THE MORAL DEMOCRACY

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF **AUNG SAN SUU KYI**

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Michał Lubina

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Aung San Suu Kyi (Rangoon, Burma, December 2011), US State Department (Wikimedia commons)

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Preface

"Men like to justify their activities on moral grounds and colour them with warm glow of humanitarianism"

John S. Furnivall[1]

Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, an acclaimed Polish writer who visited Burma in 1952 at the invitation of U Nu's government, wrote in his diaries about "three features that shaped the mentality of postcolonial Burmese elites": conservatism in family life, "colonial snobbism in Victorian dress" and a thin layer of Europeanism in their exterior outlook.[2] The main theme of his observations was that the Burmese elites of the 1950s dressed and behaved in a Western manner, yet this was only a thin layer that covered a deeply ingrained local, Buddhist identity.

Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought is precisely like that.

There are two most important components of her political thought: Buddhism and democracy. One is local – Burmese and the other one is Western – international. For decades she was better known for the latter, and considered – only partially correct, as it has appeared – as a Burmese propagator of universal values such as democracy. For this Suu Kyi became a globally acclaimed, legendary "democracy icon", who received a deluge of international awards and prizes, with Nobel Peace Prize being the most important one. And then, in the mid-2010s, came shock and disbelief when Suu Kyi, politically put on the spot by the Rohingya crisis, chose loyalty to her country over universal values. Consequently, admiration turned into condemnation (at least in the Western world) and then in wide media coverage and opinion of Western elites "Burma's Gandhi" became "Burma's Mugabe."

What was lacking all along, was a thorough analysis of her political thought that would, perhaps, spare some self-defeating illusions and wrong predictions, at least on the academic level. This book – to my best knowledge, the first ever monograph on

[1] John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice. A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, 2nd edition, New York University Press, New York 1956, p. 6.

[2] Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, *Podróż do Burmy* [*A Journey to Burma*], Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1999 (reprint of 1984), p. 41.

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Suu Kyi's entire political thought[3] – intends to fill this gap. Its main aim is to present Suu Kyi's political thought in detail as being intellectually in-between two worlds – Burmese and Western – and yet with a predominance of the former. In being so, Suu Kyi is the intellectual epigone of the Burmese elites of the 1950s, so well summarized by Herling-Grudziński.

Aung San Suu Kyi spoke passionately about non-violence, she wrote involved articles about compatibility of democracy with Buddhism and she won the hearts and minds of so many with her call for the freedom from fear. Although this was not the most important aspect of her legend – this role certainly goes to the dramatic story of Suu Kyi's political struggle with the generals (not being a part of this book)[4] – yet Suu Kyi's political thought certainly played its part, even if secondarily. For it seemed – for more than two decades – that Suu Kyi was a perfect, non-Western propagator of democracy, human rights, rule of law and other values that (as many in the West hope and believe) are universal. Yet a deeper analysis reveals that Suu Kyi intellectually, indeed, has been a democrat all along, but a Burmese democrat. That is why even when she vehemently advocated Western concepts, such as rule of law or individual freedom, at the same time she balanced it by very Burmese concepts of unity, responsibility and duty. Thus, Suu Kyi's democracy represents both rights and responsibilities in a way – quite far from the Western understanding of democracy – best seen in her message to her party members: "according to democratic principles, everyone has the right to have their own beliefs, to think independently and to have freedom of expression. But if one acts disloyally in exercising those rights, one is a renegade, a traitor."[5] This understanding of democracy is very Burmese and proves that Western intellectual components in Suu Kyi's political thought are just the surface layer. Beneath there is a very Burmese Buddhist approach to politics.

Suu Kyi understands democracy and other universal (or Western) values in a Buddhist way and she reasons about politics using Buddhist ideas, idioms and concepts. Even when she propagated concepts hitherto unknown, or little known in Burma, like human rights, she advocated them using Buddhist intellectual framework. This Buddhist dominance of her political thought had several consequences, the most important one

[3] For earlier books/articles that that partially deal with Suu Kyi's political thought, see: the latter part of this preface.

[4] This is not a book on Suu Kyi's political struggle with the generals: I wrote about this elsewhere, in my political biography of Suu Kyi in Polish (Michał Lubina, *Pani Birmy. Biografia polityczna Aung San Suu Kyi* [*The Lady of Burma. A Political Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi*], Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2015); This is not, too, a chronological book – sometimes I intentionally break the chronology in order to show the coherence of Suu Kyi's thought: despite fluctuations and modifications, her political thought since 1988 is quite constant.

[5] *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on 27–5–1999*, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199906/msg00285.html (access: 08.07.2018).

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being that her approach to politics has first and foremost been a moral one. Suu Kyi has presented democracy not as a political system, not as an institutional framework, or not even as "the worst form of government, except for all others."[6] No. Suu Kyi presented democracy in a very Burmese Buddhist way: as a moral value. That is why her vision of democracy (and of politics in general) is a moral vision. It is something I propose to call "the moral democracy."

It is a Buddhist-inspired vision of conscious individuals who are able to improve themselves, to see by themselves that democracy is the only system that enables individuals to develop; consequently, they choose it. In doing so they help themselves and, equally important, they help others, too, as democracy with its benign features establishes environment that serves each and every one. This democracy is built on onward-based qualities: morality which leads to correct behaviour, responsible usage of rights and – in its ultimate ideal – to unity in reaching common goal and reaping its fruits. In this vision, technical, external aspects – like systemic framework, legislative matters, institutional and administrative reforms, economic plans, or electoral systems – are of secondary importance. For Suu Kyi moral people make good system. And nothing else matters. Once democracy is established, sooner or later everything will be fixed, all failures corrected. Once it gets on a good, democratic track, Burma will return to its proper place among the nations of the world.

The moral dominance of Suu Kyi's thought has several consequences. First of all, on a short-term political basis, it is unsurprising that after two and a half years in power, Suu Kyi's governance – that eventuated in 2015 after long twenty seven years in opposition and lasts until now – from the current perspective can be considered a failed one. Unfortunately, and predictably, it turned out that in governing a country competences matter more than morality and her government falls short on competence in (too) many aspects. Not only she did not reform Myanmar, but her government – so far – proved to be less successful in transforming the country than its predecessors, Thein Sein's cabinet.[7] Second of all, and more important from the point of view of political thought, this moral dimension of Suu Kyi's political thought was her biggest asset both inside and outside Burma. It was precisely thanks to this moral approach, enhanced and validated by her personal sacrifices, that she became a beloved person in Burma – a "female bodhisattva." And it was exactly this moral approach that made her famous worldwide as she became an epitome of the universal battle of good and evil and one of the very few people beyond controversies. The last, third argument, however, is the fact

[6] Winston Churchill, *Speech, House of Commons, November 11, 1947*, in: *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, vol. 7, ed. R. Rhodes James, Chelsea House Publishers, New York 1974, p. 7566.

[7] On the other hand, if one takes into account all years of Tatmadaw's rule in Myanmar, the balance sheet would not be so unfavourable for NLD as NLD's failed hopes cannot match six decades of army's mismanagement of the state.

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that the same reason that made her famous and admired worldwide, now contributed to her fall from grace. For too many outside Burma it is impossible to understand how Suu Kyi – yesterday's global personification of good and morality – can now silently endorse crimes against humanity conducted in her country and accept forced relocation of 700 thousand people. A cynic would quote Bertrand Russell's words ("we have two kinds of morality side by side: one which we preach but do not practice and another which we practice but seldom preach")[8] and add a commentary that it applies especially to politicians. One, however, may offer a more favourable explanation: that Suu Kyi represents a tragic clash of ideas, including moral ideas, with political reality. Whatever the case, it was morality that made her famous, it was the same moralistic attitude that contributed to her removal from international Olympus and it is this moral understanding of politics that is the hallmark of her political thought, which is here to stay for longer, as political ideas last longer than changing political circumstances and fashions.

Aung San Suu Kyi's moral reasoning about politics, derived from Buddhist background, enforces concrete research methods in analysing her political thought.[9]

[8] Bertrand Russell, *Sceptical Essays,* with a new Preface by John Gray, Routledge, London–New York 2004 (reprint of 1928), p. 84.

[9] On the methodological level, this book will apply hermeneutic approach ("in order to understand the way people behave, we need to understand their motives for doing what they are doing and what they think they are doing, and also to know their world outlook and how they see their place in the world") based on an attempt to understand social actions: "the understanding of actions has to be based on the understanding of the subjective meaning," while the latter "is, in turn, dependent on the particular context" – and hermeneutics is the method of understanding "a work in terms of its context." In the intercultural or trans-cultural context, the understanding of the context "becomes even more essential"; thus Köchler's concept of "trans-cultural dialogue" should be applied. This trans-cultural dialogue, in contrast to inter-cultural dialogue "is a dynamic concept pointing at the capability of transcending (and possibly, transforming) one's own horizon of understanding towards other forms of cultural self-realization, and not merely of relating and comparing abstracts contents of one's own cultural environment to other such environments as it characterizes mere inter-civilizational encounters." Köchler's concept of the hermeneutics of trans-cultural understanding ("the basis of any trans-cultural dialogue is the critical self-awareness") follows Gadamar's "horizon of understanding" (determined by all socio-cultural environments a person is integrated in) – a person understands the world as a result of complex interaction of specific horizons of understanding that are constantly overlapping." In this context, "the critical self-awareness applies to the gap between the horizon of the author and the horizon which the objective of investigation belongs to", while "the inclusion of critical self-awareness in the process of hermeneutic understanding prevents from evaluating in comparison with one's own norms and values." This guarantees value-freedom: one of Weberian criterions of social science (Franziska Blum, *Teaching Democracy. The Program and Practice of Aung San Suu Kyi's Concept of People's Education*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, pp. 13–15; see also: Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, University of California Press, London–Los Angeles (*et al*.) 1978, p. 4; Vernon Bogdanor, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Science*, Blackwell Reference, Oxford (et al.) 1999, p. 153; Hans Köchler, *Philosophical Foundations of*

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A typical analysis of a political thought of a philosopher, politician or another individual, would require a comparative analysis of his/her thought with rooted (Western) political concepts in political science (preferably with Aristotle and other classics) and this book does it whenever it is possible (which means: sometimes).[10] In general, however, such approach would make little sense as Suu Kyi's political thought in its prime dimension – democracy – is quite original (or vague). It represents an intriguing intellectual indigenization of democracy, yet it would be a challenging, if not self-defeating task to situate Suu Kyi's democracy within known concepts of democracy in political science – that is why Luhmann's definition of democracy as "the illusionary component of all future constitutions" is perhaps the nearest suitable one.[11]

Suu Kyi's references to Western democratic traditions (such as social contract) have only a scant relation to Hume or Locke; this is only the surface level. What really matters in case of Suu Kyi is that her thought is deeply Buddhist. That is why this book, instead of following the classical path (introducing main concepts in Western political science and then applying it to an individual) chooses to indulge deeply into Buddhist political thought and situate Suu Kyi within the Burmese intellectual tradition.

Hence, in this book Suu Kyi's political thought will be presented thoroughly within the framework of the Burmese political thought, with special emphasis put on these

Civilizational Dialogue. The Hermeneutics of Cultural Self-Comprehension versus the Paradigm of Civilizational Conflict, International Progress Organization, Vienna 1997).

[10] Whenever it is possible, I situate Suu Kyi's political thought within concepts created by political philosophers (David Hume, John Locke, Karl Popper), politicians (Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela), political thinkers and writers (Martin Luther King, Václav Havel, Berthold Brecht, George Orwell) and others.

[11] Following the analysis of her writings and speeches (itself the essential basis for understanding Suu Kyi, her political thought, her political role and the relationship between her political thought and Burmese political thought), and inductive approach presented here, one may repeat after Blum that one should refrain from "presenting a definition of the term democracy ex ante" as well as from judging of Suu Kyi's "concept on definitions of the same" and one should "let Suu Kyi speak 'in her voice.'" This "speaking in her voice" means that the most suitable definition of democracy (or rather of controversies surrounding a definition of democracy) is that of Niklas Luhmann: "around 1800 the concept of democracy began to be valued precisely because of its internal impossibility: as the illusionary component of all future constitutions, as the concept of future. This appears to have become commonplace, but it does not seem to agree well with the concept itself. Depending on which concept of democracy we choose, the future of democracy appears different. And each different future also creates problems in the present that one believes others do not see or do not take seriously enough. If democracy is about reason and freedom, about emancipation from societally conditioned tutelage, about hunger and need, about political, racist, sexist and religious suppression, about peace and about worldly happiness of any kind, then things in fact look pretty bad" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, pp. 13–14; Niklas Luhmann, *Political Theory in the Welfare State*, transl. J. Bednarz, de Gruyten, Berlin 1990, p. 231).

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aspects of Burma/Myanmar's[12] political thought that shaped and influenced Suu Kyi: canonical and post-canonical Buddhist texts, precolonial heritage of Burma, colonialism and anticolonial struggle and the 1950s with their intellectual climate. The pivotal (personal, political and intellectual) importance of Suu Kyi's father – Aung San – is described in another, separate chapter. The narrative on all these issues – crucial to understand Suu Kyi's own political thought – is interspersed with Suu Kyi's own ideas, comments and interpretation of her country's political heritage. This lengthy background gives way to detailed description and interpretation of Suu Kyi's own political thought, with separate subchapters on the most important traits of her ideas: non-violence, democracy, education, unity, responsibility and discipline; an individual as the ultimate agent of change; and a comparative analysis of Suu Kyi's thought vis-à-vis the political ideas of her foes, Myanmar generals. This all serves to place Suu Kyi within one of two dominant traits of the Burmese political thought (in accordance with Walton's theory of two meta-approaches in the Burmese political thought) – an optimistic narrative concerning human beings and their capacity to overcome their falling nature and, consequently, their ability to construct benign political systems (like democracy); a tradition that with some reservations may be called a democratic one.

Suu Kyi's political thought presented here is derived mostly from her articles and speeches written/spoken between the 1980s and 2010s in English, and from her Burmese texts translated into English.[13] The most important ones are: the collection

[12] Given the controversies around this country's names (internationally Burma before 1989 and Myanmar after, domestically Myanma as the official name and Bama as the informal one) – which, although not identical, can be used as synonyms – I use both these names: Burma when I refer to period before 1989 and Myanmar afterwards; nevertheless, I give preference to Burma as this was Suu Kyi's own choice (before 2015; afterwards she changed her stance). I also use name Burmese for the people of Burma/Myanmar and Burman for the dominant ethnic group (Bamar). I use the name Aung San Suu Kyi without the Burmese homographic Daw ("Aunt"); I am aware that in Burmese she should be called with "Daw" (calling her plainly by her name might even be seen as unkind), but this book is in English and in English not only the lack of Daw does not mean anything negative but also Aung San Suu Kyi (without "Daw") is still the most popular form. Thus, I will not complicate (itself a very complicated matter with Burmese names) further and I will stay with Aung San Suu Kyi (without Daw). As for Pāli names I followed the Pāli version instead of the more popular Sanskrit ones, so I used *kamma* instead of karma, *dhamma* instead of dharma, *nibbāna* instead of nirvana etc. If, however, the Sanskrit version (or any other version) appeared in a quotation, I left it as it was without adjusting it to Pāli version.

[13] In short, I concentrate on her long essays written in English for international audience and on her speeches to the Burmese people spoken in Burmese and translated into English. I believe these are the most important sources of Suu Kyi's political thought. Although I've been learning Burmese, still haven't reach a proficiency level that would allow me to read her Burmese texts in original. However, under the supervision of my Burmese language teacher, dr. Than Htaike, I checked several Suu Kyi's texts in Burmese to come to conclusions similar to that expressed by researchers more fluent in Burmese than me: that Suu Kyi uses similar ideas and concepts in both her English and

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"Freedom from Fear and other writings" edited by her late husband Michael Aris[14]; the collection of twenty five of her rallies over the gate of her house translated to English from Burmese ("Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People"); the lengthy interview of Suu Kyi conducted by Alan Clements ("A Voice of Hope") and her "Letters from Burma"; and – after 2016 when she assumed the position of power (de facto, though not de iure, of the leader of Myanmar as the State Counsellor) – her speeches collected on the State Counsellor's website. This is complemented by other speeches, interviews and texts of Suu Kyi found on Burma Online Library, Burma Press Summary, Burma.net, The Irrawaddy and elsewhere. Naturally, I used other sources whenever it was possible.

The majority of the content comes from the late 1980s and 1990s where Suu Kyi had the will and ability to produce these intellectual works – in the late 1980s and the early 1990s she (successfully) tried to win the hearts and minds of the (Western) world to her cause and in order to do this she wrote her most important international texts. As for her speeches, she spoke in length during 1988/1989 electoral campaign and from the gate of her house after the release from her house arrest in 1995 (rallies over the gate that lasted more than one year, from mid-1995 to mid-1996); she randomly spoke elsewhere. Majority of interviews with Suu Kyi also come from 1996 until 2000. She spent most of the first decade of this century locked in house arrest (with a short interval between 2002 and 2003 when she embarked on another campaign tour). Once she was released from house arrest for the last time in 2010, she was speaking during electoral campaigns

Burmese writings/speeches – her speeches in Burmese are more localized (proverbs, more Buddhist vocabulary and stronger accent on Buddhism) whereas her texts to international audience are more theoretically elaborated and sophisticated: she links her ideas with Western concepts. One cannot, however, claim that Suu Kyi says one thing to the Burmese and another to the world. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, her most important texts are either in English or translated into English. And those Burmese texts translated into English prove the above mentioned rule: that she keeps telling more less the same message in her both Burmese and English texts and speeches. This all makes writing this book on English sources only – with all the reservations I am perfectly aware of – possible.

[14] The role of Suu Kyi's husband, Michael Aris, in influencing Suu Kyi's thought is probably crucial yet extremely challenging to prove at the same time. Given lack of sources and Suu Kyi's constant tendency to distance herself from her husband in public (a politically understandable decision given the logic of her confrontation with Tatmadaw) it is almost impossible to trace Aris' influence on his wife. But there must have been a strong one: their stay in Bhutan, their sixteen years of living together (with small intervals) and Suu Kyi's own academic attempts under his eyes must have inspired Suu Kyi this way or another. Aris was a leading scholar in Tibetan and Bhutanese studies, so he might have influenced Suu Kyi's understanding of Buddhism's concepts and perhaps even her Mahāyāna-inspired "compassionate Buddhism." However, this is only a hypothesis: as long as their private correspondence remains locked in Bodleian Library in Oxford, this issue needs to wait to be resolved. That is why due to lack of sources in this book Suu Kyi's husband, Michael Aris as well as Suu Kyi's mother, Khin Kyi (for a partial description of Khin Kyi's influence, see: chapter seven) are two major absentees.

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of 2012 and 2015. Since taking over the power in 2016 she had several public speeches, though not as frequent as some expected.

What characterizes Suu Kyi's political thought is a certain kind of repetition of ideas. Basically speaking, Suu Kyi in 2018 keeps telling the same (moral) message that she was preaching in 1988 when she entered politics. Naturally, accents are put on different aspects, but overall her political thought remains quite consistent, if not static. This certainly has something to do with her self-proclaimed task of educating and teaching the nation democracy – she most probably perceives that her vision must be presented to generation after generation of the Burmese people. Suu Kyi in her approach to the people of Burma clearly believes in one of teaching's golden rules: that material frequently repeated is a material best learned.

As for the secondary sources, there are very few texts written about Suu Kyi's political thought per se, though there is much about her thought, even if too much idealised, in Gustaaf Houtman's seminal "Mental Culture"; less, but more critical in Stephen McCarthy's "The Political Theory of Tyranny"; and again quite much in other seminal pieces – Matthew Walton's PhD dissertation "Politics in Moral Universe" (or in its monograph version, "Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought"), in Franziska Blum's "Teaching Democracy," in Hans-Bernd Zöllner's "The Beast and the Beauty," in Nilanjana Sengupta's "The Female Voice of Myanmar" and in Jordan Winfield's PhD dissertation "Buddhism and State in Burma."[15] There are naturally also Joseph Silverstein's article on Suu Kyi's thought from the early 1990s ("The Idea of Freedom in Burma") and Mary Callahan's one on her post-2015 ideas ("Suu Kyi's quiet, puritanical vision for Myanmar") and there are other secondary sources where the issue of her thought sometimes appeared – I tried to use anything else available on this topic, too. None of these books/articles, however, is concentrated on entire Suu Kyi's political thought.

In researching the Burmese political thought in general, I followed the line started by Emanuel Sarkisyanz: that is to look at it as much as possible from local, Burmese perspective and to use local idioms, concepts and ideas whenever possible. I am perfectly aware that as a foreigner I will always have an outsider view, but I tried to reduce this as much as possible. I believe my frequent, regular visits to Myanmar – almost fifteen since 2010 – and my business and research experience there help to reduce it further. And my background – paradoxically – helped a bit, too, as being a researcher from a Central Eastern European country who was born during (our own) socialist regime and raised during transformation years makes me understanding and empathetic to the Burmese bumpy road to democracy, quite not unlike of that of my own country. Thus,

[15] There is also the newest political biography of Aung San Suu Kyi written by Hans-Bernd Zöllner and Rodion Ebbighausen (*The Daughter: A Political Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi*, Silkworm Books, Bangkok 2018) where Suu Kyi's political thought figures significantly; unfortunately *The Daughter* was published when this book was already in print and could not have been consulted.

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my disillusionment with some political concepts, presented on these pages should in no regard be taken as a criticism from a Western perspective, as I am not a Westerner; if there is one very Western feature in me, however, it is criticism – itself the very essence of academic approach – and this enforces me to look at Suu Kyi's thought, despite all my admiration to her as an extraordinary politician and despite my genuine love to her country, without special treatment. In doing so I am loyal to her words, expressed in one of her rallies to the Burmese people: "nobody is above criticism."[16]

Naturally, Aung San Suu Kyi is also the first person I ought to thank in this book. Although during our two meetings we did not talk about her political thought, these meetings (first in Warsaw in September 2013 and second in Naypyidaw in February 2015) were priceless for my understanding of her as a politician, not a human rights activist. Therefore, I want to thank her once again for agreeing to talk to me and especially for the wise words she told me while seeing me to the door during our last meeting: she told me that luck is more important than wisdom in politics, for if one has all the wisdom in the world but no luck, one cannot do much; if however, one is not quite wise, but lucky enough, one may achieve success. I could not agree more – I find these words quite profound – however, I have doubts whether Suu Kyi's own political philosophy does bring her good luck.

On a more personal level, writing this book would have been impossible without the support of my family, friends, and colleagues. My dear wife, Magdalena Kozłowska, PhD, has been, as always, extremely supportive and understanding with my work: this is already my sixth book she – with love, patience and empathy so much needed – was able to cope with. My Director, Prof. Adam Jelonek, encouraged and mobilized me to write and finish this book (for my own good). Prof. Bogdan Góralczyk, former Poland's Ambassador to Myanmar and my mentor in Burmese studies, provided profound pieces of advice for this manuscript. Prof. Piotr Balcerowicz, Indologist and Buddhologist was kind enough to check the Buddhist and precolonial Burmese parts of this book and offered invaluable comments that spared me many errors. Prof. Agnieszka Kuszewska helped me tremendously with her encouraging attitude and offered insightful comments, too. Prof. Salvatore Babones was equally encouraging to this, as to my other endeavours, with his sober comments and practical approach so helpful for me both previously and now. Dr. Marion Sabrié was kind enough to offer her time in the extraordinary circumstances and provided insightful comments on the manuscript. Finally, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Jagiellonian University's Faculty of International and Political Studies (and especially to the Dean, Prof. Zdzisław Mach) for providing sources for this book and to Małgorzata Kmita who proofread the text.

[16] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March 1996 (no. 23),* in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Abera Verlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 521.

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Naturally, during my numerous trips to Myanmar I benefitted from uncountable number of conversations with the Burmese people. Although I did not always talk to them about Suu Kyi's political thought – and they bear no responsibility for what I wrote here – I believe at minimum I should mention those who kept helping me with functioning in the uneasy Myanmar circumstances. Hai Mann Zu Zue has always been so helpful to me during my trips to Myanmar and so open in our talks about her country that no words are enough to thank her. I am, however, very happy that I can finally give her my book in English, not only in Polish. My friend and trusted business partner Mutu Suresh throughout the years of our cooperation has been most generous, reliable and helpful: I am very grateful to him not only for his priceless ability to get things done here, but also for all his insightful comments about his country.

I am very grateful, too, for my Burmese language teachers: dr. Than Htaike and especially Daw Than Than Myint[17] who both served not only as great teachers but also gate-openers to the Burmese culture. *Kya naw ko Myanma sa ga: thin pei: te Sayama Than Than Myint ne te Saya Than Htaike ko le: a htu. Kye: zu: tin ba te lo. Pyaw chin ba te.*

Conversations with Maung Than Htun Aung, Mon Mon Myat, Toe Zaw Latt, Soe Myint Aung, Yan Naing Win, Aung Tun Oo, Zaw Win Than, Maw Htun Laphai, Wint Wady, Lily Phyu, Phyo Wai Lin, Kyan Yee, Daryl Lim, Mung Awng, Gun Maw, Zahkung Zau Ja (Je Je), Maran Law Raw, Danseng Lawn, Wai Wai Nu, Debbie Stothard, Anna Żongołłowicz, Patrick McCormick, Michael Griffits, David I. Steinberg, Kenton Clymer, Wolfram Schaffar, Esther Tenberg, Georg Winterberger, Robert Anderson, Mandy Sadan, Mary Kate Long, Bridget Welsh, Ronan Lee, Jacek Perlin, Mirosław Zasada, Jerzy Bayer, Krzysztof Gawlikowski and Andrzej Bolesta had significant impact on the way I see Aung San Suu Kyi and her political thought. I am also grateful for the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, where I stayed as visiting scholar, for providing me the opportunity to learn more about Myanmar while being there.

Finally, I benefitted from the insights from researchers and individuals from universities of: Cornell (Ithaca, NY), NIU (de Kalb, IL), SOAS (London), Oxford, Cambridge, INALCO (Paris), Dagon (Yangon), Mandalay, Utica (NY), Leeds, Bonn and Achi Gakuin (Nagoya) as well as from the help of the friendly staff at the National Archives (in both Yangon and Naypyidaw) and at the National Library in Yangon during my various stays in Myanmar.

Naturally, all the responsibility for mistakes and errors falls entirely on me.

The book was finished in Yangon and in other parts of Asia in July-August 2018.

[17] Daw Than Than Myint was kind enough to translate the Burmese language summary of this book for me.

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Chapter I

The Buddhist Background of the Burmese Political Thought

In Burma, Buddhism has not only been "the essential and fundamental ingredient of Burmese identity"[1] and "central to Burmese identity"[2] – as Aung San Suu Kyi wrote "it has become common to say: "'to be Burmese is to be Buddhist.'"[3] Moreover, Buddhism has historically provided the idioms and structure for political thought, concepts and practices[4] and is "a repertoire of 'raw materials'" which the Burmese used for thinking about politics.[5] So it is only natural that the main Buddhist ideas for politics should be presented here first. This chapter will present and emphasize the doctrinal textual, or normative viewpoints of Buddhist approach to politics based on canonical texts (the *Tipitaka*, or the *Pāli Canon*).[6]

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[1] Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, 2nd edition, University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1982, p. 19; against Buddhism "all values, ideas and behaviour are ultimately to be judged" (Ibid., p. 20).

[2] Gustaaf Houtman, *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy*, Monograph Series no. 33, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo 1999, p. 121.

[3] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma and India under Colonialism*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/ 3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 83.

[4] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 121, 184, 256.

[5] Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, p. 4. In other words, Buddhism is the "source of conceptual framework within which most Buddhist in Myanmar think about politics" and "remains an important lens through which Buddhists in the country understand, interpret, and act on politics" (Matthew J. Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, Seattle 2012, pp. 2–5).

[6] In other words, this chapter will present what Weber and Spiro called "Nibbanic Buddhism" (Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois 1958, p. 206; Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*…, pp. 31–66).

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1. A Note on Buddhism as a Religious/Philosophical System

According to Buddhism, the religious/philosophical system created around 5th century BC by Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha, or the Enlightened/Awakened One) [7] in its Four Noble Truths, life is *dukkha* (suffering, or non-satisfactoriness),[8] *dukkha* is caused by craving (clinging), yet can be overcome by its cessation (*nirodha*), which can be achieved by following the path leading to cessation (the Noble Eightfold Path).[9] Moreover, the Buddha taught of the major characteristics of existence: that life is *dukkha*, *annica* (impermanence), and *anattā* (no-self). According to his message, all things are impermanent, including material objects, thoughts and people. They are in process of endless change.[10]

If nothing is permanent then nobody possesses anything. Yet people are unable to realize this truth, they are trapped in ignorance: by wrongly believing in permanence of things, they crave to exist and possess, which ultimately always ends in permanent non-satisfactoriness. Once they accomplish their one goal, they immediately cease enjoying it and start to strive for another one.[11] This leads to a never-ending circle of non-satisfactoriness and consequently to people's – or rather to all living beings as all living beings, not only people, are subject to reincarnation[12] – rebirth again and again in different forms, albeit always inseparable with *dukkha*.[13] People strive and by not being able to fulfil their goals, they are dissatisfied. The cause of this dissatisfaction is ignorance which also lead to evil. Thus, ignorance (*moha*) is, along with greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*), one of three major poisons ("impurities", or *kilesa*) to humans existence: out of them people trespass.[14] Due to that people's existence last forever, in the

[7] Traditionally 80 years of Siddhārtha's life was situated between 566 to 486 BC, but the newest research indicate that he probably died between 410-390 BC (Piotr Balcerowicz, *Historia klasycznej filozofii indyjskiej* [*A History of the Classical Indian Philosophy*], vol. I, Dialog, Warszawa 2003, p. 132).

[8] There is a long discussion over how to translate *dukkha* into English. Traditionally it has been translated as "suffering" which led to describing Buddhism as "pessimistic" (this notion is controversial and usually rejected by Buddhists); that is why the alternative translation for *dukkha* is "non- satisfactoriness", "un-satisfactoriness" or "lack of satisfactoriness."

[9] *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, Saṁyutta 5, Mahā Vagga 12, Sacca Saṁyutta 2 (S 56.11/5: 420-424), transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/1.1-Dhammacakka-Pavattana-S-s56.11-piya.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), p. 56.

[10] Manuel Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background of Burmese Revolution*, Springer Science and Business Media, B.Y. 1965, p. 9.

[11] *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* (S 56.11/5:420-424)…, pp. 55–56.

[12] I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment. I use "people" here for simplification sake.

[13] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 45.

[14] *Dhammaniyāma-sutta*, "Living Word of the Buddha", SD, vol. 26, no. 8; *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, vol. 1 (A 3.134/1:285), transl. Piya Tan, http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/

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cyclic realm of existence, or *saṃsāra*: they are reborn in incarnations – better ones if their merits outweighed demerits, worse if the opposite was true.[15] Reincarnation is regulated by the principle of action and retribution (Pāli*: kamma*; Sanskrit: *karman*, popularly, though wrongly, known as *karma*) that works following a cause and effect rule: it is an unavoidable consequence of all actions.[16] The concept of *kamma* is based on natural law governing the world: in accordance with this causality rule, good deeds (merits, or *puñña*) bring happiness and prosperity, while bad ones (demerits, or *apuñña*) lead to misery/fall.[17]

Keeping the precepts does not results in granting award, while braking the laws of nature does not results in punishment – each have its consequences in one's *kamma*. Every human being is responsible for their life. That explains the apparent injustice of the world[18] and helps to accept it: in Buddhism there are no "innocent victims."[19] If one lived morally (e.g. observed Buddhist Precepts, and particularly followed *mettā*, or loving-kindness),[20] in the next incarnation one may be reborn as a monk; if one lived in a vicious way, one risks becoming a frog or a rat.[21] No matter how one has lived, however, one will be reborn again. This is the biggest tragedy of existence. To break the never-ending circle of incarnation one should cease to crave. Everyone is able to liberate oneself from dissatisfaction/suffering by cease to crave, by absolute lack of attachment

uploads/2009/12/26.8-Dhammaniyama-S-a3.134-piya.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), p. 108; Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, p. 47.

[15] There are 31 planes of existence, 27 "good" ones and 4 "bad" ones, "depending on one's karma, rebirth may occur in most of these thirty-one abodes and any individual will probably have been reborn in all of them as he wanders, over countless aeons of time, from rebirth to rebirth" (Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, p. 41).

[16] "Everything is related to everything – whatever exists is the effect of prior causes: today's effects are merely tomorrow's causes" (Matthew J. Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*, Oxford University Press, New York 2016, p. 8).

[17] In this incarnation or in the next ones. Importantly, it is the intent (*cetanā*) behind the act, rather the act itself, that differentiates between good and bad deeds (Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, p. 43).

[18] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 32.

[19] Maung Than Htun Aung, *Rozwój buddyzmu i medytacji Vipassana* [*The Development of Buddhism and Vipassana Meditation*], "Azja–Pacyfik", no. 13, 2010, p. 101. Thus, Buddhism have historically understood social inequalities as natural. That is why, for examples Buddhist monasteries had slaves in their compounds. This element of Buddhism is from current perspective an uncomfortable one so it is conveniently forgotten or bypassed by this religion's sympathisers. I am grateful for Prof. Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[20] "The noblest of all sentiments, the mark of the truly moral man (…) the generalized friendliness for all creatures" (Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, pp. 45–48).

[21] George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, Online Version, http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/o/orwell/george/o79b/ (access: 25.08.2018).

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to life, by resigning from one's self.[22] The ultimate goal is *nibbāna* (*nirvāṇa*) or the state of complete non-existence.[23] Buddhism "demands emotional detachment and the renunciation of the world, where most people seek attachment to friends and loved ones, power and position, self and possession."[24]

2. A Buddhist Perspective on Politics. An Introduction

The basic ideas of Buddhism[25] underline Buddhist approach to politics. As Buddhism claims the denial of the existence of the self (*anattā*), it recognizes the belief in self as the major source of social conflicts. Furthermore, Buddhist approach to politics is built on the ethic that rejects supernatural inspiration for morality (god) and obligatory normative truth in favour of advices and claims to derive its message from natural facts about the universe. Finally, Buddhism considers politics an inessential activity of secondary importance: "politics is inevitable (…) but it is a tremendous waste of time and effort as well as being a prime temptation to allow ego to run rampart (…) Buddhist political theory actively portrays engagement in politics and the pursuit of enlightenment as two conflicting paths in life." [26] These are the major ideas Buddhist political theory rests on. Hence, any system of government that is consistent with the Buddhism message should take into account the mentioned preconditions, as well as their logical conclusions that are as follows. To start with, people by nature are selfish and usually care about themselves more than about others; yet, they need others to fulfil their own needs. So, a kind of social cooperation is needed, preferably a one that helps to meet the needs of majority and minimize harm to others. Due to the imperfection of the human nature, that system of government will sooner or later have to use force which in turn will inevitably lead to further social conflicts. Yet, if this system is to succeed for longer period, it must recognize the laws of human nature such as *anattā* (no-self of people, but also no-self of the government, which means that the government should remember that it is not truly important) or *annica* (impermanence) – the latter in governance means also the relativity of means: there are no principles that are always

[22] The technique of that is meditation. The meditation itself is divided into two phases, tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*); only through these one can attain wisdom (*pañña*) that is needed to achieve *nibbāna* (Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, p. 48).

[23] *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta* Dīgha-nikāya 2, Mahā Vagga 3 (D 16/2:156-160), transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/SD9-Mahaparinibbana-S-d16-part-2-piya.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), pp. 156–158.

[24] Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, p. 10.

[25] "The impermanence of all existence, the cyclical regularity and causality of endless change" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 2).

[26] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 2. The following arguments in are taken from: Ibid., pp. 2–11.

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right, but rather are right in certain circumstances and wrong in the other.[27] That is why despite the fact that it is generally accepted that politics is not central to Buddhism,[28] the current state of knowledge in international academia[29] rejects Max Weber's famous claim that Buddhism is "unpolitical and anti-political status religion."[30] The Buddhist social ethic was very much concerned with "the public world and its structures, which included, among other things, economic and political institutions."[31] Already Early Buddhism had a "well developed view of (…) political matters."[32] Thus, there is a place for politics in Buddhism, albeit of secondary importance, particularly vis-à-vis the main goal: individual enlightenment.[33] The following classical texts will help to illustrate that. The Buddhist perspective on politics is best seen in the following classical texts from *Dīgha-nikāya* (Long Discourses of the Buddha), *Khuddaka-nikāya* (Minor Discourses), *Saṃyutta-nikāya* (Connected Discourses) and from various *Jātaka* tales (stories of the Buddha's previous lives).

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[27] "Buddhists seeking liberation need government, but government can only work if it acknowledges that the people are not selves; that the principles of social interaction do not reflect ultimate, real, absolute, unchangeable truths (…); and that the government itself is of merely relative importance" (Ibid., p. 11). This statement, generally correct, may be dangerous as it may serve as a legitimization to extermination of group of people (if they are no selves, they can be eliminated); what limits this potentially dangerous interpretation is the principle of not causing suffering (Pāli: *avihiṃsā*, Sanskrit *ahiṃsā;* Pāli *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*; "abstention from taking life") that doctrinally checks the political power: the latter should abstain from actions that could lead to suffering (*dukkha*) of other creatures. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[28] Winston L. King, *In the Hope of Nibbana: An Essey on Theravada Buddhist Ethics*, Open Court, La Salle, Illinois 1964, pp. 177–179.

[29] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 16. Some scholars portray Buddha as a political thinker (Kancha Ilaiah, *God as Political Philosopher: Buddhism Challenge to Brahminism*, Samiya, Calcutta 2002), if not a 'political philosopher' (Gail Omvedt, *The Buddha as a Political Philosopher*, "Economic and Political Weekly", 26.05.2001); although these claims perhaps go too far, the recent developments in international academia certainly prove that Buddha was not unconcerned with politics (Laksiri Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics, and Statecraft*, "International Journal of Buddhist Thought & Culture", vol. 11, 09/2008, p. 48). For more, see: Trevor Ling, *The Buddha's Philosophy of Man: Early Indian Buddhist Dialogues*, Everymans Library, London 1973/1981.

[30] Weber, *The Religion of India*…, p. 206. According to Weberian understanding of Buddhism, it is an 'other worldly' religion concerned with personal salvation (Richard Gombrich, Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1988; Christopher Queen and Sallie B. King, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1996; Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 49).

[31] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 61.

[32] Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background*, Cambridge University Press, London–New York–Melbourne 1976, p. 25.

[33] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 16.

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3. A Buddhist Perspective on Politics from *Dīgha-nikāya* Collection of the *Tipiṭaka*

a) *Aggañña-sutta*

Aggañña-sutta of *Dīgha-nikāya* collection of sermons, is the first and most important classical text, and one of the best known Buddhist canonical texts in Burma.[34] In this conversation between the Buddha and two Brahmins who became Buddhist monks and suffer abuses from other Brahmins, the Buddha consoles them and tells them the story of the beginnings of this world, the decline of human beings and the origin of caste system. According to the Buddha, initially, people were celestial creatures, lived in the paradise conditions, where there was plenty of "savoury earth" for all. Unfortunately, one person ("being of a greedy nature") tasted the earth and "craving arose in it." Others followed and in result their self-luminosity disappeared, while the moon and the sun appeared as well as the seasons. The world became more and more material, and the physical features of people hardened (this "inequality of appearance through the coarsening of bodies" will later give "the origin of inequality according to Burma's Buddhist tradition").[35] In the next phase, beauty and ugliness came into being, as well as sexes (so that "passion was aroused"). With time, people started to harvest rice, divided the fields with boundaries, but unfortunately this individual ownership led to one man stealing from another's field; caught on that, he denied that and was physically punished. This moral degeneration forced people to action: "suppose we were to appoint a certain being who would show anger where anger was due, censure those who deserved it, and banish those who deserved banishment! And in return, we would grant him a share of the rice (…) So they went to the one among them who was the handsomest, the best-looking, the most pleasant and capable, and asked him (…) and he agreed." This is how the Mahā-Sammata ("The People's Choice"), or the first legendary Buddhist king comes to being, known also under the titles ("Lord Of The Fields" and "He Who Gladdens Others With *Dhamma*", or *rāja*). His reign presented a welcoming, positive change to the people's behaviour. From then on, humanity steadily improved but later

[34] Since *Aggañña-sutta* is the standard part of the first basket (*Sutta-piṭaka*) of the Pāli Canon, the Burmese knew it, or at least parts of it, from the moment Buddhism arrived in Burma, as parts of this this basket are the standard curriculum for the monks, Piotr Balcerowicz, comment to this book. The full Burmese accounts of this *Sutta* are present, among others, in *Mahā Yazawin* (the most important royal chronicle) and in legal code *Manugye Dhammathat*, both from 18th century (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 11–12; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 70).

[35] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 11.

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divided itself into a caste system, though one can liberate itself from the castes by becoming a Buddhist monk.[36]

Aggañña-sutta, aside from presenting castes as socially constructed and unimportant to moral behaviour, depicts people as "fundamentally morally flawed, incapable of controlling their behaviour," yet able to manage this situation; hence *Sutta* offers "two distinct solutions to the inherent human condition of being driven by desire."[37] The first one is "mundane": the desire-driven nature of humans results in conflict which enforces (authoritarian) type of political power to manage it. The other one is transcendental, personalized by the monk who is morally above the king.[38] These two solutions are personalized by the king and by the monk (*bhikkhu*).[39]

Moving on in interpreting this text, the message of *Aggañña-sutta* is that "man's natural drives are socially destructive unless they are regulated through cultural and social impositions."[40] Hence, the *Aggañña-sutta* underpins the Buddhist understanding of human nature and role that politics plays in it: as human beings had fallen from their initial "blissful state of perfect society" which caused the socia1 imperfections, "1egis1ation was meant to remedy" it.[41] Perhaps that is why this *Sutta* has been read as Buddhist basis for "social contract" (the people chose Mahā-Sammata by themselves) and as such it apparently showed that there was place for democracy in early Buddhism.[42] The king "ideally exercised political authority on behalf of the people in exchange for their support, nominally under 'contractual obligations'" that is why "Buddhist society maintained an ideal of kingship that may be compared with the theory of government by social contract"; hence such early texts as *Aggañña-sutta*, "contain almost juridical conceptions of kingship as a necessary societal institution established contractually because of imperfect human conditions."[43] From it "could be derived claims that sovereignty

[36] *Aggañña-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 3, Pāṭika Vagga 4 (D 27/3:80-97), transl. M. Walshe, http://www.columbia.edu/itc/religion/f2001/edit/docs/aggannasutta.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), pp. 1–7.

[37] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 79.

[38] "The path of the king merely manages desire, whereas the path of the monk leads to the total transcendence of it"; hence the two solutions presented in the *Aggañña-sutta* range between "maintaining order in society despite human failings, and providing a path to complete liberation from craving" (Ibid., p. 83).

[39] "The king is the mediator between social disorder and the social order; the *bhikkhu* is the mediator between home and homelessness, between a world of fetters and a free state of deliverance. The king is the fountainhead of society; the *bhikkhu* is of that society and transcends it" (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 15).

[40] Ibid., p. 13.

[41] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 10.

[42] Gokuldas De, *Democracy in Early Buddhist Saṃgha*, Calcutta University, Calcutta 1955, pp. 13–117.

[43] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 15.

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originates and returns to the people, that "kingship is essentially a contractual agreement between the people and the ruler in which the welfare of the country and its people is the sacred trust."[44] Hence comes the argument that "the Buddhist view of kingship, particularly the duties and responsibilities of a chosen ruler was governed by the notion of the social contract, one that was propounded long before Hobbes and other western expositions; the Buddhist idea of 'social contract' proposed an evolutionary view of society opposed to the Brahminical view of a divinely ordained monarch and also society"; this Buddhist social contract was based on "the equality of man and that the king is only primus inter pares, and exercises authority only by virtue of the social contract."[45]

Although there are indeed democratic traits here: the "king's authority rests on initial consent of the people"[46]; the *Sutta* message is that the king should rule as an "enlightened altruist"[47]; and the election of Mahā-Sammata can be understood as "bilateral contract" between the people and the ruler. All this, however, has nothing to do with the Western concept of social contract agreed upon by free citizens.[48] In the Western democratic tradition, people are independent, rational individuals whose freedom must be respected by political power, but this contradicts sharply the concept of *anattā*: the Buddhist rejection of seeing people as rational beings endowed with natural rights: "if human beings are ultimately just more-or-less contingent phenomena, what does it matter whether they are ruled by someone they choose or by someone who seizes power against their wills?"[49] Moreover, there was no notion of social contracts in early Buddhist societies, as there was no such legal tradition[50]: "there are no Buddhist traditions, literary or otherwise, of kings being 'democratically' elected, of 'social contract' in the sense propounded by Rousseau."[51] It may be called "the 'social contract' story for the sake of convenience, but really it is a justification of law (or a repudiation of anarchy)

[44] Richard Gard, *An Introduction to the Study of Buddhism and Political Authority in South and Southeast Asia*, in: Manuel Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background of Burmese Revolution*, Springer Science and Business Media, B.Y. 1965, p. 15.

[45] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, pp. 56–57.

[46] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 24.

[47] Kulatissa N. Jayatilleke, *Dhamma, Man and Law*, Buddhist Research Society, Singapore 1988, p. 59.

[48] Steven Collins, *The Lion's Roar on the Wheel-Turning King: A Response to Andrew Huxley's "The Buddha and the Social Contract"*, "Journal of Indian Philosophy", vol. 24, 1996, pp. 421–466.

[49] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 25. However, this statement must be balanced by – mentioned earlier in this book – the principle of non-harming the other creatures. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[50] Andrew Huxley, *The Buddha and the Social Contract*, "Journal of Indian Philosophy", vol. 24, 1996, pp. 405–408.

[51] Stanley J. Tambiah, *King Mahāsammata: The First King in the Buddhist Story of Creation, and His Continuing Relevance*, "Journal of Anthropological Society of Oxford", vol. 20, no. 2, 1989, p. 107.

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as being the least worst option; its message is 'Don't obey law because it is inherently glorious; obey it because the alternative is worse.'"[52] Furthermore, in the *Aggañña-sutta* the people did not choose the king to restrain him (as the Western anti-authoritarian tradition of social contract implies), but rather selected him for his moral qualities that will guarantee just reign – thanks to being the most moral man Mahā-Sammata will restrain himself[53]; hence, "the contractual theory is counterbalanced by the fact that the one chosen is the best among men."[54] From here originates one important aspect of this early Buddhist political thought: the lack of justification for rebellion, should the king govern badly (as it is in the social contract tradition and in the Confucian legitimization of power as well, where the mandate of heaven can be withdrawn, should the emperor rule unjustly). The people choose the ruler but – importantly – do it only once and have no right to resist him, even if he governs badly[55]: "there are no Buddhist traditions (…) of justifiable 'rebellion' or 'just war' against a king who has broken a social contract."[56] Logically speaking, if Mahā-Sammata is the most moral one, he simply cannot govern badly. Finally, the people chose Mahā-Sammata not before, but after creating structural conditions (establishing laws, expelling trespassers etc.) for his rule: "while people knew the laws, they were incapable of following them and enforcing them among themselves."[57] This all explains why there "is little or no evidence that any historical agents have used *Aggañña-sutta* and/or its contractual theory."[58] Hence, *Aggañña-sutta* represents a kind of political contract between the ruler and the people, yet a one that differs from the Western social contract tradition.

b) *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*

The other classical *Sutta* very important for the understanding of the Buddhist approach to politics is the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*.[59] This *Sutta*, itself an adaptation of the

[52] Andrew Huxley, *When Manu Met Mahāsammata*, "Journal of Indian Philosophy", vol. 24, 1996, p. 618.

[53] Huxley, *The Buddha and the Social Contract*…, p. 407.

[54] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 13.

[55] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 23; however, Jayatilleke, citing *Jātaka 432* argues otherwise (Ibid., p. 150).

[56] Tambiah, *King Mahāsammata*…, p. 107.

[57] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 84.

[58] Steven Collins, *Aggañña-sutta. The Discourse on What is Primary*, an annotated translation from Pali, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi 2001, p. 94.

[59] This *Sutta*, although less popular in Burma than *Aggañña-sutta* nevertheless was still important as it permeated into Burmese folk with the millenarian figure of *Setkya Min* (Burmanization of *Cakkavattī*), particularly popular in 19th century (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 93; Jacques Leider, *Forging Buddhist Credentials as a Tool of Legitimacy and Ethnic Identity: A Study*

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pre-Buddhist Brahmanical concept of *cakravartin*,[60] starts from where the *Aggaññasutta* ends (while *Aggaññ-sutta* depicts the origins of the political authority, the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* its final stage) and focuses on "a discussion of power, political and spiritual, that is, the proper role of the ruler, and, in a somewhat prophetic tone, gives us a vision of the future of human society"; it teaches how *kamma* works in accordance with moral conduct and morality is linked with politics. *Sutta* opens with the Buddha who teaches monks about mindfulness and then proceeds to the story of an utopian ancient land ruled by the wheel-turner or universal monarch (*cakkavattī*), named Daḷhanemi ("strong wheel"). Thanks to his many merits in former incarnations and his moral rule, a wheel appeared in the sky. Having ruled morally and successfully, the king one day saw that the wheel disappeared. He then abdicated in favour of his son and "renounced the world" by becoming a monk. Upon ascending to power, his son discovered that the wheel did not appear, as he had taken for granted; distressed he asked his father (then a monk) for advice. The father/monk explained him that "the wheel is not inherited," but only arises with proper moral conduct of the ruler. The son ruled accordingly and the wheel reappeared. Once it did, the wheel helped the king to conquer peacefully the neighbouring countries (turn them into vassals). The scheme repeated with seven subsequent kings and "many years, many centuries, many millennia" until the 8th king who "did not approach the sage" and "ruled according to his own ideas." As a result, the country "did not prosper." The king summoned his advisors who told him to rule in accordance with the *dhamma*. He did so, but not completely ("provided just care, shelter and guard; but he did not give financial support to the penniless"), and as a result theft appeared. The king initially gave money to the caught thief, but that action had set a wrong precedent and many more people started stealing. To stop that, the king introduced capital punishment. But the result was even worse: the thieves "made sharp weapons, and having made them, committed acts of violent robbery." This chain of events led to poverty, stealing, armed violence, life taking, lying, slander, rape, adultery etc.; all becoming widespread, and life-span of beings declining from initial 40,000 years to present 100. In this story, the Buddha predicted that the degeneration will continue and this will shorten the life span to just 10 years. In this worst moment people will realize that they misbehave, they will try to live better by abstaining from taking life, misconduct, falsehood, slander, wrong view, etc. Hence, their life (and that of their children) will keep increasing – up to 80.000 years. Then, once humankind reaches this life span, in the royal city of Ketumatī a new king, *dhamma-rāja* [a just ruler] named Saṅkha will come into being, who will hold the world "it in his sway with neither rod

of Arakan's Subjection in Nineteenth-Century Burma, "Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient", vol. 51, no. 3, 2008, p. 410.

[60] James Hegarty, *Religion, Narrative and Public Imagination in South Asia: Past and Place in the Sanskrit Mahabharata*, Routledge Hindu Studies Series, Routledge, London–New York 2002, p. 127.

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nor sword"; along with him the next Buddha (Pāli: Metteyya, Sanskrit: Maitreya) will ascend to teach the *dhamma* and Saṅkha will become a monk.[61]

Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta played an important role in Buddhist approach to politics. To start with, the vision of ideal Buddhist state ruled by *cakkavattī* became "associated with the Golden Age of the future that is cyclically conceived after the model of the blissful past from which man had departed"[62], hence it was expected to be realized one day. More importantly, the *Sutta* gave beginning to the theory of the Two Wheels of Dhamma,[63] or the "identification of both religious life and political social life as being governed by the same underlying moral laws"; Saṅkha and Metteyya rule the two "separate but equally important"[64] spheres – "spiritual and temporal – side by side, by

[61] *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 3, Pāṭika Vagga 3 (D 26/3:58-79), transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/36.10-Cakkavatti-Sihanada-S-d26-piya.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), pp. 28–49.

[62] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 31.

[63] In Burmese conditions, the "two wheels" theory applies to precolonial times. Contrary to what they claimed, the Burmese kings' power was not as absolute: their authority had to be shared with *saṅgha*, at least nominally – it created "the triangular inter relationship" between the rulers (kings), the monastic order (monks, nuns) and the lay people. In Burma the monarchy supported monasteries, granted *saṅgha* lands, exempted it from taxation and court jurisdiction and nominated the *Mahā-saṅgha-rāja* (later *Thathanabaing*), or head of the *saṅgha*. The monks had access to the monarch and could commented on state's affairs. *Saṅgha*, too, was supposed to safeguard that the king ruled in accordance with Buddha's teaching. Although by definition *saṅgha* was an organization disinterested with mundane affairs and it indeed rarely interfered with current politics, it nevertheless enjoyed a significant political power: the clergy was in fact another political authority in the country, moreover, an autonomous authority which could not have been undermined without the risk of losing legitimacy (naturally, the politically ambitious kings limited the power of *saṅgha* by "purification" actions when they regained the land previously given to the *saṅgha*, but these actions were temporary and partially successful measures at best). It created the "two wheels" system: the moral authority of the *saṅgha* (transcendental matters) and the political authority of the king (worldly matters), those two powers supported, legitimized, checked and balanced one another (Frank Reynolds, *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: A Study of Early Buddhism*, in: *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in India and Ceylon*, eds Gananath Obeyesekere, F. Reynolds, B.L. Smith, American Academy of Religion, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania 1972, pp. 6–31; Trevor Ling, *The Buddha, Buddhist Civilization in India and Ceylon*, Temple Smith, London 1973; Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times. Traditions and Transformations*, Reaktion Books, London 2012, pp. 100–105; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 84–86; Michael Aung-Thwin, *Hierarchy and Order in Pre-Colonial Burma*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 15, no. 2, Semptember 1984, p. 225; Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, pp. 59–64; Maung Maung Gyi, *Burmese Political Values. The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarianism*, Praeger Publishers, New York 1983, pp. 25–30; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 80.

[64] Balkrishna G. Gokhale, *Early Buddhist Kingship*, "The Journal of Asian Studies", vol. 26, no. 1, 1966, p. 22.

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implication creating the best human society," which message is that "ultimately the temporal powers were subordinate to the spiritual powers (…) even the best kings retire by abdicating the throne and becoming homeless monks, hoping to achieve enlightenment before death."[65] In this "simultaneously complementary and asymmetrical relationship between the Buddha and the *cakkavatti*,"[66] there is the "supremacy of the *dhamma* over *ānā* (state's power)."[67] The *Sutta* presents living in general (including governing) "as slightly absurd" activity and places it in the opposite to timeless *nibbāna*, as the only serious thing in the long run.[68] This *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* is also a kind of moral textbook for governing, as it teaches how the moral conduct of a king results in moral behaviour of its subjects. It is here that "the king's moral negligence initiates the decline of society," yet at the same time *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* gives the people a degree of agency as it is them who rediscover the moral truths.[69] It is the people who decide they need to reform, not the king, they need him to administrate, but this comes later: "the people are capable of moral self-reform and do not require the help of a king, either good or bad (…) it is the moral goodness of the people/society that makes the emergence of a *cakkavatti* possible in the first place"; hence the message from this *Sutta* is that "political leaders are powerless to improve a society that is already deteriorating or to undermine a society that is steadily improving, and that truly excellent political leaders do not emerge in morally bad times."[70] Thus, the conclusion from the *Sutta* is that although socio-political factors influence spiritual progress of the people, they do not determine it: "a bad social environment cannot stop people who are determined from making moral progress (…), and a generally good social environment cannot stop people from deteriorating morally (…) while politics obviously plays some role in human life (…) [it] is neither a central help or a central hindrance to salvation; politics is not that relevant to the truly important things in life; at most it plays a supportive role."[71]

Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta is also about legitimacy of power. The more moral the ruler is, the less social conflict there is and consequently the more possibilities for individual *nibbāna*-seeking exists. Thus, "legitimacy is not about adequately respecting the autonomy of rational selves" (as in Western social contract), but "rather about creating conditions to allow human beings to make spiritual progress" (however, the political system can only create suitable conditions, the ultimate decision of seeking *nibbāna* rests

[65] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 21, 88.

[66] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 44.

[67] Balkrishna G. Gokhale, *The Early Buddhist View of the State*, "Journal of the American Oriental Society", vol. 98, no. 4, 1969, p. 736.

[68] Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 481.

[69] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 94.

[70] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 135.

[71] Ibid., p. 136.

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on the individual).[72] People need minimum of material sources not only to be able to give (*dāna*) but more importantly, "there is a traditional belief among Burmese Buddhists that when one's basic needs are not met, one is more susceptible to craving and more likely to commit moral infractions. The most common expression of this belief is the frequently cited proverb 'only when your stomach is full can you keep the precepts.'"[73] The *Sutta* illustrates very well how the lack of king's proper "welfare policy" resulted in disorder and collapse of morality. Thus, from *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*, as well as from other classical texts, come the idea that "welfare state" was the Buddhist ideal political state: "economic welfare was meant to be prerequisite for the Theravāda Buddhist path of salvation (…) ideally kingship had, therefore, to guarantee such economic relationships as would ensure a sufficient livelihood for its subjects - to allow them the leisure for meditation on which depended the achievement of nirvana."[74] The kings had also responsibilities of providing alms to monks and to do so they had to safeguard economic possibilities of their subjects so that they could offer alms to the monks. From this originate the "traditional notions about the obligations of the ideal Buddhist king: to give seeds and feed to those who cultivate agricultural lands and keep cattle, to supply funds to those who engage in trade, to supply wages and upkeep to those who serve the ruler (…) Therefore it was in the ideal kingdom of the Buddhist *Dhamma* that were to grow maximum harvests, culminating in the utopian Wishing-Trees. This perfect fertility of the soil was to bring maximum prosperity - which in turn was to create the welfare necessary for meditation and thereby the universal salvation of all beings."[75]

Furthermore, *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* may also be read from the position of theory of leadership – then the *Cakkavattī* represent an ideal ruler, one "who is (a) righteous, (b) protective, fair and reasonable towards subordinates, (c) upholds righteousness in his domain and (d) cares for the well-being of subordinates."[76] Moreover, there is reading of *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* in accordance with political reality of the times when *Sutta* was written. At the time of the Buddha, the political powers of monarchies in India rapidly increased and the Buddha hoped that *saṅgha* may become "the arbiter of political legitimacy by evaluating the spiritual fitness of the kings," it was "a strategic attempt on the part of the Buddha or *sangha* to benefit from state patronage or protection by depicting kings in flattering light as possessing unusual spiritual grace."[77] Finally, this *Sutta* can

[72] Ibid., p. 26.

[73] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 115.

[74] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 55–56.

[75] Ibid., p. 54; this tradition later evolved into centralized economic policy of the precolonial Burmese kingdoms.

[76] Thomas Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model of Buddhist Leadership*, MA thesis, https://philarchive.org/archive/VOSKAA (access: 01.03.2018), p. 4.

[77] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 24; Balkrishna G. Gokhale, *Dhamma as a Political Concept in Early Buddhism*, "Journal of Indian History", vol. 46, no. 2, 1968, p. 254.

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be understood as textual basis for precolonial *maṇḍala*/galactic political organization of Southeast Asia (it its religious, not geopolitical, dimension)[78]; in this understanding, *cakkavattī*'s conquests are depicted "in clearly cosmological terms and as a statement of ideal kingship and sovereignty that conquers without the use of force."[79] *Cakkavattī*'s rule "radiated out from a central position" (associated with the central cosmic mountain of the Indian tradition, Mount Meru and later reflected in the architecture of precolonial Southeast Asia),[80] but even more importantly, having conquered these lesser kingdoms, *cakkavattī* granted them their kingdoms back once they promised to follow Buddhist precepts: he, being the world monarch, allowed them to keep their thrones as long as they followed Buddhism, this policy of "pacification" provided "a model of conduct for historical Buddhist kings," starting from Aśoka and later including the Burmese kings.[81]

c) *Mahā-sudassana-sutta* and *Siṅgāl'ovāda-sutta*

Another *Suttas* from the *Dīgha-nikāya* collection that are linked with politics are *Mahā-sudassana-sutta* and *Siṅgāl'ovāda-sutta*. The *Mahā-sudassana-sutta* is based on a long story told to Ānanda by the Buddha. Here he tells his disciple the story of a righteous king named Mahā-Sudassana, who "brought stability to the country" which royal city was "wealthy and prosperous," like "the celestial city of the *devas*." Mahā-Sudassana achieved that due to his moral life in previous incarnations. Thanks to all that, a divine wheel jewel appeared and he became a wheel-turner – he conquered peacefully four quarters of the world (here the story is identical with that of *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*). Later Mahā-Sudassana declined the riches offered to him by Brahmins, built the *dhamma* palace and provided "the recluses and those revered as recluses (…) with whatever they want." He himself also meditated in the *dhamma* hall and developed *brahma-vihāra* – the Four Sublime States of Mind, known also as *appamaññā* or four immeasurables,[82] that is 1) *Mettā* (loving kindness) towards all creatures, 2) *Karuṇā* (compassion) towards the ones who suffer, 3) *Muditā* (appreciative joy) for others without being envy, 4) *Upekkhā* (equanimity), the ability to accept others as they are; he developed these states "everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself" and "without hate, without

[78] Rosita Dellios, *Mandala: From Sacred Origins to Sovereign Affairs in Traditional Southeast Asia*, The Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, Research Papers, Paper 8, http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cewces_papers/8 (access: 26.08.2018).

[79] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 46.

[80] Craig J. Reynolds, *The Buddhist Monkhood in Nineteenth Century Thailand*, unpublished PhD thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca 1972, p. 20.

[81] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 46–47.

[82] *Brahma-vihāra* is not always the same what *appamaññā* is. Often the former one is understood as a state that helps to develops these Four Sublime States, or as a state where these Four Sublime States are being realized. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this commentary.

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ill-will." Thanks to being able to develop *brahma-vihāra,* Mahā-Sudassana after passing away was "reborn in the heaven of the Brahma world," or *Brahma-loka.* The Buddha concludes this story by identifying himself with Mahā-Sudassana.[83]

The political importance of *Mahā-sudassana-sutta* lies not with mentioning the powers of *brahma-vihāra*, as these have been described in-length in *Mettā Sutta*, but in linking these Four Sublime States of Mind with politics. According to this rationale, a ruler is obliged to create conditions where people could achieve *brahma-vihāra*. The other important feature of this *Mahā-sudassana-sutta* is that in the end of it, the Buddha identifies himself with Mahā-Sudassana, which proves that this *Sutta* is younger than other canonical texts, as identification of Buddha with *Cakkavattī* is characteristic for younger, post-canonical texts[84] (see: below).

As for *Siṅgāl'ovāda-sutta*, its relation to politics is indirect, though clearly applicable. Here the Buddha encountered a youth called Siṅgāla (Sigāla) while strolling in the morning. Siṅgāla prostrated and worshipped the six directions: East, South, West and North, Earth, Sky. The Buddha asked him for the reason of doing so and Siṅgāla replied that he had been told so by his father and so he upheld his wishes. Then the Buddha, knowing that Siṅgāla is a good candidate for receiving further philosophical knowledge, yet at the same time Siṅgāla is reluctant to become a Buddhist, started to preach him about moral path of behaviour (which eventually made Siṅgāla a Buddhist). In this *Sutta*, the Buddha uses the word "householder" in relation to Siṅgāla and presents him lay ethics and social responsibilities of an individual, thus exposing the "whole code of domestic and social duties of a layman" ("the householder's discipline").[85]

At the same time, this code of behaviour was traditionally extended to the political sphere, hence it will be briefed here as well. The most important political part of this *Sutta* is when the Buddha says which actions ("evil ways") a householder (policymaker) should avoid ("the harming of life, taking the not-given, false speech, and going with the women of others—these" and subsequent ones). In these "evil ways" a householder (ruler) should avoid four *âgati* (wrong actions, misdeeds) towards his subjects: 1) *chandâgati*, "misdeed caused by desire," 2) *dosâgati*, "misdeed caused by hatred," 3) *mohâgati*, "misdeed caused by delusion," 4) *bhayâgati*, "misdeed caused by fear."[86] The understanding of these four biases for policymakers is clear: they should avoid them while governing their subjects.

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[83] *Mahā-sudassana-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 2, Mahā Vagga 4 (D 17/2:169-199) transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/36.12-Maha-Sudassana-S-d17-piya.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), pp.101–124.

[84] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 32.

[85] *Siṅgāl'ovāda-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 3, Pāthika Vagga 8 (D 31/3:180-193), transl. Piya Tan, Sutta Central, https://discourse.suttacentral.net/uploads/default/255/3889d9a0f431fc2d.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), pp. 10–25.

[86] Ibid.

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d) *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta*

Finally, the last important text from *Dīgha-nikāya* is the *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta* which, aside from telling the circumstances of the Buddha's death, describes the response the Buddha gave to king Ajatasattu of Magadha, who wanted to stage a war against the Vajjis and asked the Buddha for his opinion. The Buddha then started a rhetorical conversation with his disciple, Ānanda, about the Vajjis' system of governance. The Buddha praised their "frequent gatherings" and "accordance with ancient constitutions," the fact that they "show respect, honour, esteem, and veneration towards their elders and towards their shrines"; "refrain from abducting women" and their "protection and guardians of the *arahats*"; upon this, he predicted that they would grow, implicitly suggesting against a war with them. Not only that, soon the Buddha called his monks to gather and explained them "seven conditions leading to welfare" which are the same as the ones followed by the Vajjis. The *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta* continues with the Buddha's teaching about morality, mindfulness, and other stories not related to politics. It concludes with the Buddha's death, his passing into *nibbāna* and his remembrance.[87]

The implications of this *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta* for political authority are interesting. According to popular interpretation, the Vajjis had a quasi-democratic system of governance that the Buddha clearly endorsed by telling monks how they should govern themselves and by establishing *saṅgha* (the only organization the Buddha ever created) along with these "democratic" lines. Thus, the canonical rules of *saṅgha* "give a very nice system of a democracy which did not certainly come by accident, but, as a matter of policy, being already in vogue in the confederacies of the Vajjis (…) the Buddhist sangha was copied from the political sangha."[88] In accordance with this thesis, the Buddha "was born in a republican people (…) and mostly lived amongst republican communities; he was perfectly familiar with their working system and adapted it to the benefit of his own order."[89] His apparent "preference for a more open society was characteristic of what prevailed in the smaller tribal oligarchies," such as Vajjis[90] and their "functional and utilitarian social practices" were "more congenial and receptive" to his teaching.[91] Thus, accordingly, he set up the "democratic, non-authoritarian (…) principles and practices governing" of *saṅgha* on "democratic foundations" and "liberal political culture" copied from these confederacies and as such *saṅgha* represented "a form of 'deliberative democracy.'"[92] Moreover, the followers of this line of argumen-

[87] *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta* (D 16/2:76-80), pp. 156–160.

[88] De Gokuldas, *Democracy in Early Buddhist*…, p. ix.

[89] Kashi P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity. A Constitutional History of India in Hindu Times*, The Bangalore Printing & Publishing Co., Bangalore 1943, pp. 41, 100–101.

[90] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 47.

[91] Ibid., p. 48.

[92] Ibid., pp. 51–55. Naturally, this is a gross misinterpretation: the lack of authoritarianism does not equal democracy. It was a hierarchical system, with religious hierarchy at its base: the Buddha

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tation of the Buddha being a democrat (or a proto-democrat),[93] also present indirect arguments in favour of this thesis, such as the one that Ajatasattu, the king who wanted to invade the Vajjis, was far from being morally crystal: he came to power by killing his own religious father, Bimbisāra, who in turn – according to the Buddha – was reborn in "one of the heaven realms and that he would achieve enlightenment after only one more human birth, thus demonstrating that political leaders can make spiritual progress."[94] Such understanding of *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta* and other texts has made some scholars believe that the Buddha had endorsed the republican/democratic system of governance.[95] However, it is not quite true, given the following reasons. Firstly, the Vajjis and other "so-called republican tribal polities" indeed called themselves *saṅgha*, but they were hardly democracies, rather "segmentary states with ranked lineages," whereas centralized kingdoms were not so centralized, rather – to apply a latter model – a "mandala type constellation pattern of center and satellites" (the latter turned out to be the Buddhist pattern for kingship).[96] Secondly, this *Sutta* "is the only place in the early texts where the Buddha even appears to recommend republican government (…) in every other place (…) he is talking about monarchy."[97] One can see this preference for monarchy not only in *Suttas* (such as *Aggañña-sutta* or *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*) but also in many *Jātakas*.[98] Thirdly, his utopian vision of political future (presented in *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*), is still monarchy: "the implication is that this would be the best possible form of lay society" as it is precisely in the predictions of future where "we would expect the Buddha to endorse republicanism as the a distant-but-obtainable ideal; the fact that he did not do so, suggests that the Buddha did not see republicanism as the ideal for lay society."[99] Fourthly, the Buddha, indeed, set up *saṅgha* on the very

was not chosen. The subsequent abbots were, indeed, chosen, but by a narrow circle of monks, while the monks dominated the laity. It is hard to find democratic institutions here. This (mis)interpretation, however, is quite typical for contemporary times where democracy became a standard, so many believers spuriously understood oligarchical and clerical past as a one that contains democratic elements. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[93] The following words are illustrative to this way of thinking: "the Buddha favoured democracy not just as a question of the constitutional or legal right of equality and 'the absolute worth of the individual' but more as an affirmation of the moral obligation cast on the individual to act within a code of conduct based on such values was the ideal of human dignity, equality of respect and worth of the individual. The distinctly rational and deliberative nature of this mode of thinking bears a remarkable affinity to a key tenet of the European Enlightenment, namely, the power of reason or the primacy given to rational thought" (Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 67).

[94] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 22.

[95] Joanna R. Macy, *Dependent Co-Arising: The Distinctiveness of Buddhist Ethics*, "Journal of Religious Ethics", vol. 7, no. 1, 1979, pp. 38–52; Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, pp. 47–67.

[96] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 48.

[97] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 26–27.

[98] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 48–49.

[99] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 26–27.

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democratic principles, but he unlikely thought of *saṅgha* as the proper model for lay government, as in his vision monks are spiritually advanced individuals who are able to govern themselves without the use of force: *saṅgha* community "is conceived to be the nearest possible approximation to the ideal society possible in time and space, which all men ought to approximate as nearly as possible in their social relations to each other,"[100] a condition impossible in the lay system of government. Fifthly, the Buddha had good relations with the monarchs ruling at his time and he showed the "acceptance of monarchical government as a proper mode of sociopolitical organization and his adapting the code of discipline (*vinaya*) to conform to the interest of the rulers."[101] Sixthly, and finally, Buddhism has never developed a concept of democracy (though it had an idea of equality of all living beings – but a moral equality, not necessarily a political one), therefore when today people link Buddhism with democracy, they mix two concepts that come from two different cultural spheres (this eclecticizes the difference between political/legal system and morality).[102] Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought is a good example of this tendency.

That is why, *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta* instead of being read as a "backdoor" support for republican form of government, should rather be treated as "primarily emphasizing the value of tradition and continuity."[103] Thus, despite rather "democratic" message from *Mahā-parinibbāṇa-sutta*, the overall picture that emerges from these classical texts is that Buddha endorsed or supported "enlightened monarchy based on primal contract (…) as the only practical form of government (…) as the best possible system of lay government"; king's authority arose from public will, but is maintained by ruler's proper behaviour ("spiritual righteousness" and his more mundane efforts to prevent poverty: "the monarch has a moral duty to support the poor and unfortunate"); hence the system that emerges from these texts is an "enlightened but more-or-less absolute monarchy."[104]

4. A Buddhist Perspective on Politics from other *Pāli Canon* Texts

a) *Dhamma-pada, Mahâpadāna-sutta* and *Saṃyutta-nikāya*

Moving forward to texts from *Khuddaka-nikāya*, the *Dhamma-pada* (Collection of Buddha's Sayings) brings a straightforward message on politics. There Buddha says that "better than sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than

[100] King, *In the Hope of Nibbāna*…, p. 171.
[101] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 47. This issue will be elaborated later on.
[102] I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.
[103] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 27.
[104] Ibid., pp. 23, 27, 87 and 132.

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lordship over all worlds, is the reward of the first step in holiness."[105] This line presents clearly the "Buddha's view about the place of politics in human life (…) simply the best possible human goal is achieving enlightenment; indeed Buddha explicitly contrasts enlightenment with possessing political power"; moreover, his message (here and in other texts) "appears to be that a person who is already enlightened will have nothing to do with politics (…) and that someone seriously seeking enlightenment will do the same; enlightenment is more important goal than genuinely righteous rule, and one can help the suffering more by pursuing enlightenment than through politics."[106] The illustration of this thesis can be found in the Buddha's own life, too. According to *Mahâpadāna-sutta*, when Gautama Buddha was born, the Brahmins told his father, King Bandhumā, that his son would be a "Great Man" and that "to such, only two courses are open. If he lives the household life he will become a ruler, a wheel-turning righteous monarch of the law, conqueror of the four quarters, who has established the security of his realm and is possessed of the seven treasures (…) but if he goes forth from the household life into homelessness, then he will become an Arahant (Pāli*: arahā* / *arahaṃ*), a fully-enlightened Buddha."[107] Despite his father's attempt to prevent Gautama from choosing the latter option, he did precisely so and later became the Buddha. By doing so, he symbolically showed the subordinated place of politics in one's life. Furthermore, he enhanced that massage in his adult life. In *Māra-saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* (Connected Discourses), the Buddha, while "dwelling a small forest hut in the Himalayan," started to think "is it possible to exercise rulership righteously: without killing and without instigating others to kill, without confiscating and without instigating others to confiscate, without sorrowing and without causing sorrow?"[108] Momentarily

[105] *The Dhamm-apada and Sutta-nipata*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 10, chapter XIII, verse 178, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe10/sbe1015.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[106] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 92–93.

[107] *Mahâpadāna-sutta*, *The Great Discourse on the Lineage*, Dīgha-nikāya (D14/1.31:271-272), Pali Canon Online, http://www.palicanon.org/en/sutta-pitaka/transcribed-suttas/majjhima-nikaya/129-mn-8-sallekha-sutta-effacement.html (access: 02.03.2018); the same story ("such a great man thus endowed have only two destinies, no other. If they live a household life, they will become a wheel-turning king, a Dharma-rajah [a just king], a victor over the four quarters, a country blessed with stability, and a possessor of the seven jewels"), appears also in *Ambaṭṭha-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 1, Sīlakkhandha Vagga 3 (D 3/1:88), transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/21.3-Ambattha-S-d3-piya.pdf (access: 02.03.2018), p. 41 and in *Sella-sutta*, Majjhima-nikāya 2, Majjhima Paṇṇāsa 5, Brāhmaṇa Vagga 2 [Khuddaka-nikāya 8] 16, Vīsati Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Vagga 6, M 92/2:106 =Sn 3.7/102-112•Sela Sutta≈Tha 818-841/78-80•Sela Theragāthā, transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/21.3-Ambattha-S-d3-piya.pdf (access: 02.03.2018), p. 68.

[108] *Rajja* [*Rulership*], *Māra-saṃyutta* [*Connected Discourses with Mara*], Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 4.20:116), Sutta Central, transl. Bhikkhu Bodhi, https://suttacentral.net/en/sn4.20 (access: 02.03.2018).

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Māra, the Demon, Buddha's tempter and "the personification of the forces antagonistic to enlightenment,"[109] approached Buddha and told him: "Venerable sir, let the Blessed One exercise rulership righteously," then he flattered Buddha by saying that Buddha already achieved such spiritual power that if he wanted, he could made the Himalayas golden. Buddha realizing that this is a temptation, answered "how could a person incline to sensual pleasures. Who has seen the source whence suffering springs? Having known acquisition as a tie in the world, a person should train for its removal." Then Māra, "sad and disappointed, disappeared right there."[110] This message is very clear: it is better to care about one's enlightenment than to engage in politics, even if it could help others: "the key point in this passage is that Māra's argument is implicitly that through being a righteous ruler, the Buddha could relieve the suffering of the people who currently live under inferior rulers; the Buddha rejects this line of reasoning, explicitly on the grounds that it would distract him from his proper and implicitly on the ground that his spiritual teaching will be more helpful for reducing suffering that being a righteous ruler would be."[111]

b) *Vinaya-piṭaka* and *Gilāna-sutta*

Buddha's distance to politics is further enhanced by his advices for monks: Buddha told them that they should not "engage in the various kinds of pointless talk, that is, talk about kings, thieves, and ministers of state; talk about armies, dangers, and wars (…) Because (…) this talk is unbeneficial, irrelevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, does not lead to (…) *nibbāna*."[112] In the rules for *saṅgha* (the only organization he has ever established), this distance to politics is also clearly visible. In *Vinaya-piṭaka* (The Book of Discipline) for the monks, they are not allowed to see "the army fighting," to attend "the massing of an army or to see a review," to stay "with an army for two or three nights."[113] Moreover, *saṅgha* cannot ordain not only "thieves", "debtors" and so forth (transgressors), but also "warriors" (soldiers) – the Buddha has forbidden this after King Bimbisāra of Magadha complained to him that his warriors instead of fighting on the borderlands, seek refuge in *saṅgha* (they did so, because they realized that they did "evil" and by

[109] Nyanaponika Thera, *The Roots of Good and Evil: Buddhist Texts Translated from the Pali with Comments and Introduction,* Inward Path, Penang (BPS, Sri Lanka, Kandy) 1999, p. 22.

[110] *Māra Saṃyutta* (SN 4.20:116)...

[111] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 92.

[112] *Tiracchānakathā* [*Pointless Talk*], *Sacca-saṃyutta* [*Connected Discourses on the Truths*], Saṃyutta Nikāya, (SN 56.10:419), Sutta Central, transl. Bhikkhu Bodhi, https://suttacentral.net/en/sn56.10 (access: 02.03.2018).

[113] *Vinaya Piṭaka* [*The Book of the Discipline*], vol. II: *Suttavibhanga*, transl. I.B. Horner, Pali Text Society, London 1969, pp. 375–377.

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becoming monks they could "refrain from evil and do what is good").[114] Although in this canonical text the rationale given against ordaining these soldiers is that they "might harm monks even for a trifling matter,"[115] hence implying that motives of these soldiers were dishonest and/or that they even after becoming monks would not be able to change their nature, it is nevertheless not hard to imagine that the Buddha made this decision out of prudence – *saṅgha* could have been endangered had it challenged the political authority of the existing states. That is why, the Buddha "forbade (…) ordaining anyone as a monk who was under an existing obligation to the state (…) the implication seems to be that the *saṅgha* should avoid interfering with the business of the state, even to help an individual to achieve enlightenment."[116] This shows not only "a kind of ambiguity towards political power"[117] but also a realistic policy of the Buddha: he could have helped these soldiers to become better people (or even to achieve enlightenment) by accepting them as monks, but this could threaten that the entire *saṅgha* would receive retaliation from the political authority of the king (no political leader likes to lose soldiers and none likes competition in ruling). That is why the Buddha decided to leave political issues to state (political) leaders (kings, princesses, etc.) and ordered his monks to stay away from this sphere of life. In short, Buddha "wished to avoid trouble with the secular power" and "like Jesus, and almost in the same words as the Gospel, he urged the faithful to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar."[118] A careful reading of *Jātakas* (see: below) also suggests that Buddha was very careful not to come into conflict with the political rulers.[119] In those stories appear many kings who are depicted negatively (as rulers who seized the throne by killings or treachery and/or conducted many immoral acts afterwards), but the Buddha "unless is specifically asked for his opinion or spiritual guidance (…) does not try to educate, improve or oppose these kings, even stop them from committing great evils."[120] The Buddha's cordial position towards the existing political authority ("do whatever the laws of the state require of you, and do not expect the sangha to exempt [you] from your obligations") is further reinforced by *Aggaññ-sutta* that suggests that citizens should

[114] *Vinaya Piṭaka* [*The Book of the Discipline*], vol. IV: *Mahāvagga*, transl. I.B. Horner, Pali Text Society, London 1969, pp. 91–95.

[115] Ibid., p. 92.

[116] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 93.

[117] Trevor Ling, *Burmese Philosophy Today*, in: *Asian Philosophy Today*, ed. D. Riepe, Gordon and Breach, New York 1981, p. 32.

[118] Robert Lingat*, The Buddhist Manu or the Propagation of Hindu Law in Hinayanist Indochina*, "Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute", vol. 30, nos 3/4, July–October 1949, p. 285.

[119] This is a very important element that shows lack of Buddhism's initial political engagement. Later, however, starting with Aśoka, Buddhism became significantly involved in politics. In other words, initial doctrinal distance to politics is different than later pragmatics, including close relationship between the clergy and the political authorities. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[120] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 93.

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"pay their taxes and obey the law"; by doing so "Buddha seems to be counselling lay people to do what is required or expected of them by the state when it comes to politics; but, implicitly, anything beyond that would be a distraction from the time and energy needed to attain enlightenment."[121] This logic is also well seen in the answer given by one of Buddha's most important lay disciple – Citta, who because of "the purity of his virtue" was given a chance by *devatās* (goods) to become "a king, a wheel-turning monarch"; "a righteous one," who would "wield righteous power." Citta, however, rejected this offer, saying that "even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on."[122] Hence, he rejected the possibility of ruling the world out of being loyal to the Buddhist theory of impermanence of all things. This message is clear – politics, impermanent as everything, should not obstacle the only real goal for an individual: *nibbāna* seeking. The conclusion that comes out of these texts is that the Buddha's point is that "politics is ultimately not very important when compared with other aspects of human life and that right-thinking people should give politics and government very little of their time and attention."[123]

c) *Aṅguttara-nikāya*

Despite Buddhism's general distance to politics, one may, too, find aspects that show more practical, if not realistic, approach to politics by the Buddha. In *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (The Book of Gradual Sayings) while describing features of a perfect *rāja*, a *cakkavattī,* the Buddha, aside from emphasizing the need of ruling via dhamma, said that the rajah "knows measure, knows times, knows assembled men." If this still sounds quite innocent, then one of the five qualities that make it possible for this rajah to rule ("his strength in the four divisions of his army, loyal and alert to commands") leave no room for a misunderstanding. This realistic message is further enhanced by qualities demanded from the rajah's eldest son, who should have "skills that belong to appointed warrior rajahs: elephant, horse, chariot, bow and sword."[124] Moreover, in later part of *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the Buddha identified himself with the *cakkavattī* ("many times seven was I a wheel turning rajah, just, righteous, conquering the four ends of the earth, bringing stability to the country, possessing the seven gems").[125] As Tambiah reflected, "the most

[121] Ibid.

[122] *Gilāna-sutta: Sick* [*Citta the Householder's Last Hours*], Saṁyutta-nikāya (SN 41.10:302), transl. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn41/sn41.010.than.html (access: 02.03.2018).

[123] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 88.

[124] *Aṅguttara-nikāya* [*The Book of Gradual Sayings*], vol. III: *The Books of The Fives And Sixes*, transl. E.M. Hare, Pali Text Society, Oxford 2008 (reprint of the 1934 version), pp. 116–117.

[125] *Aṅguttara-nikāya* [*The Book of Gradual Sayings*], vol. IV: *The Books of The Sevens, Eights And Nine*, transl. E.M. Hare, Pali Text Society, Oxford 2006–2008 (reprint of the 1932/1934 version), p. 54.

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remarkable feature of this passage (…) is the Buddha's admission of his vigorous use of force as the world ruler, and of ruling righteously, not needing rod or sword"; what is equally important here is the fact that the Buddha ruled peacefully "only after (emphasis mine – ML) accomplishing the conquest", hence his "change of heart model" or "passage from violence to righteousness" is "problematic for all actual rulers"[126] (best seen in Aśoka's dilemma, see: later in this chapter). These fragments as well as other traits in the early Buddhist texts (*Saṃyutta-nikāya*, *Te-sakuṇa-jātaka*) that emphasize two features of a powerful kingdom (full treasury and a large army that enables to control the territory)[127] show that there was room for more realistic understanding of politics within Buddhism (they "suggest a Buddhist realism"[128]) and that certainly the Buddha was not naïve about politics.

d) *Culla-vagga*, *Aṅgulimāla-sutta* and *Thera-gāthā*

Finally, the last issue presented here is the question of Buddha's two foes: Devadatta and Aṅgulimāla. Although their stories neither contributed to making the Buddhist political theory nor influenced the Buddhist political thought (they have loose connection with other ideas presented here), they constitute, however, an important aspect of Aung San Suu Kyi's own political thought. As such, those two individuals and their meaning must be presented here.

Devadatta's story is known from *Culla-vagga* (part of *Vinaya-piṭaka*)[129] and from Mahāyāna texts,[130] though the preference here will be given to the sources from the former, as this book deals with Theravāda Buddhism. He was both the cousin and the brother-in-law of the Buddha (his sister was Siddhartha's wife, Yasodharā) and the brother of Ānanda. Devadatta joined the Buddhism order early, became devoted and achieved success in developing psychic powers (though not supernatural ones). Unfortunately, with time he became proud and arrogant and started to envy the Buddha's position. His self-esteem increased especially once he was able to impress prince Ajātasattu who became his disciple. Strengthened by this success, Devadatta openly challenged the Buddha by asking him to retire and hand over *saṅgha* to him, Devadatta. The Buddha not only rejected, but also warned the monks about Devadatta's change for worse.

[126] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 42–45.

[127] De Gokhale, *Early Buddhist Kingship*…, p. 17.

[128] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 51.

[129] *Vinaya Piṭaka* [*The Book of the Discipline*], vol. V: *Cullavagga* [*The Lesser Division*], chapter VII: *On Schism*, transl. I.B. Horner, Luzac & Company, London 1967, pp. 253–284.

[130] Such as *Buddhacarita Aśvaghoṣa*, see: Andre F. Herold, *The Life of the Buddha*, transl. P.C. Blum, Paris 1922, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/lob/lob54.htm (access: 02.03.2018). The fact that Pāli texts, such as the story of Devadatta, have their equivalent in Mahāyāna texts is quite typical.

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This provoked Devadatta to seek the Buddha's death. He joined hands with prince Ajātasattu: together they plotted to kill both Ajātasattu's father, good king Bimbisāra and the Buddha. The former was achieved and Ajātasattu ascended the throne. The latter turned out to be impossible. Devadatta tried three times to kill the Buddha. First, he sent Ajātasattu' mercenaries, but once they approached the Buddha they trembled and became the Buddha's disciples instead. Second, Devadatta hurled a huge stone at the Buddha who was walking on the slopes of a mountain, but managed to hurt Buddha's foot only. Third, he let the intoxicated elephant Nāḷāgiri loose on the Buddha, but the latter radiated his *mettā* (loving-kindness) towards the animal, stopped and tamed him. Realizing his failure to get rid of the Buddha, Devadatta changed his tactics and focused on splitting the *saṅgha*. Having collected a few monks, he demanded the Buddha to restrict the monastic code of behaviour into much more ascetic one (e.g. living in the forest). When Buddha rejected, he accused him of living in the lap of luxury and left, taking with him 500 newly ordained, inexperienced monks (they were later brought back by the Buddha's two closest disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna). In the meantime Ajātasattu, seriously ill, regretted killing his father and recovered only after paying homage to the Buddha and confessing his crimes to him. The Buddha reassured Ajātasattu that his father had forgiven him and was reborn in the realm of gods. Ajātasattu in return banished Devadatta from his kingdom. From then on, Devadatta was trying to convince other kings to trust him, but he was rejected everywhere. Finally, Devadatta got ill; before his death he either wanted to reconcile with the Buddha, but did not make it, or tried one more time to kill the Buddha and failed; in both versions he was swallowed up into the Niraya Hell, as predicted by the Buddha.[131] Although the Buddha (who, naturally, during the power struggle with Devadatta "did not harbour, on his part, one single feeling of ill-will" towards Devadatta) predicted a happy ending: that Devadatta would be reborn (after suffering one hundred thousand aeons of time in hell) as a *Pacceka Buddha*[132]; nevertheless Devadatta in Buddhism personalizes a person who was incapable of "turning to the light" (redemption) in the right moment and consequently had to suffer his karmic retribution in hell.

Aṅgulimāla, a ruthless bandit and killer, serves as quite the contrary example. The canonical sources of this story are *Aṅgulimāla-sutta*[133] and *Thera-gāthā* (Verses of the Elder Monks), where the story is repeated.[134] These two stories presenting Aṅgulimāla differ in details, but they have a common meaning. According to *Thera-gāthā*, Aṅguli-

[131] Ibid.; *Vinaya Piṭaka* [*The Book of the Discipline*], vol. V…, p. 284.

[132] *Devadatta*, Pali, http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/d/devadatta.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[133] *Angulimala-sutta: About Angulimala*, *Majjhima-nikāya (*MN 86:97), transl. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.086.than.html (access: 02.03.2018).

[134] *Theragāthā* [*Verses of the Elder Monks*], vol. II: *Psalms of the Brethren*, transl. T.W. Rhys Davis, Pali Text Society, London 1913, pp. 318–326.

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māla was born as Ahiṃsaka in a Brahmin family and studied under a famous guru. He was the best student in the class which evoked jealousy among his colleagues who turned the teacher against him. The guru told Ahiṃsaka that, as a customarily final gift, he should bring him thousand fingers from different victims. Ahiṃsaka embarked on this unusual enterprise and became a fearful bandit who terrorized the people and wore their cut fingers around his neck as a garland (hence his new name, Aṅgulimāla, "fingerwreathed," or "the one whose necklace is made of thumbs"). Finally, he encountered the Buddha (here stories from *Thera-gāthā* and *Aṅgulimāla-sutta* differ on why Buddha went to Aṅgulimāla's place, but these details are irrelevant for the meaning) and tried to kill him. The Buddha, however, "willed a feat of psychic power" that made it impossible for Aṅgulimāla to reach him. In the due course, Aṅgulimāla started asking questions to the Buddha and finally he converted to Buddhism and became a monk. Both version of the story inform that afterwards, already as a monk, Aṅgulimāla was – as a karmic retribution for his past misdeeds – harassed by the village people (*Aṅgulimāla-sutta* adds two stories, of Buddha's saving Aṅgulimāla from king Kosala and of Aṅgulimāla's help to a hardworking woman),[135] but nevertheless Aṅgulimāla ended up an *arahant* (a perfectly liberated person who will never be reborn and will soon attain *nibbāna*).[136]

Aṅgulimāla personifies Buddhism's message that even the worst person can be redeemed and is able to return to the light. It also symbolizes the power of compassion and good deeds over retribution and punishment. Both individuals, Devaddata and Aṅgulimāla were used as personalized symbols of political behaviour by Aung San Suu Kyi (see: latter part of this book).

5. A Buddhist Perspective on Politics from *Jātaka* Stories

Aside from *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Khuddaka-nikāya* collections in the classical Buddhist texts, there are popular *Jātaka* tales (stories of Buddha's former incarnations)[137] where

[135] Richard F. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*, 2nd edition, Routlage, London–New York 2006, p. 224.

[136] *Theragāthā*…, p. 326; *Angulimala-sutta* (MN 86:97)...

[137] *Jātakas'* relation to *Pāli Canon* is complex: *Jātakas'* strophes (verses) are considered the part of the Canon; the prose narrative is not. *Jātakas* are important in analysing the Burmese precolonial political thought: the Burmese royal chronicles "draw no lines" between monarch described in *Jātakas* texts and the monarchs who really ruled Burma: "they belonged, after all, to one superdynasty: offspring of Mahāsammata"; thus, for example, *Jātakas* represent "exemplary narratives" or "precedents" – when a courtier advised a king on not building grand pagoda due to financial restraints, he could have told him "don't be like Vessantara" which in plain language meant "when Vessantara gave more away than his people could stand, they threw him out" (Andrew Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan: Burmese Political Theory in the 1870s*, in: *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, ed. I. Harris, Routledge, London–New York 2007, pp. 26–30), Huxley here

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one can find many rules and advices concerning governance and the proper attitude towards politics.

a) *Bhadda-sāla-jātaka*

Bhadda-sāla-jātaka is important, because in this story the Buddha appears in person already as the Buddha (not as his former incarnations) and is directly involved in politics. In this *Jātaka* the king of Kosala asked Buddha's clan, the Sakya, to send him a girl of good birth to become his "queen-consort." The Sakyas did not want to do it as "the custom of our clan will be broken"; on the other hand they did not want to offend the king and risk an invasion. So they decided to deceive him – they sent him a girl named Vāsabhakhattiyā who was half noble by father and half slave by mother. The King married her and she gave birth to his son, Viḍūḍabha. For the next sixteen years they lived happily and the secret remained concealed. Unfortunately, on a trip to Sakya Viḍūḍabha accidentally discovered the truth and swore to take revenge. His father, the king of Kosala, striped Vāsabhakhattiyā and Viḍūḍabha of their royal statuses and made them slaves; moreover the king decided to destroy the Sakyas, but the Buddha himself appealed to him not to attack the Sakyas. The king agreed but later died, and Viḍūḍabha took the throne "determined to destroy the Sakyas one and all." Again, the Buddha appeared before him and stopped the offensive. The scheme (Viḍūḍabha's intention to destroy Sakyas and the Buddha's successful appeal) repeated three times, but the fourth time the Buddha "scanning the former deeds of the Sakyas, perceived that nothing could do away with the effect of their evildoing, in casting poison into the river; so he did not go thither the fourth time. Then king Viḍūḍabha slew all the Sakyas, beginning with babes at the breast, and with their hearts' blood washed the bench, and returned."[138] This *Jātaka* is revealing, because here the Buddha, despite his reservation about the involvement in politics (see: above), "seems to acknowledge that there may be emergencies of sufficient gravity that even the enlightened will directly get involved in politics."[139] Yet at the same time, the Buddha does not do it at any cost: once he realised that the Sakyas are doomed, he resigned and their fate was decided upon. His action may

used term political theory, I use more neutral and more flexible term political thought. Aung San Suu Kyi also used this example is similar pattern (evoking Vessantara as a reminder that the legitimacy of the ruler rests on the people and "may be withdraw if they lose confidence") though she democratized this interpretation substantially (Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/ 3rd edition, Penguin Books, London, 2010, p. 173). For the details, see: latter part of this book.

[138] *Bhadda-Sāla-Jātaka*, no. 465, in: *The Jataka,* vol. IV, transl. W.H.D. Rouse, 1901, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j4/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[139] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 95–96.

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suggest a consent with his message articulated elsewhere that individual enlightenment is more important that engagement in politics, even in favour of one's relatives.

b) *Rājovāda-jātaka* and *Kurudhamma-jātaka*

In *Rājovāda-jātaka*, the Buddha preached about the link between the moral action of a ruler and the prosperity of his people. In this *Jātaka*, a king wanted to know if he ruled justly, so he "went about inquiring if there was anyone who would tell him his faults." Unfortunately, he was unable to find anyone who would dare to tell him the truth, so he decided to go to the Himalayas. There he reached the hermitage of the Bodhisattva, who offered him "ripe figs which he had brought front the wood (….) They were luscious and sweet, like powdered sugar." The king was surprised why those figs were so "exceedingly sweet?" The Bodhisattva replied that "the king now exercises his rule with justice and equity. That is why it is so sweet." The king further inquired whether if the opposite was true, the fruit would "lose its sweetness." The Bodhisattva confirmed, so the king decided to check his words: he came back to his kingdom, "ruled unjustly" and after a while came back to the hermitage. Again he was offered the fig, but this time it was bitter. The Bodhisattva clarified: "the king must be unjust, for when rulers are unjust, everything beginning with the wild fruits in the wood, lose all their sweetness and flavour." Upon hearing that, the king revealed his identity, came back, "and ruling righteously restored everything to its original condition."[140]

Understanding of this *Jātaka*, as well as other canonical texts, gave birth to the tradition (inherited in Burma from India via Sri Lanka) that morality of the ruler is the prerequisite for good welfare of his subjects. In accordance with these cosmological magical ideas, "without royal morality, foodstuffs together with medicinal herbs lose their nourishing power; the people are afflicted with severe diseases," thus "infringing morality would disastrously upset the cosmic harmony"; if however, "kings are righteous, the whole country lives happily."[141] This interrelation between the morality

[140] "In the time of unjust kings, oil, honey, molasses and the like, as well as wild roots and fruits, lose their sweetness and flavour, and not these only but the whole realm becomes bad and flavourless; but when the rulers are just, these things become sweet and full of flavour, and the whole realm recovers its tone and flavour" (*Rājovāda Jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. III, transl. H.T. Francis, R.A. Neil, 1897, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[141] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 50, ritually this interrelation between the nature and the king, who was "responsible for good harvests," was inherited from India: "in Burma (…) the basic idea of empire organization was harmony with the cosmos; the state was conceived as a microcosm, an image of the universe" and "expressed in the ceremony of symbolic ploughing by the king," who harmonized "the cosmic powers of Earth, Water and Sun"; the king who performed this ceremony "had to be in harmony with both of them to ensure fertility"; this ceremony, which origins are pre-Buddhist, made the king an agent of "cosmic harmony that linked the earth of the

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of the ruler and the well-being of his realm permeated deeply into Buddhist societies, including the Burmese one. As the precolonial Burmese saying goes, "when just and upright princes reign ... whatever is sown will wonderfully fructify."[142]

Similar logic of a direct connection between rulers' moral actions and the prosperity of their kingdoms is presented in *Kurudhamma-jātaka*, where rationale about a drought is presented. The story is being built on a contrast between two rulers: Dhanañjaya, the king of Kuru, who is who "observed Five Virtues" and Kāliṅga, the king of the kingdom known under the same name. Although in the *Kurudhamma-jātaka* it is not written literally that Kāliṅga committed any immoral acts, one can assume so by the fact that "in his realms the rain fell not, and because of the drought there was a famine in the land." This unhappy situation produced an "outcry" from his people who begged his ruler for making rain. The king inquired his councillors what to do and they advised that the former kings "used to give alms, to keep the holy day, to make vows of virtue, and to lie down seven days in their chamber on a grass pallet." The king did so, but unfortunately to no avail. Then they suggested that the king should somehow receive Dhanañjaya's state elephant, Añjana-vasabha. Kāliṅga knowing that he could not invade Dhanañjaya, for the latter's army "is not easy to overcome," dispatched the Brahmins who firstly praised Dhanañjaya's virtues and then kindly ask him for the elephant. The Kuru king gave the elephant to them and they returned home, but "although the elephant was come, no rain fell yet." So Kāliṅga returned the elephant to Dhanañjaya and via his envoys asked him "to write Kuru's righteousness upon a golden plate." After a long list of people (the king, the queen-mother, the viceroy, the chaplain, the royal driver, the charioteer, "a certain wealthy man," the Master of the Royal Granaries, the gatekeeper and even the courtesan) who added their precepts to the list in Kuru the envoys came back to Kāliṅga: "then their king practised the Kuru precepts, and fulfilled the Five Virtues. And then in all the realm of Kāliṅga the rain fell (…) the land became prosperous and fertile."[143]

In those two *Jātakas*, the central idea of link between moral actions of ruler and well-being of his country is very clearly presented. Both show importance of ruling justly, righteously and wisely and both present consequences of the adverse actions: "through the king's observation of the *Dhamma*, by ruling ethically, the earth of his realm was to produce good harvests. Injustice of kings (their non-observation of the *Dhamma* Law) was thought to cause even the fruits of the forest to become bitter and dry (…) neglect of the Buddhist ethical precepts and moral virtues was an infringement of cosmic Law and would thereby upset the cosmic harmony."[144] Rulers' immorality

realm with the fructifying forces of the universe," had been performed by the Burmese kings even in 19th century (Ibid., pp. 50–51, 62 and 84).

[142] Sangermano, *A Burmese Empire*…, p. 32.

[143] *Kurudhamma Jātaka*, in: *The Jataka,* vol. II, transl. W.H.D. Rouse, 1895, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j2/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[144] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 49.

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"led not only to the ruin of the country, but also to the dislocation of natural functions in the cosmos."[145] However, *Rājovāda-* and *Kurudhamma- Jātakas* "also relate the simple remedy to these societal ills: once the king begins to act in accordance with *dhamma*, following the precepts and supporting the sangha, the fortunes of the kingdom begin to turn."[146] In those two *Jātakas* the Buddha made "the ideal *Dhamma*-kingship the agent through which the cosmic order was to be fulfilled on earth by harmonizing human society with the forces of nature (…) a correlation of the natural and human orders centred representatively in the king as the essential coordinator of nature's and humanity's orders in society, in the institution of kingship and in the morality of the head of state."[147]

c) *Mahā-suta-soma-jātaka*

Sometimes, the Buddha or deities on his behalf could not wait for the nature to show its displeasure for political actions and had to intervene directly when the situation was dire enough. That was the case of *Mahā-suta-soma-jātaka* where Brahmadatta, the king of Benares, drastically broke the precepts by being a cannibal. For doing so, he was expelled from his kingdom, but did not cease to eating man's meat: he was eating random people who passed by. Finally, a deity of a banyan tree was alarmed by this action and told Brahmadatta (now called Porisāda) that he should bring there his friend and teacher, Sutasoma (former incarnation of the Buddha) to eat him as well. Porisāda brought Sutasoma to the tree, but there Sutasoma taught him verses learned from a Brahmin Nanda that made Porisāda leave his evil habits and turn to the truth. As a reward for ending with cannibalism, Porisāda was awarded his kingdom back.[148]

d) *Te-sakuṇa-jātaka*

In *Te-sakuṇa-jātaka*, the Buddha gives more "practical" advices to governance. This is an allegorical story of a Brahmadatta ruler in Benares who had no heir. Once, while napping "at the foot of the royal sāl tree" he saw a nest and three different eggs inside: owl's, maynah bird's and parrot's. The king decided to adopt these birds and ordered to have them raised as royal children. Once they were grown, he came to ask them the same question: what are the duties of a king? The first one, a cock owl named Vessantara, told the king that he should "rule his kingdom righteously" by "putting away all

[145] William J. Koenig, *The Burmese Policy, 1752–1819. Politics, Administration, and Social Organization in the the Early Kon-baung Period*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbour 1990, p. 69.

[146] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 98.

[147] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 49.

[148] *Mahā-Sutasoma-Jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. V, transl. H.T. Francis, 1905, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j5/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

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falsehood and anger and scorn," he should be energetic, courageous and "zealous to do what is right." Then the king asked the second one, a hen of maynah (myna) bird called Kuṇḍalinī, the same question. She answered that he should take himself good advisers, but act on his own to "instruct thy people in every good way." He also should be careful not to lose control and indulge in pleasures of the body. Instead he should "study virtue." Finally, the king went to his last "child," a parrot cock named Jambuka. The parrot answered by saying about five powers (power of limbs, power of wealth, power of counsel, power of caste) and in his response emphasized the importance of the fifth power: wisdom. In short, Jambuka (the former incarnation of the Buddha) advised the king to rule righteously and follow wisdom.[149] This *Jātaka* seems to be easy to interpret, as the words spoken by these three birds represent different political abilities needed by a political ruler. Among them, wisdom, predictably, comes as the last and most important one. This is "a central tenet of Buddhist political theory: a king who wishes to avoid ignorance must have among his counsellors some who are 'wise and just,' in other words learned monks (…) monks must contribute to the formation of royal policy."[150] However, the other four political abilities are interesting as they present more realistic understanding of policy-making that can be linked with the above mentioned traits in *Aṅguttara-nikāya.* [151]

e) *Mahābodhi-jātaka* and *Mahā-ummagga-jātaka*

More indirect, yet equally powerful advices on how to govern rightfully, Buddhism gives in those two *Jātakas* that represent Buddhist objection to Brahmanistic style of policy-making.[152] *Mahābodhi-jātaka* carries this message more literally. It tells the story of an ascetic Mahābodhi who was invited by king Brahmadatta of Benares to live there. For twelve years the ascetic lived there unexposed to troubles. But then, one day, an ordinary person asked for his help. It turned out that the king had five "councillors who taught him his temporal and spiritual duties" and were appointed "to sit in judgment in the king's court." Not only each one of them held wrong views, but they were also "greedy of bribes." As it turned out, they robbed this ordinary man (and many others) of the property. Thanks to Mahābodhi's intervention, justice was restored and from then on Mahābodhi was appointed by the king to be the chief judge and he was performing his task rightfully. This naturally provoked those five councillors to plot against Mahābodhi – they tried to have him sentenced to death (in vain) and later they managed

[149] *Te-sakuṇa-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. V, transl. H.T. Francis, 1905, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j5/j5014.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[150] Ryuji Okudaira, Andrew Huxley, *A Burmese Tract on Kingship: Political Theory in the 1782 Manuscript of Manugye*, "Bulletin of SOAS", vol. 64, no. 2, 2001, p. 256.

[151] De Gokhale, *Early Buddhist Kingship*…, p. 17.

[152] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 32.

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to get him exiled; eventually, however, he came back and confronted the councillors in public stand-off during the presence of the king. He compromised their false views, first philosophical, then political which resulted in king's stripping them of their honours and property and banishing them (only after Mahābodhi's successful appeal to save their lives, as death was initially the king's first decision).[153]

The *Mahā-ummagga-jātaka*'s message is similar, yet more vague. In this (super) lengthy story, the former life of the Buddha is that of sage Mahosadha who in young age became the fifth councillor of king Vedeha from Mithilā, against the wishes of four other (evil) advisors, Senaka, Pukkusa, Kāvinda, and Devinda. Throughout the *Jātaka*, they constantly plotted against him (in vain), put him on trials (which he won successfully), lost disputes with him and finally, when they were close to having him killed, he exposed their guilty secrets, such as killings, stealing etc. which granted him royal trust and made them banished (again Mahosadha successfully saved them from being killed by the monarch).[154]

In both these *Jātakas*, the Buddha shows the deceitfulness of court Kṣatriya advisors, which may be read as an attack on Brahmanism, but also, in wider sense, as showing the superiority of Buddhism style of policy-making over Kṣatriya-based realpolitik: "the Buddhist view advocates reciprocity as against self-interest," and "an unqualified supremacy of the moral law over governmental affairs" in contradistinction to Brahmanistic thought that "recommends the objective of maximum advantage to the ruler and his polity."[155]

f) *Seyya-jātaka* and *Ekarāja-jātaka*

This moral approach is enhanced by two, very similar *Jātakas*. In both these stories there was a good Benares king Brahmadatta (a Bodhisattva) and a bad, plotting courtier who got dismissed and went to neighbouring Kosala country and convinced its king to conquest Benares. Brahmadatta did nothing to stop the invaders and even opened the city gates for them. Once imprisoned by the Kosala king, Brahmadatta "pitied the marauder and an ecstasy of pity was stirred in him."[156] Thanks to Brahmadatta's *mettā*

[153] *Mahābodhi-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. V, transl. H.T. Francis, 1905, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j5/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[154] *Mahā-ummagga-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. VI, transl. E.B. Cowell, W.H.D. Rouse, 1907, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j4/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[155] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 32.

[156] *Seyya-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. VII, transl. W.H.D. Rouse, 1895, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j2/j2135.htm (access: 02.03.2018). Or, in the other version "the king cultivated feelings of charity towards the rebel prince, and by a process of complete absorption entered upon a state of mystic meditation, and bursting his bonds sat cross-legged in the air" (*Ekarāja-jātaka*, in: *The*

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the usurper king "was attacked with a burning pain in the body."[157] He asked his advisors why he was suffering and they replied that it is due to the fact that he deposed the righteous monarch and put him in prison. The usurper king, realizing his mistake, released Brahmadatta, restored his kingdom and punished the evil courtier. Both *Jātakas* are meant to demonstrate the power of *mettā* that can do the impossible and restore the moral order in the universe. In this manner these *Jātakas* were used by Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD during power and ideological struggle with the army in the 1990s.[158]

g) *Vessantara-jātaka*

Another, politically more ambiguous, message is told by *Vessantara-jātaka*. This (very) lengthy story is of the Buddha's former incarnation: prince Vessantara (son of king Sañjaya) who from the moment of birth became "devoted to almsgiving." When Vessantara was sixteen his father abdicated in favour of him. Vessantara ruled righteously, but his charity caused his fall: one day envoys from the kingdom of Kāliṅga, which was facing a drought, came and asked Vessantara for his white elephant that could make the rain. Vessantara agreed and, to horror of his people, gave away the magical white elephant (a symbol of prosperity). This made the inhabitants of the capital Jetuttara "tremble" and "angry": they came to the late-king Sañjaya and by saying "Thy realm is ruined" they demand him to resume control of the kingdom and banish his son Vessantara. Sañjaya agreed and so Vessantara went into exile with his wife Maddī and two children to become a hermit. In the lengthy (and unconcerned with political issues) story of his banishment Vessantara "attained the summit of perfection in giving," by relinquished everything he had, including his children and his wife, but was guarded by the gods, who, by various interventions, gave to his story a happy end: he reunited with his family and was given back the kingdom from the hands of his father. The story ends with Vessantara re-taking his reign among gold shower brought by gods and delights of the "country folk and people of the town."[159]

The interpretation of this *Jātaka* is ambiguous. From one hand it suggests that the Buddhist values (such as *dāna*, or generosity, personalized by Vessantara) despite being the best for one's individual spiritual progress, may nevertheless be an obstacle in

Jataka, vol. III, transl. H.T. Francis, R.A. Neil, 1897, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018)).

[157] *Seyya Jātaka*… or "felt great torment in his body; he burnt all through as though with a twofold flame" (*Ekarāja Jātaka*…).

[158] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 326.

[159] *Vessantara-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. VI, transl. E.B. Cowell, W.H.D. Rouse, 1907, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j4/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

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political governance of the country.[160] On the other, the various interventions of gods in favour of Vessantara and the happy ending of this *Jātaka* suggest that he was right all along and that his keeping of his moral precepts resulted in his ultimate success, both moral and political.

h) *Hārita-jātaka* and *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa-jātaka*

Another ambiguous *Jātakas* that should be presented are *Hārita-jātaka* and *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa-jātaka*. Both these stories deal with morally challenging issues of committing unethical deeds by good people or/and breaking Buddhists precepts in good faith. *Hārita-jātaka* is easier to interpret, so it should be dealt with first. It tells the story of Hārita, a bodhisattva (former Buddha) who was a holy ascetic invited by the king Brahmadatta to counsel the king on religious and moral issues. He had been doing this successfully for twelve years, until one day, when the king was away, he happened to see the queen naked. Then "the sinful feeling (…) in his heart rose up like a snake lying in a box, and put to flight his mystic meditation. Being unable to fix his thoughts he went and seized the queen by the hand, and forthwith they drew a curtain round them." Having "misconducting himself with her (…) every day thenceforth he acted after the same manner" until the king returned and heard about this infidelity. He could not believe so he asked Hārita whether the rumours were true. Hārita hesitated and the *Jātaka* provides a telling description on his decision-making process: "in certain cases a Bodhisatta may destroy life, take what is not given him, commit adultery, drink strong drink, but he may not tell a lie, attended by deception that violates the reality of things." Hence, Hārita told the king the truth, which "won respect" of the monarch, who behaved quite tolerantly: without punishing the ascetic, he limited himself to "encouraging him to throw off sinful passion" and allowing, albeit reluctantly ("amidst the tears and lamentations") Hārita to go into self-exile in the Himalayas. There Hārita "fixing his gaze on the mystic circle he entered into a trance (…) and without falling away from mystic meditation he entered the Brahma world."[161] This *Jātaka*'s prime massage is about not lying: one of the Five Precepts, sometimes considered the most important one.[162] Yet the somehow random words (loosely connected to the rest of the story) about bodhisattva's right to kill, steal, cheat and drink "in certain cases," have been an invitation to bypass uncomfortable Buddhist morality in politics; as such, this passage came to be cited as justification of committing immoral acts "to the greater good."

[160] "While the perfection of *dāna* was a necessary step on the Buddha's path of moral development, his actions as a Buddha-to-be [giving away the white elephant – M.L.] constituted an example of poor political decision making" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 89).

[161] *Hārita-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. III, transl. H.T. Francis, R.A. Neil, 1897, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[162] Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, pp. 99–102.

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Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa-jātaka is somehow more elaborate. Here the Buddha's former incarnation is that of a Brahmin from a farmer's family, yet his role in the story is rather passive. The central one is being played by a golden crab (former incarnation of the Buddha's disciple, Ānanda). The Brahmin and the crab developed a friendship that was tested by dramatic events. An evil she-crow (a former incarnation of Ciñcamānavikā)[163] wanted to eat Brahmin's beautiful eyes. So she lured her crow husband (former incarnation of Devadatta) to ask a black snake (former incarnation of Māra) to kill the Brahmin so that the he-crow could take Brahmin's eyes and bring it to her. The snake agreed and poisoned the Brahmin who fell on the ground. When the crow was just about to attack the body of the unconscious Brahmin for its eyes, the crab came in and by its claw seized the crow. The snake came to rescue the crow but lost the fight with the crab who then held both the crow and the snake. As a consequence, negotiations between the crab and the snake started: the snake tried to deceive the crab to let the crow flee, but the crab saw through snake's plans and he kept the crow while liberating the snake only so that the latter could took away the poison from Brahmin's body. Once the snake did this, the crab thought "'if these two be well there will be no prosperity for my friend, I will kill them,' crushed both their heads like lotus-buds with his claws and took the life from them."[164]

The story is unique because it brings the message from *Hārita-jātaka* ("in certain cases one may destroy life") to its logical end: the crab saved Brahmin's life by immoral means. Although saving one's life by fighting with one's predators should not be considered controversial, the key moment in this *Jātaka* is what happened after the crab saved the Brahmin. He could have left the snake and the crow alone as they no longer constituted the direct threat to Brahmin's life, but the crab killed them just in case. Naturally, this was beneficial in the long term, as it removed the potential danger from them in the future, but the very act of killing both the snake and the crow cannot be considered moral from Buddhist perspective, it certainly generated demerit for the crab. Yet this *Jātaka* created a politically comfortable precedent for less idealistic and more realistic policymaking that was to be followed by Buddhist, including Burmese politicians.[165]

[163] Ciñcamānavikā was a female ascetic who falsely accused Buddha o having a sexual relationship with her and fathering her a child; once her plot was unveiled by the devas, she ran away and was killed in an accident (or swallowed up by the earth and went directly to the deepest bowels of hell in other version of this story) *Cinca Manavika Falsely Accuses the Buddha*, Dhammapada & Commentary, Khuddhaka Khuddhaka Nikāya 55/170, http://suttanta.tripod.com/khuddhaka/dhammapada/dha144.html (access: 02.03.2018). Hence, she is a female personalization of deceit in Buddhism.

[164] *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. III, transl. H.T. Francis, R.A. Neil, 1897, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[165] See, e.g. Spiro, *Buddhism and the Society*…, p. 21.

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i) *Mahāhaṁsa-jātaka* and the *Dasavidha Rajā-dhammā*

Finally, the last and perhaps most important *Jātaka* concerned with politics is the *Mahāhaṁsa-jātaka*, an allegorical story of two sacred geese (one of them being Bodhisattva) who allowed themselves to be caught in a trap sat by a king in order to preach him. They criticised the king for using deceitful means to catch them. Upon hearing their words, the Benares king handed "over to them his kingdom." The Bodhisattva-goose returned the favour by saying "be vigilant and rule your kingdom in righteousness," and by "establishing the king in the five moral laws." The most important part of this *Jātaka* is the lengthy conversation between the Benares king and the Bodhisattva-goose. While elaborating on it, the Buddha presents his ideal of a kingdom ("my kingdom is in happy case, from all oppression free, held by no arbitrary sway, but ruled with equity; I drive bad men out from the land, good men to honour raise, all wickedness I do eschew and follow righteous ways; my realm is very flourishing and ruled in equity") and *expressis verbis* tells the *Dasavidha Rajā-dhammā*, or Ten Virtues (Duties) of the righteous king: "almsgiving, justice, penitence, meek spirit, temper mild, peace, mercy, patience, charity, with morals undefiled."[166]

Rajā-dhammā, combines two words: *dhamma* (dharma) and *rajā* (ruler or king) and hence can be translated as "king-law"; it "denotes that part of the Pali Buddhist tradition dealing with the ethics and practice of kingship."[167] Ten Duties, originally *dānaṃ sīlaṃ pariccāgaṃ ājjavaṃ maddavaṃ tapaṃ akkodaṃ avihiṃsāṃ ca khantiṃ ca avirodhanaṃ*, can be today, after Walpola Rahula, translated and understood as follows: 1) *dāna* (charity/generosity): the ruler should not strive to accumulate riches, but instead "should give it away for the welfare of the people"; 2) *sīla* (moral character; law-abiding): should never "destroy life, cheat, steal and exploit others, commit adultery, utter falsehood, or take intoxicating drink"; 3) *pariccāga* (altruism): should be ready to "give up all personal comfort, name and fame, and even his life, in the interest of the people"; 4) *ajjava* (honesty and integrity): should be sincere in intentions (mustn't "deceive the public") and "must be free from fear and favour in the discharge of his duties"; 5) *maddava* (gentleness): should have a cordial, amiable temperament; 6) *tapa* (self-control and austerity of habits) should "live a simple life," avoid luxuries and be able to exercise self-control; 7) *akkodha* (no ill-will/enmity/anger): "should bear no grudge against anybody"; 8) *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), means not only not hurting anybody, but also an attempt to "promote peace by avoiding and preventing war, and everything which involves violence and destruction of life"; 9) *khanti* (patience, forbearance): must be able to "bear hardships, difficulties and insults without losing (…) temper"; 10 *avirodha* (uprightness/non-opposition) should "not oppose the will of the people,

[166] *Mahāhaṁsa-jātaka*, in: *The Jataka*, vol. V, transl. H.T. Francis, 1905, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j5/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[167] Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan*…, p. 27.

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should not obstruct any measures that are conducive to the welfare of the people (…) should rule in harmony with the people."[168] These Ten Duties "which formed the basics of legislation depicts an 'ideal type' characterization of the 'monarch' or 'ruler' who was expected to act with a sense of moral righteousness."[169] The *Dasavidha Rajādhammā* created the Buddhist ideal of political action that every ruler, including Burmese kings, was to follow.[170] And this list of the Ten Duties became "the most ubiquitous of the Buddhist political lists (…) appears to be used as a synecdoche for the whole field of political science, just as the Ninety-six diseases can stand for medical science and the Hundred-and-one races of mankind for human geography."[171]

j) Aung San Suu Kyi on *Dasavidha Rajā-dhammā*

It was precisely this archetypical meaning of the Ten Duties of a King (Burm. *min gyint taya seh ba*) that Aung San Suu Kyi used in her political writing ("the Ten Duties of Kings are widely known and generally accepted as a yardstick which could be applied just as well to modern government as to the first monarch of the world").[172] She listed and elaborated on each of these Duties in order to present an indigenous political ideas which, in her reading, should be restored after incompetent and cruel governance of the Burmese army (Tatmadaw).[173] What characterized Suu Kyi's interpretation is strong politicization of these concepts in the modern spirit – she updated them in order to present them as core arguments in her theses about Buddhism being in accord with democracy and responsible government.

She started with the First Duty, *dāna* (charity/generosity) which she translated as "liberality" and interpreted as a demand from a ruler to "contribute generously towards the welfare of the people"; she quickly went on to modern interpretation, writing that *dāna* in contemporary understanding "makes the tacit assumption that a government should have the competence to provide adequately for its citizens" and that "in the context of modern politics, one of the prime duties of a responsible administration would

[168] Walpora Rahula, *What The Buddha Taught*, 2nd edition, Grove/Atlantic Inc., New York 1974, pp. 82–91.

[169] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 58.

[170] "In practice, the monarch was bound perhaps even more than by Buddhist values by immemorial customs" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 14–15).

[171] Okudaira, Huxley, *A Burmese Tract on Kingship*…, p. 257.

[172] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 170.

[173] Suu Kyi "used Buddhist traditions (…) to show that the military leaders had not followed the guidelines of the ten royal virtues" (Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty. The History of the Conflict Between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, 1988–2011, Set in a Global Context*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, p. 145).

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be to ensure the economic security of the state."[174] Later, when she was talking to her supporters over her gate, she presented another, simpler explanation – that the government should give, not take[175] (the opposite of what Myanmar's military goverment was doing): "in our saying of a king's ten duties, the first one is alms giving. Alms is a way of sacrifice, a way of sharing and it is not alms receiving. It says that the king has to give alms to the people. It does not say that the king has to receive alms from the people (…) we all need to understand that it is not for taking back from the people."[176] Nevertheless, the government should do it wisely, without endangering the state revenues: "in ancient history, the king Wayathanthayar was so generously giving alms, up to the point of an unsatisfactory state of public affairs. That is why a good king's duty is to give alms to poor people."[177]

Having stated this, Suu Kyi tried to substantially democratize the First Duty, yet within her understanding of democracy, that is that rights are balanced by duties: the government, which is chosen by people ("in the end, in a democratic time, the king is the people") should "give to the peoples," but the people in return "also have the duty to give what they should give," like "custom tax"; in short "the people have to give in in the rights way for the good of the country."[178]

This reciprocal relation between the government and the people, and between their rights and duties, represent Suu Kyi' interesting interpretation of classical concepts – an indigenous democratisation of these ideas done within the moral logic of Theravāda Buddhism. Suu Kyi used the same intellectual device in describing the other Duties. Therefore, while writing about the Second Duty, *sīla* (morality), based on the observance of the Five Precepts,[179] she democratized this concepts significantly ("the ruler must bear a high moral character to win the respect and trust of the people, to ensure their happiness and prosperity and to provide a proper example") and, even more importantly, enforced the traditional Burmese moral logic combined with cause and effect description: "when the king does not observe the *dhamma*, state functionaries become corrupt, and when state functionaries are corrupt the people are caused much suffering (…) an unrighteous king brings down calamity on the land"; for this reason – Suu Kyi dotted the 'i' – "the root of a nation's misfortunes has to be sought in the moral failings

[174] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 170.

[175] Suu Kyi's interpretation is not only naïve but also doctrinally false: in the Buddhist legal tradition, the king was to receive 1/7 of all property as his "tax"; thus, the king first took and only later gave (much less). I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[176] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996*…, p. 428.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid., pp. 428–429.

[179] *The Dhammapada, Verses and Stories*, verses 246–248, transl. Daw Mya Tin, Burma Tipitaka Association Rangoon, 1986, http://www.tipitaka.net/tipitaka/dhp/verseload.php?verse=246 (access: 03.03.2018).

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of the government."[180] This is one of the clearest examples of a leitmotif of Suu Kyi's political thought that runs parallel to the mainstream of the Burmese political thought: that morality of the ruler is the prime mover of the wealth or poverty of the nation. This is, too, in accord with canonical Buddhism and with *Jātakas*. Therefore elsewhere, in one of her rallies, she mentioned humility as "the most important quality for a ruler" and presented an elaborate interpretation of importance of humility: "humility translates as 'not having omniscient mindset,' the arrogance that keeps telling you 'I know everything.' Why humility? People who do not consider themselves know-alls are easy to learn from others. Only a person who can learn from people is fit to rule a country properly – a person who values people, a person who treats people humanely. How can a person who thinks people are worthless value people? If one doesn't value people, one cannot lead them to progress. So I think humility is the foremost quality for a good leader. Humility leads one to wisdom, knowledge, self-censuring and self-correction. Humble people are capable of all-round development. They respect and value others. I believe that only humble persons can rule a country properly."[181]

Elsewhere, however, Suu Kyi went on beyond this traditional understanding (morality of the ruler as a prerequisite for good prosperity of a country) and extended it by including not only the importance of morality of the ruler, but also of the people for the well-being of the country: "even though she has blamed the deterioration of morality on the government's violations of human rights, she has also suggested that efforts to promote democracy will be inhibited by a lack of moral conduct among citizens"; by doing so she transposed *sīla* "from a guide for monarchs to a set of expectations for a modern democratic government," and she insisted "that a lack of moral purity in the political authority, whether monarchical or democratic, would set the tone for the conduct of the rest of the people."[182] In one speech she "explained to listeners that as people gradually lost their rights, their moral conduct correspondingly declined," which was a "creative and democratically oriented reinterpretation of the story of moral decline in the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta* as well as a pointed criticism of the previous military government."[183] In another speech, by using rhetorical questions, she presented her interpretation on why the military government (disguised by its civilian dress-up party, the BSPP) was able to rule for so long: "why was the BSPP able to last so long? I think the answer to this has to do with the people at large. Because we, the citizens, simply stood by and watched, the system was able to last as long as it did (…) the BSPP gained control of the govern-

[180] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 170.

[181] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 31 March 1996 (no. 24)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Abera Verlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 530.

[182] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 206.

[183] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 183.

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ment because the citizens failed to carry out the duties of citizenship."[184] Therefore "the Burmese people would not be able to achieve their primary goal of democracy if they did not attend to and improve their morality, although this process would also be easier if the government would grant its citizens basic rights"; she has, however, not "absolved individuals completely from their political responsibilities," for "democracy requires active participation of its citizens and Aung San Suu Kyi has conceptualized this participation as a moral duty"; "in describing that duty as working for the national interest, rather than more narrow interests, she alludes to the Buddhist virtue of selflessness."[185] That brings us to another Duty, the Third one: *pariccāga* (altruism). Here Suu Kyi at first concentrated on its translation, giving two alternative ones (generosity/self-sacrifice) and favouring the latter (for generosity "would constitute a duplication of the first duty, dana, so self-sacrifice as the ultimate generosity which gives up all for the sake of the people would appear the more satisfactory interpretation"); she illustrated her description with two stories: that of a hermit Sumedha who vowed to become a Buddha ("in so doing he who could have realized the supreme liberation of nirvana in a single lifetime committed himself to countless incarnations that he might help other beings free themselves from suffering") and that of the lord of the monkeys "who sacrificed his life to save his subjects, including one who had always wished him harm and who was the eventual cause of his death"; for Suu Kyi the message that comes from it is that self-sacrifice for the nation is good: "the good ruler sublimates his needs as an individual to the service of the nation."[186] Suu Kyi would later made use of the logic described here in her political struggles with the generals.

