

# A Burmese tract on kingship: political theory in the 1782 manuscript of *Manugye*

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The eleven lists on kingship which we translate and discuss are taken from a manuscript of the *Manugye* dhammathat which was completed on 25 June 1782. We shall refer to it as B. 1782. *Manugye*, the best known of the surviving Burmese dhammathats (law texts), was compiled in the 1750s during the reign of Alaungpaya (1752–60), the founder of the Konbaung dynasty (1752–1885). David Richardson's edition (Burmese text with English translation) was published in 1847, the year after his death: that ensured *Manugye*'s popularity among non-Burmese speakers. We shall refer to Richardson's version as R. 1847. One of the co-authors plans to publish a book-length study of the B. 1782 manuscript. Meanwhile, we believe the material we present here to be of immediate interest both to historians of Burma and to anyone interested in Buddhist political science. It is the circumstances in which B. 1782 was written that demand attention. In 1782 Badon (better known to historians as Bodawpaya) became the third of Alaungpaya's sons to ascend the Peacock throne. Badon's accession and the compilation of B. 1782 can be plausibly linked. Perhaps we can think of B. 1782 as a document compiled for the guidance of the new king. We might even think of it as summarizing what the Burmese people expected from their Burmese king—the late eighteenth century Burmese equivalent to a *social contract* or *written constitution*. This possibility—that B. 1782 was compiled in order to instruct the new king in the duties of kingship—gives a special importance to the fresh material on kingship which it contains.

B. 1782 contains two and a half chapters of material that is not in R. 1847. It has an entirely new chapter three, which contains rules on trade, irrigation and public order, and a new chapter sixteen, which contains summaries of the entire contents. Its chapter one is extended to include twenty-two lists on kingship and judicial behaviour. It is the first eleven of chapter one's lists which we translate here. The context into which they fit is as follows: the first list in chapter one is identical in B. 1782 and in R. 1847. Pp. 1–9<sup>2</sup> retell the origins of the world and the gradual deterioration of its original angelic inhabitants into humans who persuade Mahasammata to judge and punish on their behalf. It is an elaboration of the Pali canonical account in the *Aggañña Sutta* (Collins, 1993). Pp. 10–19 recount the twelve wise judgements made by the cowherd Manu in his native village. These decisions enhanced Manu's reputation and led Mahasammata to invite him to act as judge in the capital city. Pp. 20–25 recount Manu's seven appellate decisions in the capital and his subsequent career as hermit and as transcriber for the original Dhammathat written on the boundary walls of the university (Huxley, 1996: 597). At this point, R. 1847's chapter one ends, and chapter two follows with a collection of rules on deposits, gifts and contracts. Here B. 1782 inserts its twenty-two

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<sup>2</sup> Using R. 1847's pagination.

lists on kingship and dispute settlement. They fit the context fairly well. B. 1782's text chapter one, having explained the origin of kingship and the origin of the dhammathat, then expounds eleven lists for being a successful king and eleven lists for being a successful judge, before moving on to substantive legal rules in chapter two.

We have chosen to translate the kingship lists but not the lists on judging. We may be criticized for imposing on B. 1782 a distinction which the text itself does not make. Our impression is that the text does imply a distinction: we understand the first eleven lists, which we translate in full, to concern politics (the duties of kingship) and the second eleven lists, of which we give only the titles, to concern law (the processes of dispute settlement). Most of the first eleven titles confirm their political subject matter:

1. Twelve Royal Duties [*Min: Kyin. Taya: Sehnit-pa:*];
2. Ten Royal Duties [*Min: Kyin. Taya: Hse-ba:*];
3. Seven Things a City Needs [*Myo. i. Inga Hkunit-pa:*];
4. Seven [More] Things a City Needs [*Myo i Inga Hkunit-pa:*];
5. Seven Fundamental Requirements of a Kingdom [*Min-do i Pyagade Hkunit-pa:*];
6. Four Divisions of the Army [*Sit Inga Le-ba:*];
7. Four Requirements of a City [*Myo. i. Asa Le-ba:*];
8. Five Strengths of Royalty [*Min:-do. A:-daw Nga: -ba:*];
9. Seven Conditions of Welfare [*Apareikta. Niya Taya: Hkunit-pa:*];
10. Seven [More] Conditions of Welfare [*Apareikta. Ni.ya. Taya: Hkunit-pa:*];
11. Four Solidarities [*Thingaha. Wuthtu. Taya: Le:-ba:*]

