ireland, and Burma, would have been, had they lived.

Collins’s biographers have had problems over missing sources.⁴⁶ Judging Aung San is difficult for

43 References in this as yet unpublished paper are to “Burma”, “Rangoon” etc, as these were the names in use at the period covered by it. This was an oral paper and some information not included here was given to the audience in the form of Powerpoint images. Some revisions have been made to the end-notes. This copy of the article was given by its author to Dr Hans-Bernd Zöllner of the Myanmar Literature Project on 9 Oct. 2009 for limited circulation among scholars interested in Burma/Myanmar studies. If cited, please use the reference above. No lengthy quotations are permitted without written permission as the views and findings expressed should not be taken as the final state of the author’s views on the subject. A longer version of this paper, which included references to the Myanmar Literature Project, the Kinwun Mingyi’s Irish visit of 1872, and other matters not covered here, was presented at a seminar in Trinity College Dublin 2010. To request a copy of that text or to contact the author on aspects of this work, please email hardingt@tcd.ie.

44 Andrew Reynolds, Alfred Stepan, Zaw Oo, & Stephen Levine, “How Burma Could Democratize”, in *Journal of Democracy*, xii (No 4, Oct. 2001), pp. 95-108, here p. 98. Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: a biography* (London: Hutchinson 1990), argues that Eamon de Valera tried to prevent the ambushing of Collins, rather than the opposite, but lacked sufficient influence with the gunmen at that time. This is possibly the generally accepted view among Irish scholars nowadays.

45 The mythic element of Collins is discussed in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds.), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish State* (Cork 1998). All the articles in that collection are essential reading to obtain an understanding of the many facets of Collins.

46 By no means all the numerous biographies and memoirs of Collins have been read for this article. Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London: Macmillan 2005) is probably the best currently available. Risteard Mulcahy’s biography of Richard Mulcahy, *My Father, The General* (Dublin: Liberties Press 2009) was only published after this

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those of us who don't know the Burmese language, but contemporary politics affects the judgment of those who do. Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has relied on her father's status as the lost national hero. Here's another difference between the two: Collins lacked descendants: a minor point, yet, given the dynastic tendency in Irish politics, perhaps one not to be overlooked.

Burma, the largest south-east Asian country, had a population in the 1930s of about 15 million.⁴⁷ As maps show, Kipling used poetic licence when writing 'the dawn comes up like thunder outer China cros't the bay' — and clearly the old Moulmein pagoda can't look eastward to the sea.⁴⁸

Britain seized control of Burma in three phases, ultimately deposing King Thibaw in 1885.⁴⁹ Thereafter it was administered as an Indian province, although, ethnically and religiously, Burma is quite distinct from the subcontinent. About one million Indians settled there, resented for their impact on the economy, especially when they owned land.⁵⁰ By 1937, only 127,000 of Rangoon's 400,000 residents were ethnic Burmese.⁵¹ Indians formed 55 per cent and there were also Chinese and people of mixed race. The Scots in Burma were generally merchants, trading in teak, rice, rubies and later oil. They largely ran the economy with Indian managers.⁵² Americans in Burma were often missionaries. The Irish and English were mostly soldiers or civil servants.

The Indian connection ended in 1937 when the diarchy system was extended to Burma, but the pace of change that London was willing to allow fell far short of what the Burmese wanted. They now had a small measure of Home Rule with their own Prime Minister, but the Governor ran the show. From 1941-46 (although exiled in Simla half that time), this was Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, who was previously Chamberlain's Agriculture Minister.⁵³ He wrote in his memoirs:

I doubt whether any Englishman ever will understand to the full the Burmese mentality—and here I speak as an Irishman with a strong Welsh cross. There is a tremendous amount of truth in the cliché

paper was delivered. The Mulcahy papers at UCD contain a lengthy critique by Richard Mulcahy of Piaras Béaslaí's biography of Collins and the new book shows that General Mulcahy was also very critical of P. S. O'Hegarty's book *The Victory of Sinn Féin*.

47 Internet information which should be verified properly for a journal article. Area about 261,00 square miles according to R. B. Smith, 'Some contrasts between Burma and Malaya in British policy towards south-east Asia, 1942-1946', in R. B. Smith and A. J. Stockwell (eds.), *British policy and the transfer of power in Asia: documentary perspectives: papers from a symposium at the India Office Library and Record Division of the British Library, September 1985* (London: SOAS 1987). pp. 30-76; here, p. 31.

48 Rudyard Kipling, 'The Road to Mandalay'.

49 *The Times*, various reports, e.g. 12 Dec. 1885. On what Britain was doing in Burma, see Anthony Webster, 'Business and Empire: a reassessment of the British conquest in Burma in 1885', in *The Historical Journal*, xliii (no. 4, 2000) pp. 1003-1025. A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Pagoda War: Lord Dufferin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Ava, 1885-6* (London 1972); Dufferin was a nobleman from the part of Ulster which is now Northern Ireland.

50 R. B. Smith, op. cit., p. 32, quotes an estimate of 1,000,000 Indians and 2000,000 Chinese out of a total population of 14.67 million in the 1931 census.

