

Who is a Burmese ? : A Study of an Inherent Characteristic of Burmese National Identity*

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I. Introduction

This study was conducted to access the national identity which has been created in colonial Burma. When we consider the Burmese national identity emerged in colonial Burma, we may become aware of anti-colonial or anti-British movements. Not only this character, anti-colonialism, but also ethnic attachment, only which focus for the Buddhist in colonial Burma, is an inherent character of Burmese nationalism. In order to portray the inherent character of this identity, this study reexamines the Burmese national identity devoted on the Burmese national ideology raised by the YMBA, emerged since the very beginning of the nationalist movements.

It is possible to trace the emergence of Burmese national identity throughout the nationalist movements. As mentioned in the article,

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Burmese national identity raised by the DoBama Asiayone and by The 1947 Constitution, were formed along with the nationalist movements during the colonial period. Some scholars who had made valuable works on the Myanmar studies had paid enough attention to the definition of Burmese national identity, interchangeably used in the respective periods. Regarding the Burmese national identity, Daw Khin Yi made adequate accounts on the history of DoBama Asiayone in her documented work, *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)*. Professor Kei Nemoto portrays the image of Burmese national identity in his outstanding article, "The Concept of Dobama ("Our Burma") and Thudo-Bama("Their Burma") in Burmese Nationalism, 1930-1948." In his famous books *DoPyidaungzu Myanmar Naingan*(Yangon: Tekkatho Ponnaitai, 1959) and *Burma's Constitution*(The Hague: Martinis Nijoff, 1961), U Maung Maung elaborated the definition of the term "Myanmar." Myo Oo(2012) also traces the history of Burmese national identity created in the colonial order. Burmese national identity, in addition, paved the way for the emergence of researches on the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar political arena especially in the process of current democratization(Lall 2009; Kipgen 2006; Dittmer 2010; Smith 2003: 2007 and so on). Unlike above mentioned researches, this article, devoting in the statements of the YMBA, will try to uncover the inherent character of the Burmese national ideology, came out in the very beginning of the independent movements.

Regarding the word "ethnicity," labelled by Glazer and Moynihan (1963), there are some researches on the definition of a race/ethnicity as below. Schefold(1998) offers an explanation citing the psychological

explanation of Clifford Geertz(1973: 277) that "The power of the "givens" of place, tongue, blood, looks and way-of-life to shape an individual's notion of whom, at the bottom, he is and with whom, indissolubly, he belongs is rooted in the nonracial foundations of personality" in his article which sheds light the role of popular culture and nation-building in Indonesia composed of diverse ethnics(266). Hirschman(1987) also pointed out the role of British census which played in the formulation of a racial/ethnic classifications of Malaysia. In her article argued Hirschman(1987), Soda has focused on the importance of the textbooks prescribed in British Malaya that the transmission of British colonial knowledge began the localization of the British concept of Malayness(Soda 2001: 188). The ethnic formation in colonial Burma provides a new variation of the example mentioned at the outset of this article that ethnic attachments by the religion become.

Hence, there Burmese national identity, has taken a crucial role in the process of nation-building, because the resulting conflicts not only between the respective independent governments and the ethnic guerrillas but also between Buddhists and Muslims had occurred in Rakhine in 2012 and in Meikhtila in 2013, have witnessed the real character of Myanmar national identity.¹⁾ Due to the reason above

1) This demarcation paid the way for the future conflicts in colonial Burma and independent Myanmar. Recently two conflicts broke out in Myanmar: in Rakhine in 2012, between Rakhine Buddhist and Bengali Muslims, who mostly came from Bangladesh, and in Meikhitla in 2013 between Muslims and Burmese Buddhist. Current conflicts between Buddhist and Muslim can be seen in some researches such as Tin Maung Maung Than and Moe Thuzar "Myanmar's Rohingya Dilemma." (Article in ISEAS Perspective. July 9, 2012), Aung Zaw "Burma's Rohingya Dilemma" (Article in The Irrawaddy. June 14, 2012), Melanie Teff and Sarmata Reynolds "Rohingya in Burma: Spotlight on Current Crisis Offers Opportunity for

mentioned, in the article, unlike the existing researches, the inherent character of Burmese national ideology²⁾ raised by the YMBA will be reexamined.

