

# Atula Hsayadaw Shin Yasa: a Critical Biography of an Eighteenth-Century Burmese Monk (version 1.1)

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Alexey Kirichenko

One of the few relatively well-known episodes in the eighteenth-century history of monastic Buddhism in Burma is the debate on how novices should be dressed when going outside of the monastery to collect alms food.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes referred to as the *ekamsika-pārupana* or the “one shoulder” vs. the “two shoulder” controversy, the debate revolved around the issue of whether novices should wear their robes in the same fashion as the monks or whether they should be dressed in a specifically distinct manner. According to a number of influential Burmese sources, this issue caused a serious rift in the *saṃgha*, which lasted for almost a century and was remedied only through resolute actions of King Badon-min (Bodawpaya, 1782–1819).

As a subject for debate and a cause for monastic reform, the “one shoulder” vs. the “two shoulder” controversy seems a typical case for Theravādin monasticism. The tendency of Theravāda monks to emphasize seemingly minor issues of discipline or ritual practice over the matters of doctrine is long noted in the literature.<sup>2</sup> Such matters as the manner of wearing the robe or carrying the alms bowl, the acceptability of wearing footwear (in general or in specific contexts), the propriety of certain types of monastic fans, the permissibility of smoking after noon, the rules for intoning Pāli ceremonial and ritual formulas, calendrical practices, etc., engaged the best minds in the *saṃgha* for decades. The debates on such issues were usually fueled by inter-monastic competition and provided rallying points for different networks or groupings of monks as well as the justification for dissent in the eyes of lay patrons. Accordingly, they entailed a strong rhetoric of reform and purification and often sparked the discussions of what constitutes proper monasticism.

The best-known cases of differentiation that fit the pattern described above are the separation of the Kalyāṇi fraternity from the Siyam Nikāya in Sri Lanka in the 1850s, the debates between the Mahānikāy and the Dhammayut monks in Cambodia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as well as the rise of such reformist communities as the Shwegyin in Burma in the 1870s to 1880s. The “two-shoulder” manner of wearing the robe specifically was one of the defining features of Thammayut monks in Thailand in the 1840s and 1850s, of Rāmañña Nikāya monks in Sri Lanka since the 1860s, and of low-country Siyam Nikāya monks following the leadership of Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṅgala in the 1880s.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Romanization of Burmese words in this biography follows conventions accepted in Burma in the later part of the twentieth century. Royal and monastic names and titles in Pāli are spelled in accordance with the standard system ignoring the Burmese pronunciation. Monastic names are preceded by the prefix “Shin” in accordance with pre-colonial usage (at present this prefix is employed for novices and the names of fully ordained monks are prefixed with “Ashin”). The meaning of both terms is identical and translates as “Venerable” or “Lord.”

<sup>2</sup> See for example Thomas Kirsch, “Modernizing Implications of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Reforms in the Thai Sangha,” *Contributions to Asian Studies* 8 (1975), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Kitsiri Malalagoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750–1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 129–38; Anne Ruth Hansen, *How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia, 1860–1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 96–101; John Ferguson, “The Quest for Legitimation by Burmese Monks and Kings: The Case of the Shwegyin Sect (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries),” in Bardwell L. Smith, ed. *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos, and Burma* (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books,

The robe-wearing debates in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia occurred later than in Burma. Moreover, in most cases the “two-shoulder” manner was explicitly identified as “Burmese” (or “Mon”) by the proponents of the “one-shoulder” practice. In this way, the development of this debate in Burma was an important stage of scripturalization of monastic dress code in Theravāda communities while the spread of the “two-shoulder” manner beyond Burma was one of the early examples of inter-Theravādin monastic networking in the modern period.

The Burmese sources on which the existing understanding of the debate in Burma rests identify two monks as being responsible for the prolonged conflict around the issue of robe wearing.<sup>4</sup> One of them is Ton Hpongyi Shin Guṇābhilānkāra (1639–c. 1720) who allegedly caused the novices to wear the robes in a manner different from that of the monks. Another is Atula Hsayadaw Shin Yasa (1700–1786) who supposedly persuaded King Alaungmintaya (Alaungpaya, 1752–1760) to introduce this manner as a standard throughout the realm. As a result, according to these sources, even those members of the *saṃgha* who understood the Vinaya could not put their scriptural knowledge into practice and instruct the novices properly.

The problem of these sources is that they reflect the views of only one side in the debate and were written to discredit the opponents. Thus, to get a better understanding of the issues at stake, it is necessary to balance this sample of sources with others (written from different perspectives or angles). Also, while the works of Craig Reynolds, Thomas Kirsch, Anne Hansen, and Anne Blackburn discuss monastic debates in nineteenth-century Thailand, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka from a broader sociological and historical perspective, a thorough analysis of the transformations in the *saṃgha*, which accompanied the robe-wearing conflict in Burma, is still needed.

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1978), 66–86; Anne M. Blackburn, *Locations of Buddhism: Colonialism and Modernity in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 90–101; Craig James Reynolds, *The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand* (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1972), 97–105.

<sup>4</sup> The single most important source that shaped the western understanding of the debate in Burma was a religious chronicle called *Sāsanavamsappadīpikā* (“The Illumination of the Lineage of the Sāsana”) compiled by the Third Maungdaung Hsayadaw Shin Paññāsāmi (? 1810–1869) in 1861. It was the sole basis of readings of the debate by Mabel Haynes Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma* (Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1965), 65–76, Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch*, vol. I (London: Edward Arnold, 1921), 62–5; Niharranjan Ray, *An Introduction to the Study of Theravada Buddhism in Burma* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), 219–23, 226–36. The *Sāsanavamsappadīpikā* also remained influential for Michael E. Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 58–61, 66–7 and John Ferguson, “The Symbolic Dimensions of the Burmese Sangha” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975), 176–99. The last two authors also used other religious chronicles such as *Thathanalingaya-sadan* (“The Embellishment of the Sāsana”) compiled by Mahadamathingyan (1753–1833) in 1831, *Thathana-bahothhuta-pakathani* (“The Explication of Knowledge about the Sāsana”) compiled by Hpayabyu Hsayadaw Shin Rājinda in 1926, and *Wuntha-dīpani* (“Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders”) compiled by Shin Jinālānkaradhaja (1742–after 1800) in the early nineteenth century.

For the discussion of these sources see Victor Lieberman, “A New Look at the ‘Sāsanavamsa,’ ” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 39.1 (1976): 137–49; Patrick Pranke, “‘Bodawpaya’s Madness’: Monastic Accounts of King Bodawpaya’s Conflict with the Burmese Sangha: Part One,” *Journal of Burma Studies*, 12 (2008): 1–28; Alexey Kirichenko, “Istoriograficheskie i sotsialnye osobennosti monasheskogo istoriopisaniya Myanmy 17–19 vekov,” *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 13: Vostokovedenie*, 2011, no. 4: 3–23.

The latest research supplements the study of the religious chronicles with the analysis of royal orders promulgated in the 1780s and 1790s: Patrick Pranke, “The ‘Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders’ ” (Vamsadīpanī): Monastic Reform and the Writing of Buddhist History in Eighteenth-Century Burma” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2004), Jacques Leider, “Text, Lineage and Tradition: The Struggle for Norms and Religious Legitimacy under King Bodawphaya (1782–1819),” *Journal of Burma Studies* 9 (2004): 82–129; and Michael Charney, *Powerful Learning: Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma’s Last Dynasty* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 2006), 34–9, 96–9. The overall interpretation of the debate in these orders follows the same lines as in the above-mentioned chronicles.

To explore the complexity of the sources on the debate and the underlying complexity of inter-monastic relations, the present project attempts a critical biography of Atula Hsayadaw Shin Yasa. As Atula was one of the key actors in the robe controversy, his case offers important insights into the workings of religious reform and court monastic politics in eighteenth-century Burma. At the same time, Atula's status as a culprit who had allegedly misled the *saṃgha* and key lay patrons affects the availability of evidence about him. Instead of covering various aspects of Atula's life, the bulk of references to him in the sources are related to the controversy. As a result, disentangling the biography from an indictment becomes problematic.

My paper on Atula published in the *Journal of Burma Studies* (vol. 15.2, 2011) concentrated on the issues that seem the most relevant in the context of the controversy, namely, on Atula's monastic affiliation, his role in shaping the religious policy of Alaungmintaya, his banishment from the capital in the 1770s, and his trial, which took place in 1784. In the present attempt at a biography I've tried to address a broader selection of sources and other aspects of Atula's career as well. However, the bias in the information available precludes building equally strong cases for many such aspects. Given that, I chose to approach this project as a work in progress that would be updated as I accumulate new evidence. Provisionally, I decided to retain the structure of the published paper and build on its text, supplementing it with several new sections and slightly revising the published ones.

At the moment, the biography is structured to identify inconsistencies in the accepted accounts of Atula's role in the "one shoulder" vs. the "two shoulder" debate and highlight the ways the image of Atula as a culprit was constructed and used. It also follows Atula on several important junctures discussing the range of possibilities and uncertainties we face when trying to reconstruct his career. The biography also explores Atula as a monastic policy-maker.

Unlike the paper published in the JBS, this discussion of Atula offers an expanded treatment of Atula's origins, early career, and his relationship with his native area. Besides that, it also adds new sections on Atula's position at the court under the first three Konbaung overlords, on the persons involved in Atula's trial in 1784, and on the trial's aftermath. These aspects are less-researched than the ones addressed in the published paper, so at the moment the biography does not offer the same level of detail and sophistication throughout. I hope to be able to improve these weaknesses in the future. I also hope that with more evidence to hand I might be able to shift the focus from the robe-wearing controversy towards a more balanced treatment of an important historical figure.

### Atula's Monastic Affiliation

The available scholarship sees Atula primarily as a champion of the "one-shoulder" practice, just as he was portrayed by the nineteenth-century religious chronicles.<sup>5</sup> This is a serious misreading as the actual identity of the movement with which Atula was affiliated is quite different. Religious chronicles correctly described Atula as the follower of Ton Hpongyi Shin Guṇābhilāṅkāra, but manipulated the portrayal of both monks. First, the chronicles claimed that Guṇābhilāṅkāra invented the one-shoulder manner of wearing the robe.<sup>6</sup> They passed over in

<sup>5</sup> Ray, *An Introduction to the Study*, 226; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 59; Ferguson, "The Symbolic Dimensions," 185–6; Pranke, "Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders," 3; Leider, "Text, Lineage and Tradition," 93; Charney, *Powerful Learning*, 97; Pranke, "Bodawpaya's Madness," 6 note 15.

[Some references to Jacques Leider's paper in the JBS version are two pages earlier than they should have been. These mistakes are corrected here.]

<sup>6</sup> For the identification of Guṇābhilāṅkāra as the originator of the "one-shoulder" dress code see မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာရစာတမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ ဖံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၅၆)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၈၁၊ Mabel Bode, ed. *Sāsanavamsa* (London: Pali Text Society, 1897), 118; Bimala Churn Law, tran., *The History of the Buddha's Religion (Sāsanavamsa)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1952), 123. *Wuntha-dipani* by Jinālāṅkaradhaja and *Lineage of the Sāsana (Thathana-wuntha-sadan)* by the First

silence Guṇābhilaṅkāra's efforts at reforming monastic behavior and reviving forest-dwelling monasticism (which in fact earned him his reputation and made him the founder of an important community) and credited him simply with the championship of the “one-shoulder” dress code.<sup>7</sup> This characteristic was also extended to Atula.<sup>8</sup>

A broader sample of evidence, including Atula's own writings and documents produced by other followers of Guṇābhilaṅkāra, makes it possible to revise this biased description. According to an account of Guṇābhilaṅkāra's career composed by Sāsanālaṅkaradhaja Hsayadaw around 1780, as well as an epistle submitted about 1801 by Kyawzin-taik Son-myo Hsayadaw, Ton Hpongyi initiated a movement for a more ascetic lifestyle among monks in the final decade of the seventeenth century. He promoted staying in forest monasteries and observing *dhutaṅga* (“austere practices”), especially the practice of using a single set of monastic robes (*ticīvarika-aṅga dhutaṅga*).<sup>9</sup> That observance gave a name to the community he initiated, as his followers became known as *ticīvarikas* or *tisiwareit* in Burmese.<sup>10</sup> Besides *dhutaṅga*, the disciplinary code of the *tisiwareit* community implied that improper monastic utensils—such as various hats and *tharapat* fans commonly used to differentiate monks of specific lineages—should be rejected. Guṇābhilaṅkāra also abstained from smoking pipes.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the code of discipline, the *tisiwareits* seemed to differentiate themselves by a specific approach to scriptural studies that focused on the Abhidhamma and by a radical reformist program. In terms of reform, the *tisiwareits* may have been one of the first monastic movements that argued that donations and support given to immoral (*alajjī*, *dussīla*) monks will cause the decline of the *sāsana* and so doom the donor to be born in conditions of extreme suffering (*niraya*).<sup>12</sup> This argument would later become an important identity marker of such famous nineteenth-century monastic groups as the Sulagandi and Dwaya in Burma and the Rāmañña Nikāya in Sri Lanka. The followers of Guṇābhilaṅkāra seem to have been its pioneers more than a hundred years earlier. Quite importantly, the spearhead of criticism of donations to

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Maungdaung Hsayadaw Shin Nāṇa (1753–1833) admit that the one-shoulder manner existed before Guṇābhilaṅkāra (မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသဒီပနီ (ရန်ကုန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၆၇)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၃၂၊ ၁၄၃; Pranke, “Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders,” 230–40; palm-leaf ms. no. Kin 17 in the National Library (hereafter referred to as NL), Yangon, folio ၄<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>7</sup> *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* mentions only that Guṇābhilaṅkāra made the novices cover one shoulder when on the alms-round. မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသဒီပနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၄၆. In *The Embellishment of the Sāsana* the list of requirements was broadened: besides covering one shoulder, novices were supposed to stop wearing hats and using *tharapa* fans. The only type of fan allowed was *yap* fans. မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာရ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၈၁ (see also pp. 187–8). The same claim is made in *The Illumination of the Lineage of the Sāsana* (Bode, ed. *Sāsanavaṃsa*, 118). Both sources here misrepresent the case because the point about discarding hats and *tharapa* fans (and using only *yap* fans) was addressed to monks, not to novices.

This misrepresentation is repeated in *The Explication of Knowledge about the Sāsana*: according to it, Guṇābhilaṅkāra made the novices cover one shoulder and carry *yap* fans (ဘုရားဖြူဆရာတော်၊ သာသနဗဟုတုပ္ပကာသနီ (ရန်ကုန်၊ ဘုရားဖြူစာပေထိန်းသိမ်းရေးအဖွဲ့၊ ၁၉၉၃)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၁၃). Some modern works, such as the one by Kyakhatwaing-kyaungtaik Hsayadaw, are very inaccurate and claim that Guṇābhilaṅkāra's community required novices to wear hats (ဝဲခူးမြို့၊ ကြွေတံပိုင်းကျောင်းတိုက်ဆရာတော်၊ သာသနီကရာဇဝံသဝိဘာဝနီကျမ်း (ဝဲခူး၊ ကြွေတံပိုင်းသာသနာပြုအသင်း၊ ၁၉၉၂)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၇၄).

<sup>8</sup> မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသဒီပနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၄၆; မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာရ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၈၇; Bode, ed. *Sāsanavaṃsa*, 124; ဘုရားဖြူဆရာတော်၊ သာသနဗဟုတုပ္ပကာသနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၁၇.

<sup>9</sup> *Ticīvara* is a set of monastic robes consisting of three regulation-sized robes or inner garment (*antaravāsaka* in Pāli, *thinbaing* in Burmese), outer garment (*uttarāsaṅga* in Pāli, *koyon* in Burmese), and cloak (*saṃghāṭi* in Pāli, *dukot* in Burmese).

<sup>10</sup> An alternative appellation of the *tisiwareits* was “Ton-gaing,” based on the name of Guṇābhilaṅkāra's native village, that is, Ton. This rather large village, located on the right bank of the Chindwin, in precolonial times belonged to the area of Bagyi. At present it belongs to Hsalingyi township, Monywa district, Sagaing division.

<sup>11</sup> Palm-leaf ms. in the collection of the Taungpaw-kyaung monastery, Hsalingyi, Hsalingyi Township, and palm-leaf ms. no. 123369 in the Universities' Central Library (hereafter referred to as UCL), Yangon, folio ၁<sup>r</sup>, v.

<sup>12</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 4784 in the research library of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (hereafter MORA), Yangon, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> – ၈<sup>r</sup>.

*alajjī* monks was not against the *saṃgha*, but against the indiscriminating lay patrons. This innovative feature differentiated the *tisiwareits* and their later imitators from earlier monastic reformers as the reform now encompassed both monastic and lay behavior. The agenda of the *tisiwareits* was thus focused on ensuring kammatic progress for both monks and laity by promoting proper behavior and avoiding activities causing birth in woeful states.

A combination of distinct discipline, reformism, and emphasis on the Abhidhamma apparently made Guṇābhilaṅkāra and his community quite appealing, for in the early eighteenth century the *tisiwareits* enjoyed a rapid, even explosive, growth. The list of Guṇābhilaṅkāra's disciples who were abbots of individual monasteries or heads of several monasteries runs to more than seventy persons. Geographically they were concentrated mostly in Bagyi (present-day Hsalingyi, Pale, and Yinmabin townships), Chaung-U, and Monywa, with offshoots in the Sagaing/Ava, Dipeyin, Halin, Talot, Pakhangyi, and Pyi areas. The efforts of the first and second generations of Guṇābhilaṅkāra's disciples led to the proliferation of the *tisiwareit* community in various locations in present-day Dipeyin, Ayadaw, Ye-U, Wetlet, Shwebo, Khin-U, Sagaing, Myinmu, Chaung-U, Monywa, Budalin, Hsalingyi, Yezagyo, Myaing, and Myingyan townships. In more general terms, during the first fifty to sixty years of its history Guṇābhilaṅkāra's network covered roughly 25 to 35 percent of the Burmese areas in Upper Burma and was the foremost regional grouping of monks of its time. Numerically, the strength of Guṇābhilaṅkāra's community is testified to by his ability to convene at least two large monastic assemblies in Amyint and near Hsalingyi with one thousand monks attending each of them. Though Ton Hpongyi himself never received monasteries built by royalty, the very first generation of his disciples became royal teachers (by the 1720s). Members of his lineage remained a key component of the court *saṃgha* roughly until the late 1780s.<sup>13</sup>

As for championing the “one-shoulder” manner of wearing the robe, it seems that initially the *tisiwareits* were not concerned about the dressing conventions for novices.<sup>14</sup> Ton Hpongyi and his disciples subscribed to what seems to be one of the most common practices of novices of that time, i.e., wearing the upper robe in a manner that leaves the right shoulder bare and the left hand completely wrapped. The right shoulder was then covered with an undersized robe called *dukot* (or *dukot-nge*, ဒုကုတ်/ဒုကုတ်ငယ် to differentiate it from the *saṃghāṭī*). The *dukot*, in its turn, was secured in place by binding the chest.<sup>15</sup>

Guṇābhilaṅkāra's and other *tisiwareits*' advocacy of this procedure was related to the emergence of a competing reformist faction which made the “two-shoulder” manner its key issue and drew *tisiwareits* into a protracted debate. In the first decade of the eighteenth century several monks or ex-monks such as Shin Vicitta (or Citta) from Taungngu, Shin Kalyāṇa from Ngayan-o

<sup>13</sup> The existence and significance of this community remain virtually unrecognized as the existing understanding of Burmese religious history in the eighteenth century relies heavily on *The Embellishment of the Sāsana* and *The Illumination of the Lineage of the Sāsana*. The only discussions of *tisiwareits* I'm able to refer the reader to are Alexey Kirichenko, “Monasheskaya stratifikatsiya i pridvornoe monashestvo kak osobaya gruppa v buddhiskoi samghe Birmy v 17 i 18 vekah,” *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 13: Vostokovedenie*, 2008, no. 4: 3–23, and Alexey Kirichenko, “Dynamics of Monastic Mobility and Networking in Upper Myanmar of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” paper read at the Buddhist Dynamics in Premodern Southeast Asia Conference, March 10–11, 2011, Nalanda-Srivijaya Center, ISEAS, Singapore. I am currently working on an article on this important community.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that the robe controversy in Burma during the period in question revolved only around the attire of novices and never implied that monks could dress in the “one-shoulder” manner too. In this regard it was different from later debates in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia, which dealt with monastic “fashion.”