Likewise, most of the titles of the second eleven lists indicate their pre-occupation with dispute settlement:

12. Four Judges Who Are Fit to Deputise for Kings [*Min:-do. Koza: Hta: Ywe. Siyin Ya. Thu Le:-Ba:*];
13. Five Judges [*Taya:-thugyi: Nga:-ba:*];
14. Six People who Should not Act as Judges [*Ma. Siyin Se Thin Thu Chauk-Pa:*];
15. Seven Officials who Are Pillars of the State [*Kyauk-sa Tain Ke-To Kyint Ya. Thu Hkunit-pa:*];
16. Four Undesirable Rebirths [*Ape Le:-ba:*];
17. Eight Dangers [*Be Shit-pa:*];
18. Ten [Karmic] Punishments [*Dan Se-ba:*];
19. Eleven Persons Who May Be Sworn as Witness [*Ti-Ya Thet-the Tit-hse Tit-pa:*];
20. Sixteen Persons Who Should not Be Sworn as Witness [*Alon Pyet thin. thaw Thet-the Tit-se Chauk-pa:*];
21. Twenty-eight Persons Whose Testimony May Be either Ripe or Rotten [*Pyet thin. thi Ahkain Hma Pyet Ya Thi Thet-the Hnit-se Shit-pa:*];
22. Five Types of Testimony [*Thet-the Apya Nga:-ba:*].

Some confirmation that the compiler intended to distinguish kingship from dispute settlement is provided by the textual transition from list 11 to list 12. List 11 stresses the uniqueness of kings: since Mahasammata's time they have wielded the three kinds of authority; dhammic, worldly and royal. List 12's title then declares the transition from royal authority to the authority of the king's delegates. A final indication that the first and second eleven are to be distinguished conceptually comes in the two sentences of bridging material between them. This passage highlights the king's role in dispute settlement by

stipulating that the good king governs in accordance with dhammathat, and takes pains to judge disputes correctly, by night as by day.

For these three reasons, we think that the compiler made a conceptual distinction between the first and second eleven.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, he gives us no hint of what his concepts are. Modern cultures would use the words politics and law, for which eighteenth-century Burmese had no exact equivalents. Some authors of the period would have included the first eleven lists within the *rajadhamma* genre and the second eleven within *dhammathat and rajathat*. Others, who looked on the Pali canon as containing nearly all the knowledge they needed, would have regarded the lists as moving from theory to practice. The first eleven, which are more closely derived from the canon, describe the general theory, while the second eleven guide the application of theory to the particular circumstances of Burma.

### Translation

#### 1. *Twelve royal virtues*

In regard to list 1, (1) Not to transgress against the Three Gems (*Yada.na Thon:-ba:*), (2) To avoid ignorance (*A-weiza*), (3) To be well-disposed towards charitable donors, (4) To provide long-term support to scholars, (5) To give alms to those in immediate need, (6) To follow *Dhammathat* traditions faithfully, (7) To adopt the policy of following precedent, (8) To keep the old stories well in mind (*poun-pyin ko pyu.*), (9) To observe the five precepts of Buddhism (*pinsathi Nga:-ba:*), (10) To control one's anger, (11) To identify the twelve kinds of misdeeds (*Akutho*) and (12) To govern the populace and the monks.

#### 2. *Ten royal virtues*

As to list 2, (1) To give alms, (2) To observe the precepts, (3) To be generous, (4) To be honest (*hpyaun.-mat thaw hnaloun:*), (5) To be kind-hearted (*nu:-nyan. thein-mwe. thaw hna-loun*), (6) To adopt a moderate style of life, (7) To avoid anger, (8) Not to persecute (*hmin-ban hneit.-set*) the people, (9) To be tolerant and (10) Not to be oppressive (*chouk-chin kin:*). These are what the king should observe.

#### 3. *Seven things a city needs*

Regarding List 3 mentioned above, (1) An undisputed single ruler, (2) Alliances with other rulers, (3) A Minister (*A-mat*) who can pass judgement over affairs of state and village disputes, (4) A granary full of the seven kinds of paddy (*Zaba:-myo: hkunit-pa:*) which are like the seven jewels (*Yada.na hse-ba:*), (5) A strong moat, ditch, embankment and a cat-walk on the fortified gateway of the city wall, (6) An extensive territory (*Taing-ga:*) and (7) Elephant regiments, cavalry regiments, chariot regiments and infantry soldiers.