In elaborating about the Fourth Duty (integrity), Suu Kyi passed directly to modern interpretation ("*ajjava* implies incorruptibility in the discharge of public duties as well as honesty and sincerity in personal relations") and quoting a Burmese saying – "with

[184] Aung San Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity among Ethnic Groups*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London, 2010, p. 222.

[185] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 206. I will elaborate on this later in the book.

[186] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 171. Sumedha is the eleventh of twenty-four Buddhas who preceded the historical Siddharta, more about him, see: *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, vol. III: *Buddhavaṁsa* [*Chronicle of Buddhas*] *and Cariyāpiṭaka* [*Basket of Conduct*], transl. I.B. Horner, Pali Text Society, London 1975, pp. 54–56. The story of monkey king is taken from *Mahākapi-Jātaka* and tells the story of a monkey king who had a great mango(or banyan) tree with delicious fruits, which caused the attack of king of Benares; when human army attacked the tree, the monkey king made his body a bridge over which other monkeys escaped (including a former incarnation of Devadatta who tried to kill the king). King of Benares, shocked by this gesture, ordered to take care of the monkey king and withdrew with his forces. The monkey king, after preaching the Benares king a word or two about the need of morality and self-sacrifice in ruling a country, died and was taken to heaven (*Mahākapi-Jātaka*, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/j3108.htm (access: 07.06.2018)).

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rulers, truth, with (ordinary) men, vows" – she explained the importance of integrity: "while a private individual may be bound only by the formal vows that he makes, those who govern should be wholly bound by the truth in thought, word and deed," saying that this is "the very essence of the teachings of the Buddha"; the conclusion she drew was that "the Buddhist king must therefore live and rule by truth, which is the perfect uniformity between nomenclature and nature" for "to deceive or to mislead the people in any way would be an occupational failing as well as a moral offence."[187] Notwithstanding the importance of the truth (Burm: *thitsa*) for Suu Kyi's personal convictions,[188] it is hard to believe that Suu Kyi herself believed in this highly idealised, ahistorical picture she created; after all she proved to be a rather down-to-earth politician. Her linking of ruler with the Buddha was brave, if not blatant, and probably done in purpose to juxtapose this mythical picture of paradise-like conditions of conducting politics with dirty realities of policymaking in military-controlled Myanmar. Suu Kyi went even further in her democratization (and equalization) of ancient concepts with the Fifth Duty, *maddava*, or kindness. For Suu Kyi it meant "a sense the courage to feel concern for the people" which a ruler should possess: "it is undeniably easier to ignore the hardships of those who are too weak to demand their rights than to respond sensitively to their needs," therefore "to care is to accept responsibility, to dare to act in accordance with the dictum that the ruler is the strength of the helpless."[189] This accent on "the power of the powerless," influenced by Václav Havel, will be later the integral part of Suu Kyi's political thought. She would, for example, use it in one of her speeches over the gate when saying, quite idealistically, that "benevolence is one of ten codes of ethics of Buddhist kings. In Buddhism strength of the weak is the king."[190] Here one can see again her attempt to pour her own meaning into ancient texts in order to suit her interpretation. To enhance the message, she quoted *Wizaya* (19th century drama by U Pon Nya) based on *Mahā-vaṃsa* story of Prince Vijaya, where "a king sends away into exile his own son, whose wild ways had caused the people much distress: 'in the matter of love, to make no distinction between citizen and son, to give equally of loving kindness, that is the righteousness of kings.'"[191] One wonders

[187] She additionally quoted one saying: "as an arrow, intrinsically straight, without warp or distortion, when one word is spoken, it does not err into two" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, pp. 171–172).

[188] Sengupta Nilanjana, *The Female Voice of Myanmar. Khin Myo Chit to Aung San Suu Kyi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, p. 292.

[189] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 172.

[190] *Aung San Suu Kyi's 10th Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 225.

[191] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 172. Prince Wizaya later in the play becomes a better man and later a king of Ceylon who would spread Buddhism (*The Reader's Encyclopaedia of World Drama*, eds J. Gassner, E. Quinn, Dover Publications, New York 2002, p. 99).

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whether Suu Kyi own personal dramatic story – her choice of the country over her family – did not influence her understanding of this Royal Duty.

Next, the Sixth Duty is *tapa* (austerity) which, naturally, "enjoins the king to adopt simple habits, to develop self-control and to practise spiritual discipline," wrote Suu Kyi, adding, however, another idealization of the imagined past: "the self-indulgent ruler who enjoys an extravagant lifestyle and ignores the spiritual need for austerity was no more acceptable at the time of the Mahasammata then he would be in Burma today."[192] Then she went on to writing jointly about another three Duties: *akkodha* (no ill-will/enmity/anger), *ahiṃsā* (non-violence) and *khanti* (patience, forbearance) justifying it along morality play lines: due to the fact that "the displeasure of the powerful could have unhappy and far-reaching consequences," the "kings must not allow personal feelings of enmity and ill will to erupt into destructive anger and violence," for "it is incumbent on a ruler to develop the true forbearance which moves him to deal wisely and generously with the shortcomings and provocations of even those whom he could crush with impunity" – he should not, for "violence is totally contrary to the teachings of Buddhism"; consequently, "the good ruler vanquishes ill will with loving kindness, wickedness with virtue, parsimony with liberality, and falsehood with truth."[193] Although, as shown in this book a few pages earlier, violence is not necessary "totally contrary to the teachings of Buddhism" – the picture is somewhat more complicated – deconstructing Suu Kyi's idealised vision of Buddhism is not the main point here. Much more important case is the depiction of means needed to conquer "ill will." Here Suu Kyi presents a kind of Buddhist equivalent of "conquer evil with good."[194] It is even more important, given the fact the she would use this justification in her political struggle in the mid-1990s while proclaiming that she would win with the generals by using *mettā*. Here, however, she went on even further by providing a model of this kind of benevolent rule – that of Emperor Aśoka, who, according to Suu Kyi "ruled his realm in accordance with the principles of non-violence and compassion is always held up as an ideal Buddhist king" which, in contemporary realities, translates into a moral/political recommendation that "a government should not attempt to enjoin submission through harshness and immoral force but should aim at *dhamma-vijaya*, a conquest by righteousness."[195] Naturally this vision of Aśoka had little to do with reality (see: later in this book), for conquering Kaliṅga and causing the death of more than hundred thousand people is barely a non-violent mean; and even if Suu Kyi had in mind Aśoka's deed after Kaliṅga, when he apparently converted to non-violence (if his royal propaganda is to be trusted), there are still at best doubts whether he indeed ruled in accordance with what he

[192] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 172.

[193] Ibid.

[194] *Romans 12:21*, *The Holy Bible*, *New International Version*, Biblica, 1973–2011, http://biblehub.com/niv/romans/12-21.htm (access: 05.06.2018).

[195] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 172.

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preached and whether his *dhamma-vijaya* was indeed so morally right. Again, however, the real picture is irrelevant here. What matters is that this ahistorical, constructed vision of Aśoka drew by Suu Kyi functioned for her as an ideal model of governance which she acclaimed and which she implicitly levelled with Tatmadaw's mismanagement of the state. This was not the only place where she idealised the past. During one of the speeches over the gate she criticised the practice of forced labour for not being in accord with royal code of conduct – "I haven't come across any requirement for forced labour in the code of conduct of Buddhist king (…) but there is compassion in the royal code of conduct. Therefore I think a king should not subject his people to physical or mental grid (…) forced labour is not in line with the royal code of ethics if the people are forced to do work without any decent remuneration."[196]

At other times, she presented even more surprising way of interpreting history, including the precolonial history of Burma: "history cannot be written the way you want, especially not in this age. Even in the age of stone inscription and sacred kings, deplorable kings always enter into chronicles as deplorable kings. Why so, when there was no newspaper, not foreign intervention those days? Because the performance of a bad king is usually recorded in the heart of his people. If we know which kings are bad in a time there was no human rights organisation or media, there is no way we conceal what's happening in our time. We cannot lie to the times past. Since events are registered in our heart and in our brain, our oral history, the verbal communication that travels from one' mouth to another's ears, is handed down through generations. Who was dreadful and who was not will always be left for posterity."[197]

This interpretation, if understood literally, is not only dramatically idealistic, if not plainly naïve (did Suu Kyi really believe that chronicles present a reliable vision of the past?); it might, however, be a skilful PR device to make her supporters believe that her cause – presented as a just cause – would eventually win. Even if this was a Suu Kyi's propaganda tool, this nevertheless showed her inclination to idealise the past in order to make use of this idealised vision in her political struggle.

Perhaps most clear example of this tendency can be seen in one of her rallies when she totally democratised the concepts of the Ten Duties, saying that eventually it is the

[196] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 271. Unfortunately, there was forced labour in Buddhism, see works of Gregory Schopen: *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1997; *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2004; *Buddhist Nuns, Monks, and Other Worldly Matters: Recent Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2014.

[197] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 11),* in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 241.

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people who should decide about these rules: "a ruler working together with the people will improve everything, not just economy. As for the qualifications of the person who can lead a country to progress, I not reiterate here the ten duties of Buddhist kings which I have often cited before, in the end, it is the people who should decide what ethics a king should observe, what perquisites and qualifications he should possess. The people should come up with their criteria for their own ruler."[198] The fact that at other times, indeed a few lines below, she was quite willing to present her own criteria for good political conduct suggest that these words should rather be interpreted as a rhetorical, if not eristic, device to win over her audience.

Finally, in interpreting the last, Tenth Duty (the will of the people, *avirodha*) Suu Kyi would plainly state that this is a very democratic concept ("in our Buddhist culture, one of the ten royal codes of ethics is 'thou shall not oppose the people,'" it "is a democratic concept")[199]; here she justified it by invoking examples from *Jātakas*. Suu Kyi evoked *Mahāsutasoma-jātaka* and the story of king's cannibalism as an example of "a Buddhist endorsement of democracy," and showed, as a positive comparison, the example of prince Vessantara ("a very different kind of ruler" and "the Buddha's penultimate incarnation on earth") to prove a thesis that "the royal duty of non-opposition is a reminder that the legitimacy of government is founded on the consent of the people, who may withdraw their mandate at any time if they lose confidence in the ability of the ruler to serve their best interests."[200] Again Suu Kyi's presented a far-fetched interpretation, for the "endorsement of democracy" is at best a very favourable reading of a rather moral, not political *Mahāsutasoma-jātaka.* As for mandate of people that could be withdrawn, this is spurious interpretation, if not even misinterpretation, as – as shown before in this book – there were no traditions of justification for a rebellion in case the ruler governed badly; in the ideal model the people could only choose the ruler once and since he was morally best he could not misbehave. That is why this conclusion showed very well the main pattern of Suu Kyi's interpretation of the Ten Duties: democratization of these ancient concepts in accordance with Suu Kyi's own political agenda.

6. A Buddhist Perspective on Leadership

Rajā-dhammā duties, along with other traits in the canonical texts (that contain, among other, Buddha's advices to rulers) provided "a Buddhist perspective on leadership," which is based on three aspects: 1) "the idea of an inborn leader personality", 2) "iden-

[198] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 31 March 1996 (no. 24)*…, p. 530.

[199] *Aung San Suu Kyi's 1st Speech, 23 September 1995*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 49.

[200] Ibid.

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tification with determining qualities and behaviour patterns that mark a leader", 3) the "ethical and sociological dimension."[201]

The first one, or inborn leader personality, derives itself from pre-Buddhist tradition of both *cakkavattī* (see: above) and "great man" (Pāli*: mahā-puruṣa,* Sanskrit: *mahāpurisa*),[202] marked with thirty two characters (*lakkhaṇā*), a Brahmanistic tradition initially served as legitimization of Brahmanistic rule, but later took over and modified by Buddhism.[203] When asked by a Brahmin Vassakāra whether he agrees with the four qualities of a great man: 1) "highly learned in the various fields of learning," 2) "understands the meaning of various statements," 3) "has a good memory," 4) "is skilful and diligent (…) possesses sound judgment," the Buddha, neither approves nor rejects it, but adds other four: 1) "is practicing for the welfare and happiness of many people (…) who has established many people in the noble method (…) the *Dhamma*, (2) "has attained

[201] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model…*

[202] This can be compared to the Western tradition "great man theory," according to which extraordinary individuals thanks to their wisdom, intelligence, charisma and skills had a decisive historical impact. This theory sees great leaders' freewill and behaviour and the factors that changed the course of history (e.g. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heros, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, Chapman and Hall, London 1840, p. 34); in the 20th century, the rather bombastic title of a "great man" has been replaced by more modest phrases such as Le Bon's "great leaders of crowds" (Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind,* 2nd edition, Norman S. Berg, Dunwoody, Georgia 1895, p. 115), yet the essence of this approach remained the same: the great man theory "is the well-spring from which much of the leadership literature derives" (Helen L. Eckmann, *Great Man Theory: A personal Account of Attraction*, Paper for the IBA Conference, http://www.jameslconsulting.com/documents/greatmantheory.pdf (25.10.2018)). In this approach, history and politics is viewed via individuals as history makers: "man make difference." The analysis of personality and actions of the leader conditions the understanding of politics. A similar one is the is the concept of charismatic authority: by classical Weberian definition, an authority "legitimised through extraordinary personal abilities that inspire devotion and obedience" (Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf) or by Easton's more modest definition of "personal legitimization" based on personal authority, personality and style of the leader (David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, Wiley & Sons, New York 1965, pp. 289–310). Although a charismatic leader usually appears in extraordinary circumstances, more often than less in authoritarian countries (or in societies with parochial or subject political culture), his/her followers are irrelevant to social context: the source of the authority of a charismatic leader is extraordinary qualifications that are outside structure; as masses can be controlled and mobilized by emotions which create the feeling of dedication and allegiance to a charismatic leader irrespective of culture, norms, class and other structures (John J. Macionis, Ken Plummer, *Sociology: A Global Introduction*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education Ltd., Essex 2005, p. 398). Thus, a charismatic leader by his/her own qualifications transforms the existing situation. Suu Kyi can certainly be considered a charismatic leader.

[203] See e.g. *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 3, Pāthika Vagga 7 (D 30/3:142-146), transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/36.9-Lakkhana-S-d30-piya.pdf (access: 03.03.2018), pp. 180–184.

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to mental mastery over the ways of thought," (3) "gains at will (…) the four *jhānas* that constitute the higher mind and are pleasant dwellings in this very life," (4) "has realized for himself with direct knowledge, in this very life, the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, and having entered upon it, he dwells in it."[204] This message is enhanced by another Buddha's claim that "with a liberated mind (…) one is a great man (…) without a liberated mind (…) one is not a great man."[205]

Thus, when confronted with this "down-to-earth definition of a *mahāpurisa*," the Buddha "turns the definition onto a more abstract stratum of benevolence and mental perfection, affirming that he attained such state"; taking into account the Buddha's criticism of the caste system (and of the Brahmins), it "would be a contradictory teaching if he had held the view that one could become a *mahāpurisa* or *cakravartin* by birth, but such qualities must be developed (…) all core emotional and intellectual qualities, necessary for a leadership genius, are ultimately learned and need to be perfected."[206] The understanding would be that one may become a *mahā-puruṣa* not by birth (a statement implicitly implied by the Brahmins), but by one's spiritual perfection and deeds. In this modified, Buddhist meaning of *mahā-puruṣa,* there are two model examples of "great men": one is the Buddha himself, the other one is *cakkavattī*.[207]

The second aspect of Buddhist leadership approach is the one concerned with qualities and behaviour patterns of the leader who should possess ten *rajā-dhammā* duties, behave like *cakkavattī*, and should take his role not out of personal ambitions, but out of being the most competent one to take up this task (like in *Aggañña-sutta*). More importantly, however, is the example of the Buddha himself who "provided a role model to his fellowship and generations to come, which he was leading by example (…) The Buddha practised what he preached and preached what he practised"; the message that emerges from Buddha's personal example is that of integrity and humility as the determining factors for the leader.[208]

Finally, the third aspect of Buddhist leadership is that of ethical and sociological dimension. Here morality comes as the most important value. At minimum a leader should follow the Five Precepts (*pañcasīlā*), that is refrain from: destroying living creatures, taking that which is not given, sexual misconduct, incorrect speech, intoxicating drinks

[204] *Vassakāra*, *Catukka Nipāta* [*The Book of the Fours*], Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 4.35), Sutta Central, transl. Bhikkhu Bodhi, https://suttacentral.net/an4 (access: 03.03.2018).

[205] *Mahāpurisa* [*A Great Man*], *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta* [*Connected Discourses on the Establishments of Mindfulness*], Saṃyutta-nikāya (SN 47.11), Sutta Central, transl. Bhikkhu Bodhi, https://suttacentral.net/sn47 (access: 03.03.2018).

[206] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…

[207] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 38.

[208] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…

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and drugs which leads to carelessness.[209] Moreover, a leader should know the wishes of the people that are: "wealth, fame, longevity and a hope for rebirth in a heaven world" and to meet them; furthermore, the leader should possess "four spiritual accomplishments," that is "faith, moral virtue, charity, wisdom."[210] The ruler's prime requirement was to maintain "the normative order – the code of righteousness," his rule was legitimate if he was able to "uphold the principles of compassion, equity and justice."[211] That is why, "in the context of Buddhist leadership moral conduct and benevolence are prerequisites" for good governance: a righteous ruler "must lead in moral conduct."[212] Furthermore, as leadership is embedded in a social context, the ruler must also strive for "the ultimate common good of happiness": he must take into account the interests of his subjects: "the leader fulfils a demand for leading and therefore he serves his subordinates," hence the ideal ruler's "leadership qualities are best described as conducive leadership tasks such as the 'tenfold virtues.'"[213] To conclude, "the norms of compassionate justice enshrined in the Buddhist ethics and moral order provides no rational basis for a ruthless culture of greed and selfishness."[214]

7. Aśoka as the Role Model of a Perfect Buddhist Ruler

The Buddhist tradition identified the ideal *rajā-dhammā* ruler and a model for Buddhist leadership with king Aśoka (304–232 BCE), the third emperor of the Maurya Dynasty (322-185 BCE), who is best remembered for his promotion of Buddhism, sending Buddhist monks worldwide and establishing stone pillars (edicts), as well as *cetiyas*.[215] From the very scant historical records available (and much better available mythical storytelling), Aśoka emerges as a fascinating figure: apparently he started as a brutal warrior-conqueror (*Chaṇḍāśoka*, or Aśoka-the-Fierce), who concluded the

[209] Five Precepts are based on Buddha's words "he who destroys life, tells lies, takes what is not given him, commits adultery and takes intoxicating drinks, digs up his own roots even in this very life" (*The Dhammapada, Verses and Stories,* verses 246–248...).

[210] *Patta-kamma-sutta*, Aṅguttara Nikāya 4, Catukka Nipāta 2, Dutiya Paṇṇāsaka 2, Pattakamma Vagga 1 (A 4.61/2:66-67), transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/37.12-Patta-Kamma-S-a4.61-piya.pdf (access: 03.03.2018), p. 188.

[211] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 58.

[212] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…

[213] Ibid.

[214] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 58. Naturally, the historical accounts show that very few, if any, rulers followed these ideas and that in the everyday governance of the Buddhist countries there was, indeed, much space for "ruthless culture."

[215] Monuments commemorating places of the historical Buddha. These *cetiyas* connected with the Buddha evolved later in a quasi-royal cult; the earthly remnants of the Buddha were treated in a royal way which gives a clue to the relationship between religion and political power (personalized by *Cakkavattī*) (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 42–44).

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expansion of Mauryan Empire of his father and grandfather by brutally annihilating the rival Kaliṅga kingdom, but later under Buddhist influence, transformed himself into a peace-loving *rajā-dhammā*. In the subsequent pillar rock edicts indented to inform the public about his actions, Aśoka, who just few years earlier did not hesitate to murder his enemies in huge numbers (by his own account Kaliṅga's invasion had resulted in more than 100,000 deaths and 150,000 deportations), now tells the people that the experience of Kaliṅga's conquest changed him and opened his eyes for *dhamma*.[216] From now on, Aśoka declares that "the sound of the drum has been replaced by the sound of the *Dhamma*"[217] and his goal is "the welfare and happiness of all who are devoted to *Dhamma*."[218] Aside from philosophical findings,[219] Aśoka announces that his main aim is to make people happy through Buddhist values.[220] Moreover, Aśoka presents himself as the righteous ruler, who forgives the trespassers,[221]forbids injustice[222] and sacrificial killings,[223] offers healthcare to his subjects[224] and commits himself to many charitable activities.[225]

These announced deeds of Aśoka won him hearts and minds of the Buddhist people for his "unprecedented humanitarian approach to governance, which was deeply shaped by the Buddhist faith he adopted"; his core values (generosity, sense-of-duty, truthfulness, kindness, self-control, gratitude, conquest by *dhamma*, forgiveness, purity of

[216] He was "deeply pained by the killing, dying and deportation" and felt "deep remorse for having conquered the Kalingas" (*Rock Edict no. 13*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/dhammika/wheel386.html (access: 03.03.2018)). The following references from The Edicts of King Asoka are presented in the shortened form.

[217] *Rock Edict no. 4*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika.

[218] *Rock Edict no. 5*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika. For Aśoka *dhamma* is "timeless" (*Pillar Edict no. 2*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika) and includes "little evil, much good, kindness, generosity, truthfulness and purity" (Ibid.).

[219] "To do good is difficult; it is easy to do evil" (*Rock Edict no. 5...*); "not killing living beings is good" (*Rock Edict no. 3...*); "being without merit is evil" (*Rock Edict no. 10*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika).

[220] "All men are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, that I desire for all men" (*Kalinga Rock Edict no. 1*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika); "I consider the welfare of all to be my duty (…) whatever efforts I am making is to repay the debt I owe to all beings to assure their happiness in this life, and attain heaven in the next" (*Rock Edict no. 6*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika); "my only intention is that they live without fear of me, that they may trust me and that I may give them happiness, not sorrow" (*Kalinga Rock Edict no. 2...*).

[221] *Rock Edict no. 13...*

[222] *Kalinga Rock Edict no. 1...*

[223] Ibid.

[224] *Pillar Edict no. 5...*

[225] Such as planting trees, mango groves, digging wells, building rest-houses etc. (*Pillar Edict no. 7*, in: *The Edicts of King Asoka*, transl. Ven. S. Dhammika).

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heart), or Law-of-Pity even exceeded the *rajā-dhammā*.[226] It became a "moral law independent of any caste or creed based on the essence of all religions."[227] By relinquishing conquests and the use of force, Aśoka apparently stopped the tradition of governance in accordance with *Artha-śāstra* (the "Treatise on statecraft", or "Science of Politics") written by Kauṭilya, who reflected "the Brahminic ideas of politics and statecraft."[228] *Artha-śāstra*[229] can be compared, though not quite adequately, to Machiavelli's "Prince"[230] and as such may be considered as representing the Indian equivalent of Western realist political theory,[231] a tradition of policymaking strongly present in South Asian and Southeast Asian precolonial kingdoms and princedoms, yet vehemently rejected by the Buddhist approach to politics, at least doctrinally.[232] In this view, Aśoka apparently showed the moral superiority of *raja-dhammā* style of governance over *Artha-śāstra*-style of policy-making.[233] Hence, the argument goes, instead of propagating the former policy based "on the exercise of force for the pursuit of material interests and also the maintenance of order," Aśoka propagated a "Buddhist approach to statecraft which was based on the wheel of moral righteousness and singularly based on non-violence."[234] Aśoka, "at the height of his empire, publicly repented the bloodshed that had gone into conquering it - and renounced the use of force in one of the unforgettable records of the human race" from now on, the empire was to stood on *dhamma*'s principles: "the imperial unity of India realized by Ashoka reflects (and is reflected in) the moral universality of the *Dhamma* as ethical, natural and rational norm of his inscriptions."[235]

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[226] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…

[227] C. Panduranga Bhatta, *Leadership Values: Insights from Ashoka's Inscriptions*, "Journal of Human Values", vol. 6, Issue 2, 2000, p.104.

[228] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…; Upendra N. Ghoshal*, A History of Indian Political Ideas: The Ancient Period and the Period of Transition to the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1959, p. 82; Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, pp. 48–49.

[229] For a recent translation, see: Patrick Olivelle, *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, transl. Patrick Olivelle, Oxford University Press, Oxford–New York 2013.

[230] Hans H. Gerth, C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Oxford University Press, New York 1985, pp. 30, 123–124; Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist. Kautilya and His Arthashastra,* Lexington Books, Lanham–Boulder–New York–Oxford 2002. On the other hand the Machiavellianism of Kauṭilya is disputed (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 31–32). *Artha-śāstra* is often presented as supporting the deceitful and unethical style of policy-making, though the text itself tells about the moral aspect of power as well.

[231] See, e.g.: "finance is the chief means of observing virtuous acts"; "no friend can be trusted"; "when calamities happen together, or when an enemy has grown strong, a friend keeps up his friendship as long as money is forthcoming"; "skill for intrigue is better" (than skill for power) (*Kautilya's Arthashastra*, transl. R. Shamasastry, Government Press, Bangalore 1915, pp. 470 and 491).

[232] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 32–33.

[233] De Gokhale, *Early Buddhist Kingship*…, pp. 90–91.

[234] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 49.

[235] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 26–27 and 30.

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The sympathizers of Aśoka even claim that his reign represented a proto-"democratic welfare state"[236] or proto-"socialist welfare policies."[237]

Yet, there are reasons to suspect that this rosy picture is mostly a myth. Firstly, more critical scholars remind that Aśoka's legend created by monks and later chronicles is one thing, whereas historical evidence from inscriptions and archaeology is another.[238] Judged from this less favourable political perspective, Aśoka's actions represent "far-sighted business management," his conversion to Buddhism is "half business strategy," his constructions of *stūpa*s in the places of the life of Gautama Buddha linked with modern road system can be seen as "a profitable, pre-touristic investment"[239] while his pillar edicts as royal propaganda. More careful readings of his edicts reveals the fact that he might have used less benevolent means to attract his people to Buddhism,[240] did not abolish capital punishment,[241] he was intolerant to dissident voices within *saṅgha*,[242] "had a tendency to micro-manage" and, indeed, in his practical political steps still followed many *Artha-śāstra* advices.[243] Secondly, it is uncertain at all whether *Artha-śāstra* is indeed older than Aśoka; the recent scholarship claims that it is much younger[244]; *Artha-śāstra* may, too, describe policymaking practices during Aśoka's time.[245]Thirdly, Aśoka who probably became a Buddhist before invading Kaliṅga was perhaps the first Buddhist ruler who experienced "identity crisis" between great Buddhist principles and realities of statecraft. He resolved this crisis by renouncing of "violence after [emphasis is mine – ML] accomplishing conquest and empire building," which gave unholy political pattern to Southeast Asian - including Burmese - Buddhist monarchs later on:

[236] Kulatissa N. Jayatilleke, *Dhamma, Man and Law*, Buddhist Research Society, Singapore 1988, p. 81.

[237] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 218; they are certainly right about welfare, see: below.

[238] See e.g. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1961; Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India: Their History and Their Contribution to Indian Culture*, Allen and Unwin, London 1961.

[239] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…; the aim of this pre-tourist action was to attract common folk to Buddhism (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 67).

[240] "This progress among the people through *Dhamma* has been done by two means, by *Dhamma* regulations and by persuasion; of these, *Dhamma* regulation is of little effect, while persuasion has much more effect" (*Pillar Edict no. 7*…).

[241] He simply liberalized the conditions of those sentenced to death (*Pillar Edict no. 4*...).

[242] Aśoka was tolerant to non-Buddhist faith, but repressed dissident voices within *saṅgha* (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 64), e.g., see: *Sarnath Pillar-Inscription*, in: Eugen Hultsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, vol. 1, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1925, pp. 160–163.

[243] Voss, *King Asoka as a Role Model*…

[244] *Arthaśāstra* was probably written between mid-1th century BC and mid-1th century CE and edited afterwards (Olivelle, *King, Governance and Law*…, pp. 26–28). Aśoka's reign is 3rd century BC.

[245] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 27.

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Aśoka "was the first Buddhist king to give a historical incarnation" to "a Buddhist root dilemma: the need to kill before becoming a great king who can then rule righteously."[246] In this newly established model, "the ideal ruler could only rule through *dhamma* after (underline mine – ML) committing numerous morally blameworthy acts in the process of bringing the territory under his control."[247] This implicit idea was not lost to many, if not to most, of Buddhist monarchs who significantly expanded the scope of immoral, yet necessary means needed before they could start ruling through *dhamma*.

Fourthly, Buddhism had provided Aśoka with a useful ideological basis for his "ruthless control through armed strength" centralizing policy combined with undermining of the existing religious (Brahmanistic) orthodoxy[248]; "the passage from violence to the rule of *dhamma* served as an efficacious ideology of pacification, political stability, and security."[249] In this regard, Aśoka's policy "serve[s] as a historic precedent and charter for the policies of domestication, political incorporation, and even conversion to Buddhism, followed by the governments of Burma."[250] Furthermore, this new ideological basis not only legitimized his rule, but also allowed Aśoka to create an empire hitherto unknown and incomparable to his predecessors; his imperialistic ambitions "can have resonances that may sound Orwellian to another era."[251]

Fifthly, Aśoka's policies have "scriptural precedent": his "change of heart" followed a model already contained in the early Buddhist literature", that from *Aṅguttara-nikāya* where the Buddha was a *cakkavattī* who ruled righteously after conquering his enemies and his call for his successors to keep the existing rulers as long as they observe *dhamma* echoes actions of *cakkavattī* in *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*.[252] Hence a parallel between apparent moral Buddhist policies and immoral *Artha-śāstra*'s realism is a spurious one

[246] Ibid., pp. 42 and 56.

[247] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 72.

[248] Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline*…, pp. 144–145.

[249] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 52–54. This interpretation derived from the meaning of Rock Edict XIII, where Aśoka reminds "forest people" (tribes on the peripheries of newly conquered former Kaliṅga's lands) that they "are entreated and reasoned with to act properly" and if they do not do it, Aśoka "despite his remorse (…) has the power to punish them if necessary" (*Rock Edict no. 13*…).

[250] Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 64.

[251] Ibid., p. 63. According to Rock Pillar V Aśoka has put "mahamatras," or political officers "everywhere" in his country to control political, social, religious and other activities of his subjects (*Rock Edict no. 5*…). On the other hand Tambiah admits that these "Orwellian" features were rather "statements of intent" and that in reality Aśoka's empire looked more like "galactic" polity then pre-modern totalitarian state (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 63).

[252] Tambiah even claims that Aśoka established his reign on the *cakkavattī* model, that Aśoka rightly understood this scriptural model (Ibid., p. 54).

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as already within Buddhist literature there are realist traits (they are naturally not central, but nevertheless they exist).

However, the real Aśoka (whoever he was) and his actions are irrelevant to the Buddhist political thought, as it was Aśoka's myth/legend that influenced the Buddhist ideas of governance in general and Burmese precolonial political ideas in particular.[253] For example, the (mentioned above) *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*, a latecomer in *Pāli Canon*, is said to be "a post-Asokan reflection of Asoka's regime."[254] Under this influence, the "political realization of the Buddhist *Dhamma* came to be associated with the unification of the universe under a perfect Buddhist king of the future, the Turner of the Wheel of the Law (*Cakkavatti*), an ideal possibly foreshadowed in the edicts of Ashoka."[255] More importantly, Aśoka reign (as it was remembered in the myth) provided the ideal model for the relationship between Buddhism and political power[256]: "a practice of statecraft which incorporated Buddhist ideals of governance in the pursuit of social justice and peace."[257] What was new in this model[258] was the ideal of welfare state[259] that "spelt out clearly the Buddhist ideals of a 'just society.'"[260] In other words, Aśoka had established tradition that rulers' aim was to create the means for the individual pursuit of *nibbāna*, so that people do not have to worry about material needs and may concentrate on their spiritual progress. This "benevolent parentalism,"[261] model of Buddhist kingship influenced the precolonial kingdoms in Southeast Asia where it merged with earlier divine

[253] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 33–36.

[254] Arthur L. Basham, *Asoka And Buddhism – A Reexamination: Presidential Address Given on the Occasion of the Fourth Conference of the IABS Madison, Wisconsin, August 1980*, "The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies", vol. 5, no. 1, 1982, p. 135.

[255] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 31.

[256] Vesselin Popovski, Gregory M. Reichberg, Nicholas Turner, *World Religions and Norms of War*, United Nations University Press, Tokyo 2009, p. 66.

[257] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 59.

[258] An "original contribution to the history of the Buddhist oriented states" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 27).

[259] As Max Weber put it, "first time in the Hindu culture ... there appeared the idea of the 'welfare state' of the 'general good' (the promotion of which Asoka regarded as the duty of the king)" (Weber, *The Religion of India*…, p. 242).

[260] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 27; Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 59; for critique of the welfare state thesis, see Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 60–62. In this regard, "welfare measures of the government as means to permit men to rise within the causality law of *Dhamma* towards the overcoming of their suffering, the aim of Buddhism" these welfare benefits were meant by Aśoka "to make it easier for his subjects to observe the Moral Law if not to provide them with leisure opportunities for meditation towards the pursuit of Nirvana" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 27–28).

[261] C. Panduranga Bhatta, *Leadership Excellence: The Asian Experience*, "Asia–Pacific Journal of Management Research and Innovation", vol. 1, Issue 1, 2005, p. 2.

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kingship model and with time replaced it. Aśoka established "a classic model of a 'Buddhist kingdom'" and his "model of governance was to become an "ideal type'" adopted in different Buddhist countries, including Burma.[262] Under this model, the royal power was legitimized by supporting Buddhism which resulted in a close relationship between political power and *saṅgha*. This Aśokan "political Buddhism" established the lay tradition of Buddhist governance, a tradition that is less known worldwide than the philosophical monastic tradition of *saṅgha* (the pursuit of *nibbāna*), yet for political thought is crucial.[263] Unfortunately, or perhaps predictably, ruling "solely through the power of *dhamma* was not an appealing option" at all for most of the Buddhist rulers, including the Burmese kings.[264] More often than less, in their everyday governance they followed *Artha-śāstra*, not *dhamma*.[265] That is why in Theravāda's Southeast Asia, including Burma, those two traditions, idealized Aśokan Buddhist model and realistic *Artha-śāstra*'s statecraft, mixed and syncretised.[266] Thus, the legitimization of precolonial Burmese kings rested on "pragmatic achievement of power, supported by his loyal adherence to a universally accepted system of morality, namely Theravāda Buddhism."[267]

8. A Buddhist Perspective on Politics from the Post-Canonical Texts

All classical early Buddhist text mentioned above should be complemented by the younger ones, the "post-canonical texts"[268] that form the "traditional Buddhist political theory,"[269]

[262] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 46.

[263] "The ethos of lay Buddhism acting within the world of Impermanence, in pursuing Nirvana by creating the outward social conditions for such a striving towards the overcoming of Attachment. It was this social ethos that the Ashokan tradition of historical Buddhism has transmitted, a political lay tradition within Buddhism" (Sarkisyanz*, Buddhist Background*…, p. 36); "this-worldly" Buddhism has since received attention from such scholars as, Jayatilleke, *Dhamma, Man and Law*…, pp. 13–110; Omvedt, *The Buddha as a Political Philosopher*…; Ilaiah, *God as Political Philosopher*…; Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 49.

[264] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 74.

[265] Kauṭilya's book was "read and used for the instruction of princes in Ceylon and Burma" and was mentioned in the stone inscriptions of Pagan (Heinz Bechert, *Theravada Buddhist Sangha: Some General Observations on Historical and Political Factors in its Development*, "Journal of Asian Studies", vol. 29, no. 4, 1970, p. 766). Moreover, "The Buddhist writers never produced anything comparable to *Arthaśāstra*" (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 52–53).

[266] George Coedès, *The Making of South East Asia*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1966.

[267] Trevor Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism, and War: Burma and Thailand in Modern History*, Allen and Unwin, London–Boston 1979, p. 74.

[268] *Beyond the Tipitaka*. *Field Guide to Post-Canonical Pali Literature*, Access to Insight, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/noncanon/fieldguide.html (access: 03.03.2018).

[269] Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*…, pp. 53–54.

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from the period when Buddhism divided itself into two main sects: Theravāda (Hīnayāna) and Mahāyāna (some claim that into three sects, the last one being Vajrayāna). What is important for Theravāda Buddhism, these younger, post-canonical texts – such as *Mahā-vāstu*,[270] *Visuddhi-magga*,[271] *Mahā-vaṃsa*,[272] *Anāgata-vaṃsa*[273] – is that they preserved the *cakkavattī* idea, but modified it in three ways. First, they identified the

[270] Or *The Great Story*, written between first century BC and fourth/fifth century AC by Mahāsaṅghika Buddhist school, *Mahā-vāstu* provides a non-canonical genealogy of the Buddha as the descendent of Mahā-Sammata (*The Mahāvastu,* vol. I, transl. J.J. Jones, Luzac & Company, London 1949, pp. 293–302); is also important for "importing" the idea of *bodhisattva* which, in Theravāda countries, came to be identified with kingship (the monarchs declared that they aspired to become *Mettaya* to make the world a paradise-like place) (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 45–46; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 39–46, 58, 64 and 226).

[271] Or *The Path of Purification*, an important commentary on the *Pāli Cannon* written by Buddhaghoṣa in the fifth century AC in Sri Lanka, where Buddhaghoṣa added that Mahā-Sammata is one of the Buddha's former incarnations Bhadantácariya (Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*), transl. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy 2010, p. 412). Such identification of the Buddha with Mahā-Sammata is not canonical, yet became one of the most important post-canonical texts' heritages (Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 34).

[272] The chronicle of the Sri Lankan kings from fifth century AC where they link themselves with the Sākya clan of the Buddha, while Siddhartha Gautama is again identified with Mahā-Sammata (*Mahāvaṃsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon,* transl. W. Geiger, Pali Text Society, London 1912, pp. 10–11); *Mahā-vaṃsa* (as well as *Dīpa-vaṃsa*) are important, too, for presenting the idealised vision of Aśoka's career which became a political Buddhist model later on. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[273] A relatively later text from 12th century that tells the story of Metteyya, the future Buddha and describes the paradise-like conditions that will reign once Metteyya will appear. In Metteyya's paradise city of Ketumati there will be four "wishing trees" in squares at the gates (*The Chronicle of the Future Buddha (Anagatavamsa*), transl. W. Pruitt, in: *Collected Wheel Publication*, vol. XXV, nos 337–393, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy 2013, pp. 148–149). These "wishing trees" (Burmese: *padetha*), a Buddhist equivalent of pre-Buddhist Brahmanistic tradition of divine *kalpa-druma* (*kalpa-vṛkṣa* /*kalpa-pādapa*) wishfulfiling trees, are important in the Burmese political thought. These "wishing trees" (Burmese: *padetha*) symbolize supplementing of all material wants of human beings in the perfect realm of Metteyya and in the Burmese folk tradition wishing trees are associated not only with an ideal Buddhist state of Metteyya/Cakkavattī (*Setkya Min*), but with "the reign of just and upright rulers in general (…) under them, or whenever men illustrious for holiness and virtue shall flourish, the *Padeytha* (Wishing) Tree is expected to grow" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 89 and 210). Interestingly enough, the Burmese translation and expanded version of *Anāgata-vaṃsa* depicts not only the paradise-like conditions of Metteyya's future era, as the original does, but furthermore adds "description of the gradual declension of the holy religion" (*The Anagata-Vaṃsa*, ed. I.P. Minayeff, "Journal of the Pali Text Society", ed. T.W. Rhys-Davids, London 1886, p. 34), pretty much along the lines of *Aggañña-sutta*. It is this expanded, Burmese version that had important impact on the Burmese political thought as the wishing tree in the 20th century became "a fruitful vehicle for political and religious metaphor" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 135).

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Buddha with Mahā-Sammata either claiming that the Buddha was Mahā-Sammata in one of his former lives, or that the Buddha is a descendent of Mahā-Sammata.[274] Thus, Mahā-Sammata appeared "as the Future Buddha" and/or "as the ancestor of Gautama Buddha - who, in an earlier existence as a Bodhisattva, was also elected by the people as their king."[275] Second, they "identified kingship with the status of being Bodhisattva or future Buddha, thus rendering it semi divine"; third, they linked kings with the Buddha and/or Mahā-Sammata, further sacralising the king and blurring the distinction between sacred and the secular power."[276] This is where the tradition of linking ruling monarchs with Mahā-Sammata originated from; this tradition, politically beneficial for monarchies (for it served as a royal propaganda), was eagerly followed by, among others, the Sri Lankan monarchs and later by the Burmese kings, too.[277] The Mahā-Sammata has traditionally been linked with the Buddhist law making, too. Several Southeast Asian legal codes identified him as the first law-maker[278] or as the person who implemented the legal codes from supernatural sources (for more, see: Chapter Two).[279]

9. Aung San Suu Kyi on Buddhist Political Thought

Among politicians and political thinkers who interpreted Buddhism Aung San Suu Kyi stands as one of the most prominent representatives of the narrative of democratic notions of Buddhism. She understood Buddhist canonical texts twofold: on the one hand

[274] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 32.

[275] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 14.

[276] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 32; in the Burmese tradition Mahā-Sammata was identified as not only "the first but also as the best of rulers" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 13).

[277] For usage of this tradition during Burma's last dynasty, Konbaung, see: Michael W. Charney, *Powerful Learning: Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752–1885*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbour 2006.

[278] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 36; Tambiah, *King Mahāsammata*…, pp. 101–120; Huxley, *The Buddha and the Social Contract*…, pp. 407–420; D. Christian Lammerts, *Buddhism And Written Law: Dhammasattha Manuscripts And Texts In Premodern Burma*, unpublished PhD thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca–New York 2010, p. 177.

[279] There, Manu, Mahā Sammata's nobleman "rose into the expanse of heaven, and having arrived at the boundary wall of the world" he found the code which he memorized and later presented to the king (*King Wagaru's Manu Dhammasattham*, transl. dr. Forchhammer, Government of Burma Publications, Rangoon 1963 (reprint of the 19th century version), http:// burmalibrary.org/docs20/1892-wagaru_manu_dhammasattham-ocr-tu.pdf (acces: 02.03.2018), p. 1; Sangermano cites another code which is founded "carved in capital letters on the rock" and presented to the *Mahā Sammata* (Vincenzo Sangermano, *Burmese Empire a Hundred Years Ago*, White Orchid Press, Bangkok 2010 (reprint of the 1893 edition), p. 221).

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in a very Burmese way, emphasizing moral dimension of policymaking, on the other hand in a very democratic fashion, producing a far-fetching interpretation of the *suttas*.

In one of her most important essays, "In Quest of Democracy" she wanted to present democracy and Buddhism as compatible ideologies, if not similar ones. This served her goal of portraying democracy as not only not alien to Burma, but perfectly suitable to the Burmese conditions. Hence, she interpreted *Aggañña-sutta* in a very democratic way.

Writing about Mahā-Sammata's election, she presented conditions leading to it ("the Buddhist view of world history tells that when society fell from its original state of purity into moral and social chaos a king was elected to restore peace and justice"), and introduced his titles: Mahā-Sammata ("because he is named ruler by the unanimous consent of the people"), Khattiya ("because he has dominion over agricultural land"), and Raja ("because he wins the people to affection through observance of the dhamma, virtue, justice, the law)"; then she went on to her crucial interpretation: "the agreement by which their first monarch undertakes to rule righteously in return for a portion of the rice crop represents the Buddhist version of government by social contract." [280] She went even further by claiming that this followed "the general pattern of Indic kingship in South-East Asia," presented and rejected Western criticism of Mahā Sammata's election ("antithetical to the idea of the modern state because it promotes a personalized form of monarchy lacking the continuity inherent in the western abstraction of the king as possessed of both a body politic and a body natural") on the grounds that because the Mahā-Sammata "was chosen by popular consent and required to govern in accordance with just laws, the concept of government elective and *sub lege* is not alien to traditional Burmese thought"; consequently, "the Buddhist view of kingship does not invest the ruler with the divine right to govern the realm as he pleases."[281] Then Suu Kyi went on to describe the Ten Duties of Kings (see: above) and, presenting her ideas as the opinions of the Burmese people, she summarized it the following way: "by invoking the Ten Duties of Kings the Burmese are not so much indulging in wishful thinking as drawing on time-honoured values to reinforce the validity of the political reforms they consider necessary," for "it is a strong argument for democracy that governments regulated by principles of accountability, respect for public opinion and the supremacy of just laws are more likely than an all-powerful ruler or ruling class, uninhibited by the need to honour the will of the people, to observe the traditional duties of Buddhist kingship"; thus "traditional values serve both to justify and to decipher popular expectations of democratic government."[282]

In her speeches over the gate she presented a simplified version of this argument, openly stating that "Democracy is compatible with Buddhism as the dhamma is very

[280] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 168.
[281] Ibid., p. 170.
[282] Ibid., pp. 172–173.

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humanistic"[283] and depicted Buddhism as having very democratic notions, such as self-reliance (being in opposition to extreme individualism) – "when you say 'I can do something by myself,' it's not the same as 'I can stand on my own feet.' The Buddhist concept of self-reliance is similar to the notion of standing on one's feet. Self-reliance does not mean that you must do everything all by yourself. It means that you do not blame others whether you fail and you don't get dejected whenever you cannot do something alone. A unilateral I-can-do-it-alone attitude is not democratic. It lacks the fairness of the dhamma."[284]

Thus, Suu Kyi clearly followed the line of those who believed in "genuine republican and democratic elements in the Buddhist tradition" by suggesting that "the important issue in Buddhist political theory has always been creating a government that both reflects and nurtures Buddhist values, and that the particular form that government takes is a matter of convenience rather than principle."[285] Secondly, she contemporized the canonical moral obligations of the monarchs by "transposing the Ten Duties of the King from a guide for monarchs to a set of expectations for a modern democratic government."[286] And third, by writing that "the root of a nation's misfortune has to be sought in the moral failings of the government"[287] she followed the traditional line of Burmese Buddhists – and that of the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta*[288] – emphasising "the casual link between the conduct of the ruler and the prosperity of the nation" and by insisting "that a lack of moral purity in the political authority, whether monarchical or democratic, would set the tone for the conduct of the rest of the people," for "under a political structure characterized by immorality, moral acts would be discouraged, if not actively punished, making the practice of the moral life even more difficult for citizens."[289]

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[283] This statement served her as a way to appeal to the monks to support her cause: "I would like to request our sangha to help us too (…) I would like to assure that the sangha who are supporting a democratic cause are doing a great service to the sasana. Personally I am very proud of our democratic monks. As the people's sangha, venerable monks can help us. We Buddhist usually listen to the sangha. A layperson in layperson's capacity, a monk I monk's capacity, please help us" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15),* in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 248).

[284] Ibid.

[285] Moore, *The Buddhist Political Theory*…, pp. 45–46.

[286] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 183.

[287] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 171.

[288] "It was because the chakkavatin founded his kingdom on the will of the people, that he won their eager submission without recourse to harshness or immoral force. Dhamma needed to be observed if peace and justice were to be restored" (Sengupta, *Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 291). Naturally, this interpretation of *Cakkavattī* is quite idealistic, to put it favourably.

[289] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 183.

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Although there are defendable elements in her interpretation – pointing out to the fact that the ruler cannot rule as he or she pleases, that the kings were normatively obliged to follow the moral ideal of kingship and that there are (some) democratic notions in the Burmese political thought – in general her interpretation is far-fetched and was clearly written to suit the line of her political ideas. Suu Kyi presented the spurious analogy to "social contract" as a cornerstone of apparent democratic notion of Buddhism, although in reality the relationship between Mahā-Sammata's election and social contract is problematic at best (see: earlier part of this book). She even went as far as re-writing history along democratic lines in suggesting that this social contract heritage was somehow typical feature of the Indic kingship in Southeast Asia (whereas again it was not, as the historical picture is more complex). And she used her favourite eristic tool (presenting her opinions as the ideas of the Burmese people) to draw a rather idealized vision of Buddhist heritage that not only is in full accord with democracy but also justifies 1988 rebellion against brutal authoritarianism. Suu Kyi's aim was clearly visible: to present Buddhist tradition as a one that contains democratic nature (and thus prove that military dictatorship was unable to outroot the democratic instincts apparently inherent to Burmese culture), so to rebuff the criticism from her political and ideological foes, the generals, who manipulated the Burmese Buddhist heritage depriving it any claims for democratic government in Burma. That is why she painted a picture of an ideal model of Buddhist ruler, personalized by Mahā-Sammata to show this benign ideal as a clear opposition to Myanmar military government that did not respect Buddhist rights. In the due course, however, Suu Kyi went to the other extreme by presenting the Buddhist tradition as much more democratic as it had been in reality.

Consequently, what emerged was a juxtaposition of two models: real and ideal. While the Burmese generals in their policymaking clearly followed the ruthless practice of the Burmese Buddhist precolonial monarchs that had little in common with proclaimed Buddhist ideas, Suu Kyi in her political thought invoked and accentuated the ideal type of a Buddhist ruler, being in accordance with canonical texts. In other words: Tatmadaw's policymaking was a contemporary equivalent of what was the historical (unholy) pattern of ruling, while Suu Kyi called for what should have been the way of a Buddhist ruler (but never was).

10. Conclusion

To conclude the findings of this chapter, the above mentioned Buddhist texts make up for the Buddhist approach to politics, different from Western ones. According to this understanding, what differentiate this approach significantly is, among other, the secondary place of politics in human life. People strive for happiness, but unfortunately life is characterized by non-satisfactoriness which can be conquered by one's individual effort only. Seeking enlightenment should be a pragmatic choice, but it is not a moral obligation (one

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can reborn in the subsequent incarnations endlessly if one wishes to). It also does not depend on the environment: it is naturally easier to achieve enlightenment in a peaceful society among friends, but one can do it without these external conditions, too (it will be harder, but still possible). And the other way round: living under the enlightened ruler is certainly helpful, but will not automatically lead to one's enlightenment.[290] Politics is just an external environment. Its primary goal "is to ensure social stability and peace by promulgating laws and rules, punishing violations and preventing extreme poverty" and is "a useful and inescapable human activity since some human beings will inevitably seek to benefit at other people's expense," so politics should create laws and institutions to stop those activities; as such politics is "both inevitable and often beneficial – there does not seem to be any practical alternative for securing basic social peace."[291] The purpose of the politics is, then, "to create an authority that has power over human actors, managing their conflicts, punishing them when appropriate, and constraining them to act in accordance with both moral and mundane laws (…) Order not only implies political control over subjects, it also refers to the proper arrangement of society according to the laws of nature, which results in balance and harmony."[292] Buddhism then is definitely concerned with "the public world and its structures,"[293] yet places politics on a purposely distanced perspective.

The message for an individual from this outlook is that one should do whatever the state wants from one and in extreme cases one may decide to get involved in politics. However, one does not have "a moral duty to participate in politics" and should do so only to the extent that helps one achieve a spiritual progress: "typically, active participation beyond merely obeying the laws and paying taxes will be a distraction from the more important goal of individual salvation (…) achieving enlightenment."[294] The actions of the political power will have the effect on one's spiritual progress, but "that effect is not dispositive – good policies will not ensure that individuals make progress, and bad policies cannot prevent them from making progress"; naturally, good policies are better than bad ones, but ultimately this is all of secondary importance – "one should not take an active role in politics for the purpose of making better policies and should instead focus on one's spiritual life," as Buddha did by rejecting the possibility of becoming *cakkavattī* and choosing the path of a monk instead.[295] Thus, "government is both necessary and inevitable in any plausible human society, but it does not matter very much what form it takes; in any event one should not play an active role in government if one can avoid it; real social and political change and improvement will come from the

[290] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 28–30.
[291] Ibid., pp. 29–30, 95–96 and 136.
[292] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 107.
[293] Jayasuriya, *Buddhism, Politics*…, p. 61.
[294] Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 29.
[295] Ibid.

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transformation of individuals, which is only modestly affected by politics and is largely the responsible of each person"; then, the simple message to an individual regarding attitude towards politics is the following: "do what you have to do; in emergencies do more than that; but do not forget that politics is largely a distraction from the important things in life (…) someone has to run the society, but it need not to be you, and there will always be someone else eager to do it, usually for all the wrong reasons."[296]

Thus, a message that emerges from this approach to politics is clear: politics is an important, yet only secondarily, human activity and one should focus on *nibbāna* seeking, instead of getting involved into politics. Nevertheless, the concern about proper political action does exist (even if it is of lesser importance). Hence, there is a distinct set of normative obligations for a ruler who should be moral, should care about the people and should generally rule in an enlightened manner, in Buddhist tradition best personalized by the reign of king Aśoka. Otherwise there would be natural disasters, people would transgress and become hostile to one another and ultimately the society would collapse.

[296] Ibid., pp. 29–30, 95–96 and 136.

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Chapter II

The Burmese Political Thought

Before venturing into Aung San Suu Kyi's thought, one needs to present yet another background: the Burmese political thought, within which Suu Kyi's own political thought is situated. This chapter will present Burma's political thought as mostly Burmese Buddhist political thought and as such will consciously not focus on other, non-Burmese and non-Buddhist ideational aspects out of two reasons. First, Burma's political thought is predominantly the Burmese Buddhist political thought. Second, and more importantly, the non-Burmese and non-Buddhist traits had little influence on Suu Kyi's own political thought.

1. A Note on Burmese Buddhism

The Burmese political thought has been dominated by Buddhism. This religion came to (Lower) Burma about 6th-7th century AD.[1] Buddhism had mixed with local *nat* cults[2]

[1] It is disputed when Buddhism came to Burma for the first time. The legendary mission of the Buddhist monks Soṇa and Uttara sent by Emperor Aśoka in third century BC to Suvaṇṇabhūmi/Suvarṇabhūmi (Land of the Gold) is most probably a myth (there is no word about this mission in Aśoka's edicts and the information about this mission comes from *Dīpa-vaṃsā* chronicle which is not always reliable). The first Buddhist inscriptions in Śrī Kṣetra are dated in 7th century AD, whereas in Upper Burma (Pagan) only around 11th century AD (J.G. de Casparis, I.W. Mabbett, *Religion and Popular Belief of Southeast Asia Before c. 1500*, in: *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 1–2, ed. N. Tarling, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 293–294; Kanai Lal Hazra, *History of Theravāda Buddhism in South-East Asia,* Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi 1996). I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment. The Lower Burma is "generally identified, rightly or wrongly, with the ancient land of the Mon" (George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, transl. S. Brown Cowing, ed. W.F. Vella, East-West Center, University of Hawaii, Honolulu 1968, p. 17).

[2] As well as (to lesser extend), with Hinduistic and Mahāyānistic cults Gordon H. Luce, *Old Burma: Early Pagan*, vol. I, Augustin Publisher, New York 1969, p. 283; Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, 2nd edition, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles–London 1982, p. 68.

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and with time dominated the culture.[3] Buddhism, too, was modified from *nibbanic* into *kammatic*,[4] which has far-fetching consequences for political sphere until now.[5] Most of the Burmese do not see a contradiction between the ultimate goal of *nibbāna* and their more mundane, *kammatic* everyday practices of merit making. They escape this contradiction by, among others, separating the two realms. The first one is *saṃsāra*, the mundane, empirical world (Pāli: *lokiya*, Burmese: *lawki*) and the other one is the otherworldly, transcendental plane: the realm of absolute Buddhist truths (Pāli *lokuttara,* Burmese: *lawkouttara*), a method of "right" Buddhist perception, "a way to escape from worldly desires and attachments."[6] At the same time, however, this distinction produces "a tension that runs through Burmese Buddhist political thought and sometimes manifests in ambivalence regarding the nature of the political realm."[7]

2. A Note on the Burmese Political Thought

Politics has traditionally been considered in Burma as the elitist activity, reserved – as the very name says (Burmese: *nain ngan ye* means "the affairs of the state")[8] – for

[3] Robert C. Lester, *Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1973, pp. 1–4.

[4] Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society...*, pp. 69, 75–77, 79, 93–95 and 103.

[5] "Thus aware of the karmic consequence of murder, a politician may both plot the assassination of a political opponent and, at the same time, plan the construction of a pagoda – on the assumption that the merit acquired from the latter deed will avert the penalty for the former"; this happens because "the building of a pagoda or a monastery may produce merit of such enormous magnitude that the demerit is completely neutralized, and he may escape the hell altogether" (Ibid., pp. 119–122).

[6] This separation contributed to a set of practices aimed at influencing the material world, such as *yedaya*, consultation of astrologers, alchemists etc. as well as to the claim that *nats* are for this world (*lokiya*) whereas Buddhism is for the supra mundane (*lokottara*) (Matthew J. Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, Seattle 2012, pp. 57–61, 90); for distinction of *lokiya*/*lokottara* perspective see also: D. Christian Lammerts, *Buddhism and Written Law: Dhammasattha Manuscripts and Texts in Premodern Burma*, unpublished PhD thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca–New York 2010, pp. 77–78 and 200.

[7] "A productive tension that Burmese political thinkers have sought to resolve in developing and defending their particular views on politics" (Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, pp. 57 and 71).

[8] "This restricted elite understanding of politics is rooted in Buddhist ideas regarding human nature and the need for political authority, ideas that are clearly articulated in *Aggaññ-sutta*" (Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 70–71); naturally "state" is mentioned here in the precolonial understanding of this word, that is as "galatic polity" (Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background*, Cambridge University Press, London–New York–Melbourne 1976, pp. 102–132), "*maṇḍala*" (Oliver Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspective*, Institute

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monarchs, princes, royal courtiers, advisors etc., with general population excluded from this sphere of life. Buddhist doctrine of *kamma* helped to justify this elitist, state-centric, high politics model by the claim that one's position in the world was determined by one's actions in previous incarnations.[9] In the same manner, history (Bur.: *yazawin*) "etymologically meant Chronicle of Kings."[10] This elitist approach has been the main one throughout the Burmese history, particularly in precolonial history, yet since mid-20th century it has been challenged by more inclusive voices, such as that of Aung San Suu Kyi. Nevertheless, it still remains the dominant approach, albeit for a lesser scale than before.

Buddhism has provided the Burmese Buddhists with a repertoire of ideas, idioms, concepts, etc. which they use to make sense of politics; among these the most important ones are: understanding of the world "as a sphere of moral action, governed by particular rules of cause and effect," tendency to think of political actions "as quintessentially moral practices," lack of clear separation between secular and religious spheres, a "conception of human existence as fundamentally dissatisfactory" and range of methods to liberate oneself from this dissatisfactory state.[11] The moral aspect is particularly important here, as it produces long-lasting effects. This deeply religious background of politics in Myanmar makes it an obvious choice for politician to turn to: instead of focusing on rational arguments in their rhetoric, they have been preferring to focus on the field of human virtues and vices; as a result, political controversies have been deeply personalized, which led to the sacralization of the leader and condemnation of the opponent; when: "political truth is identified with *dhamma*, ultimate truth, which never can be compromised (then) the political opponent must be depicted as being morally corrupt and entirely wrong."[12] Consequently, the Burmese politics has

of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore 1982, p. 16–33) or "negara" (Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1980; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 70–71; Rosita Dellios, *Mandala: From Sacred Origins to Sovereign Affairs in Traditional Southeast Asia*, The Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, Research Papers, Paper 8, http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cewces_papers/8 (access: 26.08.2018). The first "real" state in modern understanding of this word was the colonial one. Thus in this book the term "state" will be avoided when possible.

[9] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 70–71.

[10] Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values. The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarianism*, Praeger Publishers, New York 1983, p. 17.

[11] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 2–12; the following part is heavily influenced by this book.

[12] "As the general public traditionally is more familiar with the sphere of moral values than with the world of rational arguments, it is an obvious choice for politicians to turn to the field of human virtues and vices in their rhetoric"; thus "the balance between two spheres of 'pure otherworldly truth' and 'relative mundane truth' is always threatened (…) laypeople might behave like

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been "heavily 'moralized' is the sense that it was not ability, but good conduct according to Buddhist ethics that was regarded as the main criterion for choosing a proper leader."[13]

Importantly, this moral background of politics in Burma produces two meta-approaches (a pessimistically fatalistic one and an optimistic one), both of which answer the fundamental ambivalence in the Burmese political thought: "are humans primarily defined by their desire-driven natures or by their capacity for liberation and enlightenment?"[14]

The pessimistic approach ("argument of order") emphasizes "desire-driven, acquisitive, and corrupt" nature of humans (Burm. *phu thu zin*, Pāli *puthujjana*: "ordinary worldling, enslaved to desire")[15] who are "fundamentally flawed, incapable of controlling their behaviour and inevitably (…) destined for lives filled with conflict injuring each other and engendering a perpetual cycle of violence" and stresses the necessity of a strong political authority (presumably an autocracy) to control this negative features of humans and enforce law, order and discipline.[16] This pessimistic approach is the traditional one which is quintessentially antidemocratic: "the ultimate source of sovereignty in the Burmese political theory could never have resided in the people because the people by definition were immoral."[17]

Buddhist saints (arahants) or boddhisattas, as some Burmese kings and politicians such as Nu did, or stress the Buddhist roots of their political beliefs, as the SLORC/SPDC leaders and Suu Kyi did in their Buddhist rhetoric" (Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty. The History of the Conflict Between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, 1988–2011, Set in a Global Context*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, pp. 109–110).

[13] Ibid., p. 117.

[14] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 18.

[15] *Puthujjana* can be translated as an "'ordinary human being' who is entrapped in the *saṃsāra*", as opposed to the concept of a "disciple of the Noble One" (*ariya-sāvaka*, or the Buddha's disciple) or "the noble disciple" – in other words, as opposed to a Buddhist (net necessarily a monk) who has access to the Buddha's teaching (like, for example, the higher category of the Buddha's disciples, *sotāpanna,* – 'the one who has entered the stream'). Simply put, *Puthujjana* is non-Buddhist or mindless Buddhist. I am grateful for Piotr Balcerowicz for this comment.

[16] "If one sees human beings as inherently and unavoidably driven by craving to commit evil deeds, then political authority is a necessary response," then "the purpose of politics is to create an authority that has power over human actors, managing their conflicts, punishing them when appropriate, and constraining them to act in accordance with both moral and mundane laws." This is what Walton calls "argument of order" (contrary to argument of liberation, see: below), and order "not only implies political control over subjects, it also refers to the proper arrangement of society according to the laws of nature, which results in balance and harmony" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 18, 67, 81, 83, and 107).

[17] William J. Koenig, *The Burmese Polity, 1752–1819. Politics, Administration, and Social Organization in the the Early Kon-baung Period,* University of Michigan, Ann Arbour 1990, p. 71. On this assumption rested the precolonial legitimization of political authority as well as the justification of the military rule after 1962.

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The opposite, the optimistic approach ("argument of liberation") in turn stresses the capacity of humans "to transcend their enslavement to desire," capability to control and even overcome this "enslavement to desire," live "morally worthy lives" and their ability of achieving enlightenment/liberation (for the selected few); here the need for order is "subordinated to a higher goal of politics: liberation/freedom" and political authority is placed on subordinate position vis-à-vis the religious path personalized by the monk: in this argument "the end of politics is liberation, based on the possibility of and the human potential to realize the overcoming of desire (…) the purpose of a political system is to organize society in such a way that it not only encourages correct moral practice among citizens, but also supports those who seek liberation from the conditions of existence."[18] This optimistic approach have been stressed by some important Burmese politicians in the democratic period of the 1950s and, importantly, is the backbone of Aung San Suu Kyi's argument in favour of democracy.

Overall, there is agreement on the fundamental desire-driven nature of humans, the optimism that this can be overcome (albeit by very few) and a space that allows political thinkers to express their stance: humans are fundamentally flawed, yet able to liberate themselves from this sorry state: this "ambivalence in Buddhist view (…) has given political actors the space to emphasize their own view, whether advocating for stronger political authority to control potentially harmful desire-driven action or on behalf of democracy as allowing humans to realize their potential as free agents."[19]

3. The Precolonial Burmese Political Thought

The Burmese precolonial thought stressed the notion that it was the morality of the ruler that primarily mattered: his moral conduct was crucial for the prosperity of his country. The Burmese kings were not bound by any "contract theory," as these, despite some superficial similarities, did not exist in Buddhist tradition. The king was not chosen by the people and thus they did not had the right to take sanctions against tyranny; the king was chosen because he was morally better than others; by the merit accumulated

[18] If "one recognizes the capacity of humans to transcend their enslavement to desire, the path of the monk (or the moral path in general) is not only a possibility, its solution is more complete and lasting than the transitory order instituted by political rule." This is Walton's argument of liberation (freedom), understood as "a moral/spiritual understanding based on human potential to realize the overcoming of a desire as well as more *lawki* understanding such as freedom from political and economic oppression or enslavement"; however, this mundane understanding of freedom (Burm. *lut lat ye*) is contrasted with *lokottara* understanding of complete liberation, *nibbāna* (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 18, 67, 81, 83, 107; Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 96–97).

[19] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 74.

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in his former incarnations, his *hpoun* was the biggest.[20] The Burmese reading of canonical texts such as *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-sutta* omitted the hints presented there, that the people are able to take control, the Burmese chronicles instead presented a picture of the people (including *saṅgha*) following the monarchs in their behaviour (good or bad), "in this traditional conception, ordinary citizens had little to no agency in their own moral actions."[21] Only the king had agency and he was subject to moral principles only: "the ruler became but the servant and agency of *dhamma* and his righteous or sinful behaviour infected the whole universe; if he was unjust, the realm was brought to ruin," if the opposite was true, the country flourished.[22] Critical, however, was the fact that if the king failed in his moral behaviour "there is no remedy (…) his rule is guided by moral principles alone."[23] In this model, during the reign of immoral behaviour people can do no more than wait for the universal and inevitable karmic law to punish him. That is why the morality of the ruled had a paramount importance. He was obliged to follow *Rajā-dhammā* tradition which, at least during Konbaung dynasty, consisted of: the Ten Duties (*Dasavidha Rajā-dhammā*), the Four *Saṅgahas* (Kingly Laws, or Solidarities): "almsgiving, wise conduct, kind words and treating others like oneself" and the Seven Kingly Rules: "to perfect the rule of religion in your knowledge, charity, patience, enthusiasm, piety, kindness and fortitude."[24] Aung San Suu Kyi in her interpretation listed most of these rules and duties, writing that the king was "expected to observe the Ten Duties of Kings, the Seven Safeguards against Decline, the Four Assistances to the People, and to be guided by numerous other codes of conduct such as the Twelve Practices

[20] Min Zin, *The Power of Hpoun*, "The Irrawaddy", vol. 9, no. 9, December 2001. Hence, the Burmese kingship theory was not grounded in a "constitutional rule," his actions were "not affirmed by the 'consent' of the governed or the allegiance of those who 'share' power with him"; it happened because "here are no 'natural rights' grounded in human nature as such: the Buddhist formulation is that the king is the upholder of dharma (…) Kingship quintessentially represents and 'creates' worldly order and its pulsations through the cosmic rites assigned to it; the king's apical position in society by definition endows him with great merit which he shares and distributes to his subjects; in these senses, the ideology of kingship provides the basis for ordering this world of lay actors" (Stanley J. Tambiah, *The Buddhist Conception of Kingship and Its Historical Manifestations: Reply to Professor Tambiah*, "The Journal of Asian Studies", vol. 37, no. 4, August 1978, p. 805).

[21] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 92.

[22] Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*…, p. 68.

[23] Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 58.

[24] Andrew Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan: Burmese Political Theory in the 1870s*, in: *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, ed. I. Harris, Routledge, London–New York 2007, p. 34; Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*…, pp. 79–80; a 1782 version of *Manugye* treaty gives a long list of twenty two kingship duties of which first half concern politics and another half – laws. The text not only mentions the Ten Duties (*Dasavidha Rajā-dhammā*) or the Four *Saṅgahas* but also extends the Ten Duties into the Twelve Virtues (Ryuji Okudaira, Andrew Huxley, *A Burmese Tract on Kingship: Political Theory in the 1782 Manuscript of Manugye*, "Bulletin of SOAS", vol. 64, no. 2, 2001, p. 249; see also: Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 57).

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of Rulers, the Six Attributes of Leaders, the Eight Virtues of Kings and the Four Ways to Overcome Peril."[25] These duties and obligations were indicated to kings by monks and other advisors. The would-be-kings were learning from canonical texts and *Jātakas* the precedents of good and bad governance. Judging by Western standards, all these duties and requirements are very much concerned with the personal morality of the ruler which differentiate the Burmese political tradition from the Western one: "the Burmese aren't embarrassed to admit ethics into constitutional law (…) a Buddhist king is duty-bound to be a good king."[26] Yet there was understanding about unholy realities of governing, too.[27]

The precolonial monarchs ruled "in the shadow of *dhamma*": they legitimized themselves in accordance with Buddhism in various ways, such as, among others, *kammatic* credentials,[28] royal and solar descent,[29] being the defenders of the Buddhist faith[30]

[25] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 170.

[26] Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan*…, p. 39.

[27] In the aforementioned 1782 *Manugye*'s text, alongside with moral obligations, there are more mundane advices that deal with governing a city or a kingdom or managing military matters: the text derives from *Te-sakuṇa-jātaka* (Three Birds *Jātaka*) the Five Strengths of Royalty (Okudaira, Huxley, *A Burmese Tract on Kingship*…, p. 251); In *Rajadhammasangaha (Rāja-dhamma-saṅgaha)'s* interpretation there is an interesting mix of idealism and political realism (*Rajadhammasangaha by the Yaw Mingyi U Hpo Hlaing*, transl. L.E. Bagshawe, ed. Maung Htin (U Htin Fatt), Sape U Publishing House, Rangoon 1979, pp. 146–147).

[28] The karmic credentials were the fundamental basis of monarchy: the king ascended the throne thanks to accumulated merit in his former births: the power was the consequence of his noble deeds and he was "morally superior" to his subjects. That gave monarchs almost unlimited, unquestioned, inevitable, logical power, at least normatively (Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar,* National University of Singapore Press, Singapore 2009, pp. 55–59; Walton *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 72; Victor Liebermann, *Burmese Administrative Circles*: *Anarchy and Conquest c. 1580–1760*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1984, pp. 72–75; Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times. Traditions and Transformations*, Reaktion Books, London 2012, p. 85).

[29] The chroniclers linked Burmese kings with the Sun (they called themselves *naymyo*, the solar race), with Buddha's clan, Sākya, with and with the first ever human king, Mahā-Sammata (identified with Manu, too). It all enhanced kings' karmic credentials and made opposition to him doctrinally next to impossible (*The Glass Palace Chronicles of the Kings of Myanmar*, transl. Pe Maung Tin, G.H. Luce, 3rd edition, Unity, Yangon 2008, pp. 1–2, 30–38; Victor Lieberman, *How Reliable Is U Kala's Burmese Chronicle? Some New Comparisons*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 17, no. 2, September 1986), pp. 236–238; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps. A Personal History of Burma*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2007, pp. 80–82; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 14–15 and 20).

[30] The king was the "defender of the faith" and was responsible for the welfare of the religious order; he safeguarded the religious life in country, both monastic and lay, in order to establish a peaceful society that could concentrate on *nibbāna*-seeking and/or merit-making. The means for that were "the construction of religious edifices, mainly pagodas, feeding monks, organizing

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and being "righteous rulers"; establishing order and preserving "proper" political, social and moral hierarchy of the universe[31]; they, too, used Mahāyānistic legitimization[32] and when Buddhism was not enough, they used native and very popular animistic (*nat*) and Hindu legitimising means as well.[33]

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ceremonies and, crucially, ensuring the minimum wellbeing of their subjects so that they had enough material prosperity to be able to feed the monks and gain merit" (Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 26; Michael Aung-Thwin, *The British "Pacification" of Burma: Order without Meaning*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 16, no. 2, 1985, p. 256; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 110–117; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 41–44 and 55; Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*…, p. 81; Michael Aung-Thwin, *Divinity, Spirit and Human: Conceptions of Classical Burmese Kinship*, in: *Centers, Symbols and Hierarchies: Essays on the Classical States of Southeast Asia*, ed. L. Gesick, Yale University Press, New Heaven 1983, pp. 52–53).

[31] A hierarchy that reflected the proper natural, transcendental, cosmological *kammatic* order of the universe, with the king, as *cakkavattī* (with the right to stage *dharma-vijaya*, or "righteous victory" if a lesser monarch did not recognize him) at the apex and legitimized unequal social relationship from top to the bottom which created a status-oriented society with "min (ruler) complex" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 110–116; Manuel Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background of Burmese Revolution*, Springer Science and Business Media, B.Y. 1965, pp. 70–86; Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of the State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, "The Far Eastern Quarterly", vol. 2, no. 1, 1942, p. 26; Uta Gärtner, *Nay Pyi Taw – The Reality and Myths of Capitals in Myanmar*, in: *Southeast Asian Historiography Unraveling the Myths*, ed. V. Grabowsky, River Books, Bangkok 2009, p. 265; Min Zin, *The Power of Hpoun*…; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 26; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 54–57; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 41–47).

[32] One of them was usage of the *Mahāyānistic* beliefs in Metteyya: the kings self-described themselves as an emergent Buddha, or *bodhisattva* (which was sometimes reflected in their bombastic names such as *hpayalaung*, or *tathāgata-garbha*, "embryo of the Buddha"), who sacrificed himself for the benefit of the society (Vincenzo Sangermano, *Burmese Empire a Hundred Years Ago*, White Orchid Press, Bangkok 2010 (reprint of the 1893 edition), p. 75; John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, vol. I, Colburn, London 1834, p. 234; Luce, *Old Burma*…, p. 56; Pe Maung Tin, *Introduction*, in: *The Glass Palace Chronicles*…, p. xi; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 46, 58, 64, 66; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 58; Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*…, p. 56 and 84; Michael Aung-Thwin, *Divinity, Spirit and Human*…, pp. 56–57; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 81).

[33] Despite being ostentatious Buddhist monarchs, the Burmese kings legitimized their rule beyond the Buddhist way as well: by incorporating *nat* cults and by using Hindu ritual symbolism (which was quite essential given the Burmese monarchs' likeness to use violence that could not be rationalized via Buddhism despite best ideological juggernauts); consequently, the Buddhist *dhamma-rāja* and Brahmanical (*Artha-śāstra*–style statecraft) notions of governance met: the implications were significant: for example it morally legalized the capital punishment or other lesser punishments, such as wounding the body (doctrinally forbidden by Buddhism); and it helped to deify the political authority, making the ruler a supernatural being, fundamentally superior than the ordinary people (Melford E. Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1967; Sangermano, *A Burmese Empire*…, p. 67; Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Story of Sudhana*

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Whatever they claimed, however, they ruled in accordance with the first, pessimistic approach, where people are considered ontologically flawed and the paramount purpose of politics – that justifies almost every means, including breaking Buddhist precepts– is to establish and preserve the order (that would hamper human beings' flawed nature)[34] even at the expense of breaking Buddhist precepts.[35] Consequently, precolonial

and Manohara: An Analysis of the Texts and the Borobudur Reliefs, "Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies", no. 29, 1966, p. 557; Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*…, pp. 86–87; Andrew Huxley, *When Manu Met Mahāsammata*, "Journal of Indian Philosophy", vol. 24, 1996, p. 604; Houtman, *Mental Culture...*, p. 227; Luce, *Old Burma*…, pp. 69–71; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, pp. 52–54, 73, 83–88 and 93–95; Tambiah, *The Buddhist Conception of Kingship*…, p. 805; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 88; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 56–60; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 80–81; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp.15 and 54; Trevor Ling, *Buddhism, Imperialism, and War: Burma and Thailand in Modern History*, Allen and Unwin, London–Boston 1979, pp. 29–30; Jacques P. Leider, *Specialists for Ritual, Magic and Devotion: The Court Brahmins of the Konbaung Kings*, "The Journal of Burma Studies", vol. 10, 2005, pp. 159–180).

[34] The order "guarded against both anarchy and conflict" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 110–114), and apparently, in precolonial Burma anarchy was "feared more than tyranny" (Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*…, p. 139; see also: Michael Aung-Thwin, *Hierarchy and Order in Pre-Colonial Burma*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 15, Issue 2, September 1984, pp. 226–231) – without an order people would act immorally, anarchy and conflict would reign and the *sāsana* (Buddhist community, or religion in wider sense) would disintegrate. The king's first task was to uphold order in accordance with *dhamma* – he was a *dhammarāja*, or righteous ruler; logically, if he was unable to keep the order, his legitimacy might have been questioned and, consequently, a rebellion was in sight. That is why maintaining the order was the primary task: the monarch should have done it by persuasion (derived from his superior moral position), yet when persuasion failed, he could have used force (justified by the sake of Buddhism) – it was the prime justification for breaking Buddhist precepts (Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thoug*ht…, p. 100; Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*…, pp. 67–68; Michael Aung-Thwin, *Divinity, Spirit and Human*…, pp. 52–53).

[35] When there was a political need to neutralize inconvenient Buddhist precepts, the monarchs (or rather their ministers, monks and/or chroniclers) had to navigate hard to justify breaking the precepts so that the legitimacy of the king would not be challenged. In such cases usually *Jātakas* were evoked as doctrinal legitimization, especially *Hārita-* and *Suvaṇṇakakkaṭa- jātakas*, as well as other scriptural justifications (Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*…, pp. 20–21 and 100). Other means included: ordaining themselves as monks to improve their *kamma* by kings (however, once political conditions deteriorated, they resumed their "realistic" policy making (Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 86); separating the two spheres of existence, *lokiya/lawki* (mundane) and *lokuttara*/*lawkouttara* (transcendental) to justify a claim that while Buddhist ideals are important for individual morality, they are not effective in the material world: *Vessantara-jātaka* is a good example of this rationale as well as "The Daintiest of Women and the Ablest of Men" a Burmese folk fairy tale (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 89; Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Law Tales. The Legal Element in Burmese Folk-lore*, Oxford University Press, London 1962, p. 84); or using, Hinduistic concepts (and) "relativistic Hinduistic ethics" when "the main spheres of political power could not be rationalized

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monarchy had little in common with the proclaimed Buddhist ideal, and Buddhist moral codes rarely constrained monarchs' actions.[36] This explains why precolonial Buddhist monarchs were considered by the people as cruel and despotic: one of the Five Evils (along with water, fire, thieves and disease, or in different interpretation, the person you despise which was usually a relative)[37] – an evil, yet unavoidable tools of *kamma* that punished individuals, or whole society for their immoral actions in the previous rebirths[38]. The precolonial Burmese believed that a person might become a king thanks to his *hpoun* (power) generated by merit in former incarnations, but they knew, too, that his immoral actions conducted prior to becoming the monarch or during reign were against Buddhism's morality and as such generated *akutho* (demerit) for his future.[39] In short, it was believed that for the despotic rule of the kings they "would suffer karmic retribution in future live."[40] Interestingly and importantly enough, "people expected that holders of high office would commit more immoral acts."[41] Application of Buddhist values to the precolonial kingship political practices "revealed the tragic incompatibility

in Buddhist terms" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 80–81); Finally, if the rulers were unable to rationalize their immoral actions, they could always resolve to the ultimate justification: that their merit acquired via moral acts (such as buildings of pagodas) would outweigh their other immoral action (Ibid., p. 70); they simply followed the Aśokan model: "the answer to how Buddhist kings resolved the dilemma of violating the ethic of non-violence while claiming to be *cakkavatti* was to stretch the dilemma over a sequence of life stages: to make the imperial conquests first and later turn to piety" (Tambiah, *The Buddhist Conception of Kingship*…, p. 807).

[36] For examples of Burmese monarchs' tyrannical nature, see: Sangermano, *Burmese Empire*…, pp. 73–74 and 101; Crawfurd, *A Journal of an Embassy*…, p. 136; Henry Gouger, *A Personal Narrative of Two Years' Imprisonment in Burma,* 2nd edition, John Murray, London 1862, pp. 38–49 and 59–68; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 21–22 and 27; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 78; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*…, p. 121; Spiro, *The Buddhist Conception of Kingship*..., p. 811. Although the vision of a despotic, cruel precolonial Burma was used in colonial historiography to legitimize British conquest (and as such must be treated with caution), it is nevertheless beyond doubt that precolonial Burmese monarchy had little in common with the described Buddhist perfect society (Walton *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 117–118).

[37] The interpretations differ, but in all versions rulers have been on the list (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 73; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 78–79; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 29; Than Tun, *Social Life in Burma in the 16th Century*, "Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 21, no. 3, December 1983, pp. 267–274).

[38] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 56; Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Circles*…, p. 59; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 72–73; Michael Aung-Thwin, *Divinity, Spirit and Human*…, pp. 54–56; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 17–28.

[39] Walton *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 73

[40] Spiro, *The Buddhist Conception of Kingship*…, p. 811.

[41] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 72–73.

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between political pragmatism of power and Buddhist ethics."[42] This, in turn, produced a distance to politics, considered as negative, dangerous activity reserved for state elites.

4. Aung San Suu Kyi on the Five Evils

Aung San Suu Kyi was well aware of the difference between ideals and grim reality of precolonial Burma. In one of her articles she admitted that "there is logic to a tradition which includes the king among the five enemies or perils and which subscribes to many sets of moral instructions for the edification of those in positions of authority," because "the people of Burma have had much experience of despotic rule and possess a great awareness of the unhappy gap that can exist between the theory and practice of government."[43] In one of her rallies over the gate she presented a fascinating, innovative, politicised interpretation of the traditional Five Evils. Starting from urging her audience to be mindful,[44] she presented the Five Evils (called by her "archenemies") – water, fire, monarch, thief and the person you despite – and then interpreted the danger of water as… the lack of drinkable water for the society and made providing a water an obligation of a government ("people should therefore elect a government that can provide them with sufficient water"); she followed the same pattern with fire, interpreting… electrical blackouts as the danger of fire and again placing this obligation of government ("the lack of electrical power now amounts to the danger of fire (…) here again we have to vote for a good government that can supply us with sufficient power").[45] With third archenemy, the monarch, it was much easier for her to update it ("the third archenemy is monarch, that implies government") and offer her interpretation; she offered a vivid illustration of precolonial despotism first ("why did we fear absolute monarchy? In the past people couldn't look up at the king unless they heard the order 'You may look up.' Of course, there was 'law and order' under a monarchy") only to link it, quite spuriously, with the anticolonial movement of her father ("our independence movement emerged out of our conviction against monarchical or colonial system"), which served her as a rhetorical device to move to her dual interpretation – that of a need to empower the people ("didn't we say, 'We Burmese, the *thakin* race? The *thakins* were not just a handful of Burmese men. All Burmese were supposed to be *thakins*. In order to protect ourselves from the peril of bad government, we have to elect a government which will

[42] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 80.

[43] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 170.

[44] "First of all we have to be mindful. Mindfulness can keep all kinds of peril at bay. It is said that there is no such thing as being too mindful. The mindfulness that watches over one's principles is the most important" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 463–464).

[45] Ibid.

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replace the slogan 'We Burmese, the *thakin* race,' with 'We all are *thakin* race.' Only then there will be equality") and to establish a just system, democratic system which would be the only protection against despotism: "only the system that keeps a government in check can make a harmless rule", "it's self-evident that we have to strive for democratic system"; "to keep the danger of a bad government at bay."[46] With the last two categories, she politicised the forth category again ("thief category – to those who take bribes and those who mug you for donations," an allusion to military government's policy of enforcing labour) and presented a moral (and simultaneously political) interpretation of the fifth one by saying that "we can overcome the last archenemy, the person you despise, by spreading *metta*," by urging for a separation between the person and the deed and by claiming that the cadres of her movement are morally equipped for governing.[47] In general, her interpretation of the Five Evils was quite typical to her political thought in general, especially to her tendency to show classical, precolonial examples as illustrations to her political theses, such as the need for democracy as well as to her propensity to criticise the military government in an implicit way.

5. The Personalization of Power and the Importance of Unity

The precolonial Burmese politics and its political thought produced ideas and concepts that have been influential in Burmese politics until now, despite the fact that there is no more monarchy in Burma. First and foremost this concerns two combined and connected ideas, the personalization of power and the importance of unity. Contrary to democratic societies, where power is infinite and thus can be shared, distributed or balanced, in patrimonial precolonial Burma, power had been considered finite and thus it had not been possible to share it.[48] In the Burmese tradition the sign of a ruler's weakness automatically led to his delegitimization and to the emergence of *minlaungs* – pretenders to the throne. It happened so because the magical nature of the ruler in precolonial Burma

[46] Ibid. About the *thakins* – see: latter part of this book.

[47] "There are people who you don't like, and there are people who don't like you. I for one wouldn't encourage entertaining a dislike for anyone. We have to make the distinction between 'the person' and 'the deed.' If a person does a bad deed, we have to condemn him, not because we don't like him as a person, but because we don't like his action. We must not have a policy of putting anyone on the enemy list. There may be people who are not able to resist the burden of wealth or power when we achieve a democratic system. If that happens, their sacrifices for the movement notwithstanding, we will be the first to reprimand them and condemn their action. That's how we distinguish between 'the person' and 'the deed'" (Ibid., p. 464).

[48] David I. Steinberg, *Burma. The State of Myanmar*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C. 2000, p. 38; David I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar. What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, p. 53; Min Zin, *The Power of Hpoun*…; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 23.

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"produced a highly personalized rule and concepts of authority; loyalty was personal: it centered on the king of the moment, not on the concept of kingship or governance or principles"; effective till today, this heritage makes institutions secondary to individuals and personalizes loyalty[49]. This, too, makes reaching a compromise, or accepting such notions as "loyal opposition" a challenging thing.[50] The personalization of power leads one to the importance of unity in the Burmese political thought. In Burmese, the unity (*nyi nyut ye*ì or *nyi nyut chin*) is considered as "correct moral practice," with strong religious overtones.[51] On a wider sense, unity understood as a moral concept, "represents devotion to a common purpose and loyalty to a group or community; it requires subsuming one's own interests for the benefit of the whole, something that encapsulates the Buddhist practice of rejecting *atta* (ego)," so it is an "ability of individuals in a group to overcome the natural human inclination towards the interest of the self and act in ways that demonstrate Buddhist Right View."[52] Logically, its opposition, disunity is strongly condemned morally: disunity "is the result of a group of individuals committed only to their own benefit; it is a result of moral failure."[53] Simply put, if a political opponent disagrees with one, he or she must be immoral.

6. Burma's 19th Century Buddhist Modernism

The reign of reformist king Mindon (1853-1878) brought changes to this traditional, "*maṇḍala*" Burmese model of kingship. Although his administrative reforms politically failed as they did not prevent the final colonial invasion, they are important from the point of view of the Burmese political thought: they represent a local case of a wider movement of "Buddhist Modernism" in Buddhist countries (1850-1950) that in response to colonialism transformed radically Buddhist political thought.[54] It was then that the

[49] Steinberg, *Burma. The State of Myanmar*…, pp. 39–51; see also: Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 174.

[50] Steinberg, *Burma. The State of Myanmar*…, pp. 39–48; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 214–215; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 47; Shway Yoe (James George Scott), *The Burman. His Life and Notions*, Norton, New York 1963 (reprint of 1882), p. 490.

[51] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 103; more, see: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 65–66.

[52] Walton *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 103–106.

[53] That is why "unity as a moral concept has been a powerful tool that leaders have used to presume agreement and discount opposing viewpoints" by questioning "the moral conduct of those who disagreed with their policies" (Ibid.).

[54] E. Michael Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*. *A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1975, pp. 83, 112–144; Heinz Bechert, *Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia*, in: *The Buddhist Heritage*, ed. T. Skorupski, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring 1989, p. 25; Juliane Schober, *The Theravāda Buddhist Engagement with Modernity in Southeast Asia: Whither the Social Paradigm of the Galactic Polity?*,

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alternative approach to politics, more optimistic and more inclusive emerged: one that can be classified as having democratic notions. Such 19th century political thinkers as Kyaw Htun (who expanded the royal duties of the king and suggested a kind of social contract between the ruler and the people) [55] and especially Hpo Hlaing[56] (who developed Kyaw Htun's social contract interpretation and proposed equivalent of a parliament that would check the power of the king),[57] while anchoring their ideas in traditional reasoning derived from ancient texts, significantly expanded their meaning to propose modernizing, Westernizing reforms that, if materialized, could have made Burma a constitutional monarchy. Although they politically failed, their ideas give birth to a new approach, that linked Buddhism with democratic notions in Burma and established a more democratic heritage of the Burmese political thought, one Aung San Suu Kyi is continuing.

7. Aung San Suu Kyi on Precolonial Burma

In her first text, a travel guide to Burma from 1985: "Let's Visit Burma" she, in a rather exalted (and ahistorical) way, praised her country as being described as "a golden land, an eastern paradise of untold riches" that has the best rubies in the world; in the same manner she wrote that Mandalay "has a special place in the hearts of the Burmese, and

"Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 26, no. 2, 1995, pp. 307–325; Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*..., pp. 43–46 and 61; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 114; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 190–194.

[55] Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan*…, pp. 27–40; Htin Aung, *Kinwun Mingyi's Diaries 1872–4*, "Journal of the Burma Research Society", vol. 58, no. 1, 1974, p. 138; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 21–22, 26; Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*…, p. 71.

[56] On Hpo Hlaing: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 200–201; Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan*…, p. 43; Min Lwin, *Ruling the Rulers*, "The Irrawaddy", vol. 16, no. 5, May 2008; Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, p. 51; Htin Fatt, *Biographical Preface by Maung Htin (U Htin Fatt)*, in: *Rajadhammasangaha by the Yaw Mingyi U Hpo Hlaing*, transl. L.E. Bagshawe, ed. Maung Htin (U Htin Fatt), Sape U Publishing House, Rangoon 1979, pp. 54–88; L.E. Bagshawe, *Translator Preface*, in: *Rajadhammasangaha by the Yaw Mingyi U Hpo Hlaing*, transl. L.E. Bagshawe, ed. Maung Htin (U Htin Fatt), Sape U Publishing House, Rangoon 1979, p. 6; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 20–21, 59–60, 85–98, 103–104, 159–162.

[57] Hpo Hlaing in his seminal work, *Rajadhammasangaha (Rāja-dhamma-saṅgaha)* tried to introduce Western concepts (such as parliament, bureaucracy or limitations of the power of the king) into Burma, but was forced to conceal these new, revolutionary ideas by covering and disguising them in traditional wording and concepts: that is why he claimed that the Westerners achieved their worldwide dominance because they… better understood the Buddha's teaching! (*Rajadhammasangaha*…, pp. 88–91, 94, 96, 103–104, 108–114, 117–118 and 174). On this book, see: Huxley, *Rajadhamma Confronts Leviathan*…, pp. 26, 43–48; Matthew J. Walton, *Burmese Buddhist Politics*, Oxford Handbook Online, 2015, pp. 8–9; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 23, 59–60 and 90–94; Min Lwin, *Ruling the Rulers*…; Moore, *Buddhism and Political Theory*…, pp. 51–52.

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remains a symbol of the proud days when Burmese kings ruled the country."[58] These words, even if far-fetched, are understandable given the nature of travel guide to her own country. More interesting part of the guide book starts with the chapter "a turbulent history," where she followed the mainstream of international academia in writing that "the history of Burma might be said to have begun with the arrival of the Mon people" and "the contact with the highly civilized Mons contributed greatly towards the development of Burmese culture."[59] Then Suu Kyi continued with the description of Hinduism and Buddhism and again followed the mainstream academia in claiming that "there appear to have been a period when the Mons in Burma came under strong Hindu influence and Buddhism declined; however, by the eleventh century, the Mon kingdom in Pegu and Thaton are known to have been Buddhist."[60] Next Suu Kyi described the Tibeto-Burman migration, the Pyus and their ancient cities, the Burmese migration and the foundation of Pagan. Here she got exalted once again by writing that "the name Pagan spells glory and romance for the Burmese," Pagan's third king Kyanzittha "is one of the most romantic and beloved kings,"[61] furthermore, she claims that Kyanzittha "administered the country well and cared for the welfare of his subjects."[62] After the idealization – worth of the royal chronicles![63] – she proceeded to presenting Burmese history after Pagan's fall and she did this in a rather balanced way, with presenting not only Burman history, but also that of Shan and Mon kingdoms; for the latter she wrote that "the Mon kingdoms flourished in peace and prosperity for several decades" and mentioned king Waregu and queen Shinsawbu, two most important Mon monarchs.[64] Then she presented the second unification of Burma, under Tabinshwehti, "a considerable statesman" who "seemed to have liked the Mons and to have admired their culture,"[65] which is an intriguing description, given the fact that Tabinshwehti conquered the Mon

[58] Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Country and People* (reprint of *Let's Visit Burma* from 1985), in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 39, 41, 44.

[59] Ibid., pp. 45–47. For a mainstream narrative, see (among others): Luce, *Old Burma*…, pp. 12–46; Godfrey G. Harvey, *A History of Burma from the Earliest Time to 1824* (*The Beginning of English Conquest*), Laurier Books, London 2000 (reprint of 1925), pp. 27–29; this dominant narrative has been heavily contested recently by such scholars as Aung-Thwins who claim, to put it shortly, that the Burmese arrived ahead of the Mon (Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*…, pp. 117–120).

[60] Suu Kyi, *My Country*…, p. 45; Again this narrative is being contested today: Michael Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Rawanna: The Legend that Was Lower Burma*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2005.

[61] Suu Kyi, *My Country*…, p. 45.

[62] Ibid.

[63] *The Glass Palace Chronicle*…, pp. 105–110.

[64] Suu Kyi, *My Country*…, pp. 49–50.

[65] Ibid., p. 51.

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and set up his capital in their former capital city of Pegu.[66] Suu Kyi continued with presenting the fall of Tabinshwehti due to becoming "a drunkard under the influence of a Portuguese favourite" and the unification of the kingdom by his successor, Bayinnaung. After describing his death and the fall of the Second Burmese Empire, Suu Kyi made an risky leap: having presented the defeat of a Portuguese adventurer de Brito, she wrote "as one trouble was put down, another arose. The year Ava was burnt down was also the year of the rise a new Burmese dynasty."[67] What is intriguing here is that de Brito's fall was in 1613, while Ava's in… 1752. A reader not well accustomed with Burmese history might combine these two unrelated anyhow events into one process. The rest of Burmese history until the colonial conquest is presented in a non-controversial way. What is also worth noting is that throughout her description Suu Kyi many times praised several rulers (kings Kyanzittha, Dhammazedi and queen Shinsawbu) for caring about religion and in later part of the book, Buddhism is described in detail (description of Burma's religious tradition and practices makes up the biggest part of this book). Her emphasis on Burmese importance of education ("the Burmese have a great respect for education (…) traditionally education was seen not just as the acquisition of knowledge but as the development of Buddhist values") and on women's equal status ("although, theoretically, men are considered nobler because only a man can become a Buddha, Burmese women never really had an inferior status. They have always had equal rights of inheritance and led active, independent lives") are also worth a note.[68] The rest of the book followed with description of several ethnic groups, their customs etc. In general "Let's visit Burma" is not especially important in understanding Suu Kyi's view on precolonial times, though the presented examples show that she gave a rather idealised version of Burma's history and muted the critical elements of Burma's precolonial heritage (an action completely understandable given the nature of a guide book).

Much more valuable is her first important academic text, "Burma and India: Some Aspects of Intellectual Life under Colonialism," where she compared Indian and Burmese approach to colonialism from a cultural point of view. Although most of this article deals with colonial Burma (and as such will be presented later in this book), there is a fair dose of thoughts on precolonial Burma as well. Suu Kyi started with presenting most important Indian heritage in Burma: Buddhism, which "became so integral a part of the Burmese ethos that it has become common to say: 'To be Burmese is to be Buddhist.'"[69] Then she moved to presenting the precolonial Burma and the shock the colonial conquest was for the Burmese ("it was a sudden and wholly unprecedented break with a past which

[66] Harvey, *A History of Burma*…, pp. 153–154.

[67] Suu Kyi, *My Country*…, p. 52.

[68] Ibid., pp. 72 and 74.

[69] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma and India under Colonialism*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom From Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 83.

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had been turbulent and often unhappy, but which was nevertheless an irrefutable part of the recognized traditional order"). Suu Kyi depicted, rightly, precolonial Burma as the *maṇḍala* -style[70] kingdom with "variable boundaries" and the loss of Arakan, Tenasserim and Pegu during first two Anglo-Burmese wars as being viewed as "part of the waxing and waning cycle of the Burmese kingdom concomitant with the fortunes of war. But, as long as the king reigned in his royal capital, the symbol of Burmese freedom remained intact."[71] This summary is good indeed, or at least its first part, because the second part ends with "freedom." What kind of freedom had she in mind? Suu Kyi most probably understood it as state's political independence in the modern usage of this word; at least one can judge so after these words: "the Burmese had not known any serious foreign intrusion other than brief Mongol incursion."[72] Political independence, however, in Suu Kyi's narrative soon turned into power status: "the monarchy, while weak in administration, had proved itself strong in battle often enough to have acquired the reputation of a considerable – one might almost say imperial – power in South-East Asia (…) when the Burmese king considered himself the very equal of the English queen, his assurance was not so patently absurd."[73] These lines are, no doubt, interesting – they present Suu Kyi's patriotism (if not nationalism) – but using such categories as "freedom" is ahistorical. One can hardly apply this kind of concepts to precolonial realities. On the other hand, she correctly admitted the inward-looking nature of precolonial Burmese monarchy[74] by writing that "indifference to developments in the outside world was a characteristic of the Burmese monarchs."[75] And she was also well-aware of the *maṇḍala*-style governance because few pages later she wrote that "the Burmese monarchs thought of their capital as the 'centre of the universe.' It was to this centre that men of learning and ambition came if they desired advancement or fame (…) the capital was the cultural stronghold as well as the source of possible honours and material rewards" (this description served Suu Kyi to present the dire situation of the Burmese culture after colonial conquest where "hiatus followed" and the Burmese became outdistanced by Indian and Chinese migrants).[76] Hence, Suu Kyi's usage of modern concept such as freedom is not only ahistorical but also out of place with the rest of the content of the book.

Suu Kyi moved on from the political implications of colonial invasion to the social sphere and here her thoughts are equally interesting. She claimed that although Buddhism "was free from social injustices" (which was good), this positive feature had negative implications: "Burma certainly presents a situation which demonstrates that

[70] Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*…, pp. 16–32.
[71] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in India and Burma*…, p. 84.
[72] Ibid., p. 85.
[73] Ibid., pp. 85–86.
[74] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 42–88.
[75] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in India and Burma*…, p. 86.
[76] Ibid., p. 101.

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a sound social system can go hand in hand with political immaturity (…) Traditional education did not encourage speculation. This was largely due to the view, so universally accepted that it appears to be part of the racial psyche of the Burmese, that Buddhism represents the perfected philosophy. It therefore follows that there was no need either to try to develop it further or to consider other philosophies."[77] Furthermore, "social system placed no inordinate burden on the lives of the people, it made them more tolerant of the deficiencies of government. The Burmese experience of monarchical administration had bred them a tendency to live their own lives and keep away from the central administration as far as possible." [78] The rare cases where foreigners ruled Burma (such as the Shans, so a group that belongs to the categories well-known to the Burmese and not completely "alien")[79] did not change much as the Burmese's "experience of 'foreign rule' – and that under the Shans several centuries back – had only taught them that it was the conquerors who were eager to acquire Burmese culture."[80]

This all, according to Suu Kyi, was the reason why the Burmese, contrary to Indians, were not interested in interaction with the British colonialists and did not use the colonial experience for the good of their country by acquiring modern knowledge via the colonial system and were not being able to advance their country technologically (as the Indians did). This comparative argument about colonial experience will be presented later in this book, but what needs to be commented here is Suu Kyi's rather critical approach to Buddhism. She praises her country's dominant religion on the social grounds, but criticises it from political perspective as unwittingly co-responsible for Burma's unhappy and unsuccessful colonial experience. One may find here the first traces of Suu Kyi's vision of "teaching democracy" (and other Western concepts such as human rights) to her compatriots later on (during her political career),[81] ideas Suu Kyi developed after getting involved in politics.

What is certain is that in her comparative study of Burma and India Suu Kyi presented well-thought, though indirect, criticism of precolonial Burma as a place which did not prepare the Burmese to compete successfully in the modern world. For example, one may trace this indirect criticism in such fragments as these, where she admitted to the despotic nature of the precolonial monarchy by writing about the attitude of the ordinary people towards monarchical administration. Suu Kyi proudly presented the positive aspects of precolonial Burma (mainly social), and no doubt she has been deeply

[77] Ibid., pp. 93–98.

[78] Ibid., p. 93.

[79] Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 94.

[80] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in India and Burma*…, p. 100.

[81] Franziska Blum, *Teaching Democracy. The Program and Practice of Aung San Suu Kyi's Concept of People's Education*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, pp. 11–51; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 411.

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respecting Buddhism, but at the same time, this article is the first example in which she proved that she did not have an uncritical approach towards her religion, her country's history and culture.

8. The Burmese Colonial Political Thought

The colonial period plays an important role in the Burmese political thought. With the removal of the king, the Burmese needed to find a new meaning and adjust their political thinking into new realities. If in the precolonial Burmese political thought the pessimistic approach ruled, then, after the fall of Kingdom of Burma, it started to change: "Burmese Buddhist responses to colonialism engendered a creative and productive discourse that expanded the meanings of 'freedom' and 'liberation'"; this produced an optimistic approach ("the argument of liberation"), which emphasizes the capability of individuals to overcome their desire-driven nature, live morally and achieve liberation (enlightenment).[82]

In colonial circumstances individual spiritual development was linked to independence struggle providing Buddhist legitimization for the anticolonial, independence struggle. Consequently, political and religious liberation became blurred, with some thinkers claiming that political independence became a necessity for individual liberation ("from spiritual to political liberation").[83] This can be seen in the words of *thakin* Kodaw Hmaing, a Burmese prophetic writer and national poet,[84] who despite being

[82] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 18, 67, 81, 83, 107 and 118–121; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 98–99 and 126. See also: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 107.

[83] Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 98–99, 108 and 126. On the link between political and spiritual liberation and on the Burmese complicated relationship between various understandings of freedom (*lut-lak-yei*), see: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 9, 33–34, 37, 209 and 295.

[84] Kodaw Hmaing was fascinating, complex, mysterious figure, named "the grandfather of Burma's independence"; his uncompromised quest for Burma's independence alongside with his deeply rooted in traditional Burmese culture conservative views helped Burma's national cause while at the same time contributed to forming the anticolonial movement along the nationalist, ethnocentric lines. On Hmaing, see: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 130, 133, 169, 173 and 177–178; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 42, 60, 63–65, 80, 92, 141, 183, 251, 298, 318, 332 and 352; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 16, 20, 26, 70, 100, 131 and 156; Zayar Aung Hmine, *Great Guru Master Lord Hmine. A Biography*, Yangon 2012, pp. 17–84 and 111; Than Tun, *Political Thought of Tikas by Hmine*, Shiroko 1977, in: Zayar Aung Hmine, *Great Guru Master Lord Hmine. A Biography*, *Appendix (B)*, Yangon 2012, pp. 88–89, 96–98 and 100–104; *Thakin Kodaw Hmaing (1876–1964)*, "The Irrawaddy", vol. 8, no. 3, March 2000; *Ko Tar: Book Review on Biography of Saya Lun by Thein Pe (Thein Pe Myint) Published by Nagani Book Club, Rangoon, 1938,* transl. Tin Hlaing, in: *Material on Thein Pe, Biography of Saya Lun and Member of*

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deeply religious, if not a mystic, told his young apprentices: "you may abandon religion for the sake of your nation. Religion will flourish when a nation is free and prospers."[85]

The colonial conquest of Burma, done in three stages, marks the turning point in the history of Burma: it was the end of the world the Burmese knew. Aung San Suu Kyi emphasized that the colonial "conquest was an entirely new experience for the Burmese," due to the fact that prior to 1885 they had only known "a brief period of Mongol incursion" and a few centuries of Shan domination in Upper Burma; but aside of these short periods, the royal capital of the Burmese monarch had always been "the centre of the universe."[86] Now it was gone. With the exile of the last king, Thibaw, to Ratnagiri and several other humiliations from the hands of the British,[87] the cosmological order of the Burmese collapsed.[88] As Suu Kyi put it, the colonial conquest "was a sudden and wholly unprecedented break with a past which had been turbulent and often unhappy, but which was nevertheless an irrefutable part of the recognized traditional order."[89] She explained that "Burmese patriotism was homogeneously behind the monarchy (…) the king in his golden palace had simply been a symbol of the power and glory of their race."[90]

Parliament, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:2, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 21–24; *Kyaw Nyunt: Book Review on Biography of Saya Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing)*, in: *Material on Thein Pe, Biography of Saya Lun and Member of Parliament*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:2, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 33–40. Kodaw Hmaing was famous for his *tikas* (or *htikas/digas*), extended essays-satires written in the form of religious commentaries, English translations of some of *tikas* can be found here: *Some Writings by Saya Lun*, transl. U Tin Htway, in: *Material on Thein Pe, Biography of Saya Lun and Member of Parliament*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:2, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 49–52; Myint Swe, *Nagani Diga*, *Extract from 'Dormant Writings of Thakin Kodaw Hmain*, transl. Tin Hlaing, *Additional Material Related to the Nagani Book Club*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:1.1, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, pp. 31–34; Than Tun, *Political Thought of Tikas*…, pp. 89–97 and 102. On the tikas: Anna J. Allott, *Burmese Literature*, in: *Far Eastern Literatures in the 20th Century*: *A Guide*, ed. L.S. Klein, Oldcastle Books, London 1988, pp. 5–6.

[85] Quoted in: *Kyaw Nyunt: Book Review on Biography*…, p. 41.

[86] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 85 and 101.

[87] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma,* Colombia University Press, New York 1967, p. 264; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 24–30.

[88] Reynaldo Ileto, *Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements*, in: *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 1–2, ed. N. Tarling, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 214; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 107; D.M. Smeaton, *The Loyal Karens of Burma*, London 1887, quoted in: Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1965, p. 45.

[89] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in India and Burma*…, p. 84.

[90] Ibid., pp. 111 and 129. This explains why the Burmese considered the conquest in eschatological terms and why the British had so many problems with pacifying the numerous uprisings that sprung in the countryside after the abolishment of monarchy with the aim of restoring the monarchy

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The abolition of the monarchy and all that followed later meant for the Burmese that the whole existing world – both material and spiritual – has, quite literally, collapsed.[91]

Once the British decided that they could not count on monarchy, they proceeded to administrative measures that annihilated the existing world of the Burmese.[92] The British completely reshaped Burma along modern lines – they established the first ever state here: effective one, but alien to the Burmese.[93] In the due process of building the colonial state, the Burmese were left aside. Partly it was their désintéressment, partly it was encouraged by the British attitude[94]: the colonialists preferred to build modern

(Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 103 and 151–158; Ni Ni Myint, *Burma's Struggle Against British Imperialism, 1885–1895*, Universities Press, Rangoon 1983, pp. 42–48; Godfrey G. Harvey, *British Rule in Burma 1824–1942*, Faber & Faber, London 1946, p. 22–50; Ileto, *Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements*…, p. 213. James G. Scott, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, Part I, vol. I, Governmental Printing, Rangoon 1901, p. 110).

[91] The king was the Defender of Faith and the central person around whom the intellectual life revolved. It did not matter that the last king, Thibaw (or – as Suu Kyi remarked – "at any rate his queen, Supayalat") was incompetent and cruel: "their removal roused much patriotic indignation among the Burmese, who lamented the exile of the royal couple in compositions which have passed into the realm of literature as a recognized genre" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in India and Burma*…, p. 85). This poetic genre was called *pa-daw-hmu* ("the taking away the royal couple") and "together with nostalgia for a past which although far from perfect was at least their very own, there stirred among the Burmese an insistent lodging for a future when the destiny of the country would once again be in their hands" expressed in "the form of prophetic verses, *tabaung*, foretelling the end of the British rule" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism in Burma,* in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 158).

[92] John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice. A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, 2nd edition, New York University Press, New York 1956, pp. 66–142, 172–180 and 229; Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*…, pp. 27–40 and 207–244; Muang Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*…, pp. 266–278; Ni Ni Myint, *Burma's Struggle*…, pp. 42–57; Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, Cass, London 1968 (reprint of 1912), pp. 15–29; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 32–34.

[93] "State" in the modern meaning of this world (John S. Furnivall, *Fashioning of the Leviathan*, "Journal of the Burma Research Society", vol. 29, no. 3, 1939, pp. 1–138; Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*…, pp. 129, 172–180, and 299; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 182–194; Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*…, pp. 199–208).

[94] As Suu Kyi put it, the Burmese "felt no particular urge to understand their colonial rulers (…) there was not much that they needed to know about the Englishman beyond the necessities of unavoidable intercourse between the ruler and the ruled," however, "this indifference was also encouraged by the British attitudes (…). The Englishman (…) usually saw the Burmese as 'gay,' 'open,' 'careless,' 'childlike,' not a people who needed deep philosophical interpretation" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 100). She added that the initial (positive) image of the British was of a "distant benevolence (…) a reflection of the popular image of the British before the adverse effects of colonial rule began to be felt" (Ibid., p. 148). It changed significantly after 1920s.

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Burma by Indian hands.[95] Suu Kyi gave a summary of Burma's colonial experience: she admitted (in one sentence) that "British rule brought some material prosperity," but momentarily moved to criticise colonial "laissez-faire economic policy (…) ill suited to the needs of Burmese" that "brought about a series of grave problems."[96] Consequently, already after a few years of (full) colonial conquest, the Burmese found themselves at the very bottom of the "plural society" in their own country[97] in what was "an order without meaning."[98] The British could not understand that sentiment,[99] but their rule was "appreciated but not accepted"[100] which combined with the idealization of the

[95] Furnivall called it "the survival of the cheapest" (*Colonial Policy and Practice*…, pp. 118–122); for a more distanced study about Indians in Burma, see: Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 142–148; Nalini R. Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma: Rise and Decline of an Immigrant Community*, Oxford University Press, London 1971, pp. 30–112; about chettyars: M. Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1854–1941*, 2nd edition, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 2011, pp. 115–117; Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar*…, pp. 207–208. As Suu Kyi put it, "the unchecked influx of foreigners was a major cause of the disintegration of the traditional society. Another disruptive factor was the all pervasive efficiency of an administration that was implementing changes in the time-honoured system of social custom and usage" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 101). Elsewhere she also indirectly criticised British *devide et impera* policy "the practice if encouraging the differences between the various racial groups was to have sad consequences for the independent nation of the future," (Suu Kyi, *My Country*…, p. 53).

[96] She listed them in details and criticised the colonial policy from what might broadly be called a socialist perspective: "the unchecked immigration of Indians and Chinese, the opening up of large tracts of virgin land with its attendant need for capital, the financial activities of Indian money-lenders, land alienation, the monopolies exercised by European commercial firms, the import of foreign goods which diminished the market for indigenous products, the breakdown of the monastic school system, the decline in the discipline and morals of monks removed from ecclesiastical supervision: all these circumstances combined to create forced which led to the disintegration of the Burmese society" (Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism in Burma*…, p. 141). This disintegration led, later on, to the collapse of traditional social bounds, to apathy and to the increase of crime (Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*…, pp. 131–141; John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1958, pp. 172–180).

[97] Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*…, pp. 129, 202, 299 and 303–312. The conceiver of this term, John S. Furnivall, was one of the "founding fathers" of Burmese Studies (a co-founder of Burma Research Society in 1910) who wanted – to quote Suu Kyi – "to examine the heritage of Burma in the light of modern scholarship" and by doing so he sew "the seeds of a renaissance" of Burma's culture (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 120).

[98] Michael Aung-Thwin, *The British "Pacification" of Burma*…, p. 245.

[99] Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*…, p. 162; Ian Holliday, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar*, Columbia University Press, New York 2011, p. 30; Paul Webb, *The Peacocks' Children. The Struggle for Freedom in Burma 1885 – Present*, Orchid Press, Bangkok 2007, pp. 13 and 17.

[100] Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 73–75.

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precolonial past[101] and the hard realities of British colonial state later gave birth to the anticolonial movement.[102]

9. From Revival of Buddhism to the Burmese Anticolonial Nationalism

The initial response of the Burmese against colonialism was to take up arms and join rebellions and millenarian movements, which proved futile.[103] Then, as Suu Kyi put it, "as the twentieth century progressed and the breakdown of traditional society throughout the country accelerated, it was in the realm of religion that the first alarm bells began to be heard."[104] The Burmese Buddhists were able to overcome the identity crisis they faced: they creatively reinterpreted Buddhism by understanding that the fall of the "defender of faith" was not the pivot of history, but instead another example of the Buddhist law of impermanence that applied to their British invaders as well.[105] This interpretation gave birth to the revival of Buddhism and to the dominance of the alternative, optimistic approach in the Burmese political thought – in colonial circumstances individual spiritual development was linked to the independence struggle providing Buddhist legitimization for anticolonial, independence struggle. It is not surprising then, but rather logical, that the Burmese anticolonial movement started from the revival of Buddhism. Ideationally,

[101] Suu Kyi indicated that the Burmese idealization of the past developed due to the fact that "shortcomings of the monarchy were beginning to be forgiven if not forgotten. Nostalgia for the past was more likely an indication of the dissatisfaction with the colonial status" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 119).

[102] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 108; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 80 and 92.

[103] Ileto, *Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements*…, pp. 213–215; Ni Ni Myint, *Burma's Struggle*…, pp. 34–96; Frank N. Trager, *Burma: From Kingdom to Republic*, Pall Mall Press, London 1966, pp. 44–46; Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*…, pp. 38–340; Harvey, *British Rule in Burma*…, pp. 22–24.

[104] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 103.

[105] This movement started from uncoordinated grassroots activities aimed at preventing the loss of Buddhism (Ledi Sayadaw), then evolved into creative reinterpretation of Buddhism, formation of Buddhist societies and finally into active opposition to the colonial state and its agencies (Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2015, pp. 23–136; Winston L. King, *In the Hope of Nibbana: An Essey on Theravada Buddhist Ethics*, Open Court, La Salle, Illinois 1964, p. 239; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 114–116 and 120–129; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 100 and 212; Maung Maung, *From Sangha to Laity. Nationalist Movements of Burma, 1920–1940*, Australian National University, South Asia Books, Colombia, Mo. 1980, p. xvi; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*…, pp. 177–196; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 163–203; John S. Furnivall, *The Dawn of Nationalism in Burma,* "Journal of the Burma Research Society", vol. 33, no. 1, 1948, pp. 1–7. For Suu Kyi's description of these movements, see: Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 113–126; Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism in Burma*…, p. 142).

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the Burmese thinkers rebuffed the "white man's burden" and other paternalistic ideologies of the British Raj and instead, following their Indian colleagues, interpreted Buddhism as being democratic.[106] Then they modernized Buddhism, interpreting liberation from non-satisfactoriness to quest for deliverance from social, economic and political evils of colonialism. [107] Here the role of "political monks"[108] was crucial, especially that of U Ottama[109] who interpreted independence struggle as a religious activity: according to him people cannot obtain *nibbāna* as long as the colonial government exist; hence they should get rid of it first in order to be able to concentrate on seeking enlightenment later.[110] In short, *nibbāna* must wait for a while: political freedom comes first, religious liberation later. This message resonated well with Buddhist masses who understood liberation from the British as a means to achieve Buddhist state that would restore the cosmological harmony and make people free from poverty again. His anticolonial message had a wide appeal in the society, much wider than the loyalist-legal path to independence chosen by Anglicised Burmese elites of early 20th century.[111] Consequently, anticolonial

[106] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 120–123*; Legislative Council: 751, February 1921: Discussion of Constitutional Reforms*, in: *In their Own Voice "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds. F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, p. 14.

[107] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 125–126.

[108] The name itself is controversial, see: Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar, Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society*, Uniwersity of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2011, pp. 138–139.

[109] More on this "Burmese Mahatma Gandhi", see: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 218; Donald E. Smith, *Religion*, *Politics and Social Change. A Sourcebook*, Free Press, New York 1971, p. 95; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 127 and 132. Suu Kyi summarized U Ottama as being "representative for those Burmese who drew inspiration from Japan's achievements but looked to India for political ideas and tactics" (Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism in Burma*…, p. 142).

[110] Intellectually his vision represents a fascinating novelty in the Burmese political thought: he linked anticolonial struggle with religious activity. His message was simple: Buddha could preach to his audience because they were free people, but Burmese Buddhist could not hope for *nibbāna* due to being enslaved by the British, so political freedom (decolonization) is necessary to achieve enlightenment (Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*…, pp. 95–98; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 119; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 183). U Ottama's message was taken up by other "political monks", such as Nye Ya, U Thilasara and U Wisara (the first nationalist martyr), on these monks-turned-nationalist thinkers, see: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 125–126, 132, 170 and 178; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 121–122; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 108; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*…, p. 222; Albert D. Moscotti, *British Policy and Nationalist Movement in Burma: 1917–1937*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1974, pp. 32, 51–54.

[111] This is not the place to present the history of Burma's nationalist movement (for it, see among others: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 131–135; *Extracts from U Ba Khaing's Book "Burma's Political History"*, transl. Tin Htway, in: *Material on Ba Khaing "Political History of Myanmar"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:5, Universität Passau, Passau 2006,

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approach dominated over attempts to accommodate colonial experience. The person who capitalized on these emotions was Hsaya San who – contrary to the collaborating Anglicised Rangoon elites– decided to overthrow the colonial government by force and staged the biggest rebellion in the colonial history of Burma, although a lost one.[112] The

p. 144; Cady, *A The History of Modern Burma*…, pp. 232–233; Ba U, *My Burma. The Autobiography of the President*, Taplinger Publishing Company, New York 1958, p. 104; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 183–188) but first two generations of the Burmese nationalists ("YMBA generation" and "*wunthanú athin* generation") got Westernized: the latter little less than the YMBA generation, as they already got themselves accustomed with the Burmese history and literature more (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 120–129), but still. Moreover, with time they became too closely associated with the colonial state and its interests (and consequently detached from rural reality) to see the writings on the wall on time. Only the third generation, that of *thakins*, was able to successfully combine the Western education with anticolonial goals. Suu Kyi wrote about "*wunthanú* spirit" that "urged the Burmese to preserve their culture from corrosive effects of westernization" was but "contested by a keen awareness of practical knowledge to be gained from modern education"; this led her to comment about the dilemmas Burma "had to face in the process of selecting what should be preserved, what accepted and what rejected," and she indirectly criticised the Westernization of this generation by writing about a writer Theippan Maung Wa (a colonial civil servant in the countryside who did not approve nationalists actions) – according to her, he "was a man with a strong instinct for the maintenance of law and order, but what might have been an asset in an independent nation became a questionable virtue under a foreign government out of step with the aspirations of the people" (Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism in Burma*…, pp. 147–152).

[112] On Hsaya San and his rebellion, see: Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*…, pp. 107–109, 237, 252; Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma*, Ohio University Press, Athens Ohio 2011, pp. 20–28 and 76–216; Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*…, pp. 291–292; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 158–162; Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *Structuring Revolt: Communities of Interpretation in the Historiography of the Saya San Rebellion*, "Journal of Southeast Asian Studies", vol. 2, no. 39, June 2008, pp. 297–317; Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*…, pp. 309–310; Robert L. Solomon, *Saya San and the Burmese Rebellion*, "Modern Asian Studies", vol. 3. no. 3, 1969, pp. 209–223; Maurice Collis, *Trials in Burma*, Faber & Faber, London 1945, pp. 213–216; Suu Kyi was quite critical of Hsaya San rebellion: according to her poorly armed Hsaya San "men had fought with a desperate courage, pitting swords and magic amulets against the firearms of government troops (…) Hsaya San had made an appeal to the atavistic instincts of the Burmese. He had presented himself as a future monarch (…) although there was sympathy for the patriotism of the rebels throughout the country, there was little practical support. The Burmese had quietly decided that they wanted no more of at least one old and outmoded institution"; elsewhere she called the rebellion a representation of the past, "an armed enterprise relying on the call of racial pride and the charisma of the leader." Given Suu Kyi's rather pragmatic nature (that would hardly praise such a politically hopeless affair as this rebellion), her family background (her marriage with an Englishman) and perhaps even her class status (Suu Kyi's family, obvious nationalist credentials notwithstanding, belonged to the Anglicised elite), it is unsurprising that she was so critical of the Hsaya San rebellion (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 129).

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anticolonial struggle was picked up by young students,[113] *thakins*[114] who shared Hsaya San's dreams of throwing out the British and restoring Burma's greatness – the young nationalists demanded nothing less but independence and dreamed of nothing more than restoring Burma's greatness – but rejected his outdated means.[115] Being educated in the Western schools, *thakins* understood the modern world much better, yet they remained all-out nationalists who based their political vision on Burman ethnicity, Burmese language and culture, best symbolized by their organization, *Dobama* ("We Burmans Organization").[116] Under the ideological guidance of Kodaw Hmaing, the *thakins* rejected

[113] In the 1930s, the character of the Burmese nationalists movement evolved. To quote Suu Kyi: "the1920s had been a period of political awakening punctuated by a few significant but largely uncoordinated events. The next decade was an era of change and revolution." If in the 1920s the archetypical Burmese nationalist was a lawyer, then in the 1930s it was a student. Those countryside-born students, from economically depressed Burmese villages, were – according to Suu Kyi – the product of National Schools: "a system of education guided by nationalist principles," conceived in the early 1920s, had "far-reaching effect," as it created a "crop of students whose intellectual foundation was an amalgam of the patriotic spirit and the western tradition of learning based on objective empiricism" (Ibid., pp. 126–129); these students were critical of the elder generation of nationalists. Suu Kyi aptly summarized them: "nationalist, young and vigourous (…) a breed apart from the older politicians who were either not bold enough, not Burmese enough, not radical enough or perhaps simply not young enough for the new generation of educated youth who were passionate to dedicate themselves to patriotic cause"; at the same time she was fair enough to admit that they were "not universally popular; there were those who looked down on them as brash young upstarts or feckless trouble-makers" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Father*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 10).

[114] *Thakin* is the Burmese equivalent of *sahib*, or the way the British were addressed by subordinates. Voice should be given to Suu Kyi: "*Thakin* means 'master,' and was the term commonly used in referring to or addressing Englishmen. Ba Thaung and his associates used the word as a suffix to their names to denote that the Burmese, too, were a race of masters, not slaves. It was this simple, effective device for emphasizing their spirited patriotism" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 130). Elsewhere she described it the following: "why did we shout 'we, Burmese the *thakin* race' in colonial times. Its very clear. Some people understand that we had to address the colonial British as *thakins* and we didn't like it at all (…) So the thakin party, Dobama Asiayone was set up" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 290).

[115] As Suu Kyi described them, "We have achieved this country's independence owing to political awareness of nationalist students. Just that anti-colonial students were into politics – they were *in* politics" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 344).

[116] On *Dobama*, see: *The Manifesto of the Dobama Asiayone*, *December 1939*, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14,

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colonial heritage in favour of the reinterpreted Burmese tradition combined with popular anti-imperialist ideologies such as Marxism. This would help them to achieve independence and would set the course for the dominance of socialism in the postcolonial Burma.

10. Aung San Suu Kyi on Colonial Burma

Why it happened so that for Burma, contrary to some other countries, the colonial period turned out to be unfavorable, is a debatable issue that does not belong to the topic of this book. Since, however, Aung San Suu Kyi, presented her own hypothesis about the reasons of Burma's unhappy colonial experience, it is more than needed to present it here.

Suu Kyi in her essay on comparison of India's and Burma's colonial past[117] claimed why the former successfully used the colonial period for its own development, while the latter failed to do so. Suu Kyi described the historical heritage of both countries and remarked that the Indians well accustomed to never ending cycle of foreign conquests and accumulation of outside influences, were better prepared for the colonial challenge that the Burmese closed in their hermetic, Buddhist world.[118] According to Suu Kyi, the reason was Burmese approach to Buddhism, which represented for them

eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau, 2010, p. 26; Kyaw Hoe, *Inception and Objective of the Nagani Association*, transl. Ye Nyunt, in: *Additional Material Related to the Nagani Book Club*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:1.1, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, p. 54; Khin Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930–1938)*, Cornell University Pres, Ithaca 1988, pp. 17–43; Joseph Silverstein, *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey 1980, p. 39; Kei Nemoto, *The Concepts of Dobama* (*Our Burma*) *and Thudo-Buma* (*Their Burma*) *in Burmese Nationalism*, *1930–1948*, "Journal of Burma Studies", no. 5, 2008, pp. 2–16; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 207–208. Suu Kyi presented *Dobama*'s origins in an emphatic, if not slightly nationalist way: "the Burmese had long resented the role which immigrant groups had come to play in their country. All the passion of their fears for the dignified survival of their own people was poured into the ensuing conflict. Their rallying cry as fighting broke out in the streets was 'Dohbama' (We Burmese). Ba Thaung, a young tutor from Rangoon University, conceived the idea of Dohbama Asi-ayone (Organization) as he wrote pamphlets on the Burmese who died during the riots. Its slogan was "Race, language, religion" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 130).

[117] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 82–140 (originally published as *Burma and India: Some Aspects of Intellectual Life*); followed, to lesser extend by another, on literature and nationalism in colonial Burma (*Literature and Nationalism in Burma*…, pp. 140–167).