<sup>15</sup> For the most easily accessible description see တတိယနိဗ္ဗာန်ဆရာတော်၊ သီလဝိသောဓနီကျမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၁၉၉၂)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၆. The descriptions of dressing conventions given by Bode and Ray are totally confused and imprecise. Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma*, 65–6; Ray, *An Introduction to the Study*, 219–20. The explanation given by Patrick Pranke is generally correct but incomplete. Pranke, “Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders” 2–3, 290, 294.

village, Shin Paññāsāra from Nga Mya village, and Shin Dhammananda from Naungba village started arguing that by having his left hand wrapped, his right shoulder covered with a *dukot-nge*, and his chest bound when going outside a monastery, a novice disregards the Vinaya.<sup>16</sup> Instead, they claimed the novices should clad themselves in the upper robe so that it would cover both shoulders and abstain from wearing the *dukot-nge* and chest-binding. Up until that point this manner was used predominantly by monks. In accordance with their argument, the followers of Vicitta and Kalyāṇa became known as the *thamane-thingan-yon-gaing*, a “community [making] novices cover [both shoulders] with the upper robe” (သာဓဏေသင်္ကန်းရုံဝိုဏ်း or simply သင်္ကန်းရုံဝိုဏ်း/ရုံဝိုဏ်း/အရုံဝိုဏ်း).<sup>17</sup>

If my understanding of the origins of the debate is tenable (given that the bulk of the available documents on the debate postdates the trigger events by roughly seventy years, it is not always easy to differentiate between facts and fiction), the raising of the issue of novices’ dress-code was a very provocative act. The claim that the dressing custom which visually accentuated the different status of novices and monks and the higher position of the latter in the *saṃgha* was wrong and un-canonical allowed the adherents of the “two-shoulder” practice to plunge into the public spotlight. Though less radical than the *tisiwareits*’ argument that donations to *alajjī* monks is a way to *niraya*, a claim like that surely might have secured the *thingan-yon-gaing* an audience to demonstrate their command of the scriptures to.

Available sources do not mention why Guṇābhilāṅkāra and his followers took the “two-shoulder” practice as a challenge, allowing us to postulate a range of tentative explanations. It might have been due to the separation of a new group from the *tisiwareit* community: Both Vicitta and Kalyāṇa, as well as other monks who favored their idea, cooperated earlier with Guṇābhilāṅkāra, studied under him, or even belonged to his community.<sup>18</sup> Though the disapproval of “non-canonical” attire targeted the entire monkhood, the separation of the “two-shoulder” faction from the *tisiwareits* perhaps made the latter the first object of criticism. Moreover, members of the *thingan-yon-gaing* also positioned themselves as forest-dwellers, a type of monasticism that Guṇābhilāṅkāra had just allegedly revived, so this claim could also

<sup>16</sup> Both Vicitta and Kalyāṇa disrobed at some point and continued religious life as laymen observing the eight precepts (*thidinde*). Vicitta’s disrobing was related to accusations of committing the second *pārājika*. It is not yet clear to me if Vicitta and Kalyāṇa still retained their monastic status at the time they started arguing their point because available sources (much later and written from the “one-shoulder” perspective) give conflicting evidence. Members of the Ton community tended to identify the origins of the *thingan-yon* with Vicitta and Kalyāṇa as a rhetorical tool because their ambiguous status as ex-monks cast negative light on the whole movement. By the late eighteenth century, this identification with Vicitta and Kalyāṇa became a stock phrase and even the “two-shoulder” monks used it.

The eight precepts are abstaining from murder, theft, sexual intercourse, lying, taking intoxicants, eating after noon, various forms of entertainment and beautification, and using high and luxurious seats and beds. The *pārājika* rules cover a group of transgressions of monastic discipline which lead to a loss of monastic status: non-celibacy, theft, murder, and false claims of supermundane spiritual attainments.

<sup>17</sup> The appearance of the “two-shoulder” practice as a result of Vicitta’s and Kalyāṇa’s activism (and thus its innovative character) is admitted even by the First Maungdaung Hsayadaw, a key opponent of Atula, in his *Lineage of the Sāsana*. However, the First Maungdaung helped himself out of this potentially dangerous confession by claiming that the “two-shoulder” practice was originally prescribed by the Buddha but disappeared due to the prevalence of unrighteous monks (*adhammavādī*). See ms. no. Kin 17 in the NL, folios ၈၄<sup>r</sup> – ၈၅<sup>r</sup>, especially ၈၄<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> See the account of the origins of the *tisiwareits* and their debates with the adherents of the “two-shoulder” practice written by Sāsanālaṅkaradhaja Hsayadaw (palm-leaf ms. in the collection of the Taungpaw-kyaung monastery, Hsalingyi, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> – ၉<sup>v</sup>). The same point is made by Atula in palm-leaf ms. no. 11424 in UCL, folio ၁<sup>r</sup>.

The passing connection between Guṇābhilāṅkāra and the instigators of the “two-shoulder” debate is logical due to the fact that the *tisiwareit* community was a kind of tactical alliance formed by local monastic leaders who joined the rapidly spreading network. This is confirmed by Sāsanālaṅkaradhaja Hsayadaw who mentions that the majority in the first generation of Guṇābhilāṅkāra’s disciples were older than he was (palm-leaf ms. in the collection of Taungpaw-kyaung monastery, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> – ၉<sup>r</sup>).

have become a bone of contention. Another possible reason might have been the focus of a newly emergent faction on the issue of proper attire, one of the issues central to Guṇābhilaṅkāra himself. Theoretically, the *tisiwareits* might have felt that Vicitta and Kalyāṇa encroached on their territory. It is also possible that the *tisiwareits* were unwilling to accept the *thingan-yon-gaing*'s argument that novices should follow the same discipline as the monks and considered such confusion a serious blunder (at least, they raised this point in the 1780s). Perhaps the reaction was due to a combination of these and other factors. Besides ideological reasons, more mundane concerns of ownership/holding of property and the administrative affiliation of monasteries, now complicated by reconversions of reformist monks from one *gaing* to another, might have been the reason.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the case may be, adherents of the *thingan-yon* accused the *tisiwareits* (as well as other monks) of disregarding the Vinaya, and the *tisiwareits* took the challenge of the new faction.

From as early as 1729, the hearings on the issue were held in the royal city. By the 1730s the adherents of the “two-shoulder” practice had also infiltrated the court *saṃgha*, thus matching the *tisiwareits*.<sup>20</sup> This perpetuated the presence of two reformist communities. Continuing advocacy of an established manner of wearing the robes for novices also resulted in a merger of the *tisiwareits* with a somewhat broader category of the *dukot-tin-gaing* or a “community [making novices] cover [the right shoulder] with the *dukot*” (ဒုကုတ်တင်ဂိုဏ်း or simply တင်ဂိုဏ်း/အတင်ဂိုဏ်း).

Instead of being a misinformed, contentious, and malicious culprit advocating wrong practice due to his poor knowledge of the Vinaya (as Atula was portrayed by his opponents), the background outlined above recasts him as a member of influential and well-established monastic network to which the “one-shoulder” dress-code was an important identity marker. Moreover, there is logic to explaining Atula’s career and fate against the background of his affiliation with the *tisiwareits*. Though it was not unusual for monks in eighteenth-century Upper Burma to migrate from one monastic faction to another, Atula’s loyalty seems unwavering. All available evidence places him within the *tisiwareit* network. He studied under *tisiwareit* teachers and gave particular credit to Guṇābhilaṅkāra in his writings. Having achieved prominence at the court, Atula tried to further *tisiwareit* reformist program. In the end, he faced a trial for defending a position that Guṇābhilaṅkāra upheld about seventy years earlier.

However, exploring Atula’s career below I will demonstrate that we do not have sufficient information to argue that his career was really straightforward or that he really was a hardliner (of either “one-shoulder” or *tisiwareit* stock). More evidence would perhaps make it possible to tell to what extent either the circumstances or Atula’s personality play a role in what he did.

<sup>19</sup> In a summary of the debates on the issue during the Nyaungyan dynasty, Atula himself explains the first known Vinaya trial of the “one-shoulder” vs. the “two-shoulder” by a complaint filed by a disciple of Shin Vamedhā against the other because the latter defected to the “one-shoulder” side. Both disciples (Shin Ukkamsamālā and Taungbalu Shin Uttamasāra) were abbots of monastery complexes which might mean that the conversion deprived the *ayon-gaing* of control of a monastery and some of its residents (ms. no. 11424 in UCL, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> – ၈<sup>r</sup>). However, this report disagrees in a number of details with another description of the case given by Sāsanālaṅkaradhaja Hsayadaw (ms. in the collection of the Taungpaw-kyauṅ monastery, Hsalingyi, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> – ၈<sup>r</sup>, and ၈<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>20</sup> The key *thingan-yon* figures at the court were Hpyaukhsit-min Hpongyi Shin Vamedhā, who was appointed *vinayadhara* in the later part of Tanningwe-min’s reign (1714–1733), Shwekyetyet-taik-ot Hsaya Shin Ukkamsamālā, and Kyawaungsanhta Hsayadaw Shin Ñāṇavara (1705–1753).

## Atula's Origins and Early Career

Atula seems to have been born in the year 1062 of the Burmese era (1700/01 A.D.).<sup>21</sup> His native place was Okshitkye village, one of the nine *kyes* (ကျေး) or subordinate areas of Dipeyin-myo.<sup>22</sup> During the late Nyaungyan and the early to mid-Konbaung periods, Okshitkye seems to be a good place to start a monastic career as several prominent monks emerged from there.<sup>23</sup> Okshitkye also seems to have functioned as a local ritual centre attracting devotees from the neighboring villages.<sup>24</sup> However, it is impossible to say if the place of birth had any real significance for Atula's career.<sup>25</sup>

Aside from the personal name (Khingyi Pan Htwe or Nga Pan Htwe), monastic title (Shin Yasa), and the name of the teacher, literally nothing is known about Atula's childhood and youth. We do not know who his parents and relatives were, why he joined the *samgha*, where he was ordained, and what it meant to be born and live in Okshitkye in the early eighteenth century. It is not clear if the location or Atula's family background offered a good starting position or if Atula's rise to prominence should be credited to his personal capacity. A lack of information such as this is not unusual. In fact, we rarely know the factors that have influenced high-profile careers in precolonial Burma.

As mentioned above, known teachers of Atula were the members of the *tisiwareit* community. Atula was born too late to benefit from a direct relationship with Guṇābhilāṅkāra, but he joined the ranks of the second and third generation disciples. Atula belonged to the third generation of Guṇābhilāṅkāra's disciples by virtue of studying under Shin Dhammajotābhisāra from Okshitkye village. Dhammajotābhisāra was a disciple of Shin Paññārāma from Dipeyin, who in his turn was a disciple of Guṇābhilāṅkāra. Given that Dhammajotābhisāra was a local monk, he could have been Atula's first teacher. Theoretically, he also could have been Atula's preceptor as Atula referred to Dhammajotābhisāra as his teacher in writings that revolved around the issue of the transmission of lineage.<sup>26</sup>

Few monastic careers of that period that we know better than Atula's suggest that to get ahead as a monk, a village boy usually had to move from his home place to some key monastic locations in order to get a solid education and build relations with the leaders of the *samgha* as

<sup>21</sup> This date is given in a short account by Minhla Thiri Thihathu who produced a survey of monastic biographies in 1851. ဣတံဆိပ်တော်ရ ဆရာတော်များနှင့် ရှေးနောင်ထင်ပေါ်ဆရာတော် (၁၀၅) ပါးတို့၏ အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိအကျဉ်း (စစ်ကိုင်း၊ သီတဂူကမ္ဘာ့ဒုတိယတက္ကသိုလ်၊ ၂၀၀၉)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၁၇။ As the publication does not meet the standards of critical editing, a useful alternative might be accessing manuscript versions of this text, such as a handwritten copy of a ms. no. 2030 in UCL, p. 3. The date given by Minhla Thiri Thihathu is roughly confirmed by one of Atula's epistles written in 1784 where Atula mentions that he is more than 80 years old. Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folio ဝါး ၊ ။

Alternative date (1076, i.e. 1714/15) given by Ashin Siṛsobhana seems to be a typo or a mistake because in this case Atula could not have been older than eighty in 1784. အရှင်သီရိသောဘန၊ မဟာဒွါရနိကာယသာသနဝံသီပဋိ (ရန်ကုန်၊ လယ်တီမဏ္ဍိုင်၊ ၁၉၇၄)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၀၉။

<sup>22</sup> At present, Okshitkye (အတ်ရှစ်ကျေး, a number of alternative spellings also exist) is known as Okshitkyi (အတ်ရှစ်ကြီး). As a result of administrative downsizing of Dipeyin township, Okshitkyi now belongs to Ayadaw township, Monywa district, Sagaing division.

<sup>23</sup> Besides Atula, the best known were Taunglelon Hsayadaw Shin Medhāvi and Padauk-chaung Hsayadaw Shin Jāgara. Among the predecessors of Atula, his teacher Shin Dhammajotābhisāra and Shin Nāṇa could be mentioned.

<sup>24</sup> See မင်းကြီး မဟာဇေယျသင်္ခယာ၊ တက္ကသိုလ်ကျမ်း (မန္တလေး၊ မြန်မာတက္ကသိုလ်၊ 1906)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၃၄။

<sup>25</sup> I did not manage to find the evidence on the social or economic status of Okshitkye in the eighteenth century yet. At present, it is a paddy-producing area with its paddy well known in the Chindwin region.

<sup>26</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 9425 in UCL, folio လူ ၊ ။ and palm-leaf ms. no. 544 in the Resource Centre for Ancient Myanmar Manuscripts, Yangon, folio ၈ ။

*The Embellishment of the Sāsana* refers to another work by Atula which I was not yet able to find where Dhammajotābhisāra is identified as coming from Leinhla (a group of three villages neighboring Okshitkye on the southeast). See မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာရစာတမ်း၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၃၃။ This may reflect a common difference of village of birth and village of residence reflected in many monastic names and monastic biographies.



well as with powerful lay patrons. Perhaps Atula career also followed that pattern; at least, the only other known teacher of Atula besides Dhammajotābhisāra was not a local. The monk in question was Taungbalu Hsayadaw Shin Uttamasāra (? after 1660–1733) from Sagaing.<sup>27</sup> Uttamasāra was an important member of the *tisiwareit*/Ton-gaing and a disciple of Guṇābhilānkāra. He was regarded as one of the leading scholars of Abhidhamma in the early eighteenth century and made a lasting impact on Abhidhammic studies and literature in Burma.<sup>28</sup> Many important monks of the early Konbaung period, such as Kyetthungin Hsayadaw Shin Pāsamsa (1693–1775), Zayit Hsayadaw Shin Candāvāra (1699–c. 1772), Htantabin Hsayadaw Shin Nandamedhā (c. 1708 – ? after 1782), and Halin Hsayadaw Shin Ukkamsa, studied under him.

To become Uttamasāra’s disciple, Atula must have travelled to Sagaing at least several years before 1095 (1733/34) because Taungbalu Hsayadaw is known to have died that year.<sup>29</sup> Theoretically, that means that Atula had moved from Okshitkye to Sagaing at least around the age of thirty. In fact, an earlier date seems more likely: at least, for monks in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Burma the thirties was the age for advanced studies and for starting one’s own teaching career. If that is true, Atula should have made his first leg out of Okshitkye before the early 1730s and could have changed several teachers and locations prior to arriving to Sagaing.

Atula might have stayed in Sagaing after the demise of Uttamasāra, for in 1106 (1744/45) he is mentioned again in relation to that city. By that time Sagaing hosted one of the parallel courts established by king Mahādhammarājādhipati (1733–1752) to avert the collapse of his dynasty. According to one source, in 1744/45, Bayin Naung, the new “lord” of Sagaing, bestowed titles on Kaunghmudaw Shin Indalāra, Palaing Shin Sujāta, Okshitkye Shin Ṇāṇa, and Okshitkye Shin Yasa and built monasteries for all of them except Shin Sujāta.<sup>30</sup> Okshitkye Shin Yasa was none other than Atula and the title granted to him, most likely, was Atulayasa Dhammarājaguru.<sup>31</sup>

Again, it is not clear what exactly helped Atula to become the lord’s teacher and an abbot in Sagaing. The only thing that we know is his affiliation with Uttamasāra and the *tisiwareits* some ten years earlier. That might have been a factor, yet Bayin Naung’s patronage of Palaing

<sup>27</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 123369 in UCL, folio ၁ ။. The identification of Atula as a disciple of Uttamasāra is supported by မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာရ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၈၆. The relationship with Uttamasāra made Atula a member of the second generation of Guṇābhilānkāra’s disciples.

<sup>28</sup> The works of his disciple Htantabin Hsayadaw Shin Nandamedhā (who claims he is using Uttamasāra’s method) remain the key texts used by Burmese monks in Abhidhamma studies.

<sup>29</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 123369 in UCL, folio ၁ ။

<sup>30</sup> See *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, ed. Than Tun, vol. III (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1985), 118. There is some ambiguity about the date: though the quoted document (pp. 117-8) claims that Bayin Naung was ordered to rebuild Sagaing in the year 1105 (1743/44) and was installed as a lord there a year later (1744/45), the *Celebrated Great Chronicle* by the Second Monywa Zetawun Hsayadaw Shin Ariyāvamsa Ādiccaramsī (1766–1834) dated both the reconstruction of Sagaing and the investiture of Bayin Naung to 1107 (1745/46). ဣန္ဒဝဇီရာဘိလင်္ကာရ သိရိဓမ္မမဟာဓမ္မရာဇာဓိရာဇဝရ (မုရွေးဆရာတော်သျှင်အာဒိစ္စ)၊ ရာဇိန္ဒရာဇဝရမဏ္ဍိုင်ခေတ် မဟာရာဇဝင်ကျော်၊ အတွဲ ၄ (လက်နှိပ်စက်မှု၊ ၁၉၆၈)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၆၆. Thiriuzana in his *Arrangement of the World (Lawkabyuha-kyan)* gave two conflicting dates for this event, namely 1108 (1746/47) and 1111 (1749/50). သီရိဥဇနာ၊ လောကဗျူဟာကျမ်း၊ ဦးဖိုးလတ်တည်ဖြတ်သည်၊ ဒုတိယအကြိမ် (ရန်ကုန်၊ အစိုးရ၊ ၁၉၆၂)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၄၊ ၁၉၉. The year 1108 is also mentioned in a document that seems to be either influenced by Thiriuzana or perhaps was used by him in compiling the *Arrangement of the World*. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. III, 186.

At this point I am unable to suggest which date is more likely, though I think that 1111 is much too late.

<sup>31</sup> In a later document Atula mentioned that the lord of Sagaing conferred on him the title consisting of 11 syllables and Alaungmintaya later prefixed it with Mahā- thus extending the title to 13 syllables (and Atula’s title under Alaungmintaya was Mahā Atulayasa Dhammarājaguru). A typewritten copy of palm-leaf ms. no. 16594 in the library of the Department of Historical Research (hereafter referred to as DHR), folio ၁၁ ။ Original manuscript seemingly comes from Yasauk and thus I also refer to it as Yasauk ms.

Shin Sujāta (a proponent of the “two-shoulder” practice) indicates that the preferences of this patron were not narrowly sectarian.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the patronage of another monk from Okshitkye (besides Atula) might indicate that regional connections were more important than the sectarian ones.