For the purpose, tracing the background history of the colonial Burma,³⁾ this research will briefly discuss the Burmese national identity defined by the respective nationalist associations, firstly. Secondly, this article will find out the basic ideology of the Burmese nationalist movement tracing the changes of it throughout the historic eras. In order to uncover the inherent characteristic of the Burmese national identity, this study will finally made a descriptive analysis on the some statements by the YMBA.

This study consists of four sections. The first section shortly introduces the study with a review of related literature. The second section historically traces the relation of Burmese national identity and political setting of colonial Burma with a discussion of a definition of the ethnic Burma by the YMBA. The third section serves as a discussion of the inherent characteristic of Burmese Buddhist national ideology. The fourth and final section reviews the

"Progress" (Field Report in Refugee International, October 30, 2012), and so on. Though there was a riot between Burmese and Indians in 1930, this was not in the form of conflict between two religious group, but between two ethnic of colonial Burma: Burmese and Indians.

2) Though the YMBA is the first and foremost nationalist association emerged in colonial Burma, it made activities only in Burma proper. Thus it is difficult to say that the association represented all ethnic groups in present Myanmar. However it protected all indigenous ethnic groups who religion is Buddhist in Burma proper, at least. In this article, therefore, I use the term "Burmese Buddhist national ideology" generally.

3) I, as this article primarily focuses on the colonial period, generally use the term "Burma" throughout this article for the territory and "Burman" for the people who live in the mainland and "Burmese" for all homogeneous ethnics in the colonial Burma. Myanmar is only for the independent country.

discussions.

II. The Crossing of Burmese National Identity

Myanmar and Burma have been used interchangeably in both its official and popular names worldwide. The choice of names stems from the existence of two different names for the country throughout historic eras. Due to the etymology of the terms, Burma and Myanmar, remains unclear, I will briefly report on these terms tracing its historical background. In addition, this section will focus on the relation of the political of colonial Burma composed of indigenous ethnic groups and emigrants, Indians and Chinese. In this section, I will finally report the definition of the term "Burmese" borrowing the concept of U May Aung in order to guest in advance the Burmese Buddhist national ideology defines an inherent character of it.

1. Burma or Myanmar

The word Myanmar was referred to the ethnic Burman during the time of Burmese kings. The first use of the name "*Myanmar*" for the country is to be found on a stone inscription known as "The Inscription of King Kyansittha(1064-1092) ascends the throne." The word "*Mirma*," which refers to the ethnic "Burman," has been recorded together with the terms *Tisul* which refers to the Pyu, and *Me* which to the Mon(Kyaw Zaw Aung 2012: 6). The word "*Myanmar*" which clearly shows the meaning of "Myanmar Country"

was written in an inscription known as the "Yadana Kondan Inscription" dated 594 ME(Myanmar Era) or 1235 CE. The stone was from the reign of King Kya Swa(1234-1250), son of King Htilo Minlo(King Nadaung-mya)(1211-1234)(Ma Theingi 2011: 97). Moreover, "The Inscription of Queen Bwa Seo" dated 1241 recorded the word "*Thami Oh Myanmar*"(My daughter named Oh Myanmar) and "Thettawshe Pagoda Inscription" dated 1363 did the word "*Myanmar Ywativ*"(a Myanmar village). Some inscriptions erected in the Bagan and later periods have also been recorded the word such as *Myanmar*, *Myanma Pyi*, *Myamma*(Kyaw Zaw Aung 2012: 6). In addition, "*Yazawin Kyaw*"(A Concise History of Burma/Myanmar) by Shin Maha Thilawuntha(815-880), a famous monk composer, composed in the time of King Shwe Nankyawt Shin(1501-1527) also narrated about five Myanmar dynasties(five dynasties ruled by the kings of Burman)(Kyaw Zaw Aung 2012: 6).