#### 4. *Seven [more] things a city needs*

As to List 4, (1) A strong city, (2) Wide passage for soldiers on the fortified battlements, (3) Armaments such as the lance, (4) A fighting force organized into soldiers and commanders, (5) Men to guard the gate, (6) Strong gate posts inside the walls and (7) Strong gate posts outside the walls.

#### 5. *Seven fundamental requirements of a kingdom*

As regards List 5, (1) A king, to act as lord of the country, (2) High officials, to carry out the king's wishes and perform their duties, (3) Small

<sup>3</sup> There appears to be a similar distinction drawn in Badon's *Great Royal Order* [ROB 28-1-1795]: s. 5–60 of this lengthy and literary order deal with substantive rules of law, while s. 61–90 deal with kingship and government.

- villages, inhabited by virtuous persons, (4) A strong city, surrounded by three moats, (5) Punishments that fit the crime, (6) Well-filled granaries and enough water in tanks and ponds, (7) Alliances with other kingdoms.
6. *Four divisions of the army*  
On List 6, (1) Elephants, (2) Horses, (3) Chariots (*Yahta*), (4) Foot soldiers.
  7. *Four requirements of a city*  
Regarding List 7, (1) The seven varieties of rice, (2) Cattle-fodder, (3) Firewood, and (4) Water.
  8. *Five strengths of royalty*  
In regard to List 8, (1) Strength of the royal family, (2) Physical prowess, (3) Wisdom, (4) Able counsellors, (5) Economic assets (*Oussa*).
  9. *Seven ways not to make things worse*  
On List 9, which enables the state to develop prosperously: the king should (1) Hold meetings and consult with his royal counsellors three times a day, (2) Tackle affairs with the application of consistent rules, (3) Collect only those taxes and impose only those punishments which tradition allows, (4) Respect and cherish the elderly, (5) Govern his subjects paternalistically, without oppression, (6) Make the usual offerings to the Nats who watch over the capital city and the rest of the kingdom, (7) Provide for the monastic community.
  10. *Seven [more] ways not to make things worse*  
Regarding List 10, (1) To offer respectful obedience to the Buddha, who preached the Dhamma, (2) To offer respectful obedience to the Dhamma, as it was preached, (3) To offer respectful obedience to the Sangha who preach the Dhamma, (4) To strive not to break those precepts that should be observed, (5) To be steadfast and full of integrity (*Thamadhi shi.*), (6) To try to speak good words, (7) To try to have good companions.
  11. *Four solidarities*  
On List 11, The king should practise the *Four Solidarities*. These are: (1) To give alms, (2) To speak words that are loving and sweet, (3) To work for the benefit of the people, (4) To be considerate and fair in punishment.

The Buddhas reveal the *Four Solidarities* to every World, so that every king may practise them. Those kings who have founded their kingdoms and practised these *Four Solidarities* should admonish their subjects in accordance with the law in the Dhammathat. King Mahathamada, who was the first among kings, possessed the law, the world and exclusive royal authority. All kings must show prudence when deciding judicial cases, whether they do so by day or by night.

#### *Commentary*

##### The text

After its completion on 25 June 1782, the manuscript must have remained in the royal bookchests for most of the nineteenth century. There are indications that it was consulted in the 1870s by precolonial Burma's last legal minister, but after the British conquest of Mandalay and the sack of the Royal Palace in 1885, B. 1782 was moved to the Barnard Free Library in Rangoon. It is now held by the National Library, Rangoon, under the catalogue number 'Dhammathat Collection No. 28, Accession No. 6'. In 1981 library staff prepared a typed transcription of the manuscript at one of the authors' request (Okudaira, 1996: 33). Our translation into English is from this transcription.