It is also not clear how long Atula stayed in Bayin Naung’s monastery in Sagaing and what exactly happened to that property. Most likely, the monastery was destroyed when Sagaing was captured by the troops from Lower Burma in early 1752, as several sources mention the large-scale destruction of monasteries in the capital area as a result of the siege.<sup>33</sup> However, by that time Atula was no longer in Sagaing: a document in which Atula briefly described his life during the dynastic crisis mentions that almost a year before the fall of Sagaing and Ava Atula was in another place, namely in an encampment of Kyungyaung-bo or a military leader of Kyungyaung.<sup>34</sup> As there is a village called Kyungyaung to the south of Okshitkye, most likely, by early 1751 (or even earlier)<sup>35</sup> Atula had moved back to his native area.

Atula’s residence in a military encampment was due to the fact that since the 1740s the country had been ravaged by bandits, rebellions, and incursions. To resist the brigands and invaders, a number of fortified encampments were established in various towns and villages. These encampments were controlled by military commanders called *asiyin*, some of whom were invested with various attributes of sovereignty. Major rebel leaders and invading troops also maintained their own fortified encampments. By 1750 or even earlier a significant share of the population seems to have moved to such camps to get a degree of protection or were brought there to strengthen the defense. Monks also abandoned their monasteries and moved to encampments where they lived in temporary structures built for them or dwelled on the carts.<sup>36</sup>

While staying in Kyungyaung, Atula still seems to have retained his relationship with Bayin Naung or to at least have had some inclination to be connected to him. That might be implied from the same document: there Atula claimed that he had a dream which he interpreted as an omen signifying that he would become an advisor to a king who takes care of the *sāsana*. At this point Atula wanted to join the lord of Sagaing, but this proved to be impossible due to war conditions.<sup>37</sup>

The dream allegedly seen by Atula marked his transition to a new role, that of monastic policy-maker. Though he failed to join his earlier patron, the lord of Sagaing, that turned to his advantage, because he could find himself a better one. Several months later he joined Letya Zeya Gyaw, a leader of Mokhsobo and a contender for power who in five to six years would overcome his competitors and establish a new dynasty.

Again, we do not know what allowed Atula to become a successful monastic councilor to a contender for the throne. The paucity of information concerning Atula’s early career precludes

<sup>32</sup> I have no information on the background and affiliation of Kaunghmudaw Shin Indalāra and Okshitkye Shin Nāna, two other recipients of monastic titles conferred by the lord of Sagaing.

<sup>33</sup> ဆရာတော် ဦးသမ္ဗောဓိ၊ မဟာဂင်္ဂပရိယောဂဝင်္ဂသမိုင်းကျမ်း၊ (မန္တလေး၊ သုခဝတီ၊ ၁၃၁၇)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၆၂; ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်မဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး၊ ပထမတွဲ (ရန်ကုန်၊ တက္ကသိုလ်များ သမိုင်းသုတေသနဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၂၀၀၄)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၅၁။

<sup>34</sup> A typewritten copy of ms. no. 16594 in the library of DHR, folio ဆိ<sup>၁</sup>။

<sup>35</sup> According to the Second Monywa Zetawun Hsayadaw, the encampment in Kyungyaung was constructed about 1743. ဣန္ဒဝရီရာဘိလင်္ကာရ သီရိဓမ္မဟာဓမ္မရာဇာဓိရာဇဝေရ၊ ရာဇိန္ဒရာဇဝေရမဏ္ဍိခေဘိ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၅၁။

<sup>36</sup> For example, in Bagan the Hngetpittaung monastery was abandoned after the early 1744. The *samgha* did not return to the site until mid-1754 and survived either by staying in a military encampment in Nyaung U (whenever possible) or by fleeing to more secure locations outside of Bagan. *The History of Hngetpittaung* documents the whereabouts of several senior monks and their followers. ဆရာတော် ဦးသမ္ဗောဓိ၊ မဟာဂင်္ဂပရိယောဂဝင်္ဂ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၅၁-၉၀။ Monasteries located upriver and further inland from Ayeyarwaddy should have survived a bit longer; by 1748 or 1749, however, the cumulative effect of incursions from Lower Burma, the Gwe rebellion, and the general disorder and infighting might have caused a similar catastrophe.

<sup>37</sup> A typewritten copy of ms. no. 16594 in the library of DHR, folio ဆိ<sup>၁</sup>။

meaningful analysis of the factors that might have influenced it. As mentioned above, we do not know Atula's family background and how his social connections positioned him in the *samgha*. We do not know how his monastic education progressed and what his focus and qualifications were before 1751. We do not know why he was patronized by the lord of Sagaing and why he left that city and returned to his native area sometime before 1751.<sup>38</sup> Finally, we do not know if the leader of Mokhsobo was the first contender with whom Atula allied himself (he might have stayed in Kyungyaung not only as a refugee, but as a councilor as well).

Just like the surviving documents on the robe-wearing dispute cast Atula in a particular role (a principal perpetuator of the “one-shoulder” manner and a hardliner), the evidence postdating 1752, i.e. documents produced when Atula already was a policy-maker, make his transition from relative obscurity to being a top policy-maker somewhat unproblematic. Considering this evidence, one may argue that Atula possibly was an untypical disciple of Uttamasāra. As mentioned above, Uttamasāra's expertise was Abhidhamma, and the Abhidhammic bias is very clear in the specialization of Uttamasāra's disciple Htantabin Hsayadaw Shin Nandamedhā. Abhidhamma was also the subject of Uttamasāra's disciple Shin Puññārambha who resided in Myauk-taik in Hsalingyi and of Puññārambha's disciple Dhammābhigghosa Mahārājaguru.<sup>39</sup> Zayit Hsayadaw Shin Candāvara, another prominent disciple of Uttamasāra, seems to fit the pattern of “mainstream” scriptural expertise (which in the early Konbaung period was focused more on Pāli grammar and Abhidhamma) as he became the laureate at the exams for schoolboys and novices in about 1720 and was appointed to supervise such exams in 1756.<sup>40</sup> No works written by him are known. Kyetthungin Hsayadaw Shin Pāsamsa earned a reputation for asceticism and practical excellence while the only text compiled by him that I know of is a *nissaya* (or word-by-word translation from Pāli into the vernacular) of *Ekakkharakhosa-tīkā*, a sub-commentary on a work on Pāli grammar.<sup>41</sup> Htantabin, Zayit, and Kyetthungin were also quite active in community-building and training of new generations of disciples, something Uttamasāra himself was very much up to.

Atula seems to have had a different vocation. His available writings cover a wide range of subjects including monastic discipline, moral education, royal and monastic lineages, legal and administrative issues, construction of royal cities, etc. Most writings on secular issues tend to be explanations of earlier norms, precedents, and traditions. There are also a few *nissayas* of Vinaya texts.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of traditional monastic specializations, Atula's writings display a marked bias toward the Vinaya, catering to the needs of donors, and instructing the laity. In my analysis, the “activist” nature of Atula's literary legacy, with its focus on contemporary concerns and issues, defining or influencing “the big picture” of religious practice, moral behavior, and historical precedent, reflects that, above all, Atula was a monastic policy-maker. The bias in Atula's

<sup>38</sup> For instance, other disciples of Uttamasāra such as Taungbalu Hsayadaw Shin Guṇamañjū and Kyetthungin Hsayadaw Shin Pāsamsa apparently stayed in the capital area until Ava was captured and were deported to Hanthawady. In 1756 they were used by Binnya Dala to transmit a message to Alaungmintaya. ဒေါ်ခင်ခင်စိန် (တည်းဖြတ်သူ)။ အလောင်းမင်းတရားအစိန်တော်များ (ရန်ကုန်၊ မြန်မာ့သမိုင်းကော်မရှင်၊ ၁၉၆၄)။ စာမျက်နှာ ၅၆။

<sup>39</sup> Palm-leaf manuscript no. 1081 in the library of the Shwedagon stupa, Yangon, Myanmar, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> and ၉<sup>r</sup>။

<sup>40</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၉၂-၃။

<sup>41</sup> တတိယနံမော်ဆရာတော်၊ သီလဝိသောဓနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၈၀-၁; အရှင်သီရိသောဘန၊ မဟာဒွါရနိကာယ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၀၆-၇; palm-leaf ms. no. 5594 in UCL.

<sup>42</sup> See for example palm-leaf mss. nos. 4668, 6303, 6520, 9425, 10370, 10487, and 10602 in UCL, အတုလဆရာတော်၊ နန်းစဉ်ပုစ္ဆာအမေးအဖြေကျမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၄၀), a typewritten copy of ms. no. 16594 in the library of DHR, palm-leaf ms. no. 497 in the same library, palm-leaf ms. no. 4058 in the research library of MORA, and palm-leaf ms. no. 656 in the library of the Shwedagon stupa. [NB: In the paper published in JBS ms. no. 656 in Shwedagon Pitakat-taik was wrongly identified as no. 756.]

textual production is highlighted by a virtual absence of works on Pāli grammar and Abhidhamma; so far I have been able to find only three Abhidhamma-related shortlists compiled by Atula, which is quite telling, given his origins in an Abhidhamma-oriented community.<sup>43</sup> If I am not wrong in my understanding of how exegetical works and *nissaya* translations were produced in eighteenth-century Burma, this means Atula was not an educator and that personal engagement in training new generations of scholar monks was not among his primary concerns.

A typical text compiled by Atula tends to be concise, clear, and easily accessible. Regardless of the subject, the writing often embeds aphorism-like allegories and vivid everyday examples. Atula was also quite fond of poetry and employed it to write short historical narratives, compose brief exhortations to his disciples, and summarize the preceding sections of prose text in some of his works. If, again, I understand the styles of Burmese monastic discourse, and if it is possible to draw valid analogies from twentieth-century materials, these features resemble some of the techniques used in preaching. Perhaps the outspokenness and accessibility of Atula's style together with his readiness for consultancy were among of his core assets in dealing with the donors and contributed to his clout.

However, it might be misleading to interpret the early career of Atula in the light of the expertise which he displayed between the 1750s and 1770s. On the contrary, the nature of his literary production could reflect Atula's adaptation to dynastic change and the demand that the emerging claimants to the throne had for monks able to counsel, make sense out of things, and assist in policy-making.

At least theoretically, the lack of information on Atula's early career might be due to the fact that his career effectively started anew with the collapse of Nyaungyan dynasty. Here I'm not trying to say that Atula had to start from scratch in about 1750–51. I rather suggest that a dynastic crisis could have given Atula a chance to revamp himself and become a policy-maker, or offered him an opportunity to realize his inherent interest in policy-making. To put it in other way, Atula could either have sought the role of policy-maker and so joined Letya Zeya Gyaw, or the turbulent times he lived in and the likely demand for monastic policy-makers able to suggest an ambitious program of religious action allowed Atula to move in that direction. Again, as with the reasons of Atula's joining the *samgha* and the *tisiwareit* network or with the reasons of his being supported by the lord of Sagaing, we do not know which of the two scenarios is more likely.

### Atula as a Monastic Policy-Maker

Atula's rise to a position of policy-maker amidst the dynastic crisis was described by him in the already quoted document that seems to date to the reign of Dipeyin-min (Naungdawgyi, 1760–1763). The copy I worked with is incomplete (the beginning is missing) so it is not clear how the story started. What is clear is that at some point Atula had a dream. In a dream he ate grilled beef and when he finished half of it a man came and said that, in fact, it was not beef but the flesh of the heart of the Lord Buddha.

Atula interpreted the dream to mean that though at present the settlements had been destroyed, he would later on join a king who would take care of the *sāsana*. First he wanted to join the lord of Sagaing. However, as the encampment of Kyungyaung-bo (where Atula seems to have stayed) was destroyed by the troops from Lower Burma on the seventh day of the waxing

<sup>43</sup> Identified in the manuscript as *Notes on Ultimate Reality* (ဝရမတ်မှတ်စု), *Classification of 62 Wrong Views* (ခြောက်ဆယ်နှစ်ပါးဒိဋ္ဌိခွဲပုံ), and *Classification of Consciousness by Different Types of Individuals* (ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်စိတ်ခွဲပုံ), this collection provides listings of several Abhidhamma-related categories (a typewritten copy of ms. no. 16594 in the library of DHR, folios ၅<sup>v</sup>–၆<sup>v</sup>).

moon of *Tabotwe* of 1112 (February, 1751), Atula together with another monk had to flee to Thanwin of the Northern Side. After spending several months there, Atula returned to Okshitkye and then moved to Mokhsobo.<sup>44</sup>

Mokhsobo village was the base of Letya Zeya Gyaw, a member of the Yebaw-myin cavalry unit who became an *asiyin*, a military commander of an area either appointed or recognized by Mahādhammarājādhpati or some of his satellite “lords.”<sup>45</sup> In the ensuing power struggle Letya Zeya Gyaw turned out to be the most successful of various *asiyins*, *bos*, and other military leaders as he managed to conquer the territory previously subject to the Nyaungyan overlords and became the founder of the Konbaung dynasty.

Atula arrived in Mokhsobo in the waxing moon of *Wagaung*, 1113 (August, 1751), i.e. at a quite early stage of Letya Zeya Gyaw’s contest for power. Mahādhammarājādhpati was still on the throne, and Ava was still trying to repulse the attacking armies from Lower Burma or, at least, to inhibit their advance. Thus, Atula joined Letya Zeya Gyaw’s camp at the perfect time to accompany his patron all the way through redefining himself as a “future overlord.”

The reason Atula chose to cooperate with Letya Zeya Gyaw and not any other military commander is one of the many things we do not know about him. By 1751 moving to the capital zone, the Southern Side (Kyaukhse area), the Eastern Side (Mattaya, Kyawzin-taik, and Mandalay areas), or downriver to Bagan, Pakhangyi, etc., was most likely impossible, and Atula’s choice was naturally limited to the Northern Side and parts of the Western Side on the left bank of the Chindwin. Even there (at least theoretically) he had a roster of figures to choose from. Thinking in terms of accessibility and ease of travel, Mokhsobo was perhaps more accessible from Okshitkye than, say, Khin-U (the base of one of the key competitors of Letya Zeya Gyaw), but in pure geographical terms Thazi and Kyaukka (two villages turned into encampments approximately thirty miles to the south of Okshitkye) seem a viable alternative.

Perhaps, Letya Zeya Gyaw already had a connection with either the *tisiwareits* or, more narrowly, the disciples of Uttamasāra. At least one phrase in Binnya Dala’s message delivered to Letya Zeya Gyaw (Alaungmintaya) by Taungbalu Hsayadaw Shin Guṇamañjū and Kyetthungin Hsayadaw Shin Pāsamsa in 1756 during the siege of Thanlyin hints at that. Binnya Dala mentioned that he had sent “original” or “prime” teachers (ဆရာတော်ရင်း) of “his relative” (Binnya Dala’s form of reference to Alaungmintaya) to convince the latter to negotiate peace.<sup>46</sup> This appellation is meaningful only if Alaungmintaya had earlier acquaintance with at least one of the two monks. However, such evidence is too limited and indirect to build an argument that Atula’s travel to Mokhsobo was motivated by some existing relationship.

What was Atula’s role at the emergent court of Letya Zeya Gyaw? The available evidence suggests that, first, Atula advised the ruler of Mokhsobo on navigating the right course during the period of dynastic collapse. Such consultancy was primarily based on the interpretation of omens and predictions. I have not found detailed evidence on this aspect of

<sup>44</sup> The document in question does not mention any other locations between Thanwin and Mokhsobo, but in palm-leaf ms. no. 11424 in UCL, folio ၈<sup>r</sup> Atula mentioned that he came to Mokhsobo from Okshitkye.

<sup>45</sup> My interpretation of Letya Zeya Gyaw is based on documents compiled by Atula and *The History of Hngetpittaung*. These sources, which are among the earliest Burmese documents that comment on the dynastic change, appeared outside of official Konbaung historiography and thus were less affected by its heavy retouch aimed at legitimizing Alaungmintaya (as Letya Zeya Gyaw was referred to later). The data of Atula and *The History of Hngetpittaung* are supplemented with the chronicle of the Second Monywe Zetawun Hsayadaw, an unofficial source which was less censored than *The Glass Palace Chronicle* to which the Second Monywe had also contributed.

Though I quote *The History of Hngetpittaung* from a twentieth-century edition which incorporates this chronicle as a separate chapter, I also have a handwritten copy of a palm-leaf ms. (dated 1909) containing the original text which seems to date to about 1778.

<sup>46</sup> ဒေါ်ခင်ခင်စိန် (တည်းဖြတ်သူ)။ အလောင်းမင်းတရားအမိန့်တော်များ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၅၆။

Atula's activities; however, there is enough to argue that Atula provided such expertise. According to the above-quoted document which described how Atula joined Alaungmintaya, Atula wrote numerous memos explaining the meaning of various predictions related to the rise of a new overlord, the way new dynasties emerge and assured Letya Zeya Gyaw that he was destined for greatness. The only thing Atula refused to comment on was the lifespan allotted to Letya Zeya Gyaw in predictions.<sup>47</sup>

We do not know if Atula participated in the construction of “the royal city of Yadanatheinga” (Shwebo) at the site of Mokhsobo in 1753 and its expansion in 1757–58 (Both these occasions must have been very important in legitimizing Alaungmintaya's bid for power and establishing him as a sovereign). It is reasonable to presume that Atula might have participated in the construction as these undertakings apparently required the sort of expertise he displayed in interpreting why the predictions envisioned Letya Zeya Gyaw as a new overlord. However, I do not have any evidence concerning such participation.

Much more might be said about Atula's engagement in the religious policy of Letya Zeya Gyaw/Alaungmintaya. At least in hindsight, Atula interpreted his cooperation with Letya Zeya Gyaw as a realization of his dream in Kyungyaung and described himself to his patron as a “partner in caring for the *sāsana*” (သဘာဝနာပြုဘဝကိစ္စိတ်). He also compared himself to Bame Hsayadaw, who advised Nyaungyan-min, the founder of the previous dynasty.<sup>48</sup>

The position of a “partner in caring for the *sāsana*” requires some explanation. Konbaung overlords used to appoint a single *thathanapyu* or *thathanabaing* monk, i.e. a teacher who was considered a supreme authority in the matters of the *sāsana* and so guided the king in merit-making and religious policy, helped to purify the *sāsana* (if necessary), and supervised the hierarchy of monastic leaders supported by the crown. Usually, a monk already patronized by an overlord prior to his ascension to the throne was chosen as *thathanapyu* or *thathanabaing hsayadaw*. The status of a “royal teacher” which such monks enjoyed was signified by a donation of a monastery complex constructed by the king for them. The existence of such position during the Nyaungyan dynasty is not supported by the evidence (though often implied in secondary literature); moreover, Nyaungyan overlords normally built several monasteries during their reign and thus patronized multiple “royal teachers.”<sup>49</sup>

As a result, it is possible that Atula's relationship with Alaungmintaya might have led to a restructuring of the system of court monasticism, now accommodated to a dyadic relationship between the sovereign and his primary teacher, and an establishment of a single head of court monastic hierarchy. However, while it is clear that this arrangement existed under Alaungmintaya's successors, it is not clear how everything worked during Alaungmintaya's reign and what Atula's position was precisely.

It is beyond doubt that Alaungmintaya made Atula his teacher and granted him a title (Mahā-atulayasa Dhammarājaguru). As the teacher-donor relationship usually implied a donation of a monastery, it is reasonable to expect that Alaungmintaya donated a monastery to Atula. The monastery should have been located in Yadanatheinga, a new royal city, but no such monastery is known.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> A typewritten copy of a manuscript no. 16594 in the library of DHR, folios ဆိ<sup>၇</sup> – ဆေ<sup>၇</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., folio ဆေ<sup>၇</sup>. Bame Hsayadaw is believed to have predicted the rise of Nyaungyan-min (1597–1606) and to have calculated the auspicious time for starting all the major undertakings of Nyaungyan-min's reign such as military campaigns and the reestablishment of royal city at Ava in 1599.

<sup>49</sup> On the position of the *thathanabaing* and its workings during the Konbaung period, see Alexey Kirichenko, “Taunggyin Hsayadaw and the Transformation of Monastic Hierarchies in Colonial Burma,” forthcoming.