The use of the word "Burma and Burmese for the ethnic Burman can also be traced in the Kyaw Zaw Aung's article as follows. "The word "Burma" in English was firstly printed in the book "*Alphabetum Barmanorum*" by Carpan which was published in Rome in 1776 (Kyaw Zaw Aung 2012: 6). Secondly, the word was printed in the Burmese-English Dictionary by Judson published in Indian in 1826. In detail, the word "Burmese" put in the dictionary refers to the indigenous ethnic in colonial Burma and the word "Burma" to the country colonial Burma(Kyaw Zaw Aung 2012: 6). Continuously, the word Burma in English can be found in the English-Burmese Dictionary compiled by Burmese Prince Mekkaya published in India in 1833. Mr. Charles Lance, translator of the author's preface,

translated the word Myanmar in Burmese to Burma in English in the printed dictionary (Kyaw Zaw Aung 2012: 6). During the colonial period, leading Burmese nationalist associations, the GCBA and the DoBama Asiayone, have also used the word Burma and Burmese. Burmese respective independent governments have also used the word Burma in English to refer to the word Myanmar in Burmese till to the 1989.

Immediately after the independence, the official name of Burma in Burmese was popularly known as "Union of Myanmar," but in turn, "Union of Burma" in English was continuously used. The use of names stems from the existence of two different names, as mentioned above. The official name of Myanmar in English has been changed by the junta from the "Union of Burma" to "Union of Myanmar" in 1989.

As mentioned above, though the word "Myanmar" in Burmese had been used to refer to the ethnic Burman from the Bagan period to the colonial period, it has been used to refer to all ethnic who live in Myanmar since 1948. In turn, the word "Burmese" both in Burmese and in English was referred to the all indigenous ethnic who live in colonial Burma during the colonial period, but only for the Burman in the respective independent eras. Myanmar in English has been used since 1989 for the country and all indigenous ethnic groups.

2. The Political Setting of Colonial Burma

In order to clarify the territory and political boundaries of colonial Burma, the background political history of colonial Burma, a multi

ethnic society, will also be reported briefly, here.

History of Burmese kingdom is conveniently divided into four periods: the classical Bagan period(1044-1287), a 300-year interregnum with several rival city-states, Restored Taungoo period (1587-1752), and Konbaung period(1752-1885), according to Taylor, a prominent political historian in Myanmar studies(Taylor 2009: 15). Burmese kingdoms were consisted of the main region inhabited by some minorities and major ethnic Burman directly governed by the Burmese kings and frontier areas inhabited by ethnic minorities ruled by local rulers. During the Konbaung period, Burmese kings waged three wars: the First Anglo-Burmese War(1824-1826); the Second Anglo-Burmese War(1852); and the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885) against the British, who was extending her power over the Southeast Asia.

Colonial Burma (Myanmar) was shaped by the colonial power, like other Southeast Asian countries. As the result of the wars, the British annexed *Rakhine*, western coastal region, and *Tanintharyi*, southern coastal area, in 1826, they put Lower Burma under their administration in 1853, and they finally occupied Upper Burma in 1885. Eventually, the Burmese kingdom and associated hill areas were incorporated as a state into the British-Indian Empire on 1 January 1886(Furnivall 1953: 21-26).

After the annexation, the British colonial government divided the country into two administrative areas such as "Burma proper" inhabited by the major ethnic Burmese and other minorities, and "Frontier areas" populated by ethnic minorities, and practiced different administrative systems in these areas.

Along with the bureaucratic reforms, social, economic and political conditions were changed, and anti-colonial movements broke out in colonial Burma, mostly in Burma proper. These movements were led by the ethnic Burman mostly and it can be divided into three periods such as that when the Young Men's Buddhist Association(1906-1920) and the General Council of Burmese Associations(1920-1930) (GCBA), which asked for Home Rule; that when We, Burmese Association(1930-1938), which aimed at regaining independence; and that when Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League(1945-1948) which target to build "Union of Burma." Due to the purpose of this article is to focus on the basic ideology of Burmese national identity, I would like to discuss the national identity which was coined by the YMBA, the DoBama Asiayone, and the 1947 Constitution, tracing the historical background of it.