Does B. 1782 or R. 1847 have the better claim to represent the original *Manugye*? Putting the question differently, was B. 1782 a faithful copy of an

earlier manuscript, or did it contain fresh material? The possibilities in 1847 were twofold: either [i] Richardson (or his informants) deliberately omitted material which was available to him (or them) or [ii] Richardson's informants provided him with a manuscript that itself lacked the relevant chapters. If the latter, then either [iia] the fresh chapters were part of the original 1760s *Manugye*, but had, for unknown reasons, been dropped from Richardson's source or [iib] the fresh chapters were not part of the original 1760s *Manugye* but were added between 1756 and 1782. Given that Richardson transcribes the sentence 'Here ends the fourteenth and last volume of the great work of Menoo' from his manuscript, it would seem that [ii] is more plausible than [i]. For arguments that [iib] is more plausible than [iia], see Okudaira (2000: 188). At best, then, the material we translate was compiled during 1782, the year of Badon's accession and coronation, and represents the author's thoughts on Burmese kingship at a precise historical moment. At worst it was compiled between 1752 and 1782, and represents one man's vision of early Konbaung dynasty kingship.

### Authorship

We do not know who wrote the B. 1782 manuscript. Nor does the evidence allow us to suggest that one candidate is any more plausible than the others. It is not impossible that Badon himself had a hand in the work. He was thirty-eight years old when he came to the throne, with three grown-up children and some reputation for scholarship (Symes, 1800: 100). But in 1782 he had little time to write political science: the months following the successful coup against his brother were spent annihilating rivals and putting down counter-coups (Hall, 1981: 625). We think it more likely that one of the monks or ministers resident at the Court of Ava in 1782 was the author. We offer brief snapshots of eight possible authors, but we cannot even guarantee that the true author is among these eight. Nonetheless, our snapshots indicate the intellectual milieu in which B. 1782 was produced. We have concentrated on those who are known to have written *dhammathats* (the genre to which *Manugye* itself belongs or who contributed to neighbouring disciplines through such genres as royal orders and inscriptions, vinaya texts, chronicles, *niti* (ethical proverbs), *myittasa* and *rajovada* (specialist works on kingship). In general, eighteenth-century Burmese political theory is to be found in these genres. In particular it is to be found where these genres overlap.

Among the monks living in the royal monasteries of Ava, we turn first to the **Manle sayadaw** (1714–1805) who had been appointed Chief Monk (*mahadhamma rajaguru*) under the previous king (Hla Thamein, 1961: 23). Badon had confirmed him in office (ROB 27-6-1786), so Manle should have been the leading monk present at Badon's coronation ceremonies. Manle, however, is not credited with writing in any of the 'political' genres. The **Sonda sayadaw** (1718–84) has more promising credentials: by 1782 Sonda had already translated a Pali vinaya work into Burmese, written a pamphlet on the great vinaya controversy of the day and compiled a dhammathat in Pali verse called *Sondamanu* (Hla Thamein, 1961: 25; BKTB i: 110). It has even been suggested (Ferguson, 1975: 196) that Badon and Sonda had conspired with the last king to depose the last-but-one king. The **Chaungkauk sayadaw** (1736–93), who represents the generation following Manle and Sonda, contributed to the vinaya, dhammathat and *niti* genres (Hla Thamein, 1961: 33; BKTB ii: 197). At the age of thirty-six Chaungkauk had produced a sub-commentary on the *Patimokkha*, one of the two lists round which the *Vinaya* is structured.

Three years later he disrobed to become a minister and subsequently wrote a niti work (*Suttavadaniti*) and two dhammathats. His *Rajabala* dhammathat had been completed in 1781. The **1st Bagaya sayadaw** (1783–1800) was known for Burmese translations of abidhamma and vinaya works (Hla Thamein, 1961: 34; BKTB i: 14). Two years after B. 1782 was compiled, Badon asked 1st Bagaya for a Burmese translation of the *Dhammaniti*, a Pali text which contains material overlapping with our eleven lists (Bechert and Braun, 1981: lvi).