[118] "While Indian intellectuals were caught up in accelerating attempts to master, absorb and adapt ideas imported from the West to meet the needs of their own country, the Burmese were still steeped in their traditional ways, lulled into a false sense of security"; that is why "to yield without breaking was an attitude, both pragmatic and philosophical, which the people of India had long adopted in their encounters with foreign conquerors. In this sense, they were better equipped than the Burmese to deal with the changes brought about by colonialism" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 87 and 89–90).

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"the perfected philosophy" that "did not encourage speculation" and seeking modern knowledge: "how different it was from India, with the earnest, almost obsessive desire for comprehension at the intellectual level that was producing a string of scholars and philosophers in the western mould!"[119] According to Suu Kyi, "synthesis, of East and West, of theory and practice, constituted the vital element in the tradition initiated by the renaissance in India"; in Burma there was none such: "a climate in which a synthesis of modern education and classical Burmese scholarship could be fostered did not emerge (…) the true synthesis of traditional and modern, Burmese and Western, was not achieved"; moreover, Suu Kyi illustrated this lack of East-West synthesis in Burma eloquently: "there were in Burma no Rammohun Royas, no Tagores, no Nehrus, people with wealth and leisure to pursue knowledge for the sake of knowledge, to travel, to see for themselves how other civilizations worked in their own milieu, to set standards of cultural refinement and intellectual excellence."[120] She certainly "holds in a positive light the more inclusive nationalism" of India, particularly that of Tagore and compared him favourably with Kodaw Hmaing[121] by writing that "Hmaing has been compared to

[119] "The Burmese had been firm in the Buddhist faith which provided a philosophy that could meet the challenges of other religions with supreme confidence"; that is why their rulers were characterized by "indifference to developments in the outside world" and the early colonial conquest "did not provide any external stimulus to encourage the Burmese to review their literary heritage in a new perspective (…) the Burmese felt they could afford to ignore the presence of an alien power" (Ibid., pp. 85–86, 91, 93–98 and 101). For a similar approach, see: Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 75–76.

[120] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 108, 112, 115 and 121.

[121] Nilanjana Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar. Khin Myo Chit to Aung San Suu Kyi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, pp. 262 and 264. Suu Kyi has written about Hmaing extensively in her two essays: she described his personal experience of humiliation that turned him into a nationalist (Kodaw Hmaing "from his monastery saw Thibaw and the royal family on their melancholy journey to the boat that would take them away to exile. It is said that this experience sowed the seeds of the deep patriotism which would form an essential feature of his literature output (…) for the young Hmaing with his strong attachment to monarchic tradition, it was a great tragedy"), she wrote about Hmaing's tikas: "his writings which ranged from popular plays, through newspaper articles, history and poetry, were strongly traditional in style. Their content showed a vivid awareness of contemporary economic, social and political developments (…) Hmaing quickly developed into a prolific writer whose language is vigorous and abrasive. His writings show an extraordinary personality which, in spite of its fundamentally traditional character, was able to move with the currents of the times (…) representing traditional learning, demonstrated an earlier awareness of the ills of colonial society that the modern educated class"; according to Suu Kyi tikas represented "a record of the milestones along the path of the Burmese nationalist movement" while Hmaing was a mirror of his times ("the temper of the country could often be judged from his writings"); finally she summarized his turn to socialism and support of young nationalists, including her father, at the end of his life: "it was a paradoxical quality of Hmaing's genius that while he limited himself almost entirely to the traditional Burmese world of letters, he was able to sympathize with the new

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Tagore by the Burmese as a great nationalist poet. Such a comparison is valid only if nationalism is defined in broad cultural terms rather than simply in its political sense," for according to her Tagore "was more modern of the two in experience and in intellectual development" as "the assimilation of foreign elements in Tagore's intellectual apparatus was so complete that they form an integral part of the depth and breadth of his unique talent"; moreover Tagore yarned "for union between man and the divine" and encapsulated such "ideas of Indian Renaissance" as "knowledge, freedom, universalism, truth, reason, thought joined with action within a spiritual framework"; finally although Tagore "was accepted as a national institution, he was not always viewed as a nationalist" and his "well-publicised rift with Gandhi over the latter's wholesale condemnation of western civilization" caused him popularity as his "internationalist ideals often distanced him from the masses."[122] Hmaing, according to Suu Kyi, "was closer to Tagore in being primarily a man of thought but nearer to Gandhi in his political nationalism," as "much of Hmaing's writings were on contemporary events, matters both great and small (…) Hmaing was so much a man of the people that the temper of the country could often be judged from his writings."[123] However, and this is the clue of Suu Kyi's criticism on Hmaing, "while he drew public attention to current events and expressed his criticism or approbation, he did not offer a philosophy which could have guided nationalist efforts" as his "expression of criticism and approbation could be said to have been in the classical tradition: Burmese historical writings sometimes provided critical assessments of monarchs, especially if they were notable failures."[124] Suu Kyi was naturally correct in her portrait of Hmaing: he was a fervent nationalist who used categories and concepts understandable to Burmese Buddhists only. Thus, indeed, he was hardly a candidate for Burma's universal voice to the world. What is interesting, however, in Suu Kyi's criticism, is not the fact that she was correct, but why she wrote so. Her approach to Hmaing has been consistent with her critical views on narrow Burman Buddhist nationalism and her fondness to more open and cosmopolitan Indian nationalism expressed in her early writings. Events would show, however, that with time Suu Kyi moved away from her initial cosmopolitanism and drifted much closer to what Hmaing was exemplifying and personalizing.[125]

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ideas that younger nationalists acquired from their exposure to western thought and education"; "in his twilight years Hmaing became a supporter of leftist politics while remaining a devout Buddhist" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 114–117, Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism*…, pp. 149–153).

[122] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 115–116.

[123] Ibid., p. 117.

[124] Ibid.

[125] For example Hmaing's idea that the people (and particularly politicians) should improve their minds (and consequently, their behaviour) which would create unity among them and this in turn would enable Burma to regain independence is quite close to Suu Kyi's "moral democracy";

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Then, however, in her essays from mid-1980s, Suu Kyi criticised Hmaing for not offering "a philosophy which could have guided nationalist effort"; Kodaw Hmaing, according to Suu Kyi, was a part of the wider groups of a "men of traditional learning" that "felt that their patriotic duty required the preservation of old ways"; however – and this is the key of Suu Kyi's argument – they did so "without examining them (old ways – M.L.) carefully to see if they were fit for the new times (…) no concentrated effort was made to reassess the past with a view to formulating a viable philosophy for the future (…) the reluctance to examine the past with objectivity (…) clinging to old ways solely for the sake of their antiquity."[126] There is not only "little nostalgia for the past" in Suu Kyi's writing,[127] but more importantly: a direct statement why this lack of critical approach to the past was detrimental to Burma. Hence, according to her, there "remained an indefinable barrier" between these old-style literati who did not want to critically question old times from one hand, and the English-educated "new Burman" (who "had not assimilated and adapted new nations to his life, he had merely substituted the for his old ones"),[128] in other words: a modern-educated, uprooted, Anglicised class of colonial civil servants, on the other.[129] Hence, "those who had been grounded in one system somehow seemed incapable of truly mastering the other," there was "a failure to assimilate two different strains of intellectual tradition" due to the fact that "the modern educated felt too different to suggest the reassessment of the reform of accepted values" while "the scholars of the old school on the other hand were too close to traditional institutions to be able to judge them objectively."[130] The few positive examples of people who tried to bridge this gap, such as the writers of Khitsun movement did not made a difference, because they were "an isolated phenomenon."[131]

Hmaing's Burman nationalism is also quite consistent with Suu Kyi's actions (on the ethnic minorities' dimension) after 2011 (and especially after 2015).

[126] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 117 and 119–120. She also gave the example of Five Evils to present the lack of critical re-examination of the past: "after all, did not the five enemies (…) include the min or ruler? That one system had, in fact, produced the other was largely ignored. The shock of the fall of Mandalay (from the British colonial hands – ML) had moved some Burmese to rail against their own impotence and foibles, but there was no serious attempt to analyse the cause of the deficiencies" (Ibid., p. 99).

[127] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 264.

[128] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 115 and 120.

[129] Sarkisyanz called them "Burmese intelligentsia (…) culturally Anglicized in various degrees and largely isolated from Burmese culture" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 130).

[130] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 120–121.

[131] The Khitsun writers "combined knowledge of and respect for the past with a modern spirit of innovation" and thus "represented a possible goal of East-West, old-new synthesis at the intellectual level in Burma" (Ibid., pp. 127–128). Interestingly still, in her subsequent article, about literature and nationalism in Burma, she wrote that Khitsun writers "might be said to have formed a bridge between the old wunthanu spirit and the young revolutionaries who would seek an

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So according to Suu Kyi, this "barrier" between old school literati and modern Anglicised "new Burma" happened due to social and cultural reasons. Again she repeats her argument about good aspects of the Burmese culture, particularly those of Buddhism, that paradoxically had negative consequences. This is remarkable, because "unlike her later writing which appear heavily couched in Buddhist notions of *mettā* and *sacca* (truth), here she is dispassionate in her critique of Buddhism and its influence in forging Burmese nationalism."[132]

Therefore, Buddhism in Burma "provided an essential component of the self-concept which enabled the Burmese to see themselves as different from foreigners" which led to "xenophobia - a well-justified apprehension that their very existence as a distinct people would be jeopardized if the course of colonial rule was allowed to be run unchecked."[133] She elaborated it in almost prophetic words (given her future private life and heinous criticism of her marriage with an Englishman by the Burmese army in the 1990s)[134]: "alien concepts had to be redefined in Burmese terms before they could be accepted. In a strange way the Burmese seemed to value their cultural integrity almost more their ethnic identity. They could often feel greater affinity for a foreigner who had adopted Buddhism and Burmese ways of living than for a Burmese who had embraced an alien creed (…) this cultural chauvinism made for a closed mind (…) the Burmese had adopted social and religious practices which minimalized the need for intellectual activity."[135] The other positive-comes-negative aspect was the egalitarianism: "there was also in Burmese mentality an ingrained resistance to elitism (…) traditional attitudes shaped by an essentially egalitarian society militated against the acceptance of an elite."[136] Contrary to India, where education had been the privilege of the upper class (and casts), in Burma education was widely available to everyone and "to be educated meant more that the mere acquisition of book learning; it meant the mastery of the supreme knowledge that would lead to enlightenment"; thus "a people with such a view of education could not take easily to the British policy which saw education as practical training for the new jobs and opportunities (…) and when they did, the Burmese brought to it a utilitarian, materialistic approach lacking in intellectual curiosity. The age-old conviction that true knowledge resided only in the teaching of the Buddha remained unshaken."[137] Finally, the last aspect has been language,[138]

ideological framework for their political activities in the western intellectual tradition" (Suu Kyi, *Literature and Nationalism*…, p. 153).

[132] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 261.

[133] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 103–104.

[134] See chapter on Aung San for details.

[135] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 104.

[136] Ibid., pp. 125 and 135.

[137] Ibid., p. 125.

[138] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 261.

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together with race and religion "the mainsprings of the Burmese sense of their unique identity"; contrary to those former two that were (according to her) dropped (one may ask: really?)[139] from the concept of modern nationhood by nationalists in the 1930s, the "validity of Burmese language as a unifying factor was tacitly retained"; in other place she wrote about "the Burmese need to translate foreign concepts into their language, literally and metaphorically."[140] Overall, from Suu Kyi's complicated attitude towards her Burmese Buddhist heritage "the picture that emerges is Suu Kyi's understanding of a society where nationalism is interpreted as unquestioning loyalty to a set of Burmese-Buddhist values, where patriotism is not only all-pervasive (influencing politics as well as literature as so popular thinking) but a compulsion as well, since the lack of nationalist feelings is treated with little tolerance."[141]

From this critical understanding of her own nationalist heritage point of view, Suu Kyi drew conclusions about why so few people in Burma appreciated practical knowledge brought forth by colonial education system; and those few who did this – the Anglicised colonial elite[142] – lost the contact with the masses and ceased to be politically influential: they were outplaced by younger nationalists who rejected British heritage and chose socialists patterns instead; due to this the few positive experiences of British colonial rule in Burma were forfeited.

Suu Kyi's view presented in both articles has been interpreted in numerous ways. Robert Taylor criticised Suu Kyi for articulating a thesis that the Burmese have been incapable of understanding democracy due to "Bamar mentality rooted in authoritarian past" that was to blame for continuous army rule in Burma.[143] In accordance with this reading, Suu Kyi would later be trying to implement this vision politically by attempting to keep some aspects of the Burmese tradition, but at the same time leave out the aversive ones. Nilanjana Sengupta claimed that in her two articles about colonialism in Burma, one may see what would be Suu Kyi's ideological and political leitmotiv: the emphasis "on the individual as the ultimate agent of change" and compared it with Suu Kyi's "predilection for the character of Jean Valjean" (from Victor Hugo's novel, "Les

[139] One may compare Suu Kyi's claim that as the nationalist movement "gathered momentum political leaders began to recognize the necessity for creating unity out of diversity which characterized the peoples who made up the nation" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 155) with *Dobama Asiayone's* goal of Burmanization of Burma or *thakins*' rejection of ethnic minorities as *Thudo-Bama* ("their-Burma") (Kyin Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma*…, p. 5; Kei Nemoto, *The Concepts of Dobama* …, pp. 2–16).

[140] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, pp. 131 and 134.

[141] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 263.

[142] Such leaders as U Ba Pe, U May Oung, Sir Maung Gyi, U Pu and others (Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*…, pp. 288–289).

[143] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 411.

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Misérables"); according to Sengupta "the essays feed into her latter day emphasis on the empowerment of the individual so that he is able to discriminate between what is right and what is expected, between individual will and the collective will of the nation."[144] I would like to propose another interpretation. From my perspective, there are two crucial parts in these essays: an analytical one and a political one. The analytical one is the moment when she criticised the old school literati for not being able to use the past creatively, for not approaching critically the Burmese tradition. Then, in her description (heavily loaded with assessments), she presented her own vision, an ideological statement: "old ways should be adapted, pruned, revitalized or in some cases even discarded altogether."[145] She found the positive example of this attitude in India (in this "synthesis of East and West" or the "intellectual impulse that sought a harmonious fusion of East and West") and compared it positively with her own country ("looking from the Indian situation to that of Burma, there is almost surreal impression of a time warp") in order to show a good pattern.[146] She was showing the reasons for the Burmese inability to follow this good Indian example: this is the second crucial, political point in the article. In her summary she wrote that "the Burmese people lacked a leadership which would have helped them to face the challenges posed by their confrontation with alien values (…) the lack of an elite that meant that there was little to guide and spur on the people to reach out for greater achievements"; in Burma there were not "dynamic leaders" who could carry it "along by the force"; she then suggested that "towards the end of British rule some leaders arose who saw the need to adopt a broad assimilative approach and to develop philosophy which could cope with modern developments," but unfortunately, the Second World War made it impossible ("the younger generation of leaders appeared too late to bring about effective changes"), so Burma "still remains a society waiting for its true potential to be realized."[147] Suu Kyi naturally lists her father, Aung San, on the top of these younger leaders (among his colleagues from *Dobama*) which means that the message from this article seems to suggest Suu Kyi's future political agenda: the notion of Aung San's unfinished revolution and her own duty to finish the work of her father. Thus, she, as the successor of Aung San, is destined to lead people of Burma to combine the good elements of their tradition with requirements of the modern world (democracy, human rights etc.), so that Burma may finally realize its full potential.

[144] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 259 and 264.
[145] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 121.
[146] Ibid., pp. 133–134.
[147] Ibid., pp. 133–135.

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11. Between Socialism and Buddhism: the Late Colonial and Postcolonial Burmese Political Thought

Suu Kyi's father, Aung San[148] and other *thakins* in their early career were fascinated by socialism and other left-wing ideologies, such as Marxism.[149] Although not the only one (*Dobama*'s movement was characterized by strong ideological eclecticism that syncretised Burmese Buddhist heritage with modern Western ideologies),[150] socialism, in this or other form, dominated the late Burmese colonial thought[151] due to the traumatic colonial experience (decades of colonial exploitation from the hands of the British and foreign, mainly Indian, capital). [152] With time – due to the fact that it was the *thakins*'

[148] Due to his extraordinary importance, Aung San will be described in a separate chapter: the next one.

[149] Burma was a part of wider phenomenon of Marxism in Southeast Asia (and beyond); on the reasons of Marxism's popularity see: Kavalam M.Pannikar, *Asia and Western Dominance. A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History 1498–1945*, Allen & Unwin, London 1953, pp. 251–253; Paul Kratoska, Ben Batson, *Nationalism and Modernist Reform*, in: *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 1–2, ed. N. Tarling, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 274–275; for Russian Marxism-Leninism' reception in Burma, see: *Books on the Russian Revolution*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:9, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Passauer Beiträge zur Südostasienkunde, Passau 2008. For beginnings of communism in Burma: Bertil Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1989, pp. 4–5; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 216; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 172. Suu Kyi, too, described the beginning of Marxism in Burma: "leftist literature became available in Burma around 1931," citing books brought by returning students and those circulated by Furnivall's Burma Book Club as forming "the core of socialist and Marxist works introduced into the country" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 130).

[150] Fred von der Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1963, p. 80; Webb, *Peacock's Children*…, p. 49; John S. Thompson, *Marxism in Burma*, in: *Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries*, ed. F.N. Trager, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1959, p. 21; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 175.

[151] "To some degree, leftist thought influenced almost every prominent political group that led the drive for Burmese independence" (Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 27). An example of this left-wing dominance can be seen in the *Nagàni* Book Club where – as Suu Kyi counted – among 101 books published by the Club, 32 were on revolution, 18 on socialism, 15 on communism, three on Stalin and six on Lenin (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 132). The full list is available here: *The Nagani Book Club – An Introduction*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:1, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 78–84; More on the club: *Translation of an Interview Given by U Tun Aye*, in: *The Nagani Book Club – An Introduction*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:1, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, p. 38; Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *Introduction*, in: *The Nagani Book Club – An Introduction*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:1, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 17–18.

[152] U Chit Hlaing, *A Short Note on My Involvement in the Burma Socialist Programme Party (Unrevised Version)*, in: *Soe, Socialism and Chit Hlaing, Memories*, Myanmar Literature Project,

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generation that gave Burma independence – socialism also lingered predominantly in postcolonial Burma: until 1988 Burma was a left-oriented country, not only economically but also politically and ideologically.

The late colonial Burmese intelligentsia was looking for ideas that would enable Burma to regain independence and find it a proper place among the world's nations and Marxism gave them simple explanations of difficult matters, such as colonial exploitation, or capitalist materialism.[153] Consequently, they understood Marxism primarily as an ideology leading to national independence and development without (neo) colonial dependence. [154] As Suu Kyi rather critically, if not paternalistically, commented the outcome: the Marxists texts "were eagerly consumed by young Burmese whose eyes had been opened to the exciting political currents which were sweeping across the world. As they were also searching eagerly, perhaps unconsciously, for radical ideas, there was a tendency to swallow much of the whole socialist theory without digesting it properly."[155] In these words one may find Suu Kyi's rather distanced attitude towards socialism or Marxism; a distance not doubt influenced by her critical assessment of Ne Win's "The Burmese Way to Socialism" and its sorry results for Burma. This distance is further visible in her comment on popularity of Marxism: "Burmese society with its Buddhist values, lack of extreme poverty and freedom from class exploitation was not a natural candidate for Marxist socialist ideology. It was the view that socialism was opposed to imperialism which made it attractive to young nationalists. The Burmese

Working Paper No. 10:10, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, p. 124; see more: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 191.

[153] Trevor Ling, *Buddha, Marx and God. Some Aspects of Religion in the Modern World*, 2nd edition, McMillan Press, London–Basingstoke 1979, p. 90; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 204; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, p. 220; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 27. See also: Thompson, *Marxism in Burma*…, pp. 19–21; Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 81–82; an example of that that critique can be Ba Hein's "The World of Capitalists", in: *Material on Ba Hein, "The World of Capitalists" and Hla Shwe, "Capitalism"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 35–48.

[154] Jan Bečka, *The National Liberation Movement in Burma During the Japanese Occupation Period (1941–1945),* Oriental Institute, Praha 1983, p. 38. Examples of this anticolonial attitude can be seen here: *Let Us Fight Against Colonialism (Declaration of All Burma Students' Union, on the Occasion of the Anti-Colonial Day, Dated the 8th Waning Day of Tazaungmon, 1299 Burmese Era)*, in: *Soe, Socialism and Chit Hlaing, Memories*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:10, Appendix A, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, pp. 91–96; *We Don't Want Colonialism. Declaration Issued by the Anti-War All Burma Union of Students (Dated November 11, 1937),* in: *Soe, Socialism and Chit Hlaing, Memories*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:10, Appendix B, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, pp. 96–100.

[155] Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 130.

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were caught up in the tide of the times that saw the leftist ideologies as progressive alternatives to capitalism and colonialism."[156]

Moreover, they assumed Marxism was in many ways similar and compatible to the Burmese Buddhist heritage.[157] The result was the unique synthesis of Buddhism with socialism: a Burmese domestication of Marxism (examples can be seen in the actions of *thakin* Soe, who translated Marxist concepts in Buddhist terms,[158] or in Ba Swe's ideas who claimed that Buddhism and Marxism are in fact the same[159] and looked at Stalin's example as an inspiration[160]) and making it the dominant ideology of the Burmese independence movement since the 1930s. This was best exemplified by "worldly *nibbāna*" – a local Burmese Buddhist version of "the bright future," or paradise on earth – a vision of perfect society of equal people achieved via socialism that would bring back the human beings' lost initial conditions. [161] With such concepts as the 1950s

[156] Ibid., p. 131.

[157] Such foreign modern ideologies as democracy, socialism, Marxism and even welfare state were "reinterpreted in such a way that they can be derived from certain aspects of 'indigenous' tradition" (Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 167–168 and 192; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 26–27; Ling, *Buddha, Marx and God*…, pp. 89–90). Thus, from the very emergence of socialist currents in Burma in the 1930s, the Burmese thinkers and politicians tried to marry socialist ideas with Buddhist concepts or to express socialism via Buddhist idioms. By doing this, they showed what Suu Kyi called "a practical recognition of the Burmese need to translate foreign concepts into their language, literally and metaphorically" (Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 131).

[158] *Thakin Soe "Socialism"*, editor Thakin Than Tun's Foreword, in: *Soe, Socialism and Chit Hlaing, Memories*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:10, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, pp. 14, 10–20, 22, 42, 54, 59, 66, 71 and 79; Robert H. Taylor, *Introduction*, in: *Soe, Socialism and Chit Hlaing, Memories*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:10, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, pp. 9–10.

[159] U Ba Swe, *The Burmese Revolution*, Information Department, Union of Burma, Rangoon 1952, pp. 7–29; *1951 – Ba Swe's Revolutionary Socialist Programme*, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, p. 42.

[160] In a style rivalling the best Soviet propaganda Ba Swa wrote that Stalin achieved tremendous successes in USSR, but "there was much work left to be done for erecting paradise on earth" (Maung Ba Swe, *Stalin, Erector of Paradise on Earth (Lokanibbana*), transl. G. Noack, in: *Books on the Russian Revolution*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:9, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Passauer Beiträge zur Südostasienkunde, Passau 2008, pp. 53–56).

[161] On the concept of "worldly *nibbāna*" and various Burmese discussions about it, see: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 126, 169–174, 184, 196 and 211–212; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 128–136; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 114–117; *Extracts from U Ba Khaing's Book "Burma's Political History"*…, p. 183; U Aung Min Naing, *Book Review on the Capitalist World*, transl. G. Noack, in: *Material on Ba Hein, "The World of Capitalists" and Hla Shwe, "Capitalism"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006; Zaw Naing, *Book Report (Dana-*

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Pyidawtha,[162] the Burmese ruling elites tried to marry Buddhist tradition with modernity and progress without falling into Western or Soviet patterns[163] (unfortunately, the plan failed due to lack of funds and Burmese elites' incompetence: they were not practical technocrats but rather theorists).[164] With time, especially after the break-up of the communist rebellion, the Burmese elites became more critical of Marxism, with intensified debates on which aspects of Marxism could be domesticated and which should be left out; this ended up with rejecting Marxism by the leading forces in the country – though not fully – in favour of more local equivalents of socialism (capitalism in all its meaning and with all its contexts was still rejected out of hand).[165] This was best personified by

shin loka), transl. G. Noack, in: *Material on Ba Hein, "The World of Capitalists" and Hla Shwe, "Capitalism"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006; Htet Htet Aung, *Book Review*, transl. Master Group, in: *Material on Ba Hein, "The World of Capitalists" and Hla Shwe, "Capitalism"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 38–64 and 81–84. On U Nu's usage of this term: U Nu, *Forward with the People. Translation of Selected Speeches of the Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, Delivered on Various Occasions between 19th February 1953 and 1st June 1954*, Ministry of Information, Rangoon 1955, p. 18; U Nu, *From Peace to Stability. Translation of Selected Speeches by Thakin Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, Delivered on Various Occasions from 15th August 1949 to 20th April 1951,* Ministry of Information, Rangoon 1951, pp. 18–19.

[162] *Pyidawtha: the New Burma. A Report from the Government of the People of the Union of Burma on Our Long-term Programme for Economic and Social Development*, Economic and Social Board: Government of the Union of Burma, Rangoon 1954, pp. 1–2; Tharaphi Than, *The Languages of Pyidawtha and the Burmese Approach to National Development*, "South East Asia Research", vol. 21, no. 4, Special Issue: *Colonial Histories in South East Asia – Papers in Honour of Ian Brown*, December 2013, p. 639; Dr. Maung Maung, *Pyidawtha Comes to Burma*, "Far Eastern Survey", vol. 22, no. 9, 1953, pp. 118–119; U Thant, *Building a Nation. Goals for the Future*, "The Atlantic" Monthly, Special Burma Issue, February 1958; Tinker*, Nu, the Serene Statesman*…, p. 129; U Nu's usage of this term: *Towards a Welfare State. Speech of Prime Minister U Nu Delivered on the Opening Day of the Union Welfare State Conference on August 4, 1952*, Ministry of Information, Government of the Union of Burma, Rangoon 1952, p. 44; U Nu, *Saturday's Son*, transl. E. Yaw Lone, Yale University Press, New Heaven–London 1975, p. 216.

[163] J. Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma: English-Language Discourses from 1823 to 1962*, unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne 2017, pp. 107, 148 and 179.

[164] Ibid., pp. 147–155 and 190–191.

[165] On Burmese discussions on compatibility of Marxism with Buddhism, see: Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 167–168, 174–175, 198–219 and 240; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 128 and 137–138; Walton, *Buddhism*, *Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 27, 109 and 117; Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma*…, p. 146; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, pp. 221–228; Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *Introduction*, in: *Material on Ba Hein, "The World of Capitalists" and Hla Shwe, "Capitalism"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, p. 8; *Soe, Introduction*, transl. Tin Hlaing,

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colourful and controversial figure of the 1950s Prime Minister of Burma – U Nu – a skilful populist politician who mixed religion with politics for both personal convictions and political gains (he was personally religious, yet at the same time he did not hesitate to use Buddhist arguments for his own political gains or, on the contrary, to use politics for his personal religious goals such as merit making; he was a complex figure thorn between passion for religion and skills in politics who mingled authentic religiosity with pragmatic usage of it for his political interests; in the same complex way he mixed authentic humility with self-esteem and megalomania).[166] U Nu strived for synthesising

in: *Material on Ba Hein, "The World of Capitalists" and Hla Shwe, "Capitalism"*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 23–24; Zayar Aung Hmine, *Great Guru Master Lord Hmine*…, Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, pp. 83, 84, 111; *Government of the People, Government of Workers*, Excerpt from the article by Thupannaka in "Myo Nyunt Magazine", September, 1937, in: *Soe, Socialism and Chit Hlaing, Memories*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:10, Appendix 3, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2008, pp. 100–103.

[166] See: U Nu, *Saturday's Son*…, pp. 17–100, 135–176, 195, 235–246, 277–278, 293–295 and 309–311; U Nu, *Burma Under the Japanese*, ed. and transl. J.S. Furnivall, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, St. Martin's Press, New York 1954, pp. 5–132; U Nu, *From Peace to Stability*…, p. 180; Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *Entertaining Knowledge: An Introduction into The Nagani Book Club*, in: *The Nagani Book Club – An Introduction*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:1, Universität Passau, Passau 2006, pp. 14–15; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 265–273; Hugh Tinker*, Nu, the Serene Statesman*, "Pacific Affairs", vol. 30, no. 2, June 1957, pp. 120–133; Hugh Tinker, *Burma: The Politics of Memory. Review of U Nu-Saturday's Son by U Nu, U Law*, "Pacific Affairs", vol. 49, no. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 108–112; Manning Nash, *The Golden Road to Modernity: Village Life in Contemporary Burma*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1965, pp. 280–281; Michael W. Charney, *Ludu Aung Than: Nu's Burma and the Cold War*, in: *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia*, ed. Ch. Goscha, Ch. Ostermann, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2009, pp. 341–347; Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma*…, pp. 129–152, 155–156, 184, 208 and 232; Maung Maung, *Law and Custom in Burma and the Burmese Family*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1965, pp. 65–66; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 112–113 and 122–125; Mendelson, *Sangha and State in Burma*…, p. 297; Richard Butwell, *U Nu of Burma*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1969, pp. 18–220; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 41, 205–206, 267–268, 281 and 333; Ingrid Jordt, *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement*: *Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power*, Ohio University Press, Athens 2007, pp. 30 and 198; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, pp. 219–243; Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*…, pp. 21 and 184–185; U Law Yone, *Burma's Socialist Democracy. Some Problems of Practical Politics*, "The Atlantic" Monthly, Special Burma Issue, February 1958; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 290; Robert H. Taylor, *General Ne Win. A Political Biography*, ISEAS, Singapore 2015, p. 235; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 209; Aung San Suu Kyi, Alan Clements, *The Voice of Hope. Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi*, 2nd edition, Rider, London–Sydney–Auckland–Johannesburg 2008, p. 91. U Nu's extraordinary character can be seen here: *U-nu and Ben Gurion (in Edward. R. Murrow and Fred Friendly's programme "Small Worlds")*, You Tube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf-VvnvDEQE (access: 05.05.2018).

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Buddhism with socialism in order to rebuff communist threat.[167] Declaring morality to be the paramount raison-d'être of success in politics – his policies of *mettā*[168] – U Nu

Behind closed doors he behaved quite similarly, see e.g. his unusual diplomacy style: Burma's relations with Israel and Egypt are good examples of that (*Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Burma and Israel*, National Archive in Yangon, Accession no. 98, MFA 1824-1993/15_3 (9), file no. 123 FMG 48, B(a) 22/Nga Da, box no. 5, year 1952, pp. 8–18 and 30–32; *Question of Opening Diplomatic Mission of Israel in New Delhi*, National Archive in Yangon, Accession no. 269, MFA 1824-1993/15_3 (21), file no. 12ab/Nga Da 54, box no. 17, year 1954; pp. 2–17; *Israel's Reaction to U Nu-Naser Communique*, National Archive in Yangon, Accession no. 527, MFA 1824-1993/15_3 (21), file no. 55 B (a) Nga Da 55, year 1962, pp. 6–120).

[167] U Nu, *Towards Peace and Democracy: Translation of Selected Speeches*, Ministry of Information, Rangoon 1949, pp. 15, 29, 57, 34, 72, 78–79 and 203; U Nu, *Burma Looks Ahead. Translation of Selected Speeches by the Hon'ble U Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, Delivered on Various Occasions from 19th July 1951 to 4th August 1952*, Ministry of Information, Rangoon 1953, pp. 21–22; U Nu, *On The Three Evils. A Speech to the All-Burma Peasants Organization at Mandalay, May, 1953*, in: *The Public Weal. Excerpts from Speeches by the Honorable U Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma*, "The Atlantic" Monthly, Special Burma Issue, February 1958; U Nu, *Saturday's Son*…, p. 199; U Nu, *Towards a Socialist State: Translation of a Speech Delivered by the Hon. U Nu, President of the AFPFL, and Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, on January 29, 1958, at the Third All-Burma Congress of the AFPFL*, Government of Burma, Rangoon 1958, pp. 32–42; *Union Buddha Sāsana Council Act an Act to Establish a Buddlist Central Organization for the Union of Burma. Summary of Some of the Speeches*, "The Light of the Dhamma", vol. I, no. 1, 1952, p. 47; *April 5, 1960: U Nu*, *Crusade for Democracy, Speech Delivered in the Chamber of Deputies*, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, p. 61; Publication of *Wages of Sin*, play written by Nu, March 1961, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, pp. 66–67; Zöllner, *Entertaining Knowledge*…, pp. 171–172, 216–211; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, pp. 220, 230 and 243–244; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 62, 202, 35, 42, 93, 206, 261 and 268; Walton, *Politics in Moral Universe*…, pp. 129–131 and 136–141; Charney, *Ludu Aung Than*…, pp. 337–354; Ling, *Buddha, Marx, and God*…, pp. 89–92; Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma*…, pp. 148–151 and 182–183; Charney, *History of Modern Burma*…, p. 82; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 207; Jan Bečka, *Buddhist Revival in Post-Independence Burma. A Study of Interaction of Religion and Politics (1948–1962)*, in: *Religion and Society in India and Burma,* ed. S. Vavrouškov, Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague 1991, pp. 12–20; Tharaphi Than, *The Languages of Pyidawtha*…, p. 649; Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*…, p. 312; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 290; Frank N. Trager, *The Study Defined*, in: *Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries*, ed. F.N. Trager, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1959, p. 11; Maung Maung, *Burma in the Family of Nations*, Djambatan, Amsterdam 1956, p. 134; June Bingham, *U Thant: The Search for Peace*, Gollancsz Ltd., London 1966, p. 38; *U Nu Comment on Communism*, You Tube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfxcmjuTGJU (access: 05.05.2018).

[168] *Nu on His Concept of Democracy at the Third AFPFL All-Burma Congress*, *January 1958*, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper

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turned out to be a typical representative of Burma's modernist Buddhists of the 1950s who were poor administrators and managers. They "found themselves in a situation where they could build neither pagodas nor factories. They lacked the desire to build the former, and the expertise to build the latter. The only thing they could build (…) were ivory towers; intellectual edifices that failed to provide concrete outcomes."[169] Contrary to most of them, however, U Nu felt no hesitation at using precolonial legitimising patterns (building pagodas) which resulted in a kind of retro politics that enabled him to remain popular and win subsequent elections but not necessarily to modernize Burma.[170] That is why his "neo-Aśokan" model of welfare state[171] ("Buddhist socialism," best seen in his short-lived attempt to make Buddhism a state religion)[172] failed due to the political incompetence of the government, deep and constant rifts within the ruling elite, state's political weakness and frequent army's interference. [173] The latter turned out to be the final nail in U Nu's vision coffin. With 1962 coup d'état U Nu's Buddhist socialism ended, replaced by two visions: Tatmadaw's "The Burmese Way to Socialism," and the continuation of the Burmese Buddhist modernism in exile.

During Ne Win's era (1962-1988),[174] the Tatmadaw's vision – "The Burmese Way to Socialism" – also appealed to Buddhism and to socialism, though rather superfi-

No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, p. 46; *Nu's Review on His Last Years as Prime Minister*…, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, p. 68; *Publication of Wages of Sin, play written by Nu*, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, pp. 66–67; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, pp. 235–236; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 224–225; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 140–141; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 309, 315, 320 and 326; Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*…, p. 147; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 224–225.

[169] Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma*…, p. 191.

[170] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 291; Smith, *Politics and Religion in Burma*…, p. 171; Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 239; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, pp. 230–237; Trager, *Burma from Kingdom*…, p. 126.

[171] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, pp. 218 and 232–233.

[172] Ibid., pp. 222–226; Kyaw Thet, *Continuity in Burma. The Survival of Historic Forces*, "The Atlantic Burma", February 1958, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1958/02/continuity-in-burma/306816/ (access: 25.05.2018); *The State Religion Promotion Act 1961, Appendix 2*, in: D.E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1965, pp. 332–335; *April 5, 1960: U Nu, Crusade for Democracy*…, p. 56; King, *In Hope of Nibbāna*…, pp. 241–242; Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence*, 4th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1967, p. 387.

[173] Ling, *Buddha, Marx and God*…, p. 96; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 292; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 122–125.

[174] On Ne Win and on his complicated relationship with socialism (and Buddhism), see: U Chit Hlaing, *A Short Note*…, p. 154; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 291, 299 and

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cially.[175] Conceived by the Tatmadaw's officer Chit Hlaing[176] this autarkic, vague and unreadable ideology that eclectically mixed Buddhism and socialism, served as legitimization for army's political dominance by claiming to have represented the middle way between the extremes of both Western democracy and capitalism on the one hand and communism and materialism on the other.[177] Once accepted as dogma, this ideology became intellectually stagnant and compromised by the army's mismanagement of the

316; Maung Maung Gyi, *The The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 190–216; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 93; Bertil Lintner, *Outrage. Burma's Struggle for Democracy*, 2nd edition, White Lotus, Bangkok and London 1990, pp. 60–68; Harriet O'Brien, *Forgotten Land. A Rediscovery of Burma*, Michael Joseph, London 1991, pp. 101–106; Christina Fink, *Living Silence in Burma. Surviving Under Military Rule*, 2nd edition, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai–London 2001, p. 37; U Chit Hlaing, *A Short Note*…, p. 159; Taylor, *General Ne Win*…, pp. 235–236, 253–259 and 541–563; *Letter of Aung Gyi, 09.05.1988*, in: *Aung Gyi Letters*, "New Mandala", 2011 (reprint of 1988), http://www.newmandala.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/AungGyiLetters.pdf (access: 13.05.2018); Ling, *Buddha, Marx and God*…, p. 97.

[175] It is debatable to which extend Ne Win needed an ideology to serve as smoke screen for Tatmadaw's rule and to which extend Ne Win and his colleagues believed in socialist ideas (U Chit Hlaing, *A Short Note*…, pp. 121, 132–133, 138–141 and 155; Taylor, *General Ne Win*…, p. 257; John H. Badgley, *Preface*, in: *Red Peacocks: Commentaries on Burmese Socialist Nationalism*, eds J.H. Badgley, Aye Kyaw, Readworthy Publications, New Delhi 2009; Martin Smith, *Burma. Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Zed Books, Dhaka–Bangkok–New York–London 1999, pp. 124 and 199; Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies. War and State Building in Burma*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2003, pp. 173–206). Certainly Marxist-oriented officers won a power struggle within Tatmadaw (Yoshiharo Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution. The State and Military in Burma*, *1962–88*, National University of Singapore Press & Kyoto University Press, Singapore–Kyoto 2013, pp. 61 and 84–91; Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*…, p. 121; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 229; *Aung Gyi Letter, 09.05.1988*, in: *Aung Gyi Letters*, "New Mandala", 2011 (reprint of 1988), pp. 4–5 and 17–20, http://www.newmandala.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/AungGyiLetters.pdf (access: 13.05.2018).

[176] On Chit Hlaing, see: Taylor, *Introduction*…, p. 14; U Chit Hlaing, *A Short Note*…, pp. 115, 122, 124–125, and 135–137; Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers*…, pp. 65–70 and 79–84.

[177] *The Burmese Way To Socialism*, Revolutionary Council 28th April 1962, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/The_Burmese_Way_to_Socialism.htm (access: 12.05.2018), pp. 1, 3, 7, 15 and 16–17. This programme document was later supplemented by another, much more lengthy, *The System of Correlation of Man and his Environment*: throughout this unreadable, vague, obscure document, Chit Hlaing presented revelatory truths worth of Mao's "Little Red Book," or Gaddafi's "Green Book," such as "a man's life-span runs from the moment of man's conception to that of his death" or "man matters most" or repeated well-known Burmese Buddhist saying that "morality is possible only when the stomach is full" (*The System of Correlation of Man and His Environment*, The Philosophy of the Burma Socialist Programme Party, The Union of Burma, 17th January 1963, official translation 3rd edition, 1964, Online Burma Library, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/System-of-correlation.htm (access: 12.05.2018), pp. 8, 10, 12, 24. For interpretation of this philosophy, see: Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers*…, pp. 80–96; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, pp. 361–365; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 205; Smith,

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state.[178] It not only impoverished Burma intellectually – as Aung San Suu Kyi put it "the military coup of 1962 had impoverished Burma intellectually, politically, morally and economically"[179] – but also, inadvertently, compromised socialism: once Ne Win's rule was rejected in 1988, very few people believed in socialism. The intellectual dominance of this ideology in Burma was over.

Meanwhile, the Burmese intelligentsia abroad, best personified by the Secretary General of the UN U Thant – who played significant role in influencing Aung San Suu Kyi's own political thought[180] – continued abroad their Buddhist modernists' universalistic, cosmopolitan vision of Buddhism as the modern world religion, best suitable for global challenges.[181] Buddhism was the thing they hoped Burma can offer to the world: in their eyes it was universal and local, scientific and moral at the same time, a perfect alternative for both Western materialism and communist soullessness, the religion for "universal or planetary man" the United Nations hoped to bring about.[182] Unfortunately, this vision was not accepted globally during their lifetime. Although a certain global popularity of Buddhism did indeed emerge in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, but it was

Burma. Insurgency and the Politics…, p. 199; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 21 and 147; Steinberg, *Burma: A Socialist Nation of Southeast Asia*, Westview Press, Boulder 1982, p. 76.

[178] Army's mismanagement was well summarized by Aung Gyi in his letters, e.g. *Aung Gyi Letter, 09.05.1988*, in: *Aung Gyi Letters*, "New Mandala", 2011 (reprint of 1988), http://www.newmandala.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/AungGyiLetters.pdf (access: 13.05.2018), pp. 23–28; *Aung Gyi Letter to Ne Win, 07.03.1988*, in: *Aung Gyi Letters*, "New Mandala", 2011 (reprint of 1988), pp. 2–5; *Aung Gyi Letter to Ne Win, 08.06.1988*, in: *Aung Gyi Letters*, "New Mandala", 2011 (reprint of 1988).

[179] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, p. 119. On Burma's isolation and its ideological meanings (Renaud Egreteau, Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma. Understanding the Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State*, National University of Singapore Press, Singapore 2003, p. 55; Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 198; Tinker, *The Union of Burma*…, p. 388; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 38 and 42–43).

[180] According to Bogdan Góralczyk, U Thant can be described as "the political, moral, mental and ideological mentor of ASSK," personal communication, August 2018. On U Thant, including aspects formative for his thought, see: Ramses Nassif, *U Thant in New York 1961–1971. A Portrait of the Third UN Secretary-General*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1988, p. 10; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 271, 281–282 and 309–310; *U Thant. His Life and Legacy*, a brochure distributed at U Thant house in Yangon, ed. Thant Myint-U, Yangon 2015, pp. 16–18; June Bingham, *U Thant: The Search for Peace*, pp. 170–174; Charney, *Ludu Aung Than*…, p. 336; *U Thant*, United Nations Information Centres, https://unic.un.org/aroundworld/unics/uthant/common/documents/UThant.pdf (access: 25.10.2018), p. 39; A. Walter Dorn, *U Thant: Buddhism in Action*, in: *The UN Secretary-General and Moral Authority*. *Ethics and Religion in International Leadership*, ed. K.J. Kille, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C. 2007, p. 145.

[181] Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma*…, pp. 181–199, 204–209 and 212–213.

[182] Ibid.; U Thant used the terms "planetary citizen" and "unified man" in his memoirs (U Thant, *View from the UN*, Davids & Charles, Newton Abbot–London 1978, pp. xix, 25, 454).

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the Tibetan Buddhism with its pivotal person of the 14th Dalai Lama – not Burma with its Theravāda Buddhism – that won the hearts and minds of so many in the West and beyond. Their vision lost domestically, too, annihilated by the Tatmadaw's ethnocentric xenophobic nationalism. Only with the 1988 political entry of Aung San Suu Kyi[183] did this combined Burmese and universalistic ideas re-emerged in the mainstream Burmese political thought.

12. Aung San Suu Kyi and the Postcolonial Burmese Political Thought

Although Aung San Suu Kyi did not write much about the postcolonial Burmese political thought – she concentrated much more on her father and on precolonial ideas – there are some important aspects she mentioned. Suu Kyi decisively rejected socialism, blaming its BSPP version for Burma's misfortunes. Criticism of the "Burmese Way to Socialism," however, did not mean a complete rejection of the postcolonial heritage: Suu Kyi in both her policymaking and political philosophy followed U Nu's footsteps in mixing religion with politics and in legitimising herself by Buddhist means. Finally, in her international writings one may find some distant traces of modernist Buddhists' ideas.

Criticism of Ne Win's socialism should be presented first. Suu Kyi was merciless for the military period, calling it a "narrow authoritarianism" and "totalitarian socialism," which fed the people by "a pabulum of shallow, negative dogma"; she then went on to describe the consequences of applying such an ideology: "policies with little relevance to actual needs had placed Burma in an economic and administrative limbo where government bribery and evasion of regulations were the indispensable lubricant to keep the wheels of everyday life turning."[184] Linking, in the traditional Buddhist fashion, the morality (or rather lack of therein) of rulers with the conditions of the country, she wrote about "the years of moral decay and material decline" and blamed "a small elite determined to preserve its privileges at all costs" for the sorry state of Burma.[185] Her dismissive attitude towards Ne Win's Burma can be seen in her criticism of many particular aspects of the Ne Win period[186] as well as in rejection of the BSPP's favourite Burmese

[183] Suu Kyi knew U Thant, worked in the UN during his time and lived among the Burmese *émigré* diaspore where Buddhist modernists were strongly present (Ann Pasternak Slater, *Suu Burmese*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 289; Peter Popham, *The Lady and the Peacock. The Life of Aung San Suu Kyi,* The Rider, London–Sydney–Auckland–Johannesburg 2011, p. 213). In claiming that Suu Kyi (initially and partially) was inspired by U Thant's modernized Buddhism, I follow Winfield's steps *Buddhism and the State in Burma*…, p. 214.

[184] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 168.

[185] Ibid., pp. 169–176.

[186] E.g. "In the past Burmese diplomats were among those most poorly paid in the world" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the*

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proverb: "only with full stomach one may follow the precepts." Quite a few times Suu Kyi mocked this concepts: "people who say one cannot be principled on empty stomach usually end up being corrupt,"[187] "these days, the less virtuous one is the better filled one's stomach is,"[188] or "I'm not blaming the people. It's the system that's not right. Yet I cannot accept the excuse that one cannot be principled on an empty stomach."[189] In her Oxford essay on refugees she evoked this "stomach" metaphor, linking it with Brecht's "first comes fodder, then come morals" and making it a Burmese version of universal sentiment: "the Burmese saying 'Morality (sila) can be upheld only when the stomach is full' is our version of a widely held sentiment that cuts across cultural boundaries" only to criticise it "such axioms are hardly a faithful reflection of what actually goes on in human society. While it is undeniable that many have been driven to immorality and crime by the need to survive, it is equally evident that the possession of a significant surplus of material goods has never been a guarantee against covetousness, rapacity and the infinite variety of vice and pain that spring from such passions. Indeed it could be argued that the unrelenting compulsion of those who already have much to acquire even more has generated greater injustice, immorality and wretchedness than the cumulative effect of the struggle of the severely underprivileged to better their lot. Given that man's greed can be a pit as bottomless as his stomach and that a psychological sense of deprivation can persist beyond the point where basic needs have been adequately met, it can hardly be expected that an increase in material prosperity alone would ensure even a decline in economic strife, let alone a mitigation of those myriad other forces that spawn earthly misery."[190]

Suu Kyi also rejected "national or indigenous" attempts to assimilate socialism or democracy – a clear allusion to the "Burmese Way to Socialism" – on the grounds that this "elevates the existing political elite to the indispensable position of final arbiter."[191] She certainly did not like the army and its way of governing, saying at one point

People 1995–1996, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 243).

[187] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 48.

[188] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 88.

[189] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 139.

[190] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*, in: *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 242.

[191] Harry M. Scoble, Laure S. Wiseberg, *Access to Justice: Human Rights Struggle in South East Asia*, quoted in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture of Peace and Development*,

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"nothing can be achieved under command"; "a sustainable system (…) can be achieved only via popular support."[192] She fundamentally disagreed with the Tatmadaw over the issue of individual agency (see: further in this book), according to the generals quite limited[193] - she compared this reserve about human capacity to a colonial one[194] and she relentlessly fought with it thereafter. As for army's ideology, socialism, she rather unfavourably remarked that "during socialist era, few people questioned if socialism was in accord with the Burmese culture" and called it "an alien concept, foreign thinking," implying that it was not suitable for the Burmese culture[195] and showed that few people believe in the officially sanctioned hypocrisy.[196] For Suu Kyi, the BSPP, its ideology and political practice represented an antithesis of proper politics.[197]

Her criticism is understandable from both personal level – as a daughter of Aung San she felt (correctly or less so) that his colleagues wasted his heritage – and from a patriotic perspective: as a Burmese living outside her country well acquainted with the outside world, she was able to compare Burma's lack of development not only with the

in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/ 3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 264.

[192] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October 1995 (no. 6)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 149.

[193] Taylor, *General Ne Win*…, p. 553; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 193.

[194] "Those who don't want to give us any independence will say we don't deserve it. They said the same thing in the colonial era. Colonized countries were considered incapable of self-rule. Their independence was postponed time after time. In the end, when we people demonstrated that we were worthy of independence, we got what we wanted" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 458).

[195] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 49.

[196] She gave an example of integrity of one of her friends to show the hypocrisy of the military-ruled system: "during the socialist era, a 50 pyas contribution in the name of workers' welfare or party membership was always cut from the salary. A friend of ours dissented this. He was reprimanded by his officer. 'You earn 600 kyat a month and you show no commitment for 50 pyas for our party'. He said, 'I don't want anything to do with your party at all. You may cut 100 kyat from my salary as punishment if you want to exercise your authority. I cannot do anything about it. But if you ask me for the contribution for the party on my own violation, I will not pay even 5 pyas.' He was transferred to a remote province. I respect this action very much. His action was based on his principle, not that he was pinching pennies" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 317–318).

[197] "During the BSPP time, everyone was supposed to be the member of the state party BSPP. It was a one-party system and it was not democratic. There must be many people here, who have been forced to become BSPP members. Were you able to do politics then? Politics are not just about giving a nod in approval" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 384).

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prosperity of the West but also with the neighbours' progress.[198] What is also evident here is the lack of any sentiments towards socialism: contrary to the generation of her parents she did not have many illusions about this system (or at least did not expressed such). Socialised in the West for decades, she internalized the popular Western conviction of liberal democracy being not only the best system, but also the unavoidable one. That is why she criticised Burma's socialism from democratic perspective, evoking examples of liberal democracy as the antithesis to Burma's military rulers' chosen ideology. For Suu Kyi democracy was the chosen ideology, not socialism. Thus, Tatmadaw's version of socialism became for Suu Kyi a convenient ideological scapegoat for all misdeeds of military ruled Burma.

Suu Kyi was much closer to pre-1962 political heritage of Burma. She praised this period as a successful, democratic one which proved her thesis of democratic instincts in Burmese culture: "we were a democratic nation soon after independence. At that time the Burma was known to be one of the most developed and promising countries in Southeast Asia. This confirms that a democratic system works well for Burma."[199] And, quoting a famous comparison of Singapore to Burma, she promised her people – in her classical populist way – that they would be able to regain Burma's leading position once they achieve democracy: "upon Singapore's gaining independence, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew is said to have claimed, 'I will catch up with Burma in twenty years' time.'

[198] On several occasions Suu Kyi expressed the need to know the world and and the necessity of comparisons with other countries, e.g. "there should be more international news since we need to know what is going on in the world" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 9)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 212); "we just cannot ignore and say I don't care (…) if we want to know whether our country is developing or not, we must have the courage to compare with other nations" (Ibid., p. 213); "someone who is engaged in politics cannot ignore what the people think of her. She cannot ignore the outside world. One has to listen to the outside world's opinion (...) We-will-do-whatever-we-want-and-we-don't-care-the-world attitude is not good" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 94); "We cannot say that we don't want anything to do with the outside world. Even if we want to keep the world out, the world will keep coming into our country. We therefore welcome and appreciate international solidarity" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 383). She has also urged the need to have a multicultural mindset: "one has to respect another's language, customs and culture. But it's crucial to be exposed to another culture and respect it. If you don't know a culture how can you learn to respect it? Therefore we have to train ourselves from childhood how to appreciate a culture different from our own" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 403–404); "the world keep changing. Our lifestyles keep changing. This causes gap between the generations. (…) We have to encourage the friendly exchange of youth cultures. We will do it when the country is democratic" (Ibid., p. 404).

[199] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 150.

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I've been thinking about this quite often. I might as well declaim, 'We can catch up with Singapore in twenty years time as soon as our country is democratic.' Why say impossible? If all our people take part in this endeavour, it's possible. Don't think lowly of yourself. In the past our country was highly regarded by the new nation states in the region. We will have to make efforts so we can reclaim our position. The first step must be to restore democratic system. Let's work together for democracy. We don't get anything if we don't work for it."[200] Recently Suu Kyi had her nerve to repeat this promise and declare, in Singapore, that Myanmar would, to use Krushchevian comparison, catch up and overtake Singapore in two decades ("I think we have to change that a bit - in 20 years' time, Myanmar will have overtaken Singapore").[201]

In an additional appraisal of the 1950s, Suu Kyi also attributed her proverbial courage to the fact that she was raised in democratic Burma of the 1950s: "some people say that I am a courageous woman. I don't think that I am particularly brave, Fortunately I was raised in democratic societies where repression does not exist. When I was growing up in Burma, the country was democratic. Under the democratic government, the people did not have to fear the authorities routinely. I grew up in such circumstances."[202] Elsewhere, while speaking about the importance of free press, she again evoked the 1950s: "I would like to tell you about my childhood experience. When we were young, at that time, our country had Democracy. There were many newspapers all around they were good to listen too (…) They wanted to read, not because they wanted to get angry but because they became more interested. That is why newspapers should be the eye openers of the public."[203] In her "Letters from Burma" she juxtaposed civil servants of 1950s Burma with these of the military regime: "there was a time when civil servants in our country were seen as an elite corps: well educated, well-trained and well-paid,

[200] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, pp. 339–340; she repeated this story several times, e.g. *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 461. Elsewhere she also praised Singapore's upright government, lack of corruption and education (Suu Kyi, Clements, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 104).

[201] *Aung San Suu Kyi Calls for Close Economic Ties with Singapore in Official Visit*, "The Strain Times", 30th November 2016, https://www.straitstimes.com/business/economy/aung-san-suu-kyi-calls-for-close-economic-ties-with-singapore-in-official-visit (access: 18.06.2018).

[202] She added her experience of living abroad in democratic countries, too: "I used to live abroad for many years under democratic systems. Some people bash me for being abroad for so long. I think I was fortunate enough to have grown up in democratic countries where I did not gave to fear any government since I was a kid. I simply don't know how to fear a government" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 187); she repeated it during her interview with Clements, "it's because I have lived in free countries for a large part of my life that I'm not easily frightened" (Clements, Suu Kyi, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 67).

[203] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 9)*…, p. 212.

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capable of giving good service to the community. Now they are generally regarded with fear and revulsion, or with pity. State employees who have not become part of the syndrome of daily corruption, either from a matter of principle or from lack of opportunity, are unable to maintain a standard of living appropriate to their functions. They are the nouveau poor of Burma."[204] And while visiting Myitkyina in 1989 she compared 1950s to late 1980s, remarking that when she visited Myitkyina over thirty years ago there was no problem of electricity, whereas then, in 1989, there were constant blackouts and asking rhetorically "what progress has been made" in forty years after independence?[205] Although the real picture of the 1950s Burma is more complicated – especially in economic terms[206] – it is unsurprising that she complimented this period as a juxtaposition to Tatmadaw's mismanagement thereafter.

Despite her uneasy political relationship with U Nu[207] – they, alongside with Aung Gyi, Tin U and others became the leaders of 1988 protests, deeply divided among themselves, and ultimately, unsuccessful – she echoed many U Nu's actions and ideas, though without the latter's bigotry.[208] Although in her political career she initially started with modernizing and Western slogans (unfinished revolution, democracy, human rights, etc.), with time, especially after her release from first house arrest, she underwent

[204] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 44)*…, p. 177.

[205] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 221.

[206] In the years 1950–1954 Burma's GDP was 245 USD (of 1985 value), whereas India's was 617, Philippines – 896 and Thailand 804; in 1960–1964 it was 361 (for Burma), 800 (India), 1204 (Philippines), 583 Indonesia, 1544 (Malaysia) and in 1985–1989 it was: 556 (Burma), 1142 (India), 1627 (Philippines), 1688 (Indonesia), 4082 (Malaysia), data after: Anne Booth, *The Burma Development Disaster in Comparative Historical Perspective*, "South East Asian Research", vol. 11, no. 2, July 2003, table 3, p. 145.

[207] An example of her uneasy relationship with U Nu may be found in the fact that during her rallies over the gate she mentioned him in rather negative light: "I read in late Prime Minister U Nu memoirs that dad was trying to recruit Nu into We Burmese Association. U Nu said he was a bit embarrassed about having to call himself a thakin (…) Dad quipped at him: 'What? If you don't want to be addressed as Thakin Nu, shall we call you slave Nu'?" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 290); on the other hand during another rally she admitted that "all the peoples in our nation have recognized our former prime minister U Nu as someone who had done a great deal for the religion" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 487).

[208] Asked whether she agreed with U Nu's moral dilemmas concerning usage of force in politics, she said no, and moved to distancing herself from U Nu (who took a bodhisattva vow) – "I would not think that I'm in any position to even contemplate taking the Bodhisattva vow. My first concern is to abide by Buddhist principles in my worldly dealings. Of course, I do meditate. That's because I believe that all of us, as human beings have a spiritual dimension which cannot be neglected. Overall, I think of myself as a very ordinary Burmese Buddhist who will devote more time to religion in my older years" (Clements, Suu Kyi, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 91).

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a significant Buddhicisation (see: latter part of the book) which made her politically quite similar to U Nu. Suu Kyi used Buddhism to legitimize herself: she became religious in public, visited monasteries, fed the monks and listened to their advices (and wrote about this all); and she used Buddhist concepts, especially *mettā* in her political discourse (*mettā* became the cornerstone of her mid-1990s political thought, see: later in this book) following U Nu's line. By doing all this (politically understandable actions given her confrontation with the generals) she blurred the line between religion and politics exactly along U Nu's footsteps (with all differences, such as Suu Kyi's less ostentation and less erratic behaviour, notwithstanding). And, finally, despite the fact that she rejected the concept of the "earthly paradise,"[209] her vision of democracy as a system that would eventually resolve all the problems (see: further in this book) may indeed be interpreted as a contemporary equivalent of "worldly *nibbāna*."

However, given U Nu's accent of localized Buddhism and his erratic behaviour, for Suu Kyi better models of the 1950s are Buddhist modernists such as U Thant. In a way Suu Kyi, with her unique blend of internationalized Burmeseness and with her universalistic emphasis on Buddhism as compatible with democracy and human rights, became their contemporary intellectual epigone.

One may trace Buddhist modernists' inspiration in Suu Kyi political thought particularly in some of her texts written for international audience, especially those that do not deal with her political struggle directly. For example in first four of her "Letters from Burma" (a collection of essays on political ideas, mixed with her other thoughts about Burmese culture and society), Suu Kyi described an idealised vision of Thamanya monastery ("sense of the world lying quiescent and vulnerable, waiting to be awakened by the light of the new day"; "the quietness and ease had to do something more than the beauties of nature or our state of mind"; "land with its wild, magical quality")[210] which served her to present her political philosophy – "some have questioned the appropriateness of talking about such matters as *metta* (loving kindness) and *thissa* (truth) in the political context. But politics is about people and what we had seen in Thamanya proved that love and truth can move people more strongly than any form of coercion."[211] Suu Kyi's Thamanya was "Gandhian in its Shangri-La serenity," distinguished from the external world not by "the scale of its economic advancement" but by "the proportion of *metta* in its governance"; Thamanya "became symbolic of Aung San Suu Kyi's vision of a wholesome society founded on wholesome political root; and idealised space where politics and spirituality seamlessly coalesced, both pivoted around the concept

[209] "Paradise on earth is a concept which is outmoded and few people believe in it any more" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes and Human Development*, a lecture to CAFOD's Pope Paul VI Memorial Lectures, "Trócaire Development Review" 1997, https://www. trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/1997-aung-san-human-development.pdf (access: 25.10.2018), p. 24).

[210] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (nos 2 and 4)*…, pp. 8 and 15.

[211] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (no. 4)*…, p. 17.

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of *metta*," a Burmese version of Gandhi's Swaraj and Rousseau's 'an authority which is not authority.'"[212] In one of her descriptions of Thamanya, Suu Kyi wrote about the abbot of the monastery that he "combines traditional Buddhist values with a forward-looking attitude, and is prepared to make use of modern technology in the best interests of those who have come under his care"[213] which followed Buddhist modernists' sentiments about the need to subjugate modern science to moral guidance of Buddhism.

Not only science should be subjugated: democracy, too. In her lengthy interviews from the mid-1990s Suu Kyi almost openly followed Buddhist modernists' line of thinking about the West lacking spiritual values by declaring: "I don't agree with everything that's happening in the West, which is why I say that I would like our democracy to be a better, more compassionate and more caring one. That is not to say we have fewer freedoms. But we will use these freedoms more responsibly and with the wellbeing of others in mind."[214] She repeated this sentiment when asked about her vision of Burma's future democracy – "I would like to think that it would be a democracy with a more compassionate face. A gentler sort of democracy … gentler because it's stronger."[215] Thus, Suu Kyi's vision of "compassionate democracy" can be classified as the 1990s equivalent of Buddhist modernists' hope of Burma being the model for the West, with the Burmese version of democracy being appealing thanks to the spiritual, universal values of Buddhism.

However, Buddhist modernists' inspiration is perhaps most clearly noticeable in her three lectures/essays: 1) a speech written for the Joyce Pearce Memorial Lectures at the University of Oxford, 2) a lecture to UNESCO's World Commission on Culture and Development, and 3) a lecture to CAFOD's Pope Paul VI Memorial Lectures (all written by her and presented on her behalf).

Aung San Suu Kyi started her UNESCO lecture from elaborating on the issue of culture of peace. She emphasized the universal appeal of peace ("peace as a goal is

[212] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 295–296 and 312. According to Sengupta at Thamanya "metta and sacca collaborated" to create a democratic society that was not an utopia – a place where "the rich and the poor would remain but irrespective of economic status everyone would enjoy equal social, political and economic rights" (Ibid., p. 296).

[213] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (no. 3)*…, p. 12. Elsewhere she quoted him as saying that "the genuine lottery is nirvana" and that "the people who were in nirvana were truly rich" which served her as a rthetorical device to criticise the need of the Burmese to enrich themselves (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 151).

[214] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 206; interestingly still, Suu Kyi admitted that an accent on compassion is of rather Mahāyāna Buddhism's inspiration: "in Mahayana Buddhism there's much more emphasis on compassion than in Theravada Buddhism. I'm very sensitive to this. Because we need a lot of compassion in this world. Of course, compassion is also a part of Theravada Buddhism. But I would like to see more of our people putting compassion into action" (Ibid., p. 92).

[215] Ibid, p. 104.

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an ideal which will not be contested by any government or nation, not even the most belligerent") and – in accordance with her liberal democratic agenda – combined it with democracy and human rights (which are "indivisible from the culture of peace and therefore essential to sustained development").[216] Having declared this, she proceeded to criticise critical voices: "there is ample evidence that culture and development can actually be made to serve as pretexts for resisting calls for democracy and human rights" as "some governments argue that democracy is a Western concept alien to indigenous values; it has also been asserted that economic development often conflicts with political (i.e. democratic) rights, and that the second should necessarily give way to the first"; in this regard culture and development should be presented in such way to prevent misusing these concepts "to block the aspirations of peoples for democratic institutions and human rights."[217] In this introductory paragraph Suu Kyi clearly referred to her political struggle with Myanmar generals who used culture as an argument against democracy and human rights in Burma, saying that these values ran against the traditional Burmese values.[218] Although this text, as other Suu Kyi's texts and speeches, is heavily loaded with political allusions and bitter, if indirect remarks to Myanmar's political struggle, here these aspects are of less importance. The indirect criticism of the military government served Suu Kyi as a pretext for more philosophical deliberations. She used it to criticise the concept of economic development in favour of human development[219] –

[216] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 261. While speaking to the Burmese people later on, she shifted the understanding of peace and localised it within Buddhist perspective: "the main reason for the lack of peace is the lack of trust, I believe. If we cannot trust one another there can be no peace. Let alone the whole country, if there is a stranger amongst us, we tend to get edgy. We do not trust one another. We suspect that the stranger may be a pickpocket, or someone who comes to grab a seat. If our brother or our son appears amongst us, we are not affected by his presence since we know we can trust him. The presence of trust therefore is a precondition for the prevalence of peace. There is no peace in a country where there is no trust among the citizens. Not just the trust between the ethnic groups and the Burman, if the Burman do not trust one another, there will be no peace. As long as we cannot trust one another, we will not achieve peace in this country" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 188); "peace has to come from within. Enforcing peace from outside may quell a situation but being quelled is not the same as being at peace. (…) Stability is the direct consequence of peace, a situation where all stakeholders are happy (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 275).

[217] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 261.

[218] The generals, especially after Than Shwe's ascent to power in 1992, propagated "true Myanmar values" as well as presented themselves as people who eradicate "poor living conditions, expansive health services and evil habits like corruption (…) this second stage was characterized by attempts to convince the public that the government was seriously working for the benefits of 'the people' (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 223).

[219] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 262.

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this idea is common to all three essays[220] and is repeated by her in her rallies over the gate[221] – for "development projects (…) should be done with people in mind," otherwise "projects undertaken for the sake of upping statistics, or for love of grandiosity or praise, rather than for the love of live human beings with bodies that can be hurt, minds that can be damaged and hearts that can be bruised, seldom succeed in fostering the kind of development that enhances the quality of life"; therefore "those who organize development projects should take into consideration that people need the balm of loving-kindness to withstand the rigours of human existence."[222] For Suu Kyi development projects and planning should arise "out of love," whereas "true development" should also "comprise spiritual cultivation," for "no amount of money or technical expertise or scientific knowledge or industry or vision can make up for lack of love,"[223] or "no amount of material goods and technological know-how will compensate for human irresponsibility and viciousness."[224] Suu Kyi then rejected the notion of the Western or the Eastern type of development (in both East and West there were people "who think the worth of a society is measured by its material wealth and by impressive figures of growth, ignoring the injustices and pain that might lie behind them") in favour of a division between "people centred" and "government centred" development, and called the latter "democratic," then Suu Kyi paraphrased Lincoln: according to her democratic development is a "development of the people, for the people, by the people," it is "the antithesis of the idea that development should be defined and directed by governments," this kind of development "must be measured in terms of human happiness, of peace within the community and of harmony with the environment."[225] In short, "for Aung San Suu Kyi, true development involves much more than mere economic growth."[226]

[220] Her Papal lecture: "there was a time when development was measured purely in economic terms, but such is no longer the case" (Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes*…, p. 15).

[221] She later repeated her criticism during one of her rallies over the gate: "economic development has become outdated lately. It has been replaced by 'human development' (…) Recently the UN came to acknowledge that economic development alone is not enough to measure a country's development (…) We subscribe to the UN notion of human development. We cannot only look at an average income as it doesn't tell us who gets what (…) let's aim at human development, not economic development. For instance, infant mortality, maternal mortality, under-five morbidity and mortality rates, the quality of public health, the situation of women rights and the quality of public health are used as criteria for human development" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 4 February 1996 (no. 16)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People*…, p. 359).

[222] Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Adobes*…, p. 17.

[223] Ibid., pp. 15 and 18.

[224] Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*..., p. 242.

[225] Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Adobes*..., pp. 22–23.

[226] Joseph Silverstein, *The Idea of Freedom in Burma and the Political Thought of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, "Pacific Affairs", vol. 69, no. 2, Summer, 1996, p. 226.

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This idea of people-centred development is a clear indicator of Suu Kyi being the intellectual epigone of the 1950s Burmese Buddhist modernists. She did not reject the West and international (Western) ideas (here: development) as such; she just wanted to improve it, upgrade it "spiritually" by adding human dimension in accordance with Buddhist ethics. This was what Burma, an underdeveloped country with few international assets, could offer to the world in both the 1950s and the 1990s: a more humane, Buddhist-inspired vision of development that is both local and international at the same time.

This sentiment can be seen, too, in Suu Kyi's criticism of capitalism, especially in her objections to capitalist (free market) belief that development would solve all the problems: in her Oxford essay she complained about "an increasingly materialistic world"; "a narrowly focussed materialism that seeks to block out all considerations apparently irrelevant to one's own well-being finally blocks out what is in fact most relevant," and about the "ardent advocates in favour of giving priority to political and economic expediency," who based their reasoning on "cold argument: achieve economic success and all else will follow"; and about "policies heavily, if not wholly, influenced by economic considerations" that would unlikely "make of the much bruited 'New World Order' an era of progress and harmony such as is longed for by peoples and nations weary of conflict and suffering."[227] In her UNESCO lecture she repeated these thoughts more elaborately: "the Market Economy, not merely adorned with capital letters but seen in an almost mystic haze, is increasingly regarded by many governments as the quick and certain way to material prosperity"; "it is assumed that economic measures can resolve all the problems facing their countries" and "economics is described as the '*deus ex machina*, the most important key to every lock of every door to the new Asia we wish to see."[228] In both essays, she rejected this economic vision as reductionist ("the valuation of achievement in predominantly material terms implies a limited and limiting view of human society, denying it many of the qualities that make it more than a conglomerate of egoistic consumer-gatherers who have advanced little beyond the prehistoric instinct for survival") outdated and outmoded: "as the twentieth century draws to a close, it has become obvious that material yardsticks alone cannot serve as an adequate measure of human well-being," for "even as basic an issue as poverty has to be re-examined to take into account the psychological sense of deprivation that makes people feel poor."[229] She stated this to declare that what the world has just recognized, the Burmese have known

[227] Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 241.

[228] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 262.

[229] "Instead of assuming that material progress will bring an improvement in social, political and ethical standards, should it not be considered that an active promotion of appropriate social, political and ethical values might not only aid material progress but also help to ensure that its results are wisely and happily distributed?" (Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 244).

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for long, thanks to their Buddhism[230]: "such a 'modern' concept of poverty is nothing new to the Burmese who have always used the word *hsinye* to indicate not only an insufficiency of material goods but also physical discomfort and distress of mind - to be poor is to suffer from a paucity of those mental and spiritual as well as material resources that make a human being feel fulfilled and give life a meaning beyond mere existence. It follows as a matter of course that *chantha*, the converse of *hsinye*, denotes not only material prosperity but also bodily ease and general felicity. One speaks of *chantha* of the mind and of the body and one would wish to be possessed of both."[231] Hence, according to her, "individual happiness needs a base broader than the mere satisfaction of selfish passions," but "the desirability of redressing imbalances which spoil the harmony of human relationships – the ultimate foundation for global peace and security – is not always appreciated," however "Buddhism and other religious and ethical systems, however, have long recognised and sought to correct this prejudice in favour of the self"; therefore, if Buddhism's message is taken into consideration, "with sufficient resolve on the part of governments and institutions that influence public opinion and set international standards of behaviour, a greater proportion of the world's population could be made to realize that self-interest (whether as an individual, a community or a nation) cannot be divorced entirely from the interests of others," accordingly, "if peoples and nations cultivate a generous spirit that welcomes the happiness of others as an enhancement of the self, many seemingly insoluble problems would prove less intractable," for "the drive for economic progress needs to be tempered by an awareness of the dangers of greed and selfishness which so easily lead to narrowness and inhumanity," thus "only policies which place equal importance on both will make a truly richer world, one in which men can enjoy 'chantha' of the body and of the mind."[232]

[230] "The teachings of Buddhism which delve into the various causes of suffering identify greed as lust – the passion for indulging an intemperate appetite – as the first of the Ten Impurities that stand in the way of a tranquil, wholesome state of mind (…) Loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity Buddhists see as 'divine' states of mind which help to alleviate suffering and to spread happiness among all beings. The greatest obstacle to these noble emotions is not so much hatred, anger or ill will as the rigid state that comes of a prolonged and unwavering concentration on narrow self-interest" (Ibid.). In her "papal" essay she declared that she considered "Buddhist values" especially "heavenly abodes", or divine states of mind: metta (loving kindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy) and upekkha (equanimity) "to be crucial for peace and healthy human development" (Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes*…, pp. 15–18).

[231] Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 241.

[232] This statement is a part of wider Suu Kyi's argument built on a very Buddhist concept of centrality of man: it is man who makes most of the world's problem ("calamities which are not the result of purely natural phenomena usually have their origins, distant and obscure though they may be, in common human failings") and it is man who can resolve them ("the only way out of an impasse of hats, bloodshed and social and economic chaos created by men is for those men to get together to find a peaceful solution through dialogue and compromise") (Ibid.).

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Again this Suu Kyi's declaration echoes Burmese Buddhist modernists' claim that all the problems have already been recognized and adequately dealt with by Buddhism and it would be beneficial for the world to look at the global problems from a Buddhist perspective. This would be Burma's piece in resolving international challenges and making this world a better place.

The reverse side of this coin – Suu Kyi's anger that Myanmar military rulers after 1988 instead of following this enlightened vision embraced the international world-system producing a local, Burmese version of wild capitalism – can be seen in her harsh criticism of both capitalism in general and its Myanmar version in particular: "we ought to re-examine the issue of free market (…) We assume that investment in a free market system can bring wealth to all the people. But there is no such thing as a level playing field in business (…) Therefore this free market system does not bring equity. Let alone political rights, economic rights are not equal in our country. What's at work in this age is the 'the theory of cumulative advantage', the more you earn, it's likely that you will generate more and more money from your acquired wealth. The less you earn, it's likely that you will degenerate into destitution. This is not right."[233] In her most important interview from the 1990s she openly declared that she "never thought of Burmese democracy as a capitalist democracy as such."[234] And in her Oxford refugee essay she stated that "unadulterated materialism can prevent healthy growth" and she quoted Kenneth Galbraith's concept of "culture of contentment" (a warning of the dire consequences of social imbalances) and having Myanmar in mind, asked rhetorically: "the instinct to opt for narrow, short-term benefits can present a significant threat to the continued prosperity of a rich, industrialized state shored up by strongly established institutions, how much more of a threat might it be to nations which have but recently embarked, rather unsteadily, on the grand adventure of free market economics and democratic politics?"; and, just in case someone did not understand her allusion, she made it clear that she had Myanmar regime in mind: "and it would surely be of the utmost danger to those societies still hovering on the edge of liberty and justice, still dominated by a minority well content with its monopoly on economic and political power."[235]

Instead of embracing wild capitalism, she advocated a culture of peace, democracy and human rights over economic development, and rejected the notion that this is only a difference of approach, for "the difference in approach itself implies difference of

[233] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 225.

[234] She went on with some platitudes: "we do not see why democracy should be made a part of capitalism or vice versa. We think that democracy means the will of the people. It means certain basic freedoms, which will have to include basic economic freedoms that would allow for capitalism" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 104).

[235] Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 244.

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a more fundamental order" – when regarding economics as the key to open every door, then "it is only natural that the worth of man should come to be decided largely, even wholly by his effectiveness as an economic tool," which is "a variance with the vision of a world where economic, politics and social institutions work to serve man, instead of the other way round; where culture and development coalesce to create an environment in which human potential can be realized to the full."[236] Having said that, she went on to elaborate on the issues of different viewpoints of the haves and have nots; on the privileged and unprivileged and on problem of poverty as an illustration of the limitations of purely economic approach – that simply helping the poor with economic aid is not enough. For Suu Kyi "the question of empowerment is central," for "it decides who has the means of imposing on a nation or a society their view of what constitutes culture and development and who determines what practical measures can be taken in the name of culture and development"; this served Suu Kyi in a clearly political way, to blame (indirectly) her military foes, the Burmese generals: "the more totalitarian a system, the more power will be concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite and the more culture and development will be used to serve their narrow interests"; when culture "is bent to serve narrow interests it becomes static and rigid, its exclusive aspects come to the fore and it assumes coercive overtones," for example "the 'national culture' can become a bizarre graft of carefully selected historical incidents and distorted social power," while "development is likely to be seen in the now outmoded sense of economic growth."[237] She gave example of "many authoritarian governments" (read: Myanmar's military government) that "wish to appear in the forefront of modern progress but are reluctant to institute genuine change," and that "tend to claim that they are taking a uniquely national or indigenous path towards a political system in keeping with the times"; for "it is in the name of cultural integrity, as well as social stability and national security, that democratic reforms based on human rights are resisted by authoritarian governments"; "it is claimed" wrote further on Suu Kyi, "that democratic values and human rights run counter to the national culture and therefore, to be beneficial they need to be modified – perhaps to the extent that they are barely recognizable"; in these attempts "the people are said to be as yet unfit for democracy; therefore an indefinite length of time has to pass before democratic reforms can be instituted."[238] Suu Kyi in her deliberations universalized the Burmese experiences. In Myanmar, indeed, the regime used culture to rebuff human rights and democracy; moreover, it tried to introduce an indigenization of these concepts, such as "practical human rights"[239] and, later and more successfully,

[236] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 262.
[237] Ibid., pp. 263–264.
[238] Ibid., pp. 264–265.
[239] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 296.

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"disciplined democracy."[240] Therefore, knowing these attempts, Suu Kyi universalized these bitter experiences to portray this Myanmar case as a general rule that applies to all authoritarian governments. She followed the same universalizing suit in subsequent aspect: in presenting criticism coming from various dictatorships targeted at the United States of America, as the supreme example of democracy. Again, the Myanmar regime attacked the USA for its many ills along these lines[241] and Suu Kyi rebuffed this criticism on the grounds that it was precisely democracy that helped the USA to stay united and do not disintegrate. What is much more interesting here, however, is the fact that Suu Kyi eagerly wrote about American problems (such as "'I-want-it-all' consumer culture"; "the superpower culture" or "street violence"), though she blamed materialism, not democracy, for it: "many of the worst ills of American society (…) can be traced not to the democratic legacy but to the demands of modern materialism"; according to her: "gross individualism and cut-throat morality arise when political and intellectual freedoms are curbed on the one hand while on the other fierce economic competitiveness is encouraged by making material success the measure of prestige and progress"; "the result is a society where cultural and human values are set aside and money value reigns supreme."[242] She repeated this criticism in her Papal lecture: "it can be said that behind the materialism of developed countries lie greed, hatred and delusion."[243] A few years later, in one of her "Letters from Burma" she criticised heavily foreign businessmen who invest in Burma, taking advantage of the Burmese inability to function within capitalist economy: "to observe businessmen who come to Burma with the intention of enriching themselves is somewhat like watching passers - by in an orchard roughly stripping off blossoms for their fragile beauty, blind to the ugliness of despoiled branches, oblivious of the fact that by their action they are imperilling future fruitfulness and committing an injustice against the rightful owners of the trees."[244] She echoed this criticism while talking to her supporters over the gate of her house: "the people tend to make a temple out of the US dollar. Then your cultural values are undermined"; "we need to preserve our own culture."[245] And she clarified this idea in one of her interviews when she criticised

[240] *Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt Clarifies Future Policies and Programmes of State*, Online Burma Library, 30.08.2003, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Roadmap-KN.htm (access: 31.07.2018); *The Constitution of the Union of Myanmar 2008*, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs5/Myanmar_Constitution-2008-en.pdf (access: 18.06.2018).

[241] *A Self-Defeating and Counter-Productive Move*, 88-11 Burma Press Summary (from the "Working People's Daily", 09.11.1989), vol. II, no. 11, November 1989, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS88-11.pdf (access: 18.06.2018).

[242] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 265.

[243] In the next sentence, however, she counterbalanced this statement: "but there is also much of inner strength, compassion, loving-kindness and strong support for equality and freedom to be found in those countries" (Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Adobes*…, p. 16).

[244] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 22)*…, p. 89.

[245] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 87.

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the influx of foreign investments to Myanmar in the mid-1990s: "I am very much for openness – people studying other cultures. But this kind of quick invasion can be unhealthy. There are many aspects of Burmese culture which are worth presenting. Foreign influences have come in so overwhelmingly and so quickly we might lose more than we should (…) It's worrying to me that they're coming in before the Burmese people have had a chance to develop self-confidence."[246]

In elaborating about dangers of this "quick invasion" she evoked the 1950s as an example of more just social conditions, juxtaposing it with the wild capitalism of the 1990s: "there is no social stability in a country of an enormous income gap. Our country used to be known as one of the Asian countries where the income gap is one of the smallest. We were very proud of that. In Burma, it used to be the case that there were not many extremely wealthy people. Neither were there people in abject poverty. Then the social conditions were much more tolerable. Now I have seen that the rich are unfathomably rich and the poor are in total destitution. My point is that such an enormous income gap is bad for the country. The bigger the income gap, the bitterer the dissatisfaction of the people. If your neighbours live in a wooden house and you live in a tent, you might not resent the situation so much. If your neighbours live in a mansion and you live in a tent, that will definitely make you think. You will be very outraged to know that you have to work very hard for a measly meal while others are spending thousand on a meal at a hotel. Such rage is never good for a country's stability and development."[247] Elsewhere she continued her point along the same lines, saying that "Burma, in the past, was one of the proud countries where distribution of wealth was much better (…) Around the same time, we Burmese could boast that we had neither famine nor the filthy rich in our country. We could say that there was social balance to

[246] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 87–88. The last part of her quote is interesting because it runs contrary to the leitmotiv of her political thought: a belief in an individual as an agent of change; here in disbelieving in the Burmese ability to achieve self-confidence she unconsciously follows Ne Win's belief in immaturity of the Burmese people. She was a bit less vague on her economic policy in one of her rallies, "when you do economic development, it is not enough just to call others 'come in, come in,' please come and invest, but we have to thoroughly think and decide which kind of people do we want? What type of investment do we really want? What kind of investment will surely benefit our nation? After thoroughly discussion and review, we have to invite them to come and to invest (…) For us, first of all, we have to lift up our nations' local productivities. We have to use correctly our foreign communications in business. Only when both sides are balanced, our country will truly develop" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*…, p. 488).

[247] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 173.

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some extent around that time"[248] and commenting with grief that "the widening gap between social classes has arrived in our country" – "the prospect for the future is not good if we let the gap grow. At least basic foodstuffs should be within reach of everybody. Even the poorest should be able to eat two meals of rice a day, with decent diet of meat and vegetables, that meet minimum health standards. As we need a minimum standard in our diet to keep us healthy, we also need a minimum education for our livelihood. We have to look at the general conditions of all the people. Some people are judging the general wellbeing of this country by looking only at the wealthiest clique. They have overlooked the underprivileged. This shouldn't be the case. There is always a group of the extremely rich in every underdeveloped country."[249] And Suu Kyi lost no chance to criticise the ruling generals for supporting this attitude and implicitly lacking morality and integrity to govern.[250] Finally, she warned that such unjust inequality may have dire consequences: "the have-nots get more and more destitute when haves are getting richer and richer. This has to do everything with people's life here. We have to ask if this phenomenon is good for the country. The discrepancies between the rich and the poor will lead to more unrest in this country (…) There is no justice in an unbalanced system. It is like swindling the whole country. The people on the down side of the scale

[248] She continued the following: "I am not upset about people getting rich. We should take pride in the wealth of some of our countrymen. Just one thing, how did they get rich? At the same time, when one gets very rich, one should look at the situation of the rest of the people. The majority should become relatively better off when the minority becomes millionaires. If that doesn't happen, there must be something wrong in that country. The problem we are facing today is exactly of that nature. To solve this, we have to change the system where a few people are very privileged and the rest is deprived of any opportunity. This is the only way to reduce the gap between the poor and the rich. We would like everyone to get rich. For now some are too rich and some are too poor. Not just some, the majority is too poor. We need to change this. Only then we will be able to prevent potential class clashed caused by the income gap" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 457).

[249] She continued with a colourful example: "I have heard of some third-world tycoons who can afford to fly pout to another country for a haircut. In an African country's leader is known to have flown to Paris for his haircut while his people were starving. If we are to judge his country by wealth, his country would top the rich list. The lower strata of a country's population are the best indicators for that country's progress. I hope the slogan 'cooking oil and rice must be I abundance' is meant for the poor" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 342).

[250] "They don't care about the underprivileged and the poor. They only care about the people in power. This shows how bad our predicament is. (…) They don't know how shameful it is to treat the penniless and the powerless badly for not having money and power. Some might even be proud of themselves, thinking we can do whatever we want since we are in power. Maybe those who are doing this to the poor understand prestige but not propriety. It would be embarrassing for us to keep apple-polishing the rich – what would others think of us? Similarly the sense of fear and qualm should prevent us from treating the poor and the powerless contemptuously" (Ibid., p. 343).

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will get frustrated. A country with too much frustration will never be peaceful."[251] She repeated this message several times: "the big gap in income between the poor and the rich is no good for the country. It can lead to social instability (…) if the situation is not improved, social upheavals will boil up out of social discontent. There is no unity in a society of discontent (…) The more affluent you are, the more you should care for the empty-handed."[252] Consequently, she called for social justice along the Buddhist lines: "for a country to progress, the powerful must help the powerless. The rich have to help the poor up. If necessary, the rich should shoulder the poor, because they are powerful. The powerless will be flattened if they are sot on by the powerful. To prevent such gross social injustice, we all have to continue working together. We all want a just system where the strong is kind to the weak, and we are working to achieve such a system. It is unjust to threaten businesses that are not doing well with orders of closure or seizure."[253]

Reading this criticism of the materialism of the USA (and its dire repetition in Burma) one may come to the conclusion that this is another 1990s equivalent of Buddhist modernists' criticism of the West, with its material progress but lack of spiritual values, a version of their "non-reactionary critique of Western modernity."[254] Naturally, this is not the central point in Suu Kyi's argumentation, but still – her lengthy criticism of materialism cannot be missed. Especially when combined with her other remarks about economy in general, comments being first and foremost moral messages (with its underlying idea that morality is the precondition of a wellbeing of a country) – "only when we're genuinely virtuous, an economic system which can be beneficial for the whole country will come into being"[255]; "the failure of economy in this country reflects the situation of trust in our society. Trust is the foundation for the basic exchange between the buyer and seller."[256]

She followed along these moral lines with a wider generalization in the further part of her article for UNESCO: "if material betterment, which is but a means to human happiness, is sought in ways that wound the human spirit, it can in the long run only lead to greater human suffering"; "the vast possibilities that a market economy can open up to developing countries can be realized only if economic reforms are undertaken within a framework that recognizes human needs," it must be "serving the people, instead of people serving the market" and people should be "valued for what they are rather than for what they produce."[257] She repeated these thoughts, too, during her rallies, saying that the government should encourage foreign investors "to do the kind of business

[251] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 275.
[252] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*..., pp. 339–340.
[253] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*..., p. 225.
[254] Winfield, *Buddhism and State in Burma*..., p. 183.
[255] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 88.
[256] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 406–407.
[257] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*..., pp. 267–268.

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that would benefit our people,"[258] because "in a true high standard economy you cannot separate it from high living standard of the public (…) we need an economic system which can enable the higher living standard of the majority of the people; only that kind of system could say it has high standard economy."[259]

Suu Kyi's vision of economy, in which she "obviously finds more appealing an economic growth based on 'simplicity, comfort and respect for the community,' thereby reflecting a Gandhian vision of small is beautiful" – has been criticised for being confusing ("hers seems to be an economic vision where the Great American Dream jostles with Gandhian concepts of low-cost, decentralized, small-scale growth – a vision as confused as the economic perspective of Myanmar's leaders"), as well as "simplistic, with no clear predilection evident for capitalist or socialist structures."[260] This is naturally correct, for Suu Kyi's economic vision is not a concrete economic, developmental programme, but a moral vision, based on *mettā* and Engaged Buddhism's inter-dependent co-arising "wherein no individual or society is free of the shared matrix of values and systems to which it belongs" – "what Suu Kyi has envisioned is an economic landscape which is inclusive, organically integrated to the society so as to be responsible during crisis and more importantly people-centric (…) according to her, the economic framework was merely meant to shore up socio-political and even spiritual development and left one with no option of choosing between god and mammon."[261] This moral vision of economy, too, was subjugated to politics: to achieving democracy – Suu Kyi constantly "downplayed the role of the economy in favour of implementing democracy first."[262] For example in her Myitkyina speech she declared it openly: "only if there is a good political system will it be possible to reach economic goals. Even if business is doing well, if the political system is unjust, the nation will not prosper. For example, during the era of the BSPP there were some people who were very successful in business, but what could they do with their money? In a country like Burma, where the situation was constantly

[258] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*…, p. 487.

[259] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 9)*…, p. 210.

[260] "Suu Kyi's vision hinges on the same (as Gandhi) principle of interlinking technology, man and nature to nurture a mind-set of self-reliance. It is with this purpose in mind that Suu Kyi has spoken of micro-finance schemes for providing easy access to financial service to individuals (…) explaining that it was an effective way of harnessing the entrepreneurial spirit of the people and reducing individual dependence on governmental resources and since then the NLD has embarked on an experimental foray into small-scale micro-credit schemes" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 311 and 314).

[261] Ibid., p. 314.

[262] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*..., p. 485. For Suu Kyi until 2011 the choice had been "between democracy and economic development," thus she called for sanctions/boycotts, declared "that people should not confine themselves to only economic activities" and appealed to them "not try to get any richer till the country achieved democracy" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 312–314). Once in power, she modified her stance.

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worsening, how could they find prosperity with their money? Quite a few of them sent their children abroad with the money. Just think of how much money the country lost with these young people! What is important is using this money for the interests of the whole country, not just for one' own interests or the interests of one's family. Please then don't place economic above politics, for it is a fact that all nations that prosper economically are those that also have an equitable political system."[263] And she repeated this message at the very end of her speech: "therefore, people of the Kachin State, act with courage; don't give too much thought on economics. Now is not time to be concentrating on economics, but rather on politics. One must always act according to the season and the situation. At that time we have the historic responsibility to rebuild our nation. In this country we must work for the establishment of a just form of government. It is not our historic responsibility at this time to go into business. After establishing democracy, we may have new responsibilities in the economic sphere but at this time work towards democracy!"[264]

This accent on politics at the expanse of economics can be seen, too, in her UNESCO essay, where she concluded that "the challenge we now face is for the different nations and peoples of the world to agree on a basis set of human values, which will serve as a unifying force in the development of a genuine global community."[265] In other words, capitalism,[266] the dominant ideology of the West, triumphant in the late 1980s and in the 1990s, is insufficient to solve the problems of the world as it has a reductionist vision of human beings. Free market economy, thus, needs to be deepened by empowering the people, in other words, by more cultural and spiritual needs. And the world needs to find an ideological consensus. This argument, combined with Suu Kyi's accent of Buddhism as guarantor of social justice, is another feature in making Suu Kyi a distant intellectual cousin of the Buddhist modernists of the 1950s.

Suu Kyi continued her point in the article by advocating for the cultural diversity and for making a consensus about basic human values. Otherwise, when democracy and human rights are considered as opposition to "non-Western culture, such culture is usually defined narrowly and presented as monolithic"; this is wrong, for "the values that democracy and human rights seek to promote can be found in many cultures", people all around the world "need freedom and security in order to be able to realize their full potential," in the same way as "the support for desirability of strong government and dictatorship can also be found in all cultures, both Eastern and Western: the desire to dominate and the tendency to adulate the powerful are also common human traits

[263] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 220.

[264] Ibid., pp. 222–223.

[265] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 270.

[266] Suu Kyi does not reject capitalism per se, only its distortions: elsewhere she said: "market economy is citizens' right to enterprise freely. By nature it is antithetical to command and control" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 149).

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arising out of a desire for security."[267] In other words, she universalized not only the beneficial ideas (democracy, human rights), but also the bad ones, making the point that people are the same everywhere and that freedom and dictatorship do not depend on the cultural aspects of a country, but rather on the character of the people and their choices. That led her to emphasize the importance of democracy, "a political system which aims at empowering the people," achieving "sustained human development (…) of the people for the people by the people"; having quoted Lincoln's famous words,[268] she rejected the notions that it takes time, particularly for non-Western countries, to achieve democracy, for "latecomers should be able to capitalize on the experiences of the pioneers and avoid the mistakes and obstacles that impeded early progress."[269] Later, during one of her speeches at University Road 54, she repeated this idea: "lessons can be learned from others in democracy, economy and morality. We can look at the ways other people do things, we can learn from them."[270]

Here, however, this is only a prelude to her main idea: she claimed that "there will be as many kinds of democracies as there are nations" and, in line with that, refused to accept democracy as a Western idea: "no single type of 'Western democracy' exists; nor is democracy limited to a mere handful of forms as the American, British, French or Swiss"; "each democratic country will have its own individual character (…) the variety in the democratic style of government will increase (…) in each country the democratic system will have a character that accords with its social, cultural and economic needs."[271] She repeated this view later on with her unique flavour of ahistorical populism: "all democratic countries have their own styles of democracy. No two democratic systems are alike (…) It depends on the historical and cultural conditions of the country. What is key (…) is that a genuine democratic system takes its people's will seriously, and rules them accordingly. In this sense, there is no distinction between global democracy and Burmese democracy. All democratic systems respect and follow the desire of their people."[272]

The only condition for a democracy to be genuine is "that the people should be sufficiently empowered" in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; otherwise "without these rights democratic institutions will be but empty shells inca-

[267] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 266.

[268] Abraham Lincoln, *Draft of the Gettysburg Address*: *Nicolay Copy*, transcribed and annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois; available at Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (American Memory Project [2000–2002]),Washington, D.C., http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html (access: 18.06.2018).

[269] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 268.

[270] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 149.

[271] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, pp. 268–269.

[272] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 150.

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pable of reflecting the aspirations of the people and unable to withstand the encroachment of authoritarianism."[273] She concluded that at the heart of true development "must be a sense of empowerment and inner fulfilment" – only this "will ensure that human and cultural values remain paramount in a world where political leadership is often synonymous with tyranny and the rule of a narrow elite"; therefore "people's participation in social and political transformation is the central issue of our time"; "the success of national policies depends on the willing participation of the people" and this "can only be achieved through the establishment of societies which place human worth above power and liberation above control"; then she dotted the "i": "in this paradigm development requires democracy, the genuine empowerment of the people," once achieved "culture and development will naturally coalesce to create an environment in which all are valued and every kind of human potential can be realized."[274] Hence, for Suu Kyi "while there is no one form of democracy, that it will have its own characteristics in each country where it exists, there is a basic requirement that the people should be sufficiently empowered to be able to participate significantly in its governance."[275]

Suu Kyi in her vision rejected the notion of democracy being a Western concept and called for accepting democracy as a universal value that has its many unique, cultural dimensions. What was essential for her was the people and their empowerment that would safeguard against dictatorship. One can here trace Suu Kyi's leitmotiv: the accent on individual as an agent of change (see: later in this book), overall however, Suu Kyi's vision of democracy presented here in not only a testimony to (now gone) intellectual climate of the 1990s (the apparent inevitability of democracy all around the world), but dangerously borders on utopia. Reading these words in the late 2010s, where there is little optimism regarding global fate of democracy and people's empowerment in the liberal understanding of it, one must come to a conclusion that time was not merciful for Suu Kyi's ideals concerning democracy in pretty much the same way as it was not for the Burmese Buddhist modernists of the 1950s and 1960s.

To conclude, as can be seen in these examples, in Suu Kyi's political thought economy played an adjunct position to both politics and morality. In short: "Gandhi was closer to her than Marx."[276] This was due to objective reasons – being a political dissident that fought with a mighty authoritarian regime Suu Kyi sought ways to wrest power from it and had neither time nor interest in elaborating economic programmes – but probably subjective as well. Suu Kyi is a moralist, not economist, and her knowledge on economy is limited at best. Thus she theorised on economy from moral perspective because morality is the field where she feels secure. The lack of the NLD's concrete economic

[273] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 269.
[274] Ibid., pp. 269–270.
[275] Silverstein, *The Idea of Freedom*…, p. 227.
[276] Bogdan Góralczyk, personal communication, August 2018.

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vision for the country both before 2015 and after, suggests that Suu Kyi is similar to the 1950s Buddhist modernists in several aspects. Just like them,[277] Suu Kyi is unwilling to build pagodas (she lacks desire to follow "*kammatic*" Buddhism patterns)[278] and unable to build (contemporary equivalent of) factories (she lacks the expertise to make Myanmar economy competitive); all she could to do was to build moral ivory towers, intellectual edifices that were good on paper, but failed to provide concrete results.

13. Conclusion

In the Burmese political thought the two meta-approaches (a pessimistically fatalistic one and an optimistic one) have been dominating interchangeably. The precolonial Burmese political thought conveyed a single, Buddhist massage: that the ruler must be moral and this moral behaviour is crucial for the well-being of the country. Within the ideological precolonial Burmese Buddhist framework there was, however, understanding of the unideal realities of governance. What characterized the precolonial political thought was the morally pessimistic approach to governance: when people are considered as ontologically imperfect, then the purpose of political power is to create conditions that would restrain their bad deeds, for their and society's own good. The necessity of creating and establishing order helps to justify many actions, even the inglorious ones. The unholy reality of precolonial Burma saw many, if not most of, kings as cruel, despotic and repressive. This has created a wide gap between the rulers and the ruled. It was then that the perception of politics as elite activity was born and it is well alive until now. This is, however, not the only long-lasting precolonial aspect that survived in the Burmese politics until now. The understanding of politics as a personal affair (people, not institutions or mechanisms, matter) combined with call for (rarely achieved) unity survived well and still influences, if not haunts, contemporary Myanmar. The 19th century modernization was politically belated but ideologically fascinating: this heritage

[277] In the following phrase I paraphrase Winfield's words about Burmese Buddhist modernists (Winfield, *Buddhism and State in Burma*…, p. 191).

[278] When she mentioned that in Buddhism "much value is attached to liberality or generosity which heads such lists as the Ten Perfections of the Buddha, the Ten Virtues which should be practised, and the Ten Duties of Kings," she rejected the *kammatic* Buddhism understanding of these virtues: "this emphasis on liberality should not be regarded as a facile endorsement of alms-giving based on canny calculation of possible benefits in the way of worldly prestige or otherworldly rewards. It is a recognition of the crucial importance of the liberal, generous spirit as an effective antidote to greed as well as a fount of virtues which engender happiness and harmony. The late Sayadaw Ashin Janaka Bivamsa of the famous Mahagandhrun monastery at Amarapura taught that liberality without morality cannot really be pure. An act of charity committed for the sake of earning praise or prestige or a place in a heavenly abode he held to be tantamount to an act of greed" (Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 242).

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survived and gave birth to a tradition of more inclusive political thought, a one Aung San Suu Kyi is representing.

The British colonial rule destroyed the traditional Burmese cosmological order. This provoked crisis in Burmese Buddhism that was overcame when the fall of the Konbaung dynasty became perceived as yet another proof of Buddhism's impermanence law that would certainly concern the British colonial occupation as well. The revival of Buddhism marked the early stage of the anticolonial nationalist movement and signified the prevalence of optimistic approach in Burmese political thought that stated a possibility of the people to overcome their desire-driven nature and achieve *nibbāna*. In colonial times this was linked with independence struggle producing a mix of political and religious liberation with the latter being used as legitimization for political struggle by some political thinkers as U Ottama. This anticolonial sentiments were best symbolized by a bloody – and ultimately lost – Hsaya San uprising. The anticolonial activity was continued by the *thakins* who, by virtue of being Western-educated and much more open to new realities, upgraded the means of struggle yet shared the same goals: liberation from the British and restoration of the (imagined) precolonial glory. These nationalists, with their Burman-centric approach, under the mentorship of Kodaw Hmaing – a Burmese poet-turned-nationalist – rejected the colonial rule in favour of marrying reinterpreted Burmese heritage with popular –isms, especially left-oriented ideologies such as Marxism.

Since its enter into Burma in the 1930s until late 1988 socialist ideas dominated the Burmese political thought. Although there were various, confusing, overlapping and at times contradictory, versions of socialism, Marxism, communism, Fabianism and other –isms in Burma, it had always been left-wing ideas. Political left-oriented thoughts dominated the Burmese political thought out of several reasons, the major one being the traumatic colonial experience. This produced an intellectual reality in late colonial and postcolonial Burma where any idea was good as long as it was a left-wing idea. Favourable geopolitical circumstances of post-WWII Burma helped them to achieve independence while their ideological left-wind orientation would make socialism the dominant ideology in the postcolonial Burma. In socialism (and in other progressive thoughts) they initially found the national liberation device. Later, however, Burmese politicians and intellectuals also found socialism an ideology in many (assumed) aspects similar and compatible to the Burmese cultural traditions, most importantly – to Buddhism. This gave birth to various attempts of mixing and reconciling socialistic ideas with Buddhism: from dreams of "worldly *nibbāna*" via U Nu's neo-Aśokan model, Buddhist modernism to the "Burmese Way to Socialism" that (quite unexpectedly for its authors) compromised socialism. When Ne Win was forced to step down in 1988, very few people believed in socialism: this ideology – in this or other form – after more than fifty years of intellectual dominance in Burma, was finally rejected. With the dramatic events of 1988 and the political entry of Aung San Suu Kyi another popular ideology re-emerged: democracy.

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Chapter III

The Pivotal Figure of Aung San and His Legacy

Burma's independence father and Tamtadaw's founder, Aung San was the most important politician in this country's 20th century history. By his skilful manoeuvring after WWII he was able to liberate Burma from colonial occupation, though he did not live to see it, killed by a political rival. The military regime after 1962 legitimised its rule by his name, claiming to following his ideas. Once Aung San Suu Kyi, Aung San's daughter, challenged military rule in 1988, she did this by questioning the army-sanctioned official vision of Aung San's legacy. Thus, a bitter confrontation - political, personal and intellectual - emerged over Aung San's legacy (this dispute was later transferred into academic world as well). Although politically Suu Kyi eventually won that battle over Aung San with generals (though she is yet to win the war), intellectually the topic remains fascinating. It is, too, one of the keys to understand Suu Kyi's own political thought.

1. Burma's Machiavellian Man of Destiny

It is always hard to draw a fair picture of such mythologized persons as Aung San. Except for Suu Kyi herself, no politician in contemporary history of Burma was idealised more. Aside from the obvious fact that national heroes are difficult to judge fairly, forty years of state glorification and another thirty of the NLD's and Suu Kyi's glorification (the latter both domestically and abroad) have done their share. Add two competing visions of Aung San – of a supporter of militarism and of a democrat – to see the complex picture. Nevertheless, it is essential at least to try to present Aung San the way he (most probably) was.

He was born in Natmauk in Burma's dry zone in 1915, in a family of impoverished gentry with tradition of freedom fighting.[1] Unassuming as a child – though Suu Kyi in her hagiography claimed that "as a small boy he often dreamt of various methods of

[1] Aung San, *Self-Portrait*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 3; Angelene Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle for Independence in Burma*, Silkworn Books, Chiang Mai 2001, pp. 6–9.

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rebelling against the British"[2] – Aung San during his studies at Rangoon University was well-known for this unorthodox manners and passion for politics.[3] He joined *thakin* movement, entered national politics with the 1936 student strike and steadily rose in *Dobama*'s ranks. Aung San, as majority of *thakins*, became fascinated by socialism and Marxism and, along with a few colleagues, founded the Communist Party of Burma in 1939.[4] Endangered by a British warrant after the break of WWII, Aung San escaped to Xiamen in China where he was to seek contact with either CPC, KMT, or Japan; there he was approached by the Japanese intelligence and soon joined Imperial Japan in its task to conquer British Burma.[5]

Aung San's Japanese period is naturally very controversial. It was already so, among Aung San's socialist colleagues who struggled to understand his turn to fascist, militaristic Japan[6]. His daughter watered down his decision by writing that he "took the pragmatic view that they should accept the help from any quarter that offered it and see how the situation developed."[7] Years after, Aung San wrote that he "tried to make the best of a bad job."[8] In this view he became a "reluctant collaborator."[9] On the other hand, his fascination of Japan – and of Japanese fascist militarism – is clearly

[2] Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Father*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 5.

[3] Aung San, *Self-Portrait*…, p. 3; U Nu, *Aung San's Sterling Qualities*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 3; Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle*…, p. 17; U Mya Sein, *Into the Mainstream of History*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 21; Bo Let Ya, *Snapshots of Aung San*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), pp. 7–11; Dagon Taya, *Politics Was His Sole Existence*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 26.

[4] Thein Pe Myint, *Critique of Communist Movement in Burma (1973)*, in: *Documents on Communism in Burma 1945–1977*, ed. K. Fleischmann, Institut für Asienkunde, Hamburg 1989, p. 224; Beril Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1989, p. 5.

[5] Aung San, *Burma's Challenge (Document 16)*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, p. 83; Bo Yan Aung, *Our Lonely Mission*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 41; Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 50.

[6] Lintner, *The Rise and Fall*…, p. 6.

[7] Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Father*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 14.

[8] Aung San, *Burma's Challenge*…, p. 83.

[9] This is what Suu Kyi's first (and until now most important) biographer, Justin Wintle, wrote, clearly following her line (Justin Wintle, *Perfect Hostage. Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma and the Generals*, Arrow Books, London 2008, pp. 92–104); Aung San wrote that he "tried to organize

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noticeable, most importantly in his "Blue Print for Burma", a programme document on planned post-war order in Burma[10] (see: below), though not only in this document[11] – for example under his command the BIA (later Tatmadaw, the National Army) established its slogan, still used until today – One Blood, One Voice, One Command (*ta-pyi, ta-than, ta-meint*).[12] And, most importantly, Aung San "was not forced to fight alongside Asia's then most tyrannical regime for three years, albeit with misgivings", but rather "he chose to do so after actively seeking Japanese assistance."[13]

Under Japanese guidance, Aung San – under his *nom de guerre* Bo Teza – organized Burmese Independence Army,[14] which helped the Japanese forces during invasion of British Burma. The BIA's forces, however, seemed a gang rather than an army, and became (in)famous for massacring Karens, Indians and other minorities[15]; Aung San himself killed, probably in cold blood, a Muslim headman in Lower Burma, in early 1942. [16] Despite of incidents of this kind, or perhaps thanks to them, the BIA evoked authentic enthusiasm among Burmans for being the first Burmese national forces since

a resistance soon after the entry of the Japanese in Rangoon" (Aung San, *Self-Portrait*…, p. 5), though he is unconvincing.

[10] Aung San, *Blue Print for Burma* (*Document 1)*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, pp. 19–22.

[11] Even after the war he held Japanese "methods and toughness" in "some awe and respect" (Maung Maung, *Marching with Aung San*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 67).

[12] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps. A Personal History of Burma*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2007, p. 233; BIA was built on Burman, ethnic lines (*do-Bama*) (Callahan, *Making Enemies. War and State Building in Burma*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2003, pp. 53–57).

[13] "Aung San chose a path of armed resistance against both the British and the Japanese and may well have continued doing so if independence had not been granted in 1948" (Stephen McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny in Singapore and Burma: Aristotle and the Rhetoric of Benevolent Despotism*, Routledge, London–New York 2006, p. 160).

[14] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footstep*…, pp. 229–230; Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*…, p. 51, see also: Won Yoon, *Japan's Scheme for Liberation of Burma: The Minami Kikan and the Thirty Comrades*, Center for International Studies, Athens, Ohio 1973.

[15] Dorothy H. Guyot, *The Political Impact on the Japanese Occupation*, PhD dissertation, The Yale University, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Mich. 1966, pp. 129–163; Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, pp. 49–54.

[16] According to the widow of the headman, Aung San, after purposely humiliating the headman killed him with his bayonet in public; Aung San did not deny the killings, but said he hit with his sword, but was unable to finish and one of his subordinates ended the job; Aung San did not deny that he made the order and later when explaining the context said it was a necessary "rough and ready justice to suit the time", he "declared his conscience was clean, but as he made this statement, he appeared to lose his way, muttering 'I forget, I forget…" (Christopher Bayly, Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2007, pp. 231–232).

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decades,[17] while Aung San with his puritanical and egalitarian approach became immensely popular.[18] Unfortunately, he realized – it is disputable whether it happened sooner or later – that the Japanese were not going to grant Burma independence, but instead turned themselves into a new colonial master, worse even than the British predecessors.[19] Worse still, the *thakins* were forced to accept not only Japanese occupation, but also the leadership of former comprador elites under Ba Maw – now chosen by the Japanese to rule Burma under Tokyo's (strict) guidance.[20] Ba Maw, former Prime Minister of colonial Burma, now became the *adipati*[21] of (formally – and only formally) independent Burma in 1943,[22] with his oath modelled on former royal crowning ceremony (administrated by Kodaw Hmaing).[23] Disillusioned Aung San, no. 2 in this collaborating regime, nevertheless remained "realistic": he understood that "in war sovereignty lays in the hands of the conqueror, and the conquerors were the Japanese."[24] That is why he, and other *thakins*, put their hopes for independence on hold, setting other, more pragmatic tasks: to establish their own, professional and well-trained national army – Tatmadaw.[25]

It is unclear when Aung San and other *thakins* collaborating with Japan started considering switching sides,[26] but at least from mid-1944 Aung San agreed to help the British reconquer Burma.[27] *Thakins*' motivation was rational. Against the background of

[17] Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, pp. 50–52.

[18] Maung Maung, *Marching with Aung San* …, p. 61.

[19] Bo Let Ya, *Snapshots of Aung San*…, p. 301; U Nu, *Burma Under the Japanese*…, pp. 5–132; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 233; Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*…, p. 52.

[20] Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, p. 55; Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 232.

[21] The term is usually translated as dictator (Ba Maw assumed many titles, one was Nain-Ngan Adipati, state's dictator, another was Anashin Adipati, the dictator with supreme power) (Kei Nemoto, *Neither Pro-British Nor Pro-Japanese: How the Burmese Political Elite Reacted Under British and Japanese Rule*, in: *Japan and Britain at War and at Peace*, eds. H. Dobson, Kosuge Nobuko, Routledge, London–New York 2009, p. 56).

[22] For the Ba Maw's version of the story, see: Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939–1946*, Yale University Press, London 1968.

[23] Edward Law Yone, *Dr. Ba Maw of Burma*, in: *Essays on Burma*, *Contributions to Asian Studies*, vol. XVI, ed. J.P. Ferguson, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden 1981, pp. 1–19.

[24] Maung Maung, *Marching with Aung San*…, p. 60.

[25] Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, pp. 53–67.

[26] Some say it happened already in 1942; Andrew Selth, *The Anti-Fascist Resistance in Burma 1942–1945: The Racial Dimension*, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Paper 14, James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville 1983, p. 11. Others – that it happened in 1944 (Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, p. 74). Aung San said that contacts with Allies were established in 1944 (Aung San, *Self-Portrait*…, p. 5).

[27] Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, pp. 72–75; Selth, *The Anti-Fascist Resistance in Burma*…, p. 11; Bečka, *The National Liberation Movement in Burma During the Japanese Occupation Period (1941–1945)*, Oriental Institute, Praha 1983, pp. 97–98.

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the Japanese, the British seemed a lesser evil indeed; moreover so that they were winning the war.[28] That is why Aung San and his comrades, who joined hands with communists and founded secret Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), understood than changing the sides did not lead to their goal of independence, but they could remain in the political game only by remarking/redressing themselves as anti-fascist democrats: "the future was still murky, but at least there might be a way ahead if they restyled themselves as 'antifascists,' and presented the reconquering British with as much of a fait accompli as possible."[29] Let alone that they had one invaluable political asset: the armed forces. [30] This was the decisive factor: former colonialists, although divided over cooperation with the *thakins*, eventually chose to turn a blind eye on *thakins*' collaboration with Japan over having to fight with them on the battlefield, and accepted the offer.[31] Tatmadaw's forces rebelled again Japan on March 27th 1945, in today's Burma – the Armed Forces Day.

Once the war was over, the returning British presented their vision of post-war Burma in their White Paper; its main idea was to delay granting independence for the time being[32]. Times, however, changed. AFPFL rejected British ideas out of hand, while Aung San declined the British offer of becoming the commander-in-chief of the new army, preferring instead to continue policymaking as a civilian. Although his decision had more to do with tactical reasons – Aung San was anxious of being outmanoeuvred by communists[33] – his action would later be emphasized and highlighted by Aung San

[28] *Thakins* used both the Japanese and the British instrumentally, which is absolutely understandable given the fact that these were both occupants. The British had little illusions about that – British intelligence wrote that, "Burmese nationalism is the key to all Burmese political thought, and, as a general rule, it may be taken that the Burman is primarily both anti-Japanese and anti-British" (*Burma During the Japanese Occupation*, vol. I, Burma Intelligence Bureau, Rangoon 1943, in: Tharaphi Than, *The Languages of Pyidawtha and the Burmese Approach to National Development*, "South East Asia Research", vol. 21, no. 4, Special Issue: *Colonial Histories in South East Asia – Papers in Honour of Ian Brown*, December 2013, p. 643).

[29] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 240.

[30] Ibid.; Bečka, *The National Liberation*…, pp. 97–98; Taylor, *Marxism and Resistance in Burma 1942–1945: Thein Pe Myint's "Wartime Traveller"*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio 1984, pp. 108–110.

[31] Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, p. 80; Charles Cruishank, *SOE in the Far East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1983, p. 173; Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, National University of Singapore Press, Singapore 2009, pp. 237–238.

[32] *White Paper*, in: *Burma: The Struggle for Independence 1944–1948*, ed. H. Tinker, London 1983, p. 263; Alice Thorner, *White Paper on Burma*, "Far Eastern Survey", vol. 14, no. 11, 1945, p. 145.

[33] Thein Pe Myint, *A Note From my Diary*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 86; Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle*…, p. 136.

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Suu Kyi as a proof of Aung San's democratic and anti-militaristic sentiments[34] (it is fair to admit that there were other democratic elements in his post 1945 stance).

The AFPFL rejected the British White Paper because the League had a simple policy towards the British: "independence first!"[35], which in Burmese conditions meant "only independence mattered, come what may."[36] As Suu Kyi admitted, for Aung San "any means used for gaining Burmese independence was acceptable."[37] To achieve that Aung San used a dual tactics. On the one hand he negotiated with the British, gaining their respect[38] – to them he was now "a patriot and a well-balanced realist – characters which are not always combined" (as Gen. Slim characterized him).[39] On the other, knowing the dire economic realities of Burma – political and economic crisis that undercut the British colonial administration – he used risky, if not reckless methods such as forming para-military units or organizing mass rallies and demonstrations.[40] These were formally peaceful measures, yet he was walking a tightrope,[41] unambiguously suggesting that in case of failure to meet his demands he was ready to stir a rebellion that the British might not be able to quell easily.[42] This proved to be a right strategy, for both his determination and auspicious international circumstances (such as British economic bankruptcy, decolonization of India, or the Israel – Palestine issue). In the changed international circumstances, British government in London, having pressing and more important

[34] In Suu Kyi's narrative the reason why Aung San left the army was not anxiety over being outmanoeuvred by the communist, but *mettā*: he "was a soldier who could fight – and fight well – when he had to fight, but who when the fighting was over could lay aside his sword without fear and pursue the path of peace. When political power came into his hands he could say with absolute sincerity and a complete lack of self-consciousness that we would govern 'on the basis of loving kindness and truth'" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*, in: *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 191).

[35] Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *Burma zwischen 'Unabhängigkeit zuerst – Unabhängigkeit zuletzt*, in: Franziska Blum, *Teaching Democracy. The Program and Practice of Aung San Suu Kyi's Concept of People's Education*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, p. 33.

[36] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 247.

[37] Aung San Suu Kyi, Alan Clements, *The Voice of Hope. Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi*, 2nd edition, Rider, London–Sydney–Auckland–Johannesburg 2008, p. 85.

[38] Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 22. Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 248.

[39] William Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, David McKay Company, New York 1961, p. 428.

[40] Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence*, 4th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1967, p. 17; Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist*…, p. 203.

[41] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 248. When setting off to London Aung San was asked during press conference whether he is "contemplating a violent or a non-violent struggle, or both", he answered (laughing) "we have no inhibitions of any kind" (*We Want Complete Independence* (*Aung San Press Conference 03.01.1947*), in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 105).

[42] Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 26; Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, pp. 106–113.

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issues than peripheral Burma, decided that Aung San is a person London could make business with, and a one that guaranteed getting rid of the problem with this contumacious colony.[43] Aung San secured a promise of independence from Prime Minister Attlee in London in January 1947[44] and just after that he secured an agreement in Panglong (Pinlong) with (almost all major) ethnic minorities to join the projected Union of Burma in return for autonomy.[45] Having won the April 1947 elections, he became the deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Burma (de facto Prime Minister of Burma)[46] and emerged as the paramount leader: he became widely respected, if not beloved, national leader, with some Burmese claiming him to be an incarnation of legendary Bo Bo Aung, a *weikza* with magical powers.[47] This happened also due to the fact that Aung San matured: "the final phase of Aung San's life saw him developing daily in political maturity and statecraft, his innate ability and sense of responsibility coming into full play as he faced the challenges of nation-building" (as Suu Kyi described this process in her typical hagiographical way)[48]; nevertheless facts prove that indeed "his character grew with events."[49] His party, the AFPFL, became the most popular party, or rather an umbrella organization of many parties, with Communist Party of Burma being the most powerful one, though Aung San was with time able to outmanoeuvre the communists

[43] Tinker, *The Union of Burma*…, p. 17; Anthony Stockwell, *Southeast Asia in War and Peace: The End of European Colonial Empires*, in: *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 1–2, ed. N. Tarling, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 22–24; Aung San was viewed by Mountbatten "as the man to cultivate in order to maintain peace in Burma" (Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 264).

[44] *Aung San-Attlee Agreement*, Burmastar, 27.01.1947, http://burmastar1010.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/44172419-aungsan-atlee-agreement.pdf (access: 24.05.2018).

[45] *The Panglong Agreement*, UN Peacemaker, 12.02.1947, http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MM_470212_Panglong%20Agreement.pdf (access: 24.05.2018). The real outcome of Panglong Agreement was more complex, yet the agreement became seriously mythologized in Burma, for more, see: Matthew J. Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong*, "Asian Survey", vol. 48, no. 6, November/December 2008, pp. 889–910.

[46] Frank N. Trager, *Burma: From Kingdom to Republic*, Pall Mall Press, London 1966, pp. 70–95.

[47] In one version Bo Bo Aung was supposed to save Setkya-min from death (Manuel Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background of Burmese Revolution*, Springer Science and Business Media, B.Y. 1965, pp. 155–158); in other version, Bo Bo Aung used magical powers to transform a bad king; Aung San himself "did not expect to win by using magic (…) he did not like the use of alchemy and other forms of indigenous skills to bolster his credibility as a politician; this he condemned" (Gustaaf Houtman, *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy*, Monograph Series no. 33, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo 1999, pp. 251–252).

[48] Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 33.

[49] F.S.V. Donnison, *Unifier of Burma*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 147.

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and eliminate them from the League, thus marginalizing them – in the elections of 1947 his League secured 173 seats while the communists – seven.[50] In this very moment of his peak of power and authority, he was assassinated on July 19th 1947.[51]

It is impossible to tell whether with Aung San at the helm Burma would have averted its unhappy post-1948 history. Perhaps he might have been able to make Burma a relatively successful country, united in diversity along the lines of its more lucky Southeast Asian neighbours (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand). On the other hand, premature death – which made him a quasi-mystical figure – perhaps saved him from political failure.[52]

Given these various forms of idealization of Aung San it is a challenging task to summarize him and portray his just picture. What, however, emerges from the facts of his life is a portrait of an immutable Burmese nationalist, a flesh and blood realist and pragmatist for whom only one thing mattered: Burma's independence. While trying many ways and following various ideologies – he used modern ideologies flexibly, choosing this what was suitable at the moment. He calmly admitted that "as your everyday life changes, so changes your politics"[53] and this statement was in accord with his actions: "as a political activist, whose immediate concern was to find workable solutions to problems and to persuade others to support his tactics and goals, he demonstrated in his speeches both pragmatism and eclecticism," so "apparent contradictions did not seem to bother him for in his mixture of ideas and tactics he sought answers, not logical symmetry"; at the same time, however, "if Aung San was flexible and pragmatic in his politics, he was firm and unswerving in his twin goals of independence and national unity."[54] Even Suu Kyi

[50] For a complicated relationship between AFPFL-CPB that led to split, see: *Documents on Communism in Burma*…, pp. 44–72.

[51] By his political rival, U Saw with (probable) help of some British conservative officers from old colonial administration, more: Kin Oung, *Who Killed Aung San*, White Lotus, Bangkok 1993, pp. 44–68; *Who Really Killed Aung San?*, BBC 2 Documentary, 19.07.1997, You Tube.

[52] "It is quite probable that death saved his reputation from the erosion that failure would have caused it" (John Kane, *Politics of Moral Capital*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 152).

[53] Quoted in: Josef Silverstein, *Introduction*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, p. 5.

[54] Ibid. Unity figured as an important element in his political thought, e.g. he said that "by national unity we don't mean only top unit, we mean the unity of the entire people, irrespective of race, religion, sex and sectarian and party interests, in action and not in words for national tasks and objectives" and he continued about the existence of parties: "what is important is not exactly that they exist or do not exist but that they will not engage in partisan activities detrimental to national interests. On all national questions, they should and must come together and work together without any sectarianism in the affair" (*1945–1946: Aung San's Concept of "Burmese Democracy"*, in: *In Their Voice. "Democracy" as Perceived in Burma/Myanmar 1921–2010*, Working Paper No. 14, eds F. Blum, F. Trotier, H.-B. Zöllner, Universität Passau, Passau 2010, p. 37).

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admitted, between the lines, that he was "flexible and able to adapt"[55] and that "his real quest was always for ideas and tactics that would bring freedom and unity to his country" and that "any means used for gaining Burmese independence was acceptable."[56] His "wartime political opportunism" indicate that "Burma's independence from Great Britain was his primary goal and that he would be prepared to do or say almost anything in order to achieve that goal."[57] That is why among many scholars, journalists and other writers who struggled to summarize Aung San, a German Burma scholar, Hans-Bernd Zöllner appears to be nearest to the historical truth when he described Aung San as "a pragmatic and shrewd general-cum-politician in the image of Machiavelli."[58] And it is precisely this Machiavellianism[59] of Aung San – his ability to be either a lion or a fox when needed and to flexibly change ideological stance in accordance with political circumstance[60] – that made Burma independent. However, since a Machiavellian politician is hardly a material

[55] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 84–85.

[56] Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 11. "National freedom, self-determination and independence were the main demands of Aung San. Political ideologies like democracy and nationalism are just keys to open the doors to such achievements**.** His main target is to reach socialism/communism as the final stage to achieve in the development of a nation" (*1945–1946: Aung San's Concept of "Burmese Democracy"*…, p. 39).

[57] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 164.

[58] Hans-Bernd Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty. The History of the Conflict Between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, 1988–2011, Set in a Global Context*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, p. 203. Naturally, Zöllner follows McCarthy's line (Ibid., pp. 160–165) and so do I.

[59] I use the term "Machiavellianism" of Aung San consciously, in the academic understanding of this word, not in the popular (vulgarised) one. I follow Isaiah Berlin on Machiavelli here: "there are two worlds, that of private virtue and that of public organisation. There are two codes of morality and one must choose between them. With the first code one cannot create a noble and glorious society in which human beings can thrive and grow wise and happy and productive. If one chooses the second course one must suppress one's private qualms if one has any; one has chosen to prepare the omelette and one cannot make it without breaking eggs. Machiavelli is sometimes accused of advocating the breaking of eggs for its own sake. But this is unjust. He thinks these evils are necessary – necessary as means to produce good results, good not in the sense of a Christian but in the sense of the secular, humanistic, naturalistic morality" (Isaiah Berlin, *Machiavelli*, in: Berlin, *Three Turning-Points in Political Thought*, Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library, http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/nachlass/machiavelli.pdf (access: 18.05.2018), p. 19). Nevertheless, praising Aung San for securing Burma's independence is one thing, while idealising him as a democratic model (what Suu Kyi did) is something completely different. He is a Burmese national hero and independence's father. Outside Burma, however, he must be judged as a fascinating politician but at the same time controversial, morally ambiguous, and hardly an exemplary one.

[60] "(A Prince) ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves" (Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter XVIII, Project Gutenberg, Free Ebook, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm (access: 13.05.2018)).

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for a hero anywhere,[61] both in Burma and abroad his person became purposely (or less so) idealised. What emerged was a Aung San legend. A myth that his colleagues (both civilian and military) and his daughter happily used to secure their political goals. It was all the easier given the fact that his "speeches and writings attributed to him can be used to justify arguments on both sides."[62]

2. From Aung San's Guidance to Aung San Amnesia

After Aung San's assassination, his name became politically used by almost all political groups, even to some extend by the communists.[63] However, it was U Nu's government (and U Nu himself) that initially mastered the true political art of legitimizing oneself on the back of a fallen hero,[64] which proved to be quite a lasting heritage.[65] U Nu kept portraying himself as Aung San's friend[66] and lost no opportunity to stress that he did not want to lead, but was forced to do so by the death of Aung San and a sense of duty to finish his task.[67] This line was reliable and convincing, since the AFPFL's govern-

[61] "Human mind in its day-by-day operations cannot bear to look the truth of politics straight in the face. It must disguise, distort, belittle, and embellish the truth. The more so, the more individual is actively involved in the process of politics (…) for only by deceiving himself about the nature of politics and the role he plays on the political scene is man able to live contentedly as a political animal with himself and his fellow men" (Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among the Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace,* 6th edition, Knopf, New York 1985, p. 101).

[62] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 18.