51 Census statistics in M. W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge 2009), p. 22.

52 Alister McCrae, *Scots in Burma: golden times in a golden land* (Edinburgh: Kiscadale 1990).

53 Dorman-Smith papers at the British Library: India Office private papers Mss Eur E.215/32 (2 vols: 32A and 32B), vol B, ff. 308-9.

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that the Burmese are ‘the Irish of the East’ ... In the Burmese I could discern all the failings and most of the virtues of my own countrymen.

David Hackett Fisher compared the historiography of Burma to the parable of blind men describing an elephant.⁵⁴ Their reports depended enormously on which part of the animal they handled. To save time, I am not going to discuss many books in detail but some of my sources are listed on the handout. Aung San Suu Kyi wrote a short biography of her father, but the only full-length scholarly work is by Angelene Naw (2001).⁵⁵ She examined many English and Burmese sources but the book does tend towards hagiography.

Best on the war period is Bayly and Harper’s *Forgotten Armies*, also covering Malaya.⁵⁶ Two new books that discuss recent times are Thant’s *The River of Lost Footsteps* - but read it critically⁵⁷ - and *A History of Modern Burma* (from Michael Charney at SOAS), which is more objective but somewhat unreliable on the period in question.

On Collins, I recommend Hart and the conference proceedings edited by Doherty and Keogh. Townshend is the best book on 1916. Much of the writing on revolutionary Ireland was for popular consumption by people with axes to grind, but I think Coogan is plausible saying Dev tried to prevent the ambush of Collins but lacked sufficient influence over the gunmen at that time. The Burmese admired Japan as an Asian nation that had matched Europeans technologically and militarily. They also admired the Irish as a nation that had freed itself from British rule. Yet Burma and Ireland could hardly be more different.

Without minimising the differences across the Irish Sea, there was always a far greater cultural barrier between Britons and Burmese - which very few crossed in one direction or the other. The Irish had a far greater say in their own affairs and no enemy of Britain ever invaded Ireland. Burmese independence was forged in the crucible of the Japanese occupation from 1942-5, when the British were driven out of all but the most remote highland recesses of the country for over three years. Nor was there a war of independence or insurgency campaign against the British in Burma. Once the Japanese had been driven out, the country was quite peaceful. Aung San’s Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) effectively got its way through the well-known principle of chess mastery, ‘the threat is stronger than the execution’.

54 David Hackett Fisher, *Historians’ Fallacies, toward a logic of historical thought* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 228.

55 Aung San Suu Kyi, *Aung San of Burma* (Univ. of Queensland 1984; 2nd ed Edinburgh 1991); reprinted ‘My father’ in her *Freedom from Fear and other writings* (Penguin: London 1991), pp. 3-38. Angelene Naw, *Aung San and the struggle for Burmese independence*.

56 Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: the fall of British Asia 1941-1945* (London: Allen Lane 2004).

57 Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps* (New York 2006; London 2007).

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One of the Collins myths is the fighting man. Yet, unlike Aung San, he possibly never killed anybody despite being 'out' in 1916. When a clerical worker in London up to 1915, he was active in the IRB and GAA. Returning to Ireland he was involved in 1916 as an assistant to Plunkett. The GPO was valuable experience in how **not** to run a rebellion. Collins said the military arrangements were 'bungled terribly, costing many a good life' and complained about 'memoranda couched in poetic phrases, or actions worked out in similar fashion'.⁵⁸

Thereafter, he was well placed to become one of the leaders rebuilding the republican organisation, starting with the Irish National Aid Fund. His London experience was useful also when he became underground Minister for Finance.

Nor was Collins a gunman during the war of independence. As chief of intelligence and counter-intelligence activities, he certainly ordered killings but did not necessarily have to use a weapon himself.⁵⁹

As commander-in-chief of the Free State Army, he was not required to do any fighting personally but he recklessly went on a mission into an enemy stronghold on 22 August 1922. All the more foolish, when ambushed, he decided to get out of his car and fight on foot, showing his inexperience in combat.

The post-war generation of Burmese politicians mostly emerged through the 1936 Rangoon university strike, Burma's equivalent of May 1968 in Paris. Aung San then became prominent in the Dobama Asi-ayon (or We Burmans) movement whose members adopted the honorific, Thakin, or 'master'. That was how Burmans were expected to address Europeans, like 'Sahib' in India.

War relegated Burma even lower on London's list of priorities. Over-reliant on Singapore, little thought was given to the Burmese who, long excluded from foreign policy and defence, could hardly be expected to fight enthusiastically - and anyway lacked training and arms.

In 1940 Aung San evaded an arrest warrant and went abroad with another Thakin to look for support. They arrived at Amoy off the Chinese coast,⁶⁰ where (according to his daughter) Aung San's original intention was to seek assistance from Chinese communists but he had no success in contacting them. Naw's biography follows Ba Maw, saying the Japanese smuggled Aung San out of Burma on a ship but lost sight of him, implying that the attempt to contact the communists was

58 Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin 2006 [Allen Lane 2005]), p. 254; first quoted by Declan Kiberd [see ref in Townshend].

59 One member of the audience pointed out during question time that in Palestine, in the late 1940s, Stern Gang leader Zitzhak Shamir took the cover-name "Michael Collins".