The next two candidates are from Badon's regional power base in the Lower Chindwin. Tun Nyo (1726–92) (better known as the **Wun of Twinthintaik**) had been born in Maungdaung, five miles away from Badon's country estate (Hla Thamein, 1961: 218; BKTB i: 168). Tun Nyo disrobed at the age of twenty-five after completing his education, and soon after became tutor to the young Prince Badon. On Badon's accession he was appointed Minister in charge of the Granaries and, according to Ferguson (1975: 199), was the real power behind the throne in settling the shoulder dispute and purging the monkhood. He was a dhammathat author (*Kandaw pakeinnaka in verse*) and had also translated two of the *Ten last jataka*. It was he who had advanced the career of a bright young student from his home town called Myat Nei, who was to be known to posterity as the **1st Maungdaung sayadaw** (1755–1832) (Hla Thamein, 1961: 43; BKTB ii: 276). Within ten years of his accession, Badon had appointed the forty-year-old 1st Maungdaung as his Chief Monk. This was a calculated snub to the elders: seniority in ordination is the only mark of status that Buddhist monks acknowledge. Maungdaung went on to write over forty works, including chronicles, ethical homilies and a Pali poem in praise of Badon's just and glorious rule. We doubt, however, whether Maungdaung's meteoric career had taken off as early as 1782. The eighth and last candidate is **Shin Sandalinka** who compiled the *Maniyadanabon* in October 1781. This work is a major contribution to Burmese political science. Unfortunately, nothing is known about its author other than his name.

#### *The sources of the eleven lists*

Lists such as these can be found in any of the political, historical and legal genres which we mentioned earlier. But their characteristic home is in Burma's niti literature. These niti works (most of which were first written in Pali, acquiring Burmese translations in the late eighteenth century) contain didactic poetry of Indian origin. They organize the free-floating verses around such themes as 'the wise man' and 'the evil-doer'. The earliest surviving Pali example is *Dhammaniti*, whose chapter on kingship begins with verses enumerating two of our lists. But it is the niti text *Lokasara pyo*, existing only in Burmese verse, which appears to be a proximate source of B. 1782: eight of our eleven lists are also to be found in *Lokasara pyo*. Bechert and Braun (1981: lvi, lxiv) date the *Dhammaniti* to the late 14th or early 15th century, and *Lokasara pyo* to about a century later. It would appear, then, that the compiler of our text was primarily drawing on a Burmese verse niti work written during Upper Burma's Ava dynasty, which itself drew, ultimately, on similar Indian collections. Is that all we need to know about the question of the sources? Some—let us call them unitarians—would say it is (Huxley, 1996: 596; Collins, 1998: 446). Unitarians believe that once we have traced a list back to India, we need make no further distinction between Hindu India and Buddhist India. An influential group of scholars—let us call them dichotomists—would insist on a further differentiation. They would want each list to be traced back to either a Hindu or a Buddhist origin, so that each could be assigned to one or

the other model of kingship (Wyatt, 1969: 7; Tambiah, 1976: 19; Obeyesekere, 1979: 637). We can use these eleven lists to test such claims. We shall trace each list back to its earliest textual source. We shall see whether this enables us to label eighteenth-century Burmese political theory as either more Hindu or more Buddhist.

If the *Lokasara pyo* is the proximate source of these eleven lists, then what was the proximate source of the *Lokasara pyo*? Ludwik Sternbach's answer to this question should be treated with caution:

The Buddhist *Lokasara* was explicitly and unreservedly influenced in all its aspects by the straight rules and by the spirit of Hinduistic *dharma*- and *artha-sastras* (Sternbach, 1974b: 617).

Of the Burmese *niti* literature in general he says:

Legal and political rules included in Buddhist treatises do not show important Buddhist influences and usually accept the rules of Brahmanic *dharma*- and *arthaśastra*-s (Sternbach, 1974a: 169).

Sternbach's academic interest was in the spread of Indian *niti* literature from Persia across to Bali. He was a polymath who made no claim to specialist expertise on Burma. That he mistook the language in which *Lokasara pyo* is written gives an unfortunate impression: this poem used to be one of Burma's best known texts, because for centuries it has been used as a text for school-children who are learning to read Burmese. Sternbach describes it as a 'collection of 55 *niti* sayings in Pali' and argues it is 'little known' on the grounds that Mabel Bode does not include it in her *Pali literature of Burma!* (Sternbach, 1974a: 164). Unfortunately, Heinz Bechert and Heinz Braun (1981) have not applied their specialist skills to quantifying the sources of *Lokasara pyo*. They say only that 'several of its verses have parallels in the Pali *niti* texts' (Bechert and Braun, 1981: lxiv). But they have traced 62 per cent of *Dhammaniti*'s verses back to Indian sources: just over half of these are from the Pali, just under half from the Sanskrit (Bechert and Braun, 1981: lxx, lxxiii).