<sup>50</sup> Both *The History of Hngatpittaung* and the royal order on Atula's disrobing dated 1784 make it clear that he had a monastery at Yadanatheinga but it is not named in either document. ဆရာတော် ဦးသဗ္ဗမာဓိ၊ မဟာဂုဏ်ပရိဘောဂ် စာမျက်နှာ ၉၉; *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598–1885*, ed. Than Tun, vol. IV (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies,

Later documents and secondary literature identify Atula either as *thathanapyu* or as *thathanabaing*.<sup>51</sup> However, Atula's order published in Than Tun's collection employ a synonymic, but different term *thathana-pyu thathana-saung hsayadaw* ("royal teacher taking care (or custody) of the *sāsana*").<sup>52</sup> This term is rare; in fact, I've never seen it used anywhere except this document.

Finally, it seems that Atula was not the only monk who enjoyed the status of Alaungmintaya's teacher. For example, Atula himself used this appellation to refer to Halin Shin Khemā (another disciple of Ton Hpongyi).<sup>53</sup> Zayit Hsayadaw Shin Candāvāra is also known to receive a monastery constructed by Alaungmintaya.<sup>54</sup> The royal order dated June 3, 1782 referred to Atula as a monk venerated by Alaungmintaya "in the capacity of a senior teacher" (ဆရာအကြီးပြု၍ ကိုးကွယ်တော်မူသည်). This phrase may reflect the fact that Alaungmintaya venerated several monks giving certain precedence to Atula.<sup>55</sup>

In my analysis, this ambiguity concerning the monastery and its exact designation as well as the likely multiplicity of monks patronized by Alaungmintaya indicate that court monastic hierarchy during this reign was only in the making and Atula's status was somewhat fluid. What he enjoyed was perhaps not a well-defined status or capacity, but a personal relationship with Alaungmintaya and the latter's trust.

As for the nature of Atula's caring for the *sāsana*, it is clear, that, contrary to the claims of some later religious chronicles, it was not limited to the issue of the novices' dress code and included other *tisiwareit* concerns. Atula's writings and other sources sympathetic to him show that the reforms effected during Alaungmintaya's reign were quite ambitious. They covered both lay and monastic behavior and included imposing stricter moral and disciplinary standards, disrobing monks guilty of *pārājika* offenses, promoting what was considered a "forest-dwelling" monastic practice, reforming earlier lineages of "village-dwelling" (*gāmavāsī*) monks who used various types of hats and fans considered inappropriate by the *tisiwareits*, as well as sidelining

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Kyoto University, 1986), 329. It is also known that Atula occupied Tulutbontha monastery in Yadanatheinga built by Sirimahāmaṅgalādevī, a daughter of Alaungmintaya. Thus, the monastery implied in *The History of Hngetpittaung* and the royal order could be Tulutbontha; however, the arrangement under which Alaungmintaya would have relegated the support of his primary teacher to his daughter seems unusual. Perhaps Atula might have been the abbot of Aungmyebontha-kyaungdaw built by Alaungmintaya and Mibayagaunggyi Mahāmaṅgalāratanādhīpati Sirirājācandādevī. The recipient of this monastery is not known. ဦးရာကျော်၊ မြန်မာမဟာမင်္ဂလာမင်းခမ်းတော် (ရန်ကုန်၊ ပုညစာအုပ်တိုက်၊ ၁၉၆၈)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၀၈၊ ၂၁၁.

About 1758 Atula also built a four-storey monastery in Leinhla village, and its construction was supported (at least partially) by Alaungmintaya (*The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. III, 209 [the name of the village is miscopied]).

<sup>51</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ခေတ်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၈၄; တတိယနံမော်ဆရာတော်၊ သီလဝိသောဓနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၃; Niharranjan Ray, *An Introduction to the Study*, 226; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*, 59–60; Ferguson, "The Symbolic Dimensions," 185–6; Charney, *Powerful Learning*, 95.

<sup>52</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. III, 95. This order belongs to a set of three documents (two dated 1755 and one dated 1759, *ibid.*, 94, 217) of unclear origin. Than Tun noted that the original orders are no longer extant and so it seems that he extracted them from some other publication which he has not properly identified. The title of Atula in these orders is followed in parenthesis by the name of Hsonda Thathanapyu Hsayadaw (a different, later monk). As parenthesis was never used in its modern sense in pre-colonial Burmese documents (in palm-leaf manuscripts it marked the text that was the copyist error and was not supposed to be read), this looks like an arbitrary insertion by an editor of the source publication.

<sup>53</sup> See palm-leaf ms. no. 544 in RCAMM, folio ၁၅<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> This monastery was located in a temporary city of Zetuwati built by Alaungmintaya to the south of Bago when besieging it in 1756–57. ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ခေတ်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၉၃. Zayit's monastery in Yadanatheinga (Bonzantulut) was sponsored by Alaungmintaya's son, the future king Myedu-min (Hsinbyushin, 1763–1776).

<sup>55</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 235.

other competing reformist factions such as the *thingan-yon-gaing* and the Zawti-gaing (followers of Shin Varajoti, another breakaway disciple of Ton Hpongyi).<sup>56</sup>

In the summer of 1753, soon after the establishment of the new royal city of Yadanatheinga, Alaungmintaya “required monks having differing observances due to different beliefs—*gāṃavāsī*, monks wearing round, flat, and mitre-like (နိုးကြိုးသွေး) hats, using red and white *tharapa* fans—to discard their beliefs and practices and follow the beliefs and practices of the Great Lord Guṇābhilāṅkāra from Ton village.” Alaungmintaya also ordered “ending the differentiation into the *dukot-tin* and the *thingan-yon* lines by prescribing a single community of the *dukot-tin* lineage and entrusting taking care of the *sāsana* to Atulayasa Mahādhammarājādhirājaguru Hsayadaw.”

The quote given here appears in *The Glass Palace Chronicle* and its later part incorporated into *The Great Extensive Royal Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty*.<sup>57</sup> Though the former chronicle dates to 1829–31, the passage is likely to be earlier. The reverential form of address used for Guṇābhilāṅkāra (The Great Lord, ရှင်ဝင်ဘုရားကြီး) indicates that this passage was probably written prior to the debates of the 1780s (that thoroughly discredited this monk and his followers) and so it should reflect Atula’s ambitions fairly well. For example, unlike *The Glass Palace*, *The Purified Great Extensive Chronicle* dating to the early twentieth century changes that phrase and calls Guṇābhilāṅkāra simply “Ashin Guṇābhi from Ton village.”<sup>58</sup> The strange variant of Atula’s title in the second sentence suggests it was composed or edited during the reign of Myedu-min (Hsinbyushin, 1763–1776) at the earliest as the titles ending in Mahādhammarājādhirājaguru were bestowed only after that time.<sup>59</sup> The order itself, which is implied in the quoted passage, is unavailable (at least I have not been able to find it yet), but its likely existence and the prescribed unification are confirmed by other independent sources.<sup>60</sup>

Other measures attributed to Alaungmintaya in the sources also display similarities with the *tisiwareit* concerns described above, so Atula might have been instrumental in their adoption. Measures applicable to the laity included prohibitions on the use of intoxicants, animal sacrifices, slaughter of chicken and pigs for harvest offerings, taking bribes, holding boxing matches and cock-fights (perhaps, in order to curb betting), and constrains on Muslim sacrificial practices. Measures aimed at the *saṃgha* included the appointment of *mahadan-wun* and subordinate clerks to purge monks not observing the Vinaya and the prohibition that such monks

<sup>56</sup> The extent of these measures is described by Atula in his epistle to Arakanese monks sent in 1761. *Parabaik* photocopied by Toshikatsu Ito and uploaded at [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0225-36.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0225-36.jpg), [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0226-02.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0226-02.jpg), [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0226-03.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0226-03.jpg), and [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0226-04.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0226-04.jpg).

See also မင်းကြီး မဟာဇေယျသင်္ခယာ၊ တက္ကသိုလ် (မန္တလေး၊ မြန်မာ့တစ်ရာ၊ 1906)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၃၃၊ ဦးပုည၊ သာသနာ့လျှောက်နှင့် ဆွမ်းတော်ကြီးစာတမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၅၉)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၃၅-၆။

<sup>57</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၈၃-၄။

<sup>58</sup> သုသောဓိတမဟာရာဇဝင်ကြီး၊ စတုတ္ထတွဲ (ရန်ကုန်၊ သုမ္မဝတီ၊ ၁၉၂၂)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၄၁။

<sup>59</sup> The sentence mentioning Atula is missing in the manuscript copy of *The Glass Palace Chronicle* I have consulted (palm-leaf manuscript from Taungpaw-kyaung, Hsalingyi, folio ဆ ' ). This may or may not be a coincident. I have not yet been able to check with other copies to compare.

<sup>60</sup> For example, the undated but comparatively early *History of the City of Yadanathikha* claimed that the unification of four types of monks—*tisiwareit*, arguing for covering of both shoulders, *gāṃavāsī*, and hat-wearing—into a single *tisiwareit* lineage is one of the attributes of this royal city (မှန်ရှည်တပ်ဆွေတော်စည်၊ သက္ကဋအဘိသေကစာတမ်း၊ ရတနာသီရိမြို့သမိုင်း၊ အမရပူရမြို့တည်စာတမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေဗိမာန်၊ ၁၉၇၆)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၅၉)။ *The History of Hngepittaung* mentioned that under Alaungmintaya all monks had to practice emulating the *araññavāsī* lineage of Ton Hpondawgyi. ဆရာတော် ဦးသဗ္ဗေဓိ၊ မဟာဘက်ပစ်တော်၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၄။ Badon-min’s order dated June 3, 1782, mentioned that on the basis of Atula’s submission, Alaungmintaya ordered putting an end to the division into *thingan-yon*, *dukot-tin*, and *gāṃavāsī* and that the “one-shoulder” practice should be followed. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 235–6. The suppression of the *gāṃavāsī* and the prescription of the *dukot-tin* is also summarized in အရှင်သီရိသောဘန၊ မဟာဒွါရနိကာယ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၀၅။



presided over separate monasteries owned by them (to implement this requirement, the “incapable” monks were supposed to move to the monasteries of eligible abbots and accept their guidance).<sup>61</sup> Also, somewhere around 1753 Atula blocked renewed attempts of the “two-shoulder” monks to have novices conform to the same dress code as monks by presenting the case as already settled under the Nyaungyan dynasty.<sup>62</sup>

Atula also contributed to more routine court merit-making in the form of donations and pilgrimages. For instance, in 1759 he visited Yangon and compiled a brief history (*thamaing*) of Dagon Hsandawshin (Shwedagon) stupa. The text was completed on the seventh day of the waxing moon of *Thadingyut* of the year 1121 (September 29, 1759).<sup>63</sup> As Atula mentions Alaungmintaya’s recent merit-making at this stupa, it might be safely concluded that he should have followed Alaungmintaya and the court to Yangon throughout their journey down the Ayeyarwaddy. The journey commenced on the tenth day of the waxing moon of *Wazo* (July 19, 1759), which means that Atula must have observed the rainy season on one of the barges and completed it in Yangon in the seven days after the writing of *thamaing*.<sup>64</sup> Atula must have also participated in Alaungmintaya’s pilgrimages to Kyaikkhauk stupa in Thanlyin and Shwemawdaw in Bago; however, it is unlikely he followed Alaungmintaya to Ayutthaya. More probably, he returned to Yadanatheinga together with the courtiers.

The above mentioned activities cast a different light on the role of Atula during the reign of Alaungmintaya. Besides sidelining the “two-shoulder” monks, Atula’s job had many other aspects, which seem to be guided by more general *tisiwareit* concerns. The key characteristic was the focus on both monastic and lay behavior, which allows us to qualify this as a religious, not merely a monastic reform. The primary objective was to ensure that the *sāsana* functioned as an effective and efficient vehicle for securing good births. To that end, the *samgha* was reconstituted to be a worthy recipient of donations, and donors were instructed to behave in a way conducive to making kammatic progress. The unification of the *samgha* effected by Atula

<sup>61</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၈၄; ဆရာတော် ဦးသဗ္ဗမာ၊ မဟာဒုက္ခပစ်တောင်၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၄.

<sup>62</sup> Available documents on the issue date from the 1780s. They reflect slightly different lines of interpretation. According to the sources written from the “two-shoulder” perspective, Shin Sujāta from Palaing tried to initiate the hearing, but Atula blocked this attempt. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 235–6; မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာရ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၈၇; Bode, ed., *Sāsanavaṃsa*, 124; Law, tran., *The History of the Buddha’s Religion*, 128.

Atula himself explains that Alaungmintaya had asked him to hold a hearing, but he replied that the issue had been already settled under Tanningwe-min and Mahādhammarājādhipati so holding a new debate would contradict the established legal practice (settled cases should not be reconsidered) and would spoil the reputation of both the king and his advisor. Alaungmintaya supposedly responded that he had not been aware that the issue was settled, promised to uphold the decisions passed earlier, and required novices who covered both shoulders to follow the *dukot-tin* practice. Ms. no. 11424 in UCL, folio ၈၀<sup>r, v</sup>.

Another line based on the information provided by a disciple of Sujāta and documented in *The Purification of Moral Conduct* argues that Alaungmintaya has convened the debaters in Thetkenan and informed Sujāta that he favors the “one-shoulder” manner and wants the entire *samgha* to follow it. Sujāta refused to comply, saying that this practice was not favored by the Buddha and the king is not the Buddha. Alaungmintaya supposedly replied that even the Buddha could not oppose the entire *samgha*, so the matter should be finished. တတိယနံမော်ဆရာတော်၊ သီလဝိသေသနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၈၄-၅, also reproduced in အရှင်သီရိသောဘန၊ မဟာဒွါရနိကာယ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၁၁.

Theoretically all three versions may reflect the same situation, i.e. that Alaungmintaya convened the hearing but did not allow a debate, simply passing the decision instead. In this case the difference between the sources reflects the degree to which they are ready to admit Alaungmintaya’s personal support of the “one-shoulder” practice.

<sup>63</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 13138 in UCL, folio ၉၃<sup>v</sup>. Incidentally this seems to be the earliest dated Burmese *thamaing* of this important Buddhist site.

<sup>64</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၃၄. Such observance doesn’t look exceptional; for example, the First Maungdaung made a similar journey during the rainy season of 1793 accompanied by more than a thousand royal teachers, monks, laymen, *ārāmikās*, and *kappiyakārakas* (he, however, went without the king). Palm-leaf ms. no. 8910 in the research library of MORA, folio ၈၀<sup>v</sup>; ပထမမောင်ဆရာတော်၊ “တိဂုဗ္ဗစေတီယထောမနာကျမ်း”။ မဟာပဏာမကျမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ ပိဋကဗျူဟာအဖွဲ့၊ ၁၉၈၀)။ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၁၇၊ ၁၇၆.

was at least partially successful as the influence of earlier lineages of court monks (now branded as *gāmaṃvāsī*) was greatly reduced, and after that time they do not appear in the sources as an independent entity. As for the followers of the “two-shoulder” practice, Atula did not manage to convert them. If there was any break in their activities (the status of the movement between 1753 and the 1770s needs further investigation), it was only temporary, and in the 1770s, members of the *ayon-gaing* resumed arguing their point.

The failure of the *tisiwareit*/Ton-gaing attempts to marginalize the “two-shoulder” monks highlights the issue of the outreach that the monastic reform under Alaungmintaya could have. In my analysis, initiatives emanating from Yadanatheinga between its foundation in 1753 and the death of Alaungmintaya in 1760 could have had an impact on the *saṃgha* in the areas other than the vicinity of the royal city only if there was local support for these initiatives. Given that Alaungmintaya’s hold over the Upper Burma was more or less consolidated only between 1755 and 1758 and that Alaungmintaya was absent from Upper Burma for about six months in 1755, for most of 1756, for about eight months in 1757, and after mid-1759, a thorough and consistent reform was hardly possible. The unsettled conditions and unrest continued even during the reign of Alaungmintaya’s successor Dipeyin-min.

The case of Hngetpittaung monastery in Bagan might be illustrative. According to a local chronicle, the monks returned to the monastery in mid-1754 but did not seek recognition until late 1757. Only in November or December 1757 did the incumbent abbot Shin Varadhamma go to Yadanatheinga to seek the help of Atula in petitioning Alaungmintaya so that the latter would recognize him as the abbot and confirm the monastery as a forest hermitage banning to set up residential buildings and monasteries within a radius of one kilometer. Alaungmintaya issued an order recognizing Varadhamma in which he instructed the Hngetpittaung *saṃgha* to follow the discipline of the lineage of the lord of Ton and to study the texts, confirmed the monastery status as a sanctuary prohibiting hunting and killing of creatures as well as the sale and consumption of intoxicants within the requested radius. This order was delivered to Varadhamma in Atula’s monastery, and *mahadan-wun* Zeya Yan Aung was sent to escort Varadhamma to Bagan and install him as the abbot. On January 26 and 27, 1758, Zeya Yan Aung produced a lithic inscription identifying Hngetpittaung as a sanctuary and held a dedication ceremony handing over to Varadhamma the abbot’s seal and the inscription.<sup>65</sup>

This example is interesting in two regards. First, there is a significant interval between the reestablishment of the monastery and the local *saṃgha*’s attempt to secure royal recognition. I presume that this might have been due to the monks’ waiting to see if Alaungmintaya would last as a sovereign in 1754 and 1755 and then to Alaungmintaya’s absence from Upper Burma in 1756 and early 1757. Another interesting aspect is that royal recognition with a concomitant instruction to follow the Ton monastic discipline occurs here in response to local initiative, not as a result of royal intervention.<sup>66</sup>

Accordingly, one may note that a prominent monastery in Bagan could have avoided communicating with the royal monastic hierarchy and probably remained outside of its control till as late as December 1757 (i.e. four and a half years after the unification of the *saṃgha* prescribed in 1753). Also, it might be noted that Atula’s orders on the recognition of monastic leaders in the border areas with Yakhaing (Rakhine) date to 1755 and 1759,<sup>67</sup> that the only

<sup>65</sup> ဆရာတော် ဦးသဗ္ဗောဓိ၊ မဟာဌာနကံတော်၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၆-၉၇; ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၁၁; the lithic inscription at Bagan Hngetpittaung, lines 16–17.

<sup>66</sup> As far as I understand, the recognition of local monastic leaders by the overlord and the *thathanabaing* resembled the way in which the crown recognized local hereditary leaders such as *myothugyis*, *tangaungs*, etc. Basically, such leaders applied for the recognition, promised to perform their duties, and were confirmed in their offices.

<sup>67</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. III, 94–5, 217.

example of Alaungmintaya's order on religious policy (specifying how the monks should be summoned to the royal city if there are disputes between them and mentioning the confiscation of monastic utensils and requisites by *mahadan-wun's* servicemen) in Than Tun's collection dates to 1757,<sup>68</sup> and that the majority of Atula's decisions on cases involving monks submitted to his adjudication and included in the collection of his rulings (*Atula-pyathton*) date between 1756 and 1761.<sup>69</sup> To me, all this suggests that prior to 1755 the religious initiatives sponsored by Alaungmintaya and Atula (despite their likely "universal" rhetoric) were hardly effective outside of Yadanatheinga and that even later their outreach was most likely constrained to the areas of the Northern Side and parts of the Western Side of the Upper Burma (i.e. the areas located more or less close to the royal city). Beyond these areas the cooperation and initiative of local monks was perhaps the key factor allowing the penetration of reform. As a result, I believe that the adherents of the "two-shoulder" manner in many places might have survived the 1750s pretty much undisturbed.