[63] CPB had complicated relationship towards Aung San and his heritage: Goshal wrote that he made mistakes but wanted to correct them and align with the communists and for that he was killed by the British; nevertheless, he appraised him (Ba Tin (Goshal), *On the Present Political Situation in Burma and Our Tasks (1948)*, in: *Documents on Communism in Burma,* ed. Klaus Fleischmann, Institut für Asienkunde, Hamburg 1989, pp. 84 and 93–96).

[64] To use Max Weber's terms, U Nu's government routinized the charismatic authority of Aung San (Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. I, eds G. Roth, C. Wittich, University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 1978, p. 252).

[65] Until now Burma's two out of three main national holidays – Union Day (Panglong Agreement) 12th February and Martyrs' Day (19th July) are directly linked to Aung San; and the third holiday – Independence Day (4th January) is indirectly. Only 27th March (Army's day) was disassociated with Aung San, purposely or not.

[66] Susanne Prager, *Nationalismus als Kulturelle Reproduktion. Aung San und die Entstehung des Postkolonialen Birma*, in: H.-B. Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty. The History of the Conflict Between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, 1988–2011, Set in a Global Context*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, p. 452.

[67] Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values. The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarianism*, Praeger Publishers, New York 1983, pp. 112–114; As U Nu wrote in his memoirs, "circumstances alone put him there" (U Nu, *Saturday's Son*, transl. E. Yaw Lone, Yale University Press, New Heaven–London 1975, p. 135).

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ment was made up of some of Aung San's closest comrades from the socialist party. It was unsurprising, too, given Burmese cultural background: in Burma, "legitimacy of the State centres upon persons with particular qualities and particular states of mind whose remains, when they die, exercise a powerful allure for inheritors of their ideas," so "legitimacy is crucially linked to human beings engaged in the national independence struggle, and in particular Aung San."[68] For this reason "the heroism and martyrdom of Aung San and the story of independence movement provided the symbols and ideas" which were the AFPFL's "main assets."[69] U Nu was later able to complement it by building his own legitimacy as a charismatic, Buddhist leader.

This avenue was closed for the secularized army. Once Ne Win took over the power for the second (and definite) time in 1962, he was at first reluctant to use Aung San as a legitimizing tool[70] – preferring socialism and xenophobia instead. However, with time Revolutionary Council realized Aung San's potency and started stressing the "military-organisational" component of his heritage (in opposition to the "civil-religious" advocated by U Nu).[71] Already in "the Burmese Way to Socialism" from 1962 Aung San was evoked twice ("all the races of the Union we will be guided" by General Aung San's words and "peoples of the Union of Burma, shall nurture and hug a new patriotism as inspired by the words of General Aung San").[72] Consequently, Ne Win in particular, and Tatmadaw in general, redefined themselves as true heirs[73] of Aung San and made him the "spiritual father of the army."[74] Aung San "as the 'politics general' became the symbol of independent Burma and the strongest factor unifying the country."[75] Regime's chief propagandist, Maung Maung presented a picture of Aung San as a "good soldier" who "had fallen on the march," so that "only Bogyoke Ne Win remained"; in this regard "Ne Win is portrayed as preordained to fill in for the vacancy left by Aung San" – Aung San was first Bogyoke (General), Ne Win was second, his successor.[76] Thus, Aung San was "army's father," while Ne Win "developed the army to maturity" and was legitimized

[68] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 15.

[69] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 248.

[70] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 15.

[71] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 452.

[72] *The Burmese Way to Socialism*, Revolutionary Council, 28th April 1962, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/The_Burmese_Way_to_Socialism.htm (access: 12.05.2018), p. 2.

[73] In use these "royal" comparisons consciously, following Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, pp. 155–215, and Kyaw Thet ("perhaps also in a tendency to give to popular leaders such as the late General Aung San, the 'George Washington' of our revolution, the degree of loyalty which one associates with kingship"), Kyaw Thet, *Continuity in Burma. The Survival of Historic Forces*, "The Atlantic Burma", February 1958, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1958/02/continuity-in-burma/306816/ (access: 25.05.2018).

[74] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 15.

[75] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 76.

[76] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 21.

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to play a central role in Burmese politics.[77] Symbolically this was illustrated by many portraits of Aung San in his military uniform hanging in governmental units nationwide. Aung San was "symbolically cast in the role the role of the fourth great unifier king, following the dynastical founders Anawratha, Bayinnaung, and Alaungpaya."[78] He was the modern equivalent of a "warrior king" who wanted to established a strong state and whose revolution Ne Win wanted to finish.[79]

The one legacy of Aung San Tatmadaw used was the Japanese period of Aung San's career, particularly the "Blue Print for Burma" – a war-time plan written in Tokyo, probably in early 1941, before invasion on Burma.[80] Although there are controversies to which extent Aung San wrote this document alone (and to which it was dictated by the Japanese), Aung San even after the war did not deny the authorship of this document.[81] Certainly it was in accord with his fascination of Japanese fascism and militarism in that time (Japanese "methods and toughness he held in some awe and respect").[82]

In the "Blue Print" Aung San rejected constitutional monarchy as a system for Burma, due to the fact that "Burmese temperament (...) demands always a strong capable leadership and does not want merely a figurehead"; for the same reason parliamentary government is out of question as it "fosters the spirit of individualism and thus gives chance to individualistic disruptors and obstructionists to disturb or delay the course of administration"; instead he chose a militarized fascist state: "what we want is a strong state administration as exemplified in Germany and Italy. There shall be only one nation, one state, one party, one leader. There shall be no parliamentary (sic!) opposition, no nonsense of individualism. Everyone must submit to the state which is supreme over the individual (…) in administrative as well as judicial and financial matters, the rule of authority more than the rule of law should prevail."[83] This state would make Burma

[77] Ibid., pp. 22 and 26.

[78] Jon Wiant, *Tradition in the Service of Revolution: The Political Symbolism of the Taw-Hlan-Ye-Khit ("The Revolutionary Era")*, in: *Military Rule in Burma since 1962: A Kaleidoscope of Views*, ed. F.K. Lehman, Maruzen Asia, Singapore 1981, p. 61. Anawratha (Anawrahta, or Aniruddha) was the founder of the Kingdom of Pagan ("the First Burmese Empire") in 11th century, Bayinnaung was the second and most powerful monarch of the Taungoo Dynasty ("the Second Burmese Empire") in 16th century, Alaungpaya was the founder of the Konbaung Dynasty ("the Third Burmese Empire") in 18th century.

[79] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 78 and 452.

[80] Aung San, *Blue Print for Burma* (*Document 1)*…, pp. 19–27.

[81] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 18–20; for a detailed description of controversies around this document, see: Gustaaf Houtman, *Aung San's lan-zin, the Blue Print and the Japanese Occupation of Burma*, in: *Reconsidering the Japanese Military Occupation in Burma (1942–45)*, ed. Kei Nemoto, Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo 2007, pp. 179–227.

[82] Maung Maung, *Marching with Aung San*…, p. 67.

[83] Aung San, *Blue Print for Burma* (*Document 1)*…, pp. 20–27.

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rich and powerful: "our policy is to create a happy and strong and modern nation and to ensure such conditions (…) we shall (…) develop a national health and eugenic policy"; and dependent on Japan on defence, foreign policy, and economic policy with "preferential treatment for Japanese goods" and entrance into yen zone.[84]

Unsurprisingly, the Burmese army found this document very useful for their own legitimisation, conveniently omitting Aung San's more democratic statements in the after war period. The purposed bypass of democracy in Aung San's quadruple ideas for Burma ("independence – unity – democracy – socialism") was justified by "immediate implementation of socialism," the army "were promising an even better system than the parliamentary democracy system that had so far failed as implemented in Burma."[85] This is how the army legitimised its post-1962 socialistic policy by "equating socialism with Aung San" which resulted in "the army's carefully orchestrated image of Aung San as the country's hero, and as the original architect for the country's path of socialist development right up until 1987."[86]

It is fair to admit that this vision was not entirely groundless: as in every good propaganda, significant amount of data in this vision was true. In the Blue Print, one indeed may find socialistic ideas (though without using name socialism), such as proposal to confiscate (nationalize) British capital, cancel domestic debts, check usury, provide land for the landless, regulate tenancy, abolish landlordism, establish control of export, regulate of imports, control market and price and establish the "enlightened system of taxation."[87] Elsewhere Aung San also showed socialist inclinations[88] by affirmatively quoting another contemporary hero of the left, the Chinese guerrilla and communist leader Mao Zedong,[89] or by rejecting capitalism. Aung San understood capitalism as "*adhamma vada*, which means against the *dhamma*, i.e. against the Buddha's teachings"[90]; or simply "immoral" – his critique of capitalism was also a critique of fatalistic understanding of *kutho* (*kamma*): "it is not because of your *kutho*, it is because you have organized this immoral (*a-dhamma*) system"; while "private property came

[84] Ibid., pp. 20–21.

[85] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 18, 23 and 26.

[86] Ibid., p. 28.

[87] Aung San, *Blue Print for Burma* (*Document 1)*…, p. 21.

[88] "Neither Aung San nor Ne Win had any economic training, but like most anti-colonial politicians, the rhetoric of socialism and anti-capitalism was mesmerizing and the logic of capitalism and international finance simultaneously enervating and enchaining" (Robert H. Taylor, *General Ne Win. A Political Biography*, ISEAS, Singapore 2015, p. 545).

[89] "To quote the far-framed Chinese communist leader, Mao Tse-tung, to illustrate again, 'socialism (not communism as yet, mind you) can be reached only through democracy; this is an undisputed axiom of Marxism. […] It is therefore clear that the ideological struggle now going on all over the world is not between communism and democracy, but as I have sad, between old and new democracy" (*1945–1946: Aung San's Concept of "Burmese Democracy"*…, p. 39).

[90] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 260.

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about because of greed, a state that protects private property and reinforces inequality is perpetuated both by those who are benefitting from it and by its victims who mistakenly believe that the state is necessary and good because of ignorance."[91]

In his famous article "Different Types of Politics," being an interpretation of *Aggaññ-sutta*, Aung San employed a strong criticism of capitalism. In his re-telling of the story he "incorporated a critique of private property," – in his version "people found themselves unable to control their base desires because of greed" – greed, according to him "came into being because of private property," something he called "wrong belief"; the owners of property benefit "from devising a system of protection agreed that they should 'invent/create politics' and 'set up a government' to preside over them and prevent them from killing and harming each other"; in doing so "they were manipulating and deceiving those without property, since the system would disproportionately benefit property owners and institutionalize unequal economic relations (…) the result was the transfer of what had originally been commonly held property to that which was privately held, without any understanding of its negative effects," this negative capitalist dominance resulted in "the nature of government as representative of the people and as an institution that would act according to the people's desires disappeared gradually over time."[92] As Walton commented, "while U Nu's critique of private property focused on people's misunderstanding of it as permanent and lasting, Aung San rooted this wrong view in ignorance of the characteristic of *anattā* (no self/no control) and the mistaken view that there is such thing as 'my' home or 'my' garden; it is also encouraged by greed, which blinds people to the harmful effects of private property on others"; thus, in this retelling of *Aggaññ-sutta*, Aung San's critique of private property was close to that of Rousseau's in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.[93]

Even after the WWII, Aung San remained a socialist (or returnee socialist) – e.g. in 1947 he said "we must nationalize the basic industries and the vital utilities such as electricity, transport and communication (…) the ultimate objective must be to nationalize agricultural land"[94] and during Sorrento Villa Conference, which established principles for the economy of independent Burma, Aung San promised that "capitalism would never again dominate Burma" and later called "for the careful construction of a socialist state," that is: "when Burma was ready for state socialism, the state or people's cooperatives would assume control of all means of production, while allowing private

[91] Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, p. 111.

[92] Matthew J. Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, Seattle 2012, p. 131.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Aung San, *We Cannot Stand Alone. From a Speech Delivered at the AFPFL Convention for Drafting the Constitution, the 23rd May 1947*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), pp. 129–130.

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ownership."[95] Though he admitted that "even if we may be eager to build socialism in Burma conditions are not ready for it."[96] Unfortunately, in building socialist Burma the military leaders under Ne Win omitted the crucial words "careful" and "not ready" and did not allow private ownership which, combined with their general mismanagement of the state, contributed to Burma's economic catastrophe.

This army-constructed legitimization based on randomly chosen Aung San's ideas lasted until 1988 when Suu Kyi successfully challenged the official orthodoxy. Afterwards a heritage struggle over interpretation of Aung San emerged, between the existing army-centred and alternative Suu Kyi-centred ones, a duel eventually lost by the military. Since the mid-1990s the SLORC/SPDC generals, realizing their failure in keeping Aung San as their legitimacy tool, dropped him (silently conceding their defeat to Suu Kyi in this struggle over her father's legacy). The SLORC generals removed Aung San from the banknotes, lowered the importance of Martyrs' Day anniversary (and increased the importance of Army Day instead), neglected the Natmauk Museum (his birthplace) as well as his villa in Yangon (Rangoon), and even dared to criticise Aung San's policies in public.[97] This was all done in purpose: "to justify itself as rightful heir of the Burmese political lineage the regime desperately needed to tone down Aung San's profile in Burmese politics (…) there was little alternative but to practise Aung San amnesia."[98] Having rejected Aung San the new junta chose the Burmese warrior-kings (Anawrahta, Bayinnaung and Alaungpaya) instead as their models for nation-building, which was later to be best symbolized by the new capital, Naypyidaw (literally, "the royal capital").[99]

With generals leaving this heritage battlefield beaten, there remained the alternative vision of Aung San, propagated by his daughter and thanks to her celebrity status long popular in the West: an equally constructed vision, but this time *à rebours* – presenting Aung San as crystal-clear democrat.

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[95] Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*…, pp. 81–82.

[96] Aung San, *We Cannot Stand Alone*…, p. 130.

[97] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 26–27. The lowering of the importance of Martyrs' Day was visible, among other, in ending the tradition of sounding sirens across the nation commemorating Aung San's death on every July 19th (Nilanjana Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar. Khin Myo Chit to Aung San Suu Kyi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, p. 250). Now, with NLD in power, the sirens are back.

[98] "Since Aung San minus socialism equals democracy, and since Aung San had been reclaimed by the democracy movement, the generals conveniently forgot about him" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*..., pp. 10 and 26).

[99] Aung Zaw, *Behold a New Empire*, "The Irrawaddy", vol. 14, no. 10, October 2006; Dulyapak Preecharushh, *Naypyidaw. The New Capital of Burma,* White Lotus Press, Bangkok 2006, pp. 19–46 and 87–101.

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3. The Democratization of Aung San

While Ne Win and his lieutenants tried hard to present Aung San as their ideological godfather, Aung San Suu Kyi struggled even more to rebrand Aung San as a democrat. While in Burma it was quite easy to idealise Aung San by omitting uncomfortable facts and by constructing officially sanctioned benign picture of a morally clear "father of independence," Suu Kyi, writing for international audience faced harder task. She, however, had two trump cards: the ideological legacy of Aung San's final years and Suu Kyi's own iconic position in the West. The latter allowed her to becharm so many journalists, researchers and other intellectuals to believe in her version of Aung San as a democrat. In embarking on what may be called "democratization of Aung San" process, Suu Kyi proved to be a convincing writer who not only skilfully whitewashed dark parts of Aung San's past, but also successfully constructed his idealised image in the West.

Suu Kyi "polished" the image of her father, "portraying him as an advocate of 'pure politics,' at least once the promise of independence from Britain had been won"; by bringing to the fore "one of the many facets of her father's political beliefs" she "created a rather saintly picture of the 'Father of the Nation', in the way that all Burmese leaders had done before," while the "less favourable traits of the Burmese military's first general remained to be applied to the present leaders of the Tatmadaw."[100] In constructing this image Suu Kyi was wise enough not to hide the embarrassing – to the international reader – moments of Aung San's life (becoming a fascist or murdering a civilian). Instead she marginalized the former (cooperation with Japan) by portraying a picture of young, unexperienced, "reluctant collaborator"[101] who made a mistake, but realized it, admitted it and corrected it[102]; later on, she moved along these lines even further by writing that her father "was very intelligent (…) he was also quite ready to admit his mistakes. For example, he acknowledged that it was because of his – not just his – but a general political immaturity that made them look to a fascist military power [Japan] for help. But he was quick to learn and decided later that the best way to go about achieving independence was through a political solution that hurts no one."[103] And she justified the latter (the murder of a headman), by writing that Aung San simply carried out "the findings of the court martial" and presented whole story as a plot of a jealous rival to discredit Aung San.[104] Most importantly, Suu Kyi turned Aung San's failings into virtues by presenting him as a person who searched for and tried many ideologies – committing mistakes on

[100] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 203.

[101] These words are not Suu Kyi's but her biographer, Justin Wintle who found a good expression to name this vision (Wintle, *Perfect Hostage*…, pp. 92–104).

[102] Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, pp. 14–18.

[103] Suu Kyi, Clements, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 114.

[104] Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 27.

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the way – but ultimately found democracy and understood that that was the best available form of government.[105] That is why Suu Kyi in her hagiography portrayed him as a firm democracy believer ("he believed in the principles of justice and democracy"), as a true democrat in everyday policy making ("he did not impose his views on others, decisions were reached after free and full discussions"), as a people's leader ("Aung San's appeal was not so much to extremists as to the great majority of ordinary citizens who wished to pursue their own lives in peace and prosperity under a leader they could trust and respect") and as a selfless patriot dedicated to the cause ("in him they saw that leader, a man who put the interests of the country before his own needs, who remained poor and unassuming at the height of his power, who accepted the responsibilities of leadership without hankering after the privileges, and who, for all his political acumen and powers of statecraft, retained at the core of his being a deep simplicity)."[106] Aung San comes out from Suu Kyi's portrait as a skilful national leader with "human face" – not without failings as each of us – whom one naturally tends to like. That is why Suu Kyi's hagiography on her father is a skilful piece of modern propaganda.

And, as each good propaganda, it has many true elements, such as his usage of democracy. Aung San, yesterday's communist-turned-fascist-turned-anti-fascist after the war (un)expectedly became a democrat.[107] He said that "democracy is the only ideology consisted with freedom,"[108] he spoke about "new democracy," differentiated from "old democracy"[109]; he described the former vaguely as being "although not entirely free of capitalism, is not capitalistic"; "somewhere betwixt and between," based on "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" and where "the greatest number wields the greatest power"; contrary to "old democracies" (which succumbed to manipulations of

[105] Ibid., pp. 36–37; During her later interview with Clements Suu Kyi added "by the time he died, he understood that the problems of the country should be resolved through democratic policies and not through armed combat" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 85).

[106] Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, pp. 36–37.

[107] Aung San, yesterday's fascist, now called fascism "the worst product of capitalism the world has ever seen" and called the British colonial policy an "economic fascism" (Aung San, *Problems for Burma's Freedom*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, pp. 97 and 108–109).

[108] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 194.

[109] "Roughly speaking, [there is now] a division of the world into two main camps, the division in forces of freedom and democracy on the one hand and the forces of anti-freedom, anti-democracy reaction on the other; or rather between forces for the old world and those for a new world, between so to speak, old democracies and new democracies; and not between democracy and communism as it is generally painted to be. For from any point of view, communist or noncommunist, there is no immediate prospect of communism being successfully established anywhere in the world. Even in the Soviet Union" (*1945–1946: Aung San's Concept of "Burmese Democracy"*…, pp. 38–39).

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"capitalists and big business discreetly assuming power"); this "new democracy" would "place power in the hands of the masses through their elected representative from top to bottom"; and "if they have no confidence in their representative they must have the power to recall them."[110] And he used Lincolnian concepts of democracy as representing "a government of the people, by the people and for the people."[111]

Aung San also distinguished "true" democracy from "sham" one as "not every democracy is true democracy" otherwise "any other kind of democracy is sham," like in some "imperfect democracies concealing in democratic guise the dictatorship of the capitalist class," where "the words 'people' and 'democracy' and so on are used freely, but not sincerely (…) they are only catchwords to hoodwink the people into placing power in the hands of those who are supposed to use that power in the interest of the people, but who eventually use it in the interests of the ruling classes against the interest of the people." [112] Whereas the true one is only when the state "identifies itself with the people's interest in theory as well as practice," where "government that serves to follow the wishes of the people"; therefore "only true democracy can work for the real good of the people, real equality of status and opportunity for every one irrespective of class or race or religion or sex"; only true democracy "must be our basis if we want to draw up our constitution with the people as the real sovereign and the people's interest as the primary consideration" and "democracy alone is the basis upon which the real progress of a nation can be built"; democracy, then, "may be the foundation, and is the ultimate truth of politics." [113]

In one of his articles Aung San interpreted *Aggañña-sutta* along democratic and anti-capitalist lines. Writing about humans origin "in the era of the *padesa* tree" when Mahā-Sammata was elected and the necessity to establish government was due to people's inability to observe the law (they were stealing, lying and murdering etc.) caused by greed and resulted in "in accumulation of private property and the wrong-viewed concept of 'mine'"; due to this ignorance and fighting arouse – hence the need for

[110] Aung San, *Bogyoke Aung San's Address at the Convention Held at the Jubilee Hall, Rangoon, on the 23rd May 1947*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, p. 161; Silverstein, *Introduction*…, p. 14; he also called democracy "the people's desire, the *ana* of the people' indicating that the ultimate form of authority is one based on the peoples' appreciation of what is being done for them, namely 'influence'" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 20–21 and 168).

[111] *Aung San Suu Kyi's 1st Speech, 23 September, 1995 (no. 1)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 41. Apparently, Lincoln had been one of Aung San's heroes (Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 213).

[112] Aung San, *Basis for Burma's Democracy*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, pp. 153–155; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 254.

[113] Ibid.

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government.[114] Such interpretation followed the traditional Burmese line of thinking[115], yet there are two unique features in Aung San's own interpretations: the democratic understanding of Mahā-Sammata's election and the criticism of capitalism.

Aung San's more democratic retelling of *Aggañña-dutta* is visible in saying that "government came about because people were not able to observe proper moral conduct" – the agreement to elect Mahā-Sammata was preceded "by a general agreement among the people to invent/create politics (*nain ngan ye htwin*) and "set up a government" (*a-so ya htaung*); with these words Aung San "emphasized what he saw as the contractual and consent-based nature of the original agreement, going beyond the language of the Pali text"; moreover, because Mahā-Sammata was elected at the request of the people "the legitimate role of the government is be 'people's representative' and to act 'according to the people's desires.'"[116] The democratic notion in Aung San's interpretation is present in using *Aggañña-sutta* to justify "electoral and even democratic politics", which "broadened the boundaries of 'the political'"; this "more malleable and inclusive notion of politics" is one of the aspects that makes Aung San's thought more democratic in comparison with other contemporary Burmese politicians.[117]

Another one is visible in his statements about the nature of politics. He started from rhetorical questions and then moved to give answers: "some of us still say that 'politics' is dirty. Is that correct? Of course not! It is not politics which is dirty, but only those who choose to dirty it. And what is politics? Is it something which is high above, beyond the reach of the common man? Is it the professions of the charlatans who used to roam the country, playing to the credulous imaginations of the peoples, playing on their simple minds? (…) the truth is that politics is neither high nor lowly, neither magic nor astrology nor alchemy (…) it marches with events, and is in every way a part of our daily lives. It is us. Man is a political animal (…) and politics is in our being and our works"[118]; "politics means your everyday life… it is how you eat, sleep, work and live, with which politics is concerned."[119] Although the statement of not dirtiness of politics expressed by this political realist is indeed intriguing, what is more important is the philosophical assessment of these words. Silverstein dismissed this understanding of politics as "all-encompassing" (he characterized Aung San's thought as "neither

[114] Quoted in: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 254.

[115] "Aung San drew the same lesson from this *sutta* as previous Burmese commentators: politics and political authority came about because of conflict between people and the increasing complexity of society" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 131).

[116] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 79.

[117] Ibid., p. 80.

[118] Aung San, *Religion, The Sangha, and Politics. From Inaugural Address at the AFPFL Convention, January 1945*, in: *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), p. 125.

[119] Aung San, *Problems for Burma's Freedom*…, p. 95.

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systematic nor original in his approach to politics").[120] On the other hand Walton noted that these words in the Burmese conditions "pointed out the significance of the individual in an established free Burma"[121] and meant challenging "a conception of politics that pertained solely to government activities or elite maneuvering," by "insisting that politics was neither above nor below the average person"; Aung San "recognized the need for the leaders of the Burmese independence struggle to involve the population in public life in a way that had been unthinkable prior to the colonial period."[122]

In summarizing the democratic notions in Aung San's political thought, one, indeed, needs to admit that his political thought contains democratic elements, perhaps even significant amount of it (especially in comparison with ideas of his contemporary political rivals, such as Ba Maw or U Saw). There are, however, two reservations that need to be added. First, Aung San's ideas about democracy are quite vague, which does not help to make it clear how he understood this system (though an ingenious variation of social democracy seems to be the nearest equivalent). Naturally, Aung San's obscure notions of democracy did not harm him; on the contrary in the Burmese conditions only helped him in his political career, as using democracy as a magic wand proved to be a winning strategy. Second, and more important, preaching about democracy does not make one a democrat: one judge people by the actions, not words and here Aung San, with his murder of an innocent village headman and his generally militant actions during WWII hardly qualifies as a democrat. Even in his post-1945 period, he can barely be called a democrat: he ruled the AFPFL in the authoritarian way, without tolerating dissidents and critical voices (which, in the Burmese conditions, proved to be an efficient – if not the only possible – way, but this did not have much in common with democracy) – all in all, this was rather a Burmese version of democratic centralism than democracy.[123] Moreover, it is quite naïve to believe that this political chameleon, pragmatic to the core communist-turned-socialist-turned-fascist-turned-antifascist finally trusted in democracy. If Aung San within just one decade of his life was able to try almost all important global ideologies, why assuming that he would have stopped at democracy? Given the fact that ideologies played rather little role in his life, the presumption that he would truly embrace democracy is risky, at best.

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[120] Silverstein, *Introduction*…, p. 5.

[121] *1945–1946: Aung San's Concept of "Burmese Democracy"*…, p. 35

[122] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 75. Walton, however, admits that "while Aung San and others tried throughout the 1930s and 40s to rehabilitate the image of "politics" (and of those who practiced it), they were not entirely successful (…) despite Aung San's attempt to rehabilitate the term and demonstrate to the Burmese population that politics was in fact an unavoidable element of everyone's daily life, the trope of "dirty politics" persisted after independence and probably gained strength as a result of the partisan turmoil of the parliamentary period." (Ibid., pp. 158 and 168).

[123] Susanne Prager, *Nationalismus als Kulturelle Reproduktion*…, p. 21.

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All the reservation one has about Aung San's complicated relationship with democracy (to put it favourably) are of secondary importance here. What matters most is how Suu Kyi "democratized Aung San" in order to position herself as his true heiress: national, but also ideological. Once Suu Kyi entered politics and started the all-out struggle with the generals over her father's legacy, she had to adjust her vision of Aung San to suit her current political needs, that is to present her fight for power to the international audience as a moral struggle to win democracy in Burma and to restore the original meaning of Aung San, apparently corrupted by the army. In this repainted and reconstructed picture, Aung San emerged as a genuine democrat who wanted democracy in Burma, separation of army from politics and other check and balances, while Ne Win and other generals illegally took over the power against his conceptual, institutional and legal legacy. Aung San was leaning towards democracy, Ne Win did everything to say a farewell to it, not only in words, but also in his deeds.

The elaboration of this argument is best seen in her Shwedagon speech (see: below), but she presented the more intellectual and sophisticated version of her argument in the article "The True Meaning of *Boh*" which was published in the bestseller collection of her writings and speeches edited by her husband, Michael Aris. Adjunct to the article is short message from Suu Kyi that tells everything: "the more I learn about modern Burmese politics the more I realize how essential is my father's role in keeping alive the spirit of truth and justice during all these years under a corrupt regime. When I honour my father I honour all those who stand for political integrity in Burma."[124] This clearly political article (that initially somehow found its place in an academic journal)[125] is indeed written along these lines. It starts with explaining the meaning of the Burmese word *boh*, derived from Pāli's *bala* (strength) that is semantically dangerously close to word *balakara* (violence) – this introduction serves Suu Kyi to say that "the dividing line between praiseworthy strength and undesirable force is very thin" and that "strength turns destructive when acted out beyond acceptable limits"; to make matters worse, "the menace which might, uncontrolled by principle, poses is predictably greatest in times made turbulent by sweeping social and political changes."[126] One cannot agree more with this correct philosophical observation of Suu Kyi, but the purpose of the article is not to discuss moral dangers of power, but to deify Aung San. He, predictably, was able to resist the temptation of power thanks to setting himself "extremely high standards," as well as to his Buddhist upbringing that taught him "the concept of strength as a mental and spiritual force" (derived from five *indriya*, controlling faculties: confidence, energy, mindfulness, mental discipline and wisdom); and to his practical experience in the battlefield which made him "well acquainted with the practical dangers of undisciplined

[124] Aung San Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, p. 186.

[125] Initially this article was published in "Asian Survey", vol. 31, no. 9, pp. 793–797.

[126] Ibid., p. 187.

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force."[127] This all made Aung San see "life as 'a pilgrimage in quest of truth and perfection'" in which he wanted "to carry his country with him in quest"; he succeeded thanks to his "ability to put his words into action, to demonstrate that integrity and honesty could be an effective basis for practical politics"; thus "when political power came to his hands he could say with absolute sincerity and a complete lack of self-consciousness that he would govern 'on the basis of loving kindness and truth."[128] This article marks probably the first example of Suu Kyi's attempt to paint Aung San as an "enlightened Buddhist"[129] who – in this constructed vision – is quite similar to Ba Swe's picture of Stalin.[130]

However, deification of Aung San is only one part of the article. Another, equally, if not more important goal for Suu Kyi was to present her imagined Aung San's vision for the army, apparently corrupted later by Ne Win: "Aung San visualised the army he had founded as an austere and honourable institution carved out of such rock-solid virtues as incorruptibility, self-service and self-discipline, its strength wholly dedicated to the service of the nation without thought of personal gain"; moreover, "he exhorted his soldiers to refrain from adopting a stance which would make their strength or arms seem an instrument of oppression," by "pointing out the human tendency of the strong to bully the weak, he urged the fearless opposition of immoral strength and the practice of scrupulous justice towards the weak."[131] She continued this indigestible propaganda elsewhere: "when my father founded the armed forces he founded them as the armed forces of the people. At that time the people cherished strong feelings of love and sympathy towards the armed forces (…) I should like to see again such a close relationship between the army and the people – the army as an organization standing behind the people with love and sympathy."[132] In short, as Suu Kyi added in yet another place, Aung San founded the army "to be an honourable one that was loved and trusted by the people."[133]

Aung San was not only a founder of a benevolent, charity-like army, but moreover he was wise to predict that the army may go astray: he wanted the army to be a "force

[127] According to Suu Kyi, Aung San learned these Buddhist values at a Buddhist monastery in his youth (Ibid., p. 188).

[128] Ibid., p. 191.

[129] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 203. For more about making Aung San an enlightened Buddhist, see: below.

[130] Though, to be fair, Ba Swe at least admitted that Stalin did not hesitate to kill his opponents, "there is one thing he cannot tolerate: Those, who obstruct or sabotage his work or have in one way or another become his enemies. He light-heartedly wipes them out (…) he didn't find it difficult to kill whoever deserved to be killed, to banish whoever deserved to be banished or to coax whoever deserved to be coaxed" (*Maung Ba Swe: Stalin, Erector of Paradise on Earth (Lokanibbana*), transl. G. Noack, in: *Books on the Russian Revolution*, Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper No. 10:9, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Passauer Beiträge zur Südostasienkunde, Passau 2008, pp. 53–56).

[131] Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, p. 188.

[132] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity Among Ethnic Groups*…, p. 223.

[133] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 71.

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of protection, not destruction"[134] and he "warned that if the army came to be detested by the people, the reason for which it had been founded would vitiated" for "the Burmese army had not been founded by one man or one party, it was for the whole country" – according to his daughter, he "rejected the blinkered view of those military personnel who harboured the opinion that only they were capable of patriotism" and told his soldiers "you must change this notion that only the soldiers matter"; instead the army should "continuously strive for excellence," but "it had to be excellence without elitism."[135] Furthermore, he apparently said that "although we bear arms, we do not commit injustices, we are not the nation's enemies, we are the nation's friends," as for him "the honour of the nation meant the honour of the people, and the honour of the people was inextricably linked with his own honour and that of his soldiers"; and if one day the government loses the respect, he would resign, for him "to rule without honour held no attraction for a soldier-statesman for whom strength had value only when it served a just cause"; he himself was indifferent to political power but dedicated to the cause (with "courage to do what he believed to be right without fear of calumny or death)."[136]

A picture that emerges from this kind of hagiographic deification – worth of North Korea's propaganda – is that of an imagined Aung San, who is more similar to 1988 democratic protesters (they have had enough of army's corruption, misuse of power, elitism and brutality)[137] than to the real Aung San of the 1940s whose army, founded on Burman ethnocentrism, burned villages, killed civilians and supported the brutal Japanese occupation.[138]

In Suu Kyi's vision, Aung San was not only close to a living ideal, but also a democrat pure and simple, who "remains in the heart of the people (…) genuinely and unwaveringly,"[139] who despite not being able "to leave us in any material wealth (…) he left so much *metta* in the heart of you people,"[140] who "relied on people's strength"

[134] Ibid., p. 48.

[135] Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, p. 188.

[136] Ibid. Just to compare with Slim's memoirs: "he was certainly ambitious and meant to secure himself a dominant position in post-war Burma" (Slim, *Defeat into Victory*…, p. 428).

[137] About protests and their goals: Bertil Lintner, *Outrage. Burma's Struggle for Democracy*, 2nd edition, White Lotus, Bangkok–London 1990, pp. 91–97 and 117–120.

[138] The army committed atrocities in both 1942 and 1945 (e.g. in the former case killing civilians from ethnic minorities, in the latter case bayonetting the Japanese nurses) (Bayly, Harper, *Forgotten Wars*…, pp. 231–232 and 437); about ethnocentrism (Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, pp. 53–57).

[139] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 85.

[140] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 314.

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who would not be able to achieve his political goals "without the support and active co-operation of the public," and who knew that "genuine support" could neither "be coerced" nor won "with flattery or false promises," for "he saw plain honesty as the only foundation for the mutual trust and respect which would have to be established between him and the people of Burma if they were to carry out unitedly the task of creating an independent, self-reliant nation"; otherwise "to indulge in political guile and deceit would be to insult the people and to violate his own self-respect."[141] Suu Kyi continued this veneration with writing that Aung San "worked on assumption the majority of the people of Burma were wise"[142] – a clear allusion to Ne Win's junta patronising attitude towards the Burmese[143] – and she achieved heights of exaltation when wrote that "heroes of people represent their aspirations, while their actual leaders reflect the degree to which these aspirations are capable of being realized. In these rare moments of history when the two coincide there is an inner harmony and a climactic release of spiritual and physical vigour, the memory of which constitutes a reservoir and pride which can be drawn upon when the times are impoverished of dignity and achievement."[144]

This exaltation is not only aesthetically indigestible, but it is also politically very clear: the memory of good times of Aung San provides hope for bad times of military usurpers; a hope Suu Kyi can build upon and use for her own political career as the proper heiress who could restore the initial "inner harmony." It was for this reason that Suu Kyi made her (failed) 2003 attempt to "reconsecrate Burma" by following Aung San's 1947 electoral itinerary – she wanted to "renew the unique relationship" between "Aung San and the people" and by doing this, deprive the military government of its legitimacy.[145] And that is why, ideologically speaking, Suu Kyi evoked Aung San, while justifying her concepts of rights-based democracy,[146] or the need to empower each individual[147] (see: later in this book).

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[141] Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, pp. 189–190.

[142] Ibid., p. 190.

[143] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 193; the Burmese were, in Ne Win's eyes, still "the same rather lazy, gullible people who had lost the country's economic and political independence in the nineteenth century" (Taylor, *General Ne Win*…, p. 553).

[144] Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, p. 190.

[145] This attempt failed and provoked the army to try to kill Suu Kyi at Depayin (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 458).

[146] "According to dad, everyone must have equal economic opportunities and rights" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on Sunday, 24 September, 1995 (no. 2)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 64).

[147] Giving an example of Aung San, she told the people that everyone can be a hero: "We cannot just rely on heroes. We have to try to be heroes. There is no such thing as heroism, for everybody can be a hero if he or she wants to be one. Everyone is equal. None of us who are working for democracy

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And finally, last aspect, also (un)surprisingly convenient politically for Suu Kyi – who wanted to separate the army from politics and put the army back into barracks – that Aung San left the army and ruled as a civilian: "he was a soldier who could fight (…) but who when the fighting was over could lay aside his sword without fear and pursue the path of peace"[148] – Suu Kyi would later build an elaborated argument in favour of civilian government; symbolically it was visible with Aung San's picture in civilian dress hanging at the entrance to her house.[149] Throughout her entire political career she constantly used this argument: "she started her political journey under a picture of Aung San in civilian dress and has continually emphasized his role as politician and statesman (…) he valued his role as a politician and it was a role which justified his founding of the Burmese army rather than the army justifying and reinforcing his political leadership."[150] Unfortunately, this was historically incorrect assessment as Aung San's own vision of the army "could lead to military dictatorship, not the army controlled by the State"; in this regard Tatmadaw was indeed "the spiritual child of Aung San." [151] That is why Suu Kyi who identified herself with "the Western concept of a clear separation of the civilian and the military spheres and the subordination of the latter to the former," could "hardly claim to follow in her father's footsteps."[152] She had to manipulate his legacy and twist it to serve her purposes. Which she skilfully did.

Suu Kyi ended her agitprop article with the conclusion that Aung San was too good for politics which cost him his life: "the basic tendency to regard his fellow men as intelligent beings amenable to reason and responsible to genuine goodwill made him vulnerable to the treachery of opponents who were less concerned with principles than with the drive to gain power."[153] Thus, in the end, Suu Kyi not only delegitimized Tatmadaw's claim to rule the country but came close to implicitly equalizing the murderers of Aung San with the military dictators who staged the coup in 1962 and ruled ever since. This was somehow in line with her strategy of calling the 1988 protests

can be called heroes. We are simply trying to achieve what we want to the best of our ability within the law. If we continue to believe in heroism we have to adopt a spirit that says each and everyone of us can be a hero. Only such heroic spirit can be beneficial for the country" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 186–187).

[148] Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, p. 191.

[149] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 249.

[150] Ibid., p. 326.

[151] According to Aung San, "the State relied totally on the 'people's consent' and had to 'identify itself with the people's interests in theory as well as practice'" (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 75 and 452).

[152] Ibid., p. 82.

[153] Suu Kyi, *The True Meaning of Boh*…, p. 191.

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"second struggle for national independence" (after the first one, led by her father),[154] and thus "creating a spurious analogy between the foreign rule of the British and the rule of the Tatmadaw,"[155] for the first time used during her Shwedagon Speech (see: below).

Suu Kyi continued her first-class propaganda of her father in her most famous text, an essay "Freedom from Fear," which remains Suu Kyi's most well-known and probably most frequently read text.[156] That is why her message about Aung San from "Freedom from Fear" – due to this essay's popularity – turned out to be the most influential. Here Suu Kyi presented Aung San as a "revolutionary" who "searched tirelessly for answers to the problems that beset Burma during her times of trial" and who "exhorted the people to develop courage" (she quoted him saying "each and every one of you must make sacrifices to become a hero possessed of courage and intrepidity (…) only then shall we all be able to enjoy true freedom").[157] Moreover, Aung San "constantly demonstrated courage – not just the physical sort but the kind that enabled him to speak the truth, to stand by his word, to accept criticism, to admit his faults, to correct his mistakes, to respect the opposition, to parley with the enemy and to let people be the judge of his worthiness as a leader," and "it is for such moral courage that he will always be loved and respected in Burma – not merely as a warrior hero but as the inspiration and conscience of the nation"; Suu Kyi concluded her idealised vision by comparing Aung San to Gandhi (for having "the intrinsic qualities" and "inevitable sameness about the challenges of authoritarian rule anywhere at any time") and attributing Nehru's words to Gandhi to Aung San as well: "the essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these."[158] Suu Kyi again idealised Aung San and omitted uncomfortable

[154] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 193.

[155] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 404.

[156] It was simultaneously published in "The New York Times", "The Times of India", "The Far East Economic Review" and other newspapers, a reprint was included in the collection of Suu Kyi's writings edited by her husband, Michael Aris: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, pp. 180–185. I used the reprint here.

[157] Ibid., p 182.

[158] Ibid., pp. 183–184. In her famous "Freedom from Fear" Suu Kyi continued this idealisation by writing that Aung San was "always one to practice what he preached" (Ibid., p. 183). And in 2010, when she was released from house arrest for the last time, she said about her father: "I'd also want to say that we must be able to distinguish between the right and the wrong. We must have the courage to stand on the side that is right. What is right and what is wrong cannot be the same from time to time. As time changed, as circumstances changed, answers (solutions) do also changed. But, whether we should or should not do, we should ask our conscience. There is one thing my dad had said. He said he dares to stand in front of his court of conscience. For me to, I do stand in front of my court of conscience daily to be trialed. Likewise, our fellow peoples should also stand before your court of conscious daily and get trialed. If you do so, the answer to which whether you are

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facts from his polished image. Although her propaganda is not as blatant as in "The True Meaning of Boh," she had her nerve to compare militant Aung San to non-violent Gandhi: the latter, with all reservations about him as to one should have to every politician[159] was truly dedicated to non-violence which cannot be said about Aung San, who even openly criticised Gandhi and his methods,[160] preferring the militant actions of Subhas Chandra Bose[161] (some even claim that Bose was Aung San's "ideal").[162] Finally, styling Aung San as the "conscience of the nation" – given his war-time record – is a Monty Python's style humour.

Due to Suu Kyi's writing skills and a general mood of sympathy towards her and her cause at the beginning of the 1990s, she was able to win hearts and minds of many in the West. Her powerful essays about democracy, freedom and Buddhism (see: below) have struck a chord with Western readers. This, in turn, helped her to smuggle her polished, idealized version of Aung San to the West and made it the mainstream.[163] How successful she was in her endeavour showed the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in 1991 when Suu Kyi was awarded (*in absentia*) this prestigious prize. In the speech on behalf of the Nobel Committee its Chairman prof. Francis Sejersted evoked Aung San – calling him "the leader in Burma's struggle for liberation" – along with Gandhi as the "sources of her inspiration" and "potent symbols" and followed Suu Kyi's line by talking about "fundamental similarities" between them.[164] As one critical scholar commented, "The Nobel Committee followed Suu Kyi" by calling "Aung San the 'liberator' of Burma and ascribed to him a quasi-religious and thus timeless qualities (…) the sceptical analyst

really doing what you ought to do will appear. If we all do so, our efforts will gain values (strength). We must use our energy and strength in the right way" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*, Voice of America, 15.11.2010, https://voaburmese.wordpress.com/2010/11/15/aung-san-suu-kyis-first-speech-translation-in-english/ (access: 14.07.2018)).

[159] For a critical voice on Gandhi, see: Paul Johnston, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties*, Harper & Row, New York 1983, pp. 470–472.

[160] "Thank God (if there is a God), that there is no man in Burma like Gandhi because he is so unchangeable," quoted in: Fred von der Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1963, p. 81.

[161] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 455; Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 266.

[162] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 455.

[163] Almost all, if not all biographies of Suu Kyi, including the two most important ones (Wintle's and Popham's) followed this "polished" vision of Aung San; for a criticism of this attitude, see: McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, pp. 154–165; Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 160–165.

[164] Francis Sejersted, *The 1991 Nobel Prize for Peace*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 228–234.

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may ask just how the quite militant political ideas and practices of Aung San can be harmonized with his daughter's belief in non-violence."[165]

This showed that Sejersted, whose knowledge about Burma must have been limited, bought Suu Kyi's repacking of Aung San as a democrat who wanted to liberate Burma and whose steps Suu Kyi was then following. The fact that Sejersted mentioned Aung San and presented him in an unambiguous, positive light proved the power of Suu Kyi's persuasion. It also proved to be a considerable irony that the Chairman of the Noble Committee mentioned a person whose political realism may be considered the antithesis of the values propagated by the Nobel Committee. However, aside from a narrow group of Burma experts, this irony must have been lost to the spectators of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize ceremony.

In whitewashing and idealising her father's history, Suu Kyi not only successfully democratized him in the West, but also achieved another success: she contributed to presenting this rather down-to-earth politician as a devout Buddhist. This was partially seen already in her hagiography (where she wrote that "Aung San, whom popular opinion has often cast in the role of a complete political animal, had a deep and abiding interest in religion" which expressed itself in his unrealized desire to become a monk and in his inner "pilgrimage in the quest of Truth and Perfection," and his "striving after 'sincerity in thought, word and deed'")[166]; and in "The True Meaning of Boh." This Buddhicisation of San Aung later continued in Suu Kyi's extended interview from 1996,[167] which secured Suu Kyi's own position in the West as a Buddhist equivalent of a saint.[168] Suu Kyi lost no opportunity to present Aung San as morally exemplary. In her words he was a "great man"; "a better person that I am," who was "very refined in spirit"; "born with a sense of responsibility," who "maintained the dignity and honor of the nation, taking his responsibilities very seriously" and who was "capable of learning and who learned all the time," and at the same time "conscious of his faults and of the need to improve it (…) he was a person who went in for self-improvement all the time"; and – most importantly – "there was at the core of his being a wholesomeness and a refinement that kept him together and made him an integrated person throughout all the phases the went through"; in short Aung San was close to being a living ideal in the Buddhist model. "My father once talked about purity in thought, word and deed. That's what I mean by perfection."[169] Suu Kyi's Buddhicisation of Aung San presented him in the traditional Burmese fashion as a leader who was equipped to rule thanks to his high morality and, in a way worthy of the monks, was dedicated to wisdom and thus developed refined mind; a leader who sacrificed himself in order to serve the people in almost bodhisattva way.

[165] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 204 and 316.
[166] Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 8.
[167] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 8–222.
[168] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 319.
[169] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 83–85.

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Naturally, this exaggeration cannot be taken seriously, but what is important here is the fact that this new, Buddhicised view of Aung San in turn provoked an academic debate about the role of Buddhism in his political ideas.

4. Aung San and Buddhism

Until the late 1990s, the dominant, conventional understanding of Aung San in the international academia had been that of a secular politician advocating separation of religion from politics, almost along modern, Western lines. This view has been challenged by scholars who showed that religion indeed played role in his political thinking, though an open question remains whether (or to which extent) he used it genuinely or rhetorically.

The first way of understanding Aung San was propagated by Maung Maung,[170] Donald Eugene Smith[171] and Joseph Silverstein[172] all of whom presented Aung San as a politician who believed in: "the clear separation between politics and religion"[173] (Aung San's words "religion is a matter of individual conscience, while politics is social science" were frequently quoted),[174] not using "religion in the service of politics," and consequently, "never having identified with the Buddhist political leaders," and making the Burmese independence movement "predominantly secular and impartial on the religious issue."[175] Even Suu Kyi quoted his words that "to mix religion with politics was to go against the spirit of religion itself."[176] In this view, despite the fact that Aung San did not ignore religion, "Buddhism – an integral part of Burmese tradition – did not provide Aung San with a dominant theme in his political thought, as it did with several of his contemporaries, nor did it provide a basis for his speeches and actions."[177] In a more muted version of this argument, Aung San's more secular nationalism overshadowed earlier traditions of religion-inspired nationalisms of U Ottama and Hsaya San.[178]

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[170] *Aung San of Burma*, ed. Maung Maung, Unity Publishing House, Yangon 2011 (reprint of the 1962 edition), pp. 3–155.

[171] Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1965, p. vii.

[172] Silverstein, *Introduction*…, pp. 1–19.

[173] Ibid., p. 6.

[174] "We must draw a clear line between politics and religion because the two are not one and the same thing. If we mix religion with politics, the we offend the spirit of religion itself. Politics is pure secular science" (Aung San, *Religion, the Sangha*…, p. 126).

[175] Silverstein, *Introduction*…, p. 6.

[176] Suu Kyi quoted the words about not mixing the religion with politics only to balance this statement by writing of his deep interest in religion, his desire to become a monk and his quest for "truth and perfection" (Suu Kyi, *My Father*…, p. 8).

[177] Silverstein, *Introduction*…, p. 5.

[178] Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*…, pp. 117–119, Charney, *History of Modern Burma*…, p. 90.

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This view of Aung San as a Burmese equivalent of a secularist was challenged by Gustaaf Houtman and other scholars who used Burmese versions of Aung San's speeches to show that not only religion mattered for him, but that it played important role in his political thinking: "he could not but help bring Buddhist sentiment into his speeches, if only because he was addressing Burmese people, the majority of whom are Buddhist, and because his ultimate goal was socialism after democracy, and socialism had been translated into Burmese by Buddhist concepts"[179]; accordingly, Aung San "did indeed reason about politics using Buddhist ideas."[180]

In this regard, Aung San followed the traditional Burmese distinction of two spheres of existence – so frequently mentioned already here, but worth to repeat – *loki* (or *lawki*, the mundane world) and *lokuttara* (or *lawkouttara,* the sphere of Buddhist transcendental truths), and he rejected politics as a secular matter in the former (*loki*) one, but not in the latter (*lokuttara*) one; in other words, he distinguished "one kind of secularity from another – he argued against certain prevalent interpretations of politics which linked it to low forms of magic (*loki pañña*)", and "he was against interference in politics by certain kinds of 'contaminated' Buddhism, as oppose to the higher forms of Buddhist practice with social implications, such as *byama-so tayà* (…) which he admired and observed as the most vital component in the politics of a socialist society, indeed, as representing socialism."[181] In this view Aung San, knowing that "politics is a 'mundane' affair that – unlike the issue of *nibbana* – does not excite the Burmese people" struggled "to find respectability for politics in the Burmese system of thought," so he took as his reference "two indigenous models for political behaviour" – the first one is the highest politics (*lokuttara* politics), a Buddhist politics with *nibbāna* as the reference point (building pagodas, supporting monks, meditating) which results in reduction of "mental defilements" and prosperity of the country; the second one is the "*loki pañña* path," which is "based on low and 'dirty' opportunist practices of astrology, magic and wizardry, that leave the selfish mind intact with its defilements" – Aung San rejected the latter (*loki* politics of alchemy, astrology and contaminated religion) and accepted the former (admiring "politics such as *samadhi*, *metta*, and *byama-so tayà*"), warning that "politics must be clean, suggesting that the techniques for attaining *nibbana* have a relevance for Burmese politics"; finally he linked this *lokuttara*, highest form of politics with socialism and democracy. [182] According to Houtman, Aung San distinguished

[179] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 244–245.

[180] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 131.

[181] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 246.

[182] Ibid., pp. 246, 255 and 258. Aung San indeed rejected "superstitious" means in politics, such as alchemy: according to him politics is not "a profession of the charlatans who used to roam the country, plying to the credulous imagination of the people, preying on their simple mind (…) The truth is that politics is (…) neither magic nor astrology nor alchemy" (Aung San, *Religion, the Sangha*…, p. 125).

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between two forms of Buddhism: one as a mundane religion (*batha-yeì*, *bokda batha*), in "cultural points of view" – the "Buddhendom" – "that broad culturally shared system of beliefs which is often in conflict with the original pure form of Buddhism and which is comparable in truth value to other religions"; and another one as the highest form, beyond religion (*thathana-yeì, buddha sasana*), "the Buddha's teachings as correctly implemented"; consequently Aung San rejected the former (Buddhendom), but not the latter (claiming that the latter "plays a role in encouraging the highest political values," such as *metta*) and proceeded "to say that Buddhism should be cleansed of its more defiling Buddhendom elements, and only its higher values are valuable to politics" – Aung San spoke "of Buddhism by monks as 'the highest politics,' whereas earlier he had said that 'if we mix religion with politics, this is against the spirit of religion itself, for religion takes care of our hereafter and usually has not to do with mundane affairs which are the sphere of politics.' We can only understand Aung San if we comprehend that he has moved between two very different senses of religion, namely from Buddhist 'religion' (Buddhendom) in the mundane world, a cultural kind of Buddhism full of accretions."[183] This interpretation allowed Houtman to claim that for Aung San democracy was – in an open comparison to Buddha's Middle Way – "the third way," between "two extremes, communism and capitalism or fascism"; the picture that emerges from Houtman's reading of Aung San is that he "conjoined the political quest with a spiritual one"; a narrative which made Suu Kyi's own "revolution of the spirit" logical and legitimate.[184]

It was only natural that such highly idealised (to put it favourably) vision would be met with critical reaction. One could not agree more with criticism from both McCarthy and Zöllner. McCarthy wrote that Houtman's "selective, almost enlightened portrayal of Aung San is questionable," for "unless Buddhism can be equated with violence, his interpretation of Aung San would seem problematic."[185] Zöllner followed this line of criticism and called Houtman's attitude an academic equivalent of Suu Kyi's "polishing" Aung San's image by making him an "enlightened Buddhist."[186]

McCarthy's main argument was that given the impossibility of saying what views Aung San had in private about Buddhism ("his actions complicate any speculation over beliefs that he may have held privately"),[187] we should judge him by his actions ("what-

[183] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 259–260; Houtman's Buddhendom may be compared to Spiro's kammatic, apotropaic and esoteric Buddhisms (Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*, 2nd edition, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles–London 1982, pp. 66–191).

[184] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 21 and 261.

[185] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, pp. 160 and 163.

[186] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 203.

[187] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 163; Walton disagrees with this argument by writing that Aung San's "accounts of Aung San's Buddhist piety (…) provide evidence to counter this argument" (Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 7). This is, however, unconvinc-

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ever his personal beliefs may have been, Aung San's public activities were that of a militant political activist whose opportunism should persuade us to interpret his subtle use of Buddhist ideas in his speeches as political rhetoric") – that is, judge him as "a sophistical rhetorian."[188] As such, Aung San's appeal to Buddhism should be "understood largely as a subtle rhetorical technique by a pragmatic, capable, and rising politician" who used Buddhist concepts "to appeal to the *endoxa* of the political mass and arouse support for his idea of freedom (…) to arouse emotions for independence from this predominantly Buddhist audience"; consequently, Aung San "used these concepts to gain political support and to bolster his legitimacy because the political culture of the Burmese people is inextricably bound to Buddhism."[189] Indeed, when one looks at Aung San's usage of religious symbols, such as calling the British occupation impermanent, presenting the liberation from the British as a way to achieve *nibbāna*, promising "worldly *nibbāna*" after the decolonization, comparing national unity to the unity of meditating monks, calling democracy a "middle way," delivering speeches at Shwedagon or ending his speeches with Buddha's last words ("with diligence strive to work out your liberation"),[190] one cannot help but to agree with the conclusion that the purpose of this actions was "to support his own authority and legitimacy, to persuade his audience of his bona fide concern for their interest and, perhaps with the assistance of those around him, to put his ideas into a language that could be more favourably received."[191] When one adds such facts that Aung San first wrote his speeches in English (and only later translated and delivered them in Burmese, cutting references to Aristotle and adding concepts like *mettā* or *samādhi*) and that he significantly increased his religious vocabulary in 1946, following

ing. Even if Aung San fed many monks, supported many monasteries and helped to build several pagodas, his controversial war-time legacy stands; this does not mean that Aung San should be unanimously condemned, but neither should he be presented as a model, at least for international audience.

[188] McCarthy is also convincing when he cautioned about misinterpreting Aung San's political thought, for "Aung San was not a trained scholar" – given his "hectic political agenda, much of which involved military activities, it is doubtful whether he would have had the time to develop a detailed perspective of Buddhism's relation to politics in addition to performing various degrees of synthesizing and redefining Burmese secularism" (McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, pp. 163–165).

[189] Although McCarthy admits that Buddhism "may have provided a source of instruction for Aung San on matters of freedom," however, "it is more likely that he intentionally brought Buddhist sentiments into his speeches, primarily because he was addressing Burmese people, the majority of whom are Buddhist," for "this was an effective rhetorical technique, designed and delivered in such a way as to have the maximum effect on his predominantly Buddhist audience (…) because of the importance attributed by both to Buddhism's role in Burman political culture" (Ibid., p. 165).

[190] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 245–246, and 261; about unity: Aung San, *Bogyoke Aung San's Address*…, p. 161; Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 103. Buddha's last words "strive on diligently [with diligence]!" (*Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta* (D 16/2:869), p. 157).

[191] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 164.

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the breaking up with communists,[192] then the picture is even clearer. What emerges is a fascinating, successful, ambiguous, Machiavellian politician, who "displayed a flexible pragmatism,"[193] "a pragmatic rhetorician, military strategist, and politician" who most probably "had the capacity to move from *ana* to *awza* at will – from authoritarian to democratic – depending upon his audience" which made him "one of the most successful political activists of the twentieth century."[194]

Aung San's instrumental usage of Buddhism, however, does not undermine his intellectual heritage, for his political thought stands, regardless of his intentions and real actions. Matthew Walton was correct when he wrote that "even if his Buddhist logic was employed instrumentally, the fact that he felt the need to regularly express political ideas using Buddhist examples and concepts demonstrates the degree to which the moral conception of the universe is deeply embedded in the Burmese Buddhist worldview"; in other words, Aung San reasoned about politics from within a particular framework—derived from Theravāda Buddhist beliefs about cause and effect— that conceives of the universe as functioning according to moral principles.[195] Aung San could advocate for a secular state,[196] and indeed "depoliticised Buddhism"[197] by insisting "that an independent Burma be a secular state, it is clear that his explanations of politics—and furthermore, his view of how politics ought to be conducted—were rooted in the Buddha's teachings of cause and effect, making politics an intrinsically moral undertaking."[198] In other words, Aung San, regardless of the fact that he propagated separation of religion from politics, was "still thinking about politics from within a religiously-derived moral framework," in the same way as many already secularized politicians in the West make (perhaps even unconsciously) moral judgements about politics rooted in Judeo-Christian reasoning.[199] The fact that his words, emphasizing moral understanding of politics, not always met his deeds, so to say, is irrelevant to the assessment of his political thought, as it is the fact that his "greatest achievements were pragmatic rather than ideological."[200] Aung San by the virtue of being Burma's architect of independence became the benchmark for all Burmese political actors until 1988. And thus by the virtue of being his daughter Suu Kyi was able to enter politics in 1988.

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[192] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 255 and 258.

[193] Perhaps even "agnosticism," though von der Mehden quoted Aung San's words about Gandhi: "thank God (if there is a God)" which does not necessary prove Aung San's agnosticism (Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*…, p. 81).

[194] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 163.

[195] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 6–7.

[196] Aung San, *Religion, the Sangha*…, p. 126.

[197] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 39.

[198] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 76.

[199] Ibid., p. 7.

[200] Sarkisyanz, *The Buddhist Background*…, p. 176.

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5. Suu Kyi's Karmic Credentials

As indicated above, Suu Kyi was able to skilfully reconstruct Aung San's image in the West – she democratised him. Whether she did this out of personal or political reasons (or both) is irrelevant, what matters is the result – Suu Kyi's global success. In Burma, Suu Kyi did not have to democratize Aung San as there he has been the unquestioned and uncontroversial father of independence all along; instead Suu Kyi's hard task inside Burma was to present herself as his proper heiress. This was her entry ticket into politics.

Suu Kyi used "shortcut" to power popular in many Asian countries: "infectious charisma that came from being 'widows-of-him' or 'daughters-of-him' – the him being their martyred or revered husbands or fathers."[201] In Southeast Asia, as in South Asia, a considerable number of female political leaders gained power by capitalising on the legacy of their dead (male) relatives. Male leaders' heritage became their political commitment and an essential political asset – the widows and daughters replaced the male leaders as a necessary figurehead in a sort of symbolic changeover.[202] For Suu Kyi heritage has been the trump card that she used from the beginning. That gave her not only "the moral capital"[203] in the eyes of most people of Burma, but also made her the legitimate heiress to leadership: "her karmic credentials (…) for any Burmese went without saying (…) which translated into political power."[204]

Suu Kyi used this trump card brilliantly during her Shwedagon speech that marked her entry into politics. This speech itself is an outstanding example of political rhetoric and shows how skilfully Suu Kyi played her "Aung San card." At that time, when 8888 revolution started raging on the streets of Rangoon, Suu Kyi was still a no name[205]; initially she tried to mediate between the students and the army, but was ignored by the latter.[206] Then, in August 1988, she joined the protesters' camp, but was still far from leadership. Her biggest asset – then the only one – was her father; she knew it, and she knew how to use it. [207] Her Shwedagon speech proved it.

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[201] Arnold Ludwig, *King of the Mountain. The Nature of Political Leadership*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 2002, p. 22.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Kane, *The Politics of Moral Capital*…, pp. 147–171.

[204] Jessica Harriden, *The Authority of Influence. Women and Power in Burmese History*, NIAS Press, Copenhagen 2012, pp. 210–211.

[205] Moksche Yitri, *The Crisis in Burma: Back from the Heart of Darkness?*, "Asia Survey", no. 29 (6), 1989, p. 551; Seth Mydans, *A Burmese Power Shift: Though Government Schedules Election, Decision Rests with People in the Streets*, "The New York Times", 12.09.1988.

[206] Aung San Suu Kyi, *The First Initiative*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 191–197; Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 34.

[207] Suu Kyi admitted this in her interview with Clements "I think the very first reason why the Burmese people trusted me was because of their love for my father (…) they loved him and I think

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After asking for a minute of silence for those who had been killed during protests and explaining the reason of protests, she went on to tell about herself. She admitted the politically uncomfortable facts: that she lived abroad and married a foreigner (and thus she neutralized these facts, at least for the time being). Then she repeated the criticism that she is unprepared for engaging in the Burmese politics, rebuffing it brilliantly: "another thing which some people have been saying is that I know nothing of Burmese politics. The trouble is that I know too much. My family knows best how complicated and tricky Burmese politics can be and how much my father had to suffer on this account."[208] Subsequently she quoted her father as saying that once Burma's independence "was gained he would not want to take part in the kind of power politics that would follow" and "since my father had no such desire I have always wanted to place myself at a distance from this kind of politics. Because of that I have kept away from politics."[209] What Suu Kyi said must be considered a brilliant, skilful manipulation: she did not reject politics per se, only "tricky, power politics" that her father apparently rejected. In the context of Aung San's actions (not words!), his switching sides twice during WWII, his ideological flexibility and his general legacy of political realism, Suu Kyi's argument was at least spurious (to put it favourably). What mattered, however, was that this dialectical technique allowed Suu Kyi to aptly justify not only her absence in politics until this moment, but more importantly – her decision to get involved: "some may then ask why, if I wished to stay out of politics, should I now be involved in this movement. The answer is that the present crisis is the concern of the entire nation. I could not as my father's daughter remain indifferent to all that was going on. The national crisis could in fact be called the second struggle for national independence."[210] After years, in one interview, she repeated this statement in even more literal way: "when I first decided to take part in the movement for democracy, it was more out of a sense of duty than anything else. On the other hand, my sense of duty was very closely linked to my love for my father. I could not separate it from the love for my country, and therefore, from the sense of responsibility towards my people."[211]

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a lot of that love was transferred to me. So I started off with an advantage – a ready-made fund of *metta* on which to build" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 47).

[208] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, p. 193.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid. Suu Kyi has repeated this reasoning eight years later, during one of her rallies over the gate: "we have been independent for forty-eight years but there are no human rights and basic freedoms in this country. That's why I said our democratic movement is our second independence struggle" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on Sunday, 4 February, 1996 (no. 16)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 458).

[211] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 165.

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In other words, she was forced to enter politics because of the situation: she presented herself as an outsider "forced" to enter politics by dire and critical political circumstances. That proved successful: although this message was historically inaccurate (given the fact that Aung San was also the army's founder, this statement was half-truth at best, "creating a spurious analogy between the foreign rule of the British and the rule of the Tatmadaw"),[212] but thanks to this convenient interpretation of Aung San's legacy, Suu Kyi rejected the legality of Tatmadaw's rule. The people accepted her interpretation nonetheless, which allowed her to undermine the legitimisation of the military government and settle herself as the "proper" "heir to the throne" (many Burmese regarded Suu Kyi as a female *minlaung* – a pretender to the throne in precolonial Burma – due to her "royal" parentage).[213] That is why this was an outstanding, if not genial, piece of political rhetoric. By playing on emotions, loosely interpreting facts and understanding historical legacy in a way convenient to her, Suu Kyi proved that she was born to be a politician.

Naturally, later on Suu Kyi would continue betting on this card. In subsequent interviews she dotted the 'i': "I'm doing this for my father. I'm quite happy that they see me as my father's daughter. My only concern is that I prove worthy of him,"[214] or "I always felt close to my father (…) it never left my mind that he would wish me to do something for my country"; she wanted to set up a chain of libraries and "a life of politics held no attraction for me. But the people of my country were demanding for democracy, and as my father's daughter, I felt I had a duty to get involved."[215] Although there have been certainly personal reasons for Suu Kyi's attitude[216] – love of her father and perhaps the

[212] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 404. Suu Kyi's interpretation was picked up in some academic circles, too; Silverstein, a very favourable for Suu Kyi researcher uncritically followed her line: "as the daughter of Burma's leader, Aung San (…) she appeared to have picked up her father's mantle and was ready to lead Burma's second struggle for freedom - this time against the army her father created" (Joseph Silverstein, *The Idea of Freedom in Burma and the Political Thought of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, "Pacific Affairs", vol. 69, no. 2, Summer, 1996, p. 212).

[213] Donald M. Seekins, *The Disorder in Order: The Army-State in Burma since 1962*, White Lotus Press, Bangkok 2002, p. 200; Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*…, p. 222.

[214] Steven Erlanger, *Rangoon Journal: A Daughter of Burma, but Can She Be a Symbol?*, "The New York Times", 11.01.1989.

[215] Edward Klein, *The Lady Triumphs*, "Vanity Fair", October 1995, Burma Online Library.

[216] According to Suu Kyi's close friend, Ma Than E, Suu Kyi "has never forgotten her father" who "has been a continuing obsession" for her, it was "a way of getting to know a father whom fate deprived her of knowing in life" (Ma Than E, *A Flowering of the Spirit*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 280); as Suu Kyi's intellectual foe and her ardent critic Michael Aung-Thwin recalled, during their stay in Kyoto Suu Kyi was "always harping about her father" (*Interview with Professor Michael Aung-Thwin*, "New Mandala", 28.11.2007, http://www.newmandala.org/interview-with-professor-michael-aung-thwin/ (access: 28.05.2018)). Once in politics Suu Kyi chose to reject such

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need to become worth of his name – what matters here is that Suu Kyi has skilfully been using her father in her political career,[217] de facto monopolizing the memory of Aung San.

The rest of the Shwedagon speech is equally impressive. Suu Kyi, quoting her father's saying "we must make democracy the popular creed (…) democracy is the only ideology which is consistent with freedom, it is also an ideology that promotes and strengthens peace, it is therefore the only ideology we should aim for," dotted the 'i' by saying "this is what my father said. It is the reason why I am participating in this struggle for freedom and democracy in the footsteps and tradition of my father."[218] Certainly Suu Kyi was following her father's footsteps when she called for unity and discipline ("to achieve democracy the people should be united"; "if there is no unity of purpose we shall be unable to achieve anything at all"; "if there is no discipline, no system can succeed", "therefore our people should always be united and disciplined"),[219] for unity was a theme that Aung San, indeed, used throughout his all political career.[220] This served Suu Kyi as a means of expressing her regret over "certain amount of dissention between the people and the army" – it was an euphemistic name for general hatred towards the army[221] – and to remind her audience that "the present armed forces of Burma were created and nurtured by my father"; "my father built up the armed forces," and he built it "for this nation and these people," as a force that should have "the honour and respect of the people," not being hated, for otherwise "the aim which this army has been built up would have been in vain."[222] Therefore, Suu Kyi used the notion later repeated in "The True Meaning of Boh" that the original intention of the army was different and only later, under Ne Win, it went astray. And later, when her struggle with the army intensified in August-September 1988, she even increased the usage of this argument: on 29th August she stated that "my father said that the army should keep out of politics and I support that view totally,"[223] while on 12th September she wrote that Aung San "gave

notions: "I'm not obsessed by him (…) I hope that my attitude towards him is one of healthy respect and admiration, not obsession" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 83).

[217] In other words, I'm not questioning sincerity of Suu Kyi's personal feelings towards her father (it would be an absurd to do so), but I'm rather showing that her real affection to her father went hand in hand with her political interests.

[218] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, p. 194.

[219] Ibid.

[220] E.g. *U Aung San's New Year's Day Speech, April 17, 1947, Following AFPFL Victory in the Constituent Assembly Elections*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, p. 64; *Summary and Quotations from Aung San's Concluding Speech to AFPFL Convention, May 23, 1947*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, p. 70; *Bogyoke Aung San's Address*…, p. 161.

[221] Lintner, *Outrage*…, p. 121.

[222] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, pp. 194–195.

[223] Aung San Suu Kyi, *The Objectives*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 202.

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many warnings against the army turning into a tyrannical force of oppression" (just to compare – during Shwedagon speech she quoted a single warning of Aung San, now warnings multiplied into "many").[224] A year later, once all her illusions of a possible deal with the top generals evaporated, she attacked Ne Win personally, by saying "Tatmadaw is not for one particular person. Nor is it for one particular organization. It has been said repeatedly. Father had feared much of Tatmadaw's potentiality of following the wrong path. Why had the Tatmadaw followed the wrong path despite father's fear of its coming to do so. U Ne Win had got the Tatmadaw to follow the wrong path. Now you Tatmadawmen and officers think for yourselves. Although it was explicitly declared that Bogyoke Aung San is the father of the Tatmadaw, the Tatmadaw is not in a position of what its father wanted; please consider this. You are required to decide whether the Tatmadaw is the Tatmadaw of Bogyoke Aung San or that of Bo Ne Win." [225]

But that was later. Then, at Shwedagon, Suu Kyi added one more personal note: "I feel strong attachment for the armed forces. Not only were they built up by my father, as a child I was cared for by his soldiers,"[226] which served her to appeal to both the "personnel of the armed forces to reciprocate this kind of understanding and sympathy"; "to become a force in which the people can place their trust and reliance (…) one which will uphold the honour and dignity of our country"; and to ask the people to try "to forget what has already taken place" and "not to lose affection for the army."[227] This represented Suu Kyi's renewed attempt to both mediate between the people and the army and, at the same time, to appeal to the moderates within Tatmadaw; in other words, despite her declarations of necessity of unity, she started betting on split within the army in a hope to make the soldiers disobey the orders of Ne Win, Sein Lwin, Saw Maung and other top commanders[228]; and the only way to make it happen was to remind the soldiers

[224] "It is belief of the majority of the people of Burma that the army is being manipulated and misused by a handful or corrupt fanatics", "there are those who, while using ma father's name for their own purposes, have never practiced the principles that he laid down as essential for the good of the nation" (Suu Kyi, *In the Eye of the Revolution*, in: *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 205–206).

[225] *At the 50th State LORC Press Conference*, 89-07 Burma Press Summary, 21.07.1989 (from "Working People's Daily", 20.07.1989), vol. III, no. 7, July 1989, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS89-07.pdf (access: 26.05.2018).

[226] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, p. 195.

[227] Ibid.

[228] These words represent an almost open call to rebel against army commanders: "it is becoming increasingly obvious that many members of the armed forces themselves strongly object to the way in which their honour has been tainted by the role forced upon them by the policies of the present regime. All right-thinking citizens of Burma fear that the army might split into irreconcilable factions, and they desire an early and peaceful transition to the kind of political system acceptable to the people wherein the army can return to their barracks with grace and honour" (Suu Kyi, *In the Eye of the Revolution*…, p. 205). Unfortunately for Suu Kyi, "the main army remained intact. Any

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who founded the army and to convince them that Ne Win and others betrayed Aung San's ideas for their own, selfish benefits. The rest of the Shwedagon speech is less relevant here (Suu Kyi appealed, in vain, to students group to keep unity, rejected the notion of being manipulated by politicians, emphasized her leadership,[229] and called for multiparty democracy and interim government instead of a referendum),[230] and ended with a call for unity and discipline and by quoting Buddhist invocation "may the people be free from all harm."[231]

In general, her Shwedagon Speech "laid down the basic tenets of the philosophy she holds even today" (with time she changed tactics, but not the essence): "the need to maintain peace, unity and discipline" and "people's role" in building country.[232] What is most important here in the context of Aung San, however, is that in her Shwedagon speech Suu Kyi used her main asset in one hundred percent. She followed Aung San's footsteps by copying his successful public relations: Aung San also organized his speech at the bottom of Shwedagon, praised monks and evoked Buddhist invocations. Being physically similar to him, Suu Kyi imitated his style – with a great result. She won the hearts and minds of her audience: "we were all surprised – said one of the participants – not only did she look like her father, she spoke like him also: short, concise and right to the point."[233] "What surprised us all" – said another one – "was how mature she was. She spoke elegantly but simply, so that everyone could understand exactly what she meant. It may be an old man's delusion, but for me she became Aung San in August 1988.

high-ranking army officer who had taken an armed infantry unit into the capital and declared his support for the uprising would have become a national hero immediately, and the tables would have been turned. But it did not happen" (Lintner, *Outrage*…, p. 127).

[229] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, pp. 195–198; Suu Kyi also distanced herself from politics, knowing the negative connotations of this profession in the society. In subsequent interviews she said: "a life in politics holds no attraction for me. At the moment I serve as a kind of unifying force because of my father's name and because I am not interested in jostling in for any kind of position" (Suu Kyi, *The Objectives*…, p. 201); "when asked if I intend to form a political party my reply is that it is not a prospect which I find at all attractive" (Suu Kyi, *In the Eye of the Revolution*…, p. 209).

[230] She used the tactics of escalating demands: initially Maung Maung promised referendum on multiparty democracy, but for Suu Kyi it was now "the old story: too little too late," she demanded not only imminent elections, but also an interim government: "an interim government in which people have confidence would be able to put the country back on an even keel see the conditions are created for free and fair elections" (Suu Kyi, *The Objectives*…, pp. 200–201). Unfortunately, this proved to be a wrong strategy as opposition was unable to force upon the army these demands.

[231] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, pp. 196–198; the Buddhist invocation comes from *Mettā-sutta*, it is more often translated in a positive way (like "may all be happy and safe!") (*19 Translations of the Metta-sutta*, Sutta Nipata I.8 (Khp 9/8 f=Sn 1.8/8/143-152/p25 f), http://www.leighb.com/mettasuttas.htm (access: 26.05.2018)).

[232] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 266.

[233] Lintner, *Outrage*…, p. 116.

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Her actions, her commitment, most of all her manner, were exactly his."[234] Tin U, her "right-hand man," and long-time vice-chairman of the NLD confessed that what struck him was "the way she talked, her complexion, her features and gestures were strikingly similar to those of her father. She resembled him in almost every way. I thought that she was a female replica."[235] He was not alone in this assumption – for many her name was "magic among the public."[236] As Silverstein summarized reasons of Suu Kyi's popularity: "small and thin in stature, she resembled her father in many ways – a warm smile, strong facial features and piercing eyes, direct speech and a commanding presence (…) she quickly won the hearts and backing of the people who came to hear her speak and stayed to support her movement (…) for many in Burma she appears to be the reincarnation of her father and destined to carry out his unfinished job of leading Burma into the modern world."[237]

Having had the "courage of her convictions and also the courage of connections" [238] and knowing that as Aung San's daughter she enjoyed an unwritten immunity, Suu Kyi challenged the generals, who initially "feared her popularity with the people and did not know how to respond to it."[239] What was more dangerous for Tatmadaw, Suu Kyi deprived army legitimacy. Once they recovered from the shock, however, they started a campaign to diminish her popularity. In order to neutralize such dangerous political rival, the generals embarked on a discreditation campaign in order to present her as the renegade daughter of Aung San. The generals knew her weak point – by being married with an Englishman Suu Kyi as modern equivalent of *bo gadaw*,[240] had been exposed to xenophobic sentiments among the Burmese society – and they purposely hit her below the belt by attacking her marriage in a primitive and openly racist way. The quotes from articles published in the regime-controlled media are illustrative: "(Suu Kyi) had

[234] Words of Win Khet, a former journalist of Working People's Daily, quoted in: Wintle, *Perfect Hostage*…, pp. 262–264.

[235] Suu Kyi, Clements, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 277.

[236] Seth Mydans, *Crowds Throng Streets in Burma, Pressing Rulers to Step Down Now*, "The New York Times", 26.08.1988.

[237] Josef Silverstein, *Aung San Suu Kyi. Is She Burma's Women of Destiny?*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 305 and 316.

[238] These words were spoken to Suu Kyi in early 1970s when she clashed with military authorities for the first time (over her passport then), quoted in: Ma Than E, *A Flowering of the Spirit*…, p. 287.

[239] Silverstein, *Aung San Suu Kyi*…, p. 308.

[240] *bo gadaw* were the wives and mistresses of foreign (Western) men, who became the prime target for nationalist sentiments in 1930s – for the *thakins bo gadaw* represented the quintessential *thumya bama* (them – Burmans) whose behavior was "unethical and unpatriotic," bordering on treason (Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2011, pp. 132–144).

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smeared her own father's face black (…) if her father, Bogyoke Aung San should become alive again (…) would he slap his daughter's face left and right like the Japanese do or would he take out the automatic from his holster and empty the bullets into her (…) spit on her face and make her become shameful"[241]; "if only Aung San were alive, I do not know whether he would kill or exile his daughter who married an Englishman"[242]; "The Bogadaw is not worthy to inherit the name of Bogyoke Aung San (…) instead of preserving the race of her parents, the Myanmar race which the father greatly loved, she destroyed it by mixing blood with an Englishman"[243]; "(Suu Kyi) had her blood mixed with that of an Englishman and gave birth to two half-castes (…) after giving birth to two sons of mixed blood, the fragrance of chocolate is now oozing from her blood." [244] This was complemented by a campaign of not using the full name Aung San Suu Kyi, but to call her Mrs. Aris, Mrs. Michael Aris, Mrs. Suu Kyi Aris, Daw Michael Aris and so on.[245]

On a theoretical level, presented above primitive xenophobia and racism of the generals according to Houtman represented a contemporary equivalent of the "cucumber problem" – a parallel between Manu's[246] "seventh failed decision, which caused his fall

[241] Bo Daewa, *The Unforgettable 19th July*, 96-07 Burma Press Summary (from the Rangoon "The New Light of Myanmar", 18.07.1996), vol. X, no. 7, July 1996, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS96-07.pdf (access: 26.05.2018).

[242] Chan Mye Khin, *Want to Shout from the Road Junction*, "Myanmar Alin", 30.06.1996, http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/1996/bnn0796n468.txt (access: 26.05.2018).

[243] Po Yaygyan, *Adrift and Washed Ashore*, "The New Light of Myanmar", 09.05.1997, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00391.html (access: 26.05.2018).

[244] Byatti, *Is It Thakin Blood or Slave's Blood*, 96-07 Burma Press Summary (from the Rangoon "The New Light of Myanmar", 21.07.1996), vol. X, no. 7, July 1996, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS96-07.pdf (access: 26.05.2018).

[245] Po Yaygyan, *Adrift and Washed Ashore*…; *Political Demonstration Resolved Peacefully*, "Myanmar News Release", vol. 10, no. 17, 29.07.1998, Embassy of the Union of Myanmar, Ottawa, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199807/msg00003.html (access: 13.05.2018); Houtman, *Mental Culture*…., p. 27.

[246] More about Manu and about the issue of the bilateral influence of Brahmanistic and Buddhist tradition of law-making, see: Georg Bühler, *The Laws of Manu*, Oxford University Press, London–Oxford 1886, pp. lvii-lxv; Sangermano, *Burmese Empire a Hundred Years Ago*, White Orchid Press, Bangkok 2010 (reprint of the 1893 edition), p. 22; *The Glass Palace Chronicles of the Kings of Myanmar*, transl. Pe Maung Tin, G.H. Luce, 3rd edition, Unity, Yangon 2008, pp. 38, 56 and 103; Robert Lingat, *The Buddhist Manu or the Propagation of Hindu Law in Hinayanist Indochina*, "Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute", vol. 30, nos 3/4, July–October 1949, pp. 294–296; Oliver W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspective*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore 1982, pp. 1–15; D. Christian Lammerts, *Buddhism and Written Law: Dhammasattha Manuscripts and Texts in Premodern Burma*, unpublished PhD thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca–New York 2010, pp.56–57, 178, 200, 374–380 and 394; Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against*

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as minister and judge, and the regime's misjudgment of Aung San Suu Kyi"; thus, accordingly, "when Manu decided that the cucumber belonged to the owner of the garden in which the fruit lay, the people and the devas did not applaud, and so he was forced to make a less rigid division of legal rights, admitting, this time to applause, that fruits have their legal place in the land where they are rooted"; now, "by all accounts, Aung San Suu Kyi represents Manu's classical legal problem of ownership of the cucumber," for "her roots are in Burma – she is the daughter of Burma's independence fighter and is in every respect Burmese in origin"; however, "her fruits lie on the outside – she is married to an Englishman and her children live abroad, her reputation is international and the world's eyes are on her"; the regime, "has been unable to cope with this ambiguity" and, like initially Manu, made a wrong decision.[247]

Politically speaking, however, facing such a deluge of (potentially dangerous) calamities, Suu Kyi responded by emphasizing her link with the father. She was telling about similarities ("when I started doing research into my father's life I was struck by our similarities. I was surprised that we thought so much alike. At one time there were some thoughts and feelings that I thought were my own, and then I discovered that he had them already").[248] And she was presenting her struggle as their joint struggle against the generals (when asked by a journalist about "how far the thought of her father had stiffened her resolve," Suu Kyi looked "to where Aung San's picture hangs, as it hangs on so many walls in Burma. 'There were times when I would look at his photograph and say to him: 'Well, it's just you and me – but we'll make it.' I felt that I always had his spiritual support'").[249]

That proved to be a winning strategy. Despite dire-heart attempts of the generals, they were unable to present Suu Kyi as a renegade – the society did not buy their propaganda – and they quietly conceded their defeat by starting having Aung San amnesia. This meant Suu Kyi was left alone as the sole guardian of Aung San's memory and she kept using his name and the constructed vision of him in her political struggle –"within Myanmar she ensures her image remains deeply linked with Aung San and never misses an opportunity to present her father as the personifying symbol of her movement."[250] For years she and her supporters used Aung San's myth and his martyrology as "a central motif" in their Burmese vision of "a timeless hope for victory of good over evil" which

a Historical Background, Cambridge University Press, London–New York–Melbourne 1976, pp. 93–96; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 86–87; Andrew Huxley, *When Manu Met Mahāsammata*, "Journal of Indian Philosophy", vol. 24, 1996, pp. 594–613.

[247] "Just because Aung San Suu Kyi married an Englishman does not mean that she has thereby become English or foreign" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…., pp. 90–91).

[248] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 84.

[249] Steve Weinman, *Patience Pragmatism Pays off for "The Lady*", "Nation", 01.11.1995, Burma Net, 02.09.1994.

[250] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 324.

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"reinforced Suu Kyi's image as a selfless heroine who was willing to sacrifice her life for the good of the people."[251] Although the intensity of Aung San's usage decreased in the 2010s – when Suu Kyi had to politically yield to the generals, effectively abandoning her hopes to win "the second struggle for national independence"[252] and was forced to switch her tactics from confrontation to cooperation with them (on their terms) – Suu Kyi still occasionally uses Aung San in her speeches and writings. The last significant example of that were her 2013 essays in "D-Hlaing" (*Democracy Wave*), a journal supporting her party, the NLD, where she contributed a column (*D-Saga, or Democracy Words*, a modern, Burmese language equivalent of her "Letters from Burma"); in this column Suu Kyi wrote articles on Aung San: about the commemoration of the Martyrs Day (that the regime stopped the tradition of sirens commemorating his death, but the people used their cars' horns to do so, for "martyrs never die"), about reconstruction of the Martyrs' Mausoleum and, most importantly, comparison of Aung San with Zaneka, a former incarnation of the Buddha.[253] The latter is the most important, as Zaneka was a prince who as the only one survived a storm thanks to his bravery (he climbed the highest mast and then swam across the distant shore) and then, thanks to his wisdom ("mindfulness"), won the heart of the royal princess and reclaimed his lost throne; he embodied "the *viriya parami*" (*parami* is the quality needed to achieve enlightenment, while *viraya* is derived "from etymological root, *vira* or hero" and "refers to the determined effort required for the accomplishment of any heroic deed and according to Buddhist discourse, it lies at the root of all attainment, when aroused it creates a sense of urgency and when combined with other wholesome qualities leads to progress comparable to a waxing moon"), that is "energy, diligence and sustained effort." At the end of the story Zaneka "was as perfectly balanced in his *viriya* as a perfectly tuned lute which needs to be played with energy which is neither deficient and nor in excess."[254] Unsurprisingly, Aung San is compared to Zaneka: "like the mythical hero, Aung San was capable of sustained endeavor, an embodiment of the *viriya parami*" – "with great dexterity, energy and mindfulness he steered the raft of the Burmese nationalist resist-

[251] "Neither inside or outside Myanmar was much attention paid to the fact that precisely Aung San's fate had shown the high risk of building a country's hopes on a mortal person" (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 459 and 479).

[252] According to Zöllner, it was Depayin that marked "the end of her dream of successfully winning the second struggle for national independence in competition with military" (Ibid., p. 459); in my opinion it was the changed geopolitical circumstances of early 2010s that deprived her of foreign backing and consequently forced her to yield and start playing with the generals along their rules.

[253] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 250–251.

[254] Ibid. This may be compared with Suu Kyi's definition of a hero (implicitly – Aung San) from one of her rallies over the gate: "hero is one who works for the people and for the country courageously, tirelessly and outstandingly" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on Sunday, 20 November, 1995*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 191).

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ance to the farthest shore," he "was capable of reflective *viriya* or *sammappadhana* and so could prevent any unwholesome mental states from arising in his team" – he "counselled self-reliance" when emotions ran high, "bridge all gulfs" when conflict with Karens emerged and "listened to both views and made his own decision" when split with the communists was in sight; moreover, "he was quick in decisions and equally quick to exercise caution"; consequently, "he was an *arzarni* (martyr) in the truest sense not because he had welcomed death for his cause but because by the dint of his reflective *viriya* he had helped his people survive."[255] Nilanjana Sengupta – who commented on these words (and analyzed Suu Kyi's general attitude towards her father) – wondered why Suu Kyi created such a hagiographical portrait of Aung San. Was it out of family loyalty? Or out of anxiety of losing people's affection so desperately needed in the early stages of her political career? Or out of conviction that the Burmese people were not ready for a more nuanced view of Aung San other than a "larger-than-life icon to idolize"? She came to a conclusion that "perhaps a black and white portrayal was necessary to emphasize the character traits she associated with her father – a highly evolved sense of responsibility towards nation, purity of motivation in decision making and relentless endeavor – three qualities which when emulated could bring change to the country"; in this regard hagiographical portrayal of Aung San was necessary in Suu Kyi's self-proclaimed duty to "foster a thousand Aung Sans, *arzarnis* (martyrs) who will steer the nation ashore."[256] This seems a reliable explanation. Suu Kyi must have been well aware that her to-be-or-not-to-be in politics (at least in the late 1980s and the early 1990s) depended on positioning herself as the continuator of Aung San; otherwise she would have been marginalized by the generals. In accordance with the "infectious charisma" logic she had to present herself as his proper heiress.

Thus, she has created a carefully reconstructed image of Aung San that served her political needs. The real legacy of Aung San (the complicated heritage of a Machiavellian independence father) was somehow not in line with Suu Kyi's own political thought – "the skeptical analyst may ask just how the quite militant political ideas and practices of Aung San can be harmonized with his daughter's belief in non-violence"[257] – so Suu Kyi had to modify it, and she did it brilliantly. That opened her door to the Burmese politics and ensured that she would remain in the game for long. And her global iconic position contributed substantially to ensuring that this constructed vision of Aung San would become dominant internationally. Only recently, with more nuanced approach to both Aung San and Suu Kyi, this begins to change internationally. In Burma, however, Aung San remains a hero beyond controversies and will remain so for long.

[255] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 252.

[256] Ibid., p. 255.

[257] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 316. Though one must say that Suu Kyi's stance after 2015, in particular after the Rohingya crisis, is clearly in line with Aung San's policies.

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6. Conclusion

Aung San remains the pivotal figure in Burma in both political and ideological ways. Politically as the father of independence, he is rightly credited with winning Burma's independence. Ideologically, he was the point of reference for both the Tatmadaw (which he founded) and, later, the democracy movement under his daughter, Suu Kyi. Both the army and Suu Kyi constructed visions of Aung San and his legacy suitable for each of them respectively. In army's narrative he was the ideological Godfather of the military authoritarian rule over the country. In Suu Kyi's narrative he became a genuine democrat who wanted to introduce this system to Burma and who serves as a model for the citizens. These narratives were later transferred to academia, with discussions about Aung San's authoritarianism/democracy and his approach to Buddhism being most important examples of this phenomenon.

In Aung San's thought one may find the typical features of the Burmese political thought in general: reasoning about politics from within Buddhist worldview, accent on morality, the need for unity and the usage of democracy. His was the unquestioned call for independence at any cost that politically proved to be a winning strategy. Ideologically, all aspects were subjugated to the goal of independence which made Aung San's thought an eclectic one. This, combined with his pragmatic, political realist agenda helped to justify arguments of both sides: Aung San by the virtue of his ideological flexibility proved to be a convenient starting point for Burmese actors' own political ideas, regardless of these ideas actual connection with Aung San's own agenda. After a long wrestling in Burma over his legacy between Suu Kyi and the Tatmadaw, the struggle, quite contrary to the political one, was won by Suu Kyi which ensured that her vision of Aung San prevailed. It remains to be seen how long will this new orthodoxy of Aung San last. For now it is almost unchallenged.

Chapter IV

The Moral Democracy: The Political Thought of Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi has been first and foremost a politician. This statement is almost a platitude, however, it is worth repeating, as it has implications for other aspects of Suu Kyi, including her political thought. Most of Suu Kyi's actions in politics were aimed at wrestling the power from the generals. This applies to her political thought as well: ideas and ideologies proclaimed by her were significantly influenced by her political struggle with the generals. Although there are some permanent features, such as the call for democracy, the emphasis on education or the need for unity, in general Suu Kyi's thought fluctuated. At the very beginning, Suu Kyi came out with the simple message: to restore (alleged) Aung San's democratic legacy (see: previous chapter), to bring democracy and human rights back to Burma and to achieve victory via non-violent means, in the footsteps of Gandhi, as elaborated below. Thus, initially her political thought was heavily influenced by universalistic, democratic agenda, best caught by her famous essay "Freedom from Fear." With time, however, it underwent visible Buddhicisation, Burmanization and de-occidentalization. This resulted in Suu Kyi's thought eclecticism: on the one hand, she advocated Western-style rights-based democracy; on the other she balanced it by calling for unity, responsibility and duty. What remained constant, however, were characteristic features of her political thought in general: a belief in an individual as the ultimate agent of change; the necessity to introduce democracy, the universally benevolent political system; the urge to invest in education in order to uplift the people; the need for disciplined approach in achieving these goals; and, most importantly of all: the quintessentially moral approach to politics. This chapter will describe all these aspects in detail – from initial non-violent political philosophy to recent post-2011 development – summing up Suu Kyi's thought by comparing it with the political thought of her foes, the generals, and by placing these two approaches (Suu Kyi's and the generals') in both international and Burmese dimensions.

1. Non-Violence

Since the very beginning of Suu Kyi's involvement in Burmese politics, she had to play along the rules established by the military. However, in order to get the power she needed

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to find a way to force the generals to relinquish the power (or at least to make concessions). In late 1988 and early 1989, Suu Kyi embarked on an electoral campaign that bypassed the limitations established by the Tatmadaw (such as the "Order 2/88" forbidding gathering of more than five people as well as agitating, delivering speeches, chanting slogans and marching in processions)[1] and secured a nationwide support for Suu Kyi.

In justification of her actions, Suu Kyi evoked non-violence as the ideological cornerstone. She did this out of pragmatic reasons: "partly it was Gandhi, partly it was Buddha, but it was also a common sense" – if she used violence against violence, her movement would have been crushed easily; by non-violence, however, she got "moral advantage, like Gandhi and Martin Luther King in other times and places."[2] In the Burmese conditions, "her predilection for Gandhian pacifism was more of a pragmatic choice than just an idealistic empathy for the philosophy."[3] Even Suu Kyi herself after years admitted that she "was attracted to the way of non-violence, but not on moral grounds, as some believe. Only on practical, political grounds."[4] Later she admitted non-violence was her "political tactics" and even did not reject using violence under "certain circumstances," calling it "an occupational hazard" of policy making in general.[5] In the late 1980s and in the 1990s, however, she justified it morally and ideologically. And it is this justification that matters for her political thought.

At the very beginning, Suu Kyi used her father's name by saying that he "died because there were people who preferred guns to solve political problems."[6] Later she

[1] *SLORC Order 2/88 of 18 September 1988*, Burma Online Library, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/SLORC_Order_2-88.htm (access: 13.07.2018).

[2] Peter Popham, *The Lady and the Peacock. The Life of Aung San Suu Kyi,* The Rider, London–Sydney–Auckland–Johannesburg 2011, p. 116. Henry David Thoreau should be added to this list (Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, National University of Singapore Press, Singapore 2009, p. 408).

[3] Nilanjana Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar. Khin Myo Chit to Aung San Suu Kyi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, p. 248.

[4] *Suu Kyi's Choice*, "Al Jazeera", 23.01.2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/01/20121228391338848.html (access: 13.07.2018).

[5] Aung San Suu Kyi, Alan Clements, *The Voice of Hope. Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi*, 2nd edition, Rider, London–Sydney–Auckland–Johannesburg 2008, pp. 153 and 208. Suu Kyi also rejected moral dilemmas concerned with the use of violence in politics (Ibid., p. 91). On the other hand, some personal predilection for non-violence was also quite evident. When replying on a question why she finally called off the demonstrations of 19th July 1989 (that would have most likely resulted in bloodbath), effectively yielding to the generals, but probably avoiding massacres, she said "I realized that I would not get hurt… others would have. To carry on would have been irresponsible. If others would have got hurt and I had remained unhurt, it would have been a responsibility I could not have lived with." (Ibid., p. 138).

[6] Steven Erlanger, *Opposition Leader Is Confined by Burmese Rulers*, "The New York Times", 21.07.1989, http://www.nytimes.com/1989/07/21/world/opposition-leader-is-confined-by-burmese-rulers.html (access: 01.06.2018).

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would even had a nerve to made Aung San an apostle of non-violence, similar to Nelson Mandela: "we've chosen non-violence because it is the best way to protect the people, and in the long run assure the future stability of democracy. This is why my father changed from violence to non-violence. He knew that it was far better for the future of the country to achieve a democratic state through political means and negotiations, rather than through military means. It's the same with Nelson Mandela. He changed back to non-violence when this was possible."[7] This served her as a way to reject violence and endorse non-violence based on "conviction that we need to put an end to the tradition of regime change through violence, a tradition which has become the running sore of Burmese politics."[8] In accordance with this logic, winning with violence "will be perpetuating a cycle of violence that will never come to an end," a "vicious cycle," while Suu Kyi does not "believe in an armed struggle because it will perpetrate the tradition that he who is best at wielding arms, wields power. Even if the democracy movement were to succeed through force of arms, it would leave in the minds of the people the idea that whoever has greater arms might win in the end. That will not help democracy."[9] Elsewhere she quoted a dissident song "if every movement of dissent were settled by the gun, Burma would only be emptied of people."[10] While praising democracy she argued that "the democratic tradition of free discussion and debate allows for the settlement of differences without resort to armed conflict."[11] Finally, she also added some rather simple, if not vague, explanations: "non-violence means positive actions. You have to work for whatever you want. You don't just sit there doing nothing and hope to get what you want. It just means that the methods you use are not violent ones. Some people think that non-violence is passiveness. It is not so."[12]

In choosing non-violence Suu Kyi was clearly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela: especially Gandhi's influence is important here.[13]

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[7] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 155.

[8] *Suu Kyi's Choice*…

[9] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 31. Later in the interview she repeated these ideas along similar lines: "military coups which have happened enough in Burma, are violent ways of changing situations and I do not want to encourage and to perpetuate this tradition about change through violence. Because I'm afraid that if we achieve democracy in this way we will never be able to get rid of the idea that you bring about necessary changes through violence" (Ibid., pp. 153–154).

[10] Aung San Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy Democracy*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 174.

[11] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture of Peace and Development*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 269.

[12] Ibid., pp. 32–32.

[13] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 31 March 1996 (no. 24)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Abera Verlag,

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Already in her earlier article about colonialism in India and Burma she acclaimed him as "a practical turn of mind that looked for ideas to suit the needs of situation. In spite of his deeply ingrained Hinduism, Gandhi's intellectual flexibility made him accept those elements of western thought which fitted into the ethical and social scheme he considered desirable."[14] Suu Kyi's inspiration is clearly noticeable, for if one removes Hinduism from this description and replaces it with Buddhism, one will have a good summary of Suu Kyi's own political agenda. In her other writings Suu Kyi approbatively evoked Gandhi's "change of heart" concept,[15] quoted his words "the victory is in the struggle itself"[16] and Nehru's words about Gandhi (that his greatest achievement was "the installation of courage in the people of India" and "the greatest gift for an individual or a nation… was *abhaya*, fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but absence of fear from mind" which she attributed to Aung San).[17] During her talks over the gate at her house, she once described in length the history of Indian independence struggle, emphasising roles of Gandhi (she referred to him in a respectful fashion – Gandhiji) and Nehru (Pandiji) and per analogy stressed values that mattered for her: the importance of unity ("their differences notwithstanding, the Indian nationalists respected each other" and loved one another "without any hint of jealousy and rivalry between them"; they were "united for India") and their open-mindedness (Nehru's tolerance for Bose's Austrian wife served Suu Kyi as indirect criticism of the SLORC's slandering of her for marrying a foreigner); their success (India's independence) was possible thanks to the fact that

Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 65; Lintner, who "had the privilege of reading some of her personal writings" in her Oxford home in 1989 wrote that that Suu Kyi "acquired her lasting admiration for the principles of nonviolence embodied in the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi" (Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's*…, p. 35; Barbara Victor, *The Lady. Aung San Suu Kyi: Nobel Laureate and Burma's Prisoner*, Faber & Faber, New York 1998, p. 103); Zöllner writes about Mandela's metaphor in the context of Suu Kyi's Nobel Peace Prize (*The Beast and the Beauty. The History of the Conflict Between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, 1988–2011, Set in a Global Context*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, p. 203).

[14] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Intellectual Life in Burma and India under Colonialism*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom From Fear and Other writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 108.

[15] Ibid., p. 123.

[16] "The Vancouver Sun", 01.03.1997, quoted in: Gustaaf Houtman, *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy*, Monograph Series no. 33, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo 1999, p. 380.

[17] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 184; Elsewhere, while urging her listeners to overcome fear, she gave example of Aung San who was scared of ghosts in his childhood, but managed to overcome it (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 98).

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they "regarded each other in *metta*."[18] She also quoted Gandhi's words about the moral need to treat your subordinates in a humane way.[19] Gandhi's *satyāgraha* and *ahiṃsā*, too, might have played some role in inspiring Suu Kyi to a certain way[20] – "in adopting Gandhi's pacifism, rather than focus on the spiritual symbols associated with the movement, like the *khmauk* or the spinning wheel, she attempted a closer interpretation of satyagraha as 'a moral way of conducting and resolving conflict'"; therefore she "consciously moved away from the 'belligerence' of the Gandhian monk, U Ottama's political speeches, overladen as they would be with covert threats of violence, and instead defined the movement as one driven by the ethical regeneration of the participants."[21]

Such reinterpreted Gandhism represented Suu Kyi's second most important inspiration (after her father, Aung San), but since Aung San did not "develop a coherent political philosophy," Suu Kyi "had to look elsewhere for inspiration" and she found Gandhism.[22] The logical problem (and a certain irony) associated with the fact that Aung San used military ways, while she chose Gandhi's pacifism,[23] was resolved by her by "democratizing" Aung San and spuriously linking him with Gandhi (see: previous chapter)[24] making them both equal symbols of struggle against dictatorship: a historically inaccurate (and quite unfair for Gandhi) but politically understandable undertaking. During 1988/1989 campaign she both quoted Gandhi and Martin Luther King as her models[25] and her electoral campaign "was rich in its symbolical connotations with

[18] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March 1996 (no. 23)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Abera Verlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 516–519.

[19] "Gandhiji once said, 'it has always been a mystery to me how men feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings,' It is a mystery to me, too. If you humiliate someone, you have to be aware how you are humiliated by your own action, even more than your victim. Your action tells more about you than that of the victim" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 343).

[20] Mikio Oishi, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Struggle: It's Principles and Strategy,* Just World Trust, Penang 1997, pp. 19–27; see Houtman, for critical comment on this book ("ill-informed in its understanding of the spiritual dimension to the democracy struggle, and links it to Hindu Karma Yoga") (*Mental Culture*…, p. 279).

[21] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 326.

[22] As well as Martin Luther King and Mandela (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 298).

[23] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 266.

[24] "Gandhi, that great apostle of non-violence, and Aung San, the founder of a national army, were very different personalities, but there is inevitable sameness about the challenges of authoritarian rule anywhere at any time, so there is a similarity in the intrinsic qualities of those who rise up to meet the challenge" (Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 184).

[25] *Myanmar/Burma: Prisoners of Conscience: A Chronicle of Developments since September 1988*, Amnesty International, New York 1989, p. 59; Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 347. In propagating non-violence Suu Kyi was also politically under the influence of Win Tin, former

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Gandhi's *Dandi* march."[26] Suu Kyi, too, invoked Gandhi's and Martin Luther King's examples when she openly called for civil disobedience movement in July 1989,[27] adopted a slogan "defy as of duty every order and authority not agreed by the majority"[28] and declared "what I mean by defying authority is non-acceptance of unlawful orders meant to suppress the people (…) There's nothing violent about it. It's no more violent than is necessary in banging the keys of a typewriter."[29] Finally, after being locked in house arrest in 1989, she copied Gandhi's hunger strike tactics just after being locked in the house arrest, though without success.[30]

In her speeches during 1988/1989 campaign she followed Gandhi (and her father) in yet another example: in using paternalistic advices to her auditory that served her as pretexts to present her ideas. For example, Suu Kyi "focused on the importance of reading books and on people taking responsibility for their own neighbourhoods, where grassroots democracy should begin."[31] In one speech in April 1989, she urged the people not to use threats against children as it is one of the roots of authoritarianism: "in our country we threaten children in teaching them to do or not to do something, rather than explaining to them so that they understand themselves. This kind of teaching by intimidation is now so prevalent that the rulers who govern us don't try to explain things to ordinary people, but, instead, use threats to control them. This is part of our culture and we should change that. Let us teach our children by explaining to them. This is our responsibility; we have a duty to teach the children a sense of justice and compassion"[32].

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journalist and an architect on NLD's non-violent strategy, who introduced her works of Thoreau (Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 408).

[26] Sengputa, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 271.

[27] Philip Kreager, *Aung San Suu Kyi and the Peaceful Struggle for Human Rights in Burma*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 347.

[28] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 46; *Burma Communist Party's Conspiracy to Take Over State Power*, Special Press Conference held on 5th August 1989, Burma Online Library, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BCP_Conspiracy.htm (access: 04.06.2018).

[29] *Burma Communist Party's Conspiracy*…

[30] Suu Kyi started her hunger strike with the demand that she would be treated like her colleagues – that is, put into jail, not house arrest. Finally, after mediation of her husband, Michael Aris, she yielded and "accepted compromise" that her NLD activists "would not be tortured and that the cases against them would be heard by due process of law" (sic!) (Michael Aris, *Introduction*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. xxiii–xxiv). Given the fact that "due process of law" in SLORC's Burma sounds like a bad joke, one must come to the conclusion that this "compromise" was in fact a surrender on honorable terms. The fact that Suu Kyi never repeated her hunger strike also indicates that.

[31] Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's*…, p. 71.

[32] Aung San Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity Among Ethnic Groups*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 219.

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In an interview later on she elaborated more on her ideas to teach civil disobedience to the public: "they really must learn to question people who order them to do things which are against justice and existing laws. Ask, according to which law are you forcing me to do this? What right do you have to make me do this? (…) People must ask questions and not just accept everything We are trying to help them to educate themselves, to understand the situation better and to see clearer. Not to be blinded by fear (…) Everybody should develop a true sense of responsibility - part of that is to accept one's responsibility to others, and never leave anybody to suffer by himself."[33] In one of her rallies over the gate, Suu Kyi openly declared "there is no law in our country. I would even want to say that this is a lawless country. What's written in law has no value whatsoever here. Law is meaningful and worthy only when it is served in fairness and transparency, to make people understand justice (…) If we go on irresponsibly like this, the suffering in our country will aggravate. The country without the rule of law is worse than the country without a king or a government (…) The system without a government is anarchy. The system without law is governed by the law of nature. Which one is worse (…) lawlessness under a government is far worse than anarchy."[34] By painting this dark picture Suu Kyi was advocating civil disobedience movement – a modern equivalent of the people removing a bad king in precolonial times[35] – in accordance with this interpretation, "just as a king's power stemmed from not his sword but the love of his subjects, the military would lose authority if the citizens withdrew their collaboration."[36] Giving an example of corvée labour, she said "the whole country has to stand up against such cruel practices. We can't expect one boy, or one village, to stand up. But if one boy, one village, two villages, a hundred villages, a hundred towns, the whole country decide this is it (…) then we'll get somewhere. Every one of us has a responsibility in helping others to escape from such an unjust, cruel situation."[37]

This was a quintessentially moral, Buddhist approach: Suu Kyi "wanted to emphasise the need to rethink democracy in terms of a social and moral regeneration and in doing so repeatedly held up the image of the youth, who had generosity and the 'right view' which in turn would lead to the right action"; thus "eventual success would spring from the capacity for moral reconstruction."[38] By such measures Suu Kyi hoped to change the patterns of Burmese culture. Suu Kyi "articulated a thesis that the population of Myanmar was largely incapable of understanding and working a democratic

[33] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 69–70.

[34] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 31 March 1996 (no. 24)*…, p. 530.

[35] Jessica Harriden, *The Authority of Influence. Women and Power in Burmese History*, NIAS Press, Copenhagen 2012, p. 222.

[36] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 269. Naturally Sengupta's words about power steaming from love are unacceptable idealisation.

[37] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 70.

[38] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 268.

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political system"; according to this interpretation "the alleged Myanmar or Bamar 'mentality', rooted in authoritarian past made it easy to 'men without integrity and wisdom' to rule the country and thus reinforced this alleged national thought pattern or political culture."[39] Authoritarianism has indeed been an important feature of the Burmese national character, at least if one can trust Maung Maung Gyi's judgement: "the Burmese people, by and large, are authoritarian in their outlook to this day. This outlook is part of the old thought pattern inherited from the past and unacknowledged (…) the common trait of a Burmese individual is that he is overbearing, haughty, and consumed with overweening confidence when in office with enough power and authority, but is a diffident, modest, and normal self when out of office and power"; Maung Maung Gyi went to quote a colonial source: "either a man is powerful and therefore to be feared, or else he is weak and consequently may be despised" to comment that "this statement is broadly applicable to the behavior pattern of a Burmese person vis-à-vis a man in authority to this day," for "a Burmese, by and large, feels comfortable and reassured only when he becomes a government servant or, if he happens to be in the trading business or other nongovernmental pursuits, has friends and associates in the government departments who are usually referred to as connections (*ah-set-shi-deh*)," consequently, "a typical Burmese person yearns to be a member of the administrative infrastructure from a lowly office attendant to a high-ranking official depending on his education, training, and certain qualifications including his skill to get the right connections"; he "would rather belong to the *min* (ruler) class than work for a comparable salary at other nongovernmental establishments (…) this *min* complex has never been broken since the days of the Burmese kings (…) This *min* complex has thus been handed down from generation to generation."[40] Apparently this attitude was "not alien to the *thakins*" according to one civil servant from 1945: "some well-meaning people told them to become mechanics or work with their hands. This they refused to do, shunning all manual labour, saying that it was infra dig for an 'educated' person… (they were) nurtured on the belief that all manual labour was undignified"; this quoted civil servant added: "the Burman not only wallows in the *awza* (authority) of a civil servant but the extremely high starting pay of the service and the rich plums that it offers lead every pupil in Burma to have visions of roaming about the countryside as a member of the Heaven-Born service."[41]

[39] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 411, quote "men without integrity and wisdom", comes from Suu Kyi's, *The Quest of Democracy*…, p. 169.

[40] According to Maung Maung Gyi, this "authoritarian character of the Burmese society is most noticeable in the areas of law and order and public security (…) indeed, there were democratic features in Burmese society such as the absence of a rigid caste system, freedom of women and women's rights, and easy social mobility, but they lie outside the field of law and order" (Maung Maung Gyi, *Burmese Political Values. The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarianism*, Praeger Publishers, New York 1983, pp. 1, 157, and 163–164).

[41] Ibid., pp. 157–159.

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Maung Maung Gyi quoted another source that depicted an archetypical Burmese governmental servant: "one U Kyaw… was the personification of Burmese officialdom. He had a strong 'I know all' complex. The 'you are sacked, I don't want you' style of treating subordinates was carried by him to extreme limits. There were many cases of college friends becoming estranged in later life because the one who got into the Indian Civil Service looked down on the other who was less fortunate. 'I won't mix with riff-raff at the tea-shop' or 'it is infra dig for me to go and see the man in that quarter' was the attitude commonly taken by the lowest officials in Burma… (…) All parents want to see their sons become government officials."[42] Not only parents; once people are adult, they desire a governmental career by themselves, despite the risks involved: "ministers do enjoy the limelight, privileges, and power that goes with their respective portfolios (…) yet, however precarious and short lived the life of a minister may be, ambitious young men are waiting their turns in the wings to be picked by the president for a ministerial post, or its equivalent – a chance in a lifetime to show off, to travel, give advisory lectures, administrative directions, and to be a min"; according to another source quoted by him, there are thirty eight species enumerated in Buddhist song of blessings, but the Burmese might add another one, thirty ninth 'to be an official."[43]

Thus, in such authoritarian cultural background, according to Suu Kyi the army took control of the country "because the citizens failed to carry out the duties of citizenship. If we want a stable democracy in the future every single one of us must bear this responsibility conscientiously," so they should change this part of their culture.[44] Suu Kyi herself admitted that she often talked "about the necessity to cultivate the habit of questioning arbitrary orders and to stand firm and united in the face of adversity."[45] Thus she constantly appealed to her listeners to disobey arbitrary orders: "we do not have to put up with injustice. We have to adopt the habit of questioning"[46]; "working for democracy means resistance against injustice. It means having the courage to say what's

[42] Ibid.

[43] Among other authoritarian elements ("old attitudes" in his language) Maung Maung Gyi lists "the tendency to view the government as evil; to rely on the government for everything to be done on their behalf and yet to stay aloof from the government for fear of involvement with government business; to view the government as omnipotent, and omnicompetent; the min complex; and the highly personalized outlook in human relationship within the administrative infrastructure together with please the superior ethics, or in other words, relationships based on subjective evaluations rather than on objective calculations" (Ibid, pp. 154, and 157–159).

[44] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 222.

[45] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma,* Penguin Books, London 1997, p. 193.

[46] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 189.

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unjust is unjust. It means non-cooperation with unjust rule"[47]; "I would like all of us to question ourselves whether it is good to follow any order. Please do not follow unjust orders. I would like to encourage you to refuse lawless orders as much as you can. If you have to obey each and every vicious order from the above, you will become one of their accomplices in the end. Please make a new year resolution that you will have the courage to challenge unjust and unlawful orders."[48] On another occasion she preached the following: "we should not rely on others all the time. Each time there is a problem, ask yourself why (…) If you are told to do this and that without rhyme or reason, always question why you should be obeying the orders. We will progress only when we begin to question. The point of questioning is not to attack others. We should know our rights and ought to defend them. As we all know, we have very limited rights in this country. This provides all the more reason for working harder at protecting our few rights. All of our citizens should be encouraged to question everything. If someone commands you to do something lawlessly, you should ask: 'Why should I do that? (…) We should not stop short at questioning others. We have to question ourselves too (…) I would like you to adopt a system of self-reliance."[49] By giving examples from everyday life, like smiling[50] or boycotts[51] and by quoting Burmese proverbs in order to rise social empathy[52] Suu Kyi tried to empower the people.[53] Most importantly, however, she wanted

[47] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 321.

[48] *San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 21 April 1996 (no. 25)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Abera Verlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 543.

[49] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 171.

[50] "Our people are sometimes too much conformist even when they shouldn't. One needs not smile if one doesn't want (…) Please be courageous. Smiles cannot be forced out" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 132).

[51] E.g. the issue of going to bars privatised in a dishonest way: "people have to act in unison in their opposition of such matters (…) we can show our dissent by not going to such bars and tea-shops. If there are no customers, such bars have to shut down" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 61).

[52] "Please do not think just for yourself. If you think just for yourself and if everybody ends up in trouble due to selfishness, you too will be in trouble. Please do not harbour 'let-others'-husbands-be-killed-by-a-tiger-as-long-as-mine-can-become-a-king'attitude" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 135).

[53] "How can we eliminate dependence on other? We have to empower the people. We depend on others because we are weak. If we are empowered, our dependence on others will diminish

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them to stop fearing the government: "I would like our citizens to be free from fear of government. That's why I would like our country to be democratic"[54]; "many people fear that non-compliance will cost them their job. It's not possible to fire half of any government department, let alone the whole. Be united. Be active within the framework of your rights. This does not mean that one should act lawlessly. Do what is right within existing laws, don't do anything inappropriate."[55] Later, in the mid-1990s, she declared that "our principal task is to encourage the need in people to question the situation and not just accept everything" and that her primary task is to fight against fear, inertia and complacency: "complacency is very dangerous. What we want to do is to free people from feeling complacent. Actually, with a lot of people it's not a sense of complacency either. I think that many people accept things out of either fear or inertia. This readiness to accept without question has to be removed. And it's very un-Buddhist. After all, the Buddha did not accept the status quo without questioning it."[56] Once she underwent the Buddhicisation of her rhetoric (see: later in this book) she rationalized the need to question orders in Buddhist terms: "in Buddhism, you know the four ingredients of success or victory: *chanda* – desire or will; *citta* – the right attitude; *viriya* or perseverance; and *pañña* – wisdom. We feel that you have got to cultivate these four qualities in order to succeed. And the step prior even to these four steps, is questioning. From that you discover your real desires. Then you have got to develop *chanda* … [the 'wish to do' or 'intention'] … to do something about the situation. From there you've got to develop the right attitude and then persevere with wisdom. Only then will there be success in your endeavour. Of course, the five basic moral precepts are essential, to keep you from straying as it were. With these we will get where we want to. We don't need anything else."[57]

Suu Kyi saw her role as the one who awakens the people from fear and inertia. Apparently being "depressed by the true Burmese character,"[58] she felt "the need to deepen people's understanding of democracy," so that "the more that the people understand democracy, the less helpless they will fell whenever a crisis develops"; her party "represent[s] the people and in so doing we want to educate them to also represent themselves."[59] Thus, Suu Kyi "deplored the wrong understanding of democracy by many people and tried to educate them (…) all people would have to internalize the

naturally. That's why we keep saying that political system that can secure people's wellbeing is important. If people are secure, their tendency for dependence will be reduced and their self-reliance will increase" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 187).

[54] Ibid.

[55] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 319.

[56] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 167.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Quoted in: Popham, *The Lady and The Peacock*…, p. 141.

[59] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 273. Both sides, Suu Kyi and junta tried to "educate" the society (see: later in this book), with a very paternalistic attitude (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 107).

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'true meaning of democracy', including the spirit of non-confrontation according to the Gandhian model, which would prevent disorder, looting and the like – if all citizens abided by this spirit."[60]

This is the first example of one of Suu Kyi's ideological leitmotifs – a belief in an individual - an educated and conscious individual - as the agent of change. If a person is educated, he/she will be able to take matters into his/her hands and improve the situation. That is why it was essential to make people aware that their fate depends on them: "we have to try ourselves what we can do to change our own situation. Everyone is capable of change."[61] She also ridiculed traditional fatalism and called for one's own empowerment evoking Buddhist tradition: "'uh… we are not capable of anything. We are doormats and will remain doormats no matter what our governments are' I don't like this kind of attitude at all. This is the mindset that readily gives up on life. One must adopt the mindset that can conquer life. If only you can change your mind, you will get to your destination. If we do not conquer our own mind, what can we expect to achieve elsewhere? Do not rely on the external. Buddhist tradition has it that oneself must [have] one's shoulder to rely on. Rely on yourself. Change yourself (…) You have to train yourself to be able to face the suffering for life. Tough it out, be brave. Hold the truth firmly. Those who can do it are a happy lot. Courage is a serendipity in the process of self-reliance for truth. If only you try it, you will experience how rewarding it is."[62] This was an empowering interpretation of one's own *kamma*[63] that went against the traditional Burmese fatalism[64] – Suu Kyi reminded her listeners: "you are the author of your own fate"[65] and urged them to be critical and develop a critical mind: "still we have to be critical (…) If we keep quiet, we will be subject to questions such as, 'if you

[60] Ibid.; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 411.

[61] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October 1995 (no. 6)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 153.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Suu Kyi described *kamma* in a beautiful, poetic way: "the law of karma is actually very scientific. There is always a connection between cause and effect. It's like the light of a star, isn't? The light we see now was initiated so many light years ago, but there it is. In science too, there can be a seemingly long gap between cause and effect. But there's always the connection between them" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 93).

[64] According to Maung Maung Gyi fatalism has been one of the most important aspects of the Burmese national character; he quoted a colonial writer, who summarized it the following: "the Burman has a strong personal feeling that it is impolitic and useless to strive against set in authority over him" (Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 156).

[65] She gave example of civil servants: "the civil servants are also the authors of their own fate. Karma and the consequences of karma will not spare you just because you are a civil servant. The commended is as responsible as the commander, and they both will have to pay for their karma" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 21 April 1996 (no. 25)*…, p. 543).

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don't find anything disagreeable, why are you calling for change'? Our criticism reflects the situation than needs change. That's why we are criticising what we should. People should also criticise what they should."[66] She was saying all that to make people engage more and help her in her cause: "I think our people should be more active in their efforts for democracy. People's participation is key for the success of a struggle such as ours."[67]

Suu Kyi's political goals were easy to be seen: by awakening (or rebelling) the society against the regime she hoped to gain the power. Given her limited political space, it was a rational strategy that represented a serious threat to the military government. For them she "appeared to challenge not only the military regime but also the commonly accepted patterns of deference and respect allegedly characterising much of Myanmar social relations. Her direct manner of speaking and expression was very appealing to her younger, more radical supporters, but was often considered rude and undignified, especially for a woman and the daughter of General Aung San."[68] This criticism, however, gave her popularity[69] and helped her to transform the movement into "a mass democracy movement, a people's struggle."[70] This "movement of 1989" was a new quality in the Burmese politics: "tens of thousands stood in silence, listening attentively for hours at end to an entirely new message: democracy through discipline, responsibility, and nonviolent struggle"; this made the movement "a new emerging power centre" with Suu Kyi "as the only one who could unify all segments of Burmese society," even including the army.[71]

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[66] She also urged her listeners to be critical: "speech alone will not achieve anything. On the other hand, keeping quiet will not get you anywhere (…) Some people ask if criticism is counter-productive. Non-criticism is also counter-productive" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*..., p. 322). The issue of criticism is important for Suu Kyi as she had to rebuff accusations, coming from military government, of her irresponsible/unpatriotic criticism; in justifying her criticism she again deployed Buddhist, moral logic: "no one wants to be criticized. Yet the criticism you receive give you a chance to correct yourself (…) perhaps it's not that the authorities do not care about what's going on. It might be that the authorities might not be aware of what's going on" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 382); She also defended the right to criticism: "Criticism is not illegal. There is no law that proscribes criticism" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 322).

[67] *Aung San Suu Kyi Speech, Saturday, 30 March 1996 (no. 23)*…, p. 517; "such a philosophy based on individual empowerment resonates closely with and responds to the needs of the generation born during the Ne Win era who were largely cofounded in their quest for an identity" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 328).

[68] Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 412.

[69] Franziska Blum, *Teaching Democracy. The Program and Practice of Aung San Suu Kyi's Concept of People's Education*, Regiospectra, Berlin 2011, p. 23.

[70] Suu Kyi, Clements, *Voice of Hope*…, p. 273.

[71] Bertil Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's Struggle for Democracy*, Silkworm Books, Bangkok 2012, p. 71; Bertil Lintner, *Outrage. Burma's Struggle for Democracy*, 2nd edition, White Lotus, Bangkok–London 1990, p. 173.

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Unfortunately, this movement based on non-violence politically failed in 1989 and later on. The army has put Suu Kyi under house arrest on 20th July 1989 and imprisoned other leaders; without them the NLD was unable to capitalize on the mass support, which was most clearly visible after victorious (and nullified) elections of 1990. As two researchers critical of Suu Kyi commented, "holding the 'moral high-ground' worked for Gandhi and Mandela (her models) but whereas the political and social context was favourable for them, for her, it was not."[72] Another one, more favourable to Suu Kyi wrote that "her own adaptation of the Gandhian concept of moral regeneration might sound too idealistic, too much of an intellectual speculation with strong moral overtones."[73] Whatever the reason, Gandhian non-violence proved to be an adequate strategy for fighting colonial Raj, but not for forcing the military to relinquish power in Burma. Thus, Suu Kyi unwillingly proved the adequacy of George Orwell's criticism of Gandhi.[74]

Interestingly still, Suu Kyi later in her career delicately distanced herself from Gandhi, most probably realizing that Gandhism was her asset internationally,[75] but not so much in Burma, given different religious and cultural background[76] and anti-Indian resentment in the Burmese society. Once she resumed her struggle after first house arrest in 1995, she declared that she "didn't think of herself as a Gandhian" politician,[77] and repeated that she chose non-violence out of pragmatic ("non-violent means are

[72] Michael Aung-Thwin, Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times. Traditions and Transformations*, Reaktion Books, London 2012, p. 265. High moral ground of Suu Kyi can be seen in her quintessentially moral views on reconciliation: "I read somewhere that it is always more difficult for the perpetrator of a cruel deed to forgive the victim, than for the victim to forgive his tormentor. (…) the victim can forgive because he has the moral high ground as it were. He has nothing to be ashamed of (…) I think it was Shcharansky who said (…) 'nobody can humiliate me but myself' (…) but the tormentor finds it difficult to forgive the victim because he knows that he has committed an act of shame" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 175).

[73] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 271.

[74] "It is difficult to see how Gandhi's methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the régime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again. Without a free press and the right of assembly, it is impossible not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being, or even to make your intentions known to your adversary. Is there a Gandhi in Russia at this moment?" (George Orwell, *Reflexions on Gandhi*, in: George Orwell, *Collected Essays*, Adelaide 2014, https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/o/orwell/george/o79e/ (access: 07.05.2018)).

[75] She was called Burma's Gandhi ("The Times", 8 August 1989, in: Kreager, *Aung San Suu Kyi and the Peaceful Struggle for Human Rights in Burma*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 355).

[76] "The Gandhi concept of fearlessness, since it uses a 'Hindu' technique, is not adequate as a primary role model for Burma" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 302).

[77] "I don't think of myself as either a Gandhian or Buddhist politician. I am Buddhist of course, and I would be guided by all the Buddhist principles that I have absorbed throughout my life" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 114).

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the best way to achieve our goal"), not spiritual reasons: "we have chosen the way of non-violence simply because we think it's politically better for the country in the long run to establish that you can bring about change without the use of arms. Here, we're not thinking about spiritual matters at all. Perhaps in that sense, we're not the same as Mahatma Gandhi, who would have probably concerned all movements that were not non-violent."[78] Later she dotted the 'i' by saying that her non-violence was "not quite the same as the ambiguous or pragmatic or mixed approaches to non-violence that have been attributed to Gandhi's *satyāgraha* or and Martin Luther King's civil rights"[79]; she clarified that the primarily reason why she objected to violence was that "it would perpetuate a tradition of changing the political situation through force of arms."[80] That meant distancing herself from Gandhi but not from non-violence which must again be attributed to the logic of political struggle with the generals who portrayed Suu Kyi as un-Burmese.[81]

All in all, Suu Kyi's Gandhism was rather limited and eclectic. She had little in common with Gandhi in terms of religious-cultural background and in terms of economic ideas[82]; the only common trait is the peaceful, non-violent tactics. It is indeed political similarity, but intellectually that's too little to call Suu Kyi a Gandhian politician (or theoretician). Her matching of Gandhi with Aung San (her unquestioned idol) – clearly done for the international audience – must also be judged even more critically as artificial, if not outright propagandist. Aside from identical goal of independence (meaning getting rid of the colonialists) there are few similarities between the two. Aung San was not religious, advocated non-violence only briefly at the end of his life and his death as a martyr in the Burmese conditions came to symbolize the determination to sacrifice one's life to achieve independence.[83] Indeed, it is hard to find two more

[78] The end of the quote shows the flexibility of Suu Kyi's usage of external ideas in her struggle: "I'm not sure. But he did say at one time that is he had to choose between violence and cowardice, he would choose violence. So, even Gandhi, who was supposed to be the great exponent on non-violence, was not somebody who did not make any exceptions" (Ibid., p. 155). In her "Letters from Burma" she wrote that "it is never easy to convince those who have acquired power forcibly of the wisdom of peaceful change" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter 30)*…, p. 120); hence, by non violence, she hoped to convince the generals to do so.