We turn to consider the eleven lists individually, in reverse order. The last of them is the *Four solidarities*, which our text links to the sources of law: when kings practise the *Four solidarities*, they admonish their subjects in accordance with the law in the *Dhammathat*. This list is very commonly found in the literature of Burma and its South East Asian neighbours. One reason for its popularity is that it is old and authentic: a list of four solidarities (giving, kind words, kind acts and impartiality) appears several times in the Pali canon in relation to the bonds within a family and those between a preacher and his congregation (A ii 327; A iv 219; J v 330). A second reason is that it identifies a basic sociological force: it is these solidarities which glue human relationships together. The list was not applied to kingship until the second stage of Pali literary productivity, between the first and the fifth centuries C.E. A commentarial passage written before the sixth century C.E. gives a surprisingly detailed account of the economic claims which subject may make on king. The passage compares the *Four solidarities* to four Vedic sacrifices:

Among them, the *horse-sacrifice* was taking the tenth part from the grain that had been harvested; ...The *human sacrifice* was the providing of six months' food and wages to great warriors; ...The *wedge-throw* was taking a written chit from poor people and providing them with money, in the amount of one or two thousand, for three months without interest; ...The *soma sacrifice* was speaking gentle words such as 'Daddy' and 'Mummy'... (Mp iv 69; Spk 1 144; translation Collins, 1999).

In eighteenth-century Burma, this commentarial list came to have a specific reference to political economy, and particularly to the expectations in a redistributive economy that the king should be the lender of last resort. The R. 1847 text of *Manugye* declares:

If a person has incurred debts beyond his means of paying, and his family are unable to assist him... he shall make a petition to the king, who will say ‘On conditions, give him an advance...’. In three years the king may take back the advances. This he may do in accordance with the *Four solidarities* (*Manugye* iii 74; see Richardson, 1847: 106).

In E Maung’s view, this section sets up duties enforceable by the Burmese citizen against the Burmese king:

To Burmese jurists, almost all of whom received their education in religious institutions and not a few of whom were members of the Buddhist religious order, it was but a short step from such moral exhortations to legal obligations binding on the ruler (E Maung, 1951: 6).

This is a bold thesis. Whether or not E Maung has substantiated it requires a more detailed examination of other sources than we can undertake here. B. 1782’s version of the *Four solidarities* is much closer to the canonical list than to the commentarial list. The same is true of the verse of *Dhammaniti* v264. *Lokasara Pyo* at v23 mentions the list, but does not enumerate it.

Lists 10 and 9 offer two versions of *Seven ways not to make things worse*. List 10 is based on one of several canonical lists of *Seven ways for monks not to make things worse*:

Monks, this night a deva spoke to me and said ‘Lord, these seven things lead not to a monk’s decline... Reverence for the Master, Dhamma, Sangha, the training, concentration, fair speech and good friendship’ (A iv 33).

In our text it is addressed to the king, rather than to a monk,<sup>4</sup> but it seems to be religious rather than political in tone, when compared with the other identically named version. List 9, ‘which enables the state to develop prosperously’ is adapted from the *Seven ways for the Vajjians not to make things worse* which occupies a prominent position at the start of one of Pali Buddhism’s central texts, the *Great Discourse of the Final Nirvana*. An expansionist king has declared his intention to incorporate the customary ‘republic’ of the Vajjians. The Buddha gives his analysis of the respective strengths of the combatants in the form of a list:

If the Vajjians wish to avoid defeat at the hands of King Ajātasattu, they should [1] meet together in assembly regularly; [2] conduct their assembly business harmoniously; [3] not pass new laws or abrogate any old laws; [4] honour and respect the elders of their community; [5] not carry off married women or young girls; [6] continue to venerate the country’s shrines, giving no less by way of offerings than hitherto; [7] continue to offer shelter and protection to arahants, in the hope that more arahants may be attracted to their country. (D ii 75; cf A iv 16. This summary is based on Collins’ (1998: 438) translation).

Note that in reworking the list, the Burmese have converted seven ways in

<sup>4</sup> The same list is found, also addressed to the king, in the second Monywa sayadaw’s *Rajovada* written around 1827 (Jardine, 1903 iv: 6).



which tribal elders should govern into seven ways in which a king should govern. The list appears, in a non-standard order, in *Lokasara Pyo* v33.