Colonial Burma, later independent Myanmar, emerged from colonialism and set boundaries by the colonizer British. Between the beginning of British administration in the mids of the 19th Century and the separation of British Burma from British India in 1937, Indians emigrated to colonial Burma inhabited by the major ethnic Burmese and other minorities. Chinese also migrated into colonial Burma at the same time.

According to the demographic setting, therefore, it is obvious that not only indigenous ethnic groups but also emigrants from Asian countries such as Indian and Chinese have also already settled down there since the very beginning of the emergence of colonial Burma.

3. What is a Burmese?

In contrast to demography, the nature of Burmese national ideology raised by the YMBA only focus on the Burmese.

It is possible to see the reason why the YMBA has coined the term "Modern Burman" in the article titled "The Dawn of Nationalism in Burma" by J. S. Furnivall. This article is a reflection of a lecture titled "The Modern Burman: His Life and Notion" delivered by U May Aung, at a meeting of the Rangoon College Buddhist Association on August 10, 1908, under the presidency of Mr. E. D. Marshall, principal, Rangoon(Yangon) College. In his lecture, distinguishing the modern Burmese and the old Burmese, U May Aung answered the question of "What is a Burman?"(Furnivall 1950: 1-7). As to the article of Furnivall, the author, remarked thus "... By the expression "The Modern Burman," he(U May Aung) did not mean the Burman in general at the present---it would require a whole volume to treat of him---but by modern Burman he meant the Burman who had received the not unmixed blessing of a Western education..."(Furnivall 1950: 3). On the background of this lecturer there was worry of U May Aung that, seeing the ceaseless, ebb-less tide of foreign culture and education practicing in colonial Burma, if Burmans could not prepare to overcome it, their national character, their institutions, their very existence as a distinct nationality would be swept away, submerged, and irretrievably lost(Furnivall 1950: 2). In short, the word "Modern Burman" by U May Aung means the "Burmese" today composed of Buddhists from respective indigenous ethnic groups of colonial Burma.

U May Aung's answer to the question "What is a Burman?" in the Furnivall's article is as follows. Regarding this question, he straightforwardly answered that "A Burman is a Buddhist" explaining about the New Burman as well. To portray the image of Modern Burman(Burmese), U May Aung firstly criticized the educational environment of the present generation as follows. From the time of his infancy, a young Burmese must be sent to the school where the teaching was secular and studied to pass the exam. A Burmese who studied in schools where Buddhism formed no part of the curriculum, had no knowledge of Buddhism. He, although, was a nominally Buddhist and could hardly be called a true Buddhist. Because he had merely substituted new notions for his own, he lost his national identity, a circumstance to be proud of, a bond of sympathy between him and those around him(Furnivall 1950: 3-5). Due to the environment, he was learning to drop Burmese ideals, to forget and even to despise the customs and the habits of his ancestors, and to hanker after much that was bad and very little that was good in those of alien races(Furnivall 1950: 3).

U May Aung continuously analyzed the consolidation of Burmese based on his own experiences in Yangon and other large cities as below. Due to the lack of national feeling, the Burmese were not consolidated while the Chinese were clannish to a marked degree and the Indians supported each other(Furnivall 1950: 6). Regarding the national identity, moreover, he pointed out that if one visited a modern Burmese house, he would find scarcely a single noteworthy trace of Burmese nationality but had seen articles totally unsuited to Burmese needs(Furnivall 1950: 6).

As I have explained in this section, though the demographic setting of the colonial Burma had already been changed into a multi-ethnic society composed of indigenous ethnic groups and emigrants, the Burmese Buddhist national ideology only focused on the Buddhist since the very beginning of the movement, as reflected in the ethnic attachment of it.

III. The Inherent Character of the Ethnic Attachment in Burmese Nationalism

In this section, I will discuss the inherent characteristic of the Burmese national ideology. As mentioned above, the identity proposed by the YMBA, DoBama Asiayon and The 1947 Constitution will be discussed here.