[79] *Suu Kyi's Choice*…

[80] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 114.

[81] It doesn't mean however, that Suu Kyi rejected Gandhi, she rather conveniently distanced herself from him when the political situation demanded her to do so; however, she still quoted Gandhi during her gate rallies and she continued to write about Gandhi as her model "with veneration" in her D-Hlaing column after 2012 (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 320).

[82] In my opinion, Ne Win with his autarchy comes closer to Gandhi.

[83] Gandhi (and Luther King) "had developed concepts of non-violent struggle which encompassed risks of physical harm in the active pursuit of a just cause, but without aiming for martyrdom" (Zöllner, *The Beauty and the Beast*… p. 268).

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different personalities than pragmatic (in both political and moral sense) Aung San and purely ideological Gandhi.

Martin Luther King was the second external inspiration for Suu Kyi, though for a scale much more limited than in the case of Gandhi. She learned about his struggle while living in the USA in the late 1960s – early 1970s and was inspired: she invoked his example during her call for disobedience movement in the summer of 1989,[84] and during her rallies over the gate, she quoted Luther King's famous words: "injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere."[85] But that's it. Suu Kyi's non-violence movement was inspired by Luther King's movement only to a limited extend.

Václav Havel has been a more lasting inspiration for Suu Kyi and not only due to the fact that it was thanks to his support she received Nobel Peace Prize.[86] On many occasions Suu Kyi praised Havel's essay, "The Power of the Powerless"[87] and presented it as an inspiration for the Burmese people as well (e.g. "what is needed for the people to understand [is] that they are not powerless. They've got to learn the power of [the] powerless").[88] Suu Kyi used Havel's term "neo-totalitarianism" and his concept of an individual who decides to step into the blinding light of truth: "this is the beginning of an end of totalitarianism."[89] She was also inspired by Havel's model of a critical intellectual and hoped to convince her people to develop "questioning mind" that would help them to "withstand violence or oppression, or any trend that is contrary what you believe is right and just."[90] She also highlighted the importance of having Havel-style intellectuals in Burma, yet admitted that (for then) it was impossible for such

[84] Kreager, *Aung San Suu Kyi and the Peaceful*…, p. 347.

[85] "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly" (Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Hartwick Humanities in Management Institute, Oneonta, NY 1993, p. 4). Suu Kyi: "Nobody should say, 'It's not my business to injustice.' Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere (…) If you put up with injustice for once, you will have to put up with it forever" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on Sunday, 4 February, 1996 (no. 16)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 358).

[86] *Speech by Aung San Suu Kyi to the Opening Ceremony*, Forum 2000, 15.09.2013, https://www.forum2000.cz/en/projects/forum-2000-conferences/2013/panel-summaries/transcripts/speech-by-aung-san-suu-kyi-to-the-opening-ceremony/ (access: 13.07.2018).

[87] Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, http://vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=clanky&val=72_aj_clanky.html&typ=HTML (access: 13.07.2018).

[88] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 220.

[89] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 315–316.

[90] "It is amazing to me how so much people simply do what they're told by the authorities. They've been conditioned to obey without questioning the situation. Which is why I always tell them to keep a questioning mind. A questioning mind is a great help towards withstanding violence or oppression, or any trend that is contrary what you believe is right and just" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 128).

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an intellectual to survive in Burma: "in order to become an intellectual you've got to have a questioning mind. I think everybody is capable of having a questioning mind, but not everybody who has one can be described as an intellectual. To be an intellectual also requires some kind of scholastic discipline – that's essential. Intellectuals are very important in any society. Because they are the ones who, like in the quotation, are provoking people, opening them to new ideas, pushing them along new heights. This is one of the tragedies of Burma – the intellectual is not allowed any place within society. And the real intellectual, of the kind described by Vaclav Havel, would not be allowed to survive in Burma"; for the intellectual with his questioning mind "threatens the totalitarian mind which expects orders to be carried and decrees to be accepted without question. There will always be clashes between the authoritarian mind and the questioning mind. They just cannot go together."[91]

Finally, her last non-violent inspiration: Nelson Mandela. Suu Kyi did not hide her affection and admiration for his struggle against apartheid: during her studies at Oxford she was inspired by her friend Ann Pasternak Slater to join the boycott of South African products.[92] Suu Kyi later described how this impressed her: "I came to respect her a lot. She was not a politician. Nor was her father. She was not from a political circle. She was not black. She had nothing to do with South Africa. But she was not indifferent about the plight of South African black people. She said her whole family had boycotted South African products. She started recruiting me into her campaign as soon as we got to know one another. It dawned on me that buying things from an unjust government would amount to supporting that government. That's politics."[93] Thus, inspired by Mandela's calls for sanctions evoking example of South Africa and her own experience, Suu Kyi called for international sanctions and boycotts of Burma in the mid-1990s[94] in order to deprive the military regime of "the 'performance legitimacy.'"[95] The call for sanctions is one of the most controversial issue for Suu Kyi's political (and moral) assessment,

[91] Ibid., pp. 129–130.

[92] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*… Suu Kyi said that it was Ann Pasternak Slater who convinced her to join boycotts, Radio 4, *Desert Islands Disc Aung San Suu Kyi* BBC, 01.02.2013, 13 minute.

[93] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 319–320.

[94] Perhaps most clear example of her rationale can be seen in her interview with Clements (targeted to the West), Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 93, 107, 217, 218 (tourism boycott). During her rallies over the gate with the Burmese this topic appeared much more rarely – it was a marginal issue; though there are some examples, like in *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 459–465 when she called foreign investors not to invest in Burma yet.

[95] "A combination of economic development and dominant state role" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 293).

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as the sanctions clearly deteriorated the standard of living of the people of Myanmar[96] – despite her claims to the contrary ("I don't think it would really hurt the people very much"; "sometimes it is true that some measures involve short-term suffering").[97] Worse still, sanctions turned out to be ineffective for variety of reasons, both domestic (the self-isolating nature of the Myanmar military regime)[98] and international: lack of involvement in the sanctions of Asian countries[99]; Myanmar's neighbours, like China, not only did not join sanction, but were initially almost delighted that the West, by introducing sanctions scored a political own goal in Myanmar.[100] Hence, sanctions failed, which Suu Kyi implicitly conceded by calling for their suspension in 2011; yet from the point of view of Suu Kyi's personal interests, the sanctions were not a total disaster: they helped Suu Kyi to keep her position and made it impossible to marginalize her politically (the generals dreamed and hoped for it) for long fifteen years.

To conclude the issues of this subchapter, it is hard to justly asses her non-violence political philosophy. Her rejection of violence seemed authentic, for both personal (assassination of her father) and tactical reasons (since 1988 until now she has been unable to counter the might of the army). By combining both, the "Burmese and international traditions of challenging a political foe of superior physical power, using her individual physical existence as a political resource"; Suu Kyi "drew from the moral capital she had accumulated both inside and outside her country" and was able to find adequate idioms to her political struggle.[101] That did not secured her political victory, but at least inspired many inside Burma and abroad which translated into Suu Kyi's enhanced political profile. Intellectually Suu Kyi's non-violence remains an interesting, Burmese attempt to combine both local (even if partially invented) tradition with the universalistic ideas of the modern world. As such, Suu Kyi's non-violence was very popular in the

[96] Evan Osnon, *The Burmese Spring*, "The New Yorker", http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/08/06/the-burmese-spring (access: 25.08.2015); Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 186.

[97] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 93 and 107.

[98] Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps. A Personal History of Burma*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2007, pp. 342–346.

[99] Renaud Egreteau, Larry Jagan, *Back to Old Habits Isolationism or the Self-Preservation of Burma's Military Regime*, Irasec, Bangkok 2008, pp. 1–98, http://www.reseau-asie.com/ouvrage/books/books/back-to-the-old-habits-isolationism-or-the-self-preservation-of-burma-s-military-regime/ (access: 02.07.2018).

[100] As Poland's former Ambassador to Myanmar Prof. Bogdan Góralczyk told me, the Chinese – upon hearing of the introduction of Western sanctions – started clapping their hands and cheering. Private conversation, November, 2010. His very good account of pre-2011 Myanmar is available in Polish (Bogdan Góralczyk, *Złota Ziemia roni łzy. Esej birmański* [*The Golden Earth Sheds Tears. A Burmese Essay*], Rambler, Warszawa 2011).

[101] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 268.

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1990s, yet with global decrease of democratic ideologies and Suu Kyi's own diminishing international appeal, it is bound to be forgotten now.

2. Fear and Freedom from Fear: The Universalistic Message

"It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it."[102] These opening words of "Freedom from Fear" essay – written for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 1991 – became Suu Kyi's catchphrase: her most famous and most quoted ones (today critically),[103] while "Freedom from Fear" gave her widespread, international recognition. Intellectually, the essay is important not only as Suu Kyi's most well-known text, but also thanks to its universalizing message.

Suu Kyi's titular "freedom from fear" is a direct reference to one of Aung San's speeches from 1946[104] and an indirect, if not oblivious reference to famous Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms Speech" ("freedom of speech and expression, freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, freedom from want, freedom from fear").[105] For Roosevelt, freedom from fear meant "a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor."[106] Although this understanding of freedom from fear does not relate to Suu Kyi's usage of this term, "objectively speaking, that is where this discourse started"[107] – Roosevelt's freedom from fear entered the Atlantic Charter[108] "as part of the democratic (as opposed to fascist) ideology of the Alliance" and then it entered "the discourse of human rights"[109] via the

[102] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 180.

[103] Today's critics like to remind Suu Kyi her words in the context of her silence on Rohingya's massacres, e.g. *Aung San Suu Kyi: Damned by her Silence*, "The Guardian", 10.09.2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/10/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmar-rohingya-human-rights (access: 13.07.2018); *Suu Kyi's Silence: Why Myanmar's Leader Is Ignoring The Rohingya Genocide*, "The Huffington Post", 04.24.2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/myanmar-suu-kyi-rohingya-genocide_us_5ab14dd7e4b008c9e5f1fc90 (access: 13.07.2018).

[104] *Aung San's Inaugural Address to the AFPFL Delivered on 20 January 1946*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, p. 56; Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 39.

[105] Franklin D. Roosevelt, *1941 State of The Union Address*, "The Four Freedoms", 06.01.1941, http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/fdr-the-four-freedoms-speech-text/ (access: 13.07.2018).

[106] Ibid.

[107] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 297.

[108] *The Atlantic Charter*, points 3 and 8, 14th August 1941, The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp (access: 13.07.2018).

[109] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 297.

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Preamble of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[110] Suu Kyi in her article did mention the Declaration, but not Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms Speech." In her words that echoed the Buddhist modernists' critique of global technological progress without moral compass[111] - "in an age when immense technological advances have created lethal weapons which could be, and are, used by the powerful and the unprincipled to dominate the weak and the helpless, there is a compelling need for a closer relationship between politics and ethics at both the national and international levels," Suu Kyi presented Declaration as a signpost to strive in international politics, quoting Declaration's words about the need to strive to "promote basic human rights."[112] This reference served her as a way to criticise authoritarian governments for non-realization of this benevolent goal "as long as there are governments whose authority is founded on coercion rather than on the mandate of the people, and interest groups which place short-term profits above long-term peace and prosperity, concerted international action to protect and promote human rights will remain at best a partially realized struggle. There will continue to be arenas of struggle where victims of oppression have to draw on their own inner resources to defend their inalienable rights as members of the human family."[113]

But it is just that; the Declaration did not play a central role in Suu Kyi's article, which taken together with the omission of four freedoms shows that Suu Kyi chose this reference cautiously and used it selectively and creatively. In her political thought, out of four freedoms, "only freedom of fear is actually prominent in her speeches," freedom from want is referred occasionally,[114] while "freedom of speech and belief do not form

[110] "The advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people" (*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948* (*General Assembly resolution 217 A*), United Nations, http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ (access: 13.07.2018).

[111] Jordan Winfield, *Buddhism and the State in Burma: English-Language Discourses from 1823 to 1962*, unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne 2017, pp. 181–193.

[112] "Every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction" (*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*…, *Preamble*, http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ (access: 13.07.2018).

[113] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 182).

[114] E.g. "we want freedom from fear and want" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 116); "In working for democracy and human rights we are striving to establish political and social institutions and values that will free our people from want and fear (…) Each year large numbers of people of many different races and creeds are driven to an uncertain life as unwanted refugees because of political and economic mismanagement under systems that do not foster the two basic freedoms without which human beings cannot lead dignified, meaningful lives: freedom from want and freedom from fear. As long as there are parts of the world where the two freedoms

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cornerstones in Aung San Suu Kyi's political discourse."[115] Perhaps the omission of other three freedoms had something to do with the fact that these three freedoms do not translate well into Burmese Buddhism: freedom of belief "is too readily associated with ideology and with monotheistic religion, which translates into Burmese as 'wrong-viewed', 'selfness' (*atta*), and runs directly opposite to the Buddhist teachings about non-self (*anatta*)"; freedom of speech "is not so important in Burmese discourse, for in Burmese opinion the spiritual and conciliatory nature of speech is seen as more important than the freedom to say what one wants"; while freedom from want may be controversial, as want "is too readily linked to the mental defilements related to sense-gratification," where "want" overlaps with "desire" as is usually "seen to go against the grain of even minimal Buddhist behaviour" due to being based "on attachment, which prevents the practice of Buddhist charity and renunciation of offerings 'without regret.'"[116]

For this reason or other, Suu Kyi skipped or marginalized the other three freedoms and concentrated on freedom from fear. Moreover, in her interpretation, she moved from the original "secular strategic" and "humanitarian" meanings of freedom from fear – she "Asianized"; "indigenized," or "Buddhicised" this very concept, following the footsteps of her father.[117] Suu Kyi understood freedom from fear in a psychological way, itself in

are not fostered there will be refugees (*Message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Acceptance of the 1995 IRC Freedom Award, 21 November 1995*, *Daw Suu Receives IRC Award*, Online Burma Library, 21.11.1995, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199511/msg00155.html (access: 13.07.2018); Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 367.

[115] She used freedom from want in *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 185. Among her colleagues from NLD freedom of speech was frequently mentioned by U Kyi Maung (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 297); The usage of freedom from want comes from *Message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Acceptance of the 1995 IRC Freedom Award...*, but even there it is used only occasionally: "the people of my country want the two freedoms that spell security: freedom from want and freedom from fear (…) for their political beliefs that has made so many of our people feel that even in their own homes they cannot live in dignity and security" (*Message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Acceptance of the 1995 IRC Freedom Award*…); elsewhere she wrote that "among the basic freedoms to which men aspire that their lives might be full and uncramped, freedom from fear stands out as both a means and an end" (Suu Kyi, *Freedom From Fear*…, p. 183). That said, Suu Kyi used freedom of speech occasionally in her rallies over the gate (see: latter part of the book).

[116] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 298–299.

[117] Ibid., pp. 297–298; Aung San in one of his speeches encouraged the monks to foster 'freedom from fear' with the people, to "go amongst our people, preach the doctrine of unity and love; carry the message of higher freedom to every nook and corner of the country, freedom to religious worship, freedom to preach and spread the Dharma anywhere and anytime, freedom from fear ignorance, superstition, etc., teach our people to rely upon themselves and re-construct themselves materially, spiritually and otherwise" (*Aung San's Inaugural Address to the AFPFL Delivered on 20 January 1946*…, p. 56); overall, Aung San "thus skilfully blended this anti-Fascist and pro-democratic idea of the concept of 'freedom from fear' with its Buddhist ramifications as advocated

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accord with Burmese tradition that prefers psychological explanations than "substantive political realities": Suu Kyi's interpretation "appeals to the Burmese aptitude to interpret politics in terms of Buddhist psychological concepts."[118] Hence, Suu Kyi, having introduced her thesis ("it is not power that corrupts but fear"), moved to describe four Buddhist kinds of corruption (*a-gati*): *chanda-gati* (corruption induced by desire), "deviation from the right path in pursuit of bribes or for the sake of those one loves"; *dosa-gati* ("taking the wrong path to spite those against whom one bears ill will"), *moga-gati* ("aberration due to ignorance") and – "perhaps the worst of the four" – *bhaya-gati* (from *bhaya*, "fear"), or corruption due to fear, which "slowly destroys all sense of right and wrong, it so often lies at the root of the other three kinds of corruption."[119] Then she described these types of corruption as related: "just as *chanda-gati*, when not the result of sheer avarice, can be caused by fear of want or fear of losing the goodwill of those one loves, so fear of being surpassed, humiliated or injured in some way can provide the impetus for ill will. And it would be difficult to dispel ignorance unless there is freedom to pursue the truth unfettered by fear"; and concluded this introductory part of the article in a philosophical way: "with so close a relationship between fear and corruption it is little wonder that in any society where fear is rife corruption in all forms becomes deeply entrenched."[120] Further on she described fear in length: "within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property of means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure. A most insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant or futile the small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity."[121] Elsewhere, during her speeches over the gate, while regretting the influence of fear within Burmese people ("sometimes we do things in fear"; "not only we change a policy because we like a person, we tend to change a policy in fear of a person"), she followed Buddhist reasoning by linking fear with hatred: "hatred and fear are related. You hate the person you fear. It's the law of life (…) You cannot hate the person you do not fear. If you think you hate someone, examine your heart, ask yourself, and you will find that you also fear him. Hatred cannot exist without fear"[122]; she repeated this message in one of her later interviews: "hate and fear

by the Sangha, while providing for the other two freedoms (expression and belief) in the constitution" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 298).

[118] This was also in accord with general NLD perspective which "psychologizes freedom" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 297–298).

[119] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 180.

[120] Ibid., pp. 180–181.

[121] Ibid., p. 184.

[122] She rejected hatred as a "very lowly spirit" which "can only give you distress. If you hate somebody it's you who is upset," therefore: "even if we do not like someone has done, there is no

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are the opposite sides of the same coin. It's the same thing. You don't hate unless you fear, basically."[123]

In Suu Kyi's article the "fear sums up" both "the regime and the conditions in the country."[124] The former one is important, as presenting the SLORC as fearful of social retribution/revenge was Suu Kyi's and the NLD's political tactics in the late 1980s and 1990s. According to Suu Kyi, fear is the main feature of the regime: "fear. Fear of losing their power. Fear of facing the truth. Fear of finding out that if they face the truth they will have to admit that they've been doing all sorts of things they should not have been doing" [125]; "I can sense their uneasiness – their lack of confidence"; "fear is rooted in insecurity and insecurity is rooted in lack of *metta* (…) insecurity leads to fear."[126] This fear, too, is to blame for the major sins of the Burmese politics, such as corruption and personalization of politics.[127] And this fear is not good for the generals themselves, either: "the fear of government is not good. It's detrimental to the country. The fear of the people also mentally strains the people in power. If people fear me, how difficult my life can be? I am saying this with empathy for the authorities. I don't think that the authorities feared by the people can be a happy lot."[128] Suu Kyi's deputy, Tin U followed suit by saying that "if some of them are fearing for their lives, that may be a good thing (…) this fear they live with is identical to the fear they have created among the people,"[129]

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reason to hate him or her"; she quoted an abbot saying that "resentment cannot be undone by harming the person you hate, or even by murdering him. Resentment can be undone only by killing your own hatred," she gave example of her mother who never told her to hate her father's assassins, and herself ("I don't hate anyone. Hatred is not a feeling that should be welcome and kept", "our politics do not hold any grudge against anyone"), and she urged the people to be courageous in getting rid of both fear and hatred, "the reason I'm telling you not to keep fear of hatred is for you to be courageous"; "for our people to be able to do what should be done, the people have to cleanse their hearts of hatred and spite and courageous"; "only a courageous minority is engaged in this fearless effort" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, pp. 97–98).

[123] *You Could Start by Convincing a Friend*, Interview with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the Shambala Sun, January 1996, Abbudhist Library, http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/F-%20Miscellaneous/General%20Miscellaneous/Aung%20San%20Suu%20Kyi/An%20Interview%20with%20Anug%20San%20Suu%20Kyi/Interview%20with%20Daw%20Aung%20San%20Suu%20Kyi%20in%20the%20Shambala%20Sun,%20Ja.htm (access: 13.07.2018).

[124] As well as ways of "emancipation from fear" (see: below) (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 299).

[125] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 183.

[126] Ibid., pp. 29 and 35.

[127] "To explain the phenomenon of both corruption and personalized politics, Suu Kyi does not only argue in terms of Myanmar/Burmese political culture, but refers to psychological or spiritual concepts to overcome traditional political practices. In her opinion, personalized politics are mainly caused by fear" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 36).

[128] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 187.

[129] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 300.

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while another top NLD member, U Kyi Maung, called the regime "fear-based" where "no one is safe, no one can be trusted… even if you happen to be at the very top" and compared it to Orwell's "1984" and Big Brother.[130] According to the NLD's leaders, regime's fear is due to generals' lack of compassion.[131] The narrative about fear being prime mover of Myanmar's regime action was later taken up by many international pro-democratic journalists and researchers who described the SLORC's prime motivation of not relinquishing power as a fear over "the Nuremberg Syndrome."[132]

This thesis in the Burmese political conditions was: 1) tactically wrong – the opposition that wanted to get the power from authoritarian government should rather have sought ways of convincing the regime to relinquish the power and decrease the fear instead of humiliating the generals by proclaiming in public that they were afraid of giving up the power[133]; 2) analytically correct: in the "unstable, dangerous, and often fatal nature of the domestic political environment" [134] in post-colonial states of the Global South, such as Burma, both the power and survival of political leaders have been more frequently challenged rather by internal than external threats; in an environment where losing power would mean not only surrendering the means to acquire and maintain wealth, influence and privileges, but could result in the loss of their lives and liberty as well, fear plays pivotal role; 3) philosophically universalistic: fear as the cornerstone of authoritarian regimes regardless of their cultural and historical background, hence the thesis could be applied everywhere. This universalism was undoubtedly intellectually interesting and must have had influence on Suu Kyi's popularity in the West.[135]

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[130] Clements, *Conversation with U Kyi Maung*…, pp. 256–258.

[131] "In order to overcome your own fears you have to start first by showing compassion to others. Once you have started treating people with compassion, kindness and understanding, then your fears dissipate. It's that straightforward" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 181). Tin U followed that suit (Clements, *Conversation with Tin U*, pp. 299–330). This NLD's politics of high moral ground will be described later in this book.

[132] Quoted in: Martin Smith, *Burma. Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Zed Books, Dhaka–Bangkok–New York–London 1999, p. 415; *EC Chief Says NLD Threatened Junta with 'Nuremburg-style' Trial*, "The Irrawaddy", http://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=21796 (access: 18.06.2018).

[133] The opposition even threatened the generals with redistribution: Suu Kyi said that she "will never make any personal guarantees," and she declared that she believed in truth and reconciliation commissions along Chilean and South African lines (according to her the people must know that "their sufferings have to acknowledged" let's consider it as satisfaction rather than as a need for justice); Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 38 and 122–123; Tin U followed similar lines (Ibid., p. 300). This was a highly unsatisfactory scenario for the generals who, contrary to NLD, were in the position of power.

[134] Stephen R. David, *Explaining Third World Alignment*, "World Politics", vol. 43, no. 2, January 1991, p. 243.

[135] For an academic example of this fascination of Suu Kyi's concept, see Silverstein's much quoted words: "implicit in her writings and speeches is the idea that freedom is a universal idea,

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Regime's fear, however, is only one side of the coin (it produced "aggressive confrontation"); the other one is the "long habituated response of the oppressed," of the people of Burma – their "passive submission"; this sense of fear "permeated the entire society, where all disparate expressions of fear that sprung from desire – the desire not to lose power, the desire not to lose the goodwill of those one loved, the desire to remain unsurpassed, uninjured and unhumiliated, and the desire not to ever want anything."[136] Accordingly, "fear and desire snaked through the society and enmeshed it in an unwholesome web of distorted images (…) it was a society where truth was in jeopardy because there was no perusal of 'truth unfettered by fear'"; and "to cast aside this smokescreen of fear and perceive truth there was need for courageous action."[137]

Suu Kyi put it clearly in one of her interviews, "one dominant feature is the lack of confidence. And lack of confidence often means lack of honesty, because you don't know whom you can trust enough to be honest with you. That is connected to fear. If you don't have confidence, you're filled with fear. This lack of confidence, of trust in each other, is a real sickness"; that is why "fear is very much a habit. People are conditioned to be frightened. In free countries it is quite normal to ask 'why?' if anybody, even a security officer, asks you to do something which seems unreasonable. In an authoritarian state asking such questions can be dangerous so people simply do what they are told to do. So those in power get more oppressive and the people get more frightened."[138] Suu Kyi's words match Maung Maung Gyi's description of Burmese fear of authority: "a Burmese individual is invariable afraid of the person in authority, especially a person who can give him plenty of trouble such as his direct superior. Traditions have taught him that men in position and power are always those who tend to abuse power."[139]

Here, in the second part of Suu Kyi's fear analysis (fear of the society), one may again see Suu Kyi's attempt to educate/awaken/rebel the people so that they could see by their own eyes that they may change the situation by themselves, that change depends on each individual's actions – his/her ability to overcome fear and become free.[140] Hence, "by emphasizing the necessity of being courageous and to face life, Suu

which was given modern approval in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN in 1948" (Josef Silverstein, *The Idea of Freedom in Burma and the Political Thought of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, "Pacific Affairs", vol. 69, no. 2, Summer 1996, p. 225).

[136] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 277.

[137] Ibid., pp. 277–278.

[138] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 67 and 80.

[139] "Thus in his relationship with the man in authority he would be careful to eschew words that would seem unpalatable to the latter. He would either tell a lie or water down the whole truth. He would try to please his superior rather than face the facts" (Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 166).

[140] Again, as a comparison, some quotes from her latter rallies over the gate may be illustrative: "If you are not happy, you have to do what you can to right the wrong. Fear will only give us more suffering. We must say what we should say" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January*

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Kyi implies the need to get involved and not to keep away from politics as the Myanmar/Burmese traditionally prefer to do"; and so "the elimination of fear, hatred and the excessive pursuit of want (…) are seen as prerequisites for social and political change."[141] Thus, fear is directly interwoven with freedom: "freedom and fear are inversely related: true freedom can only arise in one who has overcome fear which, in turn, is related to an accurate perception of what is dangerous in a particular political environment."[142] As Suu Kyi herself explained: "freedom would mean that I would be able to do what I understand to be right, without the fear that by doing so I would be exposing myself and others to danger."[143] That is why having described fear, Suu Kyi moved on to writing about getting rid of the fear, explaining that "even under the most crushing state machinery, courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilized man"; in Burma's example – according to Suu Kyi – it was not so much the fact of the dire economic conditions and everyday hardship of the Burmese living under autocratic ("totalitarian" in her vocabulary)[144] rule that dramatically mismanaged the economy and impoverished the country, but the demand for dignity that propelled the Burmese to protest against Ne Win regime in 1988: "it was more than the difficulties of eking out a barely acceptable standard of living that had eroded the patience of a traditionally good-natured, quiescent people – it was also the humiliation of a way of life disfigured by corruption and fear"; consequently, the students rose "against the denial of their right to life by a totalitarian regime which deprived the present of meaningfulness and held out no hope for the future."[145] Suu Kyi compared the attitude of her fellow compatriots

1996 (no. 12), in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 276); "Please serve the cause for democracy even when you know you cannot be above fear" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 30 March 1996 (no. 23)*…, p. 521).

[141] This "elimination of fear, hatred and the excessive pursuit of want" are "part of the 'revolution of the spirit'" (for the concept itself, see: later in this chapter) (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 37); Suu Kyi "concludes, that the spreading of loving kindness, or the negation of hatred, is the equivalent to being courageous. In fact, her explanation of personalized politics follows central concepts of Buddhist philosophy and borrows its terms" (Ibid.).

[142] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 296.

[143] *You Could Start by Convincing a Friend*…

[144] Naturally, this is a rhetoric device, for if Suu Kyi had lived in a totalitarian country, she would have not been able to function politically at all (and probably would have been dead long time ago); the repressions are not the indicator for totalitarianism, for authoritarian country may be equally brutal (or perhaps even more) against its people; what differentiates totalitarianism from authoritarianism is the level of control of the society – full (or almost full) in totalitarianism and limited in authoritarianism; for more, see: Juan José Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes. With a Major New Introduction*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder–London 2000, pp. 49–267; Burma had never been totalitarian, though it had been an example of very repressive (and brutal) authoritarianism.

[145] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, pp. 181–184.

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(a "passive apprehension") to "a water in the cupped hands," quoting a poem: "Emerald cool we may be; As water in cupped hands; But oh that we might be; As splinters of glass; In cupped hands"; and explained: "glass splinters, the smallest with its sharp, glinting power to defend itself against hands that try to crush, could only be seen as a vivid symbol of the spark of courage that is an essential attribute of those who would free themselves from the grip of oppression."[146] The metaphor of "glass splinter" was probably conceived by Suu Kyi to describe why "traditionally good-natured, quiescent people" protested in a violent way in 1988 (with lynching and beheading the persons suspected of being MI agents),[147] but this comparison was somehow out of line with her general emphasis on Buddhism and non-violence – even Houtman, a researcher (very) favourable to Suu Kyi, admitted that "glass splinter is a comparatively violent metaphor" that locates itself on the opposition to "Buddhist enlightenment" which is "attractive for its emphasis on non-violent means of changing attitudes and making conquests."[148] Not only "glass splinter" was out of line. "Fearlessness" which Suu Kyi – predictably – attributed to Aung San (and to Gandhi, who were both "fearless" according to her),[149] is also ambiguous from Buddhist perspective: fearlessness is "not necessarily a positive attribute," for in Buddhism "fearlessness," meaning "lack of fear of bad action" is "the tenth of the Ten Mental Defilements, is a negative attribute when it contributes, along with other mental processes, to lust (*tanha*), conceit (*mana*) and wrong belief (*ditthi*), all of which prolong samsaric existence"; in more political sense, fearlessness "can give rise to war"; which, by the way, Aung San's example showed quite well.[150] That brings us to the major point here: Suu Kyi's titular concept of freedom of fear, according to Houtman, also does not match Buddhism well. It is "not unambiguous," and "does not translate well" into Burmese and into Buddhism for in Buddhism "fear is not necessarily always negative," moreover, "it is often seen as positive," as "fear in the sense of 'not doing, saying or planning out of fear of doing bad deeds' (i.e. moral dread, scrupulousness) together with 'shame', are seen as the 'two guardians of the world' which are 'cultural rules guarding the world from destruction.'"[151]

[146] Ibid., pp. 181–182.

[147] "Public executions – mostly beheadings – of suspected DDSI agents became an almost daily occurance in Rangoon" (Lintner, *Outrage*…, p. 121).

[148] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 302.

[149] "The words used by Jawaharlal Nehru to describe Mahatma Gandhi could well be applied to Aung San: 'The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth' (…) there is an inevitable sameness (of Gandhi and Aung San – ML) about the challenges of authoritarian rule anywhere at any time, so there is a similarity in the intrinsic qualities of those who rise up to meet the challenge" (Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 184).

[150] Aung San "was not always a non-violent fearlessness in his military career" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 300 and 302).

[151] Additionally, *samvega* represents the fear of the consequences of action for a future state, and as a result, the experience of remorse; on the other hand Houtman quotes U Pandita who wrote

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If Houtman's interpretation is right, that would mean a certain kind of Suu Kyi's intellectual westernization and a partial detachment from Burmese Buddhist perspective: the logical conclusion from this reading of "Freedom from Fear" would be that Suu Kyi in her article used Buddhist concepts randomly, if not superficially, and in her main intellectual point she referred to universal (or Western) concepts of freedom, which are not always in accord with Burma's Buddhist heritage.

Nilanjana Sengupta offers a more favourable interpretation (in terms of Suu Kyi's coherence with Buddhism). According to her readings, Suu Kyi's "Freedom from Fear" is Suu Kyi's own part in a central motif in the Burmese political thought, that is how to navigate through stormy waters of *saṃsāra* and reach *nibbāna* (or help the others to reach that goal); accordingly, "Freedom from Fear" would explore and present Suu Kyi's "own vision of the *majjhima partipada*, or the critical middle path which chartered a way between compliance and conflict towards its own *nibbanic* objective."[152] According to this interpretation, Suu Kyi's words about what prompted the Burmese to rise against the regime represent a probe of "the relationship between individual behavioural response as played out against the socio-political context (…) this relationship finds an explanation in the concept of *paticcasamuppada*, or inter-dependent co-arising (or the Doctrine of Dependent Origination), one of the central precepts of the *Majjhima Nikaya* (Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha)" – according to *paticcasamuppada,* "an individual is constituted in the existing socio-cultural contexts, and the socio-cultural contexts are in turn constructed and reconstructed, through individuals' actions"; these two (individual and socio-cultural context) "are linked not by a relationship of linear causality but by the logic of network casual" which "implies that the environment, consisting of other individuals, shapes an individual's personality and character just as his every volitional action reconfigures the environment around him which in turn affects his and every other individual around him"; thus "every person's individual *kamma* is directly or indirectly responsible for the wellbeing of others and no individual can be absolved of his social role in the *kammic* web of which he is a part."[153] Sengupta used this inter-dependent co-arising theory in explaining Suu Kyi's metaphor of "glass splinters," built on playing on "juxtaposing the opposites" (coolness of water with vicious slivers of glass, and "the hand that nurtures and the hand that punishes") – "the

that "Mara's Sixth Army is known as 'Fear' itself, and only 'a person who reaches nibbana is completely protected and can therefore be called "The Fearless", the one without danger'"; all in all freedom from fear remains "not unambiguous" and that is why, according to Houtman, "after some time, Aung San Suu Kyi contextualised her ideas about fear more carefully. While foreign journalists continued to trumpet the attractive idea of fearlessness, she herself increasingly came to link 'freedom from fear' to the positive practice of *metta* and *brahma-so tayà*, so conducive to national unity" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 300).

[152] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 274.

[153] Ibid., p. 276.

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picture is of opposing forces being unwillingly pulled together while underlying tension of the situation is drawn out in her mention of 'the precarious state of passive apprehension' in which the Burmese people lie suspended"; according to this interpretation, the "glass splinters" metaphor "is startling in its unexpected harshness and in its negative implications of passivity" – it transforms the term "cool" ("traditionally associated with the safe heaven afforded by the teaching of dhamma") into "a state of enforced, wearied inertia" – "if the water lying supine within the oppressive grip was to transform itself into glass splinters then the same punitive fist could be prised open or changed into an encircling, protective refuge which shielded rather than punished. What was needed was the sharp thrust of courage or a lack of fear."[154] In other words, in this interpretation, Suu Kyi challenged fatalistic interpretation of *kamma*, blamed the inertia of people and hoped for making them emancipate from fear and by doing so change their sorry state of existence under dictatorship.

Certainly Suu Kyi repeated her ideas of the need to challenge the fatalistic understanding of *kamma* more clearly elsewhere: "a lot of Buddhists think that because the authorities are cruel and unjust, you don't have to do anything at all, they will get their own deserts. I don't accept that. I don't think that one should just sit back and expect karma to catch up with everybody else"; "both work and action come down to karma – action and doing. And of course, self-reliance is very Buddhist. We say, '*atta hi attano natho*.' In the end we only have ourselves to rely on"; "I remind the people that karma is actually doing. It's not just sitting back. Some people think of karma as destiny or fate and that there's nothing they can do about it. It's simply what is going to happen because of their past deeds. This is the way in which karma is often interpreted in Burma. But karma is not that at all. It's doing, it's action. So you are creating your own karma all the time. Buddhism is a very dynamic philosophy and it's a great pity that some people forget that aspect of our religion. If something goes wrong, people tend to do something just for themselves, as it were. But I think you can also carry on working for others. Perhaps we should encourage this more; the idea that you can gain a lot of merit by working for others, as much as by working for yourself. In fact, I would like more of our Burmese Buddhists to understand this point."[155] This feature of Suu Kyi's thought remained constant until now: in her first speech after her last release from house arrest on 14th November 2010, she again called for activity: "we will have to do a lot of work. Without work, we won't get anything. We Burmese often say it's just because of 'karma, karma.' So I had asked youth repeatedly before if they know the meaning of 'karma.' 'Karma' is basically doing. So when you say yourself it's because of 'karma,'

[154] Ibid., p. 277.

[155] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 168, 171 and 179. "I'm a Buddhist, so 'destiny' is not something that means that much to me, because I believe in karma. And that means doing. You create your own karma. And in a sense, if I believe in destiny, it's something that I create for myself. That's the Buddhist way" (Ibid., p. 186).

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then it would mean it happened because of what you did. So if there is something we want, we must try to make it happen."[156] Her belief in the active *kamma* is best caught by her catch-phrase: "no hope without endeavour."[157]

Regardless of more or less Buddhist interpretation, the key argument of Suu Kyi's "Freedom from Fear" is not fear, but fearlessness – a state that allows emancipation from fear. Of course, she mentions Aung San and Gandhi as fearless persons, but their role is passive, not active: that of models who exhort the people to be courageous. It is the people, not Aung San or Gandhi, that play the central role in Suu Kyi's argumentation. Living under authoritarian conditions they strive not to be corrupted by fear which is not always apparent to Westerners ("the effort necessary to remain uncorrupted in an environment where fear is an integral part of everyday existence is not immediately apparent to those fortunate enough to live in states governed by the rule of law"), which brings Suu Kyi to the point of importance of "just laws" (which "do not merely prevent corruption by meting out impartial punishment to offenders" but also "help to create a society in which people can fulfil the basic requirements necessary for the preservation of human dignity without recourse to corrupt practices"); where such laws are absent – and this is the key of Suu Kyi's argumentation – "the burden of upholding the principles of justice and common decency falls on the ordinary people"; people's "cumulative effect on their sustained effort and steady endurance which will change a nation where reason and conscience are warped by fear into one where legal rules exist to promote man's desire for harmony and justice while restraining the less desirable destructive traits in his nature."[158]

That is why throughout her career she concentrated her efforts on convincing people to get rid of the fear. Already during one of the speeches in the electoral campaign of 1989, she urged people to be courageous: "where people [are] daring to be politically active, they enjoy more rights. Where people are fearful, however, they suffer more oppression. Because of this, if we want democracy, we need to show courage. By this I don't mean courage to cause trouble. I must often remind people of that. By courage I mean the courage to do what [one] knows is right, even if one is afraid. We should do what we believe is right, even if we are afraid. Of course, we cannot help being afraid;

[156] *Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010…*

[157] E.g. "Hope has to be accompanied by endeavour. Hope is different from wishful thinking" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 186); "endeavour is necessary in the beginning, middle and end our effort" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…, quoted in: Nilanjana Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar. Khin Myo Chit to Aung San Suu Kyi*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015, p. 327); "We must have perseverance. We must have perseverance in whatever we do, until the end (we reach the goal)" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…).

[158] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 182.

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we just have to work to control our fear."[159] After being released from house arrest she praised the courage of the few – showing this as an analogy for others[160] – and, while speaking over the gate, she admitted that she didn't know "how to eliminate fear from people's mindset," but she nevertheless tried to do it by several ways, first ridiculing fearful attitude: "an Uncle came to me (…) he told me that his fear disappeared after listening to my speeches. Yet whenever he was threatened by the authorities, his fear got the better of him again. What can we do? Shall we encourage one another? Shall we fear the authorities in turn? Instead of fearing the authorities all the same time, we should take turn to fear them. If you are married, for example, you can have a deal with your spouse to fear the authorities in turn on every other day. If you're a group of five, you can assign fear to each person for each day."[161] And she urged ("don't fear"), plead ("we have to find ways to eliminate fear"; "we cannot live in fear"; "please be contemplative and reasonable towards fear"; "think of what you can achieve from fear"; "fear can only give you frustration and fatigue"), encouraged ("why should we fear as long as we're doing the right thing"; "we should endure hardship in doing what is right") and even threatened her listeners ("it seems that fearful people tend to be prone to accidents") to get rid of fear; she enhanced her message by evoking Shakespeare's words ("a coward dies a thousand deaths, but the valiant never tastes of death but once") and by interpreting it in a philosophical, Buddhist way: "coward people think about death in fear of it, and they die every time they think about it"; while "brave people don't have such fear and they therefore die only once"; "the meaning is that death is inevitable (…) death is the law of impermanence (…) we do not have to fear death since it's an inevitability."[162] Furthermore, she also tried to appeal to her listeners' reason by explaining them that fear is unreasonable, given the Buddhist perspective of impermanence of all things and that they should employ their reason in overcoming fear: "whatever happens, fear seizes us first and our knees become shaky before we realize what is really happening. Suppose if one's is in fear of losing one's job. Why is she afraid of being unemployed? Because she doesn't want to lose her income. That's because she needs to survive. But think again, even if one loses a job, there may be [an]other opportunity. This is just an example. Instead of living in fear of losing the current job owing to disagreement with one's unfair boss or the authorities, one might as well find a new job even if jobs are hard to come by these days. One should solve problems by contemplation and reason. Do not open up your fear, worrying about untoward things that can happen to you. Courage does not

[159] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 219.

[160] "Here is nothing to compare with the courage of ordinary people whose names are unknown and whose sacrifices pass unnoticed. The courage that dares without recognition, without the protection of media attention, is a courage that humbles and inspires and reaffirms our faith in humanity" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 48)*…, p. 191).

[161] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, pp. 95–96.

[162] Ibid., p. 96; *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 135.

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mean having no fear for death, for being beaten up or for prison life. It means the ability to face life. Have courage to face life. If one's doing the right thing, one should be able to face life, come what may."[163] Suu Kyi supplemented this call by a more positive, or even positivistic, vision combined with a call for courage: "only when we face life, doing the right thing, will our children also live by our example. So will our environment. We will have much progress in life. We will be much happier. I don't mean we won't ever be unhappy. As long as there is suffering, there will be unhappiness. But happiness can be increased greatly by living a conscientious life without fear. So, I repeat, the courage to be able to face life has to be nurtured. If we live in fear of this and that, there is no way that we will lead a rich life."[164] Saying that "there are people who were born fearless," who are "said to have a gift," she admitted that "most of us were not born fearless," so she urged them "to train yourself to overcome your fears"[165] and be courageous ("my people have to be reminded very often that they are still deficient in courage"; "dare to courage to abstain from doing unrighteous things"),[166] and question yourself the way Aung San did ("Dad says that courage is the guts to be done, not the other way round"; "he means that courageous people usually question themselves if they are doing the right thing")[167] so that they would be able to change the dire conditions of the country: "we should be able to see the realities of the country and we should be able to accept them. This is also courage. To accept that there is an issue and have the guts to face it is also courage."[168] Finally, being courageous is beneficial for everybody: "being courageous, therefore, is good for oneself. Fearlessness provides for others with happiness. Have courage, since you can have dual benefits from your courage, one for yourself and one for the others. Being dependent on others means that you are putting your burden on others all the time."[169]

Clearly seen in both her "Freedom from Fear" and her later speeches is the faith in person (or in people) as prime movers of history, capable of making a change, which is one of the Suu Kyi's intellectual leitmotifs: "in both her English and Burmese writing she would emphasise on the individual as the ultimate agent of change (…) on the empowerment of the individual so that he is able to discriminate between what is right and what is expected."[170] In "Freedom from Fear" Suu Kyi mentioned the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see: above), but in a context that showed its limitations – in the

[163] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 96.
[164] Ibid., p. 97.
[165] Ibid., p. 98.
[166] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 155.
[167] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 177.
[168] Ibid., p. 180.
[169] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 187.
[170] Sengputa, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 259 and 264.

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imperfect world, where the goals of the Declaration cannot be fulfilled automatically, it is only an individual who can make changes.

Thus, what is needed is a "quintessential revolution" – "the revolution of the spirit" – "born of an intellectual conviction of the need for change in those mental attitudes and values which shape the course of a nations development"; accordingly, an ordinary revolution that "aims merely at changing official policies and institutions with a view to an improvement in material conditions has little chance of genuine success" for "without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration."[171] "In a revolutionary movement" – Suu Kyi elaborated elsewhere – "there is always the danger that political exigencies might obscure, or even nullify, essential spiritual aims," that is why "a firm insistence on the inviolability and primacy of such aims is not mere idealism but a necessary safeguard against an Animal Farm syndrome where the new order after its first flush of enthusiastic reforms would take on the murky colours of the very system it had replaced."[172] That is why "it is not enough merely to call for freedom, democracy and human rights. There has to be a united determination to persevere in the struggle, to make sacrifices in the name of enduring truths, to resist the corrupting influences of desire, ill will, ignorance and fear."[173] "The people of Burma" – as paternalistically and rhetorically wrote Suu Kyi presenting her opinion as that of a whole nation – "want not just a change of government but a change of political values"; this change is necessary to remove legacy of authoritarianism – a "concept of absolute power" must be replaced "by the concept of confidence of the people in their right and ability to decide the destiny of their nation," by "confidence in the principles of justice, liberty and human rights"; Suu Kyi enhanced the force of confidence by invoking *saddha*, or "confidence in moral, spiritual and intellectual values" as the most important of "four Buddhist virtues conductive to the happiness of laymen."[174] Accordingly, "to instil such confidence not by an appeal to the passions but through intellectual convictions, into a society which has long been wrecked by distrust and uncertainty is the essence of the Burmese revolution for democracy," a revolution "which moves for changes endorsed by universal norms of ethics."[175] In an interview from the mid-1990s, Suu Kyi called this a "revolution of the spirit," a "true revolution" that is "going beyond a change in the material world" and requires "a change of the spirit"; hence her "struggle for democracy" is based on "spiritual values (…) values that are different to those you

[171] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 183.
[172] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 178.
[173] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 183.
[174] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 178.
[175] Ibid.

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have lived by before."[176] This Suu Kyi's "revolution of the spirit" is not an ordinary revolution (it is not aimed merely at building a popular movement, changing a regime or establishing a set of democratic institutions) – this is "the revolution of the spirit" which involves an inner, mental change: releasing "a far broader moral force"; in order to create a free society "a far deeper change in values was required" – "the focus was on challenging the status quo and the intentional undertaking of ethical behaviour in this very life; a moral regeneration by removing the *kilesas* of fear, desire and apathy – the defilements which led to unwholesome acts and unwholesome mental states."[177]

In short, Suu Kyi's the struggle for democracy and human rights is the "revolution of the spirit": without an inner, mental change, an "ordinary" revolution will not change anything. With such "revolution of the spirit," however, everything is possible. Quoting a popular (Christian)[178] sentence "saint are the sinners who go on trying" as an example of proper attitude, Suu Kyi wrote "so free men are the oppressed who go on trying and who in the process make themselves fit to bear the responsibility and to uphold the disciplines which will maintain a free society"; among the "basic freedoms" they aspire for "freedom from fear stands out as both a means and an end" – "a people who would build a nation in which strong, democratic institutions are firmly established as a guarantee against state-induced power must first learn to liberate their own minds from apathy and

[176] "When I speak about a spiritual revolution, I'm talking a lot about our struggle for democracy. I have always said that a true revolution has to be that of the spirit. You have to be convinced that you need to change and want to change certain things – not just material things. You want a political system which is guided by certain spiritual values – values that are different to those that you've lived by before" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 82); "There are people today who enjoy materially secure lives, but they can never be sure when this will be taken from them. There must be a sense of security that as long as we're not doing harm to others, as long as we are not infringing the laws which were brought about so that we should not harm each other, we should be able to rest secure in the knowledge that we ourselves will not be harmed. That the authorities cannot remove you from your job, kick you out of your house, throw you in prison, or have you executed, if you have done nothing to warrant such actions" (Ibid., p. 116).

[177] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 279–280; see also: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 302.

[178] It is another example of Suu Kyi's eclecticism – despite her stress on Buddhism she has not rarely used Christian comparisons, see: "there is a very direct link between love and fear. It reminds me of the biblical quotation, that 'perfect love casts out fear'. I've often thought that this is a very Buddhist attitude. 'Perfect love' should be *metta* which is not selfish or attached love. In the *Metta Sutra* [a discourse by the Buddha] we have the phrase 'like a mother caring for her only child.' That's true *metta*. A mother's courage to sacrifice herself comes out of her love for her child. And I think we need a lot more of this kind of love around the place"; "I find that the idea of *metta* is in every religion. The Christians say God is love. And when they say, 'perfect love casts out fear,' I think by perfect love they mean exactly what we mean by *metta*. I think at the core of all religions there is this idea of love for one's fellow human beings" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 44 and 99).

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fear."[179] According to one interpretation, this Suu Kyi's idea was "an almost *nibbanic* vision of a safe haven of strong democratic institutions, free from any fear", without, however, a "promise of lending a hand to the swimmers of samsara" (a metaphor of swimming in the waters of *saṃsāra* is a popular one in Burma) – "the responsibility lay with the individual, the oppressed who aspired to be 'free man'"; what they had to do was "to go on trying, to exercise volition to be able to cut through habitual misapprehensions and existing social norms."[180] Hence, in accordance with *paticcasamuppada* rule, the behaviour of an individual "had an accumulative effect on his own character (make themselves fit to bear the responsibilities) as well as the culture at large (free society)"; thus, "to lead a full life, free from fear they needed to engage in fearless acts which would leave a residue of fearlessness in the *kammic* web."[181] In other words, "an ethical transformation" is "achieved by volitional individual endeavour which in turn could not divested of its social dimension since each individual act had its impact in the *kammic* web of existence."[182]

Or, simpler, every single person is responsible for his/hers own "revolution of the spirit" – he or she must awaken by himself/herself and emancipate from fear which would not only help him/her, but – in a karmic effect – would make the society free. It was a vision for here and now, not for the future or for a next incarnation.

That is why in "Freedom from Fear" Suu Kyi, having shown the models of Aung San and Gandhi, put emphasis on the individual, calling for self-improvement, everyone's own work to overcome fear: "fearlessness may be a gift but perhaps more precious is the courage acquired through endeavour, courage that comes from cultivating the habit of refusing to let fear dictate one's actions, courage that could be described as 'grace under pressure' – grace which is renewed repeatedly in the face of harsh, unremitting pressure."[183] Suu Kyi was optimistic, for she wrote elsewhere that there is "a capacity for the sustained mental strife and physical endurance necessary to withstand the forces of negativism, bigotry and hate," and, most importantly, "the main impetus for struggle is not an appetite for power, revenge and destruction but a genuine respect for freedom, peace and justice" which makes "the quest for democracy in Burma" a "struggle of a people to live whole, meaningful lives as free and equal members of the world community. It is a part of the unceasing human endeavour to prove that the spirit of man can transcend the flaws of his own nature."[184]

Suu Kyi's "revolution of the spirit" concept gave birth to popular – and false – interpretation of Suu Kyi struggle as a spiritual one – a narrative certainly influenced

[179] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 183.
[180] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 279.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., p. 280.
[183] Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 184.
[184] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 179.

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by herself (e.g. "my highest aspiration is very much spiritual: purity of mind"; "truth is something towards which we struggle all the time"[185]; "only if you revolutionise your soul or change your mind-set, will there be real revolution"),[186] and by the Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech of her son Alexander, spoken on her behalf where he said that Suu Kyi's "quest is basically spiritual," not political and that her "lonely struggle taking place in a heavily guarded compound in Rangoon is part of the much larger struggle, worldwide, for the emancipation of the human spirit from political tyranny and psychological subjection."[187] The ability to convince half of the world that her political (yes: political, nothing more and nothing less!) struggle for power in Burma represented higher, humanistic values[188] must be considered an impressive public relations success of Suu Kyi. The obvious political pragmatism of her actions – to awaken/rebel the society in order to win the struggle for power with the generals and to concentrate on spiritual aspects as one of the very few avenues available inside Burma[189] – was evidently lost to many observers. Some saw that it was the political situation within Burma that enforced Suu Kyi to concentrate on abstract, spiritual ideas, but these were few and far between.[190] Most bought her message (or simply truly believed in it) that her personal,

[185] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 56–58.

[186] Quoted in Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, p. 184.

[187] Alexander Aris, *The Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 236–238.

[188] The case of Chairman of the Nobel Committee Francis Sejersted may be illustrative here. Sejersted in his speech deified Suu Kyi by saying "with her courage and her high ideals Aung San Suu Kyi brings out something of the best of us," that is why "any ill-treatment of her feels like a violation of what we have most at heart"; moreover, "knowing she is there gives us confidence and faith in the power of good"; he ended his speech with a message to everyone: "show humility and show fearlessness – like Aung San Suu Kyi. The result may be a better world to live in" (Francis Sejersted, *The 1991 Nobel Prize for Peace*, in: *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 228–234). Suu Kyi's "fight was concentrated on one point, the perseverance of virtue" which won the hearts and minds of both the Nobel Committee and the global media, the effects were that they did not 'attached significance to Suu Kyi's lack of political experience, generally a central requirement for political successes' (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 203).

[189] Even Suu Kyi admitted that: on one occasion, Suu Kyi while asked about concretization of her "revolution of the spirit" said – "because of the tremendous repression to which we have been subjected it's almost impossible for it to be either a political or a social revolution. We're so hemmed in by all kinds of unjust regulations that we can hardly move as a political or a social movement. So it has had to be a movement very much of the spirit" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 82).

[190] "The call for a 'revolution of the spirit' is necessitated by a lack of room to manoeuvre in the political and social sphere"; "given the lack of fronts on which she can fight the regime with any suc-

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political struggle for power in Burma represents universal quest for good. By this skilful universalistic justification of her political struggle, Suu Kyi achieved the status of democracy icon in the West,[191] which only helped her to remain in the political game despite being politically in much inferior position vis-à-vis the generals.

Suu Kyi was really able to speak to the world using language, metaphors and ideals widely understandable outside Burma, in the best universalistic way. The final verses of "Freedom of Fear" show it very well: "the wellspring of courage and endurance in the face of unbridled power is generally a firm belief in the sanctity of ethical principles combined with a historical sense that despite all set-backs the condition of man is set on an ultimate course for both spiritual and material advancement"; his "capacity for self-improvement and self-redemption which most distinguishes man from mere brute" – "at the root of human responsibility is the concept of perfection, the urge to achieve it, the intelligence to find a path towards it, and the will to follow that path if not to the end at least the distance needed to rise above individual limitations and environmental impediments"; hence "it is man's vision of a world fit for rational, civilized humanity which leads him to dare and to suffer to build societies free from want and fear."[192]

Such universalistic message conveyed in Suu Kyi's essay unsurprisingly delighted the Western audience – "Freedom from Fear" became immensely popular and secured Suu Kyi's position as one of most important Asian political intellectuals. It was the text of its times: the ephemeral (now gone) era of "the end of history"[193] where democracy and human rights were presented as the only and unquestioned ideology worldwide,[194] but also seemed behind a corner everywhere in the world, including Burma. Politically, "Freedom from Fear," combined Suu Kyi's dual tactics of securing popular support in Burma on the one hand, with calls for foreign backing from abroad on the other. The article represented, too, a clear example of Suu Kyi's philosophy of awakening/rebelling the Burmese people in order to make them start the political change. Suu Kyi positioned herself indirectly in line with Aung San and Gandhi as models of behaviour: ideals who show the way, but cannot do the job (just like the Buddha). The ultimate effort had to be done by the people themselves. Them, and only them, could emancipate from fear, rise and change their environment, making an utopian-like democratic conditions come

cess, the spiritual sphere is a very good beginning for it elicits the broadest support with the Burmese people and of all battles, it is a battle that can be won" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 302–303).

[191] For throughout analysis of her deification in the West, see: Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 277–359. After 2012 (and especially after 2017) she has lost this status in the West.

[192] Suu Kyi, Clements, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 185.

[193] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*?, "The National Interest", no. 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3–18.

[194] An example of her "end of history" thinking can be found, too, in one of her speeches over the gate, where she said "most of the world's successful economies are democratic" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, pp. 287–288).

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true. Overall, her vision of fear enslaving both the oppressors and the oppressed must be considered a strong, universal voice in favour of freedom, at the same time – in the Burmese political thought – it represents a variation of the "optimistic" narrative of possibility of human beings to change their *kamma*.

3. Indigenization of Democracy and Human Rights

Suu Kyi's political thought evolved along with her political struggle. Although there remained permanent benchmarks (Aung San, democracy, human rights), with time her argumentation underwent significant Buddhicisation.[195] It was an evolutionary process, not a sharp turn, in the obvious relation with the political developments: Suu Kyi's struggle with the generals (who accused her of cultural westernization). The result was Suu Kyi's evolutionary intellectual indigenization of concepts of democracy and human rights. What emerged was one of the leitmotifs of her political thought: the attempt to show that democracy and Buddhism are a perfect match.

Suu Kyi has been using Buddhist rhetoric since the very beginning of her political career: during the 1988/1989 campaign she used to "pay her respects to respected monks, take the five precepts along with her supporters, and listen to the monk's preaching who would bless her (…) sometimes she would then support their building activities by performing some symbolic tasks such as carrying building materials or expressing the wish to attain democracy. She would then proceed to 'preach the *tayà* [of politics]' from the heart," her "preaching would normally end with the Buddhist blessing 'May you be free from danger, and may you be happy in body and mind.'"[196] In an interview, she emphasized: "I am [a] Buddhist of course, and I would be guided by all the Buddhist principles I have absorbed throughout my life."[197]

Yet, beginnings were not easy. In December 1988, asked "who is the Buddha?", she apparently replied that he was an "ordinary person like us,"[198] making a point about striving to be noble: "aspire to be noble. Aspire to be as noble as [you] can be. Don't we have the idiom that 'if we try hard enough we too can become Buddhas'? Why can't we aspire to this? If we try hard, ordinary people, the Buddha too was an ordinary human being. If even the Buddha could try to become Buddha in this way, so also ordinary human beings can aspire to attain high nobility."[199] Unfortunately, as Houtman pointed out, she was incorrect from the point of view of Buddhist orthodoxy out of three reasons: 1) Buddha was not an ordinary human being, "for the Buddha is emancipated from

[195] In using the term Buddhicisation I follow Houtman's, *Mental Culture*…, p. 287.

[196] Ibid., p. 289.

[197] While she admitted that she did not think of herself as "a Buddhist politician", the rest of her words clearly contradicted this statement (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 114).

[198] *Myanmar/Burma: Prisoners of Conscience*…, pp. 49–51.

[199] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 289.

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human status through his Thirty Perfections (*parami*) as a *bodhisattva* and is nowhere referred to as 'an ordinary human being'"; 2) the Buddha could not try to become a Buddha (by being noble) "for before he became a Buddha he was a *bodhisattva* and this is the term that should have been used for him at this stage"; 3) "to say that 'even the Buddha could try to become the Buddha in this way, so also ordinary human beings can aspire to attain high nobility' would imply that the Buddha was a lesser, not a greater being than human beings"; therefore, Suu Kyi's words "did not follow Burmese sensibilities concerning the stages of transformation towards Buddhahood, all of which deserve recognition and separation."[200] This mistake, alongside with false accusations of sacrilege targeted at her students, was picked up by the junta in the anti-Suu Kyi defamation campaign, combined with presenting democracy and human rights as alien concepts to Burma.[201] Although during campaign Suu Kyi replied with skilful eristic (she challenged the SLORC's "accusation of not keeping Buddhist precepts by rhetorical question: 'how about abiding by at least the two precepts, namely killing and lying'" and "she recommended keeping the five"),[202] she was well-aware that accusations of her being Westernized, non-Burmese, and not-enough Buddhist could undermine her legitimacy in the long run – therefore what was needed was to stress her bond with Burma and her Burmeseness. She could not have done it better than by invoking Buddhism.

This was even more apparent given the fact that the SLORC – a new generation of generals, with Saw Maung and later Than Shwe at the helm – significantly altered military regime's relationship to Buddhism. Ne Win's distance to aligning with clergy[203] gave way to all-out embracing of Buddhism in order to regain lost legitimacy: the SLORC generals started being publicly religious, supporting the monks, building

[200] Ibid.

[201] Military spokesman "went on to say that the press conference convened by 'NLD youths' (…) 19 June 1989 and held in the conference hall of the home of Aung San Suu Kyi, some speakers had said that if the government's decision change 'B' to 'M' in the transliteration of the country's name (from Burma to Myanmar) were applied to the name of the Buddha, it would become 'moatta,' the Bamar (formerly Burmese or Burman) word for testicle. The SLORC spokesman declared that Aung San Suu Kyi was 'the teacher of those youths,' and described this alleged remark as 'a profound insult to all Buddhists'" (*Myanmar/Burma Prisoners of Conscience*…, p. 50). Later, in "the New Light of Myanmar" the regime declared that for insulting Buddhism Suu Kyi would go to Aviti, the lowest of Buddhist hells; Suu Kyi had been attacked by this "hell anecdote" another couple of times (e.g. 12.11.1991, 13.11.1991, 22/25.11.1991), *Political Crisis,* 91-11 Burma Press Summary (from "The Working People's Daily"), vol. V, no. 11, November 1991, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS91-11.pdf (access: 16.06.2018).

[202] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 291.

[203] With all reservations (in his final years in power Ne Win came closer to aligning himself with religion, with erecting his own pagoda in front of Shwedagon), notwithstanding. For Ne Win's attitude towards religion, see: Robert H. Taylor, *General Ne Win. A Political Biography*, ISEAS, Singapore 2015, pp. 235–236.

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pagodas and giant Buddha statues.[204] Given fundamental discrepancies of potential, Suu Kyi was unable to build her own pagodas – in the footsteps of Manuha,[205] but she was able to present herself as a more genuine Buddhist than the generals (which, given their record of atrocities,[206] was not particularly difficult). Thus, especially after the release from her first house arrest,[207] "her recitation of Buddhist ideas" changed "noticeably" and "developed (…) into a discourse on the compatibility of Buddhist thought with a democratic society and the attainment of freedom, through Buddhism, under authoritarian rule"; from then on, "the grounding of her legitimacy in the union of Buddhist thought and democratic government comprises the enthymeme of her political rhetoric."[208]

That is why, after being released, Suu Kyi became very religious in public, positioned herself as a one who strengthened herself through her meditations during the house arrest,[209] whose sacrifices were irrelevant in comparison to suffering of others,[210] who did not "used abusive terms in speaking about the regime,"[211] who supported

[204] Stephen McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny in Singapore and Burma: Aristotle and the Rhetoric of Benevolent Despotism*, Routledge, London–New York 2006, pp. 174–185.

[205] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 291. Suu Kyi wrote about Manuha in her *Letters from Burma*…, p. 8.

[206] For regime's atrocities, see e.g.: *Situation in Myanmar*, UN General Assembly, A/RES/46/132, 17.12.1991, http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r132.htm (access: 31.07.2018); *License to Rape: The Burmese Military Regime's Use of Sexual Violence in the Ongoing War in Shan State*, The Shan Human Rights Foundation, The Shan Women's Action Network, May 2002, Online Burma Library, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/License_to_rape.pdf (access: 26.07.2018); *Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar: Report/Submitted by the Special Rapporteur, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro*, http://www.refworld.org/docid/4090ffe60.html (access: 26.07.2018); *Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, Sixteenth session UN General Assembly, A/HRC/16/L.11, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs11/HRC16L.11.pdf (access: 16.07.2018).

[207] The house arrest itself must have played an important role in her Buddhicisation, at least this is the picture she presented: "I hope I've matured. I feel spiritually stronger; in a sense I've been tested and that has strengthened me. And I think that I have learned to put a much greater value on compassion. I think compassion is very important in this world" (Steve Weinman, *Patience Pragmatism Pays off for "The Lady*", "Nation", 01.11.1995, Burma Net, 02.09.1994, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199511/msg00013.html (access: 26.10.2018). Her personal feelings notwithstanding it is not difficult to see that a turn to Buddhist was for her politically convenient, if not necessary to remain in the political game.

[208] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 166. According to Blum, this statement is generally correct, but "the core Buddhist ideas, such as making merit (*punya*) and suffering, were inherent to her ideology ab initio" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 47).

[209] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (*Letter no. 40*)…, p. 160. Her usage of meditation "certainly strengthens her position of moral authority" (John Kane, *Politics of Moral Capital*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, pp. 147–173).

[210] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 141.

[211] Ibid., p. 189. This was not necessary true, as Suu Kyi called Ne Win "megalomaniac," and said "the Defence Forces have been made to play the role of thugs to make sure that a few

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monasteries and emphasized strong links with clergy,[212] who made pilgrimage to Thamanya monastery,[213] who invoked the Buddha,[214] who quoted the Buddhist philosophy,[215] as well as monks' comments,[216] who preached using Buddhist moral logic,[217] who evoked reinter-

old men can remain in power" (*Myanmar/Burma Prisoners of Conscience*…, pp. 55, 59 and 68). Other examples of her harsh words about the regime: "they have no principles whatsoever"; "there are people who do not have a moral conscience"; "some of their actions are not consonant with Buddhist teaching (…) there's so little loving-kindness and compassion in what they say, in what they write and what they do. That's totally removed from the Buddhist way"; "they're [SLORC] like a blinkered horse. Why do they not see the picture as a whole?" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 26, 27, 35 and 181); she also compared SLORC to Cambodia's Khmer Rouge (Ibid., p. 212).

[212] Starting from year 1998 (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 294).

[213] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (*Letters nos 1–4*)…, pp. 3–19.

[214] "Be diligent. I am saddened by the lack of diligence among us. I keep thinking how to motivate you. We are Buddhist. How come we are not diligent? With sheer determination and perseverance, the Lord Buddha made it through the length of the samsara to become Buddha. As Buddhist, we have to be industrious. I am not happy for our indolence. Diligence help us reach our destination sooner" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 341).

[215] "Buddhist philosophy teaches that a conscientious person is not self-promoting in that he or she never mentions his or her gratitude for others" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 91).

[216] "The act of paying obeisance is an act of virtue. Thus the act itself should be virtuous. I don't think you'll earn any virtue if your gift has not been virtuously earned. The late Magagandayone Abbott Ashin Zanaka Biwuntha said that charity without virtue is nothing. Therefore paying obeisance without virtue is nothing" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 112).

[217] "We would like everybody to overcome their dukkha. There are two types of *dukkha*, physical and mental (…) material wealth does not necessarily lead to peace of mind (…) We want all *dukkha* to be gone. We all to be in peace. 'The mind can pound the body into dust' (…) the body cannot pound the mind into dust (…) I have seen people who can still put up a graceful face, even under physical *dukkha*. Their endurance comes from their self-actualization that they done a lot of good in their life and that they have left a lot of good karma behind them (…) We want both physical and mental wealth of course. We don't mean that the people should go through physical *dukkha.* We understand the *dukkha* of the people" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 405–406); "Religion is very important (…) There should not be any misuse of Religion and manipulations of Religions in this country. There are many things such as upbringing the moralities of the people with religion in the end. It is important for those who respect religion in uplifting the morale of the people. If we talk about alms giving, sharing from our mouth and on the other hand we are stealing, the we are not favouring our religion" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 427); "I would like to ask what people think of the rich? Do they think highly of

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preted traditional obligations of a Buddhist government,[218] who – in a Buddhist fashion – rejected lying[219] and drinking alcohol[220] and followed Buddhist logic of importance of all things.[221] And finally, who listened to monks' "invaluable advices" such as: "keep in mind the hermit Sumedha, who sacrificed the possibility of early liberation for himself along and underwent many lives of striving that he might save others from suffering. So must you be prepared to strive for as long as might be necessary to achieve good and justice," or "do not be frightened every time there is an attempt to frighten you, but do not be entirely without fear. Do not become elated every time you are praised, but do not be entirely lacking in elation. In other words, while maintaining courage and humility, one should not abandon caution and healthy self-respect"; or apparent words of a 91-year-old Hsayadaw of Sagaing who "sketched out for me tersely how it would be to work for democracy in Burma. You will be attacked and reviled for engaging in honest politics,' pronounced the Hsayadaw, 'but you must persevere. Lay down an investment in *dukkha* (suffering) and you will gain *sukha* (bliss)."[222] Finally, Suu Kyi

them or just their money? We have to know the difference. You may be rich if you are not respected and your way of life disapproved by virtuous people. It's not worth being rich. We cannot look at the cash alone. 'I-will-do-anything-for-money' is an evildoer's attitude. Not that of wise person. We have to teach our children not to envy the rich (…) Do they have integrity, moral virtues and wisdom? We may not be able to change money-oriented minds overnight. But we have to try so that people of virtues and wisdom, regardless of their wealth, are respected by the society" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 463).

[218] "This story (of unpaid pensioners – M.L.) demonstrates the laws of *lokadhamma* (…) What kind of country we want ours to be? We are a proud culture known for looking after the senior members of our society. We want our society to value and respect the wisdom of the aged. Today the youth, who have to struggle for basic security, food shelter and clothing cannot look after their aged relatives properly. That's where the state should come in. We have to create a system where our senior citizens are cared for by the state. This issue is part of social security and social insurance discourse. There are several types of social security – it's not just that you feel secure from being rudely awakened by some people banging on your door in the middle of the night. It's more than that, we must be able to secure our citizens in the knowledge that they do not have to worry about their wellbeing as they are" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 346).

[219] "Since the majority of the people desire the truth, I don't have a heart to do anything that will upset them. I believe that there is nothing that can hurt people's feelings as much as a lie" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 248).

[220] "We don't have to drink bitter rainwater, we don't have to emulate the people who are imbibing poisonous liquids" (Ibid., p. 247).

[221] "People are not secure (…) Life security one must earn oneself. Even if one wins a jackpot today, one's wealth is subject to loss, theft and robbery tomorrow. We must not rely on such unreliable circumstances. We have to rely on ourselves for our life security. We have to have a firm mind, that can lead to life security (…) if one's mind is not firm, if one cannot control one's own spirit, one will never be secure" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 152).

[222] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (*Letter no. 40*)…, p. 160.

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would not be herself if she did not use her father to score political goals here as well. In one of her *Letters from Burma* she wrote that when she visited Natmauk (Aung San's birthplace), she went to the monastery "where he studied as a boy"; there "the abbot gave a sermon on the four causes of decline and decay: failure to recover that which had been lost, omission to repair that which had been damaged; disregard of the need for reasonable economy; and the elevation to leadership of those without morality or learning"; "the abbot went on to explain how these traditional Buddhist views should be interpreted to help us build a just and prosperous society in the modern age."[223] It is worth noticing that Suu Kyi used quite similar words in her "In quest of democracy" in order to theorize about the nature of Buddhism and democracy[224] (see: below). All these devices were clearly meant to present Suu Kyi as a good Buddhist, who listens to monks and wants to conduct honest politics. And a one who needs the support of the *saṅgha* to win her political struggle.[225]

On a deeper, more theoretical perspective, she rejected the Western concept of separation of religion from politics, stating that: "I think some people find it embarrassing and impractical to think of the spiritual and political life as one. I do not see them as separate. In democracies there is always a drive to separate the spiritual from the secular, but it is not actually required to separate them"; "politics is about the people, you can't separate people from their spiritual values."[226] In this she not only followed U Nu's footsteps, but her turn to Buddhism was logical, given Burma's socio-political heritage where historically "arguments for government reform" were made "through Buddhism," where political liberation had been blurred with religious one, and where opposition[227] to rulers has operated only "in the shadow of the Buddhist monasteries and pagodas" and where Buddhism was "the only idiom open to the opposition that elicits

[223] Ibid., pp. 160–161.

[224] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, pp. 168–169.

[225] That is why she hoped that monks would support her "simply by preaching democratic principles, by encouraging everybody to work for democracy and human rights, and by trying to persuade the authorities to begin dialogue. It would be a great help if every monk and nun in the country were to say, 'What we want to see is dialogue.' After all, that is the way of the Buddha" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 33); "In addition, a deeper combination of the spiritual with the political lives also meant that the Sangha would have to become more involved in politics, or more specifically, NLD politics" (McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 171); The monks eventually did this, in 2007, but lost.

[226] Ibid., p. 32; "we've got to make *metta* grow. We've got to make people see that love is a strong, positive force for the happiness of oneself, not just for others. A journalist said to me, 'When you speak to the people you talk a lot about religion, why is that?' I said, 'Because politics is about people, and you can't separate people from their spiritual values.' And he said that he had asked a young student who had come to the weekend talks about this: 'Why are they talking about religion?' The student replied, 'Well, that's politics'" (Ibid., p. 45).

[227] About historical role of the opposition, see: earlier part of this book.

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any sort of dialogue – such is not open to 'secular' opposition,"[228] it was only logical that Suu Kyi – who was politically pushed to the corner and desperately tried to manoeuvre a place for the NLD on the political scene of Myanmar cemented by the SLORC – chose to do it via Buddhism. Thus, this new political reality influenced the political thought of Suu Kyi in two ways. First, she tried to show that concepts of democracy and human rights are in accord with Buddhism. Second, she later significantly Buddhicised her political rhetoric.

First came the countering of the accusations of democracy and human rights being un-Burmese and un-Buddhist. Suu Kyi started one of her most important articles, "In the Quest of Democracy," mentioning this criticism: "opponents of the movement for democracy in Burma have sought to undermine it by on the one hand casting aspersions on the competence of the people to judge what was best for the nation and on the other condemning the basic tenets of democracy as un-Burmese (…) it was predictable that as soon as the issue of human rights became an integral part of the movement for democracy the official media should start ridiculing and condemning the whole concept of human rights, dubbing it a western artefact alien to traditional values"; then she presented this criticism as a rather typical feature of the Global South countries "there is nothing new in Third World governments seeking to justify and perpetuate authoritarian rule by denouncing liberal democratic principles as alien", "by implication they claim for themselves the official and sole right to decide what does or does not conform to indigenous cultural norms."[229] On another occasion, while talking to the people from her house gate at University Road 54, she presented the stance of her opponents as groundless: "some say democracy is not suitable for the Burmese people," others "say democracy is not in accord with Burmese culture," but "when asked [which] aspects of the Burmese culture contradict democracy, there is no answer."[230]

Suu Kyi rejects this as a "conventional propaganda aimed at consolidating the powers of the establishment" and counters "the twin myths" of the people's "unfitness for political responsibility and the unsuitability of democracy for their society" with, firstly, her vivid description of the Burmese people's "appetite for discussion and debate, for uncensored information and objective analysis," their "eagerness to study and to absorb standard theories on modern politics and political institutions," and "widespread and

[228] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 213, 218 and 225.

[229] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, pp. 168–169 and 173–174. The prime reason why Suu Kyi had to present democracy and human rights via Buddhist lens was to win hearts and minds of the Burmese people: "in presenting her political alternative in terms of Western democracy and liberalism" Suu Kyi had to "communicate her model via Buddhist concepts because large sectors of the population have been isolated from international debate and might criticise her for seeking to introduce an alien political system and of undermining the 'Burmese way,'" quoted in: McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 166.

[230] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 49.

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intelligent speculation on the nature of democracy as a social system of which they had had little experience but which appealed to their common-sense notions of what was due to a civilized society," as well as "spontaneous interpretative response to such basic ideas as representative government, human rights and the rule of law" which cumulated in contemplation with "understandable enthusiasm" that "privileges and freedoms which would be guaranteed by democratic institutions" and "thoughtful consideration" of the "duties of those who would bear responsibility for the maintenance of a stable democracy"; Suu Kyi concluded philosophically: "it is natural that a people who have suffered much from the consequences of bad government should be preoccupied with theories of good government."[231] Although the coverages from 8888 uprising indeed proved a general interest of the Burmese in democracy,[232] her description is obviously idealised. In painting a rosy picture of responsible, almost enlightened citizens who discuss in-depth the benefits of democracy, who understand implications of this system and who choose it after a thorough, wise consideration, Suu Kyi conveniently forgot the prime motivations of the protesters: bring down the military regime, make the generals accountable for country's plight, regain Burma's position and live on economic position similar to their neighbours. Suu Kyi omitted other facts as well: such as the fact that during 1988 (and after) few people understood what democracy actually means, that Burmese *de-maw-cray-si* is simply a transcription of the English word and has no Burmese equivalent.[233] And that democracy was – and has been until now – widely understood as a synonym of good governance, contradiction to Tatmadaw's bad governance: "democracy was thus synonymous with everything other than the current government, which was not trusted"; this was well seen in the pseudonym of main student leader of the 1988 protests, Min Ko Naing (the name means "the conqueror of a bad king") who, asked about the goals of the protesters compared Tatmadaw to a bad king that needed to be removed by a good one: "the new king (or queen) whom the conqueror of the bad king would 'carry on his shoulders' must have certain qualities," to Min Ko Naing and the students the new, good king "represented, 'democracy' meant 'change of leadership' from bad to good," hence the 1988 protest "can be classified as being basically a moral protest against a regime that was regarded as morally wrong," whereas their vision of democracy "was a kind of 'monarchical democracy,' a rule of the people without dissent"; "'monarchical' democracy based on trust in a virtuous leader."[234] Thus, surprisingly, the concept of "achieving democracy in a constitutionally correct way"

[231] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 168.

[232] Lintner, *Outrage*…, pp. 113–114.

[233] Until modern times there was no word for democracy in Burmese; at present the word is a translation from English (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p.32; Tin Hlaing, *Translation of Political Terms and Cencepts into Burmese with Reference to Nagani Publications*, in: *Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference*, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, Singapore 2006, pp. 43–45).

[234] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 33 and 297.

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propagated by regime soft liners with president Maung Maung at the helm in August and in early September was… more "Western, at least in a formal sense, whereas the concept of the opposition was somewhat traditionally Burmese-Buddhist."[235] Indeed, both landslide Suu Kyi electoral victories (in 1990 with 80% of votes and in 2015 with 78%) showed that this "monarchical democracy" concept is well and alive in Burma, where elections "are characterized by an unanimous acclamation of a virtuous leader in the succession of the Maha-Sammata (…) and a rejection of anybody who did not [achieve] quality according to the standards set by [the] Buddhist tradition."[236] Thus, comparing Suu Kyi's vision from her article to the reality one has to conclude that what came out of Suu Kyi's article was an enlightened vision of the Burmese people's genuine need for democracy; a vision equally artificial – though *à rebours* – as regime's reductionist propaganda.

Suu Kyi's second, more important argument in the article was her claim of democracy (and human rights) being in concord with Buddhism. This was important given regime's continuous attempts to portray democracy as un-Burmese – "a foreign ideology, in disharmony with Burmese-Buddhist culture, one which promised merely to disrupt everyday peace and force the Tatmadaw into its role of protector of the union"; the regime's notion of democracy, too, "implied a political immaturity on the part of the people which made them incapable of handling democratic transition."[237]

Again, Suu Kyi started with presenting her own views as being the general view of the population. In her constructed vision under the guidance of *saṅgha* ("in their customary role as mentors"), who "led the way in articulating popular expectations by drawing on classical learning to illuminate timeless values," all the people of Burma ("from urban intellectuals and small shopkeepers to doughty village grandmothers") made the "conscious effort to make traditional knowledge relevant to contemporary needs"; however, being cut off from the rest of the world the people of Burma could not give "detailed answers supported by careful analyses of historical, cultural, political and economic factors" (as "international scholars" did), but they did not have to, since they had "the words of the Buddha on the four causes of decline and decay: failure to recover that which had been lost, omission to repair that which had been damaged, disregard of the need for reasonable economy, and the elevation to leadership of men without morality or learning"; these timeless wisdom "translated into contemporary terms" meant that "democratic rights had been lost to military dictatorship sufficient efforts had not been made to regain them, moral and political values had been allowed to deteriorate without

[235] Ibid., p. 36. Naturally, what must be added is the fact that it is unsure at best whether this regime's constitutional concept was a fair proposal (it is equally probable, if not more probable, that it was a smoke screen) and to which extend Maung Maung could influence Ne Win and other decision-makers within Tatmadaw (again, probably to a limited way, at best).

[236] Ibid., p. 454.

[237] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 289.

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concerted attempts to save the situation, the economy had been badly managed, and the country had been ruled by men without integrity or wisdom."[238] Then Suu Kyi provided a description of Tatmadaw's mismanagement of the state, writing (in a Buddhist way, that is, with its moral perspective) about "moral decay and material decline" which did not stop the Burmese to look for "a vision of a society in which the people and the leadership could unite in principled efforts to achieve prosperity and security"; "to make an effective start at reversing the process of decline"; this vision was – predictably – "liberal democracy" which "at its most basic and immediate level" would "mean in institutional terms a representative government appointed for a constitutionally limited term through free and fair elections."[239] Choosing liberal democracy was one thing. Another was looking back to the Burmese tradition for justification of democracy. Thus, accordingly, the people of Burma (again Suu Kyi used all nation to present her opinions) "have countered the propagandist doctrine that democracy is unsuited to their cultural norms by examining traditional theories of government" – in the subsequent paragraphs Suu Kyi presented her spurious ideas about democratic traits in Buddhism (election of Mahā-Sammata as "social contract," Aśoka's reign as the model and Ten Duties of the King as morally-political compass of governance; see: previous part of this book).[240] She followed suit later in her speeches at the gate of her house, invoking again the Tenth Duty from Royal Ten Duties as well as one of four Buddhist principles of friendship ("one that stresses equal treatment to all so that people can get along well together"), calling it "a democratic concept" to prove that "democracy is in accord with our culture"; "the above two principles show that the Burmese culture does not contradict democratic norms, not to oppose the people's will and to treat all on an equal basis," therefore "we cannot and must not accept the notion that our culture is non-democratic."[241]

After theorizing about democratic notions of Buddhism, Suu Kyi moved on to rebuffing regime's criticism of human rights as being un-Burmese. Replying to regime's anti-human rights propaganda she ridiculed the ridicule: "it was also ironic – Buddhism, the foundation of traditional Burmese culture, places the greatest value on man, who

[238] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, pp. 168–169. Suu Kyi added: "a thorough study by the cleverest scholar using the best and latest methods of research could hardly have identified more correctly or succinctly the chief causes of Burma's decline since 1962" – it is worth noticing that similar words Suu Kyi used in her *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 40)*…, pp. 160–161 – thus showing a very Burmese attitude of believing that everything has already been said by the Buddha; an attitude she herself criticised a few years earlier – in her, *Intellectual Life in Burma*…, p. 125.

[239] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 169.

[240] Ibid., pp. 169–174. For more, see: earlier in this book. It is worth adding, too, that Suu Kyi's claim that "a liberal democratic government was most compatible with Buddhist thought" distinguishes Suu Kyi's thought from her father (this she naturally denied) (McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 77).

[241] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 49.

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alone of all beings can achieve the supreme state of Buddhahood," therefore "each man has in him the potential to realize the truth through his own will and endeavour and to help others to realize it" which make "human life" – "infinitely precious" (she quoted Buddhist proverb to illustrate that: "easier is it for a needle dropped from the abode of Brahma to meet a needle stuck in the earth than to be born as a human being").[242] Thus, according to Suu Kyi, democracy recognizes "the inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights of human beings" as such "cannot be cast aside as a neo-colonial concept in a society of practising Buddhists, since Buddhism as a faith places the greatest possible value on man, the only scientist being who can achieve Buddhahood."[243] In other words, Suu Kyi was trying to prove that democracy and human rights are a natural mix for Buddhism and she suggested, in the best Buddhist spirit, that achieving democracy is possible through self-improvement.[244]

Having stated that Buddhism has in its essence much to do with the value of a man (which implicitly suggests that human rights are somewhat natural to the Buddhist background), Suu Kyi moved to blaming the regime, by presenting a juxtaposition of junta's reductionist vision of human beings and people's genuine hope for democracy. According to her, "despotic governments do not recognize the precious human component of the state, seeing its citizens only as a faceless, mindless - and helpless - mass to be manipulated at will", "rice-eating robots"; "savage beast of the jungle"; on the other hand "the people of Burma view democracy merely as a form of government but as an integrated social and ideological system based on respect for the individual," they "feel so strong a need for democracy" and "they want the basic human rights which would guarantee a tranquil, dignified existence free from want and fear."[245] Here again Suu Kyi used one of her favourite rhetoric devices of presenting her own ideas as those of "the people of Burma" in order to counter regime's pessimistic understanding of human beings' existence and to present regime's ideas as not only reductionist but also driven by selfish motives: "patriotism, which should be the vital love and care of a people for their land, is debased into a smokescreen of hysteria to hide the injustices of authoritarian rulers who define the interests of the state in terms of their own limited interests."[246] Here she was quite correct in blaming the generals for inability to embrace democracy due to their own corporate background and militarised thinking,[247] yet this was only part of the criticism. The other one was intellectually brilliant: Suu Kyi presented the generals not only as selfish despots, but also – and most importantly – as culturally

[242] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 174.

[243] Sengputa, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 290.

[244] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 41.

[245] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, pp. 173–174.

[246] Ibid., p. 174.

[247] For a good description of the military's mentality, see: Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 341.

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alienated: "the official creed is required to be accepted with an unquestioning faith more in keeping with orthodox tenets of the biblical religions which have held sway in the West than with the more liberal Buddhist attitude."[248] This was indeed a powerful blow! That must have hurt them (providing they read it and/or understood it which is uncertain at best). Suu Kyi reverted the argument of being non-Burmese and non-Buddhist (used by the regime against her) and used it against their adversaries. With all her intelligence and sophistication (the generals lacked both) she presented them as culturally and religiously alienated, influenced by the monotheistic religion (itself a serious accusation from a Buddhist perspective – as wrong viewed – though a bit hypocritical given Suu Kyi's own Christian affinities)[249], in short – not Buddhist enough. This was indeed a political rhetoric at its best.

After describing her opponents as alienated and un-Buddhist, Suu Kyi moved on to justify why human rights, a foreign concept, should be accepted as being in full accord with Burma's Buddhist tradition: "it is a puzzlement to the Burmese how concepts which recognize the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of human beings, which accept that all men are endowed with reason and conscience and which recommend a universal spirit of brotherhood, can be inimical to indigenous values"; having briefly mentioned The Declaration of Human Rights and the fact that it was signed by Burma, Suu Kyi concluded with an intriguing statement: "if ideas and beliefs are to be denied validity outside the geographical and cultural bounds of their origin, Buddhism would be confined to north India, Christianity to a narrow tract in the Middle East and Islam to Arabia."[250] These words are interesting because they are somewhat out of line with her argumentation about human rights and other universal/Western values being in accord with Burmese Buddhist tradition: this argument about irrelevance of

[248] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 174.

[249] E.g. "as Burmese Buddhists, we put a great emphasis on *metta*. It is the same idea as in the biblical quotation: 'Perfect love casts out fear.' While I cannot claim to have discovered 'perfect love,' I think it's a fact that you are not frightened of people whom you do not hate" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 165). The clearest example of Suu Kyi's attempt to link Buddhist and Christian values comes from her Papal lecture, where she described the "heavenly abodes" or divine states of mind which Buddhists recognize. The first, *metta*, or loving kindness, she linked to Christian love – "while Buddhist speak of *metta*, Christians speak of Christian love", "a love that seeks to give and to serve, rather than to take and demand." She also repeated the messages of similarities while praising the NGOs ("the work that NGOs are doing right across the globe if proof that Christian development values are not so different from Buddhist ones") and she emphasized the importance of charity, evoking example of Burmese translation of the Bible ("most appropriately, in the Burmese-language version of the Holy Bible, 'charity' is translated as *metta*") (Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes and Human Development*, a lecture to CAFOD's Pope Paul VI Memorial Lectures, "Trócaire Development Review" 1997, https://www. trocaire.org/sites/default/files/resources/policy/1997-aung-san-human-development.pdf (access: 25.10.2018), pp. 16–18).

[250] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 175.

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geographical and cultural location is a prime one in many calls for the universalization of human rights (if such concept as human rights did not exist in a country earlier, now it arrived and should be accepted, for it is universally benevolent). This shows that Suu Kyi's argumentation is sometimes blurred, torn between spurious attempts to present Buddhism as genuinely democratic and calls for acceptance of foreign ideas, such as human rights.

Perhaps this is due to the fact that despite striving hard to present such ideas as democracy and human rights as genuinely Buddhist values, Suu Kyi was not always able to do that, her impressive intelligence notwithstanding. During one of her speeches over the gate she admitted that "democracy is an alien concept, a foreign thinking," but said that "it is natural for us to pick what suits us and reject what doesn't" and continued proving that democracy was well in accord with Burmese culture.[251] This ambivalence concerns human rights, too. When Suu Kyi entered politics, she talked to the Burmese "all about human rights, an expression which had little currency in Burma till then."[252] And she explained that "human rights were conceived as a tool to protect human dignity," so that "it is very important that every human being, be she in the East or in the West, can lead a secure and dignified life" and she repeated the universality of the applicability of human rights: "the notion of human security and dignity suits every culture," so for her "human rights should be available to everyone."[253] This clear, universalising message, however, must be filtered through local conditions, where the concept of human rights becomes much more complicated. When translated into Burmese, human rights (*lu hkwín yei*) "become 'the matter of human permissions/rights,'" with *hkwín* "means both 'permission' and 'rights and privileges,' suggesting that one first needs permission to have rights – i.e. as a concept it is unable to shake off unjust authority (*ana*) in favour of freedom."[254]

In other words, this is not the Western understanding of rights, based on mediation between free citizens and political authority (state) in which the latter gains power while the former is given the security that cannot be violated. In contrast, many Burmese "do not have such a conception of a transcendent right, a right that could exist outside of the context of realizing," in Burma "the respective Western concepts of rights and opportunities blur together, and tend to index an appeal to power rather than a demand for a restoration of what one already 'has.'"[255] In Burma "law is not a protection of rights

[251] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no.2)*…, p. 49.

[252] Aris, *Introduction*…, p. xx.

[253] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no.2)*…, pp. 61–62.

[254] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 225; Another translation of *hkwín* is that it means "Subject to permission/approval/consent of the other parties or circumstances" (Elliott Prasse-Freeman, *Conceptions of Justice and the Rule of Law in Burma*, in: *Myanmar: The Dynamics of an Evolving Polity*, ed. D.I. Steinberg, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder 2015, p. 98).

[255] Prasse-Freeman, *Concenptions of Justice*…, p. 96.

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but rather an arbitrary set of regulations promulgated to support the state establishment and to prevent dissidence. Law is thus personal, not contractual."[256] The consequences are important: "even when the state's law articulated privileges or opportunities that citizens may have enjoyed, these were not absolutes designated by any compact (…) and hence could be violated at any time," since "everyone was aware of this and as a result a 'right' literally only existed as an opportunity, with all contingency that that latter word implies."[257] To put it shortly, "one must qualify, or must get lucky, perhaps, in order to be protected rather than assaulted by the law."[258] Or, in simple words, one who has power, has rights, too; and if one does not have power, his/her rights are not permanent, but dependable: a political power may give and take the rights as it pleases. Thus, the meaning of a word "right" becomes similar to that of a "privilege."

The problem with human rights in the Burmese cultural conditions, however, does not end here. As "a recent invention in Burmese" the term "bears no deep, or even superficial relation to Buddhism" – "the idea of linking rights to the status of human beings timelessly as against other forms of life militates against the ideas in a society where life goes through rebirths, and where many other forms of life have been or will eventually evolve into human beings."[259] For this and other reasons "on a theoretical level, Buddhism and the concept of human rights do not fit together as easily as conventional wisdom might assume," the "main reason for the tension between both realms is the conception of 'human nature' in Buddhism"; according to "basic Buddhist law, *dhamma* – morality in its full sense – can only be achieved through ultimate liberation," on this level, however, "any enforcement of moral behaviour becomes unnecessary – including the enforcement of human rights."[260] In other words, in accordance with Buddhist understanding of human nature as inherently flawed, human beings in this world are prone to fall, so there is no direct justification of inherent rights; people can (and should) liberate themselves from their weak nature and strive to achieve *nibbāna*; then, however, they do not need anything more, including rights.

[256] David I. Steinberg, *Burma. The State of Myanmar*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C. 2000, p. 42.

[257] Prasse-Freeman, *Conceptions of Justice*…, p. 98. Traditionally in Burma, "the 'contract' written between the governed and the state was always contextual and contested. It was subject to one's ability to marshal other resources (symbolic, material, social) subject to luck or contingency, and subject to the conflation of variables (state agent whim or risk profile, the extant political conditions in the country, etc.) that may remain opaque to those on both sides of the interaction. What mediates the relationship is not 'rights' (…) it is Burmese cultural institutions'" (Ibid.).

[258] Ibid., p. 101.

[259] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 225.

[260] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 144.

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That is why Suu Kyi, who wanted to introduce such foreign concepts as human rights to Burma, had to struggle hard to conceal the contradictions. Being, however, a brilliant intellectual, she was able to skilfully bypass this problem by speaking "about human beings as having the ability to attain *nibbana*, and the possibility for human beings (*lu*) to eventually attain Buddhahood."[261] In other words, Suu Kyi presented human rights as a right of everyone to achieve *nibbāna*. And this worked out – "reverberated right across the country, eliciting immediate responses from monks and generals," for "if human rights do not touch the heart strings of the Burmese masses, nibbana will."[262] Hence, by this intellectual legerdemain Suu Kyi was able to indigenize foreign concept of human rights in Burma.

Getting back to the topic of her article "In Quest of Democracy," where Suu Kyi criticised regime for not accepting foreign ideas that are – according to her – suitable for the Burmese conditions, the main point in Suu Kyi argumentation, however, was not positive (she did not explore her argumentation about non-denial of validity of ideas, limiting herself to the catchy phrases; itself it is often quite typical characteristics of her writings), but rather negative: she concentrated on criticism of authoritarian government. She was outraged by the notion that the Burmese "are not fit to enjoy as many rights and privileges as the citizens of democratic countries" considering it "insulting"; she blamed the regime for making "wide a gulf between the government and the people" which "casts doubt on the doctrine of government as a comprehensive spirit and medium of national values," thus implicitly implying that the generals were not fit to govern Burma (itself not an incorrect statement) and suggesting that their doctrine was un-Burmese (hence, once again attacking them from this angle).[263]

The rest of the article deals with the lawless character of authoritarianisms and exhorts hope in the people of Burma to change that situation. Suu Kyi presented here an elaborate explanation of democracy, and an universalizing criticism of despotic regimes ("weak logic, inconsistencies and alienation from the people are common features of authoritarianism"), as based on an intellectual apathy which they project on their subjects ("the relentless attempts of totalitarian regimes to prevent free thought and new ideas and the persistent assertion of their own lightness bring on them an intellectual stasis which they project on to the nation at large"), as well as despotic measures ("intimidation and propaganda work in a duet of oppression, while the people, lapped in fear and distrust, learn to dissemble and to keep silent"), which only enhance people's hope for freedom ("all the time the desire grows for a system which will lift them from the position of 'rice-eating robots' to the status of human beings who can think and speak freely

[261] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 225.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 175.

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and hold their heads high in the security of their rights").[264] Later on Suu Kyi would come back to these ideas, comparing authoritarianisms to "distorted trees."[265]

The picture of an authoritarian system that is not only ontologically flawed and intellectually stagnant, but also, if not most importantly, inherently weak due to the fact that it almost "automatically" produces opposition for itself from within, is indeed an interesting thought. Although reality does not always confirm Suu Kyi's logic – one can easily find authoritarian governments in Asia, like Singapore, where lack of freedom does not produce intellectual stagnation and where there are no serious internal attempts to change the system[266] – it is nevertheless an intellectually refreshing vision of the dichotomy democracy/autocracy. Its universalization, somehow along the lines of "Freedom from Fear," was on time when it was written and remains an epitaph to the worldwide (Western) intellectual mood of the 1990s.

Having described the sorry state of Myanmar's authoritarianism, Suu Kyi moved on to the ways of changing that. She admitted that the struggle will not be easy and that society must deserve to achieve democracy: "democracy, like liberty, justice and other social and political rights, is not 'given,' it is earned through courage, resolution and sacrifice."[267] This is a very clear example of one of Suu Kyi's leitmotifs: the idea of democracy through discipline, yet here, in this article, it has only a secondary meaning. More important is the criticism of authoritarianisms which are unable to change ("change is anathema to authoritarianism, which will tolerate no deviation from rigid

[264] Ibid. She repeated this line of thinking later on, in 1996: "it does seem to me that they really don't know how to handle the situation. They're not the only ones – I think few dictators really know how to handle a country in the long run. Because of the very nature of authoritarian governments and dictatorships they effectively prevent themselves from learning the truth, because people living under such regimes get into the habit of hiding it from them and from each other. Even those whose job is to find out what's happening in the country for the dictators acquire the habit of not telling the truth to their superiors. So everybody gets out of the habit of telling the truth, while some even get out of the habit of seeing the truth. They see what they want to see, or only what they think their superiors want them to see. Now, if you get into that habit, later you develop the habit of not daring to hear what you don't want to hear. So you end up not seeing, hearing, or saying the truth. And in the long run this blunts their intelligence"; "I think it is perhaps more about ignorance than stupidity. Because people are always afraid to tell a truth that would bring the anger of the dictators down upon them" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 182–183).

[265] "Under authoritarian regimes, where you are only allowed to express certain things, the growth of talent becomes distorted. It can't flower. Like a tree that becomes distorted because it's trained to go just one way – the way that's acceptable to the authorities (…) despotic regime is afraid of different opinions and different attitudes from their own and would not allow them to flourish, let alone action. That's real despotism" (Ibid., p. 183).

[266] Even Suu Kyi admitted that (Ibid., p. 105).

[267] Suu Kyi, *In Queest of Democracy*…, p. 176.

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policies"), while the appraisal of democracy – "the institutions and practices of democracy provide ways and means by which such changes could be effected without recourse to violence" – is the crucial point in explaining non-violent tactics, as well as democracy's general benevolence: "democracy acknowledges the right to differ as well as the duty to settle differences peacefully," and allows to differ: "within the framework of liberal democracy, protest and dissent can exist in healthy counterpart with orthodoxy and conservatism, contained by a general recognition of the need to balance respect for individual rights with respect for law and order."[268] Unfortunately, authoritarianisms are unable to accept change as they cannot bear dissident voices: "authoritarian governments see criticism of their actions and doctrines as a challenge to combat," so that "opposition is equated with 'confrontation,' which is interpreted as violent conflict"; this has direct psychological reasons ("regimented minds cannot grasp the concept of confrontation as an open exchange of major differences with a view to settlement through genuine dialogue") as well as systemic ones ("the insecurity of power based on coercion translates into a need to crush all dissent").[269] Here one can see Suu Kyi's interesting rhetorical device: universalization of her experience in Burma (where, indeed, her movement was equated with confrontation by Tatmadaw)[270] and consequent generalization of her thoughts about authoritarianism in general. Although, indeed, non-democratic regimes usually do not tolerate dissents, not every authoritarian government behaves in a similarly brutal and primitive way as Myanmar regime did against Suu Kyi's movement. Lack of legitimacy combined with brutality derived from decades of policymaking of these "war fighters, not politicians"[271] were the major reasons of Tatmadaw's behaviour, but this is not a universal pattern among autocratic governments: there are hundreds of cultural, social, political and personal features that make each authoritarianism different and nullify Suu Kyi's universalizing attempt.

That said, however, what must be admitted is that her explanation was correct in Myanmar conditions. One cannot agree more with her statement that "the words 'law and order' have so frequently been misused as an excuse for oppression that the very phrase has become suspect in countries which have known authoritarian rule" and that "there is no intrinsic virtue to law and order unless 'law' is equated with justice and 'order' with the discipline of a people satisfied that justice has been done," for "law as an instrument of state oppression is a familiar feature of totalitarianism."[272] She invoked a brilliant, and telling example: quoting "a prominent Burmese author" who wrote "on the notion of law and order as expressed by the official term *nyein-wut-pi-pyar*" – "one

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 106.

[271] Mary Callahan, *Making Enemies. War and State Building in Burma*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2003, p. 2.

[272] Suu Kyi, *In Queest of Democracy*…, p. 177.

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by one he analysed the words, which literally mean 'silent-crouched-crushed-flattened,' and concluded that the whole made for an undesirable state of affairs, one which militated against the emergence of an articulate, energetic, progressive citizenry."[273] Indeed, in Burma where the regime called itself the SLORC (Law and Order Restoration Council)[274] and ruled in a way which was a mocking to the rule of law, Suu Kyi's description – perhaps with sole exception of misusing the word totalitarianism (should be: authoritarianism)[275] – was more than adequate. Suu Kyi's criticism of despotism was combined with presented good practices within democracies: "without a popularly elected legislature and an independent judiciary to ensure due process, the authorities can enforce as 'law' arbitrary decrees that are in fact flagrant negations of all acceptable norms of justice"; therefore "there can be no security for citizens in a state where new 'laws' can be made and old ones changed to suit the convenience of the powers that be," for "the iniquity of such practices is traditionally recognized by the precept that existing laws should not be set aside at will."[276] She concluded by linking this good democratic practices with moral power of Buddhism ("the Buddhist concept of law is based on *dhamma*, righteousness or virtue, not on the power to impose harsh and inflexible rules on a defenceless people"; "the true measure of the justice of a system is the amount of protection it guarantees to the weakest"),[277] thus clearly implying democratic notions of Buddhism. This served her to claim that "where there is no justice there can be no secure[d] peace," quote of the Declaration of Human Rights words of the need of protection of human rights in order to avoid "rebellions against tyranny and oppression" and write that "just laws which uphold human rights are the necessary foundation of peace and security" – this obvious fact "would be denied only by closed minds which interpret peace as the silence of all opposition and security as the assurance of their own power."[278] There is a visible eristic device here – those who disagree with her about the need of upholding human rights to guarantee peace and security (itself an optimistic statement, certainly in line with the intellectual mood of the 1990s, but no longer so valid in the 2010s) – have close minds. More importantly, however, this universalistic call for human rights served her as a means to introduce her main argument: about the central role of Buddhism in maintaining peace and security. Thus, she wrote: "the

[273] Ibid., pp. 176–177.

[274] The English name of SLORC indeed sounds Orwellian, but the Burmese name, Na-Wa-Ta, implies that the state is in a state of anarchy and disorder that demands to be settled (Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*…, p. 388).

[275] Again: SLORC was brutal but not totalitarian; if it had been totalitarian, Suu Kyi would have not been able to function politically in Myanmar.

[276] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 177.

[277] Ibid.

[278] Ibid., words "rebellion against tyranny and oppression" come from *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*…

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Burmese associate peace and security with coolness and shade: The shade of a tree is cool indeed; The shade of parents is cooler; The shade of teachers is cooler still; The shade of the ruler is yet more cool; But coolest of all is the shade of the Buddha's teachings" and dotted the 'i' by saying: "to provide the people with the protective coolness of peace and security, rulers must observe the teachings of the Buddha," while "central to these teachings are the concepts of truth, righteousness and loving kindness. It is government based on these very qualities that the people of Burma are seeking in their struggle for democracy."[279]

Therefore, in these words Suu Kyi not only idealised Buddhism to an unacceptable extent (how many Buddhist rulers in history indeed ruled in accordance with *mettā* and Ten Duties? Was there at least one?), but also presented this idealised vision as a political model to strive for. In Suu Kyi's reading only an enlightened, Buddhist ruler would be able to guarantee peace and security for they would materialize automatically just when the ruler would follow the Buddhist precepts (Ten Duties, etc.). This was a fairy tale perspective which portrayed the political power in Burma in almost religious colours, as a quintessentially moral undertaking: a fight to make the world a better place. It was a good fairy tale, brilliantly written, poignant and heart-breaking, yet a fairy tale only, not a serious, concrete political programme.

Intellectual attempts to equate Buddhism with democracy and human rights was one thing. Another one was a significant Buddhicisation of Suu Kyi's political rhetoric, especially after her release from the first house arrest. Hence, she was talking about compassion, love, purity of mind and most importantly – loving kindness, rejecting to focus on practical ideas about establishing democratic institutions in favour of stressing moral obligations: "when we visualize a democratic Burma, we do not visualize it in terms of great power and privileges for the NLD. We see it in terms of less suffering for the people. We're not starry-eyed about democracy. We don't think of it in terms of abstract institutions but in terms of what it can do to contribute towards the happiness and well-being of the people. We want a country where there is rule of law; where people are secure to the extent that one can be secure in this world; where they are encouraged and helped to acquire education, to broaden their horizons; where conditions conducive to ease of mind and body are fostered. That is why I would say that *metta* is the core of our movement – a desire to bring relief to human beings."[280]

In the same allegorical manner she portrayed the place for opposition and the role of government in relation to Buddhist canonical texts. Talking about the role of the opposition, she started along Western lines ("loyal opposition")[281] only to indigenize it later on:

[279] Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, pp. 177–178.

[280] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 179.

[281] She also deployed the Western notion of legal opposition during her speeches over the gate: "one of the strengths of democracy is opposition parties. They will challenge the government in power in the parliament if it is printing too much banknotes, causing inflation. The press will report

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"in order to have a strong, healthy democracy, we need a strong, healthy opposition (…) you need a good opposition because they'll always point out your mistakes and keep you on your toes," so "in many ways, the opposition is your greatest benefactor"; that is – "in worldly terms the opposition in a democracy plays the role of Devadatta for any legal government," it "stops the ruling party from going astray by constantly pointing out its mistake," the opposition "as the potential next government keeps the current one from misusing the power."[282] This interesting eclecticism of Suu Kyi – mixing of elements from Western ("loyal opposition") and Buddhist (Devadatta) traditions was interpreted as an attempt to find a place for opposition within Burmese political scene,[283] but given the context of the interview (Devadatta was invoked by the intervenor), however, it seems that this was rather another example of Suu Kyi's unquestioned literacy and rhetoric skills, than a serious well-thought-out political concept. The same applies to her other comparison – that of Aṅgulimāla of whom Suu Kyi said that "even he changed, his deeds were horrendous but the Buddha himself was able to separate the person from the deed," however "once Angulimala had been made to understand that what he did was wrong and was genuinely repentant, he set out to follow the right path"[284] this suggested she saw the SLORC generals as modern equivalent of Aṅgulimāla. This gave birth to an analysis that portrayed Devadatta and Aṅgulimāla as allegories of governance: "Suu Kyi gives the regime a choice of fulfilling two kinds of roles," they "can be a Devadatta, the ever-scheming Buddha's detractor who does not respond to or generate *metta*, who is unwilling to listen to advise, and who is incapable of attaining enlightenment until the time of death," or "they can be an Angulimala, the fearsome killer and mutilator who, while attempting to kill the Buddha, is transformed by *metta* only to achieve enlightenment at that very moment, and who ends up making a constructive contribution to the monastic community of which he became part."[285] This kind of reading, however, was not only spurious, but it

that the government is irresponsibly printing too much money. The government is subject to scrutiny at once" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 289).

[282] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 89.

[283] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 213.

[284] Comparison to Aṅgulimāla served her as an example of the necessity to separate the deed from a person, "I encourage people to focus on deeds, rather than on people. I was once speaking about Angulimala [a mass murderer at the time of the Buddha]. I said, even he changed, his deeds were horrendous but the Buddha himself was able to separate the person from the deed. Once Angulimala had been made to understand that what he did was wrong and was genuinely repentant, he set out to follow the right path. And the Buddha was the first to take him under his wing, as it were" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 66).

[285] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 330. Houtman went even further writing about Aṅgulimāla and about the state of *yahanda* (lack of fear) (Ibid., p. 327); as elsewhere his interpretations are fascinating from religious point of view but had little relation to real Burmese politics in 1990s. Suu Kyi indeed evoked the examples of Aṅgulimāla and Devadata, but not to show them as examples of political concepts, but to tell a moral message: "we cannot brand one person bad and the other good.

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missed the point doubly. Comparisons with Devadatta and (particularly) Aṅgulimāla were a correct moral assessment (the generals did much worse things than Aṅgulimāla), but politically they were a false one, for the generals were unwilling to "come to the light." And, secondly, this interpretation tended to overestimate Suu Kyi's literary comparisons, which were just as that: brilliant literary comparisons, nothing more.

By using this kind of vocabulary, Suu Kyi addressed the people through the Buddhist idiom, the one majority understood well and was familiar with.[286] That secured her popularity, however, "this highly spiritual approach to politics and social development market, in fact, a major departure from her earlier writings, which had been far more down-to-earth and worldly"; if before 1988 she wrote about "Burma's unfinished renaissance" (how Burma "had fallen short of achieving an East-West new-old synthesis at the intellectual level"), now "she never mentioned the immaturity of Burma's political system or the shortcomings and weakness of Burmese social and intellectual structures"; instead "on the contrary, she began to use ancient Buddhist concepts and practices – *byama-so taya, metta, karuna*, *parami*, *sati, vipassana, nibbana* – in the fight for democracy."[287]

Examples of this new approach can be found in her "Papal" Lecture of the late 1990s, where she, appraisingly evoking Sulak Sivaraksa's "goals of Buddhist development" – equality, love, freedom and liberation – declared that she considered "Buddhist values" especially "heavenly abodes," or divine states of mind: *mettā* (loving kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy) and *upekkha* (equanimity) are "to be crucial for peace and healthy human development."[288] Hence, according to her "*Metta* plays a crucial part in the process of human development," alongside with *karuṇā* (compassion) – balanced by wisdom ("compassion must be balanced by wisdom and wisdom must be balanced by compassion"),[289] the two aspects of Enlightenment; and *mudita*

What is important is a person who is capable of learning and a person who is not" (*Ncgub Translation: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Statement at Closing Ceremony of 9th NLD Congress October 15, 1997*, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199710/msg00228.html (access: 16.07.2018)).

[286] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 294.

[287] Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's Struggle*…, p. 96.

[288] Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Adobes*…, pp. 15–18.

[289] In illustrating her point, Suu Kyi invoked a Buddhist story of a bad dragon-king who lived at the foot of the Himalayas. Once a Bodhisattva came and, unfearful of the dragon, conquered his anger and gave him "a brief sermon on the joys of non-violence and compassion," which converted the dragon- king. "Now in an ideal world" – continued Suu Kyi – "that should be the happy end of the story. But ours is not an ideal world; it is a world conditioned by impermanence, suffering and the unresponsiveness of objects one's wishes." She continued with saying the once the children living nearby noticed the peacefulness of the dragon-king, they started ill-treating him. Once the Bodhisattva returned, the dragon- king complained about this ineffectiveness of non-violence; the Bodhisattva replied that "this had come about because the dragon had not balanced compassion with

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(sympathetic joy), which should be the essential part of development projects.[290] Even more frequently Suu Kyi used these Buddhist concepts during her rallies over the gate. She urged her followers to have equanimity: "if you don't have compassion (*karuna*), *metta* or emphatic joy (*mudita*), you should at least have equanimity (*upekkha*),"[291] she called the government to be mindful and to respect their subordinates "the minds of those who are heading a government should not be plagued with ill will for their juniors. The need to be broad-minded since they have obligations for the state. Acrimony by government officers will turn people into fish out of water (…) I see this as animosity. In such spitefulness, our country will suffer very much. Animosity can backfire."[292] Once, in a speech for the New Year 1996, she was urging for the need to change ("we ought to bring forth new ways of thinking") and get rid of "age-old decaying thoughts," emphasising this morally ("if we are basking in decays, we will be infected with the decays and we too will be decayed"; "if we don't want to be decadent citizens, we have to embrace change") praising culture[293] yet calling for change ("if we don't keep up with the time, our culture will get rusty"); in her long speech the crucial moment is the one when she said that "some of the cultural of ethical codes may be timeless" – "for example *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita* virtues will be relevant and valuable in any age. We cannot say that we don't need *metta* or *karuna* in this age. But it's not the same thing to discuss the use of ox cart on a motorway. We need to adopt ourselves to changing circumstances."[294]

Her increased usage of Buddhist concepts and practices was a part of the NLD's moral high ground policy of presenting themselves as morally better than the generals, and as such, better prepared to govern: "do not join the NLD in hope of getting a position or a privilege. We won't have money, position, luxury cars or condominiums. That doesn't matter. It's worth doing politics as long as we're respected and admired by the people"[295]; "our politics are not meant to slight anybody. Our criticism is aimed only at policy. We do not do politics in order to launch personal attacks"[296]; "I for one believe that one can only earn people's loving kindness, gratefulness and benevolence only when one is kind, benevolent and doing the right thing [not] expecting anything in return"[297];

wisdom: when the children became unruly he should show his fire to stop them from proceeding to cruel acts" (Ibid., p. 21).

[290] Ibid., pp. 16–22.

[291] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 270.

[292] Ibid.

[293] "Culture encompasses all these aspects of humanity. These aspects differ from age to age, from place to place. Yet the main purpose of culture should be to facilitate human interaction and communication. Culture has enabled us to live in peace and harmony" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 247).

[294] Ibid.

[295] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 65.

[296] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 44.

[297] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 90.

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"we don't have any grudge against anyone"[298]; "we don't have any intention to revenge ourselves"[299]; "I for one am never inclined to upset anyone by slander. I believe that our people are in the same disposition. That's why I rely on the people. Our people are worthy our trust"[300]; "in our Buddhist teaching, it's not in the nature of virtuous persons to blow their own horn. Upright persons do not cook up their own good deeds or loud-talk other's bad deeds. They do not exaggerate their own virtues and they do not downplay others"[301]; "I don't hold any grudge against the troops who were ordered to attack us during the new year. They did not look happy at all. Their sad faces reflected their uneasiness of having to do what they had been ordered to do. We are not angry with them."[302] This implicit positioning herself and her party as better than the generals was complemented by her more explicit remarks, such as complaint about regime's unwillingness to negotiate ("we demanded dialogue. They called it confrontation")[303] or her extensive elaborations on the fact that before engaging in politics she did not know what hatred is.[304]

This patterns, by the way, did not change even once Suu Kyi ascended to power in 2016 (see: latter part of the book). In her address to the people in 2017, she painted rebuilding Rakhine (Arakan) as a moral task ("our country needs to continue doing the things that need to be done"; "the things that need to be done, should be done correctly, bravely and effectively"), based on individual agency ("we will be able to utilise the strength of will, determination, and knowledge; bravely and energetically"; "we will use the power of truth and purity, so that this Enterprise will be worthy of being called a 'milestone' in our history") that is derived from "*Metta* (loving kindness) and *Thitsa* (Truth)," consequently, "no matter how much anger, hatred and bullying we may have to face, we shall overcome all challenges and obstacles by holding fast to *Metta*, *Karuna* and *Mudita* (Loving kindness, Compassion and Sympathetic joy)."[305]

Lintner rightly analysed that this newly acquired "devotion to spiritualism" had to do with her struggle with the generals (and their propaganda aimed at her that continu-

[298] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, p. 112.

[299] Ibid., p. 113.

[300] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 180.

[301] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 241.

[302] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 21 April 1996 (no. 25)*…, p. 543.

[303] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March (no. 23)*…, p. 516.

[304] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 465; *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 3 March 1996 (no. 21)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 475.

[305] What Suu Kyi told the audience (between the lines) in this speech was that the government cannot rebuild Rakhine but the people should help by themselves ("our people are well known for their generosity and philanthropy and have even been ranked as number one in the world") (*Report to the People by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, Office of State Counsellor, 12.10.2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1072 (access: 20.07.2018)).

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ously portrayed her as un-Burmese, un-Buddhist renegade and traitor),[306] and that this transformed Suu Kyi from being "a bold reformer and modernizer" into "a conservative force, a 'female bodhisattva' that the people believe is going to deliver them from evil" which "has no doubt made Suu Kyi even more popular with the public at large – or, rather, revered by them as she is being perceived as somebody divine and sacred, a person who is much more than an ordinary human being," whose political thought is "filled with Buddhist philosophy and Burmese popular beliefs, which seem to have little or nothing to do with the 'unfinished renaissance' she had described and analysed earlier."[307] Indeed, Suu Kyi's invocations of Buddhism were quite literal, if not outright populist: "we are trying to achieve enlightenment and to use the wisdom that is gained to serve others, so that they too might be free from suffering. While we can't all be Buddhas, I feel a responsibility to do as much as I can to realize enlightenment to the degree that I can, and to use it to relieve the suffering of others."[308] Evoking this precolonial patterns (the duty of the ruler is to create conditions that allow the people to concentrate on achieving *nibbāna*)[309] was a clear political strategy of using understandable cultural patters to remain in the political game. Consequently, "her use of Buddhist concepts and practices – *byama-so tayà*, *metta*, *karuna*, *parami*, *samatha*, *sati*, *vipassana*, *nibbana*, *yahanda*, *bodhi* – in the fight for democracy inevitably lead to a personality cult (…) as the gap increasingly widens between the dirt and corruption represented by a repressive military regime and the purity and power of the heroic democracy fighters, so also the impersonal continuity of political organizations demanded by a truly democratic system is increasingly at risk."[310] In other words, this was a good pattern – if not the only possible one in the unequal struggle with the generals – to gain power, yet in the due course Suu Kyi undermined the very democratic notions she proclaimed (e.g. she

[306] Bo Daewa, *The Unforgettable 19th July,* 96-07 Burma Press Summary (from the Rangoon "The New Light of Myanmar", 18.07.1996), vol. X, no. 7, July 1996, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS96-07.pdf (access: 26.05.2018); Chan Mye Khin, *Want to Shout from the Road Junction*, "Myanmar Alin", 30.06.1996, http://www.burmanet.org/bnn_archives/1996/bnn0796n468.txt (access: 26.05.2018); Po Yaygyan, *Adrift and Washed Ashore*, "The New Light of Myanmar", 09.05.1997, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199705/msg00391.html (access: 26.05.2018); Byatti, *Is It Thakin Blood or Slave's Blood*, 96-07 Burma Press Summary (from the Rangoon "The New Light of Myanmar", 21.07.1996), vol. X, no. 7, July 1996, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS96-07.pdf (access: 26.05.2018); *Adrift and Washed Ashore*…; *Political Demonstration Resolved Peacefully*, "Myanmar News Release", vol. 10, no. 17, 29.07.1998, Embassy of the Union of Myanmar, Ottawa, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199807/msg00003.html (access: 13.05.2018).

[307] Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's*…, p. 98.

[308] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 195.

[309] See: the subchapter on Burma's precolonial political thought.

[310] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 282.

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called personalised politics "indecent" and declared that she did not do it[311]; and she urged her listeners: "I have often urged you not to support me on a personal basis. Support me as a person who is working to achieve a democratic system in a country. Turn your back on me once my action undermines democracy. Personalized politics are not good for the country, nor for me. That's why if you love me, you ought to point out my mistakes whenever you see them").[312] Or, in other words, "Suu Kyi's almost mystical streak makes her writings, and books about her, different from those about and by other democratic leaders who have spent time in prison, such as Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel or Mahatma Gandhi, who was but a saint and a shrewd politician (…) Suu Kyi is indeed a good saint but (…) playing her saintly role leads her to neglect the hands-on style leadership required for a good politician."[313] This line of criticism continues to blame Suu Kyi for… conducting the policy out of line with her father: "her policies and methods differed considerably from those of Aung San," who "was a practical man, an orator, and a statesman who never mixed politics with religion"; "had he lived, it is quite likely that Burma would have become a more modern society"; Suu Kyi in turn, "did not carry his policies forward"; Lintner instead pointed out to her mother, Khin Kyi, and Bhutan's king Jigme Singye Wangchuck as her inspirations.[314]

Indeed, Suu Kyi's mother, Khin Kyi must have had an enormous impact on Suu Kyi[315] as it was she who shaped Suu Kyi's understanding of Aung San (Suu Kyi lost him when she was two and it was via her mother that she learned much about him). Particularly the sense of duty towards her father (and towards Burma) Suu Kyi often declared must have been influenced by Khin Kyi's "disciplinarian" upbringing of her daughter.[316] But that is not all. Khin Kyi was an important part of the Burmese postcolonial establishment and a close ally of U Nu (whom she helped in 1959/1960 electoral campaign

[311] "Personal politics are politics indecent. We don't do that" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 323).

[312] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 175; "I've always reminded people not to be personal. It's truism that, if we like a personality, we like her ideas. It's human nature. But in our quest for democracy, I'd like to remind you to make a distinction between 'political' and 'personal' and between 'public' and private' spheres" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 91); "one of our weaknesses is out personalised politics", Ibid., p.95; she also said that she found "it very embarrassing when people refer to me as gaungzamggyi – big leader," and that she was "against bringing personalities into politics. We do not like focusing on individuals, this is a very low kind of politics" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 81 and 94); and that she consider herself "an ordinary person" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no.2)*…, p. 66).

[313] Quoted in: Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 284. I do not understand why Lintner listed Gandhi in this company – for Gandhi used religion extensively in his political career.

[314] Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's*…, pp. 96–98.

[315] I am grateful for prof. Bogdan Góralczyk for urging me to include Khin Kyi in this book.

[316] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 85–86 and 165.

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and was given Ambassadorship in India in return; in was then in India when Suu Kyi encountered Gandhi's ideas for the first time). As such Khin Kyi represented the key link between 1950s elites and Suu Kyi: Suu Kyi's vision of "finishing her father's task" is more similar to U Nu's vision of Aung San legacy than to Ne Win's, a development no doubt influenced this way or another by her mother. Khin Kyi's importance is further enhanced by her "passive yet crucial" role in bringing Suu Kyi back to Burma in 1988; given strong, yet distanced bond between the mother and the daughter, Khin Kyi must have not only given her consent to Suu Kyi's decision to enter politics in 1988 but also helped Suu Kyi with her first political steps by giving invaluable advices.[317] Khin Kyi's importance in contemporary Burmese history is symbolically presented in the fact that her mausoleum lies at the slopes of Shwedagon, alongside with that of Supayalat, Kodaw Hmaing and U Thant (and vis-à-vis Ne Win's pagoda) and on the opposite side of Aung San's (Martyrs') Mausoleum.

Thus, although one may agree with the latter part of Lintner's interpretation (Khin Kyi and Bhutanese inspirations certainly had significant impact on Suu Kyi's thought),[318] one could not disagree more with the former part that missed the point out of two reasons. First, Buddhism has always been present in Suu Kyi's political thought, as has been her moral approach based on Buddhist rationale; one may discuss about the intensity of her usage of Buddhists concepts and ideas – which indeed, increased – but drawing a distinct line between her ideas in 1988/1989 and in the mid 1990s is far-fetched. Second, Suu Kyi Buddhisicised her political ideas out of pragmatic reasons: as a response to the regime's slander and defamation campaign. She had to prove that she was Burmese and Buddhist enough. And she did this with a superb result: not only she defended her position but she even enhanced it by becoming a "mother of the nation," a "female bodhisattva" etc. By doing so she enhanced her weak political capabilities and remained in the political game. This was a very pragmatic decision in the best footsteps of her father! Aung San also adjusted his ideology in accordance with changing circumstances; now his daughter did the same.

This was a political move. Ideologically, her turn to Buddhism meant that by accentuating the religious side of her political struggle and by borrowing Buddhist vocabu-

[317] Kyaw Zwa Moe, *The Mother Who Was Overlooked*, "The Irrawaddy", 03.10.2013, http://www.irrawaddy.org/from-the-irrawaddy-archive-burma/mother-overlooked.html (access: 17.05.2018).

[318] However, as with the influence of her husband, Dr. Michael Aris, Khin Kyi and Bhutanese influences are very difficult to prove (see: preface of this book). Nevertheless, it is obvious that Suu Kyi's mother had an enormous impact (see: above) and Bhutanese idealism ("gross national happiness") must also have influenced Suu Kyi's own agenda, at least in economic and developmental dimension ("human development"). For a very recent attempt to deal with Khin Kyi's influence on Suu Kyi, see: Hans-Bernd Zöllner, Rodion Ebbighausen, *The Daughter: A Political Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi*, Silkworm Books, Bangkok 2018.

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lary, Suu Kyi returned to the ideological mainstream of the Burmese political thought.[319] She became the ideological successor of Prime Minister U Nu: in legitimizing herself via religious means and mixing politics with religion, Suu Kyi clearly followed his footsteps. Successfully so: it was Suu Kyi, not the generals, who in the eyes of the majority of Burmese people, was the legitimate ruler of Burma.

4. The Symbolic Alternative Seat of Authority

After being released from the first house arrest on 10th July 1995, Suu Kyi greeted her cheering followers from the gate of her house at University Road 54 in Rangoon. This random event soon turned into one of the most unusual political performances in the contemporary Burmese history: a weekly rallies in front of Suu Kyi's house where she, standing on the gate of her house, made speeches and replied to questions of the public gathered outside.[320]

Suu Kyi's speeches over the gate and the unique atmosphere became immortalized in newspaper articles,[321] academic papers[322] and even literature[323] as well as in Suu Kyi's own "Letters from Burma."[324] On a more analytical basis, these speeches made her house an "alternative power centre": "like all centre of power in Burmese history, its

[319] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 37.

[320] She described it the following way: "on my release from house arrest last year, people gathered outside the gates of my home to greet me and to demonstrate their support for the movement for democracy (…) This continued day after day for more than a month; then I negotiated with our supporters an arrangement which was more convenient for all concerned: we would meet regularly at four o'clock on Saturdays and Sundays. Thus were born the public rallies that have been taking place outside my house every weekend. A few months after the weekend rallies had become established as a regular political feature, I invited the audience to write to me about matters they would like me to discuss (…) Letters on a wide range of subjects, political, economic, social and religious, were put into the mailbox we hung outside the gate for that purpose" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, p. 175).

[321] Philip Shenon, *Freed Burmese Democrat Is Conciliatory*, "The New York Times", 12.07.1995, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/12/world/freed-burmese-democrat-is-conciliatory.html (dostęp: 30.06.2018); *Suu Kyi is Good for Business*, Burma.Net, 30.08.1995, http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/academic/political-science/freeburma/bnn/1995/bnn083095.txt (dostęp: 30.06.2015).

[322] Amitav Ghosh, *54 University Avenue, Yangon*, "Kenyon Review", vol. 23, Issue 2, Spring 2001, pp. 158–165; Christina Fink, *Living Silence in Burma. Surviving Under Military Rule*, 2nd edition, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai–London 2001, p. 80; Ang Chin Geok, *Aung San Suu Kyi: Towards a New Freedom*, Prentice Hall, Sydney 1998, p. 97, Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 234.