Most likely, this situation continued also during the reigns of Dipeyin-min and Myedu-min. After Alaungmintaya's death Atula ceased to be the principal teacher of the overlord as Alaungmintaya's successors venerated other monks.<sup>70</sup> He however remained influential under Dipeyin-min and probably during the early years of the reign of Myedu-min.<sup>71</sup> Atula also seems to receive a new (14 syllable) title from Dipeyin-min as his epistle dated October 1761 brandished the title Mahā-atulayasa Saddhammarājaguru.<sup>72</sup> Up to 1765 he remained active in literary production, consultancy, and promoting the proper conduct among monks.<sup>73</sup>

It is believed that Atula's visit to Myedu-min upon the latter's ascension to the throne in 1763 was interpreted as an omen signifying that Myedu-min should reestablish the royal city at Ava.<sup>74</sup> This led to rebuilding of the city and relocation of the court to Ava in 1765. According to the already quoted collection of Atula's works in the Yasauk ms, in 1128 (1766/67) he received a new monastery in Ava.<sup>75</sup> In late 1768 (*Nattaw* of 1130) he seems to submit to Myedu-min a collection of replies to 57 questions which were addressed to him starting in 1753.<sup>76</sup> However, after 1765 there is no indication that Atula continued to have a say in policy matters. Instead it seems that he was gradually marginalized and then, at some unknown point, publicly disgraced.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>69</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 208 at RCAMM.

<sup>70</sup> Teacher-donor relationships were usually established long before the ascension to the throne. Dipeyin-min venerated Taungdwingyi Hsayadaw Shin Nānavara (1722–1762) while Myedu-min supported Zayit Hsayadaw and, after the demise of the latter, Mingala-kyaung Hsayadaw Shin Nānadīpa (c. 1733–1778) who was Zayit's nephew.

<sup>71</sup> Royal order dated April 25, 1784, which prescribed the disrobing of Atula claimed that the latter obstructed the kammatic progress of monks, novices, and laity and plunged them in the woeful states during the reigns of Alaungmintaya and Dipeyin-min. No such accusation was put forward as regards the reign of Myedu-min. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 326.

<sup>72</sup> [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0225-36.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0225-36.jpg).

<sup>73</sup> [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0225-36.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0225-36.jpg), [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0226-02.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0226-02.jpg), [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0226-03.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0226-03.jpg), and [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_5/vol5/Itoh0226-04.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_5/vol5/Itoh0226-04.jpg); palm-leaf ms. no. 9425 in UCL.

<sup>74</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၆၅။

<sup>75</sup> See typewritten ms. no. 16594 in the library of DHR, folio ၆၆<sup>v</sup>. However, a collection of Atula's replies to royal questions submitted on the first day of the waxing moon of *Nattaw* of 1130 (late 1768) mentions only a donation of a temporary monastery (တဲကျောင်း) built at the site of the Mahamyatmuni Lehtat monastery in Ava (palm-leaf ms. from Taungpaw-kyaung, Hsalingyi, folio ၈<sup>r</sup>). The word "temporary monastery" is missing in the published version of the text, see အတုလဆရာတော်၊ နန်းစဉ်ပုတ္တဘိ၊ စာမျက်နှာ [၁၇၀]။

<sup>76</sup> အတုလဆရာတော်၊ နန်းစဉ်ပုတ္တဘိ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၆၀၊ palm-leaf ms. of this text from Taungpaw-kyaung, folio ၈<sup>v</sup>။

### Atula's Exile and Activities Prior to 1784

A royal order related to Atula's trial in 1784 claims that he had to relocate from a monastery in Ava to some unidentified forest (or rural) locale (တောတွင်းအရပ်) because Kyetthungin, Zayit, Ingyinbin, and other royal teachers submitted an epistle arguing that Atula committed a *pārājika* offense.<sup>77</sup> The *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* corroborates this by mentioning that other members of the *dukot-tin* community refused to perform *samghakammas* (monastic ceremonies) together with Atula.<sup>78</sup>

The same source suggests that a *pārājika* offense was related to Atula's earlier legal decisions. His adjudication on cases involving both monks and laity allegedly resulted in expenses (it is not clear who exactly incurred these expenses, perhaps the litigants) and his close association with criminal justice.<sup>79</sup> Two tentative interpretations are possible here. One is that Atula fell victim to the *tisiwareit* belief (which he himself helped to establish) that no support should be given to immoral monks. Another is that there was some conflict within the monastic hierarchy at the court and Atula lost.

According to the same royal order mentioned above, in the reign of Nga Singu-min (1776–1782) the latter's mother Sīriatulamahāratanāpadumādevī constructed the Mingalashwebon monastery complex in Sagaing and wanted to donate it to Atula. Ingyin Hsayadaw and Bongyaw-kyaung U Pon submitted an epistle arguing that Atula was unfit to receive the donation.<sup>80</sup> As a result, in March 1777 this complex was donated to another monk, Min-o Hsayadaw Shin Guṇābhi.<sup>81</sup>

The exile must have occurred between 1768 (when Atula is known to have submitted one of his last works composed in Ava) and 1772 (because Zayit Hsayadaw, one of his denounciators, died that year, followed by Kyetthungin three years later). Yasauk ms. claims that in the year 1130 (1768/69) Atula moved from Ava to Hsaukpinaing Tawya, forest monastery the location of which I have failed to identify so far. Perhaps that move was due to an exile. According to the same source, Atula lived in forest monasteries at least until 1132 (1770/71).<sup>82</sup> His subsequent whereabouts are not clear to me up to roughly 1780.

The banishment from Ava was important not just because it implied serious damage to Atula's image. It also must have affected Atula's influence and ability to accumulate the resources necessary to further his lineage in the capital area.<sup>83</sup> Alaungminataya's court was located in Yadanatheinga, northwest of the long established capital area of Ava, Sagaing, and

<sup>77</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 323.

<sup>78</sup> မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသာဒီပုဒ်၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၅၈။

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Kyakhatwaing-kyaungtaik Hsayadaw discusses several of Atula's controversial decisions found in a collection of his legal rulings, yet it is not clear if this reflects actual arguments made against Atula or is a modern attempt to pinpoint what was wrong with him. ပဲခူးမြို့၊ ကြံခတ်ပိုင်းကျောင်းတိုက်ဆရာတော်၊ သာသနိကရာဇဝံသာဝိဘာဝနီကျမ်း၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၆၈-၇၁။

<sup>80</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 323. Ingyin Hsayadaw must be the same as Ingyinbin Hsayadaw. Bongyaw-kyaung U Pon is likely the abbot of Bongyawsanlut-kyaungdaw, a monastery of Zayit Hsayadaw, and the latter's successor. Zayit monastery is sometimes abbreviated as Bongyaw-kyaung, e.g. အရှင်သိရိသောဘန၊ မဟာဒွါရနိကာယ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၉၂။

<sup>81</sup> ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၃၇၁; ဦးရာကျော်၊ မြန်မာမဟာမင်္ဂလာမင်းခမ်းတော်၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၂၁၄; ဦးသုဒဿန၊ ညောင်ကန်သမိုင်းဖြစ်စဉ်သာသနာဝင် (ရန်ကုန်၊ စစ်သည်တော်၊ ၂၀၀၂)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၅၃-၄။ According to *The Views of King-Grandfather (Hpo-daw ayuwada sadan)*, a document allegedly compiled by Badon-min during the final days of his reign, this donation was preceded by a discussion about whether it was appropriate to donate this monastery to Min-o or not and whether such a donation was legitimate or not. See *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598–1885*, ed. Than Tun, vol. VI (Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1987), 390.

<sup>82</sup> Ms. no. 16594 in the library of DHR, folios ၆၆<sup>r, v</sup>။

<sup>83</sup> Jacques Leider was the first to stress that Atula was long absent from the capital area before the trial. See Leider, "Text, Lineage and Tradition," 112. In the paper published in the *Journal of Burma Studies* I've wrongly claimed that Leider questioned Atula's continuing influence in the 1780s on that basis. I'd like to correct that mistake here.

Pinya. Atula's royal monastery was located there, and one more monastery was constructed for him in Leinhla village near his native place. In 1765 Myedu-min relocated the court to Ava, rebuilding this city for the third time in its history. The relatively short interval between the relocation of the court and Atula's exile did not allow him enough time to establish himself in a new area. According to a colophon of his text submitted in the late 1768, at that moment he still resided in a temporary monastery (တဲကော့ဇ်း) built on the site of the famous Mahamyatmuni Lehtat-kyaungdaw in Ava.<sup>84</sup> Even if the permanent monastery was completed before Atula's exile, there is no evidence he retained it in his possession. As a result, it might be concluded that the only followers Atula might have had in the capital area after the 1770s were a few of his immediate disciples. That was offset by Atula's strained relations with (at least) a few influential members of the Ton community who opposed to his presence in Ava.

During Atula's absence at the court the fortune of the *tisiwareits* changed dramatically. In 1780 members of the Ton-gaing, headed by Htantabin Hsayadaw Shin Nandamedhā and Taungbalu Hsayadaw Shin Paññārāma, two successors of Taungbalu Hsayadaw Shin Uttamasāra, initiated a series of hearings concerning the proper attire of novices in a reaction to pamphlets compiled and distributed by Hsonda Hsayadaw Shin Nandāmāla (1718– ? c. 1784), who at that time was residing in Salin. Members of the Ton-gaing brought the issue to Nga Singu-min, causing the latter to summon Hsonda to Ava in order to debate the scriptural support for the “two-shoulder” practice. Though the initiators perhaps expected the outcome of the event to be the same as during the preceding fifty years, the hearing ended with the defeat of the initiating side and the prescription of uniform (“two-shoulder”) robe-wearing manner for both monks and novices in May 1781.<sup>85</sup>

Atula apparently did not attend the hearing. The *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* claims that other members of the initiating side did not want to associate with him due to his earlier transgression of monastic discipline.<sup>86</sup> Relying on another monk from the Dipeyin area, the author of *Purification of Moral Conduct* (1837) explains that Atula was not invited due to his earlier role as the *thathanabaing* (this seems to be a weak argument).<sup>87</sup> Also, Atula's involvement in the debate is never acknowledged in the “two-shoulder” sources such as Varatejo's *Account of a Dispute between the Ayon and Atin Monks (Ayon-atin-sadan)*, Hsonda's *Illumination of Purification of the Sāsana (Sāsanasuddhīdīpaka)*, *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* or *The Embellishment of the Sāsana*.

However, several epistles written at the time of the hearing testify to Atula's lobbying for the *dukot-tin* practice.<sup>88</sup> One of the documents is addressed to the king, while others do not

<sup>84</sup> Palm-leaf ms. from the Taungpaw-kyaung, Hsalingyi, folio ၈<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> Summary accounts of these hearings written from the point of view of the *ayon-gaing* are given in *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* and *The Embellishment of the Sāsana*. There exist several slightly different versions of a more complete account attributed to Shin Varatejo, a disciple of the First Bagaya Hsayadaw Shin Nandābhīdhaja. They also represent the point of view of the *ayon-gaing* and seem to provide the basis for the descriptions in *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* and *The Embellishment of the Sāsana*. Only one of them is published. Hsonda Hsayadaw also described the course of the hearings in a separate work. See မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝသဒီယနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၄၇-၅၂; မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ၊ သာသနာလင်္ကာ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၈၉-၉၀; “အတင်အရံစာတမ်း၊” မြန်အောင်မြို့၊ ဂူကိုးလုံတောရဆရာတော်၊ ဆပဉ္စတ္ထမဆောက်ကျမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ ဦးစဋီလနှင့် တပည့်များဓမ္မဒါန၊ ၁၃၅၈)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၃၄၃-၄၁၃; ဆုံထားဆရာတော်၊ သာသနသုဒ္ဓိတိပကပါဠိနှင့် သာသနသုဒ္ဓိတိပကနိဿယ (ရန်ကုန်၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၁၉၈၀). Other related documents, including those written from the point of view of the *dukot-tin* show that none of the above-mentioned accounts is complete or fully representative.

<sup>86</sup> မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝသဒီယနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၄၇.

<sup>87</sup> တတိယနံမော်ဆရာတော်၊ သီလဝိသောဓနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၂-၃.

<sup>88</sup> See palm-leaf mss. no. 11424 in UCL and no. 6598 in UCL, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> – ၈<sup>v</sup>. Besides the submissions of Atula, both collections contain other documents related to the hearings. Only one of the four texts written by Atula is dated; however, given that the collections are clearly focused on the debate of 1780–81, it seems possible that the other three belong to the same time-frame.

specify an audience. Atula's epistle to Nga Singu-min was sent at a critical point in the process when a hearing in the royal presence was scheduled (previously, Nga Singu-min did not attend the debate in person, but was informed by the ministers and posed questions to the debating parties). It was an attempt to convince the overlord that it was correct to rely on the *Cūlaganṭhi* (a Vinaya handbook on which members of the *dukot-tin* based some of their beliefs) and of the general illegitimacy of the *ayon*'s position. Some of Atula's phrasing suggests his awareness of the current stage of the hearing. However, there is no evidence that his epistles were considered during the debate.

The culmination of the hearing with the proscription of the "one-shoulder" manner in May 1781 apparently was not followed by any practical measures to implement it. However, Badon-min, a new king who assumed the throne as a result of a palace coup, was eager to effect the unification of the monks and issued several new orders in favor of the "two-shoulder" practice in May and June 1782.<sup>89</sup> Prior to the promulgation of a key order on June 3, 1782, the majority of the abbots who supported the *dukot-tin* practice in the capital area (Ava, Sagaing, and Pinya) publicly declared their willingness to "follow the requirements of canonical and commentarial texts" and instruct novices to cover both shoulders with the upper robe. Another order promulgated on June 6, 1782, directed that monks living outside of the capital area should be informed of the uncanonical status of the *dukot-tin* and demanded the laity to make donations only to moral and disciplined monks and novices.<sup>90</sup>

The order dated June 3, 1782, held Atula personally responsible for the prevalence of the scripturally incorrect practice between 1753 and 1780. The order claimed that the wrong views appeared in the *samgha* periodically but earlier they were suppressed by the three Buddhist Councils. Under the last three kings of the Nyaungyan dynasty similar rallying of the *samgha* to hold the right views could not be effected, and in the reign of Alaungmintaya, Atula blocked the debate initiated by Shin Sujāta. As a result, the *dukot-tin* practice was uniformly prescribed during the first three Konbaung reigns.<sup>91</sup> However, there is no evidence that these accusations led to any practical moves against Atula before 1784.

According to the sketchy available evidence, the reform inaugurated by the orders dated June 1782 was a bumpy ride. The division of authority in the matters of the *sāsana* between four senior monks (Minywa, Min-o, Male, and Hsonda), which Badon-min supported by his order of June 3, 1782, apparently did not work very well. The monks tended to encroach upon each other's sphere of responsibility and subordinate monks seem to listen to those teachers with whom they had personal links rather than those who were their formal superiors. As a result, Badon-min had to find the ways to achieve greater cohesion in the reform faction that won the debate of 1780–81.<sup>92</sup>

Some initiatives could not be completed. For instance, a failure occurred in the summer of 1783 when Badon-min initiated a search for the remaining followers of Shin Varajoti, a breakaway disciple of Guṇābhilaṅkāra who was famous for his radical attitude with regard to immoral monks and who established a separate community in the early eighteenth century. Followers of Varajoti (who became known as the Zawti-gaing and refused to venerate any monks other than their own) were suppressed in the reigns of Mahādhammarājādhipati and

<sup>89</sup> The majority of these documents are missing in Than Tun's edition of royal orders. The most complete available collection of relevant documents known to me is palm-leaf ms. no. 3978 in UCL. Other available collections are palm-leaf mss. no. 116 in NL, no. 351 in the library of the Department of Archaeology, Naypyidaw, no. 119456 in UCL, no. 332 in the library of DHR, and no. WMS.Burmese 10 in the Wellcome Library, London.

<sup>90</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 3978 in UCL, folios ၈<sup>r</sup> – ၈<sup>r</sup> (document no. 2 in the Appendix to this biography).

<sup>91</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 235–6 (document no. 1 in the Appendix to this biography).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 252 (document no. 3 in the Appendix to this biography).

Myedu-min. Badon-min, in his drive to unify the monks, wished to eradicate the dissident Zawti movement completely. However, when some followers of Varajoti were found near Hsinbyugyun, they could not be delivered to the new royal city of Amarapura because the servicemen sent to arrest them were allegedly bribed and ignored their duty.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, there was widespread passive resistance to the reform in the capital area. In 1783–84 royally supported monks performed a check for Vinaya compliance aimed at disrobing those who were guilty of a *pārājika* offense and reforming those who followed the Vinaya incorrectly. According to a royal order dated March 12, 1784, royal teachers could not get conclusive answers about the way the Vinaya was understood and practiced in some monastery complexes (*kyaung-taiks*). In addition, many complexes were not checked at all. The order specified that sabotage would not be tolerated; it instructed the *mahadan-wun* to compile a list of monasteries that failed to provide answers, and stated that monks whose disciplinary status and approach was not clear would not be allowed to reside in their own *kyaung-taiks*. Instead, they were supposed to be transferred to complexes headed by royal teachers and subjected to their guidance.<sup>94</sup> It is in this heated atmosphere that Atula's name again appears in the spotlight.

### The Trial of Atula

Coincidentally, at this critical moment in the reform process, Atula (who then resided in Okshitkye, his native village) sent two letters to his disciple Shin Viriyārambha from the Lawkatharahpu monastery complex. These messages, both being short pieces of poetry, were either written on, or delivered to Ava on March 27, 1784.<sup>95</sup> One was very simple and boiled down to the point that monks and novices should dress differently, just as the king should not dress like a merchant.<sup>96</sup> Another message suggested two points: first, that the addressees should not harbor ill-will because they reside near the overlord and should avoid diminishing their merit in future lives, and second, that *ganṭhipada* (a reference to the *Cūlaganṭhi*) explains the points that were left unexplained in the three *piṭakas*.<sup>97</sup> All in all, the messages show Atula defending key points on which the *dukot-tin* side was defeated in 1781. Namely, he remained confident in the radically different disciplinary status of monks and novices and the correctness of separate dressing conventions for them, as well as the authority of the *Cūlaganṭhi*. At the same time, Atula suggested his disciples should maintain a low profile as the reform took place without actually abandoning their convictions.

Theoretically, messages sent by Atula amounted to an insult and an act of subversion. They showed that the author had not heeded the royal quest for unifying the *saṃgha* and suppressing wrong views. Two years before, Atula had already been framed as a chief perpetrator of the wrong “one-shoulder” practice. Now the messages found their way to Hsonda Hsayadaw, whose writings provided a pretext for the hearing in 1780 and who used this

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 316 (document no. 4 in the Appendix to this biography).

<sup>95</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folio ၈: ၵ. *The Illumination of the Lineage of the Sāsana* and hereafter Bode and Ray wrongly claim that the messages were sent to Badon-min. Bode, ed., *Sāsanaṃsa*, 135; Law, tran., *The History of the Buddha's Religion*, 138; Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma*, 75; Ray, *An Introduction to the Study*, 235.

As for the identity of Viriyārambha, no information is available concerning him except that he clearly was Atula's disciple. My working identification is that he might be Viriyārambhasaddhamma Mahādharmarājaguru, who was venerated by Thirisithu Kyawhtin Nawyahta, the minister of Alaungmintaya, and who compiled *Thaidashit-saung yot-pon* (palm-leaf ms. from the Kanbya monastery, Okshitkyi village, Ayadaw township). Further research is needed.