60 Hsia-men (then known as Amoy).

desperation when he was stranded.⁶¹

Eventually Aung San was brought to Tokyo to meet Colonel Keiji Suzuki, the man in charge of Japanese secret intelligence in Burma. Suzuki sent him back early in 1941 to recruit cadres known as the Thirty Comrades, who went to Japan for military training. Aung San became Bo Teza and Shu Maung became Bo Ne Win, who retained that cover name: he later became military dictator of Burma in the Sixties. Early in 1941, Aung San wrote a manifesto or draft constitution for a fascist Burma:

What we want is a strong state administration as exemplified in Germany and Italy. There shall be one nation, one state, one party, one leader. There shall be no parliamentary opposition, no nonsense of individualism. Everyone must submit to the state which is supreme over the individual...⁶²

Another aspect in which Collins and Aung San are not quite parallel is their love life. Collins had rumoured attachments to several women. His marriage was postponed because of the civil war, and never took place. Aung San supposedly showed no interest in women until 1942 when he met his wife, Daw Khin Kyi, later an important person in independent Burma.

Peter Hart has tried to demythologise Collins, showing his erring human side more than previous biographers.⁶³ Hart shows he had a series of mentors; If Aung San had mentors there were perhaps first U Nu, at the university, then Suzuki. The British, with both Collins and Aung San, seem to have seen an opponent they could work with, but I would NOT interpret the British as king-makers as implied by R. H. Taylor in his book, *The State in Burma*.⁶⁴

At the end of 1941, Aung San's army, of about one thousand Burmans, accompanied the invasion of southern Burma. Their numbers soon grew although only a few thousand actually fought. Japan claimed to be replacing the imperial yoke by the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. There was some scepticism about this, due to their Chinese activities. Eventually Burmese independence was declared, subject to Japanese military occupation. Dr Ba Maw became dictator in a Vichy-style regime: Pierre Laval minus the mean streak. Aung San became Minister for Defence.

It has been reckoned that 10 per cent of Burmese supported the Japanese in 1943, 10 per cent wanted the British back, and the rest just hoped to survive. Indebted Burmese peasants got their lands back as the Indians fled, but the cruelty and insulting behaviour of the Japanese alienated

61 Aung San Suu Kyi, 'My father', in *Freedom*, p. 13; Naw, *Aung San*, pp. 62-3; Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, pp. 65 & 122-5. Thant, *River*, p. 228, leaves it vague.

62 Ba Maw, *Breakthrough*, p. 127; Thant, *River*, p. 229.

63 Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London: Pan Macmillan 2006).

64 R. H. Taylor, *The State in Burma* (London: Hurst 1987), p. 261, makes several questionable statements along these lines.

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many Burmese.⁶⁵ There is evidence from as early as 1943 that Aung San was preparing to change sides at the right moment and that his defection was not last-minute opportunism.⁶⁶ His strategy was to build up a force, armed and trained, and await developments. After the 1944 battles of Kohima and Imphal, the tide turned. In March 1945 Aung San was able to march his troops up-country: to fight the British, ostensibly, but in reality the Japanese.

Mountbatten and General Slim, who ran this theatre of war, 'did not expect the Burma National Army to exert any serious influence on the campaign' but it was useful to have them on-side.⁶⁷ These two and Hubert Rance (a brigadier under Slim) were all very impressed by Aung San when they met him. On 15 May, about a fortnight after the Japanese abandoned Rangoon, Slim sent an aircraft and Aung San turned up in his Japanese major-general's uniform. Slim gives a detailed account of their talks,⁶⁸ concluding:

...he was not the ambitious, unscrupulous guerrilla leader I had expected. He was certainly ambitious and meant to secure for himself a dominant position in post-war Burma, but I judged him to be a genuine patriot and a well-balanced realist—characters which are not always combined.⁶⁹

Mountbatten gave Aung San advice that would have been useful for Collins: 'You must decide to be either a Churchill or a Wellington. You cannot be a soldier and a political leader at the same time'.⁷⁰ Dorman-Smith also got on well with Aung San personally but failed to see that this was the man to back in post-war reconstruction. He was recalled and in July 1946 Attlee asked to see Rance, who advised the Prime Minister that although he had been four months away, he was sure that the AFPFL 'must be brought into Government'.⁷¹ This he proceeded to arrange after his appointment and eventually a January 1947 date was set for treaty negotiations.

The Anglo-Burmese talks of 1947 were less tense than the Irish treaty negotiations. The main issues were the time-scale to achieve self-government, Burma's relationship with Britain, and what to do about the ethnic minorities. The frontier areas issue was the only one where the British had any potential leverage because they could threaten a split of Burma into two parts, but (perhaps mindful of Irish partition) Attlee rejected that idea.⁷²

The day after the agreement was signed on 27 January, Gilbert Laithwaite wrote to Rance that

65 Thakin [U] Nu, *Burma under the Japanese, Pictures and Portraits*, ed. & trans. with intro by J. S. Furnivall (London 1954) is just one work that makes these points.

66 Viscount Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (1956) p. 484.

67 Slim, op. cit., p. 485.

68 Slim, op. cit., p. 515 et seq.

69 Slim, op. cit., p. 519.

70 Quoted in Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten: the official biography* (London: Collins 1985; Phoenix 2001), p. 321.