[323] Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*, HarperCollins Publishers, London 2001, pp. 540–543.

[324] "There is nothing to compare with the courage of ordinary people whose names are unknown and whose sacrifices pass unnoticed. The courage that dares without recognition, without the protection of media attention, is a courage that humbles and inspires and reaffirms our faith in humanity. Such courage I have seen week after week since my release from house arrest 15 months ago. Our brave supporters who come to our weekend rallies are a shining symbol of true commit-

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significance rested on the person regarded as the main source of authority, but also on its location."[325] In accordance with the *maṇḍala*[326]/galactic[327] tradition, the ruler was at the apex of cosmological order[328] (see: previous part of the book), therefore, the position of being at the apex of social hierarchy "was taken over by Suu Kyi as the legitimate successor of her father and the choice of the people" according to the Mahā-Sammata tradition; since "the ruler's palace represented the order of the whole world centred round the ruler's throne," now this "place was provisionally and symbolically taken by the house at University Avenue that had been inhabited by Aung San's family"; here "central functions of the state were performed from now on, merging the rituals of royal Burma and of contemporary nation-state" and making "a virtual second seat of government" – "through the media reports the impression was created that in addition to the ugly regime of SLORC an alternative government existed and that it could rule if given the chance," this "produced a certain illusory image."[329] That is why after an initial tolerance, the military government finally lost its patience and blocked Suu Kyi's house by barb wire and dispelled the people. Since 26th September 1996 no further rallies took place.[330] Nevertheless, this phenomenon, which lasted more than one year, is well-worth an analysis.

"Our rallies are political rallies so the main thrust of our speeches is about politics – described Suu Kyi in her "Letters from Burma," written during the period of weekly speeches over the gate – "we respond to letters from the people about the current economic, social and political situation; we discuss the latest international developments; we talk about the struggles for justice and freedom and human rights that have taken place in different parts of the world; we criticize policies and programs which are detrimental to harmony and progress in the nation; we touch on historical matters."[331] She continued: "I am the one to respond to letters from the audience and discuss political struggles that have taken place in Burma in the past and also in other parts of the world. I also talk often about the necessity to cultivate the habit of questioning arbitrary orders and to stand firm and united in the face of adversity. One of my most frequent messages

ment and strength," they "demonstrate their unwavering support for the cause of democracy in Burma" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, p. 192).

[325] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 245.

[326] Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region*…, pp. 16–32.

[327] Stanley J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background*, Cambridge University Press, London–New York–Melbourne 1976, pp.102–132.

[328] Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Circles*: *Anarchy and Conquest c. 1580–1760*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1984, pp. 65–83.

[329] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 246–247.

[330] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 25.

[331] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, p. 192.

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is the reminder that neither I alone, or the National League for Democracy by itself, can achieve democracy for Burma. The people have to be involved in the process; democracy involves as many responsibilities as rights."[332]

There were several characteristic features of these weekly rallies over the gate. First of all, Suu Kyi kept very good contact with the people. She was a warm, cordial speaker, often smiling, laughing – and making people laugh (in the transcription of her speeches one can see that she was frequently interrupted by laughs or, even more frequently, by applauses) – with unmissable affection to the people,[333] skilful knowledge of cultural patterns,[334] and equally effective usage of rhetoric skills (especially "*climax*, or culmination, *captatio benevolentiae*, or compliment to the audience and *argumentum*

[332] Ibid., p. 193. Elsewhere in the *Letters* Suu Kyi added a populist description that presented NLD as a "people's party," that has some kind of organic relationship with the people, "in building up the NLD our chief concern was to establish a close, mutually beneficial relationship with the general public. We listened to the voice of the people that our policies might be in harmony with their legitimate needs and aspirations. We discussed with them the problem of our country and explained why in spite of its inevitable flaws, we considered to be better than other political systems. Most important of all, we sought to make them understand why we believed that political change was best achieved through nonviolent means" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 30)*…, p. 121).

[333] "I felt knackered in the beginning. Yet once I saw you, happiness took over my tiredness. We are mutually dependent since we have to encourage one another. The more we see each other, the better we feel. I hope I will be seeing you all the time" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 59); "Isn't your people's expectation of you a cross to bear? I said, 'No! Because I cannot do it all alone.' If you don't get it yet, I must repeat that I cannot do this alone (…) We need mutual support to succeed. We are simply giving enough energy supplements to the people. A day's dosage of energy supplement is not good for a lifetime. You need to take it at least once a week. It's better if you can take it everyday. As we are not in position to feed you with energy supplements on a daily basis, a weekly regime will do for the time being. Our people have to keep up their zeal this way" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*..., p. 341); "it's only natural that when we do not meet one another, our affection speaks out" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 170); the same can be said about her first speech after being released in 2010, "we haven't seen each other for so long. But, no matter how long it has been, I'm very pleased and encouraged to see we all still remain strong" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…).

[334] Such as Burmese proverbs to illustrate her ideas: "how long does it take to realize our vision? (…) I believe that democracy should not take too long in the coming. I am saying this out of my conviction, and of my assessment of the people's desire for a democratic system (…) but this should be no reason for you to sit back and relax (…) one should not be complacent like the fabled hare. You have to be as perseverant and diligent as the tortoise. The tortoise looks slow from the outside but he is burning inside with his resolve to win. Similarly our resolve for democracy is very strong and profound. We don't have to worry about not achieving a democratic system" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, pp. 385–386).

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ad vercudium, or argument of appeal to authority"),[335] sense of humour,[336] sharp irony by which she commented current situation,[337] ridiculed unwise questions,[338] played with words[339] and made frequent allusions to current situation.[340] In Suu Kyi's speeches over the gate (as well as during her campaign of 1988/1989) "her tone remained consultative, encouraging informal interjection from the audience."[341] Suu Kyi proved to be a born politician who possessed the priceless ability: she knew how to talk to her supporters. These rallies made her even more popular, or rather, beloved. On a more systemic level, these "people's forums"[342] at University Avenue 54 balanced intimacy with distance.[343] A more critical readings of her transcripts reveals that Suu Kyi frequently omitted or bypassed inconvenient questions (e.g. "we have to investigate the issue thoroughly"[344]; "we therefore need to study the reason behind an issue so that we can make a sound judgement"[345]; "the matter cannot be ignored"[346]; "we need to collect reliable economic

[335] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 449. These words were written about her Monywa 2003 speech, but can be applied to 1995/1996 speeches as well.

[336] "If other people thank Edison for five minutes, we thank him one and half a month": an allusion to regular blackouts in Myanmar (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 90).

[337] "People who ask me how to bring about a dialogue should seek advice from U Khun Sa. How he has done that? Our methods don't seem to lead to a dialogue, but his do" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 316); "the authorities claim that our country is heading for a genuine democratic system. We are holding democracy gatherings to bring about genuinely democratic country. In this sense we are assisting the authorities (…) your democracy education will be built up and you can do a lot for the country" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 378).

[338] "Aunty Suu, could you please convince my wife that democracy activism is not a crime?" Suu Kyi's answer: "someday we need to set up a club for husbands who fear their wives" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 135).

[339] E.g. "next question is from U Sit Mone (Burm. 'someone who hates army') I don't think it's his real name" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 41); replying to a question on how is it possible that civil servants, military and police officers with low salaries could afford luxurious goods, she answered "I think the officers who can afford to buy cars must drink a lot of tea" (word play: in Burmese tips, or bribes are called money for tea, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 September 1995 (no.2)*…, p. 63).

[340] "I for one think the rice growers have better knowledge of rice than MRTV" (Myanmar TV: an allusion to propagandist programmes in Myanmar TV while the situation in Burmese countryside was dire (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 92).

[341] Sangupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 289.

[342] Fink, *Living Silence in Burma*…, p. 80.

[343] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 243.

[344] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 132.

[345] Ibid.

[346] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, p. 109.

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data to be able to come up with any economic policy"),[347] presented no small amount of populism[348] (e.g. "we won't make the rich poor, but we'll make the poor rich"; "our plans should make our peasants richer, not poorer"[349]; "our Leagues look at the hardship of every citizen"[350]; "we stand by the people forever"),[351] used Aung San to legitimize herself,[352] presented a schoolteacher's attitude ("kindly please do not ask questions that do not have any sense,"[353]; "it's important for young persons to have an ambition or convictions,"[354] "if I sound preaching to the students, may it be so"),[355] if not a motherly one ("there are issues meant for children and there are issues meant for grown-ups"[356]; "trust yourself"),[357]

[347] Ibid., p. 112; *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 3 March 1996 (no. 21)*..., p. 477.

[348] I follow Blum's interpretation here: "her criticism is quite populist" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 45).

[349] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 4 February 1996 (no. 16)*…, p. 357; other examples: "we will have to make every effort to achieve this" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, p. 111), "What matters is for our people to prosper" (Ibid., p. 113), "we have to work for peace and prosperity" (Ibid.).

[350] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 405.

[351] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March 1996 (no. 23)*…, p. 516, other examples: "there is no justice at all" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 9)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 209; "in our politics, we are trying to set better standards for the benefit of the majority of the people" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 323).

[352] She called him "Dad" or "Daddy" all the time, e.g., *Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech, Saturday 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 41; *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 85; *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 314. She also used Aung San as a juxtaposition to junta's (mis)rule, e.g. "for the types of social security by state providence, we will have to wait until the state coffer is full. We will have to work very hard to achieve that kind of social security. Before independence the nationalists, including my dad, had often discussed social security issues for independent Burma. They realized how much endeavour would entail such an effort. Perhaps some people were not convinced. That's why we are in such predicament" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 346).

[353] *Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 50.

[354] Otherwise, "the young ones who do not yet know what to do with their lives are easily drawn into drugs" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 60).

[355] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 84; another example: "I urged some of the youth to read books (…) if they have nothing to do, they should be reading at a library" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, p. 108).

[356] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 317.

[357] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 64; other examples: "if we read writings inspired by antagonism, we will be angered and our time will be wasted" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 42); "please be mindful. Be upright and think before you act. Please do not follow a shortcut just to be compliant" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 132); "helping each other is not a crime. Even selfish

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was prone to preaching ("please do not drink then you are stressed"[358]; "we all are human beings who are wont to err"[359]; "we must never encourage injustice; our action must be just, too"[360]; "any unfair deals will undermine our democracy movement")[361] and telling quasi-aphorist platitudes ("gambling can undermine public moral"[362]; "the right person must be in the right place"[363]; "smoking is very dangerous"[364]; "we have to know the right from wrong"[365]; "people not always act as they speak"[366]; "there is no perfection in this

person can help other for the sake of reciprocity can benefit from their selfish motives. Especially one should help the people who are suffering for a right cause" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, pp. 135–136); "drinking and doing drugs reflects the fact that one is looking for an external agency to deal with distress, instead of relying on one's inner self. Face your troubles boldly, ask yourself how to deal with such troubles, and try to deal with them courageously. Only then you troubles will go away. Just hanging your head in despair won't do" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 153).

[358] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 153.

[359] Ibid., p. 151.

[360] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 313; other examples: "we have to put our words into practice. Just words won't do" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 136); "I would like all our people to be well-fed, happy and work for the country willingly. One should not live discontent or fear" (Ibid., p. 139); "I would like the people to be diligent and dependable. One of your key weaknesses is your fear. You are frightened by things that should not frighten you" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, pp. 385–386); "may I remind you to be on your guard against all kinds of want. Wanting is very dangerous. Pursuing want can undermine your principles. Please do not pursue want excessively (…) People, you have to prove that you cannot be bought. Show that you are human individuals with hearts and souls. Demonstrate that your hearts and souls are not for sale (…) Do not sell you principles. Selling one's principles will destroy one's life. It will ruin our country" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 48); "charity is effective only when you have the will for it. Giving a donation without any charitable spirit will not just undermine one's pursue but might also lead one to hell" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 155); "there is no need to be disappointed with our hardship. Perhaps we are in a better position than devas. A little hardship goes a long way for our awareness. We can see the positive side of any situation and make the best of it. More challenges ahead of us can sharpen our mind and improve our tact" (Ibid., p. 241).

[361] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 459; other examples: "we have to put our words into practice. Just words won't do" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 136).

[362] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 4 February 1996 (no. 16)*…, p. 356.

[363] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 407.

[364] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 437.

[365] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 465.

[366] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 207.

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world"[367]; "in life, there cannot be a complete satisfaction"[368]; "the person who sees only the worldly materials, has only one eye but the person who tries to achieve both worldly and spiritual goals has both eyes").[369]

In general, her approach to politics, as well as to other issues, was first and foremost moral – whether Suu Kyi was talking about democracy, land grabbing, reading books or not taking bribes, she deployed a profoundly moral perspective. It is within this moral perspective that her political ideas are situated.

An example of corruption will be illustrative, as widespread corruption[370] was one of the most popular themes of letters received by Suu Kyi.[371] Suu Kyi, following classical Buddhist rationale,[372] traced the roots of corruption in moral shortcomings of the people: "corruption happens because some people no longer believe in a common good. They no longer think of contributing to a public good but only taking advantage of it. If they know that contributing to a common good means giving something to themselves, people won't be corrupt. There will be more give, less take (…) Only when we are prepared to give a bit of our self, we'll reach a stage where one can build and maintain roads for our own good."[373] These moral flaws were, however, caused by the political system: "corruption is also state of mind which has been brought about by the political situation. If the people at the top are corrupt, then people below think it is right to be corrupt. If the people at the top are not corrupt and if it becomes obvious that they are accountable, we will be able to check corruption. It's also a matter of education. We will try our best to make people understand that corruption is not a way of life and if

[367] Ibid., p. 82.

[368] *Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…

[369] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 490; other examples: "a development plan should be well thought-out and multidimensional" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 275); "printing more banknotes does not translate into making more money" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 31 March 1996 (no. 24)*…, p. 531); "after all, life is suffering. If we cannot face slight troubles, we won't be able to face life (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*..., p. 135); "our country will not progress under whims" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 4 February 1996 (no. 16)*…, p. 357); "if you understand the notion of democracy, you need not fear freedom of expression" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 381); "speech is our salient feature that separates us from animals. If we don't use our capacity for speech the right way, and if we are only verbally abusing others, we are inferior to animals" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March 1996 (no. 23)*…, p. 513).

[370] "The common attitude among the Burmese is that it is good practice to take bribes" (Maung Maung Gyi, *Burmese Political Values*…, p. 174).

[371] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, p. 175.

[372] "Suu Kyi's argumentation referring to corruption is based on the Buddhist concept of the pursuance of want" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 37).

[373] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 139.

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it is a way of life then it is certainly not the best"[374]; "corruption happens because of our poor political system. Graft happens because our people are poor. Since both the system and the people are poor, bribery becomes a means to get things done, instead of proper way of doing things"[375]; "civil servants are corrupt not because corruption is in their nature. Corruption is caused by our country's predicament. How can you resist corruption if you have to feed you children and parents? (…) being in a situation to cope with 600 kyats a month will undermine your moral values. It's not possible to survive on 600 kyat a month. Simply impossible. It's not surprising that our people's moral virtues decay in such impossible circumstances (…) I acknowledge that civil servants cannot work on their empty stomach. On the other hand, inaction (by the government) on the corruption of the civil servants who are forced to live on scant salaries causes more and more moral decay. Corruption is one of our country's biggest challenges"[376]; "when government employees do not earn enough, the system where 'graft is our friend' may become acceptable. I don't want to reproach them one-sidedly. How can you tell people, 'Don't be corrupt. Let you children starve.' We must change the system. We must act together so that our government employees can serve the country impartially and rightfully without corruption."[377] Given this dire situation, in Suu Kyi's vision each and every one is responsible for his/her fate, so the best way to end up with corruption is to start from oneself – not giving bribes; by this way the system would be improved: "there may be many bribers in this audience (…) Then you are also responsible for corruption. Only when there is a briber, will there be corruption. You have to ask yourself if you can go through an inefficient bureaucratic procedure without bribing an official (…) This has to do with spiritual courage. If you do not do under-the-table deals, things never get done here. Then ask yourself if you have the courage to be clean. Since there is so much hardship in the country, I do not want to blame the people who are not above the corruption. Because some may say that I am in a position above graft. I simply do not think that I will ever be in a position that necessitates corruption. If something cannot get done without bribery, I will leave it as it is. I understand that not everyone is in my position. I do not want to assert that since I am incorruptible, everyone must be incorruptible."[378]

With corruption, as with other issues, Suu Kyi, once achieved the position of power in 2016, has repeated her moral message from the 1990s, though with alterations. In her two post-2016 speeches (one to civil servants and another address to the public) she said corruption "is difficult to spot," but "remains a problem" and is "the central

[374] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 78.

[375] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 177.

[376] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 225.

[377] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 243.

[378] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 179.

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challenge," for "corruption has a corrosive effect on trust and on good governance, and on the reputation of the civil service and its staff. Moreover, corruption places the interests of the few above the interests of the many, and thus undermines the central principle of democracy: government on behalf of the people."[379] As a way to fight with corruption, she recalled her "freedom from fear" ideas about four types of corruption (four kinds of corruption: *chanda-gati, dosa-gati, moga-gati* and *bhaya-gati*; this time presented as: "not doing it because one does not like it; doing it because it meets one's interest; doing it because of fear; or doing it because one is oblivious of consequences are all forms of corruptions"),[380] and said that civil servants should not only be "free from taking financial briberies" but should also change their "mind-set" so that they could be "clean and free from corruption"; hence corruption for her meant not only not taking bribes but also "refrains from being self-serving," or serving "the interest of their inner circle and their kith and kin"; consequently, "civil servants must be the personnel who has the integrity to stand up for truth and justice" – only "then will they be free from desire or greed": "the act of refraining from bribes by itself is not sufficient to claim one as free of corruption. Looking out for the interest of one's close circle, family, or friends and not looking at the interest of the country as a whole is a form of corruption."[381]

Since the 1990s, despite Suu Kyi's calls against "personalization of politics," her relationship with the public was very personal: her status was higher than theirs (she "remains above the common people"), she represented the personalized system.[382] Suu Kyi saw herself as a teacher during transformation times: "via indirect – partly populist – animadversions, Suu Kyi self-practices what she teaches and thus, personates a certain role model that does not fear restrictions by the military government"; Suu Kyi is "not merely teaching but also turning her concepts into practice creates a particular personal relationship and personalized concept of education – which she rejects theoretically."[383] She is, however, not only an "effective teacher,"[384] but also "a mother of the nation" (see: latter part of the book) and – most importantly – the successor of Aung San, who has the duty to fulfil his ideas. Suu Kyi tried to instil the people the spirit of public initiative, so that they could take matters into their hands; she taught them dissent (learning how to say no to injustice); and most importantly, she tried to root out fear of the

[379] *Key Note Address by H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, at Launch of the Civil Service Reform (CSR) Strategic Action Plan For Myanmar*, Office of State Counsellor, 10.07.2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1137 (access: 20.07.2018).

[380] *State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary of the Government* (*30 March 2017*), Office of State Counsellor, 01.04.2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/798 (access: 25.07.2018).

[381] *Key Note Address by H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*…

[382] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 46.

[383] Ibid., p. 45.

[384] Kane's "effective teacher" (*The Politics of Moral Capital*…, p. 167).

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government from their hearts and minds.[385] During her rallies, "each week Aung San Suu Kyi urged her listeners to consider ways in which they could participate in the movement"; realizing that the NLD "could do little without popular participation," she "urged her audience to recognize the power that they had but were not tapping into."[386] Giving Václav Havel's essay "power of the powerless"[387] as an example, she called for the empowerment of the people.

Among themes Suu Kyi elaborated during her weekly talks over the gate, the most important ones were: democracy, education and "the triad" of unity, discipline and responsibility. These will be described below.

5. Democracy First

Suu Kyi's first and foremost message has been the need to build democracy in Burma. Not only democracy is the most frequently evoked theme in her speeches,[388] but it forms a cornerstone of Suu Kyi's political thought. Suu Kyi in her understanding of democracy was able to skilfully situate "her ideas about democracy and human rights within a Theravadin-influenced Burmese discourse on politics."[389] In accordance with traditional Burmese Buddhist political thought's patterns, Suu Kyi's understanding of democracy is a moral one. Although Western-based, institutional understanding of democracy, with checks and balances, is also present in Suu Kyi's thought, it plays a secondary role to the main, moral message. Suu Kyi's democracy is a moral vision; vague at best, utopian at worst.

Democracy was used by Suu Kyi in a variety of ways. At one time while admitting that "there are thousands of tones on democracy," she commented – comparing democracy to *saṃsāra* – that "discourse on democracy will be endless,"[390] yet she embarked on this undertaking seeing her role as the leader who was teaching her people about democracy ("I'm just trying to explain democracy")[391] in a difficult environment.[392] Her

[385] I have described all these issues in earlier parts of this chapter.

[386] Fink, *Living Silence in Burma*…, p. 81.

[387] Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*…

[388] E.g. in Suu Kyi's 25 rallies between September 1995 and April 1996 the word democracy as a noun appeared 140 times, as an adjective – democratic – 152 times followed by education 80 times, unity and united (33 times), peace (37 times), rule of law (20 times), *mettā* (24 times) and human rights (14 times), my own estimation, based on: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, pp. 18–543.

[389] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 181.

[390] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 41.

[391] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 94.

[392] "It is difficult to discuss a suitable democratic system for Burma since our country has not been democratic for a long time" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 150).

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vision of democracy is often similar to slogan: "defending one's own right within the law is working for democracy,"[393] "democratic cause is a public cause. A cause in defence of the right of the people,"[394] if not outright populistic – "we would like to see poor people get rich. We would like to see rich people get even richer"[395]; "a democratic system does not allow injustice"[396]; "there will be benefits for all"[397]; "under a democratic system, people are likely to prosper and their purchasing power will rise"[398]; "when you equate the investment and the profit, the system which has little investments and more profit, is democracy"[399]; "we need a systemic change. We need to work for a system wherein our people's suffering is properly addressed"[400]; "dictatorship is wrong and democracy is desirable"[401]; "I think of myself as fortunate, because I have been able to work for something which is worth working for – democracy"[402]; "no matter how hard you try, we cannot shut the ears and eyes of the people. We cannot mislead our people forever. To try to fool a people never works. One might die trying but he will never succeed." [403]

A more elaborate example of her populism may be seen in the reply she gave to a question about a proper political system. Suu Kyi in her answer eclectically mixed Buddhist moral aspects (good-will) with traditional Burmese dislike for party politics, only to end up with a platitude that the system must be "for the people" – according to her, democracy as a proper political system is "established on a genuine *cettana* or good-will for the sake of the people. A political system for the people. If our politics are for the party, for our interest or for our institution, our system cannot be a proper system, whether we call it a socialism or a democracy. The key is that a political system is proper when its objectives meet genuine interests of the people. We can call it what we like."[404] Elsewhere she followed these lines: "what's important is to have a system suitable for our people. We have to bring about a system that is appropriate for our current living conditions and we should try to improve it gradually (…) We ought to survey what the people want first. Only the development projects that take into account of the people's wish and their capacity, both physical and economic, will be successful."[405]

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[393] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 322.

[394] Ibid., p. 321.

[395] "We don't want anyone's wealth to be reduced" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 288).

[396] Ibid.

[397] Ibid.

[398] Ibid., pp. 287–288.

[399] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*…, p. 490.

[400] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 380.

[401] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 77.

[402] Ibid., p. 74.

[403] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 268.

[404] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 150.

[405] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 174.

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And, in 2017, a year after her ascendance to power, she continued along these vague, moral, Buddhism-inspired lines, by saying that "democracy" means "impermanency of all things" which served her to remind her party that they are not forever in power "we must also understand the concept of impermanency in politics and that the situation and position of the government is only as durable and strong as people's acceptance."[406]

Another fact following these populist lines is that in Suu Kyi's discourse democracy often played a role of a magic wand ("whatever issue we discuss, we usually end up with democracy. We must achieve it"[407]; "in the end there is only one answer, we must struggle for democracy")[408] that would heal all the social problems of Burma, such as underpayment in civil service,[409] businessmen insecurity,[410] *corvée* labour,[411] soaring prices

[406] *State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary…*

[407] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 64.

[408] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 189.

[409] "Things are stagnating in civil service, morale and virtues are getting low in our social environment, people are concerned if the situation can be fixed in a democratic system. For us there is a way when there is will. We can fix if we are truly committed to change our social and administrative systems. It's not going to be easy though. Nothing valuable comes easy. We have to try hard (…) if the people help us with all their hearts and minds, everything is possible. The topsy turvy situation in civil service and governmental departments can be repaired. Before asking if that is possible in democracy, shall we work for the democratization first. When our country is democratic, we will know the answer for sure" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 3 March 1996 (no. 21)*…, pp. 477–478).

[410] "I heard that some of the businesspeople are concerned that democracy will undermine their business. To be blunt, they do not understand democracy. Businesspeople thrive in genuinely democratic societies since there exist more business opportunities for them" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, p. 112); "in a democratic system, there will be less gratuities and more virtuous economic opportunities. This will provide businesspeople with a righteous livelihood" (Ibid.); "under a democratic governance, you only have to acquaint yourself with industrial or business laws if you want to start a business. (…) We don't want to inflict injustice upon anyone (…) Businesspeople will be treated fairly"; "industrialists and merchants should not think that democracy may be detrimental to their business. Merchants and industrialists can benefit from better purchasing power (…) Our notion of democracy implies rule of law. Under the law, everyone can mind their own business. Merchants, businessmen and industrialists will be well informed of their rights. There will be transparency. Businesses are done accountably. In a democratic system, one doesn't have to approach anyone in power for a business licence – he doesn't even have to think of buying anyone off (…) Merchants and industrialists are enjoying their wealth in democratic societies" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, pp. 287–288).

[411] "In a democratic society, there is no forced labour (…) one cannot be forced to move out in a democracy. The people have to be properly compensated" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, pp. 131–132); "the questioner thinks that such voluntary labour dukhha will be over when we have a democratic system. He is right. Because in a democracy, the govern-

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of commodities,[412] land grabbing,[413] corruption,[414] inspections of private houses[415] and other. Elsewhere she even declared that democracy might even help resolve the problem of world's famine ("best defence against famine is an accountable government").[416]

When asked about some more concrete details ("how do you work within yourself with democracy as a vision, democracy as a process, and democracy as a state of mind?") Suu Kyi bypassed the question by using vague language that focused on Buddhist, moral aspects: "the three have to be simultaneous. First of all it has to be a state of mind. You've got to act democracy. Then you have to work out the process towards the vision that you have. You can't really separate the three. They all go together. And this is very Buddhist, isn't it? Work, action and self-reliance."[417] Another time she avoided giving answer by evoking Lincolnian meaning of democracy, supplemented by some platitudes: "what democracy means is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. If you want democracy, you'll have to work for it. You've got to join in. The more people are involved the quicker we'll reach our goal."[418]

At times Suu Kyi deplored equally vague metaphors to describe democracy, her favourite ones being the comparisons of democracy to a road and to a roof. The first one she deployed several times: "I have used an analogy of road construction to our struggle

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ment that requires people to do voluntary labour will be voted out of the office after just one term" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*…, p. 224).

[412] "It might be possible that the lack of democracy can cause price hikes. People's discontent can lead to a country's instability and to market instability. Market instability means higher prices in consumer goods. One may ask if there is no price hike in a democratic system. There may be gradual price hikes in a democratic country but they can be kept under control under a good economic system. I would like to say that consumer goods prices are likely to be stable in a stable country where the citizens are contented with their government that abides by their wishes" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 188).

[413] "They cannot do whatever they want. They have to negotiate with the people concerned. Only after rounds of negotiations that ensure that the people in question are pleased, such a project should be implemented. As long as there is no democratic system, there will be issues that are not in accord with the people's desires. Our people should be united and try their best in preventing such problems from happening to them. Trying their best means that they can lend their support to us, working for democracy" (Ibid., p. 189).

[414] "If you think you can no longer resist the pull of corruption, please help us establish a democratic system as soon as possible" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*…, p. 225);"corruption exists everywhere throughout the country (…) corruption is endemic (…) That is why we need democracy" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 78).

[415] "Democracy means a system in which your home is not intruded at wee hours in the name of 'overnight guest inspection'" (*San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 129).

[416] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*, in: *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 245.

[417] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p 179.

[418] Ibid., p. 169.

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for democracy. We need to build our own road to democracy, with sweat and blood."[419] She, too, showed how democracy works on the analogy of road construction[420]: "if we are building a road, be it democratic or asphalt, if people understand that it's for their own good, they'll also understand that gravel and asphalt, meant for the road, should go to the road construction, not to anyone's pocket (…) if we people believe that a road is being built for our own good, we won't be stealing the asphalt but we'll build the road actively. I believe that the road to democracy has to be built for our own good. We don't need to steal anything. When the road is finished, it's all for us (…) When we talk about the road to democracy, people have to keep in mind that it's our own road and it must be smooth and straight. Not just road construction, road maintenance is equally important. If we do not fix a small pothole, it will become a gaping hole (…) Similarly our weaknesses have to be fixed as soon as we see them on our road to democracy."[421] She repeated her road metaphor in 2010: "we will all build the road toward democracy together, we'll build together, and we'll walk together."[422]

Roof comes as another metaphor: she used the comparison of democracy to a roof once (or twice, if one counts "Letters from Burma" and rallies over the gate separately), but extensively, as it served her to prove a thesis that politics is the most important aspect from which one should start reforming and improving the country. While writing her "Letters from Burma" Suu Kyi started from quoting a Burmese saying "if the roof is not sound the whole house becomes vulnerable to leaks" (meaning "if soundness is lacking at the top there will arise problems all along the line until the very bottom"), and then offered a vivid description of her problems with repairing the roof of her house at University Avenue 54, only to conclude with a comparison of the need "to repair the roof or our nation."[423] While speaking to her supports over the gate she was more explicit: "for us, we keep it in our hearts that Democracy is important. Because we are talking about the governing of a country. The governing system of a country is like the roof of a house. If the roof is leaking then the whole house has problems"; then she repeated the description of her problems with repairing the roof of her house only to move in with clearly political allusions: "only when the roof is holding, it will be beautiful inside. In the same way, for a country to have a good safety and security, the governing system must be right. The state governing system must be correct. That is why we are saying the most important thing is the governing system. A country's economic system is like the walls under the roof. It will be only a while after you have painted the walls all white, when it rains, it will be dirty since the roof is leaking. If the roof is good, then

[419] *San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 131.

[420] That people cannot be resettled, that the road must be built upon their consent, etc. (Ibid., p. 132).

[421] Ibid., pp. 138–139.

[422] *Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…

[423] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (*Letter no. 28*)…, pp. 111–113.

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the walls will still be white. That is why we are determined that there is nothing more important that the governing system. Therefore there is nothing more important than Democracy. When the governing system is right, we can work on the economy correctly, and it's worth working. We can continue maintaining our development since the governing system is right. Our improvements will end up if our governing system is not right. They will disappear (…) For those policies to be successful, the governing system must be right. Economic policies would not be successful if the governing system is not right. Therefore we can say firmly that Democracy is the most important thing."[424]

The comparison to a roof served her to illustrate a classical thesis of the 1990s (now discredited) – that only democracy allows economic development. Elsewhere she presented this idea by evoking historical examples of Germany and Japan: "during the Second World War, Germany and Japan practiced fascism. At that time, too, the Germans and Japanese were very disciplined people, they were brave and they valued education. Yet however disciplined, however brave, however educated they were, because of their political philosophy and their political systems their countries were really not able to develop. Despite initial victories in the war, they eventually lost. Fascism is not an ideology that benefits the majority. With this kind of ideology a country can never truly develop over the long run. After the war, both Germany and Japan adopted democratic institutions. By introducing democracy, these countries have also gone on to become two of the most prosperous nations in the world. This shows clearly that only with an effective government and equitable political system can a country really progress. We as citizens still need to be more self-disciplined; we still need to be more courageous, but in addition, we also need a proper form of government. So far we haven't even reached the zero level. If we want democracy, we need to reach that zero level (…) Now, though, however hard we try we cannot really work for our country freely."[425] The problem with this comparison is that it seemed quite adequate in the late 1980s and 1990s, but the realities of the 2000s and 2010s, with rising successful authoritarian countries like China, have falsified the claim that only democracy allows a real progress.[426] Back then, in the 1990s, however, these kind of metaphors served Suu Kyi as a means to present the leitmotifs of her political thought: that everything is political (a thought, by the way,

[424] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, pp. 432–433.

[425] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, pp. 220–221.

[426] Elsewhere she gave example of USSR's fall to prove that: "decades of authoritarian rule may have achieved uniformity and obedience but could not achieve long-term harmony or stability. Peace, stability and unity cannot be bought or coerced: they have to be nurtured by promoting a sensitivity to human needs and respect for the rights and opinions of others" (Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*, in: *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 245–246). Again, this comparison was valid in 1990s, but it is no longer so in the 2010s.

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evidently borrowed from Thomas Mann's "everything is politics")[427] and that one cannot separate politics from other social activities; her words were again clearly inspired by Myanmar's military government tactics of depoliticizing social activities (in line with classical authoritarian regimes' approach that people can do whatever they want provided they do not engage in politics). That is why Suu Kyi rejected this notion and wanted to politicise the activities of her supporters: "economic, political, administrative and social issues are interlinked. I never accepted the shibboleth, 'Don't do politics, just mind your own business'"[428]; "social affairs, religion, economy and politics are connected"[429]; "political, economic and social issues are all related. Therefore we have to deal with them at the same time"[430]; "there are those who say they would rather not be involved in the movement for democracy, but when the elections come, they will vote on the side of democracy. This is not enough. We still need to work towards free and fair elections. We have to work hard if we want our basic freedoms (…) If people are still unwilling to take part in public life after we achieve democratic government, that government will not be a stable one. But let me ask about the real meaning of democracy. Those who want popular government should also become involved in politics. They should have individual political ideas. They should have positive attitudes and a willingness to sacrifice. Without this there is no way we can win"[431]; "if you want to treat a flu, you can't just treat one of its symptoms (…) We have to get at the main disease. Inflation, prices hikes and economic downturns are caused by the need to repair economic, political and social systems. When the system is fixed, the symptoms will be gone. We, therefore, must be bold enough to look at the root of the symptoms. Then treat the disease (…) Our economic syndrome is related to our political disorder. To me, without treating the political first, it's not possible treat the economic syndrome"[432]; "we have to create a situation where each and everyone of us can do our job efficiently and peacefully. We have to mind our own business. There's only one business that concerns every citizen, politics"[433]; "politics have to do with daily life of the people. Politics are not just about parliaments and newspaper publications. I came to understand that everyone can find a way to be political"[434]; "you can do politics inside your own home."[435] It was exactly this message that she repeated in 2010, in her first speech after release

[427] Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, transl. H.T. Lowe-Porter, The Modern Library, New York 1955, Chapter VI.

[428] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 243.

[429] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*…, p. 489.

[430] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 3 March 1996 (no. 21)*…, p. 477.

[431] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 221.

[432] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, pp. 457–458.

[433] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 408.

[434] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 320.

[435] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March (no. 23)*…, p. 512.

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from (last) house arrest: "don't hold the attitude that we have nothing to do with politics. I have said this since in the past … that … we can probably say we have nothing to with politics, but politics will come to do with you. We can't avoid it. Everything is politics (…) Women who [are] staying home cooking is also politics, because they have to work with the budget they have. So it's also politics. Struggling for your children well being is also politics. Everything is politics. No one can be avoided from politics. Those who say they have nothing to do with politics, they don't want to participate in politics are those who don't understand politics."[436]

Regarding Suu Kyi's understanding of democracy, elsewhere she presented democracy as both a concept and a system of government: "it's an –ism in terms of belief system and doctrine. There are several doctrines of democracy. It's a system of government in terms of practice. A system is a set of practices, as well as a given situation. We usually say we want a 'democratic system' because a system reflects a situation. It's democracy only when a set of democratic practices are in order. Democracy cannot happen just by promising democracy. Democracy cannot just exist on paper (…) Only democratic practices can make a democratic system. Everybody can speak of democracy as an 'ism'. It can be found in books. It's simply rhetoric to repeat 'we must believe in democracy, we must practice a democratic system.'"[437]

According to Hans-Bernd Zöllner, these and other vague analogues and metaphors showed that "the concept of democracy to be applied in Burma by Suu Kyi and her party was never clearly revealed, neither inside nor outside the country"; what mattered for both her domestic and international supporters was the person of Suu Kyi, not the concrete programme: "the 'love' of the Burmese people expressed for Suu Kyi included a strong wish for political change, but was not connected to any particular political programme (…) it was primarily the relationship between the leader and the people which counted, not any political programme" – hence "the political concept and the person representing it were identical."[438] This had serious consequences for all political actors involved: herself, the people of Myanmar, the military and the international community: "through the accepting the sanction imposed on her, she completely committed herself to the struggle for democracy on behalf the Burmese people"; and "at the same time she defined 'Burmese democracy' as a quality personified by her and tied to her fate" – this "double identification had a very strong impact on her relationship with the governments and the people inside and outside Myanmar," as it "almost completely prevented a rational discussion regarding the content of the issues related to the implementation of a new political system in Myanmar"; in other words "'democracy' – both inside and

[436] *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…

[437] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 136.

[438] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 221–223 and 545.

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outside the country – became defined by the rejection of everything SLORC – and later SPDC – tried to implement."[439]

According to Franziska Blum, Suu Kyi on the one hand "characterizes democracy as a state, in which the power is held *by* the people, on the other hand, the state is rather *for* the people"; in the latter case "negotiations mainly take place in order to obtain information that is essential to reach to *right* decision"; when "the decision-maker is able to differentiate between *good* and *bad* decisions, his or her responsibility is to communicate the need for the respective decision to the people."[440]Besides this morally-educational approach (if one has the knowledge, one would make a correct decision), however, Suu Kyi "forebears from the idea of democracy as a utopia (…) explains democracy as being the solution of various problems the country is facing. Particularly, democracy is the opposite of what the military government is doing (…) democracy is anything but the contrast of the system of the military regime."[441] For example, Suu Kyi was explaining to her listeners: "we have often urged you to do what you can do for the democratization of the country but we have never specifically told you what exactly you must do. We can only point out what should be done, what methods is good. To tell the people what to do in a centralized command system is not democrat."[442] And she was elaborating in one interview: "democracy is about your job and your children's education; it's about the house you live in and the food you eat; it's about whether or not you have to get permission from somebody before you visit your relatives in the next village; it's about whether or not you can reap on your own harvest and sell it to the person you want to sell it. The struggle is about their everyday life. Democracy is the right to discuss your political views with your friends and to have the right to sit down at the tea shop on the campus and talk about whether you want to."[443] Consequently, Suu Kyi's vision of democracy is "relatively vague, if not inconsistent, which is partly due to the fact of democracy being nothing but the military government. This corresponds to Luhmann's understanding of democracy as the 'illusionary component of all future

[439] Ibid., p. 226. According to him the consequences for international community were equally negative: "the appearance of a promoter of democracy, coming from the outside but with strong Burmese roots, on the political scene at a time of political crisis in Burma was a contingent phenomenon, defying generalizations. It created the impression that Burma could be part of a global trend. This was an optical illusion, because Burma lacked the preconditions for a transition to democracy that existed in other countries" (Ibid., p. 487).

[440] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, pp. 31–32.

[441] Ibid., pp. 33 and 48; Blum gives as an example Suu Kyi's Monywa speech (30 May 2003, the last one before Depayin massacre) and correctly applies Luhmann's words of democracy to Suu Kyi's concept.

[442] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 406.

[443] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 163.

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constitutions." [444] In other words, Suu Kyi's vision of democracy often comes close to an idyll, if not a utopia.

Suu Kyi called for – what Blum interpreted as – "democracy first": Suu Kyi "insist on the implementation of 'democracy first' and requests the people to contribute to and strive for this goal, which will be the beginning of solving all the problems."[445] Suu Kyi declared this almost openly: "let's work together to achieve democracy. Then we will be able to solve many problems"[446]; "letters like this are written to me very often: Please do something! So I would like to say the same thing again: please work together to get the Democracy very quickly so I can do something about this"[447]; "I must warn you now that we have to work really hard once the country becomes democratic. The fact that we have been laid back over the past thirty years tell us to multiply our efforts in the future. To catch up with other countries, it's not enough to walk faster but we must run after them. Be prepared for industriousness as soon as we achieve democracy. Christmas trees do not grow by themselves in a democratic state. Democracy will only enable us to utilize our capacity to the full. We can't say that social security for pensioners will happen overnight in a democratic system. I can only assure you that, if democratic system is properly maintained, the country will be heading for an age where civil servants can live in security and dignity all their life."[448] Finally, when she was commenting on U Kyi Maung's words ("democracy will be a long time in the pipe"), she elaborated her thoughts quite clearly: "I would like to clarify his point. He did not mean that our struggle would take a long time. Our struggle is not complete after we achieve democracy. It's just the first stage. After that we will have to work on the preservation and maintenance of the system. We will have to protect the system from being abused. Those who do not appreciate the essence of democracy are inimical to a democratic system (…) we will have to convince them that a democratic system has equal chances for democrats and non-democrats alike. This is a long-term job. It will take twenty to thirty years' time. Only when the new generation who are to be born in a democratic system reach an adult age, a democracy is entrenched. We do not mean that the system change itself will twenty to thirty years' time."[449]

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[444] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 33.

[445] Ibid.

[446] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 137; to be fair, however, Suu Kyi had also warned that achieving democracy is only the beginning: "we have repeatedly said democracy does not mean disappearance of all problems" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 20th November 1995*, in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014, p. 191.

[447] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 429.

[448] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 346.

[449] Ibid., pp. 347–348. Other examples include her warning that democracy would not automatically make everyone instantly rich: "shall we be able to provide such social security to the citizens as soon as our country becomes democratic? I must say 'No!' The immediate benefit of

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"Democracy first" was a paraphrase of Aung San's "independence first" slogan. Just like her father, who wanted to start building the country from getting rid of the British first, so Suu Kyi wanted to build democracy by removing the generals from power; according to Blum this proved that Suu Kyi used the heritage of her father selectively, interpreting, or creating it in her own unique way in order to gain motivation, unity and legitimization.[450] While agreeing with this good comparison, one may, however, look at the slogan "democracy first" from a different angle. Suu Kyi needed democracy to gain power. As every politician Suu Kyi wanted power, despite all her denials based on moral high ground.[451] And her road to power went through democracy, for she knew that she would win all elections by a landslide. Therefore it was only natural that she advocated democracy wholeheartedly: it was, simply, a very pragmatic choice, in the very footsteps of her father.

That said, one needs to try to interpret Suu Kyi's understanding of democracy beyond slogans, political pragmatism and metaphoric comparisons. Thus, on a more concrete level of political systems, Suu Kyi advocated acceptance and assimilation of Western rights-based understanding of democracy along Anglo-Saxon lines.[452] This can be seen in eight aspects: advocating rights-based democracy and a system of check and balances, putting system over individual, stressing the importance of party politics, calling for human rights and rule of law, emphasizing the role of creative (political) minority and empowering the people.

1) Suu Kyi called for democracy based on rights: "democracy means equality of rights or equal opportunities for all in economic sector"; "democracy does not mean making everyone equal. There are rich and poor in democratic societies. Yet their rights are equal."[453] To illustrate her ideas, Suu Kyi used popular Western metaphors of "level playing field" and "meritocracy": "only when there are equal rights for every one on a level playing field, we can say that there is justice. We cannot achieve justice by just talking the talk. Justice can be felt and people should be able to appreciate it. Telling them their situation is good will not do. Therefore our goal should be equal opportunities

democracy in terms of security is that we don't have to anticipate strangers knocking on our door in the middle of the night" (Ibid., p. 346).

[450] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, pp. 33 and 39.

[451] "We do not want power. We want democracy" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 43); "to us politics are not for position or power. We're doing politics with a conviction to improve our country"; "we desire truth and integrity more than position and power" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 65); "our problem is how to achieve a democratic system. We took part in the election for democracy, not for power. We will keep up our work. When the country is democratic our focus will be the preservation of the system" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 347).

[452] Suu Kyi "advocated for democracy on the grounds that it supports freedom more than any other political system" (Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 184).

[453] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 41.

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and rights for everyone. The notion that everyone must be equal is not possible. But we should provide equal opportunities to everyone as much as we can. On a level playing field, meritocracy enables one to develop his or her own course of life the way he or she wants it. Of course some people will always be left behind. In any society, people with better capacity for personal development ought to give a helping hand to disadvantaged citizens like their own siblings. We will be going ahead, you can come along with us on your own or be left behind – this kind of attitude is not welcome (…) We need to work hand-in-hand to achieve equal rights for everyone in our country."[454] Elsewhere, she linked the metaphor of level playing field with the need to correct the system: "as long as the system in not corrected, people won't be able to participate freely in politics. People should be able to participate freely in economic life, too. Provided a level playing field, people are more than willing to take part in the political and economic process"[455]; and with self-development: "on a level playing field, everybody should be able to seek their own progress on the merit of their education, wisdom and industry."[456]

2) Suu Kyi advocated for the system of check and balances. This – from the perspective of the Burmese political thought –was a novelty, for there was no tradition of external legal control of the people in power, there were only moral "checks and balances" – the village leaders in precolonial Burma (monks, village elders and *thugyis*) "were not technically responsible for their acts to the people although they had to be responsible to the needs and demands of the people. In other words, there were no legal restraints on them. Mores, local customs, and religious teachings might have guided them in their village administration rather than well-defined legal principles. External legal restraints on a man of authority seemed incongruous to the Burmese public. All that would be expected of him was to possess the six attributes of a true leader: vigilance, assiduity, sympathy, patience, sagacity, and helpful admonition and act accordingly."[457]

Now Suu Kyi called for establishing such "external legal restrains" out of several reasons, both systemic and moral. The systemic justification is clearly along Western, rights-based, liberal lines: "a democratic government cannot do whatever they want, not just in monetary policy, as they are being watched by the whole country. Some may say it's not practical for any people to watch their government all the time. It's true. But there are opposite parties. The main responsibility of any opposition party is to watch to incumbent government all the time and be critical about it"[458]; "there are limitations to what a government can do in democracy. A democratic government cannot do what they want in any matter. There are checks and balances by the opposition parties to ensure what the government in power is doing is in line with what people want. Democratic

[454] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 244.
[455] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 384.
[456] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 466.
[457] Maung Maung Gyi, *Burmese Political Values*…, p.164.
[458] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 298.

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governments, therefore, must be grateful both to the people who have elected them and to the opposition parties that are keeping them in check. A democratic government therefore is a government that must act in gratefulness."[459] She also invoked the example of check and balances in speaking about the need for the freedom of press: "the freedom of press does not allow cover-ups for long. In that sense the press can be considered to preserve the main columns of democracy (…) the freedom of press checks and balances the authorities and educate the people at the same time (…) they are considered to be the fourth column, which is conducive, as well as testament to any democratic system."[460]

Suu Kyi's understanding of check and balances – a moral one – is a microcosm of Suu Kyi's political thought, which situates Western ideas within moral, Buddhist reasoning about politics. Hence, where she was elaborating on the issue of power, she mixed the concept of check and balances with the Buddhist understanding of the nature of human beings as inherently flawed (her statement here is interesting given the fact that usually she was much more optimistic concerning the capacity of people to overcome their flawed nature)[461] – "we need a system [that] does not depend on whether an individual wants to do what is right or not. The system should have checks and balances that prevent him from going the wrong path"[462]; "power is not necessarily good or bad on its own. It depends how it is exercised. In any country, in my opinion, people are the soul arbiter of power. Power is constructive when a government entrusted with power by the people uses it the right way. Human beings are not above weaknesses and flaws. Thus it is important that government power should always be tightly checked by the people. When they find someone who can be trusted with that power, they can hand it over to that person: 'Form a government, exercise this power on our behalf, we will be watching you.' If that person uses the power the right way, he may remain in office. If not, the people must have the right tell him: 'Enough is enough.'"[463] Suu Kyi presented this logic even more clearly when talking about corrupt politicians: "there will always be politicians who deceive people for power in any political system. Checks and balances in a democratic system aim to control such politicians. You can't hide your power craze. One day or another it will reveal itself. People usually notice politicians who tend

[459] Ibid.

[460] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 154; yet she mixed it with a very Buddhist moral approach: "there should not contain anything about defamation. And these respected newspapers should not do something like attacking a person's dignity, spreading false news intentionally on someone. In democratic countries, such news are even forbidden" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 23)*…, p. 212).

[461] Walton suggests that this pessimism of Suu Kyi was "more of a targeted response to the former military government's assertion along these lines" (Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 182).

[462] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 78.

[463] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 292.

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to forget their promises once they are voted into the office. If the people themselves do not see them, other political parties and the media as the watchdogs will see them. There is freedom of the press in a democratic system."[464] And she dotted the "i" when, following the classical Buddhist reasoning about politics, she presented democracy as a system that helps the people, and especially the politicians, to upgrade themselves morally: "democracy is a system that acknowledges the imperfection in human beings. Democracy aims to reduce imperfect behaviours of humans in the government so as to minimalize damages to a country. In every age, in every country, there will always be politicians whose words are not matched by their actions. We have to try to bring about a system that can check and control such politicians. In a democracy, a politician who has lost trust from the people won't be elected again. People have eyes and ears. They will be watching the politicians whose words speak of their own selfless sacrifice while collecting more diamonds for their wives and daughters. We don't have to fear such politicians in a democratic society."[465]

3) She put the system over the individual. Replying to a question of what is more important, the system or the leadership, the was firmly for the former, mixing the Western reserve towards individuals in politics[466] with Buddhist negative opinion about human beings: "the system is more important. I said this because the leadership is made of human beings. Human nature is liable to moral decay. The purpose of a good system is to curb this human tendency. Our ears often brim with the word democracy. Democracy is a system of government that is designed to control human tendencies for moral decay. People do not dare to approach someone who has too much power or who is in a very high official position. Very powerful people tend to get too big for their boots as they lose touch with the people. Then they do what they want to do, without taking into account of what people really want. Sometimes they do know what people want but

[464] She continued with a real life example: "if a minister, who only had a modest house before the election, gets rich all of a sudden and buys ten mansions and ten luxury cars… he will be questioned. In a democratic system, such issue might even end up in the parliament. The opposition party will demand to know how he had acquired his wealth. He cannot claim, 'I've got windfall from my wife's chicken farm.' He has to be accountable" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 381).

[465] Ibid.

[466] Focusing on individuals in politics is not advocated within Western political science. Focusing on institutions, rules, norms, etc. is much more expected and appreciated. There are several arguments in favour of that, but the most important one is probably that transformative developments such as globalization or democratization have created a pattern where individuals matter much less than the rules and norms of the institution they work for or represent. This is certainly true in democracies where systems of check and balances have been intended to prevent a degeneration of authority from power-thirsty individuals, e.g., see: Robert Keohane, *Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond*, in: *Neorealism and Its Critics,* ed. R.O. Keohane, Columbia University Press, New York 1986, p. 198.

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they simply don't care. This is why I said system is more important than leadership. A political scientist says: 'A democratic system in necessary due to human weakness. Democracy will succeed due to human strength.' As such, every effort should be made to achieve a democratic system we need. I believe that we have the strength and capacity for our vision."[467] On another occasion, she repeated that the system is more important, again deploying the moral understanding of politics: "some people ask which is more important: the actors in a system or the system itself. I would say the system. This relates to an earlier question which asks if there will be power-hungry people in a democratic system. There will be people racing for power in any system. A good system can keep human imperfections in check. When we talk about a capable person, it doesn't mean that he or she is capable all the time. The capacity of a person is judged by how capable he or she is in a given circumstances. Some people say that a good revolutionary is not necessarily a good statesman. The person may be an effective and efficient radical during the revolution but he may not be as effective or efficient in state building. It's important that a person is able to adjust his or her action to suit the circumstances."[468] And she gave an example of Churchill who was a bad person ("was reputed to have been very short-tempered and arrogant"), but the system held him in check ("yet his temper and arrogance were kept in check by the system"); the fact that he accepted the limitations of democratic rule granted him and the country success: "one of the reasons he won was that he had earned the voters' respect for gracefully accepting his post-war electoral defeat"; this represents a model for Burma: "therefore we have to bring about a system where capable people are encouraged to be part of the political process."[469] She continued along these lines elsewhere, making a point of connection between a good system of governance and well-being of a country: "a country excels only when her political system is good. An outstanding individual cannot do it alone. Human beings tend to be more or self-oriented and egoistic. We need to rein in such human tendencies with a good system (…) Similarly we the Burmese people must have the power to correct our elected leaders. Political power must be in the hands of the people."[470] Here one can see that the most important aspect in this systemic dominance is the moral underpinnings – the system help the people to behave correctly (morally rightly): "we need to build up country men and women who can work freely and responsibly (…) We need to try and get as soon as possible a system for our country which can be free and right to nurture the country men and women who can freely, courageously work and act."[471]

4) She advocated party politics, calling it "vital for a democratic system," rejecting the Tatmadaw's claim to conduct "national politics" (implicitly good, in comparison

[467] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 174.
[468] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, pp. 384–385.
[469] Ibid., p. 385.
[470] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 175.
[471] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 436.

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to bad party politics)[472] and expressing Western understanding of importance of party politics: "a genuine democratic system requires a strong party system. If there is only one party, that cannot be a democracy."[473]

5) In a classical liberal democratic way she linked policymaking with human rights, though she justified it using Burmese Buddhist comparisons (*devas*) – "politics have much to do with conditions and the status of one's country. So do human rights. There is no distinction between politics and human rights. If we are into genuine politics, the affairs of states and citizens, we are into human rights. It makes no sense to say 'We don't do human rights. We only serve citizens.' Because citizens are human beings. The claim 'We only serve citizens, not their human rights,' makes me muse 'Are citizens brahma devas?' (…) If humans are more intelligent and more virtuous than devas, it is likely that we are more mindful than them because human life can never be as luxury as that of devas (…) if our people wish to do genuine politics, do human rights politics."[474] Respecting human rights (such as one's dignity) is also a moral duty for the rulers: "a person in authority must not do what he wants. He must do what is proper. If he is doing what he wants, he should keep in mind that people never forget their grievance. This issue has also to do with democracy or lack of it. In democratic societies, impolite personnel who get[s] negative feedbacks and complaints will be subject to law. That's why we need democracy. Just this morning a reporter asks, 'You keep talking about democracy. What do you want from it?' We want a life in security and dignity. That's it. We don't have to refer to tomes on democracy to answer such a question. We want our people to live in a secure life. Then I was asked 'Is there a distinction between oriental democracy and occidental democracy. What's your take?' I said, 'No two democratic systems are alike, be it in the East or in the West. But people everywhere want to lead a secure and dignified life. They want a system where they are treated as human beings (…) people should teach the authorities how human beings should be treated.'"[475]

6) Along these lines, she advocated the rule of law as the necessary condition for peace: "rule of law is a perquisite for peace. Prevalence of law and order doesn't mean that citizens are repressed into silence for fear of reprisal. Our peaceful living is ensured

[472] "I think that those who make a distinction between "national politics" and "party politics" and treating the latter as something inferior do not believe in democracy" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 93). It is interesting to note, however, that once Suu Kyi achieved the position of political power, she also started to claim (implicitly) that she is conducting a kind of national politics, not a party one: "we will never do things based on the narrow interest of an organization, an individual or in our self-interest. If we do not stand on such a principled position, we will never achieve national reconciliation" (*State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary*…).

[473] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, pp. 93–94.

[474] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 241.

[475] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 343.

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only when we trust in the law and the justice system of the country"[476]; and as a fundament of social justice: "whether a law is just or unjust depends on the intention of the law. The aim of making a law is to protect the interests of the citizens (…) I find it hard to understand that some people are indifferent to repressive laws. It's an insult to stereotype a people. I believe that people are law-abiding as long as the law treats them justly. Once people come to realize that some of the laws are not in their interests, their respect for the legal system in undermined. We keep calling for rule of law not only because it protects the people. Law is respected by the people under the rule of law."[477]

7) Another aspect of her attempts to assimilate the Western concepts is emphasis on the role of creative minority that would lead the country into progress and democracy: "democratic transitions all over the world have always happened when the minority managed to inspire the majority in their struggle for rule of law, equality and peace."[478]

8) Finally, the last one is her endeavour to empower the people politically in the classical understanding of democracy as the will of the people. This trait is often present is her political thought, though usually as a slogan: "we need to listen to the voice of the people. We cannot ignore them"[479]; "a political arrangement that does not reflect people's desire won't last forever"[480]; "we do believe in the people"[481]; "the main strength of a democratic movement is people"[482]; "as long as we don't up with the answer 'the first priority is the people' we will not progress"[483]; "it's clear where the power should go. To the people"[484]; "we just want to change the system that does not care for the people(…) The talks on power must take place in people's context"[485]; "if a constitution is not inscribed in the heart of the people, it's no more than a piece of paper. To really serve their duty, people will have to be given a chance (for political participation)"[486]; "we never thought of preaching the people. We don't consider ourselves ahead of the people, and we are not in a position to preach them. It is us who should be preached by the people"[487]; "the capacity of the people is key to a country's success"[488]; "regardless of excellence in warfare and regardless of the sharpness of the weapons used, all the

[476] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 4 February 1996 (no. 16)*…, p. 358.

[477] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 379.

[478] She was aware that it would take time: "yet a minority's struggle alone will take a long time to achieve their cause" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 322).

[479] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 180.

[480] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 403.

[481] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 458.

[482] Ibid., p. 459.

[483] Ibid., p. 460.

[484] *Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 43.

[485] Ibid.

[486] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 315.

[487] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 3 March 1996 (no. 21)*…, p. 476.

[488] Ibid.

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swords and spears will become blunt if we cannot win the hearts of the people and if we do not rely on the strength of the people"[489]; "our main strength lies in the hearts of the people and their strength."[490]

These slogans, however, reveal one of the most important traits in her political thought: a belief in an individual, a conscious individual who is an agent of change; s/he just needs to be empowered: "we have to make all the people VIPs. This is not impossible. People become important when we are under people's rule and influence. Then we have to treat people like VIPs. If there is no rule by the people, if we do not treasure the people, the people will not be on the VIP list."[491] Therefore she needed to make people awaken, realize their potential: "our people have intelligence, eyes and ears. You can't shut their eyes and ears as they always learn what they should know"[492]; "first and foremost we rely on our internal strength. We rely on the strength of our people. We believe that we Burmese people ourselves must make efforts to see our vision come true"[493]; "we cannot just sit and accept everything. We have to think, reason and question about it (…) We need to question everything why it has to happen like that. We need to question again and again why in our country, in Myanmar, there is no democracy at all. If we can find answer why we do not have democracy, we will be able to find the answer how we can get democracy quickly. Don't just sit and accept. In every case, use your head to think and try to find the answer together how we can make this situation better."[494] This investment in human capital was necessary for the country's development: "even if we do not have natural resources, Burma can get rich if we do things properly with a good

[489] These words are quotation from "a famous poet" (though she did not mention which one), *70th Union Day Celebrated in Panglong. Unofficial Translation of the Speech Delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the 70th Anniversary Union Day Ceremony Held in Panglong*, "New Light of Myanmar", Shan State, 13.02.2017, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/70th-union-day-celebrated-in-panglong/ (access: 19.07.2018).

[490] Ibid.

[491] Suu Kyi continued with lecturing the people: "we say we do not like the VIPs getting VIP treatments but when we are with them, we droop our head saying, 'Yes…Yes.' How can our words match our action. I am not happy with this attitude. I don't like anyone cringing in front of me. It's tasteless. (…) if you are in the habit of cowering, I would like to urge you to stop it. We can treat each other on equality terms in respect. We need not sit on one another. Everybody is the same. I like to be treated equally in reciprocal *metta*. It's very pleasant to be with the people who deal with you on the basis of equality (…) Respect is not the same as obsequiousness. Respect is based on *metta* and respecting someone respectful is our way of showing how much we value him or her. If we value others, others will values us. Obsequiousness is the act of debasing oneself. Please do not cower. We have to keep in mind that treating each other with respect is good and fawning is bad. We should have a small pride that I am one of the people who will be a VIP someday," in: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues*…, pp. 478–479.

[492] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 316.

[493] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 383.

[494] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 431.

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will. Our country is rich in natural resources (…) if the system remains unchanged, no amount of natural resources will help. Do not rely on natural resources, just rely on people's strength."[495] As it is this human development that would make the country progress: "all the ladies and gentlemen, who are going to save the country from falling into the cliff, are here. They are the citizens of the country (…) One person cannot save [it]. A group cannot save [it]. Only then whole people of the nation can save the country (…) Who can do it? Only the peoples can. The system which includes all the peoples of the country can save the country from falling into the cliff (…) Therefore, if we don't want the country fallen into the cliff, we need to set up a system that includes all the people (…) In our country there is no 'one person,' who can save the country."[496]

Naturally, this empowering approach was necessitated by political circumstances – popular support was Suu Kyi's main asset (alongside with foreign backing) in her struggle against the generals. She knew that is was her primary political interest to awaken/revolt the people as she has been the unquestioned, popular leader[497]; therefore it was easy for Suu Kyi to say words like "a person who is not held in high regards by his own people shouldn't be leading them."[498]

Nevertheless, these empowering calls of Suu Kyi are important as something more than political tactics; on intellectual level they represent an attempt to advocate Western ideas (here: popular participation of the people in political process) into non-Western cultural ground using local vocabulary and reasoning. This can be clearly seen in this argument: "a government which acknowledges the gratitude of its people understands that the people are their benefactors. What's good about a democratic system is that the government, being elected by the people, needs not be explained who their benefactors are. They know if, of course. In a non-democratic system, it's sometimes difficult to explain why people are the benefactors of a government? We have to make our country democracy first so you will see politicians begging for votes saying 'Sir, Madam, you are our benefactors.' A country's major strength is its people, its human capital. No country can progress without acknowledging this fact. An individual, an organization, a government must keep in mind that people are their mothers, and people are their fathers."[499] Along these lines she was convincing the audience that each one of them can do politics, at least once democracy is achieved: "one needs not be a member of any political party to do politics (…) There must be a democratic system for the people

[495] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 461.

[496] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*…, pp. 488–489.

[497] "We already won the heart and mind of the people (…) People continue to support us. I even think that because of repression we have earned more sympathetic support from the public" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*..., p. 383).

[498] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 291

[499] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 377.

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to be able to 'participate freely in a political process.'"[500] What is interesting here is that people's participation in politics is not necessarily in line with traditional Buddhist approach where power could not reside with the people as the people are immoral; yet here Suu Kyi, as in other places, enlarged the scope for popular participation in politics: she went against the tradition by using traditional arguments and logic – itself an intellectually impressive attempt!

Aside from this eightfold Westernization, Suu Kyi's ideas about democracy are scattered around her articles and speeches. The other concrete political programme that can be found in her speeches is the call for a limited role of the government in public affairs: "the best state is a state that is not felt at all by the citizens. That kind of state is not anarchical. If citizens cannot feel the state, that does not necessary mean that their country is in disorder. If a government does its job efficiently, properly and unostentatiously, the good of the citizens is accomplished without a stress as they won't feel the state which is manipulating of ruling them. The government that is calm and discreet cannot be felt (…) All has been done by the state but you won't feel that the state exists. Therefore the best is the state that is not felt. The second best state is the state that is praised by its citizens. The third best state is the state feared by its citizens. The worst state is the state despised by its citizens. So (…) I don't mind not having the state that is not felt, I am happy as long as I get the state that is praised by the citizens."[501] She gave an example of issuing passports as a way how effective state works.[502]

These are, however, issues of less importance. The first and foremost aspect of Suu Kyi's understanding of democracy is that this is a moral vision. The struggle for democracy represents for Suu Kyi a moral undertaking based on an individual agency. Democracy, then, is a choice of free people who understand that democracy is the best option for them, both externally (establishing effective administrative system) and, more importantly, internally: as a way of self-improvement and making this world a better place to live. This moral approach necessitates accent on unity and discipline (see: further in this book). Perhaps the most elaborate example of this Suu Kyi's moral vision of democracy comes from her lengthy interview from mid-1996: "first of all, what we would like is vision. We would like the people to see and understand why a political system is tied up with our daily lives. Why we cannot ignore politics and just concentrate on economics, as the authorities would like us to do. We want them to understand that our struggle for democracy is a struggle for our everyday life, that it's not removed. It's not something that you do when you have a bit of free time, or when you feel like it. You have to work at it all the time, because it affects your life all the time. You can never separate the political system of a country from the way in which

[500] Ibid., p. 384.
[501] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 1 October 1995 (no. 4)*…, pp. 110–111.
[502] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 435.

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you conduct you daily life. This is basically the spirit that we want – an awareness that what we are struggling for is not some distant goal or ideal. What we are struggling for is a change in our everyday lives. We want freedom from fear and want. There are people today who enjoy materially secure lives, but they can never be sure when this will be taken from them. There must be a sense of security that as long as we're not doing harm to others, as long as we are not infringing the laws which were brought about so that we should not harm each other, we should be able to rest secure in the knowledge that we ourselves will not be harmed. That the authorities cannot remove you from your job, kick you out of your house, throw you in prison, or have you executed, if you have done nothing to warrant such actions."[503] Thus, in this regard, democracy "as the political system is based on a concept of truth and the public good, which the people have to be convinced of."[504]

In this moral approach, the role of a free individual is crucial, as encapsulated in Suu Kyi's slogan "everybody is essential."[505] Exactly as in 1988/1989, when Suu Kyi tried to awaken/rebel the people to make them stand to fight for democracy, now she repeated this message emphasising the role of every person in making a difference by his/her own behaviour and by giving example to others (and, preferably, influencing them to follow suit): "what we can do to achieve democracy depends on individual"[506]; "be critical on the issues that call for our criticism. You should also encourage your friends and neighbours not to give in to unfair practices"; "do your bets in your capacity. It's no use complaining with mouth and conforming with your hands. It's no use to encourage bad practices directly or indirectly. You ask, 'Is it enough to support a democratic cause'. It's not enough just to give your moral support, even though public support is very important. Some people say that the majority is doing nothing but giving their moral support. It's the minority who are shaking and moving. I did not mean that moral support from the majority was not effective. Even spreading *metta* every evening goes a long way. But we have to go one step further"[507]; "one can do in one's capacity"; "every individual, teacher or civil servant, can do something for democracy in their capacity (…) we can do many things (for democracy)."[508] This is a vision of practice of democracy "achieved by an improvement of the Buddhist spirit" of the people[509] – of each and every one – which would in turn translate into greater, social good.

[503] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 116.

[504] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 32.

[505] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 90.

[506] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 317.

[507] Ibid.

[508] Ibid. pp. 317–319.

[509] "Thus, she includes practical aspects of the practice of Buddhist principles, such as *metta* in her speeches" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 41).

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Accordingly, the struggle for democracy is in everyone's best interest: "we need to make everyone understand why we are working for democracy. Everybody has their own self-interest. This is not to blame. However we should point out to one another that one's pursuit for self-interest often has implications for public interest"; otherwise, egoism would pay back and be self-defeating: "some people tend to be more interested in their own rights. On the other hand, there are also people who are afraid of having to stand up for their own rights. They argue that they will suffer more if they speak out. If they don't, they will suffer more and more. If we are just sitting and doing nothing the change we desire will be slow in coming"; Suu Kyi also strongly rejected scepticism about individual's agency. Replying to a question that an action of individual does not matter, she said "I told her, if everyone thinks like you, my action wouldn't move a thing. But individuals who think that they can make a significant contribution to the society multiply into hundreds to thousands, our action will make a difference. I want to give you the same message. Don't think that you are alone and your action is not effective. We will prevail when individual action snowballs to influence 45 million people in this country."[510] That is why on another occasion she called for helping political prisoners,[511] refusing to buy calendars (the purchase of which was enforced by military authorities)[512] and she was giving examples from everyday life of lawyers, teachers, parents, students, civil servants, public health workers (doctors, nurses), peasants and other how to make a change.[513] And, in almost open defiance of the authorities she called the people to cease to be slaves giving example of the *thakins* and her father: "whether a person becomes a slave is up to the person. It doesn't have to do with anyone. It doesn't depend

[510] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 320–322.

[511] "I would like our people to stand by political prisoners (…) if you do not dare to do politics yourself, you have to back those who dare (…) We will get to our destination sooner if we have such courage" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 279); "in Burma today, many people are afraid to visit families of political prisoners in case they too are called in by the authorities and harassed. Now, you could show active compassion by coming to the families or political prisoners and offering them practical help and by surrounding them with love, compassion and moral support. This is what we are encouraging" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 43–44).

[512] "I don't understand this at all. Can we not all say in one voice 'We don't buy calendars.' I think we do need a unified stance. Launch a letter campaign against the departments selling calendars. Can we not question if the calendars sales are legal, or by what law we are supposed to buy calendars. Shall we give it a little thought (…) Come on! We will comply to activities that are lawful. One is not above reproach if one is persuaded by coercion (…) I for one would urge all the people not to buy calendars. If we all do not buy calendars, will they fire us all? (…) You ought stand firm and say, 'We cannot buy calendar because the sales is not legal.' Only then this issue will be dealt with" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, pp. 269–270).

[513] Examples of these attitudes than can make a difference (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 319–323).

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on authoritarianism. You may be treated badly under authoritarianism but you aren't a slave if you do not consider yourself a slave. So, slavishness is a matter of attitude. (…) it's too easy to say that we are being enslaved by authoritarianism. We need to look at ourselves too. Are we slaves because we are behaving too servile? We need to think about it (…) It's up to your attitude whether you are a slave or not. Please do not blame others conveniently. If one has servile spirit, one will remain a slave. Please adopt a thakin spirit. Everyone is a thakin in a democracy. Please adopt a democratic spirit. Thakin spirit is the same as democratic spirit. Authoritarianism won't survive where each and everyone has a thakin spirit, where there is no more slavish attitude. Please do away with all forms of slavishness."[514]

This change of one's attitude, however, requires uplifting one's morality – "as the saying goes, iron destroys iron with the rust; the problems will be solved only when we correct ourselves."[515] Thus, she was telling her audience that they should improve their morality in order to achieve democracy: "we are not at peace with ourselves. This means we harbour too much mutual grudge and mutual suspicion. We need to work hard so that we can live in our own homes in peace and dignity. Again this has to do with democracy"[516]; that everyone can build democracy "democratic principles should apply to everyone. 'Everyone is fit for democracy,'" but those who think otherwise should be "reformed" – "in a democracy we need to try to reform those who want to 'be clever.'"[517] First of all, however, one should reform oneself: "next we have to be upright. To be upright doesn't mean you have to be upright with others. One should be upright with oneself. Think about this: You don't do what [you] should do because there is nothing you can do in your capacity or because there is nothing you want to do. Everyone can chip in. Many things can be done. Even when you cannot help a good cause in person, your verbal encouragement can give an effective moral support to it. The answer to what we can do to achieve democracy, therefore, has to be the will (for democracy)."[518] As one of the analysts commented on Suu Kyi's moral ideas of democracy: "what is evident is Suu Kyi's vision of democracy is the way she equates the political notion with a model for the ethical reinvention of the self"; for her "correct democratic practice began with the Buddhist virtue of selflessness and an understanding of *annica* (impermanence), which stated that (…) the effects of individual action would remain"; the message for citizens is that "they needed to cultivate a capacity for sustained mental strife and physical endurance."[519]

[514] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, pp. 290–291.
[515] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 436.
[516] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 129.
[517] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 20 November 1995*…, p. 191.
[518] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 320.
[519] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 291.

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Thus, in order to build democracy one needs own self-improvement. Suu Kyi was clear about it when she presented her "four foundations for success" that were clearly along the Buddhist lines, evoking the Noble Eightfold Path: "the four foundations for success are the right will, the right attitude, diligence and wisdom. Beginning from the will, we have to adopt an attitude to do what we can. Some people do adopt the right attitude but their fervour is short-lived. It's not effective to adopt the right attitude that lasts a day after you leave this place. That's where diligence comes in. To keep the right attitude or mental outlook we need to have diligence. When we have the right will, the right attitude and diligence, we need to arm ourselves with the wisdom for our pursuit. Wisdom does not mean what has been taught at school or a degree that can be bought. Wisdom is the ability to use one's own mental faculties for critical reflection."[520] And it is the moral uplift of the people that is necessary to allow Burma's modernization: "in our efforts to raise our country to international level, our spirit and morale need to be uplifted to international level first. Please believe in yourself. I'd like to end here by urging you to collectively contribute to building a system that will provide you with self-confidence."[521]

6. Educating the People

Education was the second most important theme of Suu Kyi's speeches. She emphasized the decline of the education system in Burma various times; she linked education with wisdom, in a traditional Buddhist manner. And, most importantly, she embarked on her quest "to educate the people"[522] to make them see what is best for them.

The topic of education appeared 112 times during Suu Kyi's twenty five rallies over the gate between September 1995 and April 1996.[523] Suu Kyi received many letters concerning educational problems of Burma and she readily commented on drawbacks of school system in her country, such as, among others, underfunding, corruption and low level of teaching. In presenting the dire conditions of education system, she often appealed to people's personal dignity ("we need educational reforms in this country," otherwise "we will only produce mediocre graduates who are qualified only for trishaw paddling"),[524] to their national pride ("if we do not have education, we won't be able to reach the level of a developed country")[525] combined with overt criticism of the regime's politics ("a country's international standard cannot be measured in terms of

[520] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 320.

[521] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 139.

[522] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 66.

[523] My own estimation, based on material from: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014.

[524] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 62.

[525] Ibid.

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the numbers of hotels and bridges, it has to be measured in terms of education"),[526] and with pragmatic calls for reforms for Burma's good ("a country can progress only when there is good education"[527]; "in any country one always has to be after education. If one ignores education just because the country is in bad shape, his or her country will suffer more [and] the vicious circle will continue. We should be after education whether a country is in good shape or bad shape"[528]; "there is no country that can boast economic success without a decent education system"; "without a good education system, it's not possible to uplift an economy")[529] and with her stress on modernization[530] (according to her, the higher living standard of people meant "mainly health and education"[531]; "a modern nation has to have efficient public transportation, quality educational system, efficient distribution of electricity and water")[532] understood in a very Buddhist way (meeting one's most important ends): "only when our people's basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, and for health care, education and public transport are met, we can call our nation a modern nation."[533]

Moreover, Suu Kyi often deployed her schoolteacher-style philosophical aphorisms (or platitudes), like: "the point of education is to prepare one to be able to face life"[534]; "being educated means having wisdom for a sound judgement in every matter"[535]; "myopic greed can derail education and wisdom that can have long-term benefits"[536]; "wisdom has nothing to do with a university education"[537]; "having a degree does not make one any wiser"[538]; "education always has its values. A degree is not the same as an education. To be graduated is one thing, to be educated is another"[539]; "we need to be

[526] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 90; elsewhere she followed this line: "for some people building modern hotels and buying modern cars might mean 'modernization.' In our understanding, a modern nation has to have a living standards that can meet international norms. Living standard means the living standard of the common people (…) not that of a group of people." She then talked about importance of such issues as electricity, transportation or telephones (*Aung San Suu Kyi's First Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, pp. 40–41).

[527] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 72.

[528] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 15 October (no. 8)*…, p. 190.

[529] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 245.

[530] Suu Kyi wanted "to implement an education system comparable to Western countries" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 28).

[531] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 9)*…, p. 211.

[532] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 63.

[533] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 41.

[534] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 97.

[535] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 134.

[536] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 63.

[537] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 130.

[538] Ibid., p. 134.

[539] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 462.

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an education wanting nation"[540]; students "should study hard to earn wisdom that will guide them with the righteous way of living not only through this life but also in future lives."[541]

Following the traditional Buddhist way, Suu Kyi linked education with wisdom and morality[542]: "education means both secular and spiritual education"[543]; "education doesn't mean the education you can learn from a book, but the education you can learn from life. An educated person is one who is well-schooled both in secular and spiritual education. Therefore education has to do with virtue and ethics"[544]; "education should arm one with both technical knowhow, that can be used to make a living, and wisdom, that can be used to face life. Thus schools should provide both knowledge and know how"[545]; "if there is virtue, our culture will improve a great deal, for a virtuous person is a cultured person. Culture does not mean being sweet to those who can give you prestige, favour or position (…) a virtuous person will never upset, calumniate or attack others. Our culture improves with our virtues (…) Education has a lot to do with virtues"[546]; "to earn also means to broaden your knowledge. Earning a degree by rote learning does not amount to a good education. A genuinely educated person must be able to analyse a given situation astutely. Based on your own analysis, you must be able to judge what can be done about the situation (…) You should seek education for critical reasoning. The youth should not think that the point of education is to make money after their graduation. Parents must not encourage this attitude. (…) you have nurture the love for knowledge in your children. You have to encourage them to seek an education that will enable them to face life's challenges. Money will not protect your children for life. Gone is a magic trick in your possession, so says our traditional wisdom. Money can disappear overnight for several reasons. The eight laws of *lokadhamma* means that you cannot be perpetually rich. Even when you are materially wealthy, you may be mentally poor. Only the wise and educated can help oneself in a state of unhappiness, which is mental poverty. Parents who would like to see to their children's wellbeing must encourage their education."[547] Elsewhere she also exalted virtues of wisdom, in a sermon-style speech: "wisdom may not be a guarantee for a good job, nor prevent you from the misery of *dukkha*. We are not above the law of impermanence. Nor above the

[540] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 10 March 1996 (no. 22)*…, p. 489.

[541] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 463.

[542] Suu Kyi "defines education by the obtainment of both secular knowledge and spiritual wisdom" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 29).

[543] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 172.

[544] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 87.

[545] Ibid., p. 98.

[546] Ibid., p. 87.

[547] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, pp. 344–345.

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eight worldly concerns. We may be poor. We may be rich. But the wise can withstand both the stress of suffering and strain of pleasure. The wise can endure suffering, be it in prison or in poverty. Why? They have the *dhamma*. Fortitude for suffering is a major quality of a wise person. The wise also can endure the burden of pleasure or wealth as they are not tempted by bribery if they are genuinely wise. And they won't abuse any prerogative of power. That's why I mean by endurance for the burden of wealth. Some people may have fortitude for poverty, but they might easily give in to the lure of gifts, money or position. Such people cannot resist wealth. Frankly speaking even some of us in the movement who are able to endure suffering might become morally corrupt when they are in power, when the country becomes democratic. That also means incapacity to bear the brunt of wealth. Therefore we have to seek education and wisdom so that we can withstand both the burdens of poverty and wealth. A person who seeks, who knows, and possesses wisdom will not commit any malefaction for he or she, be rich or poor, understands the consequences of his or her actions."[548] Thus, in Suu Kyi's vision, both types of education (secular and spiritual) are important ("the education includes the promotion of both spiritual and worldly abilities"), but the spiritual one is more important ("the worldly aspect is subordinated to the spiritual"), because "according to Suu Kyi, worldly transformations, such as the transformation of the political culture, are achieved by a spiritual revolution."[549]

This is how education is linked with politics. In her speech in 2010 she declared openly: "politics is learning. We must learn. I said repeatedly when I talked to young people that I don't believe in such thing as smart or dull people, good or bad people, I only believe in whether one is teachable or not teachable. I do believe our people are teachable. It's not enough for us to only desire (for something). We need to know how we are going to get what we want, and how to get it in the right way."[550] Thus, it is the political importance of education that first and foremost matters for Suu Kyi: "the educated person is the centre of Suu Kyi's concept of democracy"[551] and it is the centre of her political philosophy in general: "the pivot of her philosophy remains an individual, an individual who is assured and discerning enough not be swept by the dictates of a military state but buoys himself with his own convictions"; at the same time, "the individual is not a divisive force but is conscious of the intrinsic relationship of interdependence which ties him to encompassing communities," yet, "he remains the one who is the driving force in shaping the society which surrounds him"; for these reasons "Suu Kyi has consistently tried to draw out this individual in her speeches to the Burmese

[548] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 463.
[549] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 51.
[550] *Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…
[551] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 28.

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people."[552] Hence, the goal of education "is the obtaining of wisdom which enables the people to deliver judgments" – for education "is necessary to recognize whether a politician's decisions are proper."[553] In other words, people need education to achieve wisdom that allows them to make the right decisions: once they are educated, they would know what is best for them – and that is democracy. That is why education plays a vital part in the struggle for democracy ("we have to promote education in our efforts for systemic change")[554] – "it is because of this need for individual-driven social change that education emerges as such a critical cornerstone of Suu Kyi's philosophy."[555] Given the fact that in "the centre of Suu Kyi's concept of democracy is the educated, self-responsible person," logically, "a revolution or reform of education – both spiritual and secular – is required as prerequisite for achieving democracy" – in a way even "Suu Kyi's slogan may be: Education first, Democracy second!"[556]According to this vision, "education is the precondition for any kind of development and democratization," hence, "the efforts for systemic change particularly include the promotion of education"; Suu Kyi "herself adopts the role of a transformational teacher in order to provide both information and motivation" – "through the speeches, she promotes the concept of an active citizenship, i.e. thinking, questioning and criticizing individuals by allowing inclusion and participation of the people in the speeches. The speeches as such are part of Suu Kyi's revolution of education, in which Suu Kyi plays the role of a model, representing and exemplifying the goals of education and the role of a teacher, who explains concepts theoretically."[557]

This is clearly seen in Suu Kyi's message to the students: "the primary study of any student is to be educated. If you want help a democratic [system], you first have to earn a genuine education. In the quest for education, students should understand politics, whether they do politics or no[t]. Only when students know politics this country can progress (…) Students who aim for a democratic system today must understand and study politics (…) Read literature that can give you general knowledge. Tune in into radio broadcasts that can widen your views. I don't agree with those who say we should

[552] "Thus her reference to individual endeavour in the story of Zenaka or her allusion to an individual's social responsibility in her first public speech after release in 2010" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice*…, p. 327).

[553] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, pp. 28 and 40; "democracy also meant the citizens being adequately educated: educated not merely in terms of university degree" but also in virtues (Sengupta, *The Female Voice*…, p. 291).

[554] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 63.

[555] Sengupta, *The Female Voice*…, p. 327.

[556] Blum points out to vagueness of Suu Kyi's concepts of both democracy and education: "the vagueness arises due to Suu Kyi's focus on the transition period, or in other words, on education first, which – as argued – is seen as prerequisite for the achievement of democracy" (Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, pp. 28, 33 and 40).

[557] Ibid., pp. 28, 40 and 45–46.

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not listen to foreign radios. Of course we should listen to them. We don't necessarily have to buy whatever they are selling. Listen to foreign radios and decide for yourself if you agree or disagree with the news and opinions in the air. Your general knowledge will not be improved by tuning in just to one station. You have to listen to a variety of stations (…) try every station for yourself and decide what station can bring you knowledge and widen your perspective (…) On their part, students have to earn an education to be able to contribute to the democratic struggle. Have no fear for the cause of democracy."[558]

Suu Kyi wanted to establish a perfect civil society built on engaged and politically conscious individuals, courageous enough to take part in politics even at the cost of a personal risk. Only this would make establishing democracy possible: "to put it in a nutshell, Suu Kyi aims at employ[ing] people's education as a means to achieve democracy," following this approach: "her vision of democracy depends and centres on educated citizens rather than the implementation of institutions and the separation of powers"; in this regard, "the democratic system depends on mature, voluntarily participating citizens."[559] Suu Kyi saw herself as a teacher and a leader who showed the way. That is why she emphasized the importance of teachers,[560] for the teachers are necessary in her vision: "apart from the dependence on mature citizens, the system is further based on competent teachers and thus, Suu Kyi – although warning about the personalization of politics – imagines a personalized system."[561]

That is why she was teaching the people, for example, about the importance of courage. She divided it into two: spiritual and physical courage, giving preference to the former as constituting the latter ("the spiritual courage is noble, as physical courage is usually derived from the mental one") and universalizing courage ("everyone is courageous at one time or another") by concentrating on the mental aspects: "sometimes some people get bold unexpectedly, for example, when you are faced with a robber. Sometimes, however, people think too much [and] fear sets into their mind. As I said, if as looter grabs your handbag all of a sudden, you will pull your bag back and give him a punch. This happens immediately and courageously. On the other hand, when you ponder very hard a burglary scenario, thinking what to do if a robber climbs into your room, you might lose your heart. The robber doesn't really have to show up"; consequently, for Suu Kyi courage derives itself from wisdom and integrity – and can be trained: "the fact that the more you think the more you lack the courage to face trouble show how little spiritual courage you have. The people who have spiritual courage usually think what needs to be done for justice and truth, and they are prepared to face the consequences for

[558] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, pp. 344–345.

[559] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 51.

[560] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 September 1995 (no. 3)*…, p. 90; Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, pp. 159–163.

[561] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 51.

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their action. Therefore spiritual courage is much more important than the physical one. Spiritual courage can be nurtured – we can start with small issues. If you are forced to do something unjust, try to say 'No'! It's the first test of your courage. If you are threatened with persecution when you refuse an unjust order, you have to question the law. This is the next step. We need to train our courage step by step this way."[562] She emphasized this message by evoking Buddhist law of impermanence and by following classical Buddhist rationale of the necessity of following moral action (right thought, right action, etc.) that leads to self-fulfilled life; and – on the contrary – that misdeeds pay back badly: "we should always keep in mind that all the things in this world are subject to the law of *annica*. To put it bluntly, we all must die one day. I often think to myself – we cannot avoid death, whether we want it or not. The law of *annica* encompasses the laws of transformation and impermanence. In life there are many things beyond our control. Things you do not want to happen might happen anyway. Spiritual courage occurs when you know you are righteously doing something that you should do. Even when faced with death, the realization that one has not done anything vicious in life can be helpful. Those who have been doing wrongs all their life are always haunted by their deeds, and are not prepared to face the *dukkha* or suffering. Those who are virtuous and righteous always have the courage for acrimony (…) Those who have been treating other unjustly always have to fear the retribution. They always have suspicion for other, lest they should be treated the way they treat other people (…) this is a general take on life."[563] This philosophical approach served her to underline the fact that "courage and wisdom must go hand in hand"[564] and that "the righteous people have spiritual courage" which "comes from virtues and principles, and therefore is very valuable."[565] Consequently, it is well-worth living morally: "I won't taint my reputation even if I have to die for it. We may say that but it's no good dying for anything in vain. The names of the people who weight up their action or inaction in relation to their names, and to the names of their descendants, and act accordingly never die. They are respected in the society. Their children and grandchildren benefit from their good names. People who are not capable of thinking of the consequences of their action in relation to their names, those who do not take into account of the names of the descendants, may do well in life. I mean they may be endowed with material wealth, not necessarily with happiness. Mental well-being is simply impossible for the unjust. Look at the faces of the unjust. They may look pleased by not serene. An un-serene face reflects the lack of happiness. An unhappy person tends to make other people unhappy, too, isn't it difficult? The unjust is likely

[562] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, pp. 175–176.
[563] Ibid., p. 176.
[564] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 313.
[565] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 176.

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to die in unhappiness, even though they may leave material wealth behind. If you care for the reputation of your children, you should think about your name in posterity."[566]

Elsewhere Suu Kyi elaborated on fear along the same lines, differentiating two kinds of courage, audacity and fortitude, again stressing the superiority of the latter. According to her, audacity "refers to boldness or daring in one's action," while fortitude "means mental strength or stamina in facing hardship or adversity," however "we cannot act on audacity alone," for "audacity demands courage in doing the right thing for the right side," while fortitude "requires resistance against temptations"; for this reason the latter is more important: "even when peer pressure is pushing you to commit a bad deed, you must be able to resist it as a conscious person," for both your personal and social reasons: "some people conform to peer pressure in fear of ostracism or reprisal. We should remind ourselves, that, on the long run, such conformism can undermine your integrity and principles. Not only you, but your social environment and your family members will be affected. There is absolutely nothing to be gained from a bad deed. Please do not do anything that will lower your circle's esteem and make the faces of your children small. Once you're integrity vanishes, no diamond will shine your face, this is must say. There is a saying: one's cheeks glow in the radiance of one's diamond earrings. Virtue is a set of genuine diamond earing that can help your cheeks glow. The non-virtuous diamond earrings will not make you look clean (…) A person who leads a decent life, who brings home bread he has earned with his own sweat, will not afford diamond rings for his wife and children. But the family glows in dignity. Their integrity shines. The wives, children and daughter-in-law's of some people are awash with diamonds. Of course people know where those diamonds come from. How can one's dignity be radiant if people know where her diamonds come from. Let's talk about diamond earrings later. I would like to urge you to think about diamond only after human rights and democracy prevail in this country. Good-looking women do not need diamond earrings. Foreigners often say that we Burmese are attractive. You do look good without diamonds. Don't lust after such luxuries. Do what you should do."[567] She retaliated this messages later on: "for some people it's pointless to think about one's integrity and dignity for posterity. They reason [is] that you never know what future holds for you, you'd better focus on material needs of the moment. This is not at all a pointless discourse. As we Buddhist say, chicken usually comes home to roost to prove the karmic law (…) The people who say 'The more we amass wealth, the more secure the lives of our children and grandchildren' should study world history and the profiles of great leaders. Whatever transgression one may have swept under the carpet will surface one day or another. When that happens, your children and grandchildren

[566] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 313–314.
[567] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 249.

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will not dare to show their faces in public. Scandals have forced some people to resort to changing names (…) no one wants to be snubbed by people for his or her name. If you don't care about your name, you can do whatever you like of course. It's a personal matter. Just note that your environment will not look on if you conduct affects them. On the long run, those who disregard their names will not really serve the interest of their families. They themselves cannot live in peace of mind and clear conscience."[568]

As one can see from these examples, Suu Kyi is self-employing herself as a teacher of the nation – an important role in her self-image as devoted Buddhist, who always intends to educate the people to be moral, courageous and free from fear in order to improve themselves and be able to build democracy. This followed the Buddhist rationale of the importance of moral actions (and each individuals' action), yet at the same time her concept of "teaching the nation" might have been inspired by Gandhi or by socially engaged Buddhism (the active *mettā*) of Sulak Sivaraksa,[569] perhaps even by Rousseau's "concept of the general will (*volanté générale*) and the corresponding need for education."[570] Nevertheless, "however influential this more or less foreign concepts might have been, people's education is, in a way, a particularly home-made concept that has been present throughout Myanmar/Burma's postcolonial history" – all colonial and postcolonial Burmese leaders (Aung San, U Nu, Ne Win) were teaching the society – so did Aung San Suu Kyi and her foes, the SLORC/SPDC generals: "in contrast to the perceived antagonism between the military government and Suu Kyi, similarities respecting their point of view do exist: as the military junta, Suu Kyi considers the people of Myanmar/Burma politically immature and education as essential."[571] One, therefore, may notice here an important phenomenon: that Suu Kyi and the generals – despite their bitter political confrontation – were quite similar in a way.[572]

7. The Triad of Unity, Responsibility and Discipline

The triad of unity, responsibility and discipline forms another cornerstone of Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought. It makes her political thought eclectic, as it is the point in which Suu Kyi's thought departs significantly from the Western, liberal understanding of democracy. Suu Kyi declared many times the equal importance of rights and duties – e.g. here: "every time I have talked about Democracy, I often said there are rights and

[568] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 314.

[569] "Emerging from her first six years of house arrest, Suu Kyi's political rhetoric, it seems, had developed into her own version of Sulak Sivaraksa's socially engaged Buddhism, or active *metta*" (McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 170).

[570] Blum, *Teaching Democracy*…, p. 51.

[571] Ibid., pp. 51–52.

[572] This similarity will be seen in other aspects, too (see: latter part of the book).

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there is responsibility"[573] – and it is by unity, discipline and responsibility she has been balancing the Western component of her political thought. Unity, discipline and responsibility, just like other concepts in her thought, are understood as moral ideas. Suu Kyi's call for unity, discipline and responsibility is again a moral message.

The call for the importance of unity was present in Suu Kyi's political thought from the very beginning. Already in her hagiographical essay on Aung San she emphasized that her father fought for "freedom and unity to his country," had "sense of responsibility" and was above "two scourges of Burmese politics, factionalism and jealously."[574] In her maiden[575] Shwedagon speech she used the terms unity and discipline already in the third sentence (or in the second, if one does not count the invocation) – "the people should be disciplined and united to demonstrate the very fact that they are a people who can be disciplined and united"; in order to arrive at multiparty democracy "all the people should march unitedly in a disciplined manner towards the goal of democracy."[576] In other words, unity (alongside with discipline) is a prerequisite for establishing democracy – it is the ontological, essential condition. Her reasoning was somehow along the traditional Burmese lines – "Suu Kyi drew upon the memory of her father, the elected 'king' who was prevented from ruling," while "the concept of a 'united democracy' can be traced back to the Buddhist myth of the world's first ruler, the *Maha-Sammata*."[577]

Suu Kyi repeated her message about unity several times throughout the speech ("to achieve democracy the people should be united"; "if the people are disunited, no ideology or form of government can bring much benefit to the country"; "if there is discipline, no system can succeed"; "therefore our people should always be united and disciplined"), quoted her father to enhance the message ("my father said there is a great need for the people to be disciplined and this cannot be repeated too often"), and ended the speech with such sayings as: "the final remark I wish to make is for our rally to maintain unity and discipline"; "may the entire people be united and disciplined."[578] During the speech she appealed for the unity between the army and the people (implicitly – against Ne Win and other commanders), for the unity between students, between

[573] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 428.

[574] Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Father*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 11 and 33.

[575] Technically speaking, Shwedagon was her second political speech (the first one was at Rangoon's General Hospital a few days earlier) (Justin Wintle, *Perfect Hostage. Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma and the Generals,* Arrow Books, London 2008, p. 263), but since her hospital speech was a short and informational only, Shwedagon speech is referred as the first real Suu Kyi's political speech.

[576] Aung San Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, pp. 192–193.

[577] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 34.

[578] Suu Kyi, *Speech to a Mass Rally*…, pp. 193–198.

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youngers and elders, and between Burmans and ethnic minorities; and she moved to moral interpretation of the need for unity and discipline, quite consistently with her ideas the moral foundation of power: "the strength of the people is growing day by day. Such growing strength has to be controlled by discipline. Undisciplined strength or strength which is not in keeping with right principles can never lead to a beneficial fruition. It could lead to danger for many. Therefore please continue to use our strength in accordance with rightful principles."[579]

During Shwedagon speech, Suu Kyi used the word unity nineteen times[580] which showed the importance of this concept to her and to her thought – since then unity became the hallmark of Suu Kyi's political thought alongside with Aung San and democracy. In her rallies over the gate she evoked "unity" (and "united") more than 34 times (between September 1995 and April 1996).[581] These ranged from 1) slogans, and other rhetoric devices, via 2) theorizing on history, to 3) a moral message.

1) First came slogans and other words spoken to encourage and convince her followers, such as: "we have to change things together"[582]; "no individual can solve a problem that is plaguing the whole country. There has to be a collective effort"[583]; "we can solve all our problems together"[584]; "please note that none of us can do anything alone. We have to work together. In working together, we have to rely on our own strength. We have to solve our own problems. We must not blame others for our failures. It's not at all appropriate to scapegoat others for our problems. If we do things together, we will succeed. In twenty to thirty years' time, as I said, when a democratic system in entrenched we will be able to leave behind our worries for democracy"[585]; "just say 'Sorry but [I] have to decline' All must say this in unison. If we are united, we can always say No! to donation request for a command charity"[586]; "cannot we solve the problems we are talking about? Of course we can, if we work together."[587]

2) Second came Suu Kyi's views on history ("Why we lost independence? Because we were not united (…) How did we regain our independence? We had had to rebuild

[579] Ibid., pp. 194, 196 and 198.

[580] And "in the Burmese version of 'Freedom from Fear' it is additionally used in titles of speeches on at least two occasions" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 59).

[581] It is my own estimation, based on material from: *Daw Suu's 25 Dialogues with the People 1995–1996*, transl. Ko Ko Thet, Frankie Tun, ed. H.-B. Zöllner, AberaVerlag, Hamburg–Yangon 2014.

[582] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 September 1995 (no. 2)*…, p. 61.

[583] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 137.

[584] Ibid.

[585] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 248.

[586] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 155.

[587] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 180.

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our strength of unity on the path to our liberation. It wasn't easy (…) Even in our independence struggle, schism was commonplace (…) There were divisions all the time. Why? They were caused by rivalries. We did not question what our duties or our objectives were. We only asked who should get what position. As we jockeyed for power, the scene began to look like a sport tournament. This happened even at the height of our nationalist movement. There were splits and reunions, divisions and alliances. Our independence prevailed only when a group of nationalists who were loyal to the people and who really mean well for the country came together. We have to be united if we are to work for our country and people. If there are squabbles among ourselves, we will never move forward (…) we should learn from our independence struggle. We should think hard about the kind of leadership provided by our nationalist leaders. They were selfless. They didn't lust after position or power. We have to keep this in mind").[588]

Finally, and most importantly, 3) a moral message: unity is a value built on virtues that is a necessary condition for a country to prosper – it demands subjugation of one's interests for the interests of all: "we must work together if we are to live together in unity and harmony (…) We must have [as] our goal the building of a real and lasting Union. Only after building this Union can we really work towards peace and prosperity for all. We must all sacrifice our own needs for the needs of others"[589]; unity is to be built on truth: "unity doesn't mean unity in misdeed or negative unity. We cannot build unity on corruption by 'let's get united. You don't squeal on me. I don't squeal on you.' Unity has to be sought on truth. We will succeed when we are united on our sense of responsibilities and sacrifice. Doing bad things together may be called unity but it will not do any good for the country"[590]; "do not waste your energy trying to forge a negative unity."[591] Unity is also a value that should be taught and nurtured from childhood – "children's minds are like a clean slate. That's why we have great responsibility in raising them. We must not teach them things that will divide them because of linguistic or ethnic differences; we must teach them so that they understand the idea of the Union (…) For all of them to live together in harmony we must teach our children from earliest childhood the concept of national unity, of nationhood"[592]; unity should be taught by both parents and school ("the younger, the better. Students and youth have to [be] brought together to build up unity").[593]

[588] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 268.
[589] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 218.
[590] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 268.
[591] Ibid., p. 269.
[592] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 219.
[593] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 403–404.

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Unity, like democracy, has a universal value for Suu Kyi, it is a prerequisite for achieving success and solving all the problems of the country, be it forced labour,[594] correcting immoral behaviour of superiors and rulers,[595] or making peace with ethnic minorities.[596] She even called for unity when she saw mobile phones for the first time (after being released from final house arrest).[597] And naturally she repeated her message on the overwhelming importance of unity once in power, after 2016: "let me tell you how grateful I am, for standing together with our government, with full understanding and unity"; "there is no power which can compare with the support of the people, trust of the people and the unity of the people. I believe that no matter whatever difficulties we face, we can overcome, with the unity of our people."[598] One of these challenges that unity would make possible to resolve is "the Rohingya crisis" (see: later in this book), "the attention of the world on the Rakhine issue has been immense (..) that is why we need to tackle these problems based on the strength of our unity" or "although our Union may not be strong, I am confident that we will be successful by uniting our will."[599] After 2016, Suu Kyi kept emphasizing the importance of unity elsewhere, too: when calling

[594] "All unrest is rooted in people's discontent. A satisfied person will not be stirred by any incitement. Discontent is the cause of public unrest. Therefore I would like to urge our people to try to make a unified effort to make ourselves contented and happy" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 272).

[595] Asked what is more important, top-bottom or bottom-top approach, Suu Kyi again repeated her moral message: "we have to work both ways simultaneously. If there are changes bottom-up but no change top-down, the people at the bottom will grow unhappy with those on the top. This situation will not lead the country to any progress. The same is true if there are changes in the upper echelons and no change at the lower end. However, if the morale and morality at the top are good, it's very unlikely that those at the bottom will misbehave. For instance, if an officer is incorruptible, the staff under him will not dare to take any bribe. If the officer himself is corrupt, he will just turn the other way to what's happening below. Therefore a person in charge is in a position to improve the morale and morality of those serving under him or her. It's more difficult to influence your boss. No matter how good the practice at the bottom, if the person on top is irredeemably corrupt, this department will lose face. It won't even function. However, if the people at the lower end are courageous and united, they may be in a position to say 'Enough is enough, boss'" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 315).

[596] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*..., pp. 376–377. For more on ethnic minorities, see: later in this chapter

[597] "Now I see everyone is using (mobile phones). It shows improvement in communication. Make good use of this to build understanding and unity among one another. Please raise your hands those who have mobile phones. Let's see how many. Wow …. many people are now using mobile phones. For me, I just got a chance to use such phone for the first time today. In the past, we didn't have those yet" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…).

[598] *Report to the People by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*…

[599] Ibid.

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for national reconciliation based on her "new Panglong" scheme[600] (see: later in this book) or even when praising the ASEAN.[601]

Suu Kyi's concept unity goes hand in hand with discipline and duty, but most importantly – with responsibility: for Suu Kyi unity (*nyi nyut chin*) and discipline (*si kan*) are "two of the most important components of democracy."[602] That is why Suu Kyi, paraphrasing Joseph F. Kennedy's famous words,[603] rhetorically asked "why don't you take matters into your hands? Instead of asking others what they can do for you, ask yourself what you can do. Be a responsible person. We should fulfil our obligations first. Ask yourself what you can do before asking others what they can do for you."[604]

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[600] E.g. "as everyone knows, in the situation of international and regional relations, our country and ethnic nationals in the Union need to show unity. This is the requirement of the present moment. It is a historical requirement and a preparation for the future. All leaders imagine this. Like a family that is not united, arguing and fighting among family members, our Union has been fighting within itself in a never-ending cycle for more than seventy years. No outsider will come and resolve this issue"; "federal is not a system for cessation but a system that strengthens unity"; "are we going to avoid this because this duty is heavy? How heavy it may be, with unity and collective strength, this situation can be changed immediately. The opportunity to do this is within our reach" (*State Counsellor: Historical Duty of Establishing a Democratic Federal Union for Future Generations Now Resting on Our Shoulders*, Office of State Counsellor, 2018, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/2018 (access: 24.07.2018)); "so long as we are unable to achieve national reconciliation and national unity, we will never be able to establish a sustainable and durable peaceful Union. Only if we are all united will our country be at peace"; "we have always believed that to be able to resolve the political problems that lie at the root of our armed conflicts, the most crucial requirement is to work together, with mutual understanding and trust, to seek solutions, the Panglong spirit that enabled us to implement, through unity and cooperation, the hopes of all our peoples for freedom, is equally essential now in the 21st century"; "it was the aspiration of the founding fathers of our independent nation to win the right to shape the destiny of our country. Let us proudly exercise this right with a clear vision and strength of purpose, bound in unity and confidence" (*Official Translation of the Speech Delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the Opening Day of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong*, Office of State Counsellor, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/247 (access: 24.07.2018)).

[601] "Even in times of crisis, ASEAN has been able maintain its unity (…) We must meet these challenges together, developing further our capacity for united endeavor" (*Speech Delivered by H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at the Commemorative Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN*, 14.08. 2017, Nay Pyi Taw, Office of State Counsellor, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1111 (access: 24.07.2018)).

[602] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 209.

[603] *John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address January 20, 1961*, http:// www.ushistory.org/documents/ask-not.htm (access: 16.07.2018).

[604] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 23 September 1995 (no. 1)*…, p. 45.

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Naturally, the most important responsibility is the fight to achieve democracy[605] – e.g. in late 1995 she appealed: "I would like us all to make this New Year resolution for 1996: we will contribute as much as we can to the cause of human rights and democracy in this country."[606] Earlier, in 1989 in her Myitkyina speech she elaborated a bit more about the role of responsibility in achieving democracy, emphasising the need for sacrifice: "if we want a stable democracy in the future, every single one of us must bear this responsibility conscientiously. We must be willing to sacrifice. We must all understand that there is a great merit in sacrificing for others and that by so doing we live the full life (…) To live the full life one must have the courage to bear responsibility of the needs of others – one must want to bear this responsibility."[607] To illustrate her thesis of the need to sacrifice, she showed a rather unorthodox, if not outright propagandist example – that of WW II: "early in the Second World War, Germany and Japan were still victorious, but only because the people at home worked self-sacrificingly. When they no longer sacrificed their own self-interest, they were unable to win the war. As an example, during that war the people of Great Britain made great sacrifices and, because of that, from a position of weakness Britain was able to grow stronger and defeat the enemy. That's why, if we walk along the right path, we are sure to gain victory over whatever enemy."[608] Naturally, her analogy between self-sacrifice and winning a war, let alone a global war, is spurious at best (one may list many other nations that sacrificed tremendously during the WWII and their effort went in vain), yet Suu Kyi's words are important as they illustrate leitmotif of Suu Kyi's understanding of responsibility: the moral approach.

As almost everything in Suu Kyi's political thought, unity, duty, discipline and responsibility are moral categories (or, to be strict, their value is necessitated by a proper moral conduct) – "discipline (*si kan*) refers not only to proper conduct but more specifically to proper moral conduct (*thila*)" [609] – that is why Suu Kyi explained unity as something that can be nurtured: "unity can't be built overnight. It has to be built gradually. We have to learn mutual respect and understand of one another from childhood in order to build organic unity among us"[610]– hence, "the discipline necessary for proper democratic participation is that which suppresses egoism, desire, ill-will, ignorance, and

[605] There are, however, other responsibilities, e.g. to treat your work seriously – "our citizens should develop work ethics. Love your work, be industrious and be innovative. You will learn from work, you will develop your skills and you will feel good. Only then we can establish the type of country we desire" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 340).

[606] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 249.

[607] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 222; "I can't guarantee however that there will be no pain. Sometimes, we do have to bear pain. We do suffer and our colleagues do suffer" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…).

[608] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 222.

[609] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 182–183.

[610] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 403–404.

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fear," which could be eradicated by *thila* (*sila*), or morality, the Second Duty of the King (in Suu Kyi's enlarged interpretation, of the people as well, see: earlier in this book).[611] If undertaken correctly, this correct moral behaviour would lead to good fruits: "we have to count on principles and morality that can provide us with peace and happiness. Our morality entails both secular and spiritual responsibilities. Since we belong to a secular world, we do have secular duties. If we fulfil our secular duties and we also do what we should do in the spiritual realm, we will be able to enjoy eternal wealth."[612] Thus, unity, responsibilities and duties apply to all – everyone should develop "a true sense of responsibility."[613] From 1) the people who should take matters into their own hands ("everyone has his or her own responsibility. To say that other people are already doing something is to dodge your head around your responsibilities"),[614] be responsible and do not shy away from pointing out the country's problems: "if there is a challenge, we must face it. We cannot dodge around the challenge and scapegoat this or that person (…) We must have responsible courage. We can acknowledge that problems exist in all human societies. Who is responsible for societal problems? The person who are in charge, of course (…) We just have to try to fulfil our responsibilities"[615]; "people who have entrusted themselves with government duties have to act like a good government. They must have courage to tackle the problems. If the root of a problem is 'me,' one must dare to finger-point at oneself and say it's me. Now there are always scapegoats for any problem here. It's not right (…) While we urge the authorities to solve problems, people on their part should shoulder their own responsibilities."[616] Via 2) political leaders like her: "there are many responsibilities in a democracy"; "it's the responsibility of a democratic leader to convince the people for a public good, or for the sake of the country"[617]; "we are responsible for highlighting our people's grievances and feelings. This we do as our duty"[618]; "the burden of hope is not small. It is a big responsibility

[611] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, pp. 182–183.

[612] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, pp. 151–152.

[613] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 70.

[614] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 319; the people also have responsibility to help and support those less brave in the struggle for democracy: "soon after my release from house arrest, a villager who calls himself pro-democracy citizen simply wrote: 'We are beefed up when we hear your words of courage. The moment we face blusters, we are cowered again.' This is not good. Diligence should complement courage. How can we help? We need guidance from one another. The down-and-out should be helped by the strong-willed. We need reassurance form one another. This is the way to go, we will prevail in mutual support. If everyone does things unilaterally, we will end up in quandary" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 341).

[615] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*…, p. 226.

[616] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 277.

[617] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 132.

[618] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 180.

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to shoulder hope. But I'm not afraid of being responsible. But there is only one thing I'm afraid of. I'm afraid that I don't fulfill my responsibility. I will try to fulfill the responsibility till the end."[619] To 3) the rulers (the military rulers of Myanmar in Suu Kyi's narrative evidently lack morality and are thus unprepared to govern): "it makes me wonder if the authorities do not understand what duty means (…) a duty cannot be completed by just giving an approving nod. Perhaps a nod is duty enough for them. To us a duty entails service, participation and performance. If they want people to do their duty, they have to allow our rightful participation in the right place"[620]; "power means responsibility (…) great responsibility. Unfortunately this is not what power means to a lot of people who hold it or want it. For them power means privileges. But if you start off on the promise that power first means responsibility then you would be far less enamoured of power."[621] Hence, ruling itself is a moral responsibility, a precondition to well-being of the country and its people: "if you take the responsibility, you have to fulfil the duty (…) The democratic government will not dare to avoid their heads and say it is not because of us, rather will say, it is because of us we will try to make it better"[622]; "the administrative class have to be more disciplined and law-abiding than the rest of the civil servants. Even when civil servants tend to be sloppy, their administrators must not be sloppy. As a Burmese adage goes, when the head ox of the cattle walks straight, the rest of the cattle will walk straight. What will the rest of the cattle do if the head ox is doing a drunkard's somersault? The authorities will have to set a good example in conduct, ethics, discipline, courteousness, magnanimity and kindness. They have to keep their standards high. I don't mean material standards, money, luxury cars or mansions. I mean moral standards. Politicians for democracy take administrative matters seriously because they know that administration is a heavy responsibility. One should think twice about coveting power since one has to be very uptight in a position of power. The privilege that comes with power is less than responsibility that comes with it. Everyone who believes in democracy understands this."[623]

Finally, building democracy itself is a responsibility of 4) all the people: "when it comes to responsibilities, be them democratic or social, we have to do our utmost (…) Our historic responsibility now is to achieve a democratic system,"[624] a moral one, naturally ("I do not want to advice on spiritual matters to those who need a spiritual guidance. There are many abbots who can do this better than me. If we want to enjoy worldly security, however, I must add that, we have to work hard to achieve a political

[619] *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…
[620] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*..., p. 315.
[621] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 185.
[622] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*..., p. 431.
[623] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 4 February 1996 (no. 16)*..., p. 360.
[624] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday,7 October 1995 (no. 5)*..., pp. 130–131.

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system where human rights are guaranteed"),[625] yet hardly a final one, as later, once democracy is already build, there are new responsibilities ("there are many responsibilities in a democracy")[626] which should not be abused.[627] For Suu Kyi morality underpins "basic democratic practices" and she sees "a morally 'correct' way to engage in activities such as voting, forming and supporting parties, and publicly expressing opinions" as a prerequisite for success.[628]

The triad of unity, discipline and responsibility in Suu Kyi's political thought balances the Western, rights-based liberal democratic concepts. She "merges the freedom celebrated in the rights-based account of democracy with the moral discipline (…) using reasoning anchored in the logic of moral universe."[629] Thus, without this triad, understood in a moral way, democracy would be handicapped, prone to abuses and ultimately fragile. That is why Western concepts, like freedom of speech, must be balanced by unity, discipline and responsibility: "our people have more unity that some people think. There is unity in our hearts. We cannot express our unity since there is not freedom of expression. Perhaps this is a blessing in disguise. When democracy prevails, we certainly will have our right to freedom of expression. I have to caution again the freedom of expression does not mean the freedom to circulate wrong information or to incite the public. Freedom of expression has to be practiced within the law. There are laws that protect a person from defamation or calumny. The objective of freedom of expression is to keep the citizenry informed; to provide people with information that will enable them to assess their country's situation (…) We have to refrain from coarse words, slanderous speeches and substandard conducts. Freedom of expression is a foundational stone of democracy – a big one at that, and we need not fear it."[630]

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[625] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 8 October (no. 6)*…, p. 152.

[626] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 132; elsewhere she said: "when democracy prevails we will have to worry if we can meet our challenges and fulfil our responsibilities. We won't be above criticism in a democratic system. We are prepared to be criticised for the sake of democracy" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, pp. 385–386).

[627] "It's also important that we don't abuse our democratic rights" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 132).

[628] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 184.

[629] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 185.

[630] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, p. 382. By giving priority to unity over democracy Suu Kyi, in my opinion, resolved the dilemma invoked by Zöllner: "democratic processes might endanger precisely the unity which was repeatedly invoked as a precondition for successfully fighting the common foe. This dilemma is linked to the problem faced by Suu Kyi in her pursuance of a political struggle while following the principles laid down by Gandhi: how can universal moral principles and particular national political aims be harmonized?" (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 189).

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Given this moral understanding of unity, discipline and responsibility there should be little surprise over Suu Kyi's words from 1999 about the need for unity among the NLD members; words that would chill every Western believer in democracy, human rights, free speech etc.: "it is very important for our members to be extra loyal. If we are disloyal at times of difficulties we become faithless persons. According to democratic principles, everyone has the right to have their own beliefs, to think independently and to have freedom of expression. But if one acts disloyally in exercising those rights, one is a renegade, a traitor. At a time when our comrades, brothers and sisters are battling so hard, disloyalty should not be contemplated. This is a time to be united and show our solidarity. At a time when great loyalty is needed, don't make excuses for disloyalty. The people know. We also know. Loyalty means to remain loyal (…) To enjoy the privileges of democracy you must fulfil the obligations that go with it. The first obligation is loyalty to the cause. Please be loyal (…) If we have that loyalty, and will stand firm in our political convictions the struggle for democracy will soon be won."[631] Elsewhere, while praising criticism she added that it must be a "constructive" or "positive" criticism.[632]

This is a good example of how Suu Kyi's understanding of democracy is different from the rights-based, liberal, Western one (all her earlier similarities with liberal democracy notwithstanding). And quite similar to the traditional Burmese understanding of unity as harmony without dissident voices.[633] At the base of Suu Kyi's understanding

[631] *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on 27–5–1999*, Online Burma Library, http:// www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199906/msg00285.html (access: 08.07.2018). The specific context of this speech must be mentioned: at that time Suu Kyi was in difficult situation given deflection of several members of NLD who wanted a compromise with the generals; this explains her rather tough call for unity and loyalty. It is interesting, nevertheless, to compare this statement with her words about apparent "collective leadership" of the NLD: "in our League there is no individual leadership. We know that no individual leader can do this alone. We never encourage an authoritarian system. We never wanted it. We do everything multilaterally. People should adopt multilateralism too. I am not sure if you happy to be commanded. Perhaps they might be cussing at the commander behind his backs even when they are obeying his order. We don't want a command system. We want o system where we can do everything together. Please do as much as you can" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 27 January 1996 (no. 15)*…, p. 341). Unfortunately, evidence (of her authoritarian way of ruling the party) proves against these benign declarations. Just to quote one (very favourable for Suu Kyi) author: "Suu Kyi (has been) a rather unyielding leader to work with, one who found it difficult to reconcile herself to the reality of different opinions and the existence of factionalism in her party"; her style of leadership was compared to "something of a repressive matriarch" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 300).

[632] "Our criticism should be constructive or positive. In marching towards our goal, we the people should be able to exercise constructive criticism for the sake of the public good" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 180).

[633] "The concept to agree to disagree was alien to the Burmese thought mold. Harmony was always identified with unanimity. Thinking in absolute terms is still common. A common attitude has always been that if the people were united it would be good for the country. The existence of

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of democracy is proper moral behaviour that necessitates unity and loyalty.[634] This conceptualization of democracy's relation to each individual's freedom "is individualistic and internal rather than structural: freedom is bounded not by arbitrary laws or authoritarian dictates, but by each individual's commitment to correct moral practice."[635] It was "more than constitutional guarantees" – "it was also psychological."[636]

This is the leitmotif of Suu Kyi's political thought – it goes from non-violence, via freedom from fear, revolution of the spirit and her subsequent Buddhicisation – that "each one must purify and liberate his or her mind before they can be considered ready for participation" in democracy; hence "a correct understanding of democratic values and practices rests on a foundation of correct moral understanding and practice."[637]

After taking this attitude of Suu Kyi into consideration, her behaviour is unsurprising: her authoritarianism in managing her party[638] both before ascending to power in

parties in the country was seen as reflecting discord and disunity and hence potentially dangerous" (Maung Maung Gyi, *The Burmese Political Values*…, p. 135); for more, see: Matthew J. Walton, *The Disciplining Discourse of Unity in Burmese Politics*, "Journal of Burma Studies", vol. 19, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–26.

[634] As Prof. Jerzy Bayer, former Poland's Ambassador to Myanmar told me, he once asked Suu Kyi if NLD members disagree with her: "sometimes" – she replied – "but I'm always able to convince them"; personal conversation with Bayer, 2017.

[635] Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 184. An example of this logic can be found here: "my point is that being on the top or being at the bottom should be no excuse for not doing the right thing. A country's morality will be improved if everyone, regardless of their place in the chain of command or division of labour, strive to improve their own morality. I-will-change-when-he-changes-first attitude will not get us anywhere. Please do what you can from where you are. Our incompetence has put us in such a predicament. Some people claim that everyone is corrupt here. An official even says, 'Everyone can be bought. When you wave a ten-dollar note, even a corpse will get up and grab it.' We have to prove him wrong. We cannot point fingers at the people on the top without changing ourselves first. A corrupt person doesn't have the right to tell other not to be corrupt. Don't think too much about what others should do. First think of what you should do. Only when you are a responsible person you can tell others to be responsible" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 322).

[636] Silverstein*, The Idea of Freedom*…, p. 225.

[637] This is a "dual usage" of freedom/liberation – from both mental defilements and political oppression (Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought*…, p. 185).

[638] Thomas Fuller, *Myanmar Democracy Icon Finds Herself Assailed as Authoritarian*, "The New York Times", 28.09.2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/29/world/asia/myanmar-democracy-icon-finds-herself-assailed-as-authoritarian.html?_r=0 (access: 16.07.2018). Unsurprisingly, NLD turned into a group of "yes men" around Suu Kyi, "currently, the NLD looks more like the political following of a charismatic leader rather than a real political party. The group functions well only when the leader is around" (Kyaw Yin Hlaing, *Aung San Suu Kyi. A Burmese Dissident Democrat*…, pp. 136 and 153). Even Sengupta, a (very) favourable to Suu Kyi researcher admitted that "one critical concern area remains – her intolerance towards opposing voices within NLD" – Suu Kyi "made it amply clear that she did not take opposition within her own party lightly or anything

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2015 and especially afterwards.[639] Suu Kyi with her moral approach fits well into the pattern of the Burmese politics where moral arguments serve as means to both silencing the internal critics (if they disagree, they must be immoral) and fighting with political foes (again: they are not only not correct in their behaviour or attitude, but foremost they are not right morally). In this regard Suu Kyi is quite similar to U Nu, who also blamed his rivals for being bad and immoral individuals. And her accent on unity, discipline and responsibilities not only provides "a common grounding for the democratic perspectives of both Aung San Suu Kyi and the military"[640]– the generals introduced and implemented in Myanmar their "disciplined democracy"[641] – but make them (that is Suu Kyi and the generals) ideologically and politically two sides of the same coin where, of course, and quite naturally Suu Kyi's side of coin is the more appealing, brighter and represents much better version and vision.

8. *Awza* and *Mettā* versus *Āṇā* and *Cetanā*

Suu Kyi's moral position of authority and Tatmadaw's absolute political dominance in Myanmar created an unique political situation inside the country that de facto lasted for

that seemed to cast a slur on the NLD's picture perfect image" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice*…, pp. 330–331).

[639] E.g. Kyaw Phone Kyaw, Wa Lone, *NLD Bans Candidates from Speaking to Media*, "Myanmar Times", 24.08.2015, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/16125-nld-bans-candidates-from-speaking-to-media.html (access: 16.07.2018).

[640] Matthew J. Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe: Burmese Buddhist Political Thought*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, Seattle 2012, p. 210.

[641] *Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt Clarifies Future Policies and Programmes of State*, Online Burma Library, 30.08.2003, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Roadmap-KN.htm (access: 31.07.2018); *The Constitution of the Union of Myanmar 2008*, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs5/Myanmar_Constitution-2008-en.pdf (access: 18.06.2018). As for Tatmadaw's vision, initially, in late 1980s-early 1990s they feared a united front against them; when they declared elections in 1990, they hoped that the parties would contest under the patroonship/guidance of the army, but this vision was dashed by NLD's overwhelming victory: "the many leagues, fronts and affiliations that were formed after the decision to hold multiparty elections were regarded as dangerous because they did not advocate a multiparty plurality, but a single party/league/front dominance against the military. Consequently any 'opposition' to the present military 'caretaker government' was seen as dangerous because of its antagonistic implications" (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 106). Later on Tatmadaw propagated unity in a classical military fashion, basing "its version of a future Myanmar state and society that would be characterized by stability, unity and independence from substantial foreign influence" (Ibid., pp. 226–227) their vision was best caught by Thant Myint-U: "for many imagining democracy was as hard as imagining more democratic barracks. It just didn't fit with the rest of the picture" (Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footstep*…, p. 341).

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-more than two decades (from 1988 to 2011). The army had power, but not authority, while Suu Kyi - the other way round. Both sides legitimized their quest for power using Buddhist concepts which showed a deep, philosophical rift between Suu Kyi and the generals.

Let's start from the different concepts of power. The Burmese case study prompted Houtman to distinguish two indigenous concepts of power in the Burmese political thought: *āṇā* and *awza*: he made a distinction between two different models for political action: the political model that works on 'authority' and the political model that works on 'influence.'[642] *Āṇā* in Burmese means 'order,' 'command,' 'power' and 'authority' and "is associated with the naked power of the State, irrespective of ethics" – *āṇā* "simply cannot penetrate the minds of the people, and merely leads to outward gestures of submission without positively inclining the minds of the people"; whereas *awza* means 'influence' and is related to "wholesome elevated personal qualities," usually spiritual; in short "while *ana* can be and usually is exercised negatively, *awza* is always a positive quality associated with the positive characteristics of a person."[643] There is, naturally, a link between those two concepts: *āṇā* and *awza*, "just like 'authority' and 'influence,' blend into one another. One who is greatly influential is often given authority, and one who is in a position of authority is also able to influence"; nevertheless, "there is a world of difference between these concepts. To be influential may make one authoritative, but there is a world of difference between being influential and authoritarian. In Burmese history all Burmese kings invariably had *ana*, but exceptionally few were described as having *awza.*"[644] Certainly Aung San had both *āṇā* and *awza*, U Nu had *awza*, but little *āṇā*, Ne Win – the opposite; in the conditions of the 1990s and 2000s, Suu Kyi had *awza*, but not *āṇā*, while the army on the contrary. Hence, "the military had the power to get things done (*ana*) (…) however, it lacked the capability to convince the people that this power was used correctly (*awza*) (…) Suu Kyi possessed this kind of power, but was unable to translate it into concrete political action (…) the asymmetric distribution of these complementary aspects of power prevented a meaningful dialogue."[645]

This distinction should be made further by exploring rhetorical means of the Tatmadaw and Suu Kyi. Both sides used Buddhism and legitimized themselves by Bud-

[642] *Āṇā* and *awza* dichotomy is influenced by Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 161–180 and to less extend by Steinberg, *Burma. The State of Myanmar*…, p. 38; *mettā* versus *cetanā*'s concept is derived from Zöllner's *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 261.

[643] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 167–168.

[644] Ibid., pp. 167–176.

[645] It happened due to "verbal communication by symbolic action, which did not resolve the conflict but merely allowed for public affirmation of the respective standpoints" (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 261).

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dhist concepts and moral aspects.[646] Thus, "two very interesting sets of viewpoint on democracy emerge" – one of Suu Kyi and another of the military government, "both deeply entrenched in Theravada Buddhism, yet presenting the political notion in two very different lights."[647] Differences started at the level of discourse. The army accentuated *cetanā* ("goodwill," or "beneficial intention,"[648] or "a union or accordance of mind with an object or purpose, inclination," which "presumes that for a government to work, all people must share the same deep intentions, and the same object and purpose").[649] As such *cetanā* is "a central concept of Buddhist Burmese thought."[650] In Burmese conditions, "cetana is usually attributed to those in authority, and in particular the government and army, but also parents and teachers," who "carry the onerous duties of the authority and State in a manner that ordinary citizens cannot," they "are represented as having the greatest *cetana* for peoples for whom they have responsibility – they patronise," and "of course, they do so without any self-interest or any desire for power."[651] *Cetanā* is not much transcendental, rather "transactional and redistributive," as "it takes as its main reference the act of charity" – for the act of charity (the first of Ten Parami and the first of Ten Royal Duties) "was historically the main unifying factor of the kingdom"; hence, "the concept of *cetana* has overtones that link the transactions surrounding Buddhist charity to building a domain."[652] Thus, *cetanā* in the understanding of political thought means that the political authority, or simply any authority, does something that contributes to society's good. In precolonial times *cetanā* had been used as a legitimising tool by the Burmese kings who claimed that they founded a *phaya* (pagoda) or a *kyaung*

[646] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, pp. 148–186.

[647] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 290.

[648] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 145 and 151. On the other hand, it is fair to admit, that Suu Kyi also used *cetanā* in her speeches, though *cetanā* did not form such important cornerstone for her political thought as it was for the army. Examples of Suu Kyi's usage of *cetanā*: "we cannot ignore someone who is dragging his feet is we know he can learn to walk normally. It cannot be cetana not to correct things that can be corrected. Of course calling anyone a cripple is an insult. An insult is never good will. We don't do this. We have a clear conscience since we are simply trying to highlight some issues that need fixing. This is our cetana. In our criticism we have never been malicious against anyone" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 248); "as we highly value *metta* and cetana from the people, we will never do anything that will undermine their esteem and trust in us" (Ibid.); she also countered army's claim on their cetanā: "there's always the question of cetana (right intension). The cetana of the army should be right" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 48).