List 8, the *Five royal strengths*, also derives from the Pali canon, in this case from the verses of the *Three Birds* jataka (#521). Three birds each compose a sonnet of advice on kingship. The owl tells the king ‘to bring happiness to your friends and suffering to your enemies’. This advice, we are told, is appropriate to a general. The mynah bird’s strategy—‘getting what you haven’t got and keeping what you’ve got’—is best employed in the treasury. The parrot’s advice, appropriate for a commander-in-chief, gives the Buddhist strategy for kingship. Here, in H. T. Francis’s translation, is the gist of the parrot’s sonnet:

Amidst the great ones of the earth a fivefold power we see  
of these the power of limbs is, sure, the last in its degree  
and power of wealth, O mighty Lord, the next is said to be.  
The power of counsel third in rank of these, O king, I name.  
The power of caste without a doubt is reckoned fourth in frame.  
And all of these a man that’s wise most certainly will claim.  
Of all these powers that one is best as power of learning known...  
None that are heedless in their ways to wisdom can attain  
But must consult the wise and just, or ignorant remain (Francis, 1905: 63).

This last couplet, the seventh of the eleven stanzas, gives 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. The preacher who is squawking these verses to the king will become, twenty-seven rebirths later, Gautama Buddha, the archetype of the wise royal adviser. As narrator of the jataka the Buddha follows this sonnet with the comment:

The Great Being could get the dhamma across as only Buddhas can. It  
poured into his audience like the Ganges pouring down from the sky.

For those who know the *Three Birds* jataka, which was most of Burma’s educated population, the list of five strengths implies the whole of the parrot’s sonnet, with its message that monks must contribute to the formation of royal policy. The *Five royal strengths* are also found in *Lokasara pyo* v40 and in *Dhammaniti* v148.

Lists 7, 6 and 4 all concern military matters. The *Four divisions of the army* can be found both in the Pali canon (S i 84; S iii 396; S v 446) and in the Sanskrit works on dharma and artha (Sternbach, 1974b: 627). Since neither can be shown to be earlier than the other, this is a list that cannot be labelled exclusively as Hindu or Buddhist. The *Seven [more] things a city needs* lists the defences needed to withstand an attack. A similar, but not identical, list appears in *Lokasara pyo* v30. Sternbach (1974b: 626) has not been able to identify any Sanskrit parallels. The *Four requirements of a city* appear to be connected with siege warfare. We have not been able to trace it to any earlier sources. These lists are taken, we presume, from a military manual, but whether one written in Pali, Sanskrit or Burmese we could not say.

Lists 5 and 3 are variations on an undeniably Hindu theme. P. V. Kane (1968: 17) says that ‘according to almost all of our authorities’—including the *Mahābhārata* and Kautilya’s *Arthaśāstra* as well as the *dharmasāstra* works—‘a state is constituted by seven elements’. However, these sources do not agree on the order of the elements or the precise Sanskrit vocabulary by which they should be identified. Sternbach (1974a: 163) usefully shows these variations in

tabular form. The Burmese versions of the list, whether written in Pali (*Rajaniti* v25–7) or in Burmese (*Lokasara pyo* v36 and our lists 3 and 5), do not match any one Sanskrit source, but show as much variation as the Indian texts. Sternbach criticizes the author of *Lokasara pyo* for not realizing the importance of the list. Unlike the Sanskrit authors who used the list as chapter headings ‘dealing point by point with each of the seven’, the Burmese author ‘did not develop the concept’ and, having quoted it once, paid no further attention to it (Sternbach, 1974a: 163, 167). Similar criticisms have been levelled at the organization of Burmese law, which is praised for knowing about *Manusmṛti*’s list of eighteen heads of litigation, then damned for not using it as an organizing principle (Okudaira, 1986: 133; Huxley, 1995: 67). We would prefer to say that, both in law and in politics, Burmese intellectuals of the eighteenth century came to reject the Sanskrit forms of organizing knowledge as unsuitable to their needs. Stanley Tambiah contrasts the Hindu *Seven elements of the state*, which he regards as pragmatic, with the Buddhist *Seven treasures of the cakravatti* ‘in order that we may appreciate the difference in ideological tone between the Buddhist and arthasastric theories of kingship’ (Tambiah, 1976: 31). But surely this is to compare the incomparable? The *cakravatti*, as a Buddha-like non-violent conquerer, belongs to utopian, rather than pragmatic, politics. It would be fairer to compare the Buddhist *Seven ways not to make things worse* with the Hindu *Seven elements of the state*. In any event we are not convinced that the compiler of our text would have been aware that lists 5 and 3 had a Hindu origin. We suspect that he adapted the list from niti sources, which he would have regarded as containing wisdom approved by the Buddha. Burmese intellectuals of this period had come to regard the niti literature as part of Buddhist classical literature or, to use Steven Collins’ phrase, as part of the *Pali imaginaire* (Collins, 1998: 41).