71 Hubert Rance memoirs, India Office private papers at BL (Mss Eur F169), section 20b.

72 Maung Maung, *Movements*, pp. 255-6.

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‘Aung San has handled these negotiations admirably... completely strong minded, independent and able to decide for himself without referring to his colleagues... in general impressed everyone.’⁷³

Aung San’s next achievement was a conference where he persuaded the minorities’ leaders to join in the Union of Burma.⁷⁴ Nobody else could reconcile the various political and ethnic factions, as shown by the endless civil war since he died.

Elections were held on 9 April 1947 for a constituent assembly that met in June to draft the constitution. Aung San’s greatest danger was that he could be accused of selling out if he settled for less than full independence. Keeping an eye on India was crucial; Burma must get whatever Nehru achieved. The Burmese also watched the Indonesian situation, where a Republic had already been declared and was negotiating with the Dutch.⁷⁵

Why did the British not fight harder to keep Burma? Dorman-Smith had made detailed plans for its reconstruction with a slow time-scale towards Dominion status. Whitehall prepared a White Paper along these lines, but events had overtaken this. Hugh Tinker claims that power was not transferred by the British but wrested from them,⁷⁶ but that only happened because during 1946 London decided to relax its grip.

By comparison, London kept Malaya because it was more important. R. B. Smith argued that the motivation was rubber - was a dollar earner, crucial in the new world economic order after Bretton Woods. Burma exported goods rice, teak, rubies, and oil, but the markets for these were in the sterling area. Clearly the Cold War must have been a major factor also: the communist threat was clearer there and Singapore was of greater strategic importance than Burma.

Determining the status of Burma involved similar issues to the Irish treaty. The new Secretary of State for Burma, Lord Listowel, gave Rance a briefing ‘on the advantages of remaining within the Commonwealth - a term now considered preferable to Dominion Status’.⁷⁷ The point he was most anxious Rance should get across to the Burmese was that:

...[a] constitution in republican form and not making adequate provision for the position of H.M. the King, is NOT, despite precedent of EIRE, which the UK and the Dominions are most unlikely to wish to see repeated, compatible with membership of the Commonwealth.

(Ireland was still in the Commonwealth until 18 April 1949.)

Rance kept trying to find a form of words Aung San could use at the assembly, to avoid saying

⁷³ Rance memoirs, citing file 71/GS/47.

⁷⁴ The Panglong Agreement, signed 12 Feb. 1947: Naw, *Aung San*, p. 201.

⁷⁵ Maung Maung, *Movements*, p. 248.

⁷⁶ Hugh Tinker, ‘Burma’s Struggle for Independence: The Transfer of Power Thesis Re-Examined’, in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1986), pp. 461-481; here pp. 480-1. Compare Hugh Tinker, ‘Burma: Power Transferred or Exacted? Reflections on the Constitutional Process’, in Smith & Stockwell, *British policy*, pp. 19-29.

⁷⁷ Rance memoirs: 20c (Part 2 Section 18).

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‘Republic’.⁷⁸ He asked London whether Burma could stay in the Commonwealth if it declared itself a ‘sovereign independent state’? Westminster replied that: a) the South African Constitution Act of 1934 refers to that Union as a ‘sovereign independent state’; b) the 1937 Irish Constitution speaks of Ireland as a ‘sovereign independent democratic state’.

But Aung San said ‘republic’ was to be used. Rance believed his problem was the communists gaining support with promises of land reform, advocacy of rent and tax strikes.

Rance made one final attempt, telling London on 9 June:

I believe that in Burma we are faced with a time of decision not only affecting Burma and Great Britain but with much wider repercussions. In my opinion it is a question not only whether HMG has a dynamic policy for S. E. Asia but whether HMG can produce a new conception of Commonwealth to meet new conditions.⁷⁹

What Rance - and de Valera, with his 1921 concept of ‘external association’ - were groping for is what the Commonwealth evolved into during the 1960s, but it was beyond most people then.

Collins had been satisfied with Dominion status for the Free State because, unlike some contemporaries, he predicted that the white dominions would be mutually supportive in achieving full independence, bringing Ireland with them. Burma raised new issues, as Rance foresaw; it was the trail-blazer for the colonies without white settlers. By the time it was announced that India and Pakistan would stay in the Commonwealth, it was too late to change course.⁸⁰

Collins at least enjoyed a brief period in power; Aung San did not live to the hand-over. He knew of the theft of weapons, including Bren guns handed over by the British over a forged signature, yet he took no special precautions. Six men were murdered along with him on 19 July 1947, including leaders of the Shan, Karen, and Muslim minorities. This decapitation probably had far more serious consequences than the death of Collins. Fortunately the murder squad failed to find Thakin Nu, who became the new leader.

Former prime minister U Saw was held responsible.⁸¹ He was not one of the gunmen but weapons were found at his house. Saw had gone to London in 1941 offering Burmese support for the war effort in return for a guarantee of Dominion Status afterwards. Flying home, disappointed by Churchill’s response,⁸² Saw arrived in Honolulu to see hulks of American warships in Pearl

⁷⁸ Section 25 (referring to 6 June 1947).