[649] "This concept permits overlap between the army's and Buddhist causes, for it means in particular 'to have a fixed purpose to carry out a benevolent scheme.' It means 'to make a religious offering' with the three kinds of cetana, namely with steady and firm conviction in the past, present and future" (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 162; Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauy*…, p. 145).

[650] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauy*…, p. 103.

[651] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 162.

[652] Ibid., p. 163.

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(monastery/school) out of *cetanā* for the people[653]; and that they made conquest in the name of Buddhism, in the best Aśokan tradition.[654]

This tradition has had a clear authoritarian streak: the authority benevolently does something for the people out of its goodwill, which implicitly implies that the people should appreciate that: be grateful and, preferably, loyally follow their rulers in whatever they say.

It was precisely in this authoritarian sense that the Tatmadaw used *cetanā* concept in its legitimisation attempt. They portrayed themselves as benevolent rulers who were selflessly working hard to make Myanmar peaceful, rich and powerful,[655] they urged the people to see army's *cetanā*.[656] Tamtadaw's generals, "who have returned en masse to pagoda building and to supporting Buddhism in the 1990s, thus attempt to extract legitimacy and conquer the country according to these old models"; "in presenting the national cause according to these old models of merit-making with *cetana*" they have been "building a form of national unity that demands a surrender of the people's intentions towards a singular meritorious project, their project," a one built on "generals' assumption that their acts of charity are the ultimate acts of merit-making, so that all of their projects are deemed 'sacred' projects supported by Buddhism."[657] In accordance with this model, they depicted army as a "moral force" which followed Aung San and bore "no grudge" against its foes, like Suu Kyi, even if they "had gone astray."[658] At other times, however, Suu Kyi and NLD were "portrayed as abusing the *cetana* of the authorities."[659]

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[653] "The cetana that goes with pagoda building is ultimately based on the idea that merit is distributed by the grand donor to all who live within the kingdom. This permeation of merit throughout thereby reconfigures but also comes to constitute the kingdom" (Ibid., p. 164).

[654] "At the heart of cetana is the grand donor of Buddhist projects. Kings who conquered domains did so by immediately building pagodas or planting bodhi trees within them, thus demonstrating that their fight took place in the name of Buddhism and that they were subjecting these territories to their cetana (…) This demonstrated domination of the environment along the model of Asoka who, according to legend, built 84,000 pagodas in the communities he conquered (Ibid., p. 163). For examples, see: *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598–1885*, vol. I–X, ed. Than Tun, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto 1983–1990, pp. 11, 19 and 92.

[655] E.g. Khin Nyunt's speech, *Khun Sa Conniving with Foreign and Anti-Government Organizations and KNU for His Existence*, "New Light of Myanmar", 02.04.1995, Burma.Net News, 19.04.1995, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199504/msg00111.html (access: 16.07.2018).

[656] "I am saying all this with sincerity (*cetana*) and for the sake of the State" and "if I am wrong it is only done with sincerity (*cetana*)" (*State Law and Order Restoration Council Chairman General Saw Maung's Statement*, 5 July 1989, Burma Press Summary (from the "Working People's Daily"), July 1989, Online Burma Library, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BPS89-07-SM's_speech.pdf (access: 16.07.2018).

[657] Houtman, *Mental Culture*..., p. 165.

[658] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*..., p. 103.

[659] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, p. 162.

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Whereas *cetanā* was the Tatmadaw's legitimizing means, NLD and Suu Kyi used another Buddhist concept: *mettā* (loving-kindness), the first of *Brahmavihāras* (four sublime states of mind).[660] Although Suu Kyi kept using *mettā* throughout her career, since the mid-1990s this usage intensified to such an extent that usage of *mettā* became one of the most visible signs of Suu Kyi's Buddhisication – it became "the politics of *mettā*": Suu Kyi "had developed her own brand of Buddhist political rhetoric, based upon a combination of her genuine beliefs, her Buddhist meditation practice, and the real problem of voicing her opposition in a way that would not overly offend the military yet could successfully resonate among the people."[661]

Thus, for example, she praised *mettā* as 1) correcting moral behaviour: "the spirit of *metta* can correct antipathy and acrimony. We have to have *metta* on the individuals"[662]; as 2) being a "foundation to peace" – "peace built on exchange of privileges for the moment's expediency can lead to a more dangerous situation [when] the arrangement collapses (…) we can receive *metta* from anyone anytime, but we should think twice every time if we are offered any other material gift"[663]; "we must be able to avoid such (bad) feelings and spread *metta*"[664]; as 3) a way to empower the people "your action can tell a lot about your *metta*. Parental *metta* reflected in many ways parents keep their children happy (…) genuine *metta* should empower people, so they can stand on their own feet, and develop their own capacity"[665]; as 4) a way to ease suffering – "it means doing something about the situation by bringing whatever relief you can to those who need it the most, by caring for them, by doing what you can to help others"[666]; as

[660] *Mahā-sudassana-sutta*, Dīgha-nikāya 2, Mahā Vagga 4 (D 17/2:169-199) transl. Piya Tan, http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/36.12-Maha-Sudassana-S-d17-piya.pdf (access: 01.03.2018), pp. 101–124. Suu Kyi described *mettā* by biblical quote ("perfect love casts out fear"), saying "this is a very Buddhist attitude," for "perfect love should be *metta* which is not selfish or attached love" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 44). Perhaps Suu Kyi said this for Western audience.

[661] "When compated with her writings before the period of house arrest, Suu Kyi's political rhetoric was now enriched by a greater personal knowledge, and practice, of a subject which would be most pleasing to her listeners – Buddhism (…) In addition to promoting a deeper marriage of the spiritual with the political life, her opposition tactics now embodied a desire to practice the tools of meditation, particularly *metta*, actively and on a grand scale" (McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, pp. 168–169).

[662] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 464.

[663] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 411.

[664] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 3 March 1996 (no. 21)*…, p. 475.

[665] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 311–312.

[666] "It's not just sitting there passively saying, 'I feel sorry for them.' (…) Of course, the 'sending of loving-kindness' is very much a part of our Burmese Buddhist training. But in addition to that we have got to do more to express our *metta* and to show our compassion. And there are so many ways of doing it. For example, when the Buddha tried to stop two sides from fighting each other, he went out and stood between them. They would have had to injure him first before they could hurt

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5) a magical force that unites the NLD[667] and could be able to change everyone, even the generals: "with *metta* I would like to request the authorities to be truthful. The other day a colleague asked if it would do any good to request with *metta* from anyone who does not understand *metta* (…) Yet I think everyone has some sprouts of *metta*. Therefore I would like to ask everyone to be truthful, based on their capacity for *metta*"[668]; and as 6) a way to internalize and conquer one's enemies: "we can overcome the last arch-enemy, the person you despise, by spreading *metta*."[669] Finally, and most importantly, Suu Kyi presented *mettā* as 7) the essence of her movement, as "the core" of their movement.[670]

In Suu Kyi's upgraded, Buddhisicised rhetoric political power became transformed into moral power against one's own weaknesses. That is why Suu Kyi was saying the following: "I suppose one seeks greatness through taming one's passions. And isn't there a saying that 'it is far more difficult to conquer yourself than to conquer the rest of the world'? So, I think the taming of one's own passions, in the Buddhist way of thinking, is the chief way to greatness, no matter what the circumstances may be."[671] She supplemented it by saying that that "corruption is a state of mind,"[672] and that evil is stupidity: "I always quote something that Karl Popper said when he was asked, 'Do you believe in evil?' He said, 'No … but I believe in stupidity.' And I think this is very near to the Buddhist position. I don't think there is a word for 'evil' as such, in Buddhism, is there? I have not come across [the concept 'evil' in Buddhism the way it exists in Christianity] either. But of course, we talk of greed, anger and ignorance. That's stupidity, isn't it? Ignorance is stupidity. There's also something very stupid about greed. Greed is very short-sighted. Anger also. And short-sightedness is stupidity." [673]

This stupidity/evil is caused by imperfections (defilements) of one's own mind and – just like Aṅgulimāla and Māra – can be conquered/overcome by *mettā* (thanks to

each other. So he was defending both sides. As well as protecting others at the sacrifice of his own safety" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 43–44).

[667] "When I first think of *metta*, I feel it within our movement, especially between my colleagues and myself. We work like a family – we are not just colleagues. We have a real concern and affection for each other, which is the basis of our relationships. I think this may have a lot to do with the fact that we have to work under such difficult conditions. It's only *metta* that is strong enough to keep together people who face such repression and who are in danger of being dragged away to prison at any moment. And the longer we work together the greater our bond of *metta* grows" (Ibid., p. 160). These words are outright propagandist given the well-known factionism within NLD.

[668] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March (no. 23)*..., p. 521.

[669] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*..., p. 464.

[670] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*..., p. 179.

[671] Ibid., p. 211.

[672] "Corruption is also a state of mind which has been brought about by the political situation" (Ibid., p. 78).

[673] Ibid., p. 65; earlier she also talked about "the banality of evil" (p. 54.)

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Buddha's *mettā* Aṅgulimāla became Buddhist, while Māra disappeared),[674] as well as by spiritual practices, inner strength, self-control and purity of mind: "the battlefield within the mind is the primary arena of conflict in and of itself," while "the 'enemy' subsequently is often represented as himself attaining the state of *yahanda* which frees him also from fear"; in this regard, overcoming one's weaknesses becomes the best way to win the struggle with others, the struggle is within one's mind: "purity of thought, word and deed means that 'no one can hurt you but yourself,' so that evil is merely one's own stupidity and ignorance rooted in one's own mental defilements which must be uprooted."[675] This "internalizes the enemy and consequently, much of the political battlefield is thereby internalized too," thus "to confront the enemy directly is to tackle one's own mental impurities (…) with a clear mind in a non-confrontational and unaggressive manner, without fear."[676] The following quote from one of Suu Kyi's essays may be illustrative to this interpretation[677]: "once during my years of house arrest, one of the people who were – shall we say, 'taking care of me'? – said in an accusing tone that I was always 'on the side of the people.' Yes, I said, that was so, because I would always stand by those who were weaker; they were the ones who needed support. But, came the query, what if the weaker side were in the wrong? In that case, I replied, I would try to correct them with *metta* (…) later I asked myself what one would do if *metta* did not succeed in correcting those who were weak but quite patently in the wrong. The conclusion at which I arrived was that one would have to work at perfecting one's *metta* because perfect *metta* cannot fail."[678]

Another interpretation sees Suu Kyi's usage of "active *mettā*" as a hallmark of her version of engaged Buddhism by which she tried to "move away from the ritualistic, hierarchical platform for merit-making into which Buddhism had developed and give it a more modern outreach, presenting it as a path to achieve an alternative vision of global, sustainable and ethical society"; in this interpretation *mettā* is "active, self-sacrificial and with an unselfish motive to protect others – three qualities which underline interdependence, the core concept of Engaged Buddhism."[679] Thus, accordingly, "it is

[674] Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 325–330.

[675] Ibid., pp. 327–328.

[676] Ibid., p. 328.

[677] These words (being "always on the side of the people") may also be considered as an outright propagandist piece of rhetoric, too. It is especially interesting to read these words ("standing by the weaker") from the perspective of 2018, after Letpadaung 2013 issue and after rather unsuccessful two and half years of Suu Kyi in power – there are not many examples of her standing by the weaker.

[678] Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes*…, p. 19.

[679] "Engaged Buddhism focus not so much on the cessation of individual *dukkha* but place individuals against the larger social web, living in conditions of interdependence with a compulsive need to care for the welfare of other so that eventually the individual himself is released from suffering. For Suu Kyi the quality of loving-kindness is even more elemental than justice or the defence of basic human rights for a society" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 297–298).

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because in a *mettā* driven society human rights are a pre-supposed condition that she equated such a society with a participatory democratic form of government"; so, this interpretation goes, for Suu Kyi "a fuller democracy was one where love and compassion were interpreted in political terms" – thus "entire superstructure of a democracy with its connotations of equality, human rights and criterion of co-responsibility could be built on a single word – *mettā*."[680]

These interpretations are naturally favourable ones. A critical commentator might doubt that the NLD leaders were so politically naïve (or so hypocritical); one could equally consider this a benevolent rhetoric aimed at softening the generals and/or presenting the opposition to the public as morally superior. Combined with the NLD's political agency of supporting Western sanction against the Myanmar regime (sanctions being a rather "hard" political measure),[681] this policy could have equalled to "carrot and stick" one. Whatever reason, judging by political perspective, this "internalization of enemy" done by Suu Kyi, Tin U, U Kyi Maung and other NLD leaders, was a political tactic, born out of the dire situation of the opposition, squeezed and pushed to the corner by the regime.

Thus, this tactic was based on a hope – desperate if genuine, hypocritical if not (it is debatable whether the NLD's leadership indeed thought this way or whether it just presented it to mobilise its shrinking supporters or spin doctoring reality) – that by this kind of moral example the opposition would be able to convince the generals to relinquish the power. "In essence, Suu Kyi and her NLD executive companions, U Tin Oo and U Kyi Maung (..) had decided to try to feel affection towards their tyrants as a means of persuading the Tatmadaw to the bargaining table," it was "a non-violent threat to the generals' legitimacy."[682] This moral approach was supposed to wake up their sleeping consciousness and to convince them to correct their immoral behaviour; the following

Suu Kyi herself declared that she believed in engaged Buddhism (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 33).

[680] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 298–299. This applies to NLD as well: "to her a political party can be truly democratic when its power arises from the *metta* of the people and it is the *metta* of the party for the people which helps it to navigate the right path" (Ibid., p. 312). I think this moral approach explains why Suu Kyi has been so harsh in her dealings with dissidents inside her party ("traitors" and "renegades" in her language, see: subchapter on unity).

[681] Sengupta tries to justify Suu Kyi's call for sanctions – one of the few weapons Suu Kyi had (and used) by deploying this *mettā* -centred interpretation ("according to Suu Kyi, if economic development occurred after the process of democratization based on *metta* and justice, then it would be natural for the more fortunate to extend their hand in assistance to the less prosperous" (Ibid., p. 299) yet this is unconvincing at best, and self-defeating at worst, as it is hard not to see the practical benefits of sanctions' policy from Suu Kyi's own, personal, political perspective (without sanctions she could have been easily marginalized by the generals).

[682] "Her Buddhist political rhetoric, born of a deeper marriage between the spiritual and the political lives, though based upon her genuine beliefs, would naturally intimidate the generals and

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words of Suu Kyi demonstrate this: "they are unaware of five precepts"; "they're like blinkered horse"; "why do they not see the picture as a whole"; "a lot of people who commit injustices don't see what they don't want to see"; "they're blind to the injustice of their own actions"; "the authorities don't want to see the truth"; "it's the story of SLORC."[683] Suu Kyi declared this policy of the NLD in length in the following speech: "our party is thriving on *Metta*. We have no power, we have no weapons. We also don't have much money (…) What are our foundations? It is *Metta*. Rest assured that if we should lose this *Metta*, the whole democratic party would disintegrate. *Metta* is not only to be applied to those that are connected with you. It should also be applied on those who are against you. *Metta* means sympathy for others. Not doing unto others what one does not want done to oneself. It means not obstructing the responsibilities of those whom one has *Metta*. It not only means not wanting harm to befall one's own family, but also not wanting harm to befall the families of others. So our League does [not] wish to harm anyone (…) We are an organization that is free from grudge and puts *Metta* to the fore."[684] She dotted the "i" elsewhere: "some people might think it is either idealistic or naïve to talk about *metta* in terms of politics, but to me it makes a lot of practical good sense"[685]; because "the spiritual dimension becomes particularly important in a struggle in which deeply held convictions and strength of mind are the chief weapons against armed repression."[686]

Indeed, this *mettā*-based approach had some practical sense: "while this may be considered an extremely theoretical persona for a modern-day politician to adopt, it should not be forgotten that practically the NLD wield no effective political power whatsoever within Burma"; hence "the NLD executive's decision to pursue their current line of political rhetoric comes as a direct consequence of their being denied political power by the Tatmadaw"; consequently, "if Suu Kyi appears idealistic in her speeches and writings when compared with less idealistic politicians who hold power, therefore, perhaps it is the very denial of power which creates this rhetorical trait," hence "Suu Kyi's ideals, belief, and rhetoric are to a large degree based on and suffused with 'notions of empowerment' i.e. empowering herself, the NLD, and the Burmese people."[687]

provoke the kind of response which has played itself out in recent years" (McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, pp. 171–172).

[683] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 64, 181 and 222.

[684] *Statement by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Closing Ceremony of the 9th NLD Party Congress, 29 September 1997*, Burma.Net News, 16.10.1997, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199710/msg00228.html (access: 18.11.2018).

[685] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 45.

[686] Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 50)*…, p. 199.

[687] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*…, p. 173.

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The NLD's attitude was a reference to stories from *Seyya-jātaka*[688] and *Ekarāja-jātaka* (see: chapter one) where an usurper invader Kosala conquered a kingdom and put its king, Brahmadatta, in the jail, but the deposed Brahmadatta released *mettā* which caused tremendous suffering on Kosala, forcing him to release Brahmadatta and give him back his kingdom.[689] On a more theoretical level, Suu Kyi's (and the NLD's) Buddhist rhetoric provides "a good example of Reynold's description of the dual structure within the Theravada Buddhist tradition" ("Two Wheels of Dhamma," see: earlier part of this book); "her promotion of active *mettā* follows in 'the tradition of the 'true Dhamma' which could be actualized within the context of the ordinary structures of social and political life"; moreover, "within this dual structure there exist 'two intimately interwoven patterns of community life,' the *Saṅgha* and 'the ideal of a Buddhist state governed by a pious monarch who modelled his rule after the example of Asoka'" – while Aśoka's "true dhamma" was (according to his edicts) "a moral teaching and meditational practice," Suu Kyi's "own political interpretation of the Buddhist Dhamma, along with her vipassana meditation practice, embodies her own creation of true Dhamma" – she "has adopted the persona of a modern-day *min laung*, a king in the making or contender to the throne, seeking to prove that she has the religious merit necessary to claim her legitimate Cakkavatti status."[690]

From here was derived the NLD's conviction of possessing the moral right, best caught by Suu Kyi's slogan "right is might."[691] It is, however, quite unsurprising that the generals, who enjoyed the almost unquestioned political power, were unwilling to concede to moral dictate of the opposition which had nothing, except the moral right (that means politically next to nothing). The biggest drawback of this moral narrative was

[688] *Seyya-jātaka*, *The Jataka,* vol. II, transl. W.H.D. Rouse, 1895, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j2/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018); *Ekarāja-jātaka, The Jataka*, vol. III, transl. H.T. Francis, R.A. Neil, 1897, http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j3/index.htm (access: 02.03.2018).

[689] Houtman, *Mental Culture*..., p. 326.

[690] McCarthy, *The Political Theory of Tyranny*..., pp. 172–173.

[691] She explained her slogan the following way: "we have to rely on our moral and ethical principles. We have to depend on our solidarity. If we have strong principles and are united no power or money can bully us. I would like you to always keep in mind that the strength of our principles and our solidarity is mightier than that of political power and money" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 14 October 1995 (no. 7)*…, p. 175); "if you say that you want to change a system where might is right, then you have to prove that right is might. You can't use might in order to bring about what you think is right and then still insist that right is might. People are not fooled by that" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 115). She also declared that she believed "that in the end, right will prevail – the light will have to come" and said that today's world "the world is better (…) we are less barbaric, people as a whole are more civilized"; she continued with the example that in monarchical times the kings could do what they pleased, whereas now the generals deny the atrocities – "that's progress" she emphasized several times (Ibid., pp. 172–173).

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that the *Jātaka* analogy with Kosala/Brahmadatta was an incorrect one. It was a wrong comparison. The Tatmadaw's military junta was not king Kosala.

More important than political divagations here, however, is the analysis of these discrepancies from the point of view of political thought. Suu Kyi versus the generals struggle produced a fascinating context of two competing, different political philosophies, both international and Burmese at the same time.

Let's start from the international angle. Even at first glance one can easily see similarities not only to authoritarianism (*āṇā*) and democracy (*awza*) but also to two meta political philosophies: political realism[692] (the generals) versus idealism/liberalism (Suu Kyi).

The Tatmadaw's political realism (so frequently presented as cynicism) can well be seen in several aspects. First, in realist, bitter – one may say, Hobbesian – understanding of the nature of politics in general, visible in the words and actions of the Tatmadaw from at least the 1950s.[693] Second, in its stress on the state's sovereignty which fits well into realist core concept of anarchic international relations and to realist belief in the state as the major actor in world politics unconcerned with external, supranational aspects, such as human rights and other ideologies. Hence, "the Tatmadaw as a defender of State authority made use of state monopoly of the use of force and claimed that such actions was legitimate under international law," thus "a particularistic approach was taken, which was defended against criticism based on reference to international principles by stressing the right of every country to handle its own affairs without foreign intervention."[694] Third, in its realist, or to be correct, omnibalancing, understanding of domestic politics as a "microcosm of international politics"[695] which led to the assumption that in order to stay in power, military leaders had to successfully balance internal

[692] Naturally political realism is a general, wide – if not vague – term that encompasses a various meanings and interpretations; this is, however, not the place to elaborate on that: I understand "political realism" here after Morgenthau as a political philosophy that "appeals to historical precedent rather that abstract principle," dismisses "a modernistic prejudice that takes for granted the superiority of the present over the past" and claims that the world is "imperfect as it is from the rational point of view," being "the result of forces inherent in human nature"; world is thus inherently a place of "opposing interests and of conflict among them," where "moral principles can never be fully realized but must at best be approximated through the ever temporary balancing of interests and the ever precarious settlement of conflicts"; therefore, political realism, "aims at the realization of the lesser evil rather than of the absolute good" (Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among the Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace,* 6th edition, Knopf, New York 1985, p. 4).

[693] Colonel Maung Maung's criticism of U Nu may be illustrative here: "U Nu thinks we can make friends with everybody: friendliness is okay but we need to have a big stick," quoted in Callahan, *Making Enemies*…, p. 162.

[694] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 108 and 145.

[695] David, *Explaining Third World Alignment*…, p. 234.

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threat (that is – the NLD) as primary one.[696] Fourth, in survival strategy of the regime: the generals understood that the global order had shifted and that the internal democratic movement supported (even if only morally) by the hegemonic global power constituted their primary threat,[697] thus they chose to crush the NLD at the expense of national interests (staying in power was more important that the interests of the state).[698] This, fifth, enforced the foreign policy of "isolationism without isolation"[699] best seen by the words attributed to Than Shwe expressed in Palmerston-style sentence: "there is no such thing as an eternal enemy or friend. We are not kissing China because we love China."[700]

As for Suu Kyi, she appealed to the UN, and foreign governments and international organizations, called for pressure, condemnation and sanctions[701] and her attitude was

[696] These include (mis)perceptions, (mis)trust and an (in)ability to see other states' intentions; state elites and institutions that affect the power or character of leaders. In other words, attention is paid to values and ideas that influence actions and choices (Gideon Rose, *Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*, "World Politics", vol. 51, Issue 1, October 1998, pp. 144–172; Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016).

[697] The inward-looking, xenophobic and nationalistic military regime under Than Shwe was prone to paranoia and misperception of the Western intentions. The generals, with their scant knowledge of the outside world, overestimated the Western intentions: they wrongly saw criticism and sanctions primarily as a means to overthrow them (despite a strongly expressed condemnation coming from Washington and other Western capitals, and despite the fact that the US policymakers were keen to displace the military regime, they did not take serious action to overthrow the junta).

[698] Burma case after 1988 confirms the basic assumptions of omnibalancing theory that Global South countries' "leaders are weak and illegitimate and that the stakes for domestic politics are very high (…) the most powerful determinant of alignment is the drive of (…) leaders to ensure their political and physical survival (…) they will sometimes protect themselves at the expense of the interests of the state" (David, *Explaining Third World Alignment*…, p. 236).

[699] Renaud Egreteau, Larry Jagan, *Back to Old Habits Isolationism or the Self-Preservation of Burma's Military Regime*, Irasec, Bangkok 2008, http://www.reseau-asie.com/ouvrage/books/books/back-to-the-old-habits-isolationism-or-the-self-preservation-of-burma-s-military-regime/ (access: 02.07.2018), pp. 47–85.

[700] Benedict Rogers, *Than Shwe. Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai 2010, p. 139.

[701] E.g. Aung San Suu Kyi, *Two Letters to Amnesty International*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 208–210; Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 25, 193–194 and 218; Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*…, pp. 87–89; Adrian Levy, *Portrait. Aung San Suu Kyi*, "Prospect Magazine", Issue 65, July 2001, p. 2. It is important to note that once Suu Kyi achieved the position of political power, she significantly moved away from this internationalization, instead hailing the ASEAN's Way and its policy based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: "the principles of dialogue, consensus, cooperation and non-interference have enabled the Association to overcome many challenges and to remain relevant throughout its half-century of existence. These principles have served as a foundation for building mutual trust, friendship and cooperation, not only within the region

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based – in accordance with liberal/idealistic understanding of politics, and international politics – on human, universal values, such as human rights,[702] or maybe simply: on values in politics.[703] That is why she many times evoked The Declaration of Human Rights denying the ultimate legitimacy of the state in favour of supranational concepts.[704] Right from the beginning of her entry into the Burmese politics in 1988, she based her argumentation "on universal and timeless standards laid down in the Declaration of Human Rights (…) she claimed that these rights had been violated by the leaders of the Tatmadaw" – she also "called upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the basic standards of the United Nations, as the yardsticks for assessing Burmese political and legal matters" to charge "the military with not abiding by universal standards of law."[705] She, too, based her argumentation on the rejection of personalized justice, or

but also beyond (…) ASEAN provides a model for peaceful borders, and wider regional harmony. ASEAN's recipe for success is consultation and more consultation until consensus is reached and cooperation made possible. The ASEAN Way has served us well as we navigated the waters of our constantly changing world during the last fifty years" (*Speech Delivered by H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar*…)

[702] "I believe that respect for the inherent dignity of man is the key to genuine progress for a nation"; "fundamental to the sort of development which enhances the quality of life is justice," hence "the importance of the struggle for human rights" (Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes*…, p. 22); "everybody understands the fundamental human desire for freedom and security. What we want in Burma is both security and freedom; freedom from want and freedom from fear; freedom to be allowed to pursue our own interests – obviously, without harming other people's interests. At the same time we want the security that allows us to pursue these interests without fear of other people's interference. Real freedom cannot exist without security. An insecure person is never free" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 73).

[703] Examples from *The Voice of Hope*: "honesty is the best policy" (p. 57); "you lose more by deception" (p. 58); "in politics greatness is defined as the capacity to inspire other people to join a great cause" (p. 210); asked what is the core of her NLD movement, she replied: "inner strength. It's the spiritual steadiness that comes from the belief that what you are doing is right, even if it doesn't bring you immediate concrete benefits. It's the fact that you are doing something that helps to shore up your spiritual powers. It's very powerful" (p. 166); and she elaborated on truth as a weapon: "truth is a powerful weapon. And truth – like anything that is powerful – can be frightening or reassuring depending on which side you are on. If you're on the side of truth, it's very reassuring – you have its protection. But if you're on the side if untruth – then it's very frightening' (p. 57); "political integrity means just plain honesty in politics. One of the most important things is never to deceive the people. Any politicians who deceives the people either for the sake of his party of because he imagines it's for the sake of the people, is lacking in political integrity" (p. 25). A recent one: "if we don't do it in the right way, no matter how good our goal is, our journey will get twisted and eventually our goal will be destroyed. Therefore, we must get what we want in the right way" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…)

[704] E.g., Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear*…, p. 182; Suu Kyi, *In Quest of Democracy*…, p. 175.

[705] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 143 and 145.

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injustice in Burma.[706] Thus, for example, she was saying that everyone has a sense of justice (and injustice) regardless or his/her nationality, status and religion, only justice guarantees peace and happiness: "one cannot be bought or bribed into happiness. Patting on the back of a people will not make them happy for long. Our country will be peaceful when there is relative happiness brought about by just means (…) Everyone wants justice. You know an act of injustice when [you] feel one. Maybe not everyone is able to stand up for herself, but everyone knows what injustice is."[707] And later, when she faced the bizarre incident with John Yettaw, an American trespasser, she justified hosting him against the junta's law,[708] invoking "the 'law of humanity,' which demands following ones' conscience regardless of the consequences."[709] Another example of her universalization approach can be found in her usage of *Justitia* (Lady Justice) metaphor for universal "blind justice" based on "objectivity and impartiality," regardless of the circumstances which she combines with *dhamma*: "in the West, law is symbolized by Lady Justice who is seen balancing the scales of truth and fairness in one hand and a sword in the other hand. The blindfold represents objectivity and impartiality of blind justice. The balanced scales symbolize fairness in that justice can weigh the arguments presented by both sides, the prosecutors and the prosecuted at the court. The sword will punish the person who is found guilty. Since our country is Buddhist, I believe that the Lady Justice should not wield the sword alone, should also keep dhamma in her hand. If our Lady Justice is holding a sword in one hand, without scales in her other hand and if she is not blindfolded, our country will go topsy-turvy. Therefore if one wants to use a sword, one must be blindfolded and must hold scales in the other hand."[710]

[706] "If there is no equality in the eyes of justice, how can people live peacefully. How can our people be happy? Justice should not be personalized, justice should be justice (…) The authorities are blatantly violating their own law as their acts are based on personal acrimonies" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 23 December 1995 (no. 23)*…, p. 516).

[707] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 275. That is why everyone should dare to stand against injustice: "at least we should be able to question the acts of injustice (…) we have to speak up for justice. If we don't nobody will speak for us when they come for us" (Ibid.).

[708] *Letter Submitted by Suu Kyi to the Court, Announcement No. 14-05-09, 27.05.2009*, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs07/Suu_Kyi%27s_Letter_to_the_Court.pdf (access: 25.10.2018).

[709] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 123.

[710] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 24 February 1996 (no. 19)*…, p. 529; she evoked *Justitia* on another occasion, emphasising the Buddhist element in her interpretation: "the aim of law, as I see it, shouldn't be punishment. The purpose of law should be deterrent against punishable crimes (…) Punishable crimes are action that can damage society (…) Yet instead of punishing a murderer only after the deed is done, wouldn't it be better to create an environment where a potential murder can be prevented? (…) Crime prevention is less costly for the society. To dissuade people from crime is far better than to punish them only after they are found guilty of criminal act (…) The

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Suu Kyi's internationalization is interesting, for she combined it with Burmese legal traditions – Suu Kyi adopted "the Western concept of law, symbolized by Lady Justice, as an absolute touchstone to assess the situation in Myanmar, with a small addition of dhamma to the sword. By this yardstick Myanmar is lawless, and worse off than a state in which anarchy prevails. By relating lawlessness in Myanmar to the present 'bullyist rule of power' she stamps the ruling military junta as being the absolute antipode of the Maha-Sammata, they mythic first ruler of the world, who saved the people from perishing under anarchy. No company can be kept with such people, who do not respect the Buddha's teaching. As a consequence, civil disobedience is needed."[711]

Suu Kyi's universalization is complemented by her accent on no-violence, democracy, education (see: previous chapters); and on dialogue,[712] which according to Suu

social condition where people are not tempted to thievery is far more desirable than the situation where people are hanged for thievery (…) it would be great if we were able to create an incorruptible environment" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 409).

[711] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 147. According to Zöllner, Suu Kyi's following of Burmese legal tradition can also be seen in her reluctance to make personal guarantees to the military leaders (see: earlier part of this book) – "here Suu Kyi's Buddhist way of looking at things is evident, in line with the traditions of Buddhist law that aimed at dissolving conflicts not by way of enforcing legal norms, but by advocating harmony (…) traditional Burmese-Buddhist law at all levels aims at the regulation of conflict and tries to avoid confrontation and, in consequence, to avoid harsh sentences below the level of the security of the State" (Ibid., pp. 139–141).

[712] "Dialogue… dialogue can lead to a lot of things… you talk, you talk about your problems, you talk about your differences" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *The Need for Dialogue*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, pp. 252–255); "some people might not believe in what we believe. But I must reassure you, dialogue will happen one day. Dialogue is the only way. We can't avoid the road to dialogue. (…) The longer the journey to dialogue is, the more the people will suffer" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 7 January 1996 (no. 13)*…, p. 290); "if there is will, there will be dialogue (…) If someone wants a dialogue with us, she is always welcome. We will never say 'No!' to a dialogue. Our thinking is always orientated towards why dialogue should happen. It should happen for the good of the country (…) We believe that only a political dialogue can solve a multitude of problems in this country" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, p. 316). Suu Kyi even offered dialogue as a way to save the people from forced labour: "we cannot ignore the repeated *dukkha* of the people (…) I see that they are objecting forced labour because of its inherent gross injustice and authoritarianism. U would like to urge the people to negotiate with your local authority. Please try. Do no say that you do not have to guts. I don't like the excuse 'I don't dare to do it.' For 'I don't want to do it.' You have to try to convince the authorities how forced labour is endangering your livelihood. First we need to find out if a negotiation is possible. We need to investigate the possibilities. We hold that there must be negotiation to solve any problem. We should not give up on anything without an attempt. (…) We still have to test the waters. Nothing is going to get done if we just sit on an issue and do nothing. We have to try. We have to do things ourselves for ourselves. Unity is key here. If our people speak in one voice, your campaign will be a success. 'A different mouth, a different voice' will not get us anywhere. We have to tell the authorities what

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Kyi, is "the custom of our civilization"[713] and "a very human way" worth of "civilized citizens"[714] (this prompted Silverstein to interpret her thought as a belief "that the resolution of all problems and differences is best achieved through free discussion or dialogue")[715]; on empowerment[716]; human development[717]; negotiations[718]; confidence-building[719]; and peace.[720]

Her idealism – naïve and strongly idealistic, if authentic – can also be traced indirectly in 1) her words about history and writing history: "real heroes never die, because they will live in history and even if someone tries to distort history, the people will know

is possible and tolerable and what's not if we are forced into corvee. (…) our inaction will only prolong our suffering (…) People's unity is strength in their campaign against injustice" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, p. 272); "we are ready for any dialogue as long as there is unity among ourselves, the people behind us and the truth on our side (…) You have to both the truth and the people behind you, a firm foundation for any negotiations. On every level of our governance, if all of us try to settle our own problem by dialogue, this will become national tradition (…) dialogue is the only way" (Ibid., p. 274).

[713] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 30 March (no. 23)*…, p. 513.

[714] "Adventures of dialogue: there is no causality. Gun fights kill and wound people. Speech fight might hurt your ears a little bit however (…) For a human it is best to live and communicate like human. One can learn from contemporary happenings, one needs not delve into worldly history if one wishes to know whether dialogue is desirable. You will see that there have been slaughters and carnages and creeks of blood. In the end, there has always been a solution through dialogue. I have said many times that smart people go to the negotiation table sooner. They do not want any casualty. But those who trust their blood only are swayed by their blood and bloody events usually ensue. As civilized citizens, we have to engage in dialogue to solve any problem. We can understand this better from a family perspective. If there is a fight within a family, you don't throw tables and chairs at your family members (…) If we sit down and talk to our family members and find a solution, there won't be any injury. Our neighbours wont' look down on us" (Ibid., pp. 513–514).

[715] Silverstein, *The Idea of Freedom*…, p. 227.

[716] Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…., pp. 260–270.

[717] Ibid., p. 271.

[718] "In colonial Burma, we had blamed the *Chattiya* money lenders. Now we point finger at our own people. This really troubles my mind. Our peasants too should talk to the authorities in one voice (…) We believe that finding a solution through negotiation is the best way to go. As such, we are prepared to face hardship. Our approach will take time but, on the long term, we will enjoy two advantages. First a negotiation entails little casualty. A dialogue may stress you out but that's the worst thing that can happen. Secondly, the precedent of a negotiated settlement will benefit future generations. Therefore we have to find ways to talk to the authorities in one voice. Our League is bold enough to ask for a dialogue. We are united. Besides, people are standing firm behind us" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech*, *Saturday, 6 January 1996 (no. 12)*…, pp. 237–274).

[719] Suu Kyi, *The Need for Dialogue*…, pp. 252–255.

[720] "The common goal of all the people of Burma should be nothing other than peace and prosperity of the country. If we all share the same goal there is no reason we cannot work together" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*…, p. 223).

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the truth. 'History never lies.' It puts on record the good and the bad deeds of everyone, so that even in the days of absolute monarchy, bad kings could not black out from history their bad deeds"[721]; in 2) her thoughts about the nature of human beings ("I believe in inherent goodness of some people and I think there is both good and bad in everyone. It's a matter of which bits you cultivate")[722] and 3) about good and bad in general ("what I've learned in life is that it's always your own wrongdoing that causes you the greatest suffering. It is never what other people do to you. Perhaps this is due to the way in which I was brought up. My mother instilled in me the principle that wrongdoing never pays, and my own experience has proved that to be true. Also, if you have positive feelings towards other people they can't do anything to you – they can't frighten you. I think that if you stop loving other people then you really suffer")[723] and in 4) her thoughts about nationalism.[724]

These all aspects made Suu Kyi a representative of idealistic/liberal school of international politics that "believes a rational and moral political order, derived from universally valid abstract principles" is possible, that "assumes the essential goodness and infinite malleability of human nature, and blames the failure of the social order to measure up to the rational standards on lack of knowledge and understanding, obsolescent social institutions, or the depravity of certain isolated individuals or groups" and that "trusts in education, reform."[725] In short, Suu Kyi, judging from this international angle, was a Burmese equivalent of a group of people who engage in politics with optimistic assumption ("politics is about people and I have sought to bring out the human face of our political struggle")[726] and who – by doing so – hope to make this world a better place to live. Suu Kyi declared it openly a couple of times: "I'm doing my bit to try to make

[721] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 20 November (no. 8)*…, p. 191.

[722] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 94.

[723] Ibid., p. 73.

[724] "The criterion to one's nationalism must be set against the effort with which one keeps his or her people happy (…) The people who are recognized as great nationalist, both in the world and our own history, were those whose efforts have graced their nation and their nationals. The action of a nationalist must live up to people's expectations. Whatever they do should bring pride and prestige to their country and his people. I am sure you know the difference between nationalism and patriotism. I prefer the term patriotism, devotion to one's country, to nationalism, devotion to one's nation. You have nationalism when you work for your country's progress and keep your people happy. Nationalism should not be weighed or measured. Everyone is capable of nationalism. One cannot say that I have more nationalism than others. Nationalism is not a private property, it's public. Therefore we cannot set an accurate standard of measurement for nationalism. History will reveal who has nationalism" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, 20 January 1996 (no. 14)*…, pp. 311–312).

[725] Morgenthau, *Politics Among the Nations*…, p. 4.

[726] "I have tried to present politics as multifaceted and indissolubly linked to social and economic issues" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (*Letter no. 52*)…, p. 207).

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the world a better place"[727]; "together we can help to develop a happier, better world where greed and ill will and selfishness are minimised. This is not impractical idealism, it is down-to-earth recognition of our greatest needs"; "we can certainly seek to make our planet a better, happier home for all of us by constructing the heavenly abodes of love and compassion in our hearts."[728] And once when writing that "we are so much in need of a brighter world" she evoked Karl Popper's words to make her point: "the dream of a society ruled by loving kindness, reason and justice is a dream as old as civilized man. Does it have to be an impossible dream? Karl Popper, explaining his abiding optimism in so troubled a world as ours, said that the darkness had always been there but the light was new. Because it is new it has to be tended with care and diligence."[729]

This was the international perspective on the dichotomy between Suu Kyi and the generals. Much more important, however, was the Burmese perspective. Despite differences, both sides used similar concepts, though in a contrasting ways. For example, both claimed that they were sacrificing themselves: the Tatmadaw referred "to its past and present deeds performed out of *cetana* and asks the people to trust in its good intentions," while Suu Kyi talked "about the future of Burma in which people engage themselves in politics, not just stand by and watch [what] the government does, as in the past under the BSPP"; moreover, both sides presented role models – the Tatmadaw itself, as "an institution with corporate identity that is both firm and flexible," while Suu Kyi envisaged "the ideal of a civil society composed of engaged and politically-aware individuals who dare to intervene in politics even if they put themselves at risk."[730] Despite these dissimilar ways, both sides had "a lot in common" – they "regard Aung San as the personification if their respective ideal" (though Suu Kyi eventually won this struggle, see: earlier part of this book), they both stressed "discipline and unity" and propagated "a comprehensive solution to the country's problems, leaving little space for compromise," drawing "a clear line of demarcation" – the Tatmadaw's vision saw "any

[727] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 221; she also declared, in an openly idealised manner, "why can't we all be friends? It's exhausting being enemies" (Ibid., p. 49); and she used a beautiful, touching metaphor: "I'm thinking of a book I once read, by Rebecca West. She was talking about musicians and artists as a 'procession of saints always progressing towards an impossible goal.' I see myself like that – as part of a procession, a dynamic process, doing all that we can to move towards more good and justice; a process that is not isolated from what has happened before or what will come after. And I do whatever I have to do along the path, whether it's sowing seeds or reaping the harvest or (laughing)" (Ibid., p. 93).

[728] Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Adobes*…, pp. 23–24.

[729] She continued the following: "it is true that even the smallest light cannot he extinguished by all the darkness in the world, because darkness is wholly negative. It is merely an absence of light. But a small light cannot dispel acres of encircling gloom. It needs to grow stronger, to shed its brightness further and further. And people need to accustom their eyes to the light to see it as an benediction rather than a pain, to learn to love it" (Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 247).

[730] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, pp. 103–104.

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attempt to harm the integrity and honour of the armed forces as an insult and a threat to national security" whereas Suu Kyi's vision was "painted against the black picture of military misrule through the last decades, tolerated by the people but cause by bad leadership."[731]

Both these visions were moral visions – "the political sphere was dominated by a morality based on virtues directly or indirectly derived from Buddhist teachings" (earlier "exemplified by Nu's 'Buddhist Socialism' and Ne Win's 'Burmese Socialism'") – which made the art of politics a moral quest ("the question of political credibility based on the virtue of speaking the truth played a dominant role") and severely limited space for compromise: "political controversies were accompanied by inter-personal rhetoric of disdain and self-justification with regard to the moral attitudes of the political actor and the political opponent (…) the motif of ultimate sacrifice on both sides only intensified the confrontation."[732] Unsurprisingly, then, that the communication between Suu Kyi (and her followers) on one side and the generals on the other from the very beginning until 2011 "followed the pattern 'I will not do what you want if you don't do what I want.'"[733]

On a deeper level, the generals and Suu Kyi represented two archetypes of political thinking, both based on philosophical understanding of human nature in accordance with Buddhism. Human beings are imperfect creatures, driven by impossible to satisfy craving that produces suffering/lack of satisfaction; at the same time, however, human beings are able to overcome this state of affairs and achieve *nibbāna*. Thus, the most important question is "are humans primarily defined by their desire-driven natures or by their capacity for liberation and enlightenment?"[734] Or, in the terminology proposed in this book, is the pessimistic understanding more valid or the optimistic one? The approach to this question philosophically differed the generals and Suu Kyi.

The former emphasized the pessimistic understanding: the fallible, corruptible, craving-driven nature of human beings: that a human being is hurting himself/herself and, by extension, others. This pessimistic understanding necessitates establishing a strong, authoritarian political power to maintain order, so that to control the people, save from anarchy and enforce morality. In other words, a strongman-type government is needed, to keep a tight rein on the society, for otherwise they would start transgressing, hurting and killing one another, producing anarchy and a total collapse of morality. The implications are very clear: "if one sees human beings as inherently and unavoidably driven by craving to commit evil deeds, then political authority is a necessary response."[735] This was a traditional legitimization (see: earlier parts of this book) and it was this concept the

[731] Ibid., p. 104.
[732] Ibid., pp. 117–118.
[733] Ibid., p. 487.
[734] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, pp. 31–32 and 71.
[735] Ibid., pp. 83–84.

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generals referred to in 1988 and after: as "being a necessary attempt to keep the chaotic tendencies of human nature at bay (…) the maintenance of law and order was viewed by the military leaders as a precondition for the attainment of economic and democratic progress."[736] That is why the Tatmadaw's concept of democracy (or politics and political systems in general) "had very strong elements of guardianship and was founded on an inherent scepticism about the capacity of individual citizens" – a concept "firmly anchored in traditional Burmese-Buddhist notion of politics according to which a strong political authority was pre-requisite for a thriving sasana" (Buddhist community).[737] In accordance with this understanding, power cannot be given to the people – for the people are fallible – as it would directly lead to disintegration of the state, desolation of the country, and ultimate moral fall of the society. In the Tatmadaw's vision "while the framework was Buddhist, the end objective it sought was unity and a stable Union of Myanmar"; to achieve that "correct conduct was expected from citizens: a compliance with rules and procedures and an ability to rise above selfish interests for the sake of greater good"; in short "democracy demanded the submerging of individual will to the greater will of the state."[738] This is the origin of slogan of the army that says it all: "the disciplined democracy."[739]

Suu Kyi, on the other hand, although admitted that human beings are imperfect,[740] rejected this pessimistic understanding in favour of an optimistic one in which "humans are capable of controlling and even overcoming our enslavement to desire, living morally worthy lives and (for a select few) stepping completely out of the cycle of suffering and continued existence"; the optimistic argument "claims that the purpose of a political system is to organize society in such a way that it not only encourages correct moral practice among citizens, but also supports those who seek liberation from the conditions of existence."[741] What is important here – and perhaps indeed is Suu Kyi's "greatest contribution" (at least intellectual) – is that she offered the people of her country "the alternate vision" of Burma's political thinking ("an alternate reality"; "more acceptable because it is organically linked to the country's cultural past"), "while staying within the dominant Burmese culture"; she simply "flipped a coin": whether it was her "reinterpretations of Burmese nationalism or the Burmese way to democracy or the popular

[736] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 145. "men may, of course, have order without liberty, but they cannot have liberty without order. Authority has to exist before it can be limited" (Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, New Heaven 1968, pp. 7–8).

[737] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 290.

[738] Ibid., pp. 290–291.

[739] *Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt*…; *The Constitution of the Union of Myanmar 2008*…

[740] E.g. she started her essay on heavenly abodes from words "from the point of view of an ordinary, imperfect human being" (Suu Kyi, *Heavenly Abodes*…, p. 15).

[741] Walton, *Politics in the Moral Universe*…, p. 107.

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practice of Buddhism"; instead of "a top-down, authoritative, state-driven set of directives which these concepts had developed into," she "presented them as non-coercive philosophies meant for exploration of the individual inner world, as an inward journey towards that 'concept of perfection' which lay at the root of all human responsibility."[742] From this optimistic reinterpretation of the Burmese political thought originates Suu Kyi's "emphasis on the role of the citizens in enabling the democratic vision" – her concept of democracy, equally entrenched within the Theravāda Buddhism framework "laid equal emphasis on unity and national interest and yet had at its core an individual's capacity for correct moral practice rather than obedience to authoritarian rules and regulations"; that is why "she placed people and leadership on the same plain and proposed a non-coercive unity of purpose to achieve prosperity and security for all"; in Suu Kyi's view "in individual formed the core of any democratic system"; it was "an educated individual, capable of sound judgement and moral discretion, who upheld a democratic state with his independent decision making, whether he worked for the government or was an ordinary citizen was immaterial."[743] Suu Kyi's stress on the ability of the people (who can disobey unjust orders, who can be educated and who can succeed in grass-root activities) is not only a Burmese equivalent of "yes, we can," but more importantly, this is an attitude that follows the optimistic argument concerning human beings' nature (their possibility of overcoming fallible characters) – that people can take matters into their hands, they can build democracy and make Burma a better place to live.

As a summary of this ideologically binary extremes between Suu Kyi and the generals, one may quote one of the threads of Suu Kyi's rallies over the gate. When Suu Kyi was extolling virtues of democracy against the vices of military dictatorship, she told her audience the story of ancient Greece's Peloponnesian War, emphasized the democratic heritage of Athens[744] and theorizing about the duration of political systems (only good ones, like democracy would eventually prevail) – "Athenian ideology and philosophy have been studied and respected throughout the world history. On the other hand, the militant Sparta did not leave us much to remember for. The world did not inherit anything from Sparta. To Athens, however, the world is forever grateful for its endless resources. Any part or any system, therefore, if based on brute force, will only be transitory. A party or a system based on the reasoning of our heart and mind, is beneficial not only for our country, but also for the world and the humanity."[745] These

[742] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 326.

[743] Ibid., pp. 290–291.

[744] Suu Kyi clearly feels attached to Athens' democratic tradition, for she elsewhere quoted Aeschylus and commented that of "an age when, after decades of war, revolution and tyrannies, Athenian democracy in its morning freshness was beginning to prove itself as a system wonderfully suited to free, thinking men" (Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 244).

[745] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 21 April 1996 (no. 25)*…, p. 540.

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words are beautiful and touching indeed – as many Suu Kyi's speeches are – but Suu Kyi did not tell their people the one, crucial thing. That Sparta, not Athens, won the war.

9. Minorities

Surprisingly or not, the issues of minorities – women and ethnic minorities – do not figure prominently in Suu Kyi's political thought, though the reconciliation with the latter became so important and significant after 2016 when she became an important part of the political system of the country and joined the generals in power-sharing. Nevertheless, the only prominent minority in her writings and speeches is the active minority that should bring about the democratic change. Other minorities, however, have a peripheral position in her political ideas, which itself is telling.

a) "Mother of the Nation," not a Feminist

Let's start from the gender issues. Suu Kyi as a woman from the very beginning had a rough way to power in Burma. Due to cultural reasons women in Burma have been considered more immoral than men (they have been associated with the realm of desire) and consequently – lower on karmic existence; although women exercised informal influence via their handling of economic matters – which itself only enhanced the perception of women's "spiritual pollution" – this assumption of the asserted superiority of men effectively prevented most women from attaining prominent positions in formal political institutions associated with power, authority and prestige.[746] In short, the popular belief has been that women were inferior to men and thus, incapable of effective political leadership.[747]

Although there were exceptions to this rule (Mon queen Shin Saw Pu and Konbaung queen Supayalat, though the latter served as a negative example of women's viciousness in politics), in general the political role women played in Burma was an informal one: of influencing policymaking from the shadow. This applied to the powerful women of the Tatmadaw (wives and daughters of generals and other officers), too: they created and strengthened the military patronage network.[748] For example, Than Shwe's wife, Kyaing Kyaing, for two decades (the 1990s and 2000s) enjoyed a real power – probably much

[746] Melford Spiro, *Gender Ideology and Psychological Reality: An Essay on Cultural Reproduction*, Yale University Press, New Heaven 1997, pp. 12–200; Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*…, pp. 24–25; Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 34; Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 165–179; Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism*…, p. 149.

[747] Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*…, p. 216.

[748] Fink, *Living Silence in Burma*…, pp. 153–171.

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bigger than Suu Kyi enjoys now – yet she never expressed it in a formal way (though she was eager to express it in an informal way).[749]

When Suu Kyi entered politics in 1988, she had broken the unwritten rules of "staying in the shadows" – what she did was an outright negation of this traditionalistic understanding of the position of women in the Burmese system of power. That came as a shock for the conservative generals.[750] To them her appearance was deeply disturbing: Suu Kyi became "an archetypal 'difficult woman' – stubborn, argumentative, irrational and (ultimately) dangerous to the state; she did not know her 'proper place' (in the home or in 'appropriate' female professions), but rather involved herself in complex political affairs that – as an inferior woman – she was incapable of understanding and which should remain the exclusive domain of men."[751] They responded with all their brutality (by hitting her below the belt): attacking her marriage to an Englishman and – in an openly racist manner – portraying her as a racial renegade (see: previous part of the book). The regime propaganda's overall message portrayed Suu Kyi as a "sort of new-age Supayalat."[752]

Suu Kyi neutralised the propaganda by distancing herself from her husband and sacrificing her family[753] and by dressing in Burmese clothes (when she initially

[749] Rogers, *Than Shwe*…, pp. 166–174.

[750] Maung Maung in his memoirs vividly described how Suu Kyi entered the men's world of Burmese politics (Dr. Maung Maung, *The 1988 Uprising in Burma*, U Win Aung, Yangon 2012 (reprint), pp. 271–274).

[751] Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*…, p. 216.

[752] Sengputa, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 323.

[753] Facing this deluge of personal attacks, Suu Kyi tried to neutralise the negative political impact of her marriage. She has repeated many times in public, that Burma is more important to her than her family and she has managed to reduce the impact of her marriage on her political persona (Barbara Bradley, *Dark Victory*, "Vague" Magazine, 29.11.1995, Online Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199511/msg00224.html (access: 25.10.2018)). Later during her house arrest, Suu Kyi discouraged her husband from staying at her house, in order to prevent the junta's PR-machinations taking advantage of them and she even considered divorcing him due to political reasons (she later dropped this idea) (Victor, *The Lady*…, pp. 101–117). Upon her release from house arrest in 1995, attacks on Aris intensified in the military-controlled press, forcing Suu Kyi to distance herself from him in her interviews (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 141–142). Besides that, she constantly downplayed the personal costs of her political struggle by presenting separation from her family as irrelevant in comparison with the suffering of ordinary Burmese people under the military's regime (Ibid., p. 141). Finally, when it turned out that her husband was dying of cancer in England, she decided not to bid him farewell, but to stay in Burma fearing that once she left the country, the junta would not allow her to return. Her struggle must have had enormous personal costs. When judged from a purely political perspective however, her actions were a successful strategy to minimalise the political damages of a marriage deemed politically incorrect by sacrificing the "private" sphere in order to fulfil her cause in the public sphere.

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entered politics in 1988, she dressed in a Western style); she started following a dying out Burmese tradition – putting flowers in her hair.[754] Her feminine dress code corresponded with her determination and loyalty to her cause despite tremendous personal sacrifices, which produced an image of a powerful, yet very feminine leader at the same time: "she insisted on continuing with an ultra-feminine image" and declared that she did not see "a need to develop a masculine style in order to be effective as a politician"[755]; she also neutralised her westernised behaviour by developing "an image which is emphatically Burmese," a kind of "'over compensation' for her Englishness."[756] By her actions Suu Kyi consciously (or semi consciously)[757] referred to the nationalistic patterns from the 1920s and 1930s. Back then, politicised women (*myo chit may*) served as "poignant political icons": traditionally mothers and protectors of their *amyo* (family), once they crossed the imaginary boundary of the domestic into the public, self-sacrificed themselves to the national cause. Thus their "acts of transgression were more intense than those of their male counterparts."[758] Thanks to her actions, Suu Kyi won the hearts and minds of the people. Suu Kyi, in the majority of the Burmese society's eyes, had proven that she indeed always had put her country ahead of her family. Or, in other words, the country became her family and she became "the mother of the nation."

[754] Her first pictures from 1988 show her without flowers (Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 303).

[755] "Under the circumstances, placed between Asian western forms of patriarchy it is interesting to note how she has negotiated her position as a female authority figure (…) She has insisted on continuing an ultra-feminine image and wears the longyi and the flowers in her hair with pride" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 323–325). As she conceded, "I don't try to make a man out of myself. I don' think I need to develop a masculine style in order to be effective as a politician", quoted in: ibid., p. 323.

[756] "Yet another facet of her character for which Suu Kyi has been consistently criticised is her 'western' code of behaviour. In a 2005 interview Suu Kyi seemed to lose 'self-control and started doing things which she, as a Burmese woman, should not do': she was very upset when she saw a picture of Ne Win hanging on the wall, loudly expressed her displeasure and ultimately sprang up on a table to take the picture down" (Kyaw Yin Hlaing, *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi: A Burmese Dissident Democrat*, in: *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity*, ed. L. Dittmer, World Scientific, Singapore 2010, p. 126). In another interview from 2002 a colleague from NLD commented on her anger and intolerance aimed at ex-army commanders who had joined the party and appeared reluctant to engage in open protests against the government for fear that it might cause bloodshed: "she was basically asking all these ex-military commanders if they were cowards. She should not have talked to older people like that. We could only conclude that she was very Westernized" (Ibid., p. 127).

[757] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 325.

[758] Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma,* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2011, p. 87.

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Theoretically speaking, in politics "the mother of the nation" approach is a convenient avenue for many women (especially in Asia-Pacific)[759]: it promotes the image of power based not on the authority (stereotypically associated with fathers), but on care and provision of goods. It is characterised by the "softer power" approach, a symbolic motherhood, by "national mothers who have accepted the burden of the political commitment to honor the memory of their husbands and realize their political dreams."[760] In Burma, too, mother (*amay*) has been the "traditional source of female authority" and "one of the most powerful female stereotypes of Burmese cultural tradition" and Suu Kyi was able to link her image with this symbolic motherhood.[761] Suu Kyi achieved the position of "the mother of Burma" with time by sacrificing her family and personal liberty (15 years of house arrest) to her cause. The regime's cruel actions not only failed to weaken her political resolve, but also made the Burmese more sympathetic towards her: "supporters have interpreted her political commitment as a form of personal sacrifice, demonstrating her willingness to prioritize the welfare of the Burmese people in the same way that a good woman sacrifices her own needs for the well-being of her family (…) Suu Kyi's love and concern for her fellow citizens has been likened by many Burmese to the *mettā* (loving kindness) shown by a mother towards her children (…) thus Suu Kyi's 'feminine' qualities of self-sacrifice, kindness and compassion are widely regarded as political strengths, not weaknesses."[762] Suu Kyi not only used the opportunities provided by the struggle with the military, but also achieved this by rejecting feminism and by navigating her position of a female authority figure.[763]

Quotes from Suu Kyi illustrate this thesis. First is the rejection of feminism. Although she occasionally used feminist traits in her speeches,[764] when asked whether she sees herself as a feminist, she openly said she did not and elaborated on the women issue, prioritising establishing democracy and political rights first: "people have often asked me about women's rights in Burma and I have always said very frankly, 'Men do not have rights in Burma either.' I do know that men are the privileged gender in Burma (…) but at the moment men are just as vulnerable to injustice and oppression.

[759] See examples of: Sirimavo Bandaraike of Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi of India, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Sheik Hasina Wajed and Khaleda Zia Rahman of Bangladesh, Corazon C. Aquino of the Philippines, Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia and recently (with a grotesque ending) Park Geun-hye of South Korea.

[760] Donatella Campus, *Women Political Leaders and the Media*, Macmillan Palgrave, Basingstoke–New York 2013, p. 62.

[761] According to Sengupta, this is how Suu Kyi was able to liberate herself from the label of being Aung San's daughter only (*The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. xxi and 324).

[762] Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*…, p. 227.

[763] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 324 and 241–243.

[764] E.g. *Opening Keynote Address by Aung San Suu Kyi*, read on video on August 31, 1995, before the NGO Forum on Women, Beijing, China, Gifts of Speech, http://gos.sbc.edu/k/kyi.html (access: 02.07.2018).

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So, first let's give everybody their fundamental rights (…) at this moment I find it very difficult to think of women in Burma as apart from the same movement in which men are involved. But I'm sure that the issue of women's rights will come out once we have democracy and everybody is enjoying their basic political rights."[765] So far, after the transformation of the 2010s, seen from a feminist angle, the results of Suu Kyi's ascendance to (partial) political power for women's participation in politics are mixed at best.[766] Suu Kyi's rejection of feminism was complemented by her traditionalist approach to gender issues and to roles of women in politics. For example while talking about getting rid of the fear, she followed a traditional understanding of women's roles in the society as being household keeper and walking one step behind men: "how can

[765] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 161–162.

[766] "Down the years the tradition of female political participation has further eroded in Myanmar (…) Such a political scenario has further contributed to Aung San Suu Kyi's iconic status as also to her often appearing unwarrantedly assertive and unilateral in her own opinions. While on one hand the imbalance in the gender ratio means there is no suitable female representation to challenge her position, on the other it also means that she is left virtually alone to push through a female perspective. As a woman author known to be close to government circles confessed, even if she does not agree with Suu Kyi at all times, she refrains from objecting or criticising because 'at least it is a woman's opinion being expressed'" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 322); on the other hand Sengupta admits that "simultaneously, since her release in 2010, Suu Kyi has also been more vocal about feminist causes. While not expressly denying the popular belief in the emancipation status of the Burmese woman, she has encourage female political participation" (Ibid., p. 330). An example of that can be seen in her speech to ASEAN Business Summit in 2017, where she stressed "the important role of women in the economic sphere," and said that "development and thus empowering women is also a form of human capital" crucial for development of a country (*Graft Fight Holds Key to Development, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Tells ASEAN Summit*, 14.11.2017, "The Irrawaddy", https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/economy/133240.html (access: 15.08.2018)). Yet her calls are again first and foremost moral calls without concrete ideas. On a women's forum in Naypyidaw in 2017 she stated that "business cannot flourish in a country devoid of peace. The business that we're supporting is inclusive of all people, not for any particular individual, corporation or organization" (*Women Entrepreneurs' Role in Peace Process*, 03.07.2017, State Counsellor Office, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/721 (access: 19.07.2018)). Instead of "offering any concrete vision of how that inclusivity could be achieved" or "addressing seriously the call from some quarters for a quota of women to be engaged in the peace process," she presented this quoted above moral vision and "throughout the forum, she appeared skeptical of the relatively moderate reforms advocated by the delegates, such as governmental rules governing childcare, parental leave and healthcare in the workplace. As corporate leaders argued for greater inclusion of women in business and politics, Suu Kyi responded firmly, declaring: "it is of great importance to prove that our women have the courage to take responsibility with their increasing demand for rights"; and "taking most participants by surprise, she urged the women leaders to pay their taxes and invited them to contribute to her peace fund" (Mary Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision for Myanmar*, Asia Nikkei.com, 29.03.2017, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Aung-San-Suu-Kyi-s-quiet-puritanical-vision-for-Myanmar (access: 18.07.2018)).

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we convince wives not to discourage their husbands from democracy activism? I think we need to be more considerate. We women usually have to rear and raise the children. If we are to instil fear in the minds of our husbands, how can we train our children? How can a child [who] was raised in fear face the future? Women should try to be able to stand on their own feet. Even if you husband is imprisoned, you should be able to lead the family on your own. If a wife is concern lest her husband should go to jail, this means that the woman is too dependent on her husband. Try to be more self-reliant."[767] Once in power, in 2017, on the occasion of the Women's Week Forum, she "instructed her audience to devote themselves to raising 'peace-loving' children, something she - only half-jokingly - quipped was beyond the capacity of men."[768]

Most importantly, however, Suu Kyi was able to navigate a place for herself in politics as a woman by consciously following the image of the "mother of the nation" which "personifies *metta* – not only the *metta* that nurtures but the *metta* a mother feels for her only child which gives her the courage to sacrifice"; Suu Kyi's "repeated refusal of feminism saying that since both sexes led lives of subjugation in Burma it was time to focus on fundamental rights rather than gender bias, is countered by a universal image of motherhood"; in this image, built on a "spirit of service which denied power and stressed sacrifice," the Burmese "society found an acceptable face of female leadership."[769] Thus, Suu Kyi proved herself correct in choosing the strategy of entering and functioning in Burmese politics as "the mother of the nation" instead of following

[767] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 7 October 1995 (no. 5)*…, p. 135.

[768] Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision...*

[769] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 324 and 241–243. For an example of "the mother of the nation" approach of Suu Kyi, see her Panglong speech, where she directly compared governing a country with raising children: "good parents do not see only the present. They usually foresee the future. Good parents do not see only the period they can see with their own eyes while living. They generally foresee the legacy they leave after death. So, broad-minded parents, well-wishing parents reprimand their offspring for their future, for example, for their children to be bright in education and to be healthy. They will support them as much as they can. On the contrary, narrow-minded parents indulge their offspring, fulfilling them with physical needs. It is necessary to ponder whether indulgence towards their children like these is for the children's benefits or for their own sakes. It must be considered whether this indulgence is intended to show their affection towards their children or if they hey want the love from their children. Likewise, in carrying out the tasks for the benefits of the country, we need to assess with bravery, whether we do it as we want people's love and support or we do it as we love our people and for their better future. Sometimes, we abandon our people's satisfaction toward us in the interest of our citizens and for the betterment of younger generation's future. For example, when we reprimand and force our children who do not want to go to school to send to school, the children will be annoyed with us. They may be conceived in their minds that my parents do not love me but I want play at home. Parents who do not send their offspring to schools for fear of being annoyed by their children, in fact, do not love their children. They are indulging themselves. They want their offspring love them" (*70th Union Day Celebrated in Panglong*…).

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any feminist avenues of policymaking. Although the "the mother of the nation" strategy started to politically backfire on Suu Kyi in 2013 during the Letpadaung mine controversy, in general this strategy has proven to be successful.[770] This explains, too, why women issues have so little attention in the political thought of Aung San Suu Kyi – one of the most famous woman in politics in the world.

b) Unity in Diversity under Burman Guidance

The ethnic issue (or the uneasy relationship between the Burman majority and more than hundred ethnic minorities than compromise one third of the people of Myanmar)[771] – one of the central ones in contemporary Myanmar and probably the most difficult one – does not figure prominently in Suu Kyi's thought. The ethnic topic in her articles and speeches has been subjugated to other issues, such as democracy or unity. Suu Kyi, not without grounds, has been accused of being dismissive of ethno-cultural differences and of perpetuating the Panglong myth.[772]

In Suu Kyi's early writings the ethnic minorities appear only occasionally. There is much about them in Suu Kyi's least important intellectual work: her tourist guide on Burma. What is telling is that Suu Kyi's description of subsequent Burma's ethnic minorities is… almost colonial, if not Orientalist.[773] Although this perhaps reveals Suu Kyi's (partial) attitude towards ethnic minorities, it can be dismissed as a typical tourist narrative, lacking in-depth analysis. More significant is one fragment from her

[770] Sengupta, *The Female Voice*…, pp. 324 and 241–243.

[771] Officially 135 ethnic groups, *The Nationalities of Myanmar*, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar, http://www.myanmartourism.org/gl/gl-people.htm (access: 26.10.2013); for a thoroghout criticism of this list, see: *135: Counting Races in Burma*, "Shan Herald Agency for News", 25.09.2012, http://www.shanland.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4965:135-counting-races-in-burma&catid=115:opinions&Itemid=308 (access: 26.10.2013).

[772] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 319.

[773] E.g. "The Kachins are a handsome people. The men look very dashing in their traditional turbans and baggy trousers, with curved swords dangling at their sides. The women are striking in their costumes heavily decorated with silver ornaments" (Aung San Suu Kyi, *My Country and People* (reprint of *Let's Visit Burma* from 1985), in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writing*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 60). On the other hand, her description of Burmans and her country also come dangerously close to being local version of Oriental Orientalism: "Burma is indeed one of those lands of charm and cruelty. I have found more warmth, more wholehearted love and more caring concern among my people, as we hope together, suffer together and struggle together, than anywhere else in the world. But those who exude hate and vindictiveness and rave about annihilating and crushing us are also Burmese, our own people" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma (Letter no. 51)*…, p. 205). I borrow the term Oriental Orientalism from Gladney (Dru C. Gladney, *Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities*, "The Journal of Asian Studies", vol. 53, no. 1, 1994, pp. 92–123).

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essay *Empowerment for a Culture of Peace and Development* where she quoted a text: "in the process of nation building… the notion of minority in Burma changed, as one group defines itself as a the nation those outside the group become minorities… There were of course minorities in traditional Burma – people close to the power elite who consider themselves superior and people estranged from the power elite who were considered inferior. These criteria for establishing majorities (who might in fact be a small portion of the population as, say, white people in South Africa) were not based on race or even ethnic group, but on access to power. Minorities, thus, are those people with poor access to power."[774] This understanding of ethnic minorities comes dangerously close to nationalist Burman narrative which claims that in precolonial society there were no – or at best few – ethnic minorities and that ethnic minorities were "created" by the British in colonial *devide et imperia* strategy in order to divide the Burmese. The problem with this narrative is that it implicitly asserts Burman superiority and, worse still, in its extreme version suggest that the ethnic minorities should be Burmanized, or re-Burmanized[775] to bring back the (invented, mythical) original unity.

Despite this kind of academic controversies – barely noticed outside small circle of academics – during Suu Kyi's early days in politics (electoral campaign of 1988/1989), ethnic minorities found her a supporter of their cause. This happened thanks to her brilliant public relations' device: wearing ethnic clothes. Suu Kyi while visiting ethnic areas dressed in their traditional clothes and by this touching gesture won their hearts and minds. For neglected, unprivileged and often repressed ethnic minorities her action spoke louder than thousands of words. Unfortunately, the minorities did not know that Suu Kyi complained about her "dress code policy" in private (apparently she said she looked silly in these clothes),[776] did not read her international interviews where she admitted she had little idea about ethnic minorities[777] and most probably did not know about the NLD's programme on the ethnic issues which sanctioned Burmans'

[774] Ronald Renard, "minorities in Burmese History", quoted in Suu Kyi, *Empowerment for a Culture*…, p. 266.

[775] Burmanization is naturally a controversial term; for a reasonable descriptions, see: Smith, *Burma. Insurgency*…, pp. 34–36; Steinberg, *Burma. The State*…, p. 57; Silverstein, *The Idea of Freedom*…, p. 221; since 1990s it is rather Myanmafication than Burmanization (Houtman, *Mental Culture*…, pp. 15–157).

[776] These words come from Ma Thanegi's diary, quoted in Popham, *The Lady and the Peacock*…, pp. 109, 138.

[777] "I have not studied the cultures of the other ethnic peoples of Burma deeply enough to comment on them, apart from the fact that my mother always taught me to think of them as very close to us, emphasising how loyal they were. She always spoke of them with great suspect and warmth" (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, p. 197).

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"more equal" status in country.[778] And most importantly, the ethnic minorities did not listen carefully to Suu Kyi's message. Asked about ethnic relations, she replied that first a civilian government must be established and then she would be able to handle this issue, which meant that the Burmans should elect a government and only then would take up the ethnic issue.[779] Later, during one of her gate speeches, she dismissed ethnic calls unscrupulously: "in our country, there are already hubbub and hurly-burly because a few minorities are unhappy. Imagine what can happen to the country if the majority is unhappy."[780] And asked by ethnic minorities' representatives to help their cause, she declared openly: she would have established democracy first and then she would consider their demands.[781]

This "unconscious acceptance of the Burman privilege"[782] attitude is seen not only in such short statements of Suu Kyi but also in her longer texts. The most famous one is her "Myitkyina speech" from 1989. The main theme of this speech is unity between various ethnic groups in common quest for democracy, so unsurprisingly this goal is declared at the very beginning of the speech ("we of the NLD believe very strongly that it is important in our movement for democracy that all ethnic groups in the country work together. It is in trying to help bring together all ethnic groups, all peoples, that we go on these organizational tours)."[783] Then Suu Kyi flattered the audience with some warm words about ethnic minorities: she evoked the memory of her tolerant mother who treated the ethnics humanely: "from my earliest childhood my mother taught me

[778] Although the NLD's manifest of 1989 admitted about forty years of tragedy of ethnic relations and called for resolving the ethnic problem, it did not say how to do it, as its proposals where sanctioning the existing Burman dominance. In accordance with this manifest a parliament should have been called to legislate laws for regions before writing a new constitution; in this parliament the ethnics would be given legislative initiative. However, only once democratic system of power would be introduced, the members of parliament and ethnic representatives would meet in a Panglong-style conference to lay fundaments for democratic society. This, in reality, meant "organizing a Burman-dominated body, which would promulgate constitution and only then start negotiating with ethnic minorities; in other words, the ethnics would not be given an equal right in the process" (*Manifesto of the National League for Democracy on Multi-Party General Elections*, 06.11.1988, Online Burma Library, http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/NLDElectionManifesto1989.htm (access: 29.05.2018); Josef Silverstein, *Aung San Suu Kyi. Is She Burma's Women of Destiny?*, in: Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, ed. M. Aris, 2nd edition, 1995/3rd edition, Penguin Books, London 2010, p. 315; Bertil Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's Struggle for Democracy*, Silkworm Books, Bangkok 2012, p. 66).

[779] Silverstein, *Aung San Suu Kyi. Is She Burma's Women of Destiny?*..., p. 314.

[780] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 24 December 1995 (no. 10)*..., p. 221.

[781] Quoted in: Levy, *Portrait. Aung San Suu Kyi*...

[782] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*..., p. 319.

[783] Suu Kyi, *The Need For Solidarity*..., p. 218.

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this idea of national unity; not by merely talking about it but by including it in everyday work. For example, we always had people from various ethnic groups living with us (…) She would invite those from ethnic minorities to stay at our home. Since my youth, then, I was taught to live closely with the people from other ethnic groups", and she declared the need to take ethnic minorities' voice into consideration: "we need to give thought to ethnic groups other than our own. We need to show sympathy and understanding. Without this the progress for the country will be impossible."[784] Yet this is just a decoration to Suu Kyi's main message than is clear and simple: unity in pursuing for democracy matters, not ethnic rights, the latter should be subjugated to the greater good of democracy in Burma: "there is a very great need for all our ethnic groups to be joined together. We cannot have the attitude of 'I'm Kachin', 'I'm Burman', 'I'm Shan'. We must have the attitude that we are all comrades in the struggle for democratic rights. We must all work closely together like brothers and sisters. Only then will we succeed. If we divide ourselves ethnically, we shall not achieve democracy for a long time (…) I conclude by asking all the ethnic groups to remain united and to continue to work together."[785] "Myitkyina speech" is hardly the only source of this attitude of Suu Kyi; she repeated the message on unity between various ethnic groups during her gate rallies: "we are proposing negotiations and dialogue as invitations to all groups to join hand with us. It would be very hard for the country to move forward if different people are voicing different opinions"[786]; "our country is a Union. The existence and perpetuation of a union depends on the unity of her people. A genuine unity is based on organic solidarity. There is no such thing as command unity. The prerequisite for our country's progress in unity and trust among our ethnic groups. How do we establish trust? Trust begins with having good faith in each other's words. We will earn trust from our ethnic brothers and sisters only when our speech is trust-worthy (…) Unity among our ethnic nationalities is of utmost importance. With unity we can shape the changes we want to see. A country's progress therefore does not depend on its size, population or resource (…) what really matters for our country's development is our united endeavour for our people."[787] Here again one may find typical features of Suu Kyi's thought: moral understanding of politics, unity built on moral values (here: trust, organic solidarity) and everyone's personal improvement, not institutional or structural aspects, and complete lack of concrete details. The same applies to her answer given to a question on federalism (postulated by the ethnic minorities and vehemently rejected by the Tatmadaw as threatening secession) – "even among the majority Burmese, we want equal rights for

[784] Ibid., pp. 219–220.
[785] Ibid., p. 223.
[786] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*…, p. 458.
[787] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 10 February 1996 (no. 17)*…, pp. 376–377.

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everyone (…) The quest for equal rights is neither unusual nor unnatural. We all deserve equal rights. But our actions should be based on the understanding of others' feelings. If we want equal rights, we should be able to treat others equally."[788] Once in power, after 2016, she conceded that federalism is the goal to be reached ("the stand against the word 'federal' being once unacceptable had changed, and NCA was signed and pledges made toward establishing a democracy and federal union. However, to date, required agreement on 'federal' was not reached and is slowing down the peace process to reach a complete success. We have announced untiringly and for uncountable times throughout the period when 'federal' was wrongly defined that federal is not a system for cessation but a system that strengthens unity"),[789] yet her words on federalism did not go beyond 1) slogans ("Democratic Federal Union" – "political problems can be resolved only when a democratic federal union is established" [790]; "almost everyone accepts that the resolution to our country's long-running armed conflicts is a federal system that is

[788] "Federalism has nothing to do with the conditionality of secession (…) Make no mistakes about federalism. Some think that federalism by definition grants the right for secession. This is not the case. Some non-federalist constitutions feature secession rights. There are also federal unions that do not allow their parts to break away. The key in determining whether a state is unitary or federal is the extent of institutional understanding, shall we say, between the central government and provincial ones, and the extent the provincial governments can exercise their own power. Out ethnic national brothers and sisters want equal rights in the union. I understand that" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 246).

[789] *State Counsellor: Historical Duty*…

[790] *State Counsellor: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong 2nd Session*, Office of State Counsellor, 25.05.2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/883 (access: 20.07.2018). We are "preparing for the opportunities and challenges of a federal future" (*Key Note Address by H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*…); "I urge all of you to finalize all the fundamental principles on Federalism. Once we have agreed on the fundamental principles, we can continue to discuss and elaborate on their details. We will need to continue our dialogue on the division of power, allocation of resources and revenue between the Union, States and Regions, and the powers as described in the additional tables to the Constitution. These are about how we will divide our state powers in our future Federal Union"; "we all agree that a federal system is the only solution for the internal armed conflict which has been unresolved under successive governments" (*Opening Speech by the Chairperson of the NRPC and State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Ceremony to Mark the 2nd Anniversary of the Signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement*, Office of State Counsellor, 15.10.2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1092 (access: 20.07.2018)); "achieving sustainable peace is meant the development of a country and the first step towards a Democratic Federal Republic that we have all aspired for, for decades" (*Message from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the Rally to Welcome and Support the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong*, Office of State Counsellor, 27.01.2018, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1659 (access: 20.07.2018)).

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acceptable to all. Our goal is therefore the emergence of a democratic federal union based on democracy and federalism")[791] and 2) moral preaching.[792] Suu Kyi's stance is understandable given the Tatmadaw's position on "federalism."[793]

She followed with the same accent on values and emotions (such as "feelings"; "understanding") and absence of any concrete details in the same speech later on: "for our union, all of us, all the stakeholders, have to decide what kind of union we want to establish. I cannot speak for myself what should be done. Nor can anyone from the audience, for that matter. Nor a Shan. Nor a Karen. The kind of union we want should be a result of an understanding, of a negotiated settlement of all stakeholders (…) Unity among ourselves is of utmost importance."[794] This Suu Kyi's approach is based on unconscious Burman privilege: "Suu Kyi can call for a move away from ethnic identity precisely because her own ethnic identity is unproblematic. Not only does she effectively ignore the historically real and continuing effects of ethnic conflict, she does not

[791] Other examples: "our aim is to establish a democratic federal union"; "our shared objective of establishing a democratic federal Union"; "historical duty of establishing a democratic federal union for future generations now resting on our shoulders"; "peace conference is a political roundtable discussion where important basic principles of democracy and federalism will be established"; "we must have firm determination in walking down the path toward democracy and a federal union"; "all need to bear in mind to head towards a peaceful and democratic federal union that is the best and the most secure for the people of the country" (*State Counsellor: Historical Duty*…).

[792] "If there were any disagreement in political discussions, all need to avoid anything that widens the disagreement and head toward more meetings to reach together a solution that is acceptable to all. Aiming toward a democratic federal union that will be established, all must negotiate, give, take and overcome disagreements and not hold onto a single policy and stand of a single group"; "we believe and see clearly that our long term aim is establishment of a democratic federal union. We will strive with unrelenting moral force to create a stable and peaceful surrounding that is free from armed conflicts for our new generation, fulfill the wishes and aims of our preceding leaders and brighten the hopes dimmed by armed conflicts" (Ibid.).

[793] A good example of Suu Kyi's implicit admittance of the problem of reconciling federalism with Tatmadaw's agenda can be seen in these words: "now, all the organisations that had signed the NCA as well as all who wish to establish a Union are of the same thinking as us. As such, in implementing 'federal,' the main principles of non-cessation from the Union and self-determination need to be negotiated, as these are very delicate matters" (Ibid.).

[794] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Sunday, 30 December 1995 (no. 11)*…, p. 246. Writing for international audience, she evoked the Indonesian example of "unity in diversity" and emphasized the need to establish democracy in order to resolve ethnic problems: "unity in diversity has to be the principle of those who genuinely wish to build our country into a strong nation that allows a variety of races, languages, beliefs and cultures to flourish in peaceful and happy co-existence. Only a government that tolerates opinions and attitudes different from its own will be able to create an environment where peoples of diverse traditions and aspirations can breathe freely in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust" (Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma* (*Letter no. 16*)…, p. 65).

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acknowledge the disparities in sacrifice and suffering experienced by non-Burman ethnic groups."[795]

To make matters worse, Suu Kyi not only did not offer any concrete ideas for the ethnic minorities, limiting herself to platitudes and moral messages, but she initially also criticised the ceasefire agenda of the Tatmadaw,[796] again from her moral, onward-based perspective: "temporary ceasefire is not the same as peace agreement. Stakeholders are still armed. There may be temporary cessation of aggression but troops are still armed in our ceasefire agreement. This means that shooting can resume any time, that's what I think. There will be an enduring peace when there is no reason for hostilities. In an ideal peace scenario, arms are redundant. As long as former foes are armed, we must ask why (…) We need perpetual peace (…) We believe that perpetual peace and the conflict resolution among our ethnic groups will never be achieved by violent means, using tanks and artillery. Enduring peace can only be achieved by political means. Peace in fact originates in the will for peace. For example, shooting someone requires your will to shoot someone that motivates you to pick up the gun and pull the trigger. When people don't will to kill anyone, when there is no motive for animosity, there will be perpetual peace. That's why we are saying we need a political solution for our problems in this country. The root causes of all the problems here are political. No more, no less. Just politics. Political problems have to be solved by political means, not by military or economic means."[797] Instead of ceasefire agenda – the only (so far) workable scenario for resolving, at least temporarily, the ethnic conflict in Myanmar – she offered moral solution based on *mettā*: "genuine peace is peace of mind. Genuine peace is different from ceasefire agreement in that we don't have to hold arms in genuine peace. Genuine peace will come about when we are able to build trust and between ethnic minorities. The peace attained by means of give and take and exchange of interests will not last long. Genuine peace can be achieved only by reciprocal *metta*. No other way."[798]

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[795] According to Walton, Burman-ness is "a form of institutionalised dominance similar to Whiteness" (Matthew J. Walton, *Wages of Burman-ness. Ethnicity and Burman Privilege in Contemporary Myanmar*, "Journal of Contemporary Asia", vol. 43, no. 1, 2013, p. 16).

[796] A solution far from ideal, but – at least temporarily workable (which is much in Myanmar conditions) – and one of the very few successes, even if partial one, of the military government in their domestic policy (Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, pp. 322–332; Steinberg, *Burma. State of Myanmar*…, p. 190; Jake Sherman, *Burma: Lessons from the Cease-Fires*, in: *The Political Economy of Armed Conflicts: Beyond Greed and Grievance,* eds K. Ballantine, J. Sherman, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder 2003, pp. 225–255); "the ethnic ceasefire group have enjoyed a degree of normalcy, though not peace" (Zaw Oo, Win Min, *Assessing Burma's Ceasefire Accords*, "Policy Studies", no. 39 (Southeast Asia), East-West Centre, Washington, D.C. 2007, p. 57).

[797] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, p. 405.

[798] Ibid., p. 410.

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Once in power after 2016, Suu Kyi modified her stance on ceasefire agreements.[799] Suu Kyi: 1) called the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) "an acceptable agreement,"[800] "first step towards peace"[801] and "equilibrium point,"[802] admitting that thanks to NCA "it is our ethnic peoples who are enjoying the fruits of peace"[803] and that "innocent ethnic nationals and people who lived in the conflict areas are starting to taste increasingly the fruit of stability and security that were created by NCA."[804] Furthermore, Suu Kyi 2) praised Thein Sein's cabinet for their actions ("we were not part of the discussions while the NCA was being negotiated. But we fully accepted the duties and responsibilities of government, and after discussion and consultation with individuals and organisations involved in the peace process, we ourselves took this path"[805]; "the previous government initiated the negotiations that led to the signing of the NCA. Our government proudly carries on this process"[806]; "I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the previous government led by former President U Thein Sein (…) We will continue to build on the previous government's work towards peace").[807] Moreover, Suu Kyi 3) pledged to finish his task ("in resolving political problems, it is most

[799] She did this in an intelligent way, saying that the previous ceasefires were imperfect (which was true and which echoed her earlier criticism), while the new ones would improve this imperfect scheme; this suggested she did not lose face by joining this agenda, "if we look back throughout our history, many different ceasefires have been signed, but there were no guarantees that the ceasefires would be maintained firmly and that there would be a subsequent political dialogue. The NCA came about through the belief that it was necessary to have an agreement, to which both sides were committed, that would provide such guarantees" (*State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech at the Opening Ceremony*…).

[800] "Compared to peace processes elsewhere in the world, Myanmar's NCA, with its strong ceasefire process and guarantee of political dialogue, can be seen as an acceptable ceasefire agreement" (Ibid.).

[801] "The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is the first step not only towards peace, but towards the establishment of the long hoped for democratic federal Union" (*Official Translation of the Speech Delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the Opening Day*…).

[802] "NCA is a hard to attain merging equilibrium point, where different forces come together. It is an agreement that is recognized internationally as well as in the country. To achieve this, former government leaders led by President U Thein Sein, Tatmadaw leaders and ethnic national leaders discussed and negotiated for months and years. Although it is not complete, it was an agreement that was acceptable by opposing and battling foes"; "NCA is a merging equilibrium point where different forces come together as well as being a starting point in our march toward our ultimate destination. We are not halting or stopping at NCA" (Ibid.).

[803] *Opening Speech by the Chairperson of the NRPC*…

[804] *State Counsellor: Historical Duty*…

[805] *State Counsellor: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech at the Opening Ceremony*…

[806] *Opening Speech by the Chairperson of the NRPC*…

[807] *Official Translation of the Speech Delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the Opening Day*…

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important not to stop but to move on")[808] and 4) to achieve national peace by her "New Panglong" scheme.[809] This, however, so far did not happen – "peace negotiations with ethnic armed groups have effectively stalled"[810] – and is unlikely to happen soon.[811] She, however, did not change her "*mettā* -approach," at least in rhetoric, telling ethnic minorities about her *mettā* "which wishes to remove bad legacies and pass down good legacies for our future generations."[812]

After reading this kind of statements, it is perhaps unsurprising that Suu Kyi after two and half years in power not only achieved little in terms of ethnic reconciliation in Myanmar but the peace process during her NLD government was even reversed in comparison to "new ceasefire agenda" of Thein Sein.[813] Suu Kyi's failure to resolve Myanmar's ethnic conflict via her New Panglong (The 21th Century Panglong Conference) – "much vaunted but ultimately unsuccessful"[814] agenda perhaps has something

[808] *State Counsellor: Historical Duty…*

[809] "But our intention is not to stop at the ceasefire stage. It is to achieve lasting peace through political dialogue. In our country's history, we have had many different types of ceasefire. But, as everyone is aware, for a variety of reasons these ceasefires fell apart. We recognise that ceasefire negotiations can address surface problems, but only political dialogue can address underlying grievances. As such the NCA itself is not the ultimate destination" (*State Counsellor: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech at the Opening Ceremony…*). "Ceasefire alone is not sufficient for a sustainable reconciliation and peace in our country and our Union. Governments throughout the ages had attempted to achieve ceasefires in our country in their own ways. All had known that once a single shot was fired, ceasefire agreements disintegrate and revert back into the cycle of violence. Throughout the years, ethnic armed organisations had demanded to resolve political problems through political discussions. The main sources of armed conflicts were the inability to resolve the political problems. Today, in our 21st Century Panglong Conference, we will attempt to solve the source of the armed conflicts through dialogue" (*State Counsellor: Historical Duty…*).

[810] Andrew Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for: The National League for Democracy and Government in Myanmar*, Griffith Asia Institute Regional Outlook Paper no. 56, 2017, p. 1.

[811] Suu Kyi is aware of that: "frankly speaking, I didn't envisage how the country's peace process would go on; I believe it will be successful, but it will take time. Looking at other peace processes, none of them were smooth. So speaking of the peace process, there is no peace because there were the factors that caused discord from the very beginning. Removing those factors will never be fast" (Interview for Radio Free Asia), *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Politics and Crises: In Quotes*, "The Irrawaddy", 26.09.2017, https:// www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-politics-crises-quotes.html (access: 08.09.2018).

[812] *Message from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to The Rally…*

[813] Though, naturally, Suu Kyi's lack of concrete ideas to resolve ethnic conflict in Myanmar is a secondary factor in failure to do so; the primary one is Tatmadaw's uncompromising attitude. And for Thein Sein's quasi-civilian government it was easier to implement some decisions. Nevertheless, the fact stands: during NLD's governance the peace process regressed.

[814] Andrew Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace*, Lowy Institute, 08.12.2017, https:// www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/aung-san-suu-kyis-fall-grace (access: 29.07.2018).

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to do with her mythologizing of the Panlong (Pinlon) Agreement[815] itself, which is also a part of her untiring task of deificating her father. Various times she presented an idealised vision of the Panglong Agreement. During one of her gate rallies she presented Panglong as an affirmative example of her moral political philosophy. She started from depicting difficult circumstances surrounding Panglong Agreement ("what difficulties the leaders faced at the negotiating table?"), again emphasising the inward factors: "the major hurdle they had to overcome was the pre-existing suspicion and prejudice among our ethnic groups" and admitting that "there were reasons behind this," because "to begin with, we, the majority Burman and minority ethnic groups, had never learned to understand one another in history."[816] Then she followed the mainstream Burman narrative of colonial machinations of the British ethnic policy[817] (and she even claimed that the ethnic leaders understood these machinations) and said that the ethnic minorities "joined" the struggle against colonialism (this claim was a post-independence Burma narrative), intercepting this narrative with some platitudes (typical for her style) about the people: "the situation was exacerbated by the divide and rule policy of the British colonial system. Any government that cannot win hearts and minds of the populace have to resort to 'divide and rule.' The ethnic groups therefore were denied the chance to fully participate in the anti-colonial struggle that was happening in what was then called 'Proper Burma.' As Burma was almost set for independence, some people in the colonial camp came up with the idea that the conditions for independence for the 'frontier peoples' and the Burman were not the same (…) Our ethnic leaders had long view. They knew that those who did not want to see the whole Burma independent were rocking the boat by stirring the dissonance among ethnic groups."[818] Having presented this historically inaccurate picture, she linked the struggle for independence with her struggle for democracy along her "second struggle for national independence" lines – which she repeated during another rally ("people from all strata of life, and all ethnic groups had taken part in our first struggle. Similarly we would like all to be part of the second struggle")[819] – saying that a "similar notion" (of ethnic groups' unreadiness for independence) "has been heard in our quest for democracy"; but she countered these

[815] *The Panglong Agreement*, UN Peacemaker, 12.02.1947, http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MM_470212_Panglong%20Agreement.pdf (access: 24.05.2018).

[816] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 401–403.

[817] This narrative resulted in associating ethnic politics as "the obverse of the politics of national unity in modern Burma" (Robert Taylor, *Perceptions of Ethnicity in the Politics of Burma*, "Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science", vol. 10, no. 1, 1982, p. 8), while "in the eyes of the Burmans the ethnic minorities came to be associated with colonial rule" (Matthew J. Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong*, "Asian Survey", vol. 48, no. 6, November/December 2008, p. 7).

[818] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*..., pp. 401–403.

[819] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 2 March 1996 (no. 20)*..., p. 458.

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claims by evoking the example of her father (and other independence leaders) who managed this situation: "faced with the peril that Burma might be cut up into pieces upon independence, our national leaders set out on a nationwide campaign to iron our difference between Burman and ethnic leaders"; according to Suu Kyi, they knew that "they had to build unity" by treating the ethnic groups equally – "the Burman leaders realized that the guarantee of equal rights for all the ethnic groups within the Union was key to the successful negotiations and soonest independence."[820] Equality derived from the trust alongside with, somehow artificially added here, "people's participation" (what the people had to do with Panglong, essentially a "cabinet diplomacy" style deal brokered behind closed doors?) were thus the reason why Panglong, according to Suu Kyi, succeeded: "Panglong was a success because our national leaders earned the trust of ethnic leaders. The national leaders were respected as men of their word, men whose action match their rhetoric (…) The crux of the agreement is the principle of equality (…) the recognition that ethnic autonomy and desires should not be compromised was a critical element of Panglong Agreement. People's participation was vital for Panglong breakthrough. National and ethnic leaders were able to come together for the independence of the Union because their peoples were behind them. They achieved all that with a unionist spirit."[821] In 2012 she repeated this message invoking "light-hearted references to Aung San's easy camaraderie with minority leaders – she mentions a picture of Aung San take with Kachin women amidst goodnatured ribbing about his wife's possible jealousy – an image deeply evocating of a lost opportunity and a close-to-being achieved national unity."[822]

Unfortunately, when Aung San was gone, his successors failed to implement the Agreement (this statement, by the way, contradicts Suu Kyi's earlier words that Panglong was a success)[823] – Suu Kyi repeated this statement in 2012 evoking Aung San's famous (broken) promise of "one rupee for ethnics and one for Burmans,"[824] and explained the

[820] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 401–403. Naturally, democracy would resolve almost all problems: "in tolerant societies, there is little to be more inter-class and inter-generational conflicts, and horizontal conflicts between ethnic groups, too" (Ibid., p. 404).

[821] Ibid., pp. 401–403. Suu Kyi used the thesis of unity being the key to success in independence struggle in her "Myitkyina speech," too: "we won independence through the unity of the various nationalities" (Suu Kyi, *The Need for Solidarity*…, p. 223).

[822] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 320.

[823] "Ethnic leaders ratified Panglong Agreement because they trusted my father and that, when dad was gone, the subsequent Burman leaders did not honour the Agreement. They are right. We should not pin our hope on one individual leader on one organization. We have to count on our conviction in equal rights of all national ethnic groups in building a democratic Union we desire" (*Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 401–403).

[824] "If Bamar get one kyat, Shan and Kachin must get one kyat respectively" (*Aung San: A Legacy Unfulfilled*, "The Irrawaddy", 13.02.2018, https://www.irrawaddy.com/from-the-archive/aung-san-legacy-unfulfilled-3.html (access: 16.07.2018)).

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reasons for breaking this promise "with a rather weak argument: 'because there was not even 25 pyats to give either to the Kachins or the Bamahs.'"[825] In case someone in the audience did not understand this message of the importance of unity (derived from inward moral behaviour) in quest for democracy along the "second struggle for independence lines," Suu Kyi dotted the "i" by saying: "the lesson we learned from Panglong is clear. Unity is the vehicle to our destination. There will always be insinuators, causing disunity among us. When we overcome them, we will be able to build a united and democratic union."[826] In 2012 she repeated this message – again in Myitkyina – saying that "independence was achieved because the ethnic nationals did not 'distance themselves' from her father and worked in unity, and democracy would be achieved if they continued to do the same (…) to contemporise the struggle, the Burman-dominated AFPFL was merely to be replaced by a similarly structured NLD."[827]

The problem with Suu Kyi's interpretation of Panglong is multidimensional. To start with, Aung San – Suu Kyi's unquestioned model – although empathetic to ethnic minorities, had a more complicated relationship towards the ethnic issue, not an uncontroversial one.[828] Moreover, Panglong was not as successful as she presented it: it was a compromise, which the ethnics accepted primarily due to economic reasons, not out of "patriotism" or "unity."[829] Worse still – Panglong was only a limited deal (only representatives of Shan, Kachin, and Chin minorities attended the conference, another key minority – the Karens – only sent observers and later boycotted Panglong).[830] And the

[825] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 320.

[826] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech, Saturday, 17 February 1996 (no. 18)*…, pp. 401–403.

[827] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 320.

[828] "The standard myth of Panglong positions Aung San as possibly the only Burman figure to enjoy the trust of the ethnic minorities, and thus, the only man who could conceivably unite all of Burma (…) But Aung San's legacy regarding ethnicity in Burma appears to be more mixed than his defenders choose to acknowledge. He insisted on abiding by Stalin's famously exclusive definition of the nation, even going so far as to suggest that only the Shan were numerous enough to warrant the label of nationality" (Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict and History in Burma*…, pp. 899–900). E.g. see: Aung San, *Minimum Population Figure for Ethnic Minority*, in: *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, ed. J. Silverstein, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1991, pp. 96–97.

[829] "Although the official history of Panglong portrays their participation as motivated by patriotism and a desire for independence, their actual positions were much more complex and varied," given the economic discrepancies between "Burma proper" and "hill areas," the ethnic minorities had primarily "utilitarian (particularly economic) reasons for signing the agreement," not "unity" or "independence" – "the motivations for participation varied among the ethnic minority signatories, yet economic concerns were of primary importance. Recognition of this fact is necessary in breaking though false claims of 'ethnic unity' that are attributed to Panglong" (Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict and History in Burma*…, pp. 901–910).

[830] Absent were other key minorities: Mon, Arakanese, Wa, Naga and other; Ibid, pp. 901–904; Smith, *Burma: Insurgency*…, p. 75; Especially lack of Karens had serious consequences (Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps*…, p. 253).

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deal was brokered on Burman majority's terms[831] dangerously close to unholy Burmese pattern of enforcing unity "through coercive mechanisms: by marginalizing or removing dissenters."[832] Thus, what Suu Kyi was doing was uncritically accepting and perpetuating the "Panglong myth."[833] In her version of the Panlong myth, the elusive "'spirit of Panglong' is something that needs to be recaptured, and this can only be done by recognizing the rights of the minority peoples that were agreed on February 12, 1947; this produced call "for another Panglong a contemporary conference that would look back to the time in Burma's history when all of the people *were* united and shared similar goals in working toward first, independence, and then, prosperity"; Suu Kyi assumed "that as long as government policies can be changed, a spirit of Burmese unity will be attained" – "indeed, the myth often insists that unity will be attained in this way."[834] Once in power she tried to implemented this vision by establishing "new Panglong," or the "21th century Panglong Conference." During her various speeches it was precisely this myth she offered to the ethnic minorities.

[831] "Although Aung San made significant concessions to the minority leaders such as granting full autonomy in internal affairs, the negotiations did not take place with all parties on an equal footing": the Burman political dominance "allowed the AFPFL to proceed with creating a Burmese nation essentially on their own terms" (Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict and History in Burma*…, pp. 902–908).

[832] Christina Fink, *Ethnic Politics at the Periphery*, quoted in: Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong*, "Asian Survey", vol. 48, no. 6, November/December 2008.

[833] There are three versions of this myth, two: that of Burman government of the Burmese state and that of NLD matter here (the third, of ethnic minorities, is irrelevant here. The first one "highlights the unity of the ethnic groups of Burma in the struggle against the Japanese, as well as the harmonious spirit in which the groups' representatives gathered at Panglong to sign the historic agreement (…) it was only through the peerless leadership of Aung San and the wise decisions of the leaders of the ethnic minorities that Burma was able to free itself of its colonial shackles," this myth continues with Tatmadaw's claim of protecting "the unity of nation," and "the integrity of Burma against both foreign attacks on national sovereignty and against internal elements attempting to dismantle the union through separatist politics"; accordingly, all Tatmadaw's actions "have been in the spirit of Burmese unity, the spirit of Panglong"; this myth "conveniently ignores the fact that only three of the main ethnic minority groups were in attendance at Panglong and that there was still significant dissension within those groups," moreover, "there was virtually no attention given to the status of minority groups within Ministerial Burma." The second myth, that of NLD, "is similar in many ways to the first" – "it also reifies Aung San's role in the conference and stresses the unity of the groups involved", yet it differentiates in understanding of post-Panglong events, as it blames the Tatmadaw for betraying the spirit of Panglong (Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict and History in Burma*…, pp. 904–910). About "spirit of Panglong", see: Smith, *Burma: Insurgency*…, p. 75.

[834] NLD's "account of Panglong—while adhering more closely to historical reality than the first—is still problematic. While its criticism of government and military policies is important, it too ignores the historical tensions both between the minority groups and the AFPFL and also among the minority groups themselves." (Ibid, pp. 901–905).

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Hence, for example, she evoked the "Panglong spirit" and the moral message associated with it during the first session of the 21th Century Panglong Conference in August 2016 when she declared that "since its inception it has been the aim of the National League for Democracy to hold political negotiations based on the Panglong spirit and the principle of finding solutions through the guarantee of equal rights, mutual respect, and mutual confidence between all ethnic nationalities" and emphasized the moral duty (to fulfill hopes of peace and "to turn these dreams into reality is a huge responsibility," but "huge is not to say heavy") of reaching an agreement: "a responsibility that is borne to keep faith with those who loved our country and have departed this world, without having known the incomparable joys of peace throughout the land; to affirm our compassion for our people, who are today suffering from lack of peace; as evidence of our love for the generations to come who will have to bear the burden of our legacies, both good and bad; such a responsibility can never be too heavy. This is a unique opportunity for us to accomplish a great task that will stand as a landmark throughout our history." To achieve that everyone needs wisdom and courage that comes from morality: "let us grasp this magnificent opportunity, with wisdom, courage, and perseverance, and create a future infused with light. If all those who play a part, however big or small, in the peace process, cultivate the wisdom to reconcile differing views for the good of the people, the courage to accept ideas and practices that deserve to be accepted, and the perseverance to continue until difficulties are overcome, we will surely be able to build the democratic federal Union of our dreams"; only then, Myanmar would be able to achieve peace and realize its true potential: "with a durable peace, our country will flourish, our diversity will be cause for celebration, and our peoples can finally realise their true potential as the children of this Union (…) it has been said that "the dreamer who makes his dream come true is the lord of us all. To be able to make the dreams of a whole country come true is to become truly the lords of ourselves."[835]

Another example of Suu Kyi's propagation of "Panglong spirit" came with her much publicized speech on the 70th anniversary of Panglong, where she said that it was in Panglong "where the foundation of the very unity of the union was laid down," for "the union was first established on the basis of consultation, discussion, co-ordination and agreement"; hence "the term Panglong, a very simple, short name, is pleasing and

[835] The speech was complemented by calls for dialogue ("to achieve our long-overdue peace we must engage in dialogue. We must negotiate. If we are to find solutions at the political negotiating table, we will need a framework that is accepted by all"), and a debatable statement that peace cannot be enforced from above: "no peace process can succeed without the support of the people. Peace is not something that leaders impose. It is not something than can be achieved only in a conference room. It requires the active involvement and support of all peoples (…) I know that they will with to see their political leaders pursue difficult peace negotiations ahead with intelligence, courage and empathy" (*Official Translation of the Speech Delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the Opening Day*…).

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exciting to the hearts of all genuine Union people"; a "symbol of the nationals' qualifications of venturing to sacrifice their lives for the benefit of the people"; then, after offering 1) some platitudes ("peace is the cause we believe in. We must be loyal to and cherish the peace process"; "national reconciliation is the foundation for the Peace of the Union"; "what's most valuable and beneficial to the people is nothing but peace"; "our peace must be eternal till doomsday"), mixed with 2) moral messages ("to achieve peace is an opportunity as well as a duty") and 3) quasi-scientific argumentation ("must use our brains to achieve peace only" – "according to scientists, human beings generally use only 10 per cent of their brain's capacity, whereas the remaining 90 per cent is supposedly unused or sleeping. So, if we will use more than 10 per cent, let us say, 20 per cent, even if it is not 100%, for the peace, I mostly believe it is impossible that there is no way to achieve peace. This is our belief and our confidence"), she presented here 4) the main message: that to end the ethnic conflict "we need to be farsighted, courageous enough to take risks in the interest of the generations to come."[836] Hence she told the ethnic minorities that they all "must be truthful to peace," and "to be loyal to peace, we must all be brave, daring to take risks"; this loyalty, alongside with "duty conscientiousness" ("without which nothing valuable can be achieved correctly") and "discretion," ("which means the ability to make correct judgement of the consequences arising from our own actions") will help "to achieve everlasting peace within our union."[837] Evoking the example of Aung San, Suu Kyi told the ethnic minorities (many of whom have been courageously fighting the Tatmadaw for decades) "be courageous and take risks for the interest of the people. Sacrificing and taking risks are the supreme courage. My father told me that the courage to defend is not the real courage. To be defensive is the real courage. To be on the defensive is the real courage. To be on the defensive means doing what should be done and being ready, prepared to bear the consequences resulting from what is done. This kind of courage is the real courage. What made Panglong a success was based on the belief on the part of indigenous races"; in Suu Kyi's vision courage derives itself from self-confidence ("self confidence matters most in building trust"; "what's required in the first place for all groups involved in the peace process is self-confidence… believing in ourselves that we have goodwill (*cetana*) to do the best for our country, our Union and believing in our capacity can lead us all to participant in the 21st Century Panglong conference") which is a mental quality, a one that can be developed ("every person has weakness and strength. It is mainly responsible for a person to develop one's strength and to get rid of his weakness himself") and that can help to conquer those who disagree (" we need not be afraid of these negative minds and spirits. These can be overcome through our judgement, unity and courage").[838] In other words,

[836] *70th Union Day celebrated in Panglong…*

[837] Ibid.

[838] "We need to make the correct judgment as to what consequences will arise from our actions. I mean we must be truthful to ourselves. This has a connection with duty conscientiousness (…)

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those who oppose her "new Panglong" scheme are wrong minded but can be defeated by improving our own morality that would lead to self-consciousness (that would make people see that they should not fight with each other) and consequently – courage; this in turn would establish peace.

She has repeated the same moral message on other occasions, too. During the speech to commemorate the anniversary of the NLD government in 2017 she offered some heart-touching slogans like "national reconciliation is the essence"; "our goal is peace. Our goal is national reconciliation" or "I would also like to remind the people that we are a government of national reconciliation." She, too, offered poetic comparisons: "taking the path of peace is like taking a journey. We have to move forward. Sometime we have been standing still. Sometime we have had to move back a little. But clearly, we have never lost sight of our goal. Therefore, we will continue our march towards that goal."[839] At another time, during the 2nd anniversary of signing the NCA, she offered another metaphor – a marathon: "national reconciliation and peace efforts of our country cannot be perfect all the time. Difficulties and challenges will remain. In sprints, the strong wins; however, in marathons, only those who are determined and committed emerge victorious. Our road to peace is a marathon, and to successfully complete it, we need determination, good attitude and in addition, a will."[840] These surrounded her main point: the moral message seen in platitudes like "we took risks to do the right thing" or "I am fully confident that we have the wisdom and capability to choose the right path in fulfilling the needs of our country. This is our spirit" (in the government anniversary speech)[841]; or "based on the experiences and lessons learnt from the past, we strongly believe that political dialogues are the way forward"; "our main objective is to achieve the age-old dreams of peace and national reconciliation of the people"; "we need the will for our future generations. In the upcoming decades we need to think about what kind of country or what kind of Union we want our children to inherit"; "it is our inherent responsibility to work towards national reconciliation"; "we need to support each other with consideration and empathy whenever we face hardships and challenges during our

Now, we are not on good terms with one another because of disagreement, doubt and disunity. So, we're fighting. When we choose to fight, we must rely on physical weapons. They are created by our human brain (…) We need to have self-confidence (…) Therefore, I hereby want to request national ethnic groups who have not yet signed the ceasefire treaty until now, to have self-confidence in their own capacities. I would not say to trust us. I want to urge them to develop their self-confidence that they can move on to the goals they want, by seizing people's support with their powers and their astuteness" (Ibid.).

[839] *State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary…*

[840] *Opening Speech by the Chairperson of the NRPC…*

[841] *Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary…*

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journey"; "agreements can be reached if all political partners negotiate on the basis of mutual understanding and mutual trust" (in the NCA anniversary speech).[842]

In May 2017 during her opening speech to the 2nd session of the 21th Century Panglong Conference she told the delegates that they "enjoy the privilege of, and bear the responsibility for, turning the dreams so long cherished by our people into reality" and she preached to them "we must recognise that courtesy is not weakness, negotiation is not concession. Honesty, trust, awareness and wisdom are necessary for negotiations to succeed. We should not be afraid of negotiating with anybody. Rather than focusing on the problems that can exacerbate our differences, we must seek to identify the issues which can help to strengthen unity between us. Through dialogue, we can develop understanding, friendship, and empathy," through "unity, empathy, solidarity and the anglong spirit, we will strive to overcome the challenges that we will encounter along the way," and realize "potential of our country"; the "dream of peace", that, when achieved would be an example to the world: "our triumph will be a triumph not just for the Conference or for our nation but for all the peoples of our world who long for peace, who value harmony above dissension, friendship above enmity, prosperity above devastation."[843] And finally in another speech at the 21th Century Panglong Conference, in July 2017, she started and ended with appealing to the delegates from moral high ground position: "whether the peace that was beyond the reach of the Union throughout its history can be achieved or not is dependent on the mind and decision of the groups that are assembled in this hall" and "those who live together in the Union, be it good or bad, need to reform and resolve it. This opportunity is now in the hands of all leaders who are in this hall" only to move on with 1) slogans ("national reconciliation and peace is the most important and the most required for our Union"), 2) encouraging messages ("whatever difficulties and challenges we may face between each step, do not despair. If we fall, pick ourselves up again and take another step forward") and, most importantly, 3) moral preaching about the values of a) peace ("peace is not for 'first come, take all,' but just like those who first see the rising sun, they will feel the benefits of peace first and foremost, for sure"), b) can-do spirit ("if we have a determination to achieve peace, we will be able to overcome together whatever difficulties and challenges we may face. The last conference is the proof of our can-do spirit") and c) unity – "as we are in the same boat, we need to help one another. As we are on the same path toward the same aim, it should be noted that the (Myanmar) saying 'a different verse for a different school and a different verse for a different village' would create numerous questions and answers that would take us far away from our aimed destination. After everything is agreed upon, if new things pop up here and there, it would destroy trust and we can reach a stage

[842] *Opening Speech by the Chairperson of the NRPC…*

[843] The mentioned dialogue should be "open, frank and inclusive" (*Suu Kyi's Speech at the Opening Ceremony…*).

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where all will go whatever direction they want to go. Peace is achieved not through pressure but only through understanding and trust. Darkness is removed by light and not by darkness."[844]

The problem with this Suu Kyi's stance is that "this moralist call for self-sacrifice has done little to build trust with the ethnic populations that have historically been excluded from receiving adequate services and recognition from their national government, which has been dominated by the majority Burman population and a military that conducted brutal counterinsurgency campaigns that inflicted destruction on ethnic minority communities for decades"; hence "what ethnic minorities heard in this exhortation and the rest of the speech were suggestions that their worries about the current peace negotiations were not in fact based on serious problems in the process, but rather reflected a shortage of 'courage' and an unwillingness to sacrifice for the greater good"; for Suu Kyi "such a message was self-evident."[845] This was quintessential Suu Kyi's approach to politics: "lacking much in the way of experience with the abuses, devastation and sacrifices borne by ethnic populations in war zones for decades, Suu Kyi delivered what was to her a clear moral vision"; this vision "was to set aside individual or group desires for specific rights, concessions or promises in favour of proceeding with the process she had laid out based on her political and moral legitimacy."[846] In other words, the ethnic minorities should trust her because she is the daughter of Aung San, so she will carry out his task of national reconciliation to its happy ending; if they, however, do not trust this moral vision without specific details (such as federal rights for example)[847] then they are wrong-viewed and consequently they lack courage. In circumstances where Suu Kyi "has not invested the time and energy into personal diplomacy with ethnic minority leaders that informed observers feel is needed to build up trust and increase the prospects for a comprehensive agreement," instead of offering them statements "heavy on rhetoric and light on practical measures" and preaching to them, in formal settings, about their moral responsibilities,[848] it is unsurprising that so far her "new Panglong" scheme failed to achieve success.

Idealisation of Panglong, however, is just the beginning of problems with her narrative: "although she has repeatedly denounced the oppression of minority groups," her statements at times disregard "the exclusion and deception that characterized Panglong

[844] *State Counsellor: Historical Duty…*

[845] Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision…*

[846] Ibid.

[847] Perhaps one of the very few concretes she offered was the following pledge (so far unfulfilled): "our government will increase the momentum of conducting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) work processes for regional development and improving socio-economic situation of the ethnic nationals and the people in the conflict region" (*State Counsellor: Historical Duty…*).

[848] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for…*, pp. 10–12.

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as well as the complexity of Burma's recent ethnic history."[849] For example her continuous call for unity at the expanse of cultural differences and ethnic rights "inadvertently supports the Tatmadaw-propagated view that the sanctity of the Union was to be preserved at all cost,"[850] which again makes Suu Kyi's position an ideologically reversed side of the same coin as that of the Tatmadaw. This is, perhaps, one of the key reasons why so far Suu Kyi's 21th Century Panglong Conference failed to deliver results, despite Suu Kyi's investing enormous political capital in it: in conditions where her ethnic policy seemed to be dictated mostly by the Tatmadaw's line (albeit presented in softer version) – Suu Kyi "has in key respects seemed to support the negotiating position laid down by the Thein Sein government, and endorsed by the armed forces."[851]

Suu Kyi's idealisation and imagination of Aung San's Tatmadaw as "people's army" (see: chapter on Aung San) unconsciously follows Burman ethnocentric patterns: "she also speaks of the Tatmadaw as an army established by Aung San to serve national interest, with no apparent mention of the fact that the army at its inception was largely a Burman establishment, formed to vindicate the Burman martial spirit, hitherto ignored by the British and that down the years the Tatmadaw has been perceived by ethnic minorities groups as in instrument of persecution."[852] And this vision of Aung San's people's army is not only imagined and idealised, but also built on Burman-centric patterns: "Aung San's vision was an 'army of the people' that was as undivided as the composition of parliament. His idea was that all ethnic nationalities would unite under one political body, the AFPFL, following the model of the army with its battalions composed along ethnic lines united under one central command."[853] Unsurprisingly, this undemocratic vision – that proves that Aung San was indeed the Tatmadaw's ideological father – was unacceptable for many among the ethnic minorities.

The last problem with Suu Kyi's approach to ethnic minorities – combined with previous ones – is her "unintentional condescension" of the ethnic minorities, seen in 1) comments like that of Burmans "who because of their status need to be 'magnanimous' to other groups," in 2) "repeated references to certain cultural symbols or ideas based on which the Burman-dominated 'official' history of Myanmar has been constructed" and in 3) adopting "symbols for her party which resonate deeply with the country's Bamar past, often at the cost of inadvertently marginalizing ethnic interests – fighting peacock, venerated abbots, Buddhist celebrations, explains democracy by Ten Duties, Burmese tendency to emphasise the need for personal sacrifice (…) Over the years it translated into not only an uncritical acceptance of her father's legacy and some of the popular

[849] E.g. "we won our in-dependence through the unity of the various nationalities" (Walton, *Ethnicity, Conflict and History in Burma*…, p. 905).

[850] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 320.

[851] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, pp. 9–12.

[852] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 320.

[853] Zöllner, *The Beast and the Beauty*…, p. 74.

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Burmese perspectives (e.g. the mythology surrounding the formation of Tatmadaw) but also being indisputably identified with the Buddhist-Burmese majority of Myanmar."[854]

In short, Suu Kyi is very much a Burman-centric Burmese, ideologically a reversed (more gentle, more humane and much more acceptable) version of the Tatmadaw's view of ethnic relations. That is why her marginalization of both ethnic issues and ethnic minorities' representatives in the party (there were very few ethnic candidates from the NLD in the general elections of 2015) is unsurprising. Despite that the ethnic minorities voted for the NLD in the last elections (which helped Suu Kyi's party to achieve a landslide), but grew disappointed with time. It is uncertain, though not impossible, that they would vote again for the NLD in general elections in 2020.

The most dire example of Suu Kyi's negligence of ethnic issues and her preference for Burman majority, however, comes from her attitude towards the most prosecuted and most controversial minority in Myanmar: the unrecognized as the citizens of the state Rohingyas. Suu Kyi's stance on Rohingya cost her much internationally (though not domestically) both in political and moral sense – this is the single reason why Suu Kyi has lost her previously almost celestial position in the West.

c) The Rohingya Trap

"The Burmese expression for refugee is *dukkha-the*, 'one who has to bear *dukkha*, suffering.' In that sense, none of us can avoid knowing what it is to be a refugee. The refuge we all seek is protection from forces which wrench us away from the security and comfort, physical and mental, which give dignity and meaning to human existence."[855]

When Suu Kyi wrote these words in 1990s, she probably in the worst nightmares did not expect how ironic they would sound now, given her silence over mass exodus of over 720 thousand Rohingya refugees from her own country, under her government. The Rohingya crisis – itself a drama that (in its last stage) started in 2012 – is the single reason why Suu Kyi has lost her iconic position in the West. From being an idealized "beacon of hope" she was degraded into the position of merely a shrewd politician. Notwithstanding the intellectual and emotional level of such labels and its political

[854] Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 320–325. Sengupta correctly adds some words in defence of Suu Kyi that "to be fair, despite the criticism, throughout her 2012 speech there are repeated calls for ethnic solidarity – she speaks her intention of a long stay in Kachin State and of learning the Kayin language as also takes pains to explain the true spirit of Panglong, based as it is on equality of nationals, the majority with the minority groups, and a perpetration of 'genuine peace.' In fact, throughout her political career she has repeatedly denounced the oppression of non-Burma minority groups and in the context spoken of the criticality of rule of law" (Ibid., p. 320).

[855] Suu Kyi, *Towards a True Refugee*…, p. 240.

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and analytical adequacy,[856] the Rohingya crisis is important here as it provokes crucial questions in relation to her political thought: did Suu Kyi change her stance or did her political behaviour remain consistent to her political thought?

Rohingya is a Muslim ethnic minority (unrecognized in Myanmar) that lived in Rakhine (Arakan) province (majority of them – up to one million – were expelled, while minority – between 100 to more than 200 thousand of them remained in Rakhine). As other Myanmar's ethnic minorities, the Rohingyas have been prosecuted and repressed for many decades (in their case in 1978, 1991/1992, 2016 and 2017), however, there are two aspects which differentiate them from other prosecuted ethnic minorities. First, since 2012, Rohingya's plight has been well-known and publicized in the West. Second, the Rohingyas are the single most detested group in Myanmar – the hatred towards them is really indiscriminate, as it unites the nation, the army and even the democratic dissidents. The general ill-feeling towards Rohingya in the Burmese society produces a political reality where any politician backing them has nothing to win and everything to lose. For Suu Kyi, as for any other politician in Burma, support of Rohingya equals committing a political suicide. At the same time, the lack of support for Rohingya exposes her to criticism in the West. Hence, the "Rohingya trap." Suu Kyi has been trying to detour this trap. She did not say a word in support of the Rohingyas (she never used that word as it is considered politically incorrect inside Myanmar)[857] and limited herself to general calls for peace and reconciliation and against violence and prejudice.[858] Unfortunately, the Rohingya crisis re-emerged in late 2016 and again in August-September 2017, once Suu Kyi was already in power (though her power is shared with the generals and Suu Kyi does not control the army), and contributed to the deluge of international criticism on her, including some from a few UN Peace Prize

[856] This itself is not the theme of this book, I've written about this elsewhere.

[857] This is how she explained her stance: "I think that instead of using emotive terms, this term has become emotive, and highly charged. It's better to call them as Muslims, which is a description that nobody can deny. We are talking about the Muslim community in the Rakhine state and other terms may be applied to that community but I do not see any point in using terms that simply inflame passions further" (Suu Kyi's Interview for ANI (Asian News International), in: *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Politics and Crises: In Quotes*, "The Irrawaddy", 26.09.2017, https:// www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-politics-crises-quotes.html (access: 30.09.2018)).

[858] For a recent one, see: "my true feelings are very very simple. I want peace and harmony in Rakhine. It's the responsibility of every government to maintain a position of integrity and fairness. We have to be fair to all communities. We have always maintained this that we don't condemn either of the communities. We condemn actions that are against the rule of law and that are against the humanitarian needs of all people. But we have never condemned communities as such," – interview for the Nikkei Asian Review; "hatred is never good. Promoting hatred in the name of Buddhism is quite contradictory to the Buddha's teachings. Lord Buddha never supported hatred," – interview for Radio Free Asia, in: ibid.

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Laureates[859] and petitions to revoke her 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.[860] Suu Kyi had again been silent and backed the military in their anti-guerilla actions in Arakan against Rohingya.[861] Facing deluge of criticism from the West, Suu Kyi pleaded with the West: "not to add fuel to fire,"[862] asked the international community not to "drum up cause for biggest fires of resentment" and claimed that the government has "managed to keep the situation under control and to calm it down."[863] In September 2017, responding to the exodus that UN Secretary General called "a humanitarian catastrophe,"[864] Suu Kyi downplayed the crisis by ignoring the direct causes of more than 720.000 people's exodus (she claimed that her government did not know the reasons of their flight!) and by placing the crisis in the wider context of more important domestic priorities; she neither condemned the military nor tried to influence the Tatmadaw's actions.[865] Her

[859] *Open Letter to the President of the Security Council and Member Countries of the Council to End the Human Crisis of Rohingyas in Myanmar*, 30.12.2016, http://www.muhammadyunus.org/index.php/news-media/news/1630-open-letter-to-the-president-of-the-security-council-and-member-countries-of-the-council-to-end-the-human-crisis-of-rohingyas-in-myanmar (access: 25.10.2018).

[860] *Take Away Aung San Suu Kyi's Nobel Peace Prize. She No Longer Deserves It*, "The Guardian", 05.09.2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/05/rohingya-aung-san-suu-kyi-nobel-peace-prize-rohingya-myanmar (access: 16.07.2018).

[861] "Some parts of Rohingyas turned militant and there are even claims that one of their organizations became "affiliated with the international terrorist network al-Qaida" (Bertil Lintner, *Militancy in Arakan State*, "The Irrawaddy", 15.12.2016, http://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/militancy-in-arakan-state.html (access: 16.07.2018)); the crisis re-emerged after Rohingyas attacked a Burmese army's military post in 2016 and again in 2017; yet on the other hand Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or ARSA's agenda is very local, not fundamentalist.

[862] *Suu Kyi Calls for 'Space' to Address Myanmar's Rohingya Issue as Kerry Visits*, "Reuters", 22.05.2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-usa-kerry-idUSKCN0YD01E (access: 16.07.2018).

[863] *Aung San Suu Kyi Accuses International Community of Stoking Unrest in Myanmar*, "The Guardian", 03.12.2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/03/aung-san-suu-kyi-accuses-international-community-of-stoking-unrest-in-myanmar (access: 17.07.2018).

[864] *Letter Dated 2 September 2017 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, UN, S/2017/753, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/753 (access: 17.07.2018).

[865] *State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Speech*, 19 September 2017, Nay Pyi Taw, Office of State Counsellor, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GTzJu0W4G0 (access: 17.07.2018). Elsewhere, in her (rare after 2015) interviews she placed the crisis in the longer historical perspective: "regarding the current situation in Rakhine State, it has never been good, even since we took office. However, the issue has needed to be handled more delicately, lately as it has received extra attention from the international community. It is more difficult to resolve any problem when all are watching it" (interview for Radio Free Asia); "it's a humanitarian issue, which has risen out of long-term socio-economic problems and politics of course. In the Rakhine State, go back to the 19th century, and periodically trouble has broken out there between the Muslim community and the

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government in denying ethnic cleansing on Rohingya "followed much the same line as the former military regime, when it was accused of human rights violations" – they "have flatly denied that any abuses have occurred and accused the international news media of inaccurate reporting even peddling 'fake news'"[866] (the latter phrase was used by Suu Kyi herself).[867] They also stated that UN's plan to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Myanmar would equal to interference in Myanmar's domestic affairs, which "sounds eerily like the responses made by the military regime before 2010, to calls by the international community to free Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest, calls that were encouraged by the then opposition leader," it is also an ironic reversal of "Aung San Suu Kyi's 20-year campaign to persuade the international community to exert pressure against the former military regime."[868] Most probably Suu Kyi's government PR behaviour steams from the anxiety over not provoking the military,[869] but the result is that the NLD's government comes dangerously close to previous Tatmadaw's military governments. This naturally provokes international criticism.

Rakhine community. And we have inherited this very complex problem and we have to deal with it and have to resolve it. So, obviously, it is not something we can do overnight" (interview for Asian News International); she also placed Rakhine in a wider context of nationwide challenges: "those who are interested in the Rakhine situation from the outside will only focus on the Rakhine situation. But we have to carry on with the rest of the country — including the economy, health, education, development, peace process, everything. And we keep our eyes open to make sure that we are doing the best in every possible sector" (interview for Nikkei Asian Review); she emphasized economic solutions: "socio-economic development is a very important part of the solution" (interview for Asian News International); "one of the reasons why we have problems like these is because of underdevelopment rather because of investments. So investments would actually help to make the situation better" (interview for Nikkei Asian Review); finally, in what seems like either detachment from reality or outright hypocrisy, she stated that "we have a very strong code of conduct that has been distributed to all the security forces and they have been instructed to follow them very closely" (*Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Politics and Crises*...). Critics point out that in her stance on Rohingya issue, Suu Kyi "conflated illegal migration with terrorism" which represents "a core justification of the military's abusive treatment of the minority"; "insinuated unchecked illegal migration from Bangladesh represents an existential threat by swamping the Buddhist majority nation with Muslims" which "echoes recent arguments made by the Myanmar military, or Tatmadaw, and the radical Buddhist clergy," accordingly, Suu Kyi's stance represent its "more subtle fashion" of "an increasingly xenophobic defiance of international criticism" in Myanmar (David Scott Mathieson, *Suu Kyi Takes a Populist, Paranoid Turn*, "Asia Times", 21.1.2017, http://www.atimes.com/article/suu-kyi-takes-populist-paranoid-turn/ (access: 14.08.2018).

[866] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 12.

[867] *Rohingya Crisis: Suu Kyi Says 'Fake News Helping Terrorists'*, BBC, 06.09.2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41170570 (access: 29.07.2018).

[868] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 12.

[869] Justin Chambers, Gerard McCarthy, *Optimism and Despair in Myanmar*, "New Mandala", 07.02.2017, http://www.newmandala.org/optimism-despair-myanmar/ (access: 28.07.2018).

