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THE ARAKANESE STUDENT AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS

A POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Shwe Lu Maung *alias* Shahnawaz Khan, Ph.D. (Wales, UK)

A movement is a process that makes steady progressive advancement resulting in a new and better social, cultural, economical, or political order. In the light of this conventional understanding I am making this attempt to present the readers a concise analysis of the Arakanese student and youth movements. My



A group of Rakhine students of Rangoon University belonging to sub-committee for Rakhine Culture and Literature in a neatly pose in their olden days: NN-Photo

Craddock was the Lieutenant Governor (1918 to 1922) of Burma which was a province of British India. Was U Uttama, *the Brave Heart*, born out of a movement? No. He was born of his own struggle. As a Bikkhu he studied, struggled, traveled across Asia, taught Pali in Tokyo University and came back home in the days of Lt. Gover-

The Arakanese Students and Youth Movements: a political analysis

Shwe Lu Maung *alias* Shahnawaz Khan, Ph.D. (Wales, UK)

Movement is a process that makes steady progressive advancement resulting in a new and better social, cultural, economical, or political order. In the light of this conventional understanding I am making this attempt to present the readers a concise analysis of the Arakanese students and youths movements. My analysis will be based upon my own experience as well as on what I learn my parents and their generation. I call this a political analysis as I would mainly focus on the horizon of a new and better political order.

Pre-War Arakanese Intellectuals Movement: The British Burma woke up from her silent fear of the British colonial masters when a Rakhaing Bikkhu named U Uttama shouted, "*Craddock, go home*". It was in the second decade of the 20th century. Sir Reginald Henry Craddock was the Lieutenant Governor (1918 to 1922) of Burma which was a province of British India. Was U Uttama, *the Brave Heart*, born out of a movement? No. He was born of his own struggle. As a Bikkhu he studied, struggled, traveled across Asia, taught Pali in Tokyo University and came back home in the days of

Lt. Governor Craddock. He unknowingly and unintentionally created various social, cultural and political movements in the Burma Province of British India. Asia Youths (*Ah-sha Lu-gnay*), Asia Women (*Ah-sha Amyo-thami*) were born out of people's admiration of U Uttama's life in Asia. From Japan he brought the glory of the *Rising Sun* into Burma. U Uttama was seen as the symbol *Greater Asia*, which was a brand new social, cultural and political concept of the time. My father (1909-1987) was a member of the *Asia Youths* whereas my mother (1910-1980) teamed with the *Asian Women*. I met good number of their friends and colleagues who belonged to these associations. They were in their teens when the *Greater Asia* movement became active in Burma. It was the Asians against the European domination of the world. It was a broad-spectrum movement to upgrade educational, social, cultural, economical and finally political conditions of the people. Accordingly, a well-defined middle class came to its establishment in 1930s.

Educated Arakanese came to the front of the British administration securing major civil service positions. India Civil Service (ICS) was the highest examination in the British India administration. It was introduced in 1858 and ended when the British withdrew from the subcontinent in 1947-48. A total of 1250 ICS were left behind in the entire subcontinent (source: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/icsassociation/>). There were eight in Burma and four of them were the Arakanese. Sir Paw Tun, the Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council 1942 of the Governor Sir Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith, and Sir Tun Aung Kyaw, the famous Supreme Court judge, were the sweet fruits of the educational movement inspired by the achievements of U Uttama. Sir Paw Tun became the wartime Premier of Burma in 1942 was known as the Knight Prime Minister of Burma (source: <http://www.hmc.gov.uk/NRA/searches/PIdocs.asp?P=28895>).

Similarly, ICS U Kyaw Min, U May Aung, etc. were popular as the Burmese household words. Not only in the civil service they also took part in the political movements. Sir Paw Tun and Sir Tun Aung Kyaw were in the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA), which was the forerunner of the political parties. U May Aung's daughter Daw Mra Sein presented the case of Burma separation from India in the British Commons as a member of the Burmese Delegation to the British parliament in 1935. This, however, was against the opinion of U Uttama who brought about the political awakening of Burma. He wanted Burma to stay inside India till independence came simultaneously both to Burma and India. His presentation '*The case against the separation of Burma from India*' to the British government is a masterpiece of political communication. It can be read at <http://www.rakhapura.com/research/>. Separation of Burma from India was so popular that U Uttama lost all his popularity and affection of the Arakanese who charged him as the *pro-kala* and compelled him to leave his hometown Saitetwey.

Bikkhu Uttama believed that Burma inside India working together with the Indian politicians would bring independence to both countries quicker. He was not against the independence Burma. The result of defying U Uttama's wisdom was the Japanese occupation of Burma and subsequent revival of Myanmar colonialism in the independent Burma. The alliance of the Arakanese intellectuals with the Bama politicians and their investment of absolute faith in the Bama promises are the two major causes of the prevailing Rakhaing misfortune today. In the light of this analysis I would conclude that pre-war Arakanese intellectuals movement was a success in terms of education, but a total failure in the arena of politics.

Nevertheless, the history might repeat again in the upcoming Road Map of Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt.
(To be continued)

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