⁷⁹ Telegram No 13 of 9 June cited in Rance memoirs; see Tinker’s volume of documents.

⁸⁰ Rance insists on this at some length in his memoirs.

⁸¹ Telegram Rance to Listowel, 20 July 1947, #454 in Tinker documents, p. 674.

⁸² ‘U Saw Dissatisfied: No Dominion status for Burma, yet’, *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1941; ‘Burma and Dominion Status’, *The Times*, 5 Nov. 1941.

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Harbour.⁸³ Forced to return eastward, he was observed visiting the Japanese embassy in Lisbon. Arrested in Palestine, Saw was interned in Uganda for the duration, but allowed home afterwards.

In the House of Commons, Tom Driberg condemned ‘the comfortable Conservative gentlemen here [who] have incited U Saw to treachery and sabotage’,⁸⁴ but generally rumours that the British were implicated at a high level were disbelieved. Both the trial and two books by Burmese writers concluded U Saw really was to blame; he was executed in 1948.⁸⁵ On the British side, there were security lapses and some irregular arms dealings but no clear evidence of involvement in the assassination plot.

Joseph Lee has written that of all the senior victims of the Irish Civil War, ‘none except Collins was irreplaceable. Only Collins might, just possibly, have significantly influenced the course of history’.⁸⁶ Of Aung San it can definitely be said that if he had lived, Burma might have trodden a sunnier path.⁸⁷

83 Charney, *Modern Burma*, p. 49. His sources for that detail was not stated but *The Times*, 19 Jan. 1942, reporting U Saw’s detention, did say he had been in Honolulu. For more details, and the character of U Saw, see Maurice Collis, *Last and first in Burma (1941-48)*, (London: Faber 1956) which is partly based on Dorman-Smith’s memoirs.

84 *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 40, cols 866-7, following statement by PM Clement Attlee on the assassinations; cited in Tinker documents ii, #458 p. 678n. Look in *The Times*.

85 Maung Maung, *A Trial in Burma: the Assassination of Aung San* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1962); Kin Oung, *Who Killed Aung San?* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2nd ed 1996 [1993]).

86 J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 63-4.

87 Another audience member asked about George Orwell’s *Burmese Days* and we discussed this afterwards. His point related to Hannah Arendt’s argument in *Totalitarianism* that people transferred lessons/ behaviours from colonial days into post-war situations of oppression (e.g. Orwell’s policing and later his BBC work influenced *Nineteen Eighty-Four*).

3 Laurence Cox, Irish Perceptions of Burmese Buddhism

Editor's note: The following two texts are excerpts of a paper written by Lawrence Cox, lecturer for Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Mainooth, on "Knowledge and Study of Buddhism before the 1970s" as part of a book published in 2013 on *Buddhism and Ireland: from the Celts to the counter-culture and beyond*. Sheffield: Equinox.

3.1 Maurice Collis

Of a slightly later date are the Buddhist-inflected writings of Maurice Collis (1889 – 1973). Born to a family of Anglican gentry⁸⁸ and raised in Killiney, Collis entered the Indian civil service in 1912 as an administrator in Burma (Derné and Jadwin 2006).

According to his memoirs, the experience moved him from a naïve acceptance of colonialism towards a recognition of its exploitative nature, the colonialist attitudes of the British and the resentment of the natives. By 1920 his British colleagues were accusing him of being "pro-Burman" and he was being increasingly removed from significant roles at the same time as he deepend his interest in Burmese culture (guided by the Orientalist Gordon Luce) and his contacts with Burmese people (Derné and Jadwin 2006: 194).

With the War of Independence and the Black-and-Tans, Collis developed increasing sympathies for Irish nationalism, and drew the parallels to Burma. In 1929, rebuking (but not convicting) an employer who had bullied a servant to suicide, he found that

the business community was horrified by this public rebuke to one of their number. The fact was that no Englishman had ever before been rebuked from the bench in Burma... One effect of the Purves case was to reveal, both to myself and to the business community, that I was not their man. (1953: 177)

In 1930, Collis "caused a furore in the English community" by jailing a lieutenant who caused a traffic accident injuring two Burmese women (Derné and Jadwin 2006: 197). He notes

When a man's job is to maintain a foreign Government and keep down a conquered nation, and when he has no official or social contact with that nation, it is not easy for him to adjust his ideas as time moves on and modifies what was originally a complete autocracy. Military officers in the Rangoon of 1930 found it very hard to think of themselves as subservient to the law in exactly the same way as the local inhabitants... and that it was as wrong to injure two Burmese women as two Englishwomen. (1953: 188)

The upshot was that military authorities and the business community demanded Collis' removal, and his superior transferred him to the first of a series of increasingly marginal posts. He eventually resigned and turned to writing as a career, focussing on Burma in particular.

Collis wrote widely on his Burmese experiences; of his thirty books at least half draw on Burma.

⁸⁸ His uncle was the Orientalist George Grierson, Superintendent of the Linguistic Survey of India and author inter alia of scholarly articles on Indian *bhakti* religion.