List 2, the *Ten royal virtues*, is the most ubiquitous of the Buddhist political lists. Sometimes, indeed, it 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. Though they are found throughout the jataka (enumerated at J iii 274 and mentioned at J i 260; 399; J ii 400; J iii 320; J v 119, 378) the *Ten royal virtues* are not mentioned in the earliest parts of the Pali canon. In the jatakas and the Sri Lankan chronicle they are used to describe the dhamma appropriate to a Buddhist king. They are quoted to the same effect in the twelfth-century *Dhammavilasa* dhammathat and the Burmese chronicles (Lieberman, 1984: 67; Koenig, 1990: 268). The list is given in *Dhammaniti* v263 and, in a non-standard order, in *Lokasara pyo* s23. B. 1782 gives the ten virtues in their standard order.

About list 1, the *Twelve royal virtues*, we have drawn a blank. We cannot trace this to any earlier Burmese or Indian source, and we have only come across one subsequent allusion to such a list (ROB 21-8-1785). Perhaps this is a freshly composed list which our author added as a preface to the ten political lists which he had compiled? Perhaps, to speculate further, list 1 gives the skeleton argument of a sermon or address which the author gave at court some time during 1782, the year of Badon’s coronation?

### Conclusions

What light do these eleven lists shed on the quarrel between unitarians and dichotomists? A determined dichotomist who was eager to talk up the Hindu origins of Burmese political thought could argue that B. 1782 is 53 per cent

Buddhist, and 47 per cent Hindu, a proportion similar to Bechert and Braun's analysis of *Dhammaniti*'s sources. To reach these figures, he would have to eliminate List 1 (as a Burmese invention) and assume that Lists 3, 4, 5 and 6 are wholly Hindu in origin. Such an analysis would stand at the extreme limits of plausibility. We would prefer to say, without committing ourselves to precise percentages, that far more of the lists can be traced to Buddhist than to Hindu sources. But we doubt that Burmese authors of the late eighteenth century would have seen any importance in the Buddhist/Hindu dichotomy. A few specialists may have read Sanskrit works on mathematics and astrology, but otherwise Indian classical literature was Pali literature. And the Pali canon encouraged them to think of some areas of knowledge as being common to Vedic and Buddhist wisdom. The *Nine sages* of the Vedas appear in the Pali canon as the *Nine hermits*, where they represent the wisdom that is common to Buddhism and the Vedas (Huxley, 1996: 608).

Taken by itself, B. 1782 cannot determine any arguments about the sources of Burmese political thought from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. But it can tell us a great deal about the sources on which the early Konbaung kings drew. We have suggested that the single most important source of B. 1782 was *Lokasara pyo*, and that our author used it critically.<sup>5</sup> Other Konbaung dynasty intellectuals also gave a sympathetic updating to political materials that emanated from fifteenth-century Ava. The year before our manuscript was completed, Shin Sandalinka compiled the *Maniyadanabon*, a collection of advice given to a fifteenth-century king of Ava by his counsellor. Two years after our manuscript was completed, Badon asked the first Bagaya sayadaw for a Burmese translation of the *Dhammaniti*. Might these three instances illustrate a Konbaung dynastic preference for reviewing Upper Burmese wisdom collected three centuries earlier at the Ava court? And might this be motivated by a desire to distance the new dynasty from its Toungoo predecessor, whose kings had been associated with Lower Burma and could be portrayed as having allowed Burmese culture to be diluted by Mon and foreign elements?

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<sup>5</sup> In two cases where *Lokasara pyo* gives a Pali list in a non-canonical order, our author has restored the correct order.

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