<sup>96</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ၈: ၵ – ၈: ၶ (document no. 6 in the Appendix to this biography).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., folio ၈: ၵ (document no. 5 in the Appendix to this biography). The latter point was previously made in 1780, see palm-leaf ms. no. 6598 in UCL, folios ၈: ၶ – ၈: ၵ.

opportunity to move against Atula. Badon-min was informed about the issue, and on April 1, 1784, he ordered that Atula be quickly summoned to Amarapura.<sup>98</sup> Atula tried to avoid going on the pretext he was not feeling well, but in the end was escorted to the capital.<sup>99</sup>

### The Hearing on Scriptural Matters

Atula's trial is said to have consisted of two parts.<sup>100</sup> The first dealt with the correct manner of dress for novices and the authority of the *Cūlaganṭhi*. Scriptural issues were investigated by monks appointed to supervise royal exams for schoolboys and novices (their identities, except for one, are not known to me).<sup>101</sup> Institutionally, such monks were perhaps the most important members of the court monastic hierarchy as they effectively controlled the recruitment process of the court *samgha* and were occasionally appointed to try important cases instead of the *vinayadharas*.<sup>102</sup> In addition to Atula, the disciples to whom he addressed his messages were also called in as defendants. The documents identify them as Shin Viriyāmbha, U Tot Hpyu, and Pindale Hsaya. The trial held on April 19, 1784, at the Thudama-zayat in the royal library was public, and all abbots of monastery complexes in the royal city, all ministers and court officials were required to attend.<sup>103</sup>

If the available trial report is accurate, the hearing did not reveal anything new as compared to earlier debates. Atula's testimony repeated almost verbatim what he claimed in 1780 concerning the scriptural support for the *dukot-tin* practice and the origins of the

<sup>98</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folio ၵ: ၵ (document no. 7 in the Appendix to this biography).

<sup>99</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folio ၵ: ၵ–ၵ ၵ (document no. 8 in the Appendix to this biography).

<sup>100</sup> The trial has been repeatedly described in the literature. Jacques Leider provides an overview of the trial on the basis of *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders*, *The Embellishment of the Sāsana*, *The Illumination of the Lineage of the Sāsana*, and documents included in *The Royal Orders of Burma* (Leider, “Text, Lineage and Tradition,” 112–5). He notes the discrepancy between the accounts of the trial in chronicles and a more complex process revealed in the royal orders and lists a number of points that seem puzzling. However, he does not distinguish the roles of participants of the second part of the trial, namely, monks called in as Atula's denunciators (those who have earlier accused him of a *pārājika* offense; the royal orders identify Bongyaw-kyaung Hsaya Khingyi Pon, Shin Janinda from Lehtat-myauktaik, Yindaw Hsaya, Ywanan Hsaya, Kabe Hsaya, and Dawe Hsaya), monks called in to adjudicate (other members of the Ton community, such as Minbu Shin Kalyāna from Yadanasanlut monastery, Maungdaung Shin Obhāsa, Nga-ywa Shin Kalyānacakka, Hsalingyi Shin Parama, and Hsalingyi Shin Dīpa), and monks who monitored the trial (members of the *ayon-gaing* who supervised the royal exams of whom only the First Bagaya is known), thus failing to explain why some of them were sentenced to disrobing right after the trial.

The confusion of roles is also apparent in Than Tun's annotation of the royal orders. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 47–9. The description of the trial by Michael Charney (*Powerful Learning*, 97–8) confuses several key details. Relying on Than Tun's annotation instead of the original documents, Charney declares Obhāsa, Kalyānacakka, and Parama “Sudhamma” and “Ayon” (i.e. supporters of the *ayon* practice instead of being its opponents). Confusing the place of the hearing with the identity of interrogators, he claims that the interrogation was made by “the membership of the Religious Texts Library.” Besides that, he wrongly identifies minister U Htun Nyo as a stakeholder in the hearing.

The accounts given by Bode and Ray are a garbled retelling of *The Illumination of the Lineage of the Sāsana*. Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma*, 75–6; Ray, *An Introduction to the Study*, 235–6.

<sup>101</sup> A royal order postdating the trial by roughly a month specified the appointment of Male Hsayadaw, Palaing Hsayadaw, Mondaw Hsayadaw, Mede Hsayadaw, Halin Hsayadaw, Hsonda Hsayadaw, Taunglelon Hsayadaw, Shwedaung Hsayadaw, Maungdaung Hsayadaw, Hsinde Hsayadaw, and Gado Hsayadaw as supervisors of exams. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 338. Though some of the listed persons might have performed this function before, we can not automatically assume that these are the monks who orchestrated the trial of Atula. Unfortunately, I did not manage to find earlier appointment orders of monastic examiners. At the same time, the trial report once uses unusual term “royal teachers who will supervise the emams” (တေးမေးမည်ဆရာတော်), see palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folio ၵ ၵ. That might suggest the supervisors in question have not yet controlled the exams and so the later order might be fairly relevant in establishing their identity. The issue needs further investigation.

<sup>102</sup> Kirichenko, “Monasheskaya stratifikatsiya i pridvornoe monashestvo,” 11.

<sup>103</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ၵ ၵ–ၵ ၵ ၵ; *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 323 (documents no. 11 and 12 in the Appendix to this biography); မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ၵသဒီပနီ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၅၆–၈. For an investigation preceding the trial on April 19, 1784, see documents no. 10 and 11 in the Appendix.



*Cūlaganṭhi*. As the first point was already settled in 1781, the only new development was the demonstration that Atula's claims about the origins of the *Cūlaganṭhi* are unfounded and that this text also supported the two-shoulder practice.<sup>104</sup>

However, in the general context of the debate about the correct practice for novices, this achievement of those who questioned Atula was in fact a relatively minor point. As early as 1780 the discussion of true bases of authority (*mahāpadesa*) for identifying correct practice led to a ruling that only canonical and commentarial texts (i.e. not even the sub-commentaries, let alone the *Cūlaganṭhi*) would be taken into account.<sup>105</sup> Accordingly, if one analyzes the trial as a genuine judicial contestation, the only effect of proving Atula wrong about the *Cūlaganṭhi* would perhaps be psychological, as Atula was publicly made to backtrack on one of his principal claims and exposed as someone who had insufficient command of the texts. This might be further highlighted by the fact that Shin Viriyārambha, U Tot Hpyu, and Pindale Hsaya allegedly testified that they could not provide support for the practice of covering and chest-binding due to a lack of scriptural training.<sup>106</sup>

At the same time, the report positions the trial not so much as a contestation, but rather as a public ceremony or carefully scripted performance. The report looks like a skillfully phrased piece of rhetoric that has no feeling of being a faithful record of some unfolding live event. It is formulated much in the same way as the royal orders related to Atula (i.e. as documents intended to be public proclamations by definition). It serves the single purpose of exposing Atula and his accomplices as the enemies of the *sāsana* (*sāsanapaccatthika*). By employing the Vinaya commentary's definition of *sāsanapaccatthika* as a person who presents something that is against the Buddha's teaching as being the Buddha's teaching (Sp 874,8–12), the trial report thus manages to portray Atula not merely as a person who is wrong but as a false monk who poses a threat to the *sāsana*.<sup>107</sup> Such powerful rhetoric, perhaps unnecessary or redundant for persecuting a single or several erring monks, makes better sense if used to inaugurate a major corrective action affecting the *saṃgha* in general. Accordingly, taken together with the royal orders that later prescribed the disrobing of Atula and other *dukot-tin* monks, the report looks like a diptych: it furnishes a justification for the purge proving that the adherents of the "one-shoulder" practice pose a real threat to the *sāsana* and so should not be tolerated.

### Disciplinary Investigation and Verdict

The second part of the trial was necessary to investigate the disciplinary status of Atula. Atula was confronted with his earlier denunciators and the task of trying the case was delegated to the members of the Ton lineage with the royal teachers who supervised the exams appointed to monitor the trial and report to the king.<sup>108</sup> This arrangement was probably aimed at making the

<sup>104</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ḍ<sup>r</sup> – ḍṛ<sup>v</sup> (document no. 12 in the Appendix). Atula claimed that this text was composed on Lanka and predated the three *ṭikās* (sub-commentaries) on the Vinaya while the hearing proved that that was not the case.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, royal orders requiring the members of the *dukot-tin* to prove their point exclusively on the basis of Pāli (canonical texts) and *aṭṭhakathās* (commentaries). *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. III, 285–6. An earlier order allowed the monks to substantiate arguments by references to Pāli, *aṭṭhakathās*, and *ṭikās* (ibid., 281).

<sup>106</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ḍ<sup>r</sup> – ḍṛ<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>107</sup> It might be noted that by relating Atula's support of chest-binding and covering one shoulder to the actions of monk Ariṭṭha and novice Kaṇṭaka (mentioned in the Vinaya commentary as the examples of *sāsanapaccatthikas*), the trial report equated the transgression of dressing conventions with Ariṭṭha's and Kaṇṭaka's denial of indulgence in sensual objects being an impediment to the realization of *nibbāna*. In a sense, Atula's position was thus escalated into being a distortion of the purpose of the Buddha's teaching. For Ariṭṭha's and Kaṇṭaka's "perverted views" see Vin IV 133–5, 138–9 and MN I 130–2.

<sup>108</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 323 (document no. 13 in the Appendix).

members of the same lineage as Atula publicly interrogate him and his opponents and condemn Atula for monastic inconsistency.

This part of the trial consisted of three consecutive hearings held between April 21 and April 24, 1784, with a gradual growth in the number of participants.<sup>109</sup> According to royal orders, that was made necessary by the fact that those who were supposed to testify, try the case, and monitor the adjudication (i.e. all participants regardless of their affiliation) were giving evasive reports. However, already after the first hearing (i.e. when the propriety of Atula's disrobing was not yet officially established) Badon-min ordered that eight immediate disciples of Atula be summoned together with their followers.<sup>110</sup>

As soon as Atula was ruled guilty of the second *pārājika* offense (i.e. of theft) by the appointed judges from the Ton side, Badon-min issued an order (dated April 25, 1784), which required that not only must Atula be disrobed, but extended that measure to other “enemies of the *sāsana*” (*sāsanapaccathika*). In an interesting development the order seems to have been passed in two versions. The first version specified that in addition to Atula, three of his disciples interrogated during the first part of the trial were to be disrobed and banished to four remote places upriver. Six laymen who supported Atula at the moment of his summoning to Amarapura were also sentenced to exile.<sup>111</sup>

The second version of this order, which must have superseded the earlier one, envisaged that a large group of abbots, monks, and novices belonging to the former core *dukot-tin* and *gāmvāsī* monastery complexes in Ava, Pinya, and Sagaing should also be disrobed and given the job of procuring the fodder for elephants. This provision also applied to eight of Atula's disciples recently summoned to Amarapura.<sup>112</sup> Most likely, the second version appeared right after the first one and was either a result of a lobbying for a more radical purge in the *saṃgha* or a carefully planned ploy.

It seems that in a few hours events unfolded at a breathtaking speed. As follows from the documents issued on the next two days, Atula, his disciples, and at least some of the *dukot-tin* and *gāmvāsī* abbots must have been disrobed on the same day (April 25, 1784). In a very short time after that, Badon-min received one or two petitions from supervisors of the royal exams (i.e. those monks who tried Atula on scriptural matters and monitored the disciplinary trial) asking the overlord to “pardon” the declared “enemies of the *sāsana*.”<sup>113</sup> The “pardon” was promptly given, either in the evening of April 25 or early on April 26, but it did not mean a return to the earlier condition.

As specified in a series of orders issued up to April 27, the sentence of exile and procuring the fodder for elephants was cancelled. Disrobed, Atula was allowed to go to a “place where his relatives reside,” those who were disrobed but had not in fact committed *pārājika* offenses were allowed to be reordained, and those who were not yet disrobed were allowed to remain in the *saṃgha* after undergoing a disciplinary reexamination by the royal teachers. However, all those who were readmitted or pardoned were not allowed to reside in separate

<sup>109</sup> Documents no. 13–5 in the Appendix.

<sup>110</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 324–5 (documents no. 14–5 in the Appendix).

<sup>111</sup> *Parabaik* in the collection of *thugaungs* of Salin photocopied by Toshikatsu Ito and uploaded at [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/Vol\\_3/STG018-36.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/Vol_3/STG018-36.jpg) and [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/Vol\\_3/STG018-35.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/Vol_3/STG018-35.jpg) (document no. 16 in the Appendix).

<sup>112</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ၈၈<sup>v</sup> – ၈<sup>v</sup>; *parabaik* from the collection of U Maung Maung Tin photocopied by Toshikatsu Ito and uploaded at [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_2/vol2/UMMT-0974.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_2/vol2/UMMT-0974.jpg); *The Royal Orders of Burma*, ed. Than Tun, vol. IV, 326–7 (document no. 17 in the Appendix).

Assigning the defrocked monks to such low-status occupations was a common punishment in the case of crown-sponsored disrobing.

<sup>113</sup> The documents themselves are not available and are known only from the references in royal orders, see documents no. 18–20 in the Appendix.

monastery complexes. Instead, they were supposed to relocate to monastery complexes of the royal teachers who supervised the scriptural exams and accept dependence on their instruction.<sup>114</sup> Such measures (if they were carried out to the full extent) severely curbed the authority of the abbots of roughly fifty monastery complexes as well as their ability to train disciples and further their lineages. In other words, Atula's trial provided a pretext to implement the steps already contemplated in the order dated March 12, 1784.

All these sanctions were prescribed and executed in just three days from April 25 to April 27, 1784. As far as I understand, April 25 was of particular importance. First, it saw the promulgation of an order targeting Atula, and then this order was amended to cover the *dukot-tin* and *gāmvāsī* abbots. That was followed by the disrobing, which (according to other sources) was public and specifically designed to humiliate “the enemies of the *sāsana*.”<sup>115</sup> As soon as the disrobing occurred, a “pardon” was requested and granted. The swiftness of all these measures and the obvious degree of preparation required to execute them might indicate that Atula's trial was nothing but a pretext for crushing the former “one-shoulder” opposition and that the sentence of exile and procuring fodder was perhaps never intended to be implemented. Both the stigma of “the enemies of the *sāsana*” (partially revoked by a royal order dated April 27, 1784) and a harsh verdict might have been designed to highlight the seriousness of the crime and make the “real” punishment (the disrobing and imposition of dependence on the *dukot-tin* and *gāmvāsī* abbots) look like an act of grace.<sup>116</sup>

### Issues about the Trial

It remains to be seen what necessitated the trial. Religious chronicles pretend that Atula continued to be relevant, and this claim was taken at face value in earlier modern-day accounts.<sup>117</sup> However, nothing proves that the trial was necessary because Atula was behind the introduction of the “wrong” “one-shoulder” practice. The spuriousness of this claim was demonstrated in the preceding sections. Moreover, a reexamination of available evidence shows that Atula hardly did anything significant or novel during the ten years preceding the trial. There is no evidence that even his attempt to petition Nga Singu-min in 1780 saw any reaction. It could not be argued with any surety that his lobbying was coordinated with other members of the *dukot-tin* faction. For that reason, contemporary researchers such as Patrick Pranke, Jacques Leider, and Michael Charney see Atula's trial mainly as a show trial. But what necessitated that?

The royal order about disrobing accused Atula of continuing to build a following after being banished from Ava. However, the list of Atula's personal disciples looks quite modest when compared to the list of the *dukot-tin* and *gāmvāsī* abbots (many of whom were Atula's opponents by then) sentenced to being disrobed as a result of his trial. Atula's following

<sup>114</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 328–30; [http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol\\_2/vol2/UMMT-0974.jpg](http://taweb.aichi-u.ac.jp/DMSEH/vol_2/vol2/UMMT-0974.jpg); palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ၈<sup>v</sup> - ၈: ၇ (documents no. 18–21 in the Appendix).

The dependence (*nissaya*) on a teacher lasting for five years is a standard training procedure for newly ordained monks. Thus, the re-ordination of the “pardoned” monks resulted in a loss of seniority and status along with concomitant privileges.

<sup>115</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. VI, 390, ခဲတီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသင်္ဂီတို့ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၅၈. The most detailed available description of disrobing appears in the account of Siamese war captive analyzed by Rattanaporn Pongpattana. Rattanaporn Pongpattana, “King Bodawhpaya of Konbaung in a Testimony of Ayudhya War Captives,” in *Myanmar Historical Commission Conference Proceedings*, part 3 (Yangon: Myanma Historical Commission, 2005), 17.

<sup>116</sup> Jacques Leider sees the pardon as Badon-min's compromise in face of monastic opposition to a supposedly harsh and radical sentence. Leider, “Text, Lineage and Tradition,” 115. The context provided here (and also below) does not leave much room for such an argument. Patrick Pranke offers a more cautious account. “Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders,” 4–8.

<sup>117</sup> Ray, *An Introduction to the Study*, 235.

consisted of three abbots in the capital area, one in Yadanatheinga, and eight monks and several laymen from his native area.<sup>118</sup> Though this might seem a fairly significant following in some other case, it is not much given Atula's earlier prominence and the attempt by the religious chronicles and royal orders to portray him as the leader of the opposition.<sup>119</sup> If he was a real leader of the *dukot-tin* in 1784, the number of his personal followers who were subjected to interrogation would have been much larger. Accordingly, it looks more probable that instead of having serious influence, Atula was just a convenient victim for persecution, once a prominent figure, now powerless and discredited, but still remembered and thus suitable to provide a pretext for carrying out a more thorough purge of the royal *samgha*.<sup>120</sup>

### Key Dramatis Personae

The available documents do not make clear the roles of various actors involved in the trial. We do not know exactly who the royal teachers supervising scriptural exams were in April 1784 and who pressed for Atula's disrobing and pardoning and why.<sup>121</sup> We also do not know the attitude of the courtiers or the personal inclinations of Badon-min.

There is an argument that the trial was a joint initiative of some segments of the court and the *ayon* faction. For example, Jacques Leider tends to see the trial and harsh measures suggested by the order of April 25, 1784, as a reflection of Badon-min's forceful and even extreme personality.<sup>122</sup> Michael Charney claims that the masterminds were an important court minister Twinthin-taik-wun U Htun Nyo (who in Charney's opinion had a special grudge against the *dukot-tin* and, as Charney suggests without providing evidence, might have been made to disrobe (when a monk) because of their activities) and the unidentified "Religious Texts Library elders".<sup>123</sup>

The claim about U Htun Nyo is a misunderstanding. Charney relies on Ferguson who misread *The Embellishment of the Sāsana*. The chronicle mentioned that in early 1782 U Htun Nyo was sent to ask the abbots why they resumed instructing the novices to follow the *dukot-tin*

<sup>118</sup> This proportion highlights the local nature of Atula's following since the 1770s as well as the importance of Atula's links with his native area. Apparently, he maintained this connection throughout his career. He returned to the Okshitkye area before 1751, then again in 1751, he was active there during the reign of Alaungmintaya (cf. the construction of monastery in Leinhla in 1758), retired to Okshitkye during his banishment from Ava, and seems to have returned there after his disrobing. By the 1760s he must have owned at least two monasteries in the area—one in Okshitkye and another in Leinhla (Inhabitants of Okshitkye believe that his monastery was located on the site of the present Manaw-lingaya-kyaung. Inhabitants of Leinhla believe that Atula once resided at the site of presentday Manaungyadana-kyaungtaik (personal interviews with the villagers in June 2010). This belief however may confuse Atula with another monk from Leinhla, whose title was Atulavamsa Dhammarājaguru and who probably was a disciple of Zayit. On Atulavamsa see lithic inscription from Nyaungbingan village, Ayadaw township, dated 1133 (1771). Atulavamsa might have been also related to Okshitkye as his seal is now kept at Kanbya monastery in this village).

<sup>119</sup> Law, tran., *The History of the Buddha's Religion*, 138.

<sup>120</sup> In this regard, my argument that Atula was not an educator deserves attention. If it indeed was so, he simply did not have as many disciples as Taungbalu, Kyetthungin, Zayit, Htantabin, or the First Bagaya. At the same time, the fact that the trial and disrobing of Atula was noted by an Ayutthayan war captive brought to Ava after 1767 (i.e. when Atula was about to be banished or already banished) might indicate that he was still remembered and remained a public figure or, at least, that his disrobing drew keen public attention. Pongpattana, "King Bodawhpaya," 16–7.

<sup>121</sup> The only interrogator of Atula during the first part of the trial identified in the later sources is the first Bagaya Hsayadaw Shin Nandābhīdhaja. Apparently, he must have been one of the supervisors of exams. Jacques Leider names the First Maungdaung as one of the supervisors. Leider, "Text, Lineage and Tradition," 113. In fact, there is no evidence that the First Maungdaung had that responsibility prior to receiving such appointment on May 24, 1784. On his arrival in the royal city he was appointed to supervise the royal library and the copying of royal manuscripts.