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These include *The land of the great image*, an account of the seventeenth-century travels of the Portuguese friar Manrique in Burma and elsewhere⁸⁹. Typical of his elliptical approach to the topics he wanted to discuss, the Preface reads, in full,

In a previous book of mine, *The Great Within*, the political theory at the back of Confucianism was shown to be connected with the vision of a world state. Here is disclosed an analogue Buddhistic theory, which is as curiously related to the Christian *Civitas Dei* as is the Confucian. No direct exegesis of this is given, but it will be found to emerge from the episodes constructed round Friar Manrique's adventures, to which it gives both coherence and meaning. (1943: 5)

Here he notes of Manrique's *Travels*

he was not a man of real intellectual curiosity, particularly in the matter of foreign religions... But we are more curious... (1943: 160 – 161)

He goes on to discuss the *Sappadanapakarana*,

To glance at some of its contents will give a better idea, than any direct exposition, of the religion of Arakan, an Apostolic Buddhism, yet tinged with myth and magic, though not nearly to the extent that these are found in Mahayana Buddhism. And the book illustrates vividly the extraordinary religious importance of the Mahamuni [Buddha statue]. (1943: 164)

Collis' tone is urbane and deeply humanist, increasingly opposed to colonialism but alive to the lure of the exotic at the same time. Collis' attraction to Burmese Buddhism was an inseparable part of his identification of Ireland and Burma:

as he explored sacred scented hills and became intimate with Burmese monastics. He saw the magical traditions of scented hills as much like the "fairylend" he had known in Ireland... He found himself visited by spirits while stationed at Sandoway (now Thandwe) and while visiting the old temples of Mrauk U... Religion was a strong presence in Burma as it was in Ireland and Collis sometimes consulted Burmese astrologers (Derné and Jadwin 2006: 191 – 2).

Both came together in a visit, as senior magistrate in Mandalay, to the Arakan pagoda. There was a long-standing conflict with pagoda trustees prohibiting shoes:

It was foreseen that the British would refuse to take off their shoes, as to do so would render them ridiculous... The new rule caused some ill feeling in British circles because strolling on pagoda platforms ... had always been a favourite pastime. (Collis 1953: 56).

Having been permitted nevertheless to visit - the trustees dealt with an objector - he noted

The half light, the strong scent of the incense, monks passing, the sound of gongs, distilled a sense of devotion more intense than I had ever noticed at a Buddhist shrine before, where in general all is gently devout. My conductors were fallen on their

⁸⁹Others of his books cover Marco Polo; the sixteenth-century Portuguese explorer Fernão Mendes Pinto; "Siamese White", a seventeenth-century Englishman who worked for the king of Siam; China's seventeenth-century encounter with the West; the Opium War; the Spanish conquest of Mexico; the history of Burmese independence; the mystic painter Stanley Spencer; a study of Confucianism; and a drama, *Lord of the three worlds*, in which Buddhist folklore and magic feature strongly (Collis 1947).

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knees; I alone remained standing, a conspicuous figure with my shoes on. It suddenly struck me that I was committing a rudeness, and I wished I had not come... I grew more uncomfortable and felt like an outsider, or worse, like an oppressor who was taking advantage of his office. (1953: 57).

In 1920, he was writing letters home about Burmese philosopher Shwe San Aung:

This man, I had learned, was attempting a synthesis of Buddhist and Western metaphysics, a matter of particular interest to me because my study of Oriental thought, amateur though it was, had already led me, as it had led A.E., to think that such a synthesis was possible. (1953: 37)

He was clearly sympathetic to what he knew of Buddhism:

Christianity, though like Buddhism a religion of compassion, had no compassion for its fallen [pagan] rivals, whom it regarded as devils beyond redemption. (1953: 139 – 140)

However, his interest always seems to have been more in folk religion than in orthodox Buddhism: he often consulted astrologers, including the abbot of a local monastery:

His object in becoming a monk was to reach the Farther Shore on the Ferry, in other words to attain the enlightenment which would enable him to perceive that the world of appearances was not reality... Such was the Sayadaw's lofty aim, which he pursued to the best of his ability by study and meditation... For reasons I am ignorant of, he did not spend all the afternoon and evening in religious study and meditation, but worked on astrology; perhaps because he had a mathematical bent and needed relaxation in his very austere life, perhaps because, having developed by meditation the psychic side of his mind, he discovered in himself some faculty of precognition... Or it may have been that he was able to connect astrology with his metaphysical speculations and regarded it, not as a relaxation, but as having relevance to the grand passage to the Farther Shore. (1953: 92 – 93).

In visiting the magic hill of Taung-ni, Collis experienced the traditional mysterious smell:

[The village headmen] seemed very satisfied and not at all bewildered, and one of them said: "It is as we hoped, as we expected. The hill spirit came to meet and welcome your Honour."

I have recorded what happened, what was said; I can offer no explanation. A strong and beautiful smell was in the air a moment; I smelled it and it was gone. It is a cardinal belief throughout the East (reflected again and again in its literature) that divine beings have a sweet smell... since there was no detectable source, no breeze to carry the scent past, no reason for it to cease if it were there, I can only conclude that it was supra-sensory. But by giving a name one does not explain a mystery. (1953: 106 – 7).