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Indeed, intellectually the Realpolitik justification of Suu Kyi's action (see: above) is the only possible one, for her stance is indefensible from the perspective of universal (Western) values.[870] How come a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate behave oblivious to the plight of repressed people? Isn't it going against all she preached since 1988? Against such touching words like these on refugees quoted at the beginning of this subchapter?

This is precisely the reason why Suu Kyi faces a deluge of harsh criticism from the West.[871] Journalists and human rights activists that passionately supported Suu Kyi for two decades still do not comprehend Suu Kyi's attitude, accusing her of betrayal of the values she shared before. For her – so surprising and unexpected to many – stance she has been called – to name just a few labels – a "prisoner of conscience turned into a cynical politician,"[872] "apologist of the military government,"[873] a "neo-populist" who switched her initial "value-shy" approach on Rohingya issue into "outright racist rhetoric" that supports nationwide Islamophobia, and, consequently, who "retreated from moral leadership to one based on fear and paranoia."[874] Some commentaries even went so far as to compare her to "Burma's Mugabe" with blood on her

[870] For an honest, yet intellectually unconvincing attempt to defend ASSK's stance on Rohingya from other than Realpolitik perspective see: Sengupta's interpretation. Although Sengupta admits that "for once her pragmatism showed in a bad light," she nevertheless tried to justify Suu Kyi's stance by linking her rationale to Havel's concepts and to the Engaged Buddhism ("there was need to address these issue, if real community cleansing was to happen and hence Suu Kyi's reference to fear as a main instigator to recurrent strife") (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, pp. 315–316).

[871] Responding to this criticism Suu Kyi evoked one of the central values of her political thought: responsibility (of all sides): "regarding how Myanmar people and the international community should view the current situation of Myanmar, I think they should view with a complete sense of responsibility. But what our citizens should know is that the main responsibility lies on them if they want their country to develop and have peace. But at the same time, they can't ignore the international community. The world today is like a village. You can't stay unconnected, and it is important to get along well with the international community. This is also a responsibility for your country. So, you have to take responsibility for your country, and global citizens also have to take responsibility for this world. If all have a sense of responsibility, there will be problems for no one. However, we can't always see this sense of responsibility" (*Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Politics and Crises*…).

[872] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Inexcusable Silence*, "Al-Jazeera", 24.05.2016, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/05/aung-san-suu-kyi-inexcusable-silence-150524085430576.html (access: 17.07.2018).

[873] Guy Horton, *Aung San Suu Kyi, Complicity with the Tyranny*, "The Ecologist", 31.10.2013, http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2140042/aung_san_suu_kyi_complicity_with_tyranny.html (access: 17.07.2018).

[874] Mathieson, *Suu Kyi Takes a Populist, Paranoid Turn*…; "a number of observers have also questioned Aung San Suu Kyi's failure to try and change popular perceptions of the 'threat' posed by Muslims" (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 16).

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hands.[875] According to this now mainstream (in the West, not necessarily in Asia) narrative, Suu Kyi is "legitimizing the genocide,"[876] and once in power, she ignored "her most vulnerable people"[877] and betrayed her democratic ideals.[878] Certainly this has all contributed to her "fall from grace."[879] In a way summarising this narrative, "New York Times" in its editorial in May 2016 called Suu Kyi's stance "cowardly"; "deeply disappointing" and "utterly unacceptable" and advised her to "reconsider her stance immediately."[880] To summarise this discourse, one can see the following features: the notion of betrayal of values and a deep sense of disappointment, appeals to her to "wake up," strong moral condemnation based on the "becoming a politician" concept, calls for her to change policy and to Western, particularly US, policymakers to influence her.

Without making any excuses for Aung San Suu Kyi,[881] it must be said that her stance may indeed be considered controversial and morally ambiguous. Most probably she is hoping to keep this deep domestic crisis under control, as it threatens to undermine her position (or even topple her by the generals). Or, another convincing or persuasive explanation is that she is simply sacrificing the Rohingyas for the greater good of being able to reform Myanmar and finish her father's task. From Realpolitik perspective her stance is unsurprising, but there is certain irony, if not tragedy, in the fact that Suu Kyi – until 2012 considered an antithesis of realist politician – behaved in a classical realist

[875] Roland Watson, *Aung San Suu Kyi Is a Disgrace*, "Dictator's Watch", 14.01.2017, http://www.dictatorwatch.org/prsuukyidisgrace.html (access: 17.07.2018); Roland Watson, *Aung San Suu Kyi: Burma's Robert Mugabe*, "Dictator's Watch", 19.03.2013, http://www.dictatorwatch.org/articles/suukyimugabe.pdf (access: 17.07.2018).

[876] Shebad Khan, *Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Accused of 'Legitimising Genocide of Rohingya Muslims'*, "The Independent", 25.11.2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/rohingya-muslims-burma-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-legitimising-genocide-a7439151.html (access: 17.07.2018).

[877] Richard Cockett, *Aung San Suu Kyi Is in Power. So Why Is She Ignoring Her Country's Most Vulnerable People?*, "Foreign Policy", 09.06.2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/09/aung-san-suu-kyi-is-in-power-so-why-is-she-ignoring-her-countrys-most-vulnerable-people-burma-rohingya/ (access: 17.07.2018).

[878] Joshua Hammer, *Betrayal in Burma*, NYRB, 05.11.2015, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/11/05/betrayal-burma/ (access: 17.07.2018).

[879] Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace*…

[880] *Aung San Suu Kyi's Cowardly Stance on the Rohingya*, "New York Times", 09.05.2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/opinion/aung-san-suu-kyis-cowardly-stance-on-the-rohingya.html?_r=0 (access: 17.07.2018).

[881] The criticism is targeted mostly at Suu Kyi, not at Min Aung Hlaing, a globally unknown commander-in-chief of the Tatmadaw, who is primarily responsible for Rohingya's plight. Suu Kyi has no control over the army; moreover, the army may overthrow her anytime; Suu Kyi is not killing the Rohingyas and she has little possibilities to help them; and if she does try and oppose the military, she might lose the cause she has been fighting for the last 27 years. Thus the criticism on Suu Kyi has targeted the wrong person and lacks proportions.

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way. Thus, from the point of view of political thought, one thing is certain: the Rohingya crisis was the acid test for Suu Kyi and her ideals and all political thought and stand. In her crucial moment of truth Suu Kyi chose loyalty to her country over universal values. It turned out that the political interests of Myanmar and/or her own political benefits are more important than universal values: the protection of the human rights and helping the repressed minority. In doing so Suu Kyi proved to be Aung San's true heiress: a real political successor of Aung San's Machiavellianism that demanded securing Burma's interest at the expanse of everything else, including morality.

Her stance, however, has another consequence, too: an intellectual one. Given the reality of Rohingya crisis, one may either claim that Suu Kyi has "changed" and "betrayed her values" (then, intellectually speaking, it seems coherent: she had universalist ideas, but she has forgotten about them due to political interests). Or that Suu Kyi and her ideas remained more less similar, but were to certain level misunderstood, at least externally. This book claims the latter is true and hopes that material collected here would speak for itself in supporting this interpretation: that the international/universalist dimension of Suu Kyi's political thought has always been subjugated to the Burmese one. Suu Kyi called for universal (Western) values, but understood them in a Burmese way, where such ideas as unity, duty or sacrifice come ahead of the universal rights for everyone. Even more importantly, Suu Kyi advocated them for the Burmese people, and for the interests of Burma, not for the Rohingyas whom she – most probably – does not consider as fellow Burmese. Here her "unintentional condescension" for non-Burmans showed itself, was brought into daylight by the Rohingya crisis. The crisis proved that for Suu Kyi human rights have their limits when Burma's and Burmans' (and her personal) interests are at stake. And this, in turn, proves that international dimension of her thought was only a thin, surface layer beneath her deep Burmese Buddhist approach to politics, one in the very footsteps of her father.

10. Post-2011: The Enforced Reconciliation

In 2011, Aung San Suu Kyi – released from the house arrest for the last time in November 2010 – having struggled with the army for twenty years in vain, yielded.[882] Instead of continuing vain attempts to overthrow the army-dominated system, she accepted the

[882] "Suu Kyi while speaking at an election rally in 2011 had remarked that some were concerned that her personal dignity would be injured when the NLD was approached to participate in the 2012-by elections, but she had agreed to participate, fully aware that her dignity might be compromised because she believed politics was not about dignity but about commitment" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 306).

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political reality of the Tatmadaw's political dominance[883] and decided to manoeuvre for herself a good position within it.[884] In moral terms she seemed to be a winner, in political terms she has started to be not only a practitioner but also a decision-maker with growing power-share, as this decision has opened her way to win the 2015 elections[885] and became the (co)-ruler of Myanmar, alongside with the army which still holds key political checks.[886] It also allowed Myanmar – all reservation notwithstanding – to move forward.[887]

The nature of the Tatmadaw-controlled transition[888] made it impossible for Suu Kyi to do what many in Myanmar hoped for: make political reckoning with the past. Unfortunately, what may seem right in the Weberian "ethnics of convictions" is not quite so in the "ethics of responsibility."[889] Thus, after the elections, Suu Kyi presented a politically

[883] "Whatever happens, the armed forces will remain the ultimate arbiter of power in Myanmar. As far as can be judged, the generals do not envisage a transition to a full democracy in the foreseeable future, and possibly not for a decade or more" (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 20).

[884] The essence of Suu Kyi-Tatmadaw's unwritten agreement has been "inclusion, consensus and stability" (Ian Holliday, *Thinking about Transitional Justice in Myanmar*, "South East Asia Research", vol. 22, no. 2, Special Issue: *Myanmar's Democratization – Comparative and South East Asian Perspectives*, June 2014, pp. 183–200).

[885] The 2015 elections were politically not the turning point in Burma/Myanmar's transition: this title goes to the deal that was struck afterwards behind closed doors between the military and Aung San Suu Kyi. In November-December 2015 the real political power was negotiated between Suu Kyi and the military regime which opened way to establishing NLD's civilian government in early 2016.

[886] These include: three ministries (defence, home affairs and border affairs); budget autonomy and legal option of staging a coup, and 25 percent of the seats in the parliament for the army and blocks Suu Kyi from becoming president; the Constitution effectively makes Tatmadaw the co-ruler of any civilian government (*The Consitution of the Union of Myanmar*…, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs5/Myanmar_Constitution-2008-en.pdf (dostęp: 01.08.2018)).

[887] The post-2011 changes "do not go far enough, but are not insignificant" (Mary Callahan, *The Debate During BRACIF 2 Conference*, Nagoya, Japan, 9 July 2018).

[888] "It must be recognised that she is in a very difficult position. Security operations in Myanmar are managed by the armed forces which, under the 2008 constitution, control all military affairs. Her ability to intervene is limited. Also, if her current delicate relationship with the Tatmadaw should break down, then her ability to govern the country and introduce a range of much-needed reforms over the longer term, is jeopardized" (Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace*…).

[889] Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf (access: 25.10.2018), published as "Politik als Beruf", Gesammelte Politische Schriften, Munchen 1921. Originally a speech at Munich University, 1918, published in 1919 by Duncker & Humblodt, Munich, in: *From Max Weber*: *Essays in Sociology*, transl. and eds H.H. Gerth, C.W. Mills, Oxford University Press, New York 1946. Contrary to social expectations and contrary to the logic of "ethnics of convictions," Suu Kyi couldn't allow herself to being tempted by a political payoff; this would ruin her chances of persuading the army to accept

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wise, conciliatory tone: she called for a dialogue, national reconciliation and did not criticise military-backing cronies (she already befriended some of them earlier).[890] She, too, significantly changed her economic thought: "despite her earlier stance of democracy first and her repeated claim that democracy is yet to be achieved in its true sense in Myanmar, she has consistently reviewed her perspective on economic progress, has accommodated foreign conglomerates (…) she serenaded multi-national corporations at the World Economic Forums of Davos (2011, 2012), or Bangkok (2012) and seems to have no qualms in accepting donations from business cronies of the military on behalf of the NLD."[891] This realistic attitude, in both political and economic dimensions, not only opened her doors to successful negotiations of power transition with the army,[892] but had consequences for Suu Kyi's political thought as well.

her electoral victory, and perhaps even sabotage reforms and inflict repressions (and consequently ruin the achievements of last few years).

[890] Simon Montlake, *Myanmar Democracy Icon Suu Kyi Taps 'Crony' Capitalists for Charity Funds*, "Forbes", 01.16.2013, http://www.forbes.com/sites/simonmontlake/2013/01/16/myanmar-democracy-icon-suu-kyi-taps-crony-capitalists-for-charity-funds/ (access: 19.07.2018); *Suu Kyi Attends Football Match*, "The Irrawaddy", 14.09.2011, http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22073 (access: 19.07.2018); Suu Kyi presented her stance in her classical way: as a moral value – she said the cronies need a chance to reforms (Tha Lung Zaung Htet, *Give Cronies a Chance to Reform, Says Suu Kyi*, "The Irrawaddy", 11.01.2013, http://www.irrawaddy.org/business/economy/give-cronies-a-chance-to-reform-says-suu-kyi.html (dostęp: 14.08.2018)).

[891] Among significant examples of Suu Kyi's shift were her decision to call such investors as Total and Chevron (criticized heavily earlier for investments where human rights abuses took place) "responsible investors" and, most importantly, her backing of a Chinese investors against local population in Letpadaung; "similarly, by the change of stance towards Total or by encouraging non-govermental, small scale community-building projects she has tried to de-mystify her own philosophy which was often labeled as idealistic and impossible to implement" (Sengupta, *The Female Voice of Myanmar*…, p. 311). On the other hand I would claim that these decisions were more political in nature (they were a part of her quest to be accepted by the army as the leader of the country) instead of representing significant shift in Suu Kyi's thinking about economics; the latter did not change significantly, see: latter part of this chapter (on corruption).

[892] Suu Kyi's relations with the army have remained good. NLD's government has not tried to undermine the privileged position of armed forces, does not interfere in army's clashes with ethnic minorities' Northern Alliance, is indifferent to Rohingya's plight, maintains cordial relations with crony capitalists and continues Myanmar's traditional balancing foreign policy. In fact, Suu Kyi's government is continuing rather than reversing former military's policies (even the 21th Century Panglong Conference may be seen as the continuation of the National Ceasefire formula). This is unsurprising given the fact that political circumstances on the ground (2008 Constitution, the political might of the Tatmadaw) force NLD to cohabite with the army. Suu Kyi has accepted this reality and has not challenged the army directly, at least not yet. Thanks to that, as some Burmese commentators say, Suu Kyi has been accepted by army's elite as Myanmar's political leader (Aung Zaw, *Army to Rebrand Itself as New Political Reality Sets in*, "The Irrawaddy", 16.05.2016, http://www.

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Suu Kyi – in accordance with the rule that real politics cannot be revealed to the public[893] – couldn't have announced that she has just struck a deal with the generals and so the past should be forgotten, the military dominance and economic inequalities (economy dominated by the cronies) should now be accepted due to political circumstances. Instead she did what she always preferred to do: she depicted her policy in moral way, presented a moral message: that of reconciliation.

To be fair, she declared the need for reconciliation already in the 1990s[894] and she made it the main topic of her 2010 release speech,[895] yet earlier, when she was given a chance, she would have preferred the South African-based model of qualified amnesty[896] or a local version of "merciful justice,"[897] whereas now it became a blanket amnesty (full, unconditional amnesty) type of transitional justice.[898] This was the enforced reconciliation on generals' terms[899] – the only available option on the table – and it was this reconciliation that Suu Kyi chose to present in moral terms.

That is why her government has "prioritized peace and reconciliation" and focused on the "reconciliation between leaders of the NLD and the military"[900] while Suu Kyi

burmanet.org/news/2016/05/16/the-irrawaddy-army-to-rebrand-itself-as-new-political-reality-sets-in-aung-zaw/ (access: 18.07.2018).

[893] "Human mind in its day-by-day operations cannot bear to look the truth of politics straight in the face. It must disguise, distort, belittle, and embellish the truth" (Morgenthau, *Politics Among the Nations*…, p. 101).

[894] Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 38, 122–123 and 175.

[895] "We'll work with peoples' support, and we'll work together with all the groups that are striving for democracy in order to achieve national reconciliation in our country. We'll work toward national reconciliation in the least possible way to cause pain to the peoples" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…).

[896] At least her interviews from 1990s where she frequently evoked South African and Chilean example might suggest that (Suu Kyi, Clements, *The Voice of Hope*…, pp. 38, 122–123 and 175).

[897] Halliday, *Thinking about Transitional Justice in Myanmar*…, p. 189.

[898] I've written about this elsewhere; part of the material presented here is taken from that article (Michał Lubina, *Set the Torturers Free: Transitional Justice and Peace vs. Justice Dilemma in Burma/Myanmar*, "Polish Political Science Yearbook", vol. 47, no. 1, 2018, pp. 77–96).

[899] "In this delicate balancing act (…) it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Tatmadaw has had the upper hand and that, either with or without Aung San Suu Kyi's endorsement, the C-in-C (Min Aung Hlaing – ML) has usually been able to get his own way"; "her current relationship with the C-in-C is difficult to read, but there is a strong feeling among foreign commentators that she could do more to persuade him to curb the excesses of the security forces"; "within the bounds of the 2008 constitution the generals want the NLD government to succeed, as they share many of its goals. They too want Myanmar to be strong, modern, prosperous, stable, united, independent and respected" (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, pp. 9, 15 and 19).

[900] In this approach, reconciliation is understood as between the NLD (the former democratic opposition) and the military (Aileen Thomson, *Prospects for Justice in* Myanmar: *Does New*

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herself has repeated her message about "healing past wounds" between military and opposition many times.[901] This included rejecting transitional justice: "it appears that the NLD leadership does not believe transitional justice is necessary or desirable" as it "associate justice or transitional justice with criminal prosecutions motivated by revenge."[902] This understanding of transitional justice originates from Suu Kyi's personal attitude (she has many times stated that the does not seek revenge and can work with her former enemies) yet probably even more from political circumstances: her politics are based on the principle of non-irritating the military: "anything that might upset the military is off -limits, in order to secure its full cooperation on the NLD's priority issues."[903] Consequently, the NLD's government "time and time again appeared to align itself with military interest"[904] and Suu Kyi "herself has been accused of having only one strategy, and that is to maintain good relations with the Tatmadaw."[905]That is why the NLD government is even more nervous about any anti-Tatmadaw activities than the previous quasi-civilian government composed of former generals.[906]

Suu Kyi's moral message on reconciliation is a part of her wider "quiet, puritanical vision for Myanmar" focused "on moral principles rather than concrete solutions"; this "moral political world view" was "already apparent in the early 1990s" but after 2015 it

Political Reality Offer Opportunities for Addressing Violations?, International Center for Transitional Justice, 11.03.2016, https://www.ictj.org/publication/myanmar-justice-prospects-nld (access: 18.07.2018)).

[901] *Forgive Those Who Wronged Us, Suu Kyi Tells NLD*, "The Irrawaddy", 07.12.2015, https://www.irrawaddy.com/election/news/forgive-those-who-wronged-us-suu-kyi-tells-nld (access: 18.07.2018); *NLD 'Not Seeking Revenge' for the Past, Says Suu Kyi*, "ThaiBSP", 12.10.2015, http://englishnews.thaipbs.or.th/nld-not-seeking-revenge-for-the-past-says-suu-kyi/ (access: 18.07.2018); for a recent one: "we've already said that we'll work toward national reconciliation", interview for Radio Free Asia, *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Politics and Crises*…

[902] Thomson, *Prospects for Justice in Myanmar*…

[903] Ibid.

[904] Feliz Solomon, *One Year on, Aung San Suu Kyi Struggles to Unite a Fractured Myanmar*, "Time", 30.03.2017, http://time.com/4714808/myanmar-burma-aung-san-suu-kyi-anniversary/ (access: 27.07.2018).

[905] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 19.

[906] For example in June 2016 NLD government has banned launching a report in public in Yangon about Tatmadaw's atrocities in Northern Shan State, whereas "under the previous government, similar report launches were common in Yangon, and some ethnic minority activists have taken this and other incidents as a sign that their freedom of speech has shrunk since the NLD took power", Ibid. Suu Kyi asked about her relationship with Tatmadaw stated that "it is normal (…) There is appropriate engagement now. And I always try to cooperate on some issues (…) We've not criticized the Tatmadaw for being the Tatmadaw. We've only said that we don't agree with this or that action carried out by it" (*Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Politics and Crises*…).

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"has been more evident."[907] In other words, once in power, Suu Kyi even enhanced what has been the hallmark of her political thought all along: the moral approach.

The first example of that has been her distance. Suu Kyi is no longer the "people's politician" who chats with the people, jokes and laughs – one that is reachable. Now the "schoolteacher" qualities of Suu Kyi – already visible in the 1990s – transformed her into a celestial matriarch who preaches, declares and orders. She concentrated all possible power in her hands – itself not an unreasonable move given her need to balance the Tatmadaw's might, yet due to her "personality and idiosyncratic work practices" this transformed into a situation where each decision, big and small, must pass by her and get her consent (she resists delegating her work to the others and consequently "is unable to cope with the many demands made upon her") – Suu Kyi's "imperious leadership style, remoteness and tendency to micro-manage both government and party business has led to resentment and administrative inefficiencies," while "her insistence on exercising a paramount role has undercut the authority of her ministers and added to the difficulty of state institutions trying to establish themselves as independent agencies."[908] Once in power, her authoritarian style of leadership – Suu Kyi has been even called a "democratic dictator"[909] – showed itself in full, with "elitist, driven from the top" approach to governance and almost open unwillingness to listen to any of outside voices, including those inside the NLD.[910] Consequently, Suu Kyi rarely speaks to the public, even more

[907] Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision…*

[908] Being unable to become the president (due to 2008 Constitution) she created for herself the position of State Counsellor (a kind of super-prime minister) that is, to use her words, "above president"; besides that she is the minister of foreign affairs, minister in president's office and chairman of two key subcommittees: Security, Tranquillity and Rule of Law, and Economic Affairs; moreover, "she vets every bill before it is submitted to parliament and reportedly insists on making the final decisions on even minor matters"; initially she was also minister of energy and of education, but she dropped the last two positions (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for…*, p. 9). See also: *Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar's Great Hope Fails to Live up to Expectations*, "The Guardian", 31.03.2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmars-great-hope-fails-to-live-up-to-expectations (access: 27.07.2018); *Aung San Suu Kyi Is Letting Her Own Revolution Down*, "The Economist", 30.03.2017, http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21719800-myanmars-revered-leader-needs-learn-how-delegate-aung-san-suu-kyi-letting-her-own?zid=309&ah=80dcf288b8561b012f603b9fd9577f0e (access: 27.07.2018).

[909] Lindsay Murdoch, *What Now for Myanmar? Is Aung San Suu Kyi Becoming a "Democratic Dictator"?*, "The Sydney Morning Herald", 02.04.2016, http://www.smh.com.au/world/what-now-for-myanmar-is-aung-sun-suu-kyi-becoming-a-democratic-dictator-20160331-gnuxdo.html (access: 27.07.2018).

[910] "When representatives of ethnic minority organisations have been included in discussions, for example with regard to the peace process, they have complained of tokenism, and a failure by the NLD adequately to consult them or take their views into account. Public feedback on policy proposals has not been welcomed. Some activists, such as those working on land and environmental

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rarely gives interviews,[911] appears in public only during official occasions,[912] and – a noticeable difference to the 1990s – does not comment on everyday issues, such as education, healthcare, governmental services, cost of living or press freedom[913] (although these issues are precisely what the people are interested in most as these affect them)[914] – concentrating instead on administrating from behind-closed-doors in Naypyidaw (itself an ideal place to do this kind of politics). And when Suu Kyi "does occasionally address a public audience, she repeats abstract concepts such as 'national reconciliation,' 'rule of law' and 'peace' with" – that is important – "commanding and pedagogical rhetorical style underpinned by a puritanical political ideology" which "shows a world view that values individual fulfillment of *ta-wun* (duties or responsibilities) rather than exercise of *akwin-ahyeh* (rights or entitlements)."[915] Suu Kyi tends "to demand more of people, rather than acknowledging their concerns and promising to help them" and leaves it "to others to convey the government's views on specific issues."[916]

An example of that was her 2016 Thingyan (Burmese New Year) address where – aside from pseudo-aphorisms like "the future of a nation is a thing of eternity" and outright populist platitudes like "people won't suffer. It will be us who will suffer if needed. We'll back you and protect you"; "countrymen matter most"; "countrymen are the first, the second and the ultimate"; "what really counts is the strength of our people, not the resources, for they can be deplete someday"; "I rely more on our people"; "one of the objectives of our new administration is to promote people's capacity and qualification";

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issues, feel that they are being actively opposed by the NLD government. Protests and demonstrations over pressing social issues have either been ignored or suppressed" (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 9).

[911] Since taking power in early 2016 she has given very few interviews: among the noticeable are two for BBC, one for Radio Free Asia, one for the Nikkei Asian Review and one for the Asian News International.

[912] According to Selth, this is a political mistake: "what is perhaps most perplexing about Aung San Suu Kyi's behaviour since taking office has been her failure to capitalise on her greatest political asset, namely her own personality cult. More than anyone, she represents the NLD brand. Indeed, she has actively cultivated this image. For example, during the 2015 election campaign she told voters not to bother about the individual NLD candidates running in their electorates, but simply to vote for the party, which she personified. Despite growing disappointment in her government, she remains very popular in Myanmar, albeit less so in the ethnic minority areas. However, for reasons that are not clear, she has made very few personal appearances. Her rare public statements have focused on abstract concepts like national reconciliation and the rule of law" (Ibid., p. 16).

[913] In what seems like another irony, freedom of media decreased during Suu Kyi's rule in comparison to Thein Sein's years (Thomson, *Prospects for Justice in Myanmar*…).

[914] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 8.

[915] Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision*… Accordingly, to Suu Kyi "only demanding rights without assuming responsibility and accountability, which are wholly left to the government, does not comply with democracy standards," quoted in: ibid.

[916] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 16.

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"we'll love our people. We'll be loyal to our country. We're bound to succeed if we can keep this promise"; "nothing is unachievable if we can win popular support and public confidence" – and aside from legitimizing on Aung San: "I'd like to quote my father. What he said is concise and clear. The country would be ruled based on loving kindness and loyalty" – Suu Kyi offered these abstract concepts: "our policies and principles are to ensure national reconciliation, internal peace, the rule of law, the amendment to the constitution and keeping the democratic system dynamic and well ingrained"; "what matters most is national reconciliation"; "without the rule of law, we cannot construct peace" combined with call for unity ("if a nation has to progress and prosper, unity is of utmost importance"); summed up by overall moral message: the NLD's aim is to "put the nation on the correct path."[917] The same moral message ("people are watching and people will come to know")[918] surrounded her calls for national reconciliation with the ethnic minorities (see: previous chapter).

Another example of this stance may be her March 2017 speech on the anniversary of the NLD's government. The speech itself was noticed domestically and internationally for Suu Kyi's admittance of the fact that her government failed in realizing the hopes of the people of Myanmar ("I am also aware that we have not achieved the level of development that people have expected"), yet this one sentence, perhaps together with other random self-critical remarks ("it is not a matter of thinking that we are the smartest or the best to do the job" or that the NLD's power is not given forever) was rather out of touch with the mood of the rest of the speech, dominated by self-proclaimed successes and moral messages.[919] Therefore, when Suu Kyi commented on the NLD's all-encompassing slogan for 2015 elections ("time for change"),[920] she said that while change has already started, it requires both "changing the system" and "changing mindset," with mutual participation of the government and the people (on the sincerity of these slogans, see: below), for "neither the people nor the Government acting alone can

[917] *Amendment Essentials. State Counsellor Offers New Year Message*, "New Light of Myanmar", 18.04.2018, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/18_April_16_gnlm.pdf (access: 18.07.2018).

[918] *State Counsellor: Historical Duty…*

[919] *State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary…*

[920] Suu Kyi promised "real change" (Moe Myint, *"Time for Change", Says Opposition Leader Aung San Suu Kyi*, "The Irrawaddy", 21.08.2015, http://www.irrawaddy.com/election/news/time-for-change-says-opposition-leader-aung-san-suu-kyi (access: 26.07.2018). Unfortunately for her, Suu Kyi in the election campaign of 2015 made several promises "that were always going to be difficult to keep," like amending constitution, reducing the power of the armed forces, eliminating corruption and achieving peace with ethnic minorities' military organizations ("in what appears in hindsight to be evidence of monumental hubris, Aung San Suu Kyi stated that she would give her highest priority to the national peace process, before turning to other domestic matters"); she also promised bigger social spending, but falling government revenues made it yet another promise difficult to fulfil (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for…*, p. 8).

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bring about change and transformation we seek"; in changing the former, that is "the old system that has been deeply entrenched in our society for over fifty years," Suu Kyi came back to her "freedom from fear" ideas by saying "it is important that the people must be free from fear and similarly, the Government must also be free from fear. It must have the courage to do what is right. It has no right to assume the responsibility of the State if it does not have the courage to do what is right for the country." [921] Stating so, she boasted that her government represented a significant change in this regard: "I believe most people are becoming increasingly aware that they do not have to live in fear of the Government anymore. I see this as progress. The Government is not to be feared but rather to be respected, valued, and trusted by the people"; and being free from fear is essential, for it would also help to fight corruption and to establish national reconciliation and peace.[922] Hence, to achieve peace ("a priceless jewel") and reconciliation "four mindsets" are needed – "strong desire, with relentless efforts, with strong spirit and with the wisdom to distinguish right from wrong."[923]

Suu Kyi repeated her freedom from fear ideas once again in her address to civil service while launching *Civil Service Reform Strategic Action Plan* in 2017[924] – a speech that is yet another example of Suu Kyi's tendency to propose abstract moral concepts to resolve concrete problems. After elaborating on importance of civil service in general[925] and in a changed, democratic environment in particular,[926] she stated that "these new expectations cannot be met through organizational restructuring alone: cultural change is required," the new government needs to "not only the existing structures and

[921] *State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary…*

[922] "We must be free from corruption if we are to achieve national reconciliation and peace" (Ibid.).

[923] *Message from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the Rally…*

[924] *Myanmar Civil Service Reform Strategic Action Plan 2017–2020*, http://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/library/democratic_governance/Myanmar_Civil_Service_Reform_Action_Plan.html (access: 25.10.2018).

[925] "Civil service reform is a matter that affects every citizen"; "a capable and committed civil service founded on the principles of integrity, impartiality and accountability is the backbone of democratic governance"; "the role of civil servants is becoming of ever greater importance" (*Key Note Address by H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi…*).

[926] "Democracy places upon civil servants new and demanding responsibilities. No longer are civil servants simply expected to enact orders from above. Under a democratic government, civil servants are expected to take initiative, to develop and submit policy options, to propose solutions to difficult problems. Civil servants are expected- indeed it is their duty- to speak frankly and with fearless impartiality to their Ministers, pointing out the benefits, but also the risks and mitigations, of a particular course of action. And civil servants are encouraged to come up with innovative ideas for improving the efficiency of government processes, cutting administrative waste, breaking down inter-departmental and inter-ministerial silos, and enhancing the effectiveness of government as a whole" (Ibid.)

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processes, but also to reform a deep-seated institutional culture," hence, "civil servants are accountable to the government elected by the people, and must act with integrity, professionalism, intelligence and dynamism (…) these major tasks will require intellectual rigour, complex planning and coordination, and robust implementation."[927] This "change of culture" was nothing different than her earlier "revolution of the spirit" – placing individual moral development at the heart of reforming the country at the expense of concrete, mundane means. That is why in her address to civil servants she admitted that low salaries are the essential problem ("we are acutely aware that many civil servants' salaries remain low, particularly in comparison to counterparts in other sectors"), yet she did not offer any solution to this challenge ("on this issue, I will be frank: there are no immediate solutions. The raising of salaries must be an incremental process, carried out responsibly and sustainably, in accordance with the resources available under the national budget").[928] Instead she told the civil servants that they should be free from fear and, consequently, from corruption. In other words, their increased morality would fight with corruption much more effectively than such mundane aspects as increasing of salaries. She repeated this statement on other occasions, too. For example, while speaking at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2017, she "emphasized combating corruption and the development of human capital as key to achieving sustainable economic growth in Myanmar" and called for "need for development of people as human beings not just economic powerhouses" – in her vocabulary that meant "we depend for economic development on the enhancement of integrity," which is "a better way of saying getting rid of corruption."[929] She concluded her speech by revoking her old call for investing in the people instead of concentrating on economic development per se: "I would like us to think more about what we mean by power and what we mean by capital. Are we thinking only in material terms — that power is economic power? And that capital is economic capital? The material capital that will give us clout (…) This may seem old-fashioned these days to think of developing ourselves as better

[927] The actions needed are the following: "it is the civil service that will be at the heart of these endeavours. That is why I encourage all Ministries and government bodies to place priority on developing the skills and capabilities of your most valuable asset: your staff (…) The Strategic Action Plan also notes the importance of 'merit-based and performance-driven culture and systems.' Realising this aspiration will require not only the introduction of new HR procedures, but also the personal commitment of civil servants at all levels (…) Every effort must be made to avoid even the perception of favouritism or nepotism. And there should be no place for discrimination in any form (…) Building trust requires civil servants to act with integrity, impartiality and accountability in all that they do" (Ibid.).

[928] It is fair to admit that Suu Kyi nevertheless offered some (vague) mundane incentives to civil servants: "while salary increases may not take place with the immediacy that our civil servants may wish for, there are other ways in which the government can and will support them. We will strive to provide a better environment at work and better living conditions for their families" (Ibid.).

[929] *Graft Fight Holds Key to Development*…

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human beings rather than as materially more powerful countries. But perhaps it is about time we think about these things."[930]

These speeches show that despite her populist pledges of serving the people, when Suu Kyi speaks in public she does not concentrate on mundane aspects, moving away from her earlier "her self-portrayal as a politician focused on assuring the public that she would meet their needs as they view them," which she promised all along (last time during 2015 election campaign); instead "her view of what constitutes her personal responsibilities as national leader is no longer one of articulating an actionable plan for modernization," but rather "to spur a 'revolution of the spirit,'" consequently, "she increasingly sees her role as using her voice, formal positions and iconic status to achieve a transformative remolding to a moral-based national political economy, starting with each person's mindset."[931] In this vision, "she does not consider it proper for

[930] Ibid.

[931] Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision*… Indeed, Suu Kyi has been proclaiming that she wanted to know the opinion of the people since at least 1990s; e.g. in 2010, after release from house arrest she declared (it is, by the way, very interesting to read these statements knowing Suu Kyi's behavior after 2015): "in order for us to do what we want to do … we do know what the people want (…) I've been observing and learning peoples' desire, what they want every single day (…) But in the name of peoples, I've been listening everyday. By listening like that, I think I know what the peoples want to some extent (…) I welcome peoples to talk to us. Only then, we would know what we can do for our people. Without the participation of people, nothing can be achievable. Since whatever we do can be achievable only with peoples' participation (…) I would like the peoples to give us advice, assistance, and point out if there is any issue. Address any issue to us properly and genuinely. Doing so would equate helping us achieve the goals we all want. May I make a request to the people (of Burma). When you deal (work) with us, please do it openly and boldly. Don't worry whether you should say this or that. You can feel free to tell us whatever you like. If in case we disagree, we'll of course have to say so, because it is the fundamental of democracy. Freedom of expression (…) We must exchange our thoughts and view. For that, we'll have to train ourselves and practice it (…) Please feel free to send us letters (…) I'd like to know what you have in mind. Over the last 6,7 years, I want to know what has been in peoples' mind, what in their mind has changed? I can't know right way. I'll have to take time and learn. I'd like to talk to everyone but it's practically not possible. If I could, I would have talked to everyone but it'll never end. I do want to talk to people. Standing alone and only one talking is so boring. You talk and I respond vice versa would be more lively, productive and valuable. If there is only one person talking and the rest are just listening, I don't think it's in line with democracy (…) We need to have peoples' "hit-taing" (meaning a place where people can vent emotions, desires, complaints, what they have in mind) (…) Please also teach us. We have to learn from one another. The peoples and the democracy activists must teach us so that we won't make mistakes. There is one thing important about democracy, and that is, those who follow should be able to, must have a right to manage (have a say to or keep accountable) those who lead at the front. And that is democracy. The general public should be able to manage those who governed (who are also minority in numbers). This is democracy. For us also, we are willing to be managed by the peoples (…) Whatever we do or decide, we'll let the peoples know (…) In the meantime, we'd like to hear from the peoples as much as

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citizens to expect or ask the government for help in solving the personal, community or regional problems that dominated the 2015 election campaign," instead, "individuals should muster 'courage' and 'self-confidence' to take personal responsibility for their own and the nation's solutions"; this is "a socially conservative ideology of radical self-sufficiency and *laissez-faire* relations between the state and society."[932]

In Suu Kyi's attitude there is a deep internal, psychological conviction that she deserves her current position and role, and that the people should vote for her because she is the daughter of Aung San[933] and her duty is to finish his task of placing Burma on the correct place along nations of the world.[934] Once they vote, their role is over, despite of all her grandiose statements (like "together with the people") on the contrary.[935]

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possible. By listening to the peoples, we'll decide how we will continue to do our future work (…) The ability to work out despite disagreements is also the fundamental of democracy. Why do we have to do it? We will have do it, explain it in order to get trust and understanding from the peoples, not the same as trying to get votes from the peoples" (*Daw Aung San Su Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…). Even in 2017, in her Panglong speech she repeated these lines: "we greatly value People's love. We want to get their love. We have been doing political activities for nearly 30 years with the spirit of our reliance upon our people. Yet, we will never ever get their supports by means of harming their benefit. We will do everything for the betterment of the country" (*70th Union Day Celebrated in Panglong*…); "I made a promise then that we will always cherish and care for the people and be loyal to the nation"; "actually, loyalty to the country and caring for the people cannot be separated"; "give critical remarks where necessary. assist us and work with us in matters that could make a difference for the interest of the people and the country" (*State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary*…). Although Callahan's interpretation – that Suu Kyi moved away from this – is convincing, Suu Kyi's call for listening to the voice of the people may have been a populist device all along, too.

[932] Ibid. For an example of her preaching about courage, see her 2010 speech: "courage, as some might think, is not something like going in the front, raising their fists in anger or in a show of defiance. Courage is something we make efforts tirelessly with a strong determination to make what we want happen in reality. We have to nurture such kind of courage. Really courage is something we do on daily basis. Our peoples (of Burma) have to be courageous daily from the mornings to face each day. We must make good use of our courage, effectively for the people and for the country, not just of oneself or one's own family" (*Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's First Public Speech on Nov 14, 2010*…); "even today, Myanmar has not yet been able to escape from the trap of poverty and conflict, and great efforts will be needed if we are to catch up with the rest of the world" (*Suu Kyi's Speech at the Opening Ceremony*…).

[933] Personal conversation (BRACIF 2 Conference, 08–10.07.2018, Nagoya, Japan).

[934] "I remember my father saying in the aftermath of the World War II that we need to run while people from other countries are walking to keep peace with them. Now too, the situation is not very much different from that of those days (…)When people from other countries are walking, we need to run, taking great trouble to be able to catch them up" (*Amendment Essentials. State Counsellor Offers*…).

[935] "A year ago on 30 March 2016, the NLD Government took over the responsibilities of the State with a clear mandate given by the people. Accordingly, we have a bounden duty to be

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That's why the NLD government turned out to be much less democratic that most of the world had expected. To surprise of many, it not only did not revoke repressive anti-liberal laws against the media[936] but and even introduced new ones (e.g. "at Aung San Suu Kyi's specific request, severe restrictions have been imposed on the number, movement and rights of reporters covering the national parliament"),[937] with pressuring and intervening in the media to change the contexts of news and articles, attacking, dismissing and jailing journalists critical of the government and the Tatmadaw[938] and tightened control of social media, including examples of jailing people critical of Suu Kyi (in May 2017 a woman was sentenced to half a year in prison for sharing Facebook posts "insulting" Suu Kyi).[939] Add keeping a range of repressive regulations (e.g. on the books) to silence dissidence and opposing organizations (previously used by the junta against the NLD), to see that in freedom of speech, particularly freedom of the press, the NLD "government's position has seemed uncomfortably close to that of the former

accountable to the people"; "people have the right to know what the Government is doing. What are its priorities. Without transparency people would not be informed"; "now that we are one year old, I feel that we should change our slogan to provide another impetus. I have been thinking what slogan we should adopt. One that is short and precise in meaning. I've decided on 'Together with the People' to express our desire to continue on this journey together with the people on board with us"; "we will be accountable for our actions together with the people. We will work together with the people. We will march forward with the spirit that in fulfillment of our duties and responsibilities we will let the people be the source of our strength and likewise, our capabilities and strength will be for the people. I hope the people of the Union will join hand with the Government and assist it in our march towards our future together" (*State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary*…); "support from the people and their active participation are sine qua non for bringing peace to our country. Peace cannot be achieved without the participation of all communities" (*Message from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the Rally*…). Despite these heart-touching slogans, the political practice of NLD's governance, however, shows that these are slogans only; NLD governs as if following an assumption that the people voted and their role is over.

[936] *Myanmar: Amnesty International Oral Statement at 35th Session of the UN Human Rights Council*, Amnesty International, 15.06.2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/6408/2017/en/ (access: 18.07.2018).

[937] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 13.

[938] Ibid.; Fiona MacGregor, *Suu Kyi's State of Denial*, "New Mandala", 04.03.2017, http://www.newmandala.org/suu-kyis-state-denial/ (access: 26.07.2018); Christian Caryl, *Press Freedom in Burma is Under Attack Again – and Aung San Suu Kyi Isn't Doing Anything About It*, "The Washington Post", 06.02.2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/02/06/press-freedom-in-burma-is-under-attack-again-and-aung-san-suu-kyi-isnt-doing-anything-about-it/ (access: 26.07.2018).

[939] Htun Htun, *Woman Sentenced Under 66(d) for "Insults" to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, "The Irrawaddy", 26.05.2017, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/woman-sentenced-under-article-66d-for-insults-to-daw-aung-san-suu-kyi.html (access: 26.07.2018).

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military regime."[940] Additionally, the NLD's government has limited parliamentarian and party democracy: Suu Kyi enforced strict party discipline, forbade the party members to criticize the party or her, limited internal debate, significantly reduced the scope for elected MPs to raise issues in the legislature and removed check and balances within parliament's committees.[941] In general, the NLD's government "appears singularly reluctant to dismantle the junta's machinery of repression," consequently, "the New Burma is starting to look too much like the Old Burma," with the only difference being that the NLD represents a softer version of authoritarianism than the Tatmadaw ("in truth, Burma's version of democracy seems to mean a reduction in the country's degree of authoritarianism, not a qualitative change to its political system").[942]

In Myanmar there is little room for voices critical of the NLD in general and of Suu Kyi in particular and this explains the authoritarian policy style of Suu Kyi which does not invite opinions and dissident voices from outside the NLD (and very little from inside), so people of Burma understood that their opinion is not welcome: "Suu Kyi has made numerous public and private comments on the theme that civil society is useless, unnecessary, and selfish."[943]

In these circumstances Suu Kyi's 2016 repeated "Kennedian" message (she used it already in the 1990s) to her party members ("think of what you can contribute for the development of your country, not what benefits you can have from your country"), has some logic, yet dramatically misses the point when applied to peace process with the ethnic minorities, as this "Kennedy-inspired line" rises their "alarm bells" (see: previous subchapter); worse still, this moral message represents an "exhortation to keep silent when it comes to physical, material and economic problems as well as possible govern-

[940] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 13.

[941] "Before 2016, the leadership of standing and ad hoc parliamentary committees was based on roughly proportional representation across the political spectrum. Almost all committees are now chaired by NLD members. The goal might be a more streamlined, disciplined and efficient administration, but a number of important checks and balances have been removed" (Ibid., pp. 12–13).

[942] Elliott Prasse-Freeman, *The New Burma Is Starting to Look Too Much Like the Old Burma*, "Foreign Policy", 28.06.2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/28/the-new-burma-is-starting-to-look-too-much-like-the-old-burma/ (access: 26.07.2018).

[943] Thomson, *Prospects for Justice in Myanmar*… Civil society groups, grass-roots activists and ethnic minority organizations all complained that Suu Kyi is reluctant to discuss major issues with them (Prasse-Freeman, *The New Burma Is Starting to Look*…). During conversation with the author of this book Suu Kyi critically said that "some NGOs are so strong that they are conducting their own politics," personal conversation, Naypyidaw, 05.02.2015. On the other hand, Suu Kyi was praising civil society in her 2016 Panglong Conference speech: "civil society organizations have long played an important and active role in this country, including in our ethnic states" (*Official Translation of the Speech Delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the Opening Day*…).

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ment solutions."[944] According to Callahan, "the continued silence of Suu Kyi, outside of occasional public sermons on her vision of moral rectitude in a democracy," has both good and bad consequences for herself and for Myanmar; the former include the avoidance of "the messy daily debates over such issues as electricity purchasing agreements going awry, the use of a draconian new censorship tool under the telecommunications act to silence dissent, massive population displacements resulting from escalating violence in Rakhine state and the northern states, and other missteps of her government"; this silence on "unpleasant everyday politics" has "enabled Aung San Suu Kyi to maintain her status as a political icon who offers not only hope, but also precisely what she preaches - moral fortitude"; she could still do what she loves: to convey "messages of personal and community duty."[945] Unfortunately, there are also negative consequences, especially for the country that faces many modernizing challenges: "a country that still falls short in improving living standards, attracting responsible investment, creating meaningful jobs and equipping the next generation with critical thinking and marketable skills is in dire need of Suu Kyi's help to shape and communicate policies that draw on the immense political stock of her election victory and her democratic legacy"; unfortunately "she has refused to engage by offering well-articulated and concrete plans" – although more than six decades of mismanagement cannot be fixed in one day, none of the serious problems can be tackled "without a strategic, pragmatic vision of reform directly from the state counselor and firm, vocal and clear commitment based on her considerable political capital."[946]

So far the negative aspects prevail: after two and a half years in power, Suu Kyi's government is a failure. As Myanmar people commented with grim irony, "after decades of trying to get into the driver's seat of the rickety old bus that is modern Myanmar, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has discovered that the steering wheel is not connected, the accelerator does not work and the passengers all want to go in different directions."[947] Apart from these metaphoric "mechanical problems" (steering wheel, accelerator) – or to use more academic wording, structural problems – inherited by the NLD upon taking over the government,[948] it turned out that the NLD does not have a driving licence. Suu Kyi's men were "ill-prepared to take office" ("the party must have

[944] Callahan, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Quiet, Puritanical Vision…*

[945] Ibid.

[946] Ibid.

[947] Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace…*

[948] Andrew Selth identifies six main structural problems: 1) "more than 50 years of inept and self-serving military rule"; 2) a deep political, ethnic and religious conflicts "some of which dated back to the colonial period (1824-1948) dividing the nation"; 3) the Tatmadaw-centered 2008 constitution; 4) opening up country with big prospects but economy in "dire straits"; 5) "lack of the institutions and structures needed to function in a globalised, inter-connected world"; 6) largely

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had some idea of what to expect when it took power, and after the elections it had five months to prepare for government", but they did not) and "created many of their own problems" (the "NLD has made life more difficult for itself") with electoral promises (like achieving peace with the ethnic minorities or amending the constitution) impossible to fulfill, lack of strategy of governing ("it was almost as if the party's overriding goal was to win government, and little thought had been given to what might follow after that"), incompetent cadres ("few of the NLD's elected members had any executive or law-making experience") chosen out of loyalty towards Suu Kyi and her line and unable to articulate and deliver well considered or coordinated policies ("they seemed to have few detailed or articulated policies, even on core issues"; "they also lacked considered strategies to implement the sweeping changes that Aung San Suu Kyi had promised before and during the election campaign") with "little understanding of how a democracy worked in practice"; consequently, NLD's government faces criticism from both outside observers and domestic ones (the latter more muted "but clearly the shine has come off the new government, and its leader") for failing to meet the high hopes and to carry on reforms: the NLD's government is "seen to have failed to deliver on almost all its core promises."[949] To make matters worse, it slowed down the pace of the modernization that started in 2011; it is unable to move on with the peace process which has stalled if not reversed; it does not have any ideas of how to reactivate slowing economic development and attract decreasing foreign investments.[950] For Suu Kyi it

ineffective "moribund bureaucracy" that has been resistant to change (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, pp. 6–7).

[949] Consequently, "all this has led to a loss of confidence in the new government's ability to keep its promises" (Ibid., pp. 1, 7–9). NLD blames Tatmadaw for sabotaging the government, yet NLD "does not need others to build trust with and among ethnic nationality populations; streamline decision-making; re-evaluate ministerial authorities and appointments; outline a detailed economic policy" and propose a vision for Rakhine, to name just the most important ones (Derek Mitchell, *Myanmar's Government – Time for Course Correction?*, "Nikkei Asian Review", 21.03.2017, http://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Derek-Mitchell/Myanmar-s-government-time-for-course-correction (access: 27.08.2018).

[950] *Myanmar's Foreign Direct Investment Rush Recedes*, "Financial Times", 23.01.2017, https://www.ft.com/content/f7bda5bc-e150-11e6-8405-9e5580d6e5fb?mhq5j=e1 (access: 26.07.2018); *Myanmar's PMI Retreats into Contraction in June*, "Nikkei Asian Review", 03.07.2017, http://asia.nikkei.com/Markets/Nikkei-PMI/Myanmar-s-PMI-retreats-into-contraction-in-June (access: 26.07.2018). NLD's economic plan from 2016 is sketchy at best (12 points), with calls for transparency, infrastructure development and sustainability of natural resources, but without details needed in a business plan (Motokazu Matsui, *Myanmar's New Economic Agenda Short on Specifics,* "Nikkei Asian Review", 4.08.2016, http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Economy/Myanmar-s-new-economic-agenda-short-on-specifics (access: 26.07.2018)). Unsurprisingly, the business community is "especially critical of the new government" (Kyaw Sein, Nicholas Farrelly, *Myanmar's*

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meant that all these challenges, plus new ones that have arisen during the NLD's rule, "have stretched her inexperienced administration almost to breaking point."[951]

Although most of structural problems were inherited after the military government and/or are consequences of six decades of army's mismanagement, the uncomfortable truth is that the NLD's government is less successful in reforming Myanmar than its direct predecessors, Thein Sein's cabinet: "the new administration is increasingly inviting unfavourable comparisons with the former military regime."[952] In turned out that the NLD is not only less effective in governing the country than Thein Sein's government, but it repeats many of the Tatmadaw's repressive policies. Suu Kyi and the NLD "came to power with virtually the entire country and world on its side. That goodwill still exists. But it was predicated on the assumption that the new government will represent a real break from the past"; unfortunately, "that break has sometimes been hard to identify. Instead, and to the surprise of many, the government in several ways seems to be following in the footsteps of former military administrations" – the NLD's policies seem "to have adopted attitudes that mirror those of the Thein Sein administration, or even at times the military dictatorship which preceded it"; consequently, "a comment increasingly heard in Myanmar is that the NLD government is in some respects no better than the former military regime."[953] In short, the NLD doesn't have its predecessors' virtues, but it has their vices. The NLD's (very) limited successes in reforming education and healthcare[954]

Evolving Relations: The NLD in Government, Asia Paper, Institute for Security and Development Policy, Stockholm, October 2016, p. 37).

[951] Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace…*

[952] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for…*, p. 4. Naturally, if one counts all years of Tatmadaw's rule – from 1962 – then the picture would be much more favorable to the NLD.

[953] Ibid., pp. 1, 9 and 19.

[954] Suu Kyi in the anniversary speech of her government in 2017 Suu Kyi admitted, in her motherly attitude, that the development is the essential goal ("loving and caring for the people means to strive our utmost for continuous progress and development to improve their lives"; "if one genuinely loves and cares for the people, one must strive for their physical and mental wellbeing"; "saying you care without taking action would just be empty words"), especially in the areas of health care and education ("caring for the people means that we need to pay more attention to their health and education") and highlighted NLD's successes in these dimensions: "we have accordingly been paying special attention to budget allotment for the health and education sectors. This year we have allotted unprecedented amounts for health and education sectors. The international community has acknowledged our progress. Significant progress has been noted on the fight against (3) diseases, namely Tuberculosis, Malaria, and HIV/AIDS"; besides that she claimed her government improved transportation network ("this year, we managed to establish a good transportation network") and electricity sector, though the latter sounded more like populist slogan, without concretes: "we have also scored success in the electricity sector. With electricity comes job creation. People will have opportunity to create their own jobs with their own business opportunities," especially when compared with her next words: "we must therefore accord priority to electrification in-line with

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– and more mixed results in fighting corruption[955] – as well as some other achievements[956] – do not change this grim picture.

Commentators are merciless in summarizing Suu Kyi's time in power – they acknowledge "the political realities in Myanmar, and the hard choices that Aung San Suu Kyi needs to make to preserve her domestic power base and pursue her vision for a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Myanmar," however, "few outside the country have seen them as justification for inaction in key areas"[957] and few "anticipated that Aung San Suu Kyi would fall from grace so quickly."[958] Suu Kyi was unable to take advantage of her landslide electoral victory in 2015 to present an inspiring vision for Myanmar, to use the hope and goodwill produced by her raise to power to continue reforms, win political groups and mend fences with the ethnic minorities; and most importantly, she failed to inspire the population and to establish a successful government.[959] That is why, although Suu Kyi remains popular, she is no longer beloved: "the public mood seems to be shifting. The Lady, as she is known, is still seen as preferable to the military leaders of the past, but the euphoria of last year's election landslide has

development of transportation and job creation" (*State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary*…).

[955] Although Suu Kyi pleaded that she achieved successes in fighting corruption, saying that "I couldn't help mentioning the fact that some of those who had been engaging in business in Myanmar previously said that it was much easier then because then you knew who you had to bribe. It is a lot more difficult now, because now you have to know how to do business in the right way," others are less optimistic: "despite some improvements, critics fault the slow pace of progress in the graft fight, with corruption reportedly still rampant in the lower levels of government"; Suu Kyi, too, claimed progress in ensuring "a level playing field to strengthen competition and to create a favorable, predictable and friendly investment climate, including reducing bureaucratic red-tape" and boosted that "Myanmar had been growing rapidly as it rolled out rigorous reforms and structural changes in every sector" (*Graft Fight Holds Key to Development*…). Her government is "reputed to be clean, compared with past administrations", yet Myanmar still is at the bottom of the transparency international list (136 out of 176 countries in 2016) (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 8).

[956] The other successes that can be qualified are: *modus vivendi* with Tatmadaw, dialogue (albeit flawed) with ethnic minorities, cooperation with bureaucracy and consolidation of administrative power; yet these successes did not bring practical results per se (Kyaw Sein, Farrelly, *Myanmar's Evolving Relations: The NLD in Government*…, pp. 62–63); "despite decades of often bitter antagonism, a working relationship has been developed between the NLD and the armed forces. A long list of reforms is being considered, and work has begun on their implementation. A major effort has been made to reach a nation-wide ceasefire with EAGs (…) There are still a host of difficult problems to be tackled, particularly in rural and ethnic minority areas, but most in the country would agree that life for the average citizen has improved. These are no little achievements, given Myanmar's troubled history" (Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 19).

[957] Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for*…, p. 15.

[958] Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace*…

[959] Mitchell, *Myanmar's Government: Time for Course Correction?*…

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faded. There is now increasing scepticism about the government's willingness to make the necessary changes and, more to the point, its ability to do so."[960] Simply put, Suu Kyi and the NLD "have not performed well," they "have not provided the new start that so many people wanted, and expected" – Suu Kyi "had the whole world and everyone at home on her side. And look what happened. She has alienated the ethnics, she has lost the battle over Rakhine (…) and has not delivered on the economy."[961] It turned out that moral vision is not enough in reforming and administrating such an underdeveloped country as Myanmar.

Therefore, if an effective government indeed sustains of "ensuring basic security" – both from external enemies as well as internal insurgencies – "meeting the basic needs of its citizens" including health and education, and "maintaining legitimacy,"[962] then Suu Kyi's government meets only the last condition. But even this may change in the future if the NLD's government proves unable to achieve real successes. Although the majority of the Burmese people self-censors and refrains from criticising Suu Kyi, the "elephant in the room" is hard to pass unnoticed. Most depressingly, Suu Kyi's government represents a failed hope; a hope, however vague hope it was, Suu Kyi personified for thirty years.

11. Conclusion

The most important aspects of Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought include: 1) democracy, understood in various ways (eightfold Westernization in the institutional sphere, populist, utopian vision that resembles "worldly *nibbāna*" and Burmanized version of Kennedian responsibilities that come ahead of rights) yet first and foremost morally ("the moral democracy"); 2) education as the prerequisite of achieving success; 3) unity and discipline as moral guardians of establishing functional system; 4) belief in an individual as the change-maker; and 5) non-violence means to achieve success (non-violence was particularly important in the early stages of Suu Kyi's career). Since the mid-1990s Suu Kyi underwent a significant 6) Buddhicisation, Burmanization and de-Westernization of her political ideas.

[960] Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi's Fall from Grace…*

[961] Quoted in: Selth, *Be Careful What You Wish for…*, p. 19. Prospects for the future are not good either: "the outlook for the remainder of the NLD's five-year term of office is for more of the same, with the government struggling to overcome its own weaknesses and the many other obstacles it faces to deliver promised reforms. There will continue to be an uncomfortable modus vivendi between the civil and military authorities" (Iibid.).

[962] Jeremy M. Weinstein, John E. Porter, Stuart Eizenstat, *On the Brink, Weak States and US National Security. Report*, Center for Global Development, May 2004, https://www.cgdev.org/doc/books/weakstates/Full_Report.pdf (access: 19.07.2018).

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The political struggle with the generals (1988-2011) produced an interesting clash of two political philosophies – Suu Kyi's and the generals' – that differed both in their international and Burmese dimensions. The generals may be framed as Myanmar's equivalent of political realists, with their Hobbesian approach to politics, accent on sovereignty, omnibalancing foreign policy and their regime survival strategy that forced them to make choices detrimental to the national interest of Myanmar but beneficial for the corporate interests of the Tatmadaw. Suu Kyi, on the other hand, represented the liberal/idealistic visions of politics, with her accent on human, universal values, dialogue, empowerment, negotiations, confidence-building and peace. In the Burmese dimension of this juxtaposition, Suu Kyi and generals represented two visions of politics – negative, pessimistic one (the generals), where the people are inherently weak and prone to fall (which implies the necessity of a strong, authoritarian government to control their character for their good and for greater good). And positive, optimistic one (Suu Kyi) based on belief that despite people's failings they are nevertheless able to improve and liberate themselves from shackles of their fallen nature which implies that a more inclusive, participatory political system, like democracy, may be built in Burma.

Despite these differences, there have been significant similarities, such as nation-building based on Aung San, the concept of sacrifice, stress on discipline and unity and moral approach that left little space for compromise which was one of the reasons why political stalemate in Myanmar lasted for so long. Once, however, Suu Kyi and the generals were able to struck a deal (that enabled Myanmar's transformation) these similarities became more visible, with Suu Kyi's governance style coming closer to the Tatmadaw's authoritarianism (though in much softer scale, without harsh repressions and various atrocities committed on the peoples of Myanmar). This similarities should not come as a surprise, for both Suu Kyi and the generals originate from the same intellectual heritage – Burmese Buddhist political thought with its moral approach to politics – even if they understand this legacy differently. Thus, both Suu Kyi and the generals ideologically represent two sides of the same coin.

Conclusion

The Buddhist-Inspired Moral Democracy of Aung San Suu Kyi

The root of a nation's misfortunes has to be sought in the moral failings of the government
Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought spans thirty years of her political and public career (1988-2018), and even longer if one counts her earlier articles. Although there were fluctuations of her thought – in clear relation to her political struggle – like the accent on non-violence in the beginning of her political struggle, significant Buddhicisation and de-Westernization of her ideas under way and the modification of stance from an accessible people's politician into a distanced, matriarch-style authoritarian leader – in general Suu Kyi's political thought is quite consistent and coherent. The permanent features of her thought include: 1) self-proclaimed mission to restore – her father – Aung San's (imagined) legacy. 2) Unequivocal call for democracy, a universally benevolent political system, democracy understood in various ways: from advocating Western-style institutional framework, with check and balances and situating it within Buddhist reasoning about politics via vague, if not populist, utopian promises of democracy as Luhmannian "illusionary component of all future constitutions" to a wide moral vision based on unity and disciplined approach. Suu Kyi's democracy is rather a Burmese Buddhist democracy derived from morality, not an equivalent to any Western understanding of democracy. Hence, the book's titular "moral democracy." 3) The necessity of education, both secular and moral, in improving the country and uplifting the people. 4) The accent on unity, responsibility and discipline that balances the rights-based, Western elements of her thought. 5) The belief in an individual as the ultimate agent of change (though, judging by her post-2011 actions, this belief decreased).

In effect, the single most important aspect of Suu Kyi's political thought is her moral approach to politics. Be it the struggle for democracy or the need for education, for Suu Kyi politics is a moral undertaking based on individual agency. The people should be educated to tell the good from bad. Once they are they would understand that democracy

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is politically and morally the most benevolent option for them, as it is the most effective administrative system and, even more importantly, it allows self-improvement. Consequently, they would choose democracy and by doing so they would help to uplift themselves and restore Burma's proper place among the nations of the world. In short, Suu Kyi's moral democracy is built on internal, onward-based moral qualities of individuals, and not on external solutions, or concrete issues, such as mechanisms or institutions, like in the West. Building democracy understood in this way necessitates disciplinarian approach based on unity and responsibilities. Suu Kyi, strict to Burmese tradition but also to Buddhist teaching, sees her role as a teacher, as someone who shows the way and gives an example as the moral pillar.

Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought is an eclectic set. It originates from two traditions: the local, Burmese one: Theravāda Buddhism heritage of the Burmese political thought; and the international one – Western rights-based democracy. The former one is much more important as Suu Kyi reasons about and makes sense of politics using the very logic of Burmese Buddhist political thought. She has been advocating universal (Western) values, but she has understood them in a Burmese way and she reasons about politics using Buddhist moral framework. Hence, the international dimension of her thought has been only a thin, surface layer beneath her deeply Burmese Buddhist understanding of politics.

Although initially, in her early texts, Suu Kyi presented a rather critical approach to Buddhism (she praised Buddhism, but considered it partially responsible for Burma's tragic colonial experience; in accordance with this view, Buddhism did not prepare the Burmese to function in the modern world), this would later give place to all-out embrace of Buddhism. Her transformation was understandable. In Burma, Buddhism has always provided idioms, concepts and ideas for local political thought, such as, among others, understanding policymaking as a quintessentially moral undertaking, the absence of separation between secular and religious parts of life, the understanding of human life as dissatisfactory, and the quest for the ways of liberating humans from their enslaved nature. The moral dimension is the most important one: deeply religious background of the Burmese political thought created circumstances where local politicians, such as Suu Kyi, in their rhetoric have always preferred to focus on moral aspects at the expense of rational arguments which led to the personalization of political debates and conflicts, the sacralisation of one side and demonization of the other. Morality – in accordance with Buddhist principles – of the leader and the lack of therein in the opponents' case, has been the main criterion for being political leaders. In precolonial times the morality of the ruler was responsible for the well-being of their country – his or her main task in policymaking was to follow Buddhist moral rules and suggestions, such as the Ten Duties. If a ruler was moral, then the country prospered, yet if he/she was immoral, then the country fell into decline and the cosmological order was endangered (though if the ruler corrected his/her behaviour, then the well-being of the country would have

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returned to its blissful condition). Consequently, the ruler should reign justly, righteously and wisely; otherwise the consequences would be dire for both the ruler and his/her realm. Although the Burmese monarchy is gone, the tradition of dominance of this Buddhist moral approach to politics survived and is well and alive.

Aung San Suu Kyi used this archetypical meaning of the Ten Duties in her writings to support her claim that this political ideal should be restored after the Tatmadaw's mismanagement of the state. What underpins Suu Kyi's interpretation of the Ten Duties is the leitmotif of her political thought *per se*: the moral approach that is fully consistent with the Buddhist political thought and the Burmese intellectual tradition – the belief that the ruler must be moral and if he or she is not, then the misfortunes would fall upon the nation. Consequently, Suu Kyi – in a clear device to juxtapose the idealized, ahistoric conditions with the sorry state of the Tatmadaw-dominated Myanmar – idealized the Ten Duties and ahistorically presented them as a lost historical ideal that should be restored. The same applies to her pointing out to Aśoka as a model of a benevolent ruler, as the idealized image of Aśoka is a product of his (and following) propaganda created by his pillar edicts and later by monks and chronicles. The "real" Aśoka (whoever he was), although he established the tradition of pursuing *nibbāna* by creating external social conditions for seeking enlightenment (from then on the legitimization of political authority rested on its support of Buddhism), which translated into a local equivalent of a welfare state, he also used not so benevolent means in ruling.

Suu Kyi's idealization of the past, including that of Aśoka, was a part of her strategy to present her political goals in moral terms as a struggle between good and bad where she intended – in accordance with these traditional patterns of the Burmese Buddhist political thought – to win using *mettā* and conquer ill will with good. In short, Suu Kyi had to idealize the past to make use of it in her political struggle. That is why she poured her own meaning into the ancient texts in order to suit her interpretation of apparent peacefulness and universal benevolence of Buddhism (this device served her to present her political foes as un-Buddhist) and that is why she claimed that violence is totally against Buddhism. Unfortunately, the reality is less clear-cut, with existing evidence to the contrary not only in the historical practice of Buddhist policymaking but also in canonical texts and in *Jātakas* where indeed violence and other immoral acts were used in order to achieve a greater good.

Her interpretation of the Ten Duties, however, does not stop at condemning the Burmese military for their misdeeds using an idealized archetype of political behaviour. Her take goes beyond the traditional understanding of the Ten Duties and represents a modernization and democratization of these ancient concepts; the latter one, however, in her own understanding of democracy (being *per se* an interesting indigenization of democracy) where rights are balanced by duties in the mutual, reciprocal relationship between the government and the people. Hence, it is not only the ruler who must be moral to secure prosperity of the country, but the people must be moral as well. The

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people, too, should decide about the modern interpretation of these Duties – a proposal unheard of and unthinkable in the traditional paradigm. Finally, Suu Kyi stretched the meaning of the Ten Duties to claim that the people give mandate to govern but may withdraw it anytime should the ruler reign badly. This went totally against the traditional understanding derived from *Aggaññ a-sutta's* election of Mahā-Sammata which did not involve resisting a bad king – at least not on the conceptual level – as the king cannot be bad, if he is morally superior to others. Consequently, within Buddhist political thought, a theoretical tradition of a just rebellion did not exist (to repeat once again: on the conceptual level; on the practical level it naturally functioned well as many rebellion where justified by rulers' immorality). In the ideal model the people have only one chance to elect the best ruler, as his or her morality would guarantee his/her just reign.

Suu Kyi's democratization attempts do not stop at the Ten Duties: she presented Buddhism as possessing very democratic notions on several levels. Firstly, according to her Buddhist political theory, she wanted to create a government that both reflects and nurtures Buddhist values. Secondly, she contemporized Buddhist moral obligations for rulers (such as the Ten Duties) into expectations of a modern government. Thirdly, and most importantly, she presented Mahā-Sammata's election as the ultimate proof of Buddhism's democratic notions and as a local equivalent of a social contract; according to Suu Kyi, Mahā-Sammata was chosen by the people which proves the Buddhist tradition of the elective government. Suu Kyi was not the only one who compared Mahā-Sammata's election to a social contract, unfortunately, the Buddhist understanding differs significantly, as choosing the king is a repudiation of anarchy as being the least worst option. The people did not choose Mahā-Sammata to restrain him (as in the Western tradition of the social contract), but rather elected him for being morally the best one among them; his superior morality would automatically guarantee that he would rule justly. That is why in the Burmese precolonial conditions, the monarchs were not bounded by any contractual obligations: the king was the upholder of *dhamma* who should, by the virtue of having superior morality, share his merit, not his power, with his subjects.

Suu Kyi's interpretation had a clear relation to her political struggle. In order to rebuff the criticism from her political foes that democracy is incompatible with Buddhism, Suu Kyi had to present the Buddhist tradition as more democratic than it had in reality been. Thanks to such an interpretation, she could present the Tatmadaw's rule as an anomaly that was unable to annihilate the inherent democratic instincts of the Burmese people. Yet this vision was historically inaccurate: the Tatmadaw's rule was rather a continuation of the traditional reign than a breach of it. Consequently, while Suu Kyi in her political thought invoked the canonical, ideal type of a Buddhist ruler that never materialized, the generals followed what was the historically documented, unholy pattern of policymaking in precolonial, Buddhist Burma. Historical accuracy, however, was irrelevant here. What mattered for Suu Kyi was to present her own vision as

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a restoration of "traditional" democratic, Buddhist rule and to paint the Tatmadaw's rule as un-Buddhist. This juxtaposition of two models – Suu Kyi's Buddhist and Tatmadaw's un-Buddhist – would deprive the Tatmadaw of legitimacy.

Suu Kyi's democratization of the Buddhist tradition situates her ideas among representatives that interpret Buddhism as essentially democratic. For them the prime evidence in favour of this claim is the Buddha's endorsement of Vajjis' quasi-democratic system of governance; in this view the Buddha is interpreted as a kind of proto-democrat. Unfortunately, this is the only place where he (appears) to recommend democratic government: elsewhere (and much more frequently) he was talking about monarchy and it was absolute, albeit enlightened monarchy that he envisioned as the ideal political system.

From a Burmese perspective, Suu Kyi's political thought should be situated within one of two main schools of political thought, that deal with central theme in the Burmese political thought: are people defined by their fallen nature or by their capability to overcome it and achieve enlightenment? Hers is the optimistic one. Contrary to the dominant first approach, quintessentially antidemocratic and pessimistic – which claims that given the imperfect nature of human beings (people are ontologically flawed and consequently they hurt themselves and others) a strong political authority (tyranny or autocracy) is needed to control them for their and others' good – the optimistic approach offers more democratic solutions. If the people are able to overcome their desire-driven nature, behave morally and able to achieve *nibbāna*, then it is possible to establish a more just and inclusive political system, such as democracy, or its equivalents that would support correct moral practice among the people, helping them to achieve enlightenment. Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought is situated firmly in the latter approach.

Historically speaking, however, it was the first school that dominated the Burmese political thought. The monarchs ruled in accordance with the first, pessimistic approach, where people are considered ontologically flawed and the paramount purpose of politics – that justifies almost every means – is to establish and preserve the order (that would hamper human beings' flawed nature) even at the expense of breaking Buddhist precepts. Consequently, precolonial monarchy had little in common with the proclaimed Buddhist ideal, and Buddhist moral codes rarely constrained monarchs' actions. This explains why precolonial Buddhist monarchs were considered by the people as cruel and despotic: one of the Five Evils. Aung San Suu Kyi, who was well aware of the tension between the proclaimed ideal and the unholy reality, innovatively interpreted the Five Evils. In her view, the danger of water was understood as lack of drinkable water in the country, that of fire as lack of electricity and that of thieves – as danger from corrupted officials; the danger from monarch was naturally that of the military government conquerable by establishing democratic system. Suu Kyi's reading of the Five Evils represents a pattern typical for her political thought: that is using ancient concepts to legitimise her own political ideas and by doing so contemporizing these ideas.

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The colonial times were an important background for Suu Kyi's early texts. In her essays she has written much about colonial vices and anticolonial struggle, comparing it to the Indian one. Her main point was the criticism of the first generations of independence movement – the Burmese colonial intelligentsia – for not being able to use the past creatively and critically, the way Indian thinkers did. Consequently, Burma, unlike India, was unable to make use of the colonial period: it could not produce a synthesis of East and West. Suu Kyi presented these two dichotomies (cosmopolitan Indian nationalism vs. narrow Burmese Buddhist nationalism) on the examples of Rabindranath Tagore and Kodaw Hmaing preferring the former and criticising the latter for not providing an ideology that would help Burma to make use of the (limited) opportunities offered by the colonial period (in her latter political thought Suu Kyi moved away from appraisal of cosmopolitanism in favour of embracing Burmese Buddhist tradition quite along Kodaw Hmaing's lines). Thus, according to Suu Kyi, the inability of Burma to use the colonial period creatively was caused by the fact that there were not proper leaders in Burma who could help the people to make use of the colonial challenge/opportunity; her father, Aung San, was on the good way to achieve that, but he was killed. Consequently, Suu Kyi implicitly suggested her future role as the one who must finish her father's task to lead the Burmese people to combine their tradition with requirements of the modern world in order to make Burma realize its true potential.

Contrary to the generation of her parents, Suu Kyi was disillusioned with socialism: the ideology chosen by her was democracy, not socialism. Thus, she firmly rejected socialism, calling it "alien ideology" and blaming its BSPP version for Burma's plight. For Suu Kyi, the "Burmese Way to Socialism" became the ideological scapegoat for all problems of Burma: she criticized the army's elitist approach, its (mis)governance of the state, corruption, cruelty, intellectual stagnation and other vices of the Tatmadaw's rule in Burma. Suu Kyi was much closer to Burma's pre-1962 intellectual heritage, praising its democracy and international profile (with her favourite comparison of Burma being the 1950s model for Singapore) and juxtaposing it with subsequent Tatmadaw's rule. Despite her complicated political relationship with U Nu during 1988 revolution – she was very critical of him – Suu Kyi with time, especially after the mid-1990s, became quite similar to him (though without U Nu's ostentation and with more intelligent usage of populism) in mixing religion with politics (making use of Buddhism in politics) and legitimizing herself via Buddhist idioms, concepts and practices. Suu Kyi's utopian vision of democracy that would fix everything once established came closely to being contemporary equivalent of "worldly *nibbāna*."

All similarities with U Nu notwithstanding, Suu Kyi with her blend of Burmeseness and universalism should rather be classified as the intellectual epigone of the 1950s Burma Buddhist modernists. She, too, idealised Buddhism for international audience, presenting it as a philosophy that, if applied, could make this planet a better place to live; a philosophy that should subjugate morally both modern science and democracy

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("compassionate democracy") and by doing so provide a universal model for the world – her "human development." Suu Kyi, as Buddhist modernists, wanted to upgrade, improve spiritually international (Western) ideas, such as capitalism, to propose a Buddhist-inspired vision of development and democracy that is both Burmese and international at the same time. Consequently, like them, all Suu Kyi is able to offer is moral vision that lacks concrete details. She does not like to build pagodas, but she is unable to build factories either, as her predecessors: all she can do is to build moral ivory towers, intellectual edifices that are good only on paper.

The single most important person Suu Kyi considers her model is her father, Aung San, Burma's independence father and the Tamtadaw's founder, the pivotal figure in the 20th century history of this country. This outstanding politician, Burma's Machiavellian "man of destiny" dared for the task almost impossible, that is independence from the British yoke, and was killed just before achieving it. Aung San secured Burma's independence after several political, military and ideological twists during WWII. Killed just before achieving his goal, he became a legend (save Suu Kyi herself no politician in recent history of Burma was idealised more) that all subsequent Burmese government found convenient to build their legitimacy upon. Given the fact that his political thought – that followed typical patterns of the Burmese political thought (reasoning about politics from within Buddhist worldview, moral perspective, calls for unity and the usage of democracy) – was quite changeable (he started as a socialist, then became a communist, fascist, anti-fascist and finally a democrat) and eclectic, and given his political realism and pragmatism, it was easy for many Burmese political actors to legitimise themselves on Aung San.

The army's legitimisation was particularly important, as it presented Aung San as the Tatmadaw's ideological Godfather along the militarist, authoritarian and socialist lines. This was only partially correct at best (Aung San in his Japanese period indeed praised fascist Japan and rejected "nonsense of individualism," throughout his career he condemned capitalism, built the army on ethnocentric patterns with a vision of the Tatmadaw being more similar to dictatorship than to democracy), as it singled out only these aspects of Aung San's heritage that were convenient for the Tatmadaw and left the rest out. Aung San Suu Kyi did the same, though *à rebours*: she democratized Aung San, whitewashed the dark elements of his legacy and repainted him as a true democrat. Again, this vision was partially correct (or generally correct, as every good propaganda is) as Aung San, yesterday's communist-turned-fascist-turned-anti-fascist after the war indeed praised, vaguely understood, democracy. His actions, however, did not follow his words: his rule represented rather democratic centralism than democracy. Yet Suu Kyi was able to manipulate his legacy and present him as a democrat pure and simple (as the one who strived for democracy, opted for separation of the army from the politics and wanted check and balances, but unfortunately his vision was corrupted by Ne Win) and as an enlightened Buddhist (although not as secular as it had generally been thought

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so before in the West – he reasoned about politics using Buddhist framework – nevertheless Aung San used Buddhism rather rhetorically in order to achieve political goals). This polished image of her father served Suu Kyi's specific political goals: when she entered politics in Burma in 1988 she declared that she did this to restore (alleged) Aung San's democratic legacy and given the fact that positioning herself as the continuator of Aung San was initially her to-be-or-not-to-be in politics, her decision to democratize her father was a rational one. By using "Aung San card" she was depriving the Tatmadaw of legitimacy and positioning herself as his true national and ideological heiress (by "karmic credentials," or "infectious charisma" logic of securing political power) – one who must finish his job, that is restore the original harmony and achieve "second national independence."

Consequently, a bitter political, personal and intellectual legitimacy struggle over Aung San's legacy emerged between the constructed narratives of his brothers-in-arms (and their successors) and his daughter. The generals used every means to demonize Suu Kyi and present her as a national traitor and Aung San's renegade daughter (they, just like the mythical lawmaker Manu, failed to judge the "cucumber problem" correctly). Yet, they lost: the society did not buy their black PR. Hence, the struggle was eventually won by Suu Kyi, both in Burma and outside (Suu Kyi's success in rebranding Aung San as a democrat in the West was particularly remarkable from a public relations perspective given his war-time record, including atrocities; yet this was possible due to Suu Kyi's former iconic position). Seeing their failure yet unwilling to concede it, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) generals dropped legitimising themselves on Aung San and started having "Aung San amnesia." Consequently, Suu Kyi won the ideological war on Aung San and secured that his polished position prevailed inside Burma and abroad.

The Aung San topic is the backbone of Suu Kyi's political thought. Be it self-proclaimed task of finishing Aung San's job of making Burma strong and prosperous or legitimizing herself via Aung San or making him larger-than-life democrat, annihilated by the army, her father remains – let's repeat and undermine it – the central tenet of Suu Kyi's political thought. He is, however, hardly the only one. Aside from fascination and veneration of her father, Suu Kyi has other ideas and concepts (that sometimes do not match well with that of her father). Among the central issues of Suu Kyi's political thought – such as democracy, education, the role of an individual, unity and moral approach to politics that encompasses all these aspects – non-violence came chronologically first. She declared her goal of bringing democracy back to Burma via non-violent means at the very beginning of her political career and although she did this due to pragmatic reasons (given the Tatmadaw's might, violent means were senseless), her justification counts for her political thought. Suu Kyi claimed that she wanted to end a sorry tradition of changing government by violent means in Burma. In doing so, she looked for inspiration abroad (her first and ultimate source of inspiration – Aung

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San – could not provide basis for non-violent political philosophy, though Suu Kyi, against the facts, claimed the opposite: democratised and rebranded him as another non-violence apostle). Hence, Mahatma Gandhi whose thought had absorbed her early years during a longer stay (with her mother) in India, was the major and almost obvious one, followed, to lesser extent, by Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Václav Havel. In following Gandhi's footsteps Suu Kyi singled out the aesthetic, Hindu symbols of his movement and instead concentrated on his moral message of non-violence, which is unsurprising given her predilection to morach preaching. That is why, following Gandhi's footsteps, she called for moral regeneration that would lead to achieving democracy. By changing deeply rooted authoritarian patterns of the Burmese culture – according to Suu Kyi responsible for the military rule – Suu Kyi hoped to bring about vague, unspecified but lofty democracy. In this undertaking the individual improvement came as the prerequisite for political success. Here one can see for the first time one of the central tenets of Suu Kyi's political thought in general: a belief in an individual who is educated, conscious and by being so, s/he is the agent of change: s/he can take matters into his/her hands and make Burma a better place to live. In order to make the Burmese realize their potential, Suu Kyi embarked on an anti-fatalist quest, urging people that their life depends on them and presenting an empowering interpretation of one's own *kamma* ("the active karma") – best expressed by her catch-phrase: "no hope without endeavour" – that went against the traditionally accepted fatalistic interpretations of *kamma*. By doing so, she hoped to emancipate them from authoritarianism that ruled in accordance with deterrence patterns.

Thus, following Gandhi, Suu Kyi called for civil disobedience, urging the people to question and disobey arbitrary orders in order to empower them vis-à-vis political authority. She saw her role as a teacher who awakens the people from inertia and fear. She localized civil disobedience call in Burmese conditions by comparing disobedience to the government to removing a bad king in precolonial period and later employed Buddhist concepts to justify her call. From the point of view of her political interests, calling for civil disobedience was a rational decision given her limited political space: by awakening/rebelling the people against the army she could have hoped to gain power. Unfortunately, it failed, for domestic context in Burma was unfavourable to Suu Kyi (which distinguished her case from those of Gandhi, Mandela and Luther King), with society too weak (and unwilling to stage an all-out revolution against the army) and regime too strong to make the civil disobedience work. Hence, the authoritarian Burma of the late 1980s and early 1990s – against which Suu Kyi fought – turned out to be decisively different than Gandhi's opponent: colonial India. Thus Suu Kyi has unwillingly proved the adequacy of Orwell's criticism of Gandhian non-violence.

Although labelled as one of Gandhi's spiritual successors, Suu Kyi differed from her spiritual guru significantly (in such aspects as religious-cultural background or economic ideas, the approach to the latter makes Gandhi more similar to Ne Win),

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with the only major common idea being non-violence. The same applies to her another non-violence model, Luther King whom she quoted and that's it. More important was Havel's example, whose essay "The Power of the Powerless" impressed and inspired Suu Kyi. She hoped that in Burma it would be possible to develop a "questioning mind" among the people in order to destroy authoritarianism from within. Finally, even more lasting was Mandela's shadow. Inspired by South African example Suu Kyi called for sanctions that unfortunately turned out to be a self-defeating failure (unlike apartheid's South Africa the sanctions did not bring the regime down but instead they impoverished society already maltreated by the Tatmadaw), at least from the national perspective (from Suu Kyi's personal political perspective the sanctions were not as bad, as they helped to keep her in the political game).

All in all, Suu Kyi's non-violence was an authentic choice given both personal reasons and political considerations. In the latter case, Suu Kyi skilfully combined international traditions of non-violence with the Burmese heritage. This gave her moral capital both in Burma and abroad which, despite not securing Suu Kyi's political victory (this turned out to be impossible), enhanced her political profile domestically and internationally. Intellectually, Suu Kyi's non-violence was an interesting case of domesticating and nativising of the universalistic ideas (here: Burmanization of non-violence philosophy).

Even more interesting was Suu Kyi's interpretation of freedom from fear (her 1991 essay remains her most famous text, with the catch-phrase "it is not power that corrupts but fear" that is probably Suu Kyi's most frequently quoted sentence). It remains the hallmark of her universalizing message from the 1990s. In her title Suu Kyi referred to one of Aung San's speeches, yet the phrase originates from Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms Speech" and functioned as a part of Allies WWII anti-fascist democratic ideology. Despite quoting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, however, Suu Kyi omitted reference to the Four Freedoms and instead interpreted it her own way, dropping or neglecting three other freedoms and concentrating on freedom from fear only. In her reading she Burmanized and Buddhicised this originally Western, secular concept by retelling it – in accordance with Burmese intellectual tradition – in the psychological way. For Suu Kyi, then, there are four corruptions related to one another: *chanda-gati* (caused by desire), *dosa-gati* (by ill will), *moga-gati* (by ignorance), and the worst one, *bhaya-gati* (by fear). Fear is the central concept in Suu Kyi's telling, as it describes both the attitude of the Myanmar military regime (presenting the regime as fearful of social retribution was one of the NLD's 1990s hallmarks, which was analytically correct, tactically wrong and philosophically universalistic) and the condition of the society (where fear permeated deeply and produced passive submission). Fear, too, is responsible for major problems of the Burmese politics (corruption and personalization). Having painted fear, Suu Kyi moved on to describing ways of getting rid of it, following her earlier attempts to awaken/instigate to rebel the people to make them understand that change depends on them, on their courage to become free from fear. By being courageous the people would

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eliminate fear and other mental defilements, consequently they would get involved in the political affairs and would be able to produce political change. This is how fear is directly interwoven with freedom. Suu Kyi presented this interrelation by using "glass splinters" metaphor and by introducing concept of fearlessness – both quite out of line with Buddhism (in her article Suu Kyi referred to Western understanding of freedom, not to the Buddhist one) – as ways of liberating the people from fear. It is fearlessness, a state that allows emancipation from fear, that is the key argument of Suu Kyi's essay. She attributed fearlessness to Aung San and Gandhi, but their role, as that of the Buddha and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is passive: they are just models of behaviour to be followed. The active role must be played by the people who need to liberate from fear by themselves. That is why, in accordance with this logic, Suu Kyi throughout her political career was concentrating on convincing people to cease fearing. In order to convey her message, she urged, plead, appealed, encouraged the people (and praised the courage of the few as an analogy for all) to be courageous so that it would be beneficial for them and they would be able to change the country. This reflected her belief in individual agency that is able to shape history. Suu Kyi's ideal type is an individual who is an agent of change; in order to achieve this ideal, she needed to empower the people, let them see the situation and change the world. In doing so they must count on themselves, as signposts such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not working well in the imperfect world, so the job must be done by the people themselves. They, and only they, can make a change.

Hence, what is needed is the "revolution of the spirit," that involves an inner, mental change, moral regeneration, ethical transformation, not only an outer reshape that changes the structures. In this revolution, each one of us is responsible for our destiny without external help, everyone must awaken and self-improve by himself/herself: emancipate from fear, rise and change our environment. This would not only be automatically beneficial but – in a butterfly effect – would establish the free society and make an utopian-like democratic conditions come true. With this kind of revolution everything is possible, every goal reachable.

This utopian, quintessentially moral vision, born out of Suu Kyi's dire political situation in Burma (her opposition movement was squeezed and pushed to the corner by the regime and could only do two things: 1) hope to provoke the society to rebel and 2) to transfer the political struggle into an abstract, moral field) gave birth to popular and false interpretation of Suu Kyi's struggle as a spiritual one. A narrative she influenced by herself for her own political interests – Suu Kyi by using language, metaphors and ideals widely understandable outside Burma was able to convince half of the world that her political struggle for power in Burma represented higher, humanistic values, almost a quest for good. Her ideas, too, suited perfectly well the intellectual climate of the 1990s which helped her to secure the democracy icon status in the West – that in

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turn helped her to remain in the political game in Burma despite being politically much weaker than her foes, the Tatmadaw's generals.

Within the Burmese intellectual heritage, Suu Kyi's vision of fear that represents a symbolic prison for both the oppressors and the oppressed, was a very strong voice in favour of the optimistic approach of the Burmese political thought that believes in human beings' capacity to overcame their desire-driven nature and change their *kamma*. It was a message along universalistic lines that not always fitted well with Buddhism.

Soon, however, Suu Kyi was forced by political circumstances – the generals accused her of being Westernized and non-Burmese enough (such labels were mortally dangerous to her legitimization, though she, in her rhetoric, reverted their criticism targeted on her and, with all her intellectual brilliance, showed that it is them, not her, that is not Buddhist and Burmese enough due to their militarized *espirit de corps*, their selfishness and their religious and cultural alienation) – to Buddhicise her message considerably. In doing so she followed consciously or not, U Nu's footsteps. Being unable and unwilling to build her own pagodas, Suu Kyi started being religious in public to show that she was a better Buddhist than the generals. This was somehow logical given political circumstances (lack of space for opposition in the SLORC-dominated Myanmar and Burma's heritage of religion being the only idiom open to opposition to rulers). Intellectually, she indigenized concepts of democracy and human rights, rejected the Western-inspired separation of religion from politics and significantly Buddhicised her rhetoric.

First came her attempt to show that democracy is natural to Buddhism and Burmeseness. In doing so Suu Kyi was rebuffing the regime's criticism (that claimed the opposite) by painting an artificial picture of responsible citizens who went to the streets in 1988 and consciously demanded democracy (in reality the people of Burma indeed demanded democracy but had a scant understanding of what it meant; they understood it primary as the opposition to incompetent military government and as following of a virtuous leader). Suu Kyi's vision was as inaccurate as the generals' reductionism, though *à rebours*: if they deprived Buddhism and Burmeseness of the few democratic traits that were indeed there, she was misinterpreting the Buddhist heritage (such as the election of Mahā-Sammata, Aśoka's reign or the Ten Duties) as well as the legacy of 1988 protests to present them as more democratic than they actually were.

With human rights Suu Kyi faced a harder task: even she, with all her intelligence, was unable to present human rights as genuinely Buddhist values (human rights do not match well with Buddhism due to this religion's dual view of the people: if people are inherently flawed, they cannot have permanent rights; and if they are able to liberate themselves from their desire-driven nature, they do not need any rights anymore). Suu Kyi had to admit that this is an alien concept with scant or none relation to the Burmese Buddhist heritage (in the Burmese conditions rights are not transcendental, but the concept of rights is blurred with that of opportunities/privileges, suggesting that the rights depend on the will of the political authority). Yet, she justified its introduction by

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using universalistic arguments that ideas should not be confined to their place of origin and by presenting human rights as rights to achieve *nibbāna* (which showed that in the justification of introduction of such Western/universal concept as democracy or human rights Suu Kyi was switching back and forth from domesticating arguments and universalizing ones). In the same manner she universalized her Myanmar experience to paint a dark picture of inherently flawed – due to their intellectual apathy and inability to change – authoritarianisms ("distorted trees") juxtaposed with benevolent democracies. This was correct in the Burmese conditions, where the Tatmadaw's rule indeed fitted well into Suu Kyi's framework, but was hardly universal (not all authoritarian governments behaved similarly badly to Myanmar military regime). Suu Kyi did this in order to align democracy with Buddhism, writing that Buddhism plays a central role in maintaining peace and security. This fairy tale-style political model where peace and security would have been guaranteed automatically once the ideal Buddhist ruler had followed Buddhist precepts showed very well Suu Kyi's tendency to paint politics in religious colours, as a quintessentially moral undertaking.

The second aspect of Suu Kyi's Buddhicisation was the increased usage of Buddhism in her political rhetoric, especially after 1995 once she was freed from her first house arrest. In her messages to international audience, she combined Western concepts (like "loyal opposition") with reinterpreted Buddhist canonical references (comparisons of opposition to Devadatta and the regime to Aṅgulimāla). In her words to the Burmese, Suu Kyi, instead of concentrating on practical ideas, such as how to establish democratic institutions, started preaching about loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion, purity, wisdom, *nibbāna* and moral obligations of the ruling and the ruled. By using this kind of religious wordings, Suu Kyi addressed the people through the Buddhist idiom, the one that the majority understood well and was familiar with. This secured her popularity, if not certain kind of (bottom-to-top) personality cult ("female bodhisattva"), yet marked a departure from her earlier, more down-to-earth ideas about unfinished modernization or lack of ability to accommodate foreign ideas.

In the mid-1990s, Suu Kyi's Buddhicised turn represented a response to the regime's propaganda (that portrayed Suu Kyi as Westernized renegade) and a moral high ground policy of positioning herself (and her party, the NLD) as morally better than the generals, and consequently, more fit to govern. This was a pragmatic – and successful – response to a marginalizing threat. This secured Suu Kyi's position in the eyes of the majority of Burmese people and other nationalities in the country as the legitimate ruler of Burma who was deprived of her power by the Tatmadaw's usurpers. This moralizing tendency of focusing on moral aspects instead of on practical issues, however, became a permanent feature of her political thought in general, present until now (e.g. her painting of rebuilding of Rakhine as a moral task guided by *mettā*).

Once released from her first house arrest in 1995, Suu Kyi with her rallies over the gate of her house at University Avenue 54 established an alternative seat of authority.

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A one that had legitimacy, but no power, while the military regime enjoyed the opposite: power without authority and legitimacy. Before the generals decided that enough is enough, for more than one year Suu Kyi was able to establish a unique tradition of informal interactions with her supporters ("people's forums"). Having a great contact with the people (she was often laughing, telling jokes or ridiculing Myanmar's absurds to the delight of her audience), knowing Burmese cultural patterns as well as rhetorical devices and making use of her personal status that situated her above the people (despite all her calls against personalization of politics) – in short being a good politician who knows how to talk to the people – Suu Kyi enhanced her popularity tremendously and made it impossible to marginalize her. A more critical reading of her gate speeches, however, reveals a no small amount of populism, omitting inconvenient questions, blatant usage of "Aung San's card" and a schoolteacher, or even "the mother of the nation" attitude to her supporters. Suu Kyi was prone to teaching, telling quasi-aphorist platitudes and believed that her mission was to teach the nation how to establish democracy and fulfil her father's ideas.

Suu Kyi's self-proclaimed quest to "educate the people" forms the important part of her political thought. Partially it was a pragmatic response to the sorry state of Burma's educational system (Suu Kyi many times talked about the decline of it and the need to reform it in order to modernize the country). It was, too, consistent with the Burmese political thought in general (education being linked to wisdom and morality), but there is certainly Suu Kyi's very personal element here as well. She compared policymaking to learning, rejected the notion of ontological goodness or badness of individuals and instead proposed educational criterion: if someone behaves badly, that means s/he is not educated enough. S/he needs to be taught – everybody can be taught (implicitly: to become a democrat and behave morally). That is why the educated person, who by virtue of being educated becomes an independent self-responsible individual, engaged and politically conscious, a one who can engage in politics even at the cost of personal risk (s/he must be courageous), is the ideal archetype in Suu Kyi's concept of democracy. Consequently, once people are educated, they would form a near-perfect civil society and choose democracy. That is why education is so essential: it enables to obtain not only knowledge, but also wisdom that allows correct moral and, consequently, political choices. From here originates the primary importance of education for democracy: reform of education is a prerequisite for achieving democracy ("education first, democracy second"). This is an internal understanding of democracy, centred on educated citizens, who need to be moral enough, courageous, free from fear. Here external structures, institutions or check and balances play a secondary role only. In short, democracy depends on educated people.

In the quest for educating the people, Suu Kyi saw herself as a transformational teacher, a leader who shows the way, informs, encourages and motivates. She saw herself as "the teacher of nation" who needs to encourage the people to improve themselves, which would lead to common good. This teaching of nation scheme, although partially

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inspired by external sources (Gandhi, "engaged Buddhism," perhaps Rousseau) was well in accord with the Burmese political culture patterns, where all important postcolonial political leaders tended to employ this patronising attitude of teaching the people. This included the Tatmadaw's generals who considered the population not mature enough to grasp certain concepts. Although Suu Kyi many times stressed the opposite (maturity of the Burmese people) in her actions she unconsciously behaved in a similar way, as if the Burmese needed to be treated like children.

Regardless of more or less visible Suu Kyi's schoolteacher attitude during her gate speeches and after, Suu Kyi's approach to various issues discussed at the meetings (from democracy via bribery to reading books) was a profoundly moralistic one – all her ideas are situated within this moral framework – and as such represents a microcosm of her political thought that remains constant until now (once she achieved her position of power in 2016, she kept repeating the same moral message).

Among these issues democracy comes as the first major one: not only democracy is the most frequently mentioned theme in her gate speeches, but it constantly appears in her other texts and lectures. In short, democracy forms a cornerstone of Suu Kyi's political thought. Suu Kyi placed democracy within moral, Buddhist reasoning about politics. What emerged was a "moral democracy" – democracy as a vague, or even utopian, moral vision.

More often than less Suu Kyi has been using democracy in a populist way: as a slogan, as a platitude (e.g. "system for the people") – limiting herself to the catchy phrases is quite typical of Suu Kyi's writings/speeches – as a magic wand that would heal all social problems of Burma (and even, at times, some global ones) or as vague, moral metaphors, like comparisons of democracy to a road or to a roof. She offered little details, preferring moral language instead, that focused on mobilizing supporters rather than explaining systemic details (Suu Kyi's concept of democracy was never clearly and thoroughly revealed; only fragments, like call for the limited role of the government in public affairs, were). Her understanding of democracy, too, was a testimony to intellectual climate of the 1990s, with its belief and deep conviction that only democracy allows economic development. This served her to present one of her political thought's major ideas, borrowed from Thomas Mann: "everything is political" – Suu Kyi, in clear response to the military regime's attempt to depoliticise society, tried to politicise it as much as possible. Finally, due to the logic of the political struggle with the generals', democracy became tied to Suu Kyi - personified by her - and started exemplify everything the military government was not. This was the first reason why Suu Kyi's democracy resembled a utopia (idyllic future conditions as juxtaposition of current sorry state). The other one was presenting democracy as the only solution of Burma's numerous problems. Conceptually, Suu Kyi's vague understanding of democracy comes closest to Luhmann's definition of democracy as the "illusionary component of all future constitutions."

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Establishing this kind of democracy should have been given top priority: Suu Kyi's agenda can be summarized in one, telling sentence: "democracy first!" She was telling her supporters: let us establish democracy first together and then we would be able to fix everything. Her "democracy first" was a clear reference to Aung San's "independence first!" approach (remove the British first, rebuild the country later), and equally pragmatic one, since Suu Kyi knew that her road to power went via democracy (she would win all elections thanks to personal popularity).

Beyond political pragmatism, metaphors and slogans, Suu Kyi's concept of democracy represented a call for a selective assimilation of Western rights-based understanding of democracy. Her eightfold Westernization combined both systemic (Western) and moral (Burmese Buddhist) justifications. It was seen in advocating: 1) rights-based democracy (e.g. calls for "level playing field"), and 2) a system of check and balances (itself a novelty in the Burmese Buddhist intellectual heritage as traditionally in Burma there was only moral control of the people in power, not external, legal one; now Suu Kyi advocated it by a moral argument: that it helps the politicians themselves to behave correctly). 3) In putting the system over an individual (system is more important than the individual as the system can hold politicians in check but also can help the people to behave morally correctly). 4) In stressing the importance of party politics. 5) In calling for human rights and 6) rule of law, emphasizing 7) the role of creative (political) minority and 8) empowering the people (itself one of the leitmotifs of her political thought: a belief in a conscious, educated individual who is an agent of change). On a systemic level, Suu Kyi's eightfold understanding of democracy represents an attempt to advocate Western ideas into non-Western cultural ground using local vocabulary and reasoning.

This eightfold Westernization, however, is less important than Suu Kyi's major approach to democracy: a moral one. Seen in words like "democracy is the political system based on a concept of truth," Suu Kyi's "moral democracy" is a moral undertaking based on an individual agency. In this regard, democracy is a choice of free people who are educated enough to understand that it is the best system for them: externally (establishing an effective administrative system) but much more important: internally. It is a way of self-improvement (democracy as a practice achieved by self-improvement in the Buddhist way) that, if achieved, would – by a Buddhist version of the butterfly effect – make this world a better place to live. Consequently, the struggle for democracy is in everyone's best interest.

Hence, individual agency - a free, conscious individual - plays the crucial role in this moral understanding of democracy. Everyone can make a difference by proper moral and social behaviour (giving good example). To do so, however, one needs to uplift his/her morality first (ethically reinvent himself/herself) – Suu Kyi's vision is based on individual improvement of morality that would result in achieving democracy. In short, people must be moral enough to achieve democracy.

This moral approach to democracy necessitates an accent not on rights, as in the Western understanding of rights-based democracy, but on duties. It is here where Suu

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Kyi's thought departs significantly from the Western, liberal understanding of democracy and becomes eclectic, as Suu Kyi balances Western rights-based democracy with very Burmese Buddhist moral concepts of unity, discipline and responsibility. Without this triad democracy would be handicapped, prone to abuses and ultimately fragile. That is why unity, responsibility and discipline represent another cornerstone of Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought, alongside with Aung San and democracy.

Suu Kyi has been calling for unity and discipline from the very beginning of her political career: from her "maiden" Shwedagon speech where these values were as frequently mentioned as democracy and were presented as prerequisites for the latter: essential conditions that must be met in order to establish a representative, republican government. Later in her speeches/texts she frequently mentioned unity – usually as a slogan, or as a device to theorize about other aspects, like history – understood morally. Suu Kyi's unity is a value built on truth that demands subjugation of one's interests for the interests of all (politically it follows the traditional Burmese understanding of unity as enforced harmony without dissident voices). As such unity is the prerequisite for achieving democracy and solving all the problems of the country, including recent ones, such as the "Rohingya crisis." In short, only united Burma can be successful.

Alongside with unity, responsibility is another crucial component of Suu Kyi's democracy and again a moral one. Using, or even overusing Kennedian call for thinking about what one can do for the country first, Suu Kyi was telling her supporters that they should develop "true sense of responsibility." This included things big and small, such as nurturing individual initiative (taking matters into their own hands) in everyday issues, not upbringing children in authoritarian way, or sacrificing oneself for the cause. The people's prime responsibility, however, was to struggle to achieve democracy. Responsibilities do not end with the people, though. Political leaders, like Suu Kyi, have responsibilities, too (again the major one is struggling to achieve democracy, yet once it is done, there will be new ones) and rulers of the country have them as well. Ruling is a responsibility, too, and – crucially – a moral one. From here originates Suu Kyi's deeply Buddhist approach to governance: if morality is a necessary condition for successful ruling, then well-being of the country and its people depends on morality of the rulers. Logically, if the country is poor and undeveloped, as Myanmar is ("nation's misfortunes"), then the immorality of the rulers ("moral failings of the government") is to blame for it.

Since responsibility, like unity, is a moral category (derived from the proper moral conduct), it can be nurtured and practiced and then lead to morally correct behaviours, including the ones in the political sphere (supporting parties, speaking in public). In other words, if one is moral enough s/he would naturally be loyal, responsible and stand united behind the leadership which would contribute to achieve democracy and make it a thriving one. Correct moral understanding and practice is then the foundation of correct understanding of democracy. This is an onward-based, personal or psychological

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understanding of democracy, necessitated by correct moral behaviour of each and every one, not an external, structural one (external check and balances such as laws). Regardless if one is a country ruler, or just an ordinary person who votes and speaks in public, one needs to nurture one's morality first before starting getting involved in politics. Consequently, if one disagrees with the enlightened and morally near-perfect leadership of Suu Kyi, or disunities with her on any action, one is not moral enough, should rethink his or her stance and, ideally, "come back to light." With this attitude Suu Kyi's authoritarianism in governing the party and the state (after 2015) with an iron grid, without tolerating dissident voices, is unsurprising. More so: it is natural.

Here Suu Kyi's approach follows the traditional unholy pattern of the Burmese politics where morality has always been used to both silence internal dissidents and delegitimize political opponents. This trait makes Suu Kyi not dissimilar to her long-time political opponents, the Tatmadaw's generals. These two are ideologically two sides of the same coin – Suu Kyi of course is the brighter one – with all differences, including moral ones between them notwithstanding (Suu Kyi never committed crimes against humanity and was not responsible for mass repressions against the society as the Tatmadaw was).

Yet these differences were important, too. Although both Suu Kyi and the Tatmadaw legitimized themselves via Buddhist concepts, there was a deep, philosophical divergence between them on various levels. To start with, the Tatmadaw had *āṇā* (authority based on the naked power, "authoritarianism"), whereas Suu Kyi had *awza* (authority based on influence, "democracy"), the Tatmadaw proclaimed the *cetanā* ("goodwill", usually attributed to those in power) of their actions (the generals positioned themselves, along traditional Burmese authoritarian legitimization patterns, as selfless rulers who benevolently worked to the people's good); whereas Suu Kyi made *mettā* (loving-kindness) the centre of her legitimization ("the politics of *mettā*") along the Engaged Buddhism lines. Suu Kyi did this out of the dire political situation of the opposition, squeezed and pushed to the corner by the regime. She hoped to soften the generals and convince them to relinquish the power (in accordance with *Seyya Jātaka*'s and *Ekarāja Jātaka*'s logic). Suu Kyi, too, wanted to empower her movement: to present herself and the NLD to the public as possessing the moral right (vide: her slogan "right is might"). In short: as morally superior.

These two legitimization patterns, chosen by the Tatmadaw and Suu Kyi, produced two competing political philosophies, both international and Burmese at the same time. From the point of view of international (Western) political philosophy, the Myanmar generals, with their "Hobbesian" or "Darwinian" understanding of international politics (and its domestic version) as anarchic, based on power politics and survival of the fittest, and with their stress on absolute sovereignty of the state, can be classified as Burmese equivalent of political realists. Suu Kyi on the other hand, with her (until 2015) appeals/calls for sanctions to the UN and other international organizations as well as to foreign

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governments, based her international legitimization on universal, supranational, human values (such as human rights, justice, democracy, non-violence, dialogue and peace), encompassed by the Declaration of Human Rights that transcends national borders. Until 2015, Suu Kyi represented a local, Burmese version of not a small group of people who engage in politics with hope to make this world a better place to live.

From the point of view of the Burmese political philosophy – much more important here – both sides, the Tatmadaw and Suu Kyi, legitimized themselves via similar patterns (such as unity, discipline, sacrifice or Aung San as the personification of the political ideal) though interpreted differently, with strong moral conviction that their version is morally the only right, correct one. This transformed political struggle in Burma into a moral quest and significantly limited space for compromise. It was to blame for twenty seven years of stalemate.

These two interpretations are fundamental here. The generals and Suu Kyi represented two archetypes of political thinking anchored in the Burmese Buddhist political thought. The generals, in accordance with the traditional Burmese legitimization pattern, worked on the implicit assumption that the people are fallible, desire-driven, imperfect creatures who harm themselves and others and thus must be controlled by a strong, authoritarian political authority that maintains order, limits conflicts, enforces morality and saves the people from anarchy. In short: the pessimistic understanding of the human nature – the power cannot be given to the fallible people – necessitates establishing authoritarianism or guardianship type democracy, like current Myanmar's "disciplined democracy."

Suu Kyi, on the other hand, while not dismissing the imperfection of human beings, built her political philosophy on an alternative assumption that the people, despite their desire-driven nature are able to overcome it, live good lives and (some) may even achieve *nibbāna*. Consequently, it is possible to establish a more inclusive political system like democracy, as it would encourage correct moral behaviour among citizens and, indirectly, help them to achieve *nibbāna*. From here originates Suu Kyi's emphasis on the educated individual, and, by extension, on the society composed of such individuals, as the essential base for democracy. This was the other side of the same coin – both generals and Suu Kyi started from the same Burmese Buddhist philosophical assumptions – yet Suu Kyi's side was much more appealing and optimistic. It is only a bitter irony that once Suu Kyi ascended to power, she started ruling in accordance with the pessimistic assumption, dropping or forgetting about her hope of building democracy around educated individuals.

Once she became the State Counsellor of Myanmar in 2016 – her ascendance to partial power being the result of her long-term effort to bring about a real change in the country through non-violence means, which finally led to the enforced reconciliation with generals, however more on the their than her terms (which she naturally presented as a moral value) – Suu Kyi employed "the mother of the nation" approach in governance

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(already used by her while she was in opposition). This avenue is a convenient one for women in politics in Asia-Pacific in general and in Burma in particular as it bypasses cultural handicaps that obstacle women's path to political power. These barriers in Burma include: alleged women's proneness to immorality due to their lower position in the karmic hierarchy that – in popular opinion – makes them inferior to men, incapable of effective political leadership and forces to employ "head and neck" style of governance (Suu Kyi while entering politics had broken unwritten rules of staying in the shadow). "The mother of the nation," on the other hand, allows legitimization built on care and provision of goods, traditionally associated with mothers, instead of that built on naked power. Combined with Suu Kyi's own dramatic choices (distancing herself from her husband, sacrificing her family and personal liberty) as well as her skilful PR (her Burmese "dress code policy" and putting flowers in her hair) and her rejection of feminism and approval of traditionalist approach to gender issues, this all helped her to create a powerful, yet very feminine and very Burmese image. This is how Suu Kyi navigated herself a place for herself in politics as "the mother of the nation" who cares for her people like mother for her children. Although in reality Suu Kyi governs like a mandate of heaven holder, a no-nonsense authoritarian matriarch who preaches, declares and orders, who micromanages everything, who needs to consent every decision, big or small, who does not tolerate any dissident voices and does not listen to any outside ones; in short, as a mother who holds her symbolic family with an iron grip, so far her legitimization has not significantly suffered, at least among the Burman majority.

The reconciliation with the ethnic minorities became one of Suu Kyi's major tasks upon ascending to the position of power. Until then, ethnic issues were overshadowed by unity or democracy in her political thought, though Suu Kyi was able to win hearts and minds of Burma's ethnic minorities' by symbolic actions such as her "dress code policy." But that's it. Her political ideas did not offer much to the ethnic minorities: she was dismissive of ethno-cultural differences in favour of national unity (her message to ethnic minorities was simple: ethnic rights should be subjugated to the greater good of achieving democracy via national unity; only once democracy is achieved a discussion about ethnic rights might be started). And she unconsciously followed Burman-dominated narratives (e.g. that of the colonial "creation" of ethnic minorities or that of the united anticolonial struggle of all Burma's nationalities) and accepted Burman privilege, both social and political (her political programme perpetuated the privileged status of the Burman majority). This Suu Kyi's personal, unintentional condescension of the ethnic minorities makes her a brighter version of the Tatmadaw: both Suu Kyi and the Tatmadaw in their ethnic policies propagate Burman-centric narratives, though Suu Kyi does it more softly, humanly.

Once Suu Kyi became The State Counsellor, she conceded that federalism – postulated by the ethnic minorities – is the goal to be reached, yet her statements did not go beyond slogans, platitudes and moral preaching (such as her words that ethnic conflict

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might be resolved via application of *mettā,* or loving-kindness*)* without offering any concrete solutions. In her attempt to move beyond the Ceasefire Agreement formula (she criticised it when she was in opposition and praised it once she gained partial political power), Suu Kyi envisioned The New Panglong (the 21th Century Panglong Conference) scheme, based on a clear reference to 1947 Panglong Agreement (the outcome of the Second Panglong Conference) achieved by her father. Suu Kyi built her agenda on an idealised vision of Panglong – on the "Panglong myth" that perpetuated simplified, historically inaccurate, Burman-centric understanding of ethnic relations (propagated by the Tatmadaw), with its main emphasis on alleged unity between Burma's nationalities. This resulted in Suu Kyi's understanding of ethnic relations along her "second struggle for national independence" lines (democracy first, ethnic rights later), combined with strong moralising based on Burmese Buddhist patterns. Both positive (calls for wisdom, courage, truth etc. understood as mental qualities that can be developed) and negative (presenting opposing voices as wrong-viewed and implicitly immoral: dissidents should improve their own morality which would help them to become self-conscious, courageous and this in turn would establish peace). In short, in Suu Kyi's vision the qualities needed to resolve the ethnic problem are again internal (morality of participants), not external (structures, institutions, systems). This makes Suu Kyi's Panglong scheme another microcosm of Suu Kyi's political thought based on morality.

The fundamental problem with this approach is that from the perspective of the major ethnic militant organizations it misses the point as it offers them little, if none.People who have been fighting a brutal civil war with the Burman-centric Tatmadaw for many decades do not buy Suu Kyi's main argument based on moral self-conviction ("trust me, because I am the daughter of Aung San therefore I will achieve national reconciliation and if you don't trust me that means you should improve your morality").So, unsurprisingly, the New Panglong scheme so far failed to achieve success.

Suu Kyi's biggest problem, at least on the international level, with ethnic minorities is not the unsuccessful New Panglong scheme, but completely unexpected and not well understood by her the "Rohingya crisis." It tarnished Suu Kyi's international image and deprived her of her major political asset, held for two and a half decades: the foreign support. Suu Kyi, in the eyes of the West yesterday's global democracy icon and a "beacon of hope" within just a few years was degraded to a position of a shrewd politician who betrayed her values. Although criticism of Suu Kyi in the West is often exaggerated and targeted at the wrong person (Min Aung Hlaing and Tatmadaw in general are primarily responsible for Rohingya's plight, not Suu Kyi who is simply passive or indifferent in order to survive politically), her stance on Rohingya crisis is indefensible from the universalistic position. That is why this crisis represented the acid test of Suu Kyi's political agenda and, by extension, her political thought. Facing bad and worse solutions – "the Rohingya trap" (lack of support, even moral, for their tragedy exposes her to merciless criticism in the West, while backing of their plea equals committing a political suicide

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inside Myanmar) – Suu Kyi chose Realpolitik considerations (her state's interests and her own interests) over universal values. By doing so she proved to be a real heiress of Aung San and his political Machiavellianism. And she unintentionally revealed that the international/universalist dimension of her political thought plays a secondary role to the main, Burmese one. Suu Kyi's universalism is a thin, surface layer beneath her deep Burmese Buddhist approach to politics.

Thus, for Suu Kyi, sacrificing Rohingya, just like sacrificing her own family and her personal liberty earlier on, was most probably perceived as painful, yet necessary means in order to achieve a greater good: access to power and ability to "finish her father's task." As such, these sacrifices represent part of her self-proclaimed moral crusade to change Burma. In this task morality plays a key, fundamental role: a proper moral behaviour of the political leader, who shows the way for the others, is the prerequisite for the country's success. Hence, internal qualities of the leader and her people who should upgrade themselves morally following her example ("the revolution of the spirit") truly matter, not external elements, such as structures, institutions or systems (or, to be correct, these external elements are just the technical layer than should be placed on the moral foundation but without morality these external elements would not function properly). In other words, moral principles, not concrete, mundane, external solutions, are the essence of Suu Kyi's moral democracy.

The occasion for implementing this political philosophy came when Suu Kyi finally struck a deal with the generals in the early 2010s. After two and a half decades of futile struggle to beat the military, Suu Kyi saw the writings on the wall and yielded: she accepted the Tatmadaw-dominated system and decided to manoeuvre herself the best position within it, which she achieved by the landslide electoral victory in 2015. This allowed her to establish a chancellor-style position of The State Counsellor for herself – "above the president" to use her words – and to gain the maximum available power, shared, however, with the generals who still hold key check and balances and in many aspects can do whatever they please (e.g. military operations in Rakhine and in Northern Myanmar to name just the most dire examples).

As The State Counsellor Suu Kyi employs a despotic, precolonial queen style rule: she declares and orders from her celestial position, she makes politics behind closed doors in the Royal Capital (Naypyidaw), she limits parliamentarian and party democracy as well as freedom of speech (her government did not dismantle the junta's repressive system but rather enjoys it and sometimes develops it), she is little seen or heard, and even if, she rarely addresses the public. She does not lower herself to the level of everyday, mundane issues, such as cost of living or healthcare instead offering pedagogical moral preaching about duties and responsibilities of the citizens which come ahead of rights, and about the need for each and every one to transform himself/herself morally (her tendency of offering abstract moral concepts to resolve concrete problems can be seen in her message to civil servants who should fight with widespread corrup-

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tion in the public administration by upgrading their morality, not by expecting increase of their salaries). In this Burmanized Kennedian approach, citizens should concentrate on developing moral qualities, not demanding the government to help them solve their personal, community or social problems, or criticizing the government for not doing it.

Consequently, Suu Kyi is still able to maintain her celestial position of an icon that levitates high and offers hope to the people. But the country's problems lay unresolved. There is no vision, no plan and, the worse of all, no competence to tackle the multidimensional problems facing Myanmar. After two and a half years her government has few successes (a limited ones in reforming education and healthcare), many failures (Rohingya crisis, reconciliation with other ethnic minorities, economic development) and many failed hopes in its balance sheet. In short, after two and a half years in power, Suu Kyi's government is clearly a failure. The NLD inherited serious structural problems from the army, but these problems notwithstanding, this cabinet does not seem to be able to govern successfully. To put it metaphorically, Suu Kyi's team is like a rally team whose car has inherited serious defects from the previous teams, but once it set off, it turned out that nobody checked whether the driver had a driving licence.

Worse still, Suu Kyi's government (so far) is much less successful in reforming Myanmar than its predecessors, Thein Sein's cabinet (though if one counts all the Tatmadaw's rule, or misrule, from 1962, then the balance sheet would be more favourable to the NLD). It is, too, much less democratic than it was expected before, with the machinery of repression (against which Suu Kyi fought earlier on when she was in opposition) still in place. Consequently, the NLD's government has many of Thein Sein's cabinet vices, but few of its virtues. This all makes Suu Kyi's rule just a bit softer than the Tatmadaw's version of authoritarianism. And, most tragically, equally incompetent in the fundamental sphere: ability to govern.

One may comfort oneself that if the world is indeed spherical as Suu Kyi believes it is – as she told Clements in 1990s: "talking about morality, right and wrong, love and kindness, is considered rather old-fashioned these days, isn't it? But after all, the world is spherical. Perhaps the whole thing will come around again, and maybe I'm ahead of the times" – the tide would turn and her government would learn the hard lessons of governance and achieve success so desperately needed.

So far, judging by the perspective of mid-2018, it turned out that Suu Kyi's moral vision is not enough to reform and govern a country. Consequently, the major problem with Suu Kyi's political philosophy of "moral democracy" is that in practical, real politics terms it is clearly not working, which in turn proves a more general rule. A cynic would say that if the political philosophy encapsulated by the sentence "the root of a nation's misfortunes has to be sought in the moral failings of the government" is correct, then, logically, Suu Kyi and her people in power must be not moral enough to govern. However, this is not the case: it is a wrong approach to the problem. Morality and policymaking does not automatically go in pair. It does not mean that being in

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power, one may behave immorally, but it also does not mean that morality in politics is a prerequisite to success. Unfortunately, in this imperfect world morally good actions do not always lead to good results and morally bad actions do not always end up in this or other sort of punishment. The ultimate outcome of a political action is rather a result of combination of various factors, both structural and agential ones, as well as such elusive ones as luck or blind chance. Consequently, morality and policymaking are two different spheres of action that, indeed, sometimes overlap – they have to – but do not automatically influence one another. If a policymaker does not understand it, he or she is indeed a political infant. But if a policymaker understands it, but fails to accept it and tries to prove the opposite is true, he or she risks such a spectacular political failure as the one experienced now by Aung San Suu Kyi.

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The Burmese Summary

အောင်ဆန်းစုကြည်၏ ကိုယ်ကျင့်တရား ဒီမိုကရေစီ

အောင်ဆန်းစုကြည် ၏ နိုင်ငံရေး အတွေးအခေါ်များသည် လွန်ခဲ့သော အနှစ်၃၀ ကျော် (၁၉၈၈-၂၀၁၈) ကစခဲ့ပါသည်။ သူ၏ယခင် ဆောင်းပါးများကိုပါသုံးသပ်ရပါလျှင်သည့်ထက်ပင်စောနိုင်ပါသည်။ သူမ၏နိုင်ငံရေးခရီးသည် ချောမွေ့မှု မရှိခဲ့ပါ။လမ်းခရီးတလျှောက်ရှုန်းကန်လုပ်ရှားမှု များစွာရှိခဲ့ပါသည်။ အစကနဦးကပင် သူမ၏ နိုင်ငံရေးဂါဒသည် အနောက်နိုင်ငံများ၏ ဒီမိုကရေစီလမ်းစဉ်မှ သွေဖီ၍ မိမိနိုင်ငံနှင့်သင့်တော်သော လမ်းစဉ်ကို ကျင့်သုံးခဲ့ပါသည်။ သူမ၏ဒီမိုကရေစီလမ်းစဉ်မှာဗုဒ္ဓ၏ အကြမ်းမဖက်သောဂါဒကို အခြေခံခဲ့ပါသည်။ ကျင့်သုံးနေဆဲလည်း ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ သို့သော်လည်း သူမ၏ အတွေးအခေါ်များသည် တခါတရံပြောင်းလဲမှုအတက်အကျ ရှိတတ်ပါသည်။

သူမ၏နိုင်ငံရေးဂါဒသည် ပြည်သူလူထုကို အခြေခံခဲ့ပါသည်။ သို့သော်ငြားလည်းသူမ၏အုပ်ချုပ်မှုသည် အာဏာရှင်မိခင်တဦး၏ အုပ်ချုပ်မှုမျိုးဖြစ်နေပါသည်။ သို့သော် ယေဘုယျအားဖြင့်ပြောရမည်ဆိုပါက သူမ၏ဒီမိုကရေစီအတွေးအခေါ်ယူဆချက်များသည်ဒီမိုကရေစီနည်းအတိုင်းတည်တံ့လျှက် ရှိနေပါသေးသည်။

သူမ၏ဒီမိုကရေစီအတွေးအခေါ်ယူဆချက်များသည် အောက်ပါအချက်ငါးချက်အပေါ်တွင် အခြေခံပါသည်။

၁။သူမ၏ဖခင်အောင်ဆန်း၏အတွေးအခေါ်များကိုမိမိကဆက်လက်၍အကောင်အထည်ဖော်ရန် ပြုလုပ်လိုသော သမီးတယောက်၏ ကိုယ်ပိုင်ယူဆချက်။

၂။ သူမသည် Luhmannian ၏ထင်မြင်ယူဆမှု အတွေးအခေါ်များ (“Luhmannian : illusionary compotent of all future constitutions”) ကိုအခြေခံ၍ စည်းကမ်းရှိသော ဒီမိုကရေစီနည်းလမ်းကို ချည်းကပ်လိုသောလမ်းစဉ်များဖြစ်ပေသည်။ထိုသူမ၏လမ်းစဉ်များသည်ဤစာအုပ်အမည် နဲ့ကိုက်ညီသော ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာကို အခြေပြုထားသော ကိုယ်ကျင့်တရား ဒီမိုကရေစီ လမ်းစဉ်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

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၃။ နိုင်ငံတော်တိုးတက်မှု နှင့် နိုင်ငံသားတို့၏လောကနီတိဆိုင်ရာကိုယ်ကျင့်တရားမြင့်မားလာစေရန်မှာ ပညာရေးသည် အဓိကလိုအပ်ချက်ဖြစ်ကြောင်း။

၄။ စည်းကမ်းရှိမှု၊ ညီညွတ်မှု နှင့် တာဝန်သိတတ်မှုကို ဖြစ်ပေါ်လာစေနိုင်သော နည်းလမ်းများ။

၅။ပြောင်းလဲမှုတွင် အရေအကြီးဆုံးမှာ လူတဦးချင်းအပေါ်တွင်မူတည်သည်ဟူသောသဘောတရားများ ဖြစ်ကြပါသည်။

၂၀၁၀ခုနှစ်ပိုင်းတွင် သူမ၏လုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များ ကိုလေ့လာကြည့်ပါက
သူမ၏ထိုယုံကြည်ချက်များသည် တဖြည်းဖြည်းလျော့နည်းလာသည်ကိုတွေ့မြင်ရပါသည်။
လက်တွေ့အားဖြင့် အရေးအပါဆုံးသော မိမိ၏နိုင်ငံရေးလုပ်ရှားမှုသည် ကိုယ်ကျင့်တရားကို
အခြေခံကြောင်းကိုတွေ့ရပါသည်။ မိမိအနေဖြင့် နိုင်ငံရေးလုပ်ရှားမှုတွင်ဖြစ်စေ၊
အဖွဲ့အစည်းတခုခုမှာဖြစ်စေ ပညာရေးသည် အလွန်အရေးပါကြောင်း၊ ပညာတတ်မှသာလျှင်
အကောင်းအဆိုးကို ဝေဖန်ခွဲခြားနိုင်မည် ဖြစ်ကြောင်း၊ အရာရာကို
အသိညဏ်နှင့်ယှဉ်၍လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်မှသာ စစ်မှန်သော ဒီမိုကရေစီ သဘောတရားကို အခြေခံသော
နိုင်ငံရေးလုပ်ရှားမှုများကို ပြည်သူတွေ သဘောပေါက်နားလည်လာကြမည်ဟု သူမယုံကြည်ပါသည်။
ပြည်သူတွေ ပညာတတ်လာပါက မိမိကိုကိုယ်မိမိလည်း ယုံကြည်မှုရှိလာနိုင်မည်။ ပြည်သူများသည်
တဦးချင်းသော်လည်းကောင်း၊ အဖွဲ့အစည်းများအတွင်းတွင်လည်းကောင်း သိမ်မွေ့နူးညံ့သော
နိုင်ငံရေးလုပ်ဆောင်ချက်များကို နားလည်ပါးနပ်စွာ လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်ပါလျှင် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသည်
ကမ္ဘာ့အလယ်တွင် နေရာကောင်းတနေရာပြန်ရနိုင်မည်ဟု သူမယူဆပါသည်။

အတိုချုပ်ပြောရမည်ဆိုပါက စုကြည်၏ ကိုကျင့်တရား ဒီမိုကရေစီကျင့်စဉ်သည် မိမိပြည်တွင်းကို
အခြေပြုပါသည်။ ဒီမိုကရေစီသည် နိုင်ငံတွင်းနေထိုင်ကြသော ပြည်သူတဦးချင်းစီ၏
ကိုယ်ကျင့်တရားအပေါ်မှာ အခြေခံသည်ဟု သူမယုံကြည်ပါသည်။ သူမယုံကြည်သော
ဒီမိုကရေစီလမ်းစဉ်သည် ဗုဒ္ဓ၏လမ်းစဉ်ကို အခြေပြုသော လမ်းစဉ်ဖြစ်ပေသည်။ သူမသည်
မိမိကိုယ်မိမိ နည်းပေးလမ်းပြ ဆရာအဖြစ်လည်းကောင်း၊ မှီခိုအားထားရာ တံတိုင်းကြီး
အဖြစ်လည်းကောင်း သတ်မှတ်ယူထားဟန် ရှိပေသည်။