<sup>122</sup> Leider, "Text, Lineage and Tradition," 84–95, 112–5.

<sup>123</sup> Charney, *Powerful Learning*, 97. The suggestion of the *dukot-tin* complicity in Htun Nyo's disrobing is unfounded and is basically a stretching of facts to prove Htun Nyo's involvement.

practice and record their answers. Ferguson inferred that it meant U Htun Nyo was appointed a judge in Atula's trial, and Charney seems to borrow that claim from him.<sup>124</sup>

Personal determination of Badon-min is also questionable. Though available royal orders show him staying the course, Badon-min's message to the First Maungdaung Hsayadaw Shin Nāna, his new monastic advisor and supervisor of the royal library, sent on April 12, 1784 (at a critical juncture when Atula was already summoned to Amarapura but had not yet arrived), casts a different light on the situation. It reveals the king wavering and requesting a confirmation while the First Maungdaung is confident and firm.<sup>125</sup>

Apart from the unproved involvement of U Htun Nyo, Charney's suggestion that certain monks were the movers behind the trial seems the most probable, though their identity remains to be clarified. At this point it is only possible to state that Atula's messages were allegedly submitted to the court by Hsonda, the idea of purification was supported by the First Maungdaung, and Atula's interrogation involved the First Bagaya.

### The 'Breathing Space' Given to Atula in 1782–1784

The timing of the trial raises questions as well. As mentioned above, messages sent by Atula and his supposed testimony concerning scriptural issues revealed nothing new—he had already spoken and written about that. It seems that Atula never backtracked on his earlier statements so it was technically possible to sue him on the basis of his existing writings. Moreover, a comparison of messages with their summary in the royal order which initiated the trial shows that the summary expanded the messages based on Atula's earlier submissions. Contrary to a statement in the royal order, the messages dated April 1784 did not claim that the correct conduct for novices is specified only in the *Cūlaganṭhi*.<sup>126</sup> This means that those who submitted the report on the contents of Atula's messages to Badon-min as was required by an order dated April 16, 1784, were aware of Atula's ideas, and framed the description to provide a better justification for the trial. Nevertheless, it still seems that if the trial was indeed targeting Atula, it might have occurred earlier, and probably should have done so. At the present stage of my research, the timing looks logical only if the trial is seen as a step towards the implementation of measures envisaged by the order dated March 12, 1784.

### The Validity of Evidence

The discrepancy between the messages and the royal order highlights the issue of the manipulation of data in the interest of the individuals compiling the documents. The problem looms large as one starts comparing the evidence thoroughly. A few such discrepancies have been already mentioned in the footnotes, but there are even more vivid examples. For instance, the record of a trial supposedly made on Badon-min's order by ex-monks Saddhammanandi and Nga Ngyein may well have been fixed. *The Views of King-Grandfather*, itself a problematic document, claims that the First Bagaya interrogated Atula about the textual support for the practice of covering and that the hearing was held in the *zayat* at Hsingyo Shwegu in Amarapura with ex-monks Nga Ngyein from Kanthit and Saddhammanandi from Chaunggauk appointed to

<sup>124</sup> Ferguson, "The Symbolic Dimensions," 197.

<sup>125</sup> The message questioned the reform saying "I take care of the exalted *sāsana* by rejecting *adhammavādī* and adhering to *dhammavādī*. Is the present purification proper or not?" Citing the precedents from the *Jātaka* and Asoka's example, the monk replied that the purification was proper and would allow the king to mature the perfection of caring for the benefit of the world and the attainment of wisdom as a prerequisite for obtaining *bodhi*. ပဋိမမောင်းတောင်သာသနာပိုင်ဆရာတော်၊ အမေးတော်ဖြင့် (မန္တလေး၊ ဇူလိုင်လ၊ ၁၃၂၃)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၆၅ (document no. 9 in the Appendix).

<sup>126</sup> Cf. palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ၈: ၂ – ၈: ၅ and folio ၈: ၂ (documents no. 5, 6, and 11 in the Appendix).

take notes.<sup>127</sup> Atula asked to appoint qualified people to keep the record; that was not done and *no record was taken in the end!* As a result of the trial, Atula was escorted around the city to declare that he is “a thorn in the *sāsana* and a thorn in the settlements.”<sup>128</sup>

Regardless of the authenticity of the trial report (or the claims in *The Views of King-Grandfather*), it is clear that the real weight of charges against Atula and the points he was supposedly condemned for do not justify the purge of the *dukot-tin* and the *gā mavāsī* which was triggered by his condemnation. The summoning of Atula’s disciples prior to the completion of the hearings, the swift appearance of the list of the enemies of the *sāsana*, and the rapid progress of public disrobing, petitioning, and “pardoning” testify to prior preparation on the part of those who were behind the adjudication.

In this regard I share the opinions of Patrick Pranke, Jacques Leider, and Michael Charney that the trial was basically a show one. There is, however, a further point that could be made here. Atula’s messages may not have been just a pretext, and the trial might not just be a cover up of something that was happening at that specific point in time in Amarapura which made such a trial necessary or desirable. The nature of the trial also has a bearing on the documents about it.

In terms of objectivity, the key orders (especially those intended to be proclaimed publicly, such as the ones dated June 3, 1782, and April 25, 1784) and the representations of the trial in these orders are not very different from the religious chronicles authored by the “two-shoulder” monks. In fact, if we compare the orders of June 3, 1782, and April 25, 1784, with the way the events between 1753 and 1782 are presented in *Treatise on the Lineage of the Elders* and in *The Embellishment of the Sāsana* it becomes clear that these documents have a shared agenda, employ similar rhetoric, and present things in similar ways. The key points are (1) the structural division of the *saṃgha* into three communities of *thingan-yon*, *dukot-tin*, and *gā mavāsī* (June 3, 1782, is the first time this notion appears in the documents; further on only these three categories were recognized by the *thingan-yon* reformers when checking the background of other monks and determining if they need to be reordained), (2) the description of the role of Atula, and (3) the accusation that he blocked the attempt of Shin Sujāta to prove the correctness of the *thingan-yon* practice. Given that, it seems probable that the “two-shoulder” monks were involved in formulating the order of June 3, 1782, and later reproduced their claims in the religious chronicles.

Also, the stigma of “the enemies of the *sāsana*” applied to Atula and other monks in the order on disrobing dated April 25, 1784 is a characteristic given to these monks by the supervisors of scriptural exams in the trial report. Thus, here the rhetoric of royal order is derived from monastic discourse and reflects the thinking or presentational techniques of the *thingan-yon* monks.

<sup>127</sup> The royal orders identify the location of the trial as the Thudama-zayat in the royal library. This royal library (which was one of the buildings ceremonially established to initiate the construction of Amarapura in December 1782-January 1783) is now inside the external enclosure of the Hsingyo Shwegu complex as Hsingyo Shwegu was constructed in April 1784 incorporating the royal library into its premises. According to the official royal chronicle, Thudama-zayat in the Hsingyo Shwegu complex dates to 1785 (i.e. is later than the trial). ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၃၉၂-၃၊ ၃၉၉; ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ဒုတိယတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၃၄. A sketch of Hsingyo Shwegu complex (referred to as the Kat-kyaw Hpaya at present) made by U Htun Yee is available in Masahiro Kitsudo, “A Survey of the Founders of the Amarapura Nikāya in Burma (Myanmar): Their Journeys and Higher Ordinations,” 椋山女学園大学研究論集 : 人文科学篇・社会科学篇・自然科学篇 = *Journal of Sugiyama Jogakuen University. Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences*. 33 (2002), 167. How the royal library looked like structurally prior to the construction of Hsingyo Shwegu as well as any details about the Thudama-zayat attached to it before 1785 are not known.

<sup>128</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. VI, 390.

### The Aftermath of the Trial

The acceptability of evidence gets stretched to the limit when we arrive at the question of what happened to Atula after the trial. An undated royal order (which I think was issued on April 27, 1784) permitted him to return to his native place.<sup>129</sup> *Wuntha-dipani* also mentions that he was sent there.<sup>130</sup> Minhla Thiyi Thihathu claims that Atula died in Okshitkye in 1148 (1786/87) at the age of 86 and after completing 66 rainy seasons as a monk.<sup>131</sup> This figure is possible only if he was not disrobed or if his disrobing was considered invalid! However improbable that outcome might seem, it is interesting to note that “culprits nos. 2 and 3,” i.e. U Gyaw Gale (or Shin Viriyārambha from Lawkathayahpu-taik) and U Tot Hpyu, who were interrogated alongside Atula on April 19, 1784 and disrobed about April 25, 1784, still remained monks in October 1787 as they were required to pass the monastic exams then.<sup>132</sup> For sure, both these monks were not accused of the *pārājika* offence, so the barriers to their readmission into the *saṃgha* were clearly less serious than in the case of Atula, but given the discrepancy between the representations of the events in royal orders and monastic chronicles and the way the things look after more thorough examination, I’d not totally rule out the possibility that after the trial Atula’s condemnation might have been recognized as unfair too.

An alternative interpretation to Atula’s return to Okshitkye has it that he was floated naked in a cage down the Ayeyarwaddy accompanied by a military escort to demonstrate that he is an unamendable criminal. He was supposedly released near Thayet-myo and died in Mindon few years later. As far as I know, the only evidence for that version is a work called *The Submissions of Ayudaw-mingala* (*Ayudaw-mingala shauk-hton*, SAM). Despite SAM being a fictional account,<sup>133</sup> the floating of Atula became a historiographic fact and was employed by Hpayabyu Hsayadaw, Than Tun, Htin Aung, Noel Singer, and Michael Charney.<sup>134</sup>

SAM was written by U Aung in 1910.<sup>135</sup> The author claimed that his work was based on a number of earlier texts available on white *parabaiks*, such as *Rājālaṅkāramañjū*, *Sāsanagottakārī*, and *Pañhakkamadīpanī*.<sup>136</sup> However, a comparison of SAM with other documents shows that such *parabaiks* (at least, *Sāsanagottakārī* and *Pañhakkamadīpanī* that are cited as the sources on monastic affairs) most likely never existed or could only be fakes postdating the 1870s (as the text contains terminology specific to this and later time frame). In terms of religious history, SAM conflates the conflict between the *ayon* and the *atin* with a conflict between the Thudama and Sulagandi monks which started in the 1870s. Monks from the *ayon* side are identified as the Thudama and the monks from the *atin* side are identified as the Sulagandis. Furthermore, the author of SAM thought that the *ayon* monks were in favor of covering one shoulder and *atin* monks were in favor of covering both shoulders (i.e. the opinions are reversed).

<sup>129</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. 119456 in UCL, folios ၵ ၵ - ၵ: ၵ (document no. 20 in the Appendix).

<sup>130</sup> မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသဒီပနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၅၈။

<sup>131</sup> A handwritten copy of a ms. no. 2030 in UCL, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. IV, 633.

<sup>133</sup> Tin Naing To in his study of accuracy and historicity of another work of U Aung dedicated to Badon-min’s and Sagaing-min’s minister U Hpaw U arrives at a similar conclusion that the text is predominantly a fiction.

<sup>134</sup> ဘုရားဖြူဆရာတော်၊ သာသနဗဟုသုတပြုကာသနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၃၂-၃; Than Tun, “The influence of occultism in Burmese history with special reference to Bodawphaya’s reign 1782–1819,” *The Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission* I, 2 (1960), 125–6 = Than Tun, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma* (Arran: Kiscadale, 1988), 139–40; Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 187–8; Noel Singer, *The Sorcerer-King and That “Great Abortion” at Mingun* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2004), 79–80; Charney, *Powerful Knowledge*, 98.

<sup>135</sup> ဦးအောင်၊ အယူတော်မဂ်လာလျှော်ထုံး ဖြစ်သော ကဝိသာရမဉ္ဇူသာကွမ်း ( [ ? ရန်ကုန် ] လယ်တီတရားသတင်းစာတိုက်၊ ၁၂၈၉ )၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၆၊ ၁၈၉။

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 48, 73. As far as I know, these texts are not known or mentioned anywhere, but in SAM.

SAM attributes the following statement to Badon-min:

Only in the *saṃgha* of the Thudama-gaing there are many persons known and famous as well-versed in the scriptures, as having penetrated [them], as having bright and profound intellect, [as capable of] a lion roar. [My] royal ancestors never appointed monks belonging to the Sulagandi-gaing as the *thathanapyu*. Only in the reign of my father the affairs of the *sāsana* were entrusted to Atula Hsaya which must have infatuated him with pride. That's why it is only because of Atula Hsaya that the affairs of the *sāsana* are in disorder and there are many impurities [in the *sāsana*]. [This thing] did not start just now, in the present reign. The old *thathanabaing* Atula stirred disorder in the *sāsana* and was not denounced, and because of that [the *saṃgha*] was split into the *atin-gaing of the upper-robe lineage* (sic!) and the *ayon-gaing of the lineage of those who placed dukot* (sic!). In the reign of my nephew, the ruler of Nga Singu, starting from the year 1141, a debate was held in the Thudama-[zayat] in which that Atula's *ayon-gaing* of the lineage of those who placed *dukot* was presided by Yadanasalwe [most likely, Yadanasanlut] Hsayadaw, Pyogan Hsayadaw, and Taungbalu Hsayadaw, these three [monks] and the *atin-gaing* of the upper robe was presided by Bagaya Hsayadaw, Gado Hsayadaw, and Hsonda Hsayadaw, these three [monks]. The side of the Sulagandis, i.e. Atula's *ayon-gaing* of the lineage of those who placed dukot, suffered a shameful defeat because they could not debate in conformity with the scriptures. [Due to that], starting from this reign let no monks from the Sulagandi-gaing be entrusted with the role of the *thathanapyu* [to supervise] the affairs of the *sāsana*. Let this order be recorded on a white official *parabaik* as a legacy order for all royal successors to know.<sup>137</sup>

SAM displays no awareness of the issues discussed in 1780–84, such as the disciplinary status of the novices vs. the monks, the acceptability of chest-binding for novices, the bases of authority in monastic practice, etc. Sectarian identifications of monks are confused and anachronistic (Male, Kyaunggauk, and Shwedaung Hsayadaws from the *ayon* side are made Atula's followers, while Htantabin and Minbu Hsayadaws from the *atin* side become "Thudama").<sup>138</sup> The division of the *saṃgha* into the *atin* and the *ayon* factions is blamed on Atula, which is a big departure from the argument of religious chronicles that the split was originated by Guṇābhilānkāra and the argument of royal orders that claimed that Atula initiated the unification of the *saṃgha* into the *dukot-tin* lineage and prevented the debate on the canonicity of the "one-shoulder" practice.

After the ascension of Badon-min Male Hsayadaw (the *ayon* monk who was appointed to supervise the affairs of the *sāsana* after the debate of 1780–81) is claimed to ally himself with Atula and revive the robe controversy together with the latter. SAM seems to be unaware of Atula's exile and implies his presence in Amarapura before the debate and disrobing, because it is claimed that the arbitrariness of Atula's legal decisions on family and property disputes caused widespread dissatisfaction in the capital area. Having learned about that, Badon-min allegedly decided to stop the subversive activities of Atula and Male and convened a hearing on the issue of robe-wearing and on the mode of intercalation in observing the rainy season (the calendrical issue emerges in the narrative right out of the blue).<sup>139</sup> Thus, the hearings of 1780–81, 1784 and later calendrical debates are conflated and Bagaya Hsayadaw, the chief speaker on the part of the *ayon* in 1780–81 and 1784 is replaced by a certain Nyaunggan Hsayadaw Khingyi Byaung.<sup>140</sup> All

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 46–7. Reference is to page numbers as they appear in the edition I have. In fact, they are misprinted.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 55–6.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 51–2. Reference is to misprinted page numbers.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 55–6. A monk from Nyaunggan village with lay name of Khingyi Byaung is not mentioned in any other known sources, but in SAM. Yet, this Khingyi Byaung bears the monastic title of Nyaunggan Hsayadaw Khingyi Yaung (Kavindābhiddhamavaradhaja Mahādhammarājādhirājaguru), so there might be a misprint in the name (Byaung instead of Yaung). However, Khingyi Yaung was only 31 year old in 1784 and thus was too young to play the key role in the trial. Moreover, Khingyi Byaung is identified in SAM as the *dhammasenāpati*, i.e. the *thathanabaing*; however, as far as I know, no monks from Nyaunggan village were ever appointed *thathanabaings*.



these confused details make it very unlikely that SAM's story of Atula's floating down the river is to be trusted.<sup>141</sup>

However, it is interesting to note that the account of SAM is not entirely imaginary. It manipulates a number of real events (such as the hearings under Nga Singu-min and Alaungmintaya's veneration of Atula) and even shows knowledge of some textual sources. For instance, it gives the list of monks presiding over the debate of 1780–81 as Hsonda Hsayadaw, Bagaya Hsayadaw, and Gado Hsayadaw (from one party) and Yadanasanlut Hsayadaw, Pyogan Hsayadaw, and Taungbalu Hsayadaw (from the other). This list appears only in *The Glass Palace Chronicle* and is unique as it is at variance with numerous earlier versions of the list of participants in the debate.<sup>142</sup> It is highly probable that U Aung relied on *The Glass Palace Chronicle* for this information.<sup>143</sup>

Though in somewhat modified way, SAM also reflected the tradition set by royal orders and supported by religious chronicles that Atula was personally responsible for the perpetration of the *dukot-tin* from 1753 to 1780. Thus, as far as the account on Atula goes, SAM was a marriage of fantasy and misinterpretation with some real historical propaganda. Given that degree of acquaintance with some post-1782 historiography, it might be possible (at least theoretically) that the story of Atula's floating was not entirely made up by U Aung but reflected some anecdotal accounts of the *ayon-atin* debate current in late nineteenth-century Burma.<sup>144</sup>

The appellation *dhammasenāpati* also seems anachronistic for 1784, it came into use after the appointment of the First Maungdaung Hsayadaw several years later.

<sup>141</sup> The currency of the story of Atula's floating down the river highlights the issue of unreliable information in Burmese biographical materials. Another thing that most likely never happened but entered the record on Atula is a manipulated story of two monks from Maungdaung village who were punished for following the "two-shoulder" practice by being assigned to carry earth for the construction of a stupa. In *Sāsanavamsappadīpikā* this event was fitted into Alaungmintaya's reign to claim that the royal palace and Atula's monastery were stricken with lightning, apparently as a punishment for such wrongdoing. Law, tr. *The History of the Buddha's Religion*, 129. However, if we give credence to Atula's writings (I'm inclined to do that, as Atula was apparently unaware of accusations that would be leveled against him some eighty years later), the punishment occurred during the reign of Dipeyin-min and the sentence was given by another monk, not by Atula. Palm-leaf ms. no. 11424 in UCL, folio ၈၀ ၵ. Accordingly, Atula's monastery was probably not struck by lightning, as Atula was not really involved in the trial.

It is interesting to note here that two opponents of Atula, the First Maungdaung and the First Bagaya, were also remembered in controversial ways. Later oral history and written documents testify that both monks were intermittently cast either as victimized scholar-monks or as essentially bad guys. Negative myth-making about the First Maungdaung resulted in a story that he disrobed every evening to spend a night with Badon-min's concubines and then passed re-ordination in the morning. Attempts to acquit the First Maungdaung from disrepute as a result of his disrobing during the latter part of Badon-min's reign resulted in a story that the disrobing was forced and undeserved.

The acquittal of the First Bagaya was also framed as a myth about forced disrobing. According to it, the First Bagaya disagreed with Badon-min on calendrical issues in 1812 and was undeservedly disrobed. In fact, the First Bagaya was disrobed and banished to his native village in 1794. As shown by a royal order, that happened because he took royal manuscripts from his donor who brought them without getting Badon-min's authorization. Later the manuscripts perished in a fire and the First Bagaya was considered guilty of a *pārājika* offence for knowingly taking and mishandling property which the owner did not intend to give to him. Negative myth-making about the First Bagaya included the claim that his monastic robes miraculously turned into a layman's dress when he was disrobed and that his corpse turned into a snake on the eve of cremation.