Collis negotiated with himself about his relationship to folk magic:

If I was interested in astrology to the extent of being glad to test it in my particular case, I had only an imaginative liking for magic through having lived on magic ground at Sandoway and seen a magical apparition at Mrauk-u. So when [the Taung-yin Sayadaw] handed me a magical diagram, saying that I should keep it by me as a protection, I was touched by his good nature and delighted by the novelty, but not impressed. (1953: 174).

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The Orientalising mode of such comments neatly parallels that of Anglo-Irish folklorists of the time, commenting on and attempting to relate ancient manuscripts, known history, archaeological discoveries and contemporary peasant belief:

Originally [Sandoway] was important, having been one of the stopping places on the main route from classical India to the Hindu colonial kingdoms on the Malay peninsula and beyond... Sandoway still retained its classical name of Dvaravati, a name belonging to an ancient Buddhist city of India... The Indian city of Dvaravati is mentioned in the *Chata Jataka*, one of the lovely Indian fairytales of the Buddha's previous births, and is there described as having the power of rising into the air when threatened by invasion... This story was taken over by Arakanese Dvaravati. (1953: 124)

Discussing various relics of the Buddha's previous lives which were held to lie under the Sandoway pagodas, he noted

The date the relics were found, the names of the kings who had found them, the miracles testifying to their authenticity, the ceremonies used at their installation and the wonders then seen, had all been recorded in full and were common knowledge in every Sandoway household. (1953: 125)

Or again, exploring the ancient capital of Mrauk-u,

I saw outside the north gate a great broken slab on which were inscribed squares containing numerals in accordance with the rules of *yattara*, a system under which astrology and magic were combined to produce a phenomenal effect. An invader advancing against a battery of inscribed squares was in as great danger as when faced by cannon. Stated in print such fancies may not impress, but I can assure the reader that it is an odd experience to wander round a magical city. Without its inscribed squares Mrauk-u was a bit of archaeology; their presence lifted it into the realm of poetry. (1953: 136 – 7)

Like Hearn's revaluation of "old Japan" in the midst of the Meiji – or, come to that, Lady Gregory and others' revaluation of ghost and fairy tales, hero stories and Celtic myth in the midst of the rationalising processes of late-nineteenth century Irish Catholicism - the colonial outsider's romantic position allies them with the traditional and the peasant, in contrast with modernising forms of religio-ethnic nationalism, but capable of allying with it as well as entering into conflict. The Irish example, and discussions about peasant folklore as pagan survival, were clearly present as models (consciously or otherwise) for Collis' speculations:

These passages [in Mrauk-u] were lined with bas-reliefs representing both the Buddhist and the Hindu mythologies... [they] had been built about 1600 when the religion and the monastic establishment had long been exclusively Buddhist... The magical city took on a yet stranger complexion. What rituals were enacted in these dark passages? The monks, to whose keeping had been entrusted the two shrines, must have had their reasons for placing in them representations of the older gods. The only reason I can think of is that they believed these deities would grant them benefits which could not be demanded of the Buddha, just as you might ask Venus

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for what it would be improper to mention to the Virgin. (1953: 137 – 8).

As in Ireland, this one-way identification was hard to sustain when the peasantry revolted. Collis, however, was more reflexive and self-critical than Yeats in this situation. Writing of Saya San's millennial rebellion (1930-32), he observes:

All the Burmese one had met in Rangoon, the members of parliament, the bar and the professional class, pinned their faith on the grant of a new constitution and were as much surprised as was the government. It was a magical rebellion. The old Burma which I have described, the Burma that dreamed of a saviour king, believed that a saviour king had come...

There was a confluence of all the visionaries. The mediums gathered and were possessed by the spirits; the spirits spoke through them and promised victory. The alchemists prepared the elixir, the magicians were at hand with their magic diagrams. The hosts of fairyland were besought for help, the divinities of tree and stream and hill, those who resided in stones and old sites, the guardian ghosts, and those of paradise, the superior spirits, the King of Heaven himself. All these sweet fairies among whose haunts I had been wandering nearly twenty years were now summoned with music and dancing, aroused with offerings of fruit and flowers, adjured with incantatory verse. The Buddha himself was too far away, locked in his cosmic dream, unutterably remote, his whereabouts unknown because it was undefinable, in a nothingness that was everything, a void that was the plenitude, a quiddity that passed understanding. But the spirits, both the greater and the lesser, who had existed before the Buddha and, converted by him, had become pious Buddhists, were within reach and, since in the past they had always stood by the old kings and the sacred land, so now they would rally, extent their protection, give counsel and lead the van. (1953: 192 – 3)

Thus officers and academics, civil servants and curators, Protestant missionaries and (perhaps) rationalising Irish Buddhists existed within a mode of Orientalist study of Buddhism, connected to the institutions of the British Empire abroad and the "Anglo-Irish" at home, producing knowledge as observers, writers and academics, as the collectors and cataloguers of manuscripts and items. If Ireland was never a centre of Buddhist Studies in a major way, nevertheless this was a context where research and personal experience merged to provide a substantial awareness of Buddhism.

3.2 Desmond Fennell

In 1956 – 7, the progressive Catholic journalist Desmond Fennell travelled through Asia. His own view was that he brought very little from home to this experience:

By Irish standards I am a city man. But in the world I set out to see I was quickly made to understand that I was essentially a peasant and came from a nation of peasants. I accepted this fact and it helped me to find myself...