1. Burmese National Identity Raised by the DBA and The 1947 Constitution

Before moving to the discussion of the ideology by the YMBA emerged in the very beginning of the movements in colonial Burma, the existing discussion of those should be made clear. Regarding the ideology, there are two definitions which includes all ethnic nationals in a wider meaning in Myanmar studies. The one is "Bamar" (Burmese) defined by Dobamar Asiayon and the other is "Myanmar" by the 1947 Constitution and the successive post-colonial Myanmar

governments in this sense.

The concept of Burmese national identity "*Bamar*" reached its zenith immediately after the formation of DoBama Asiayone on May 30, 1930(Dobama Asiayone 1976: 137, 177) while Burmese was suffering the political and economic distress. By the ardent desire for national independence, the membership composed primarily of the offspring of landlords, landed farmers, merchant, free-lance professionals, and civil servants(Taylor 1987: 124-125). The mottos of the DBA have been reflected in its first declaration *Naingganpyu Sazu Ahmat I*(Reform Series No. 1)(DoBama Asiayone 1930: 1) as follows:

Bama pyi (Burma) is our country.
Bama sar (The Burmese literature) is our literature.
Bama sagar (The Burmese language) is our language.
Love our country.
Praise our literature.
Respect our language.

It is possible to see the Burmese national identity in *The DoBama Bulletin Vol. 1. No. 1*. In order to assert the nationalist sentiment of the association, DoBama Asiayone, itself chose the word "Burmese" rather than the term "Myanmar" which referred to the Burmese ethnic in a narrow sense that excluded other indigenous ethnic minorities such as Karen, the Shans(Khin Maung Hla 1976: 133). On the other reason why DBA chose the word "Burmese," Zaw Soe Min described that "...The term DoBamar was divided again into two; DoBamar. The Burmese word "Do" directly means "We" and besides in the

sense of Burmese people, it also has the repercussions of original meanings as unity and collects among the fellow people. Thakhin Ba Thaung, the founder of the DoBamar Asiayone, and colleagues said that they used this word intentionally in order to get rid of the narrow-mindedness of fellow people and to cultivate the like-mindedness among them···"(Zaw Soe Min 2009a: 111; Ba Sein 1943: 17-18). Although it claimed to represent all indigenous groups, the DBA leaders failed to develop a strong, convincing and all-encompassing Burmese national identity in British Burma(Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2007: 153).

During the Second World War(1939-1945), Burma was annexed by the Japanese and it was put under a single administration by the Japanese authority during the war time, exactly from 1941 to 1945, and it was reformed as a state integrated both areas: Burma proper and frontier Burma divided by the British. One of the effect of the Japanese administration which integrated the areas as a state, paid the way for the future unification of it as a state, Union of Burma later Union of Myanmar. Along with the same line of essence, The 1947 Constitution coined the term "Myanmar" instead of "Burmese" calling for the equality of all indigenous ethnic groups(*The 1947 Constitution*: Chapter 10). I will briefly introduce the political background happened on the eve of independence in this section, extracting from *The 1947 Constitution and the Nationalities*(Vol.1), composed by the scholars of the Myanmar Historical Commission, as below.

Immediately after the war, because the British post war policy, the White Paper granted the Burmese independence, had been announced

in 1945. The White Paper, however, revealed the intention that the British Government wanted to exclude frontier areas of the administration of newly independent Burma (Kyaw Win 1999: 107). Regarding the British policy to the Burmese independence, the Anti Fascist People Freedom League (AFPFL), composed of the Burma Communist Party, Revolutionary Party and the army, the leading nationalist association in colonial Burma at the time being, had made public its policy on 25 May that the Burmese desire was the attainment of the self-determination for Burmese (Kyaw Win 1999: 108). At the same time, the AFPFL had held Naythuyein Mass Meeting on 19 August 1945. The meeting made some decisions and one of them stressed endorsing the Atlantic Charter and other international agreements, for example Teheran Agreement and Yalta Agreement, which granted the freedom of all people to determine their own destinies and reiterating Burmese oft-repeated aspiration and demand for full sovereignty of status (Kyaw Win 1999: 108).