<sup>142</sup> See ဦးမောင်မောင်တင်၊ ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်၊ ပထမတွဲ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၃၇၂; ဦးအောင်၊ အယုတ်တော်မင်္ဂလာ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၄၇; other versions in palm leaf ms no. 3978 in UCL, *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. VI, 390, မဲထီးဆရာတော်၊ ဝံသဒီပနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၄၇, တတိယနံမော်ဆရာတော်၊ သီလဝိသောဓနီ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၀.

<sup>143</sup> At least one section of SAM explicitly refers to *The Glass Palace Chronicle*. ဦးအောင်၊ အယုတ်တော်မင်္ဂလာ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၉၃.

<sup>144</sup> That the story of Atula's floating down the river might have been based on some oral tradition predating SAM is just a possibility. Alternatively, it might have originated in that text. To check the earlier possibility, I've tried to confirm the details provided in SAM about Atula and Ayudaw Mingala by means of field research. As regards Atula, I've conducted a series of interviews in Okshityi area in March and June 2010 which showed a diverse set of ideas about Atula's career, all mediated by SAM to a different extent. The reliance on SAM was more often indirect, i.e. the informants referred to more contemporary sources, which, most likely, were derived from SAM. Some of the

A hint at a context in which accounts describing Atula's floating down the river might have appeared is perhaps provided by another work slightly postdating SAM. In 1920, Ashin Tejābhivamsa, a monk residing in the Taungngu area, published a pamphlet arguing against the followers of the Dwaya (Sulagandi) movement. To refute the latter's polemic against donations to *alajjī* monks based on the *Cūlaganṭhi*, Tejābhivamsa explained that the Sulagandi's opinion was shown to be wrong in several Vinaya works of the late nineteenth century (written by Shwegyin Hsayadaw Shin Jāgara, Mahabo Hsayadaw Shin Paduma, Thingaza Hsayadaw Shin Aggadhammālaṅkāra (1815–1886), and the Second Waziyayama Hsayadaw Shin Paññābhi (1830–1909)) and that Shin Indasāra from Sagaing was disrobed for holding that opinion and creating dissent in the *samgha* during the reign of Badon-min.<sup>145</sup> Perhaps to stress further that the reliance on the *Cūlaganṭhi* was deeply problematic historically, Tejābhivamsa also summarized the story of what he called the Mahaganthi/Thudama vs. the Sulaganthi debate under Badon-min which led to the disrobing of Atula.<sup>146</sup> This story looks like a faithful reproduction of SAM in an abridged form with a few slight corrections (e.g. Male Hsayadaw is replaced by some Ma-aung Hsayadaw, an unknown, perhaps fabricated person, and the Sulagandi/*Cūlaganṭhi* is more correctly spelt as the Sulaganthi/*Cūlaganṭhi*).

If juxtaposing the floating of Atula with polemic against the Dwaya was a rhetorical tool not invented, but adapted by Tejābhivamsa from some earlier works that similarly criticized the Dwaya/Sulagandi's opinion on the donations to *alajjī* monks, it is possible that the narrative of Atula's floating down the river naked was initially a fabrication aimed at discrediting the *Cūlaganṭhi* and those relying on that text by presenting the evidence of its problematic background and links. Even if it is not possible to determine the exact origin of that narrative at the present stage of research, it is clear that the usage of Atula's case by Tejābhivamsa follows a familiar model of targeting a convenient victim to dishonor a larger (and basically unrelated) monastic group. That is basically the same purpose that Atula's trial in 1784 has served.

## Conclusion

The present biography is a balancing act between stating the gaping lack of evidence which precludes conclusive investigation and acknowledging the circumstantial nature of key developments in Atula's career. It seems that this career had two critical moments—first, when

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informants went beyond SAM; for example, one of them claimed that Atula was floated down the river, released near Pyi, refused to accept his disrobing and stayed in a forest as a monk. Later he was visited by the future Shwegyin Hsayadaw Shin Jāgara (1822–1894) who studied under Atula and then founded the Shwegyin-gaing on the basis of Atula's instructions.

As regards Ayudaw Mingala, SAM claims that he built two stupas (Kyauksitpon Hpaya and Mingala Hteit Pan Hpaya) to the south of Khothan village. ဦးအောင်၊ အယူတော်မဂ်လာ၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၇၉။ To check that I visited Khothan, Kyauksitpon, and Mingala-gon villages in Monywa township in March, 2010. There I found two monuments attributed to Ayudaw Mingala, but both were claimed to be Mingala Hteit Pan Hpaya and in both cases the identification was clearly based on a copy of SAM the locals had.

The trustees of the stupa in Kyauksitpon (it has an alternative name of Shwetheindaw which might be its original designation) showed me handwritten notes on the biography of Ayudaw Mingala and his construction of Kyauksitpon and Mingala Hteit Pan Hpayas copied from SAM. In Mingala-gon I was shown a copy of SAM which belonged to the late abbot of local monastery who identified the temple in this village as Mingala Hteit Pan Hpaya. The monk had thoroughly studied the text marking it on many pages. The passage on construction of Mingala Hteit Pan was underlined and a new paragraph added on the margins describing how “our temple” was renovated. All in all, it is clear that local oral history, if such ever existed, was reconfigured to fit SAM which was apparently understood as a famous and seemingly old (and thus authentic) source.

(Judging from the architecture of two monuments in Kyauksitpon and Mingala-gon, I'd rather date them to the colonial period. No other stupas or temples which may be alternative prospects survive in Kyauksitpon and Mingala-gon.)

<sup>145</sup> အသျှင်သီရိဘဒ္ဒန္တ တေဇာဘိဝံသ၊ ဗာလောဝါဒနိဂ္ဂဟကျမ်း (ရန်ကုန်၊ လောကသာရ၊ ၁၂၈၁)၊ စာမျက်နှာ ၇-၂၅။

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 26–33.

Atula allied himself with Alaungmintaya and, second, when he was victimized in 1782–84. In my opinion, in both cases the developments were more due to a demand for a person like Atula, than to Atula’s personal initiative. In the 1750s Alaungmintaya probably needed someone who was outspoken and self-confident to guide (and, perhaps, publicize) his program of religious action. In the 1780s there was a demand for a prominent, recognizable, but essentially powerless personality who might be blamed for the “wrong” course of monastic practice and would strengthen the argument for a new royal program of religious action. In both cases, the situation in the *saṃgha* was too complex for a single monastic actor to have a critical influence on it. Accordingly, in both cases Atula’s name took on more importance than his actual historical role. A similar thing might have happened to Atula again in the late nineteenth century when the story about his trial might have been recycled to strengthen the critique of the Dwaya/Sulagandi movement. In fact, Atula should rather be remembered not as a culprit or a disgraced royal advisor, but as a person whose career and resultant public image reflect some important junctures through which the Burmese court monasticism went during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

We have too little information to understand how the alliance of Alaungmintaya and Atula was formed, but even the limited evidence we have suggests that Atula should have had a certain leadership background prior to joining Alaungmintaya in 1751. The reason why Alaungmintaya chose Atula as his teacher-monk was probably due to the latter’s ability to counsel on various policy matters and guide his patron in an ambitious program of religious action strengthening Alaungmintaya’s image as the *dharmarāja*. However, the very nature of Alaungmintaya’s reign and his preoccupation with securing his conquests made it impossible that a monastic reform under him could have a broad geographical outreach and affect remote areas or locations inhabited by unsympathetic monks. Thus, the unification of the *saṃgha* advocated by Atula in the 1750s was most likely constrained to the court monastic establishment.

The analysis presented here indicates that Atula’s position during the first Konbaung reigns was not central to the proliferation of the “one-shoulder” manner, nor could his trial in 1784 have had a decisive effect on crushing the opposition to the “two-shoulder” reform. The “one-shoulder” dress code for novices was entrenched long before Atula’s rise to prominence, and it did not disappear with his condemnation. Later in his reign Badon-min became disillusioned with his monastic advisors and their recipes for reform, and he again allowed the “one-shoulder” manner of dress and even such previously proscribed practices as hat-wearing and using “non-canonical” types of fans. As a result, the documents from the 1830s testify to the fact that up to that time novices in certain monasteries in the capital area still followed the “one-shoulder” manner.<sup>147</sup>

The currently accepted image of Atula was constructed by several royal orders in 1782–1784. The order passed on June 3, 1782, personally blamed him for the survival of the *dukot-tin* between 1752 and 1780. In effect, it set the stage for the 1784 trial, and did it when Atula presumably was in Okshitkye and had not yet done anything “wrong” (e.g., violated any applicable royal command). The order dated March 12, 1784, envisaged the purge of the *dukot-tin* and *gāmaṃvāsī* abbots, and the trial of Atula provided a pretext to carry it out six weeks later. The order dated April 25, 1784, which required that Atula and other “enemies of *sāsana*” should be disrobed, was phrased as a logical continuation of earlier orders. The role of Atula was defined, and in the nineteenth century the “two-shoulder” religious chronicles inscribed it in history.

<sup>147</sup> Palm-leaf ms. no. Kin 58 in NL, folio ၆၀၅ ၊.

Besides providing an excuse for the repression of the *dukot-tin* and *gāmvāsī* monks, the trial of Atula could have important psychological implications. It exonerated Alaungmintaya of any guilt with regard to supporting the wrong dress code as now Atula was publicly condemned as the person who misled the king. The trials also delegitimized the *dukot-tin* as a historic community, for now their track-record of royal support was attributed to misconceptions and fraud. It also provided a convenient tag line for the official discourse on the unsettled condition in the *saṃgha*. The disorder was attributed to the wrongdoings of a kind of evil genius who was now removed from the community and whose influence had been uprooted. It was not the fault of the initiators of the trial that the reform of the 1780s and 1790s did not achieve its presumed objective of unifying the monkhood in the end. At least they created a nice story to explain what made the reform necessary and how it proceeded.

The present biography provides a limited discussion of the situation in the Burmese *saṃgha* in the eighteenth century and of the reasons of its preoccupation with the reform at this time. It sets aside the important issue of relations between the monks and the crown and the interests or expectations of both sides concerning each other. It also does not offer any conclusion about the outcomes of this reform process. All these tasks require further research, and I personally would like to know the larger picture. The discussion here suggests a way out of the box of the “one-shoulder” vs. the “two shoulder” paradigm and shows that the developments and debates in the Burmese *saṃgha* were more complex. The fissures often occurred within a single community (as in the case of a conflict between Atula and other members of the Tongaing) and switching sides was not uncommon. Still, the nature and the details of inter-monastic competition are not yet clear.

Rhetorical and conceptual links between royal orders on Atula, the trial report, and monastic chronicles highlight the key roles played by monks in initiating the reform under Badon-min, providing its justification, and keeping its momentum. In this aspect the present study suggests that a reinvestigation of monastic reforms in Burma is desirable, given that more often such reforms were analyzed as royal initiatives and royal prerogative.

While evaluating Atula, it should be acknowledged that his ambition as Alaungmintaya’s teacher was not to further the “one-shoulder” dress code but to ensure a proper standard of monastic behavior, to transform the *saṃgha* into a worthy recipient of donations and an effective vehicle of kammatic progress. In his capacity as the royal advisor, Atula put much effort into promoting conformity with the Vinaya (in the way he and other *tisiwareits* understood this). In this regard he had much more in common with his “two-shoulder” opponents than they were willing to admit in their writings.

At the same time, the reform in eighteenth-century Burma as envisaged by the *tisiwareits* was not limited to monastic practices (or to a single such practice such as the manner of wearing the robe) but covered lay behavior as well. Reforming lay behavior and promoting larger awareness of the monks’ conformity with the Vinaya when choosing an appropriate candidate for donations seems to be an important innovative feature employed by the *tisiwareits*. In this sense, the purpose of this movement was not a purely monastic reform, but a more general religious reform. A combination of monastic and lay offering in one package is a rarer instance of Buddhist reform which awaits further exploration. In contrast to that, the reform as promoted by the members of the “two-shoulder” faction in the 1780s and 1790s looks like a more conservative and traditional policy of vying for leadership on the basis of alleged strict adherence to the Vinaya.

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Alexey Kirichenko is an assistant professor at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Moscow State University, Russia and a visiting senior research fellow at the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre, ISEAS, and Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. His primary research interests include monastic Buddhism, pre-colonial history, and historiography of Burma. He can be reached at vamsa00@gmail.com.

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of the construction of the city of Amarapura]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ စာပေဗိမာန်၊ ၁၉၇၆ (တက္ကသိုလ်များ စာအုပ်ပြုစုရေးကော်မတီ ပေပုရိုက်စာစဉ် - ၅)။

ဘုရားဖြူဆရာတော် [Hpayabyu Hsayadaw]။ သာသနဗဟုသုတပွဲကာသနီ [The explication of knowledge about the sāsana]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဘုရားဖြူစာပေထိန်းသိမ်းရေးအဖွဲ့၊ ၁၉၉၃။

ဆုံထားဆရာတော် [Hsonda Hsayadaw]။ သာသနသုဒ္ဓိဒီပကပါဌ်နှင့် သာသနသုဒ္ဓိဒီပကနိဿယ [The illumination of the purification of the sāsana and nissaya thereof]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၁၉၈၀။

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ဣန္ဒဝဇီရာဘိလင်္ကာရ သီရိဓဇမဟာဓမ္မရာဇာဓိရာဇေရ (မုံရွေးဆရာတော်သျှင်အာဒိစ္စ) [Indawazirabilingaya Thiyidaza-mahadamayazadiyazaguru (Monywe Hsayadaw Shin Adeitsa)]။ *ရာဇိန္ဒရာဇဝေရမဏ္ဍနီ ခေတ်မဟာရာဇဝင်ကျော်* [The great celebrated chronicle called the splendid adornment of the lord of kings]။ အတွဲ ၄။ လက်နှိပ်စက်မှု၊ ၁၉၆၈ [Typewritten copy available in the Northern Illinois University Library, call no. DS528.5 .A3471968]။

ခင်ခင်စိန်၊ ဒေါ် (တည်းဖြတ်သူ) [Khin Khin Sein, Daw, ed.]။ *အလောင်းမင်းတရားအမိန့်တော်များ* [Royal orders of Alaungmintaya] ။ ရန်ကုန်၊ မြန်မာသမိုင်းကော်မရှင်၊ ၁၉၆၄ (မြန်မာသမိုင်းကော်မရှင် ကျမ်းစဉ် - ၅)။

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\_\_\_\_\_, “Monasheskaya stratifikatsiya i pridvornoe monashestvo kak osobaya gruppa v buddhiskoi samghe Birmy v 17 i 18 vekah [Monastic stratification and court monks as a specific entity in Burmese Buddhist samgha of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries].” *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 13: Vostokovedenie* 2008, no. 4: 3–23.

\_\_\_\_\_, “Taunggwin Hsayadaw and the Transformation of Monastic Hierarchies in Colonial Burma,” forthcoming.

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မဟာဓမ္မသင်္ကြံ [Mahadamathingyan]။ သာသနာလင်္ကာရစာတမ်း [The embellishment of the sāsana]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၅၆။

- မောင်မောင်တင်, ဦး [Maung Maung Tin, U]။ *ကုန်းဘောင်ဆက်မဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး* [The great extensive royal chronicle of the Konbaung dynasty]။ ပဉ္စမအကြိမ်။ ပထမနှင့် ဒုတိယတွဲ။ ရန်ကုန်၊ တက္ကသိုလ်များ သမိုင်းသုတေသနဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၂၀၀၄.
- မဲထီးဆရာတော် [Mede Hsayadaw]။ *ဝံသဒီပနီ* [The illumination of the lineage]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၆၇.
- Mendelson, Michael E. *Sangha and State in Burma: a Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975.
- မင်းကြီး မဟာဇေယျသင်္ခယာ [Mingyi Mahazeyathinkhaya]။ *တစ္ဆတ္တဒီပနီကျမ်း* [Exposition on ghosts]။ မန္တလေး၊ မြန်မာ့တာရာ၊ 1906.
- ပဌမမောင်းထောင်သာသနာပိုင်ဆရာတော် [Pahtama Maungdaung Thathanabaing Hsayadaw]။ *အမေးတော်ဖြေ* [Answers to king's questions]။ မန္တလေး၊ ဧမ္မုမိတ်ဆွေ၊ ၁၃၂၃.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . “တိဂုမ္မစေတီယထောမနာကျမ်း [A praise of Tigumba cetiya]”။ *မဟာပဏာမကျမ်း* [Great salutation]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဝိဇ္ဇာဗျူဟာအဖွဲ့၊ ၁၉၈၀။ စာမျက်နှာ ၁၁၇-၇၆.
- ပဲခူးမြို့၊ ကြခတ်ဝိုင်းကျောင်းတိုက်ဆရာတော် [Pegu-myo Kyakhatwaing-kyaungtaik Hsayadaw]။ *သာသနိကရာဇဝံသဝိဘာဝနီကျမ်း* [Explanation of royal and religious history]။ ပဲခူး၊ ကြခတ်ဝိုင်းသာသနာပြုအသင်း၊ ၁၉၉၂.
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- ပုည, ဦး [Ponnya, U]။ *သာသနာလျှောက်နှင့် ဆွမ်းတော်ကြီးစာတမ်း* [Submission on [the condition] of the sāsana and the account of the great offering]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ၁၉၅၉.
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- Singer, Noel. *The Sorcerer-King and That “Great Abortion” at Mingun*. New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2004.
- တတိယနံမော်ဆရာတော် [Tatiya Namaw Hsayadaw]။ *သီလဝိသောဓနီကျမ်း* [Purification of moral conduct]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ သာသနာရေးဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၁၉၉၂.
- တောဇာဘိဝံသ, အသျှင်သီရိဘဒ္ဒန္တ [Tezabiwuntha, Ashin Thiri Batdanta]။ *ဗာလောဝါဒနိဂ္ဂဟကျမ်း* [Refutation of a foolish doctrine]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ လောကသာရ၊ ၁၂၈၁.
- Than Tun, “The influence of occultism in Burmese history with special reference to Bodawphaya’s reign 1782–1819,” *The Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission* 1, 2 (1960): 117–45.
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- သမ္မာမိ၊ ဆရာတော် ဦး [Thanbawdi, Hsayadaw U]။ *မဟာဝဂ္ဂပတ်တောင်ရာဇဝင်သမိုင်းကျမ်း* [Chronicle of Mahahngetpittaung]။ မန္တလေး၊ သုခဝတီ၊ ၁၃၁၇.
- သီရိသောဘန, အရှင် [Thirithawbana, Ashin]။ *မဟာဝဂ္ဂါရနိကာယသာသနဝံသဒီပနီ* [The illumination of the sāsana lineage of the Mahadwaya-nikāya]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ လယ်တီမဏ္ဍိုင်၊ ၁၉၇၄.

သီရိဥဇနာ [Thiriuzana]။ လောကဗျူဟာကျမ်း [Arrangement of the world]။ ဦးဖိုးလတ်တည်ဖြတ်သည်။ ဒုတိယအကြိမ်။  
ရန်ကုန်၊ အစိုးရ၊ ၁၉၆၂။

သုဒဿန၊ ဦး [Thudathana, U]။ ညောင်ကန်သမိုင်းဖြစ်စဉ်သာသနာဝင် [History and *sāsanavaṃsa* of Nyaunggan  
village]။ ရန်ကုန်၊ စစ်သည်တော်၊ ၂၀၀၂။

သုသောဓိတမဟာရာဇဝင်ကြီး [Purified great extensive chronicle]။ စတုတ္ထတွဲ။ ရန်ကုန်၊ သုဓမ္မဝတီ၊ ၁၉၂၂။

ရာကျော်၊ ဦး [Ya Kyaw, U]။ မြန်မာမဟာမင်္ဂလာမင်းခမ်းတော် [Royal ceremonies of Myanmar]။  
နန်းညွန့်ဆွေတည်းဖြတ်အမှတ်ရေး။ ရန်ကုန်၊ ပုညစာအုပ်တိုက်၊ ၁၉၆၈။