My generation is the first one to come of age since the War of Independence and the Treaty with Britain. Only in my generation have we come – in the greater part of our country – to exercise power, to control our affairs, to pursue higher education and to make the full adventure of modern living...

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We of the Irish Catholic peasantry – the largest by far of the groups which make up Ireland - are recent in another sense. History robbed us of nearly everything which we brought with us from the remote past... We came naked into the modern world. (1959: 9 – 11).

Recording his awe on encountering the cultural capital of the continental bourgeoisie (his phrase), his journey took him further east because he "believed Further Asia to be the most important part of our world that was non-European... to know our world one must know the East" (1959: 12). This could be mixed with a different kind of awe:

I had heard that for the educated and sophisticated of Asia, Christianity seemed crude alongside Buddhism, Hinduism or accumulated Chinese wisdom. It was said that Westerners were regarded as machine-men... I was not a machine-man, but I was conscious that I came of Irish peasants, potato-eaters. (1959: 85)

In fact, however, this self-deprecatory pose covered a more extensive "recipe knowledge" of what Buddhism was, which was not to be shaken by facts, and shows the character of his own intellectual inheritance, at the tail-end of the unquestioningly nationalist and Catholic service class which had inherited the new state. Thus Fennell *knew* what Buddhism (and come to that Marxism) "really were":

The political leaders of Burma today – and they include some men of intellectual eminence - are convinced Marxist socialists... At the same time, several national leaders, most conspicuously U Nu, are devout Buddhists. They apparently find no contradiction between their socialist and Buddhist beliefs. Of course, it is entirely possible that they hold to Buddhism and socialism without attempting to reconcile the points of divergence. The simultaneous adherence to mutually exclusive sets of beliefs is a widespread phenomenon of the Asiatic mind that has been termed by Professor W. E. Hocking "plural belonging"...

There is of course a straightforward racism in this "Asiatic mind", as too in the following comment:

For one reason or another the atmosphere generated by Buddhism in Burma has not encouraged a spirit of enterprise. Ninety per cent of the business firms in Rangoon are in the hands of foreigners, mainly Indians and Chinese. (1959: 101 – 2).

The "one reason or another", of course, lay in the colonial inheritance and the reshaping of Rangoon as, in Maurice Collis' words,

not a Burmese city but a trade emporium, where the products of Burma were handled by foreigners, companies which bought its rice and milled it; refined the oil they had won from its fields; cut up the teak they had felled from its forests... (cited in Derné and Jadwin 2006: 193).

The combination of Buddhism and a commitment to social change, which Fennell saw as self-evidently contradictory, was also known elsewhere in the English-speaking world to have long roots both in the traditional role of Buddhist kingship and in the history of Burmese nationalism:

U Nu's Buddhist socialism appears against the background of Burma's intellectual

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history not as purely pragmatic adaptation to postwar political requirements but as a modernised expression of ideas deep rooted in Burma's Buddhist heritage of the Asokan tradition (Sarkisyanz 1961: 59)

Fennell, however, already *knew* from his reading what Buddhism "was":

Buddhism ... has always preached another way for the overcoming of human suffering – the elimination of desires! If we have no desires, we are immune from much unhappiness. It is obvious that such an attitude does not lead eventually to the Welfare State which is the declared aim of Burmese policy. That is why a substantial section of the Burmese *élite* has borrowed from socialism the modern-Western, non-Buddhist attitude. (Fennell 1959: 103).

Elsewhere in his travels, he observed old women in a Chinese Buddhist temple in Malaysia (1959: 120), a Zen Buddhist priest teaching calligraphy and a Buddhist graveyard in Tokyo (1959: 145 – 146) – but all from this same touristic perspective where the pleasure in the experience does not allow anything to challenge existing understanding. This self-assuredness in received (European) wisdom about Asia was only really questioned in an encounter with a Zen master:

It was a memorable interview for me in many ways, but the things which made it memorable are such as one feels ought not to be spoken about. They are perceived and felt and appreciated... But such perceptions become ungainly when put in words and the attempt to do so is unseemly. (1959: 185)

Despite the conventional disclaimer that "nowhere in my mental genealogy lay any of those modern brands of Christianity – Calvinist, Castilian or Victorian English – which held European man superior to non-European by virtue of his baptism or his skin" (1959: 10), and a disclaimer of any kind of intellectual inheritance which "might be orthodoxly colonial or orthodoxly anti-colonial, evangelical or romantic" (1959: 85), the book nevertheless concludes entirely conventionally

Belief and love – after the hunger of the belly these are man's greatest hungers... Ravenous hunger for these breads has characterized the European peoples and that Western World – from Santa Fe to Moscow – to which Europe has given birth... Europe injected the whole world with her own hungers for belief and love – and she gave doctrines for the beliefs to cling to, ethics which enabled love to expand. Thus did Europe in the twentieth century after Christ make the world One. (1959: 272)

The surface disavowal of colonialism, then, was perfectly compatible with a triumphalist celebration of missionary Christianity as against "the Asiatic mind" – and, more broadly, an ethnocentric taking-for-grantedness of the world grounded in an apparently homogeneous culture.

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