By the aim of the Burmese political leaders that all areas of British Burma should be freed at the same time and to be integrated into a single state, political movements continuously occurred in British Burma. Have some conversations between the British government and Burmese political leaders, and leaders of ethnic minorities and Burman leaders, eventually, the British government invited a Burmese delegation composed of General Aung Sun and other leaders, some are members of the AFPFL and some were members of the Governor's Executive Council (Kyaw Win 1999: 159).

According to an agreement that to achieve the early unification of the frontier areas and Burma proper with the free consent of the

inhabitants of those areas, Burmese political leaders and other ethnic leader tried to get an agreement with leaders of ethnic minorities. As the result of these endeavors, the Panglong Conference had been arranged on 11 and 12 February, 1947 and, with the agreement of the leaders of frontier areas, the Panglong Agreement was signed by the leaders including Shan Sawbwas and leaders, Kachin leaders, Chin leaders and General Aung Sun, representative of the Burmese government(Kyaw Win 1999: 213).

After the independence, according the Panglong Agreement, Burma became a single state composed of Burma proper and frontier areas integrated into a single state by the Panglong Treaty signed by the Burmese nationalists led by General Aung Sun and leaders of ethnic minorities on 12 February 1947(Myra Han 1991: 93-99). In order to integrate a single state, the term Burmese has been replaced by the term Myanmar and the latter has been officially referred to the community composed of all indigenous ethnic groups throughout the respective independent governments. However, based on the political and religious problems, there are ethnic conflicts between independent Burmese government and ethnic nationalist groups immediately after the independence.

As I have shortly discussed in this section, Burmese national identity does not represent the emigrants such as Chinese and Indians, and it makes the contrast between the demography of colonial Burma, composed of indigenous ethnic groups and emigrants, and the identity.

2. National Ideology Raised by the YMBA

In order to figure out the inherent character of the Burmese national ideology, I will make a discussion of the aim and objective of the YMBA. Before moving on to the descriptive analysis of the statements of the YMBA, I will briefly report some researches on the YMBA's activities.

There are two opinions on the YMBA's activities. Professor Setinberg has expressed his opinion that the YMBA was formed in 1906 by a group focus on religious works and patriotic activities modeling after and in competition with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the association made an account of the activities both social welfare and advocacy activities, at the national level involved in the independence movement (Steinberg 1997). On the one hand, some researches have recognized the YMBA as a leading association in Burmese nationalist movement. Professor Taylor, one of the most outstanding scholars in modern Myanmar political history, made a remark that the YMBA is the first and foremost nationalist element in the political arena of colonial Burma and its' Burmese name is *Buddha Batha Klyana Yuwa Athin* (Association of Care for the Well Being of Buddhism) (Taylor 1988: iv). On the activities of YMBA, Myo Oo (2011) shed light the role of the association that it protected the Burmese Buddhist promoting various cultural aspects including education, and called for demands legally for the release from economic, social and cultural oppressions by foreigners such as Indians and Chinese who had economic power and westerners who had administrative power and were in the

dominant position in British Burma(Myo Oo 2011: 105). Zaw Soe Min, a young Myanmar political historian, has stressed his opinion on the YMBA that the YMBA was the standard bearer of the Burmese nationalist movement between 1906 and 1920, and the major claims of the nationalist movement in its infancy were to gain the socioeconomic and administrative reforms within the colonial framework(Zaw Soe Min 2009a; 2009b).

Based on the second opinion, in this article, I will discuss the activities of YMBA. Because, as has been reflected in the above mentioned researches, the association, employing Buddhism as a common base of the Burmese society composed of indigenous ethnic groups such as Burmese, Mon, Rakhine and Shan whose religion is Buddhism, in British Burma, protected its indigenous ethnic groups which have been oppressed by foreigners.

Though the association did not coin the term Burmese, as has reflected in its name of the YMBA, the ethnic attachment of it has primarily been focused on the ideology of Buddhism as a common denominator. The goal of the YMBA can be seen in four aspects: *Amyo*(Nationality), *Batha*(Burmese language), *Thathana*(Buddhism) and *Pyinnya*(Education). The slogans of the YMBA were "*Amyo-go-Chitpa*"(love the nation), "*Batha-go-Layazaba*"(respect the Burmese language), "*Sasana-go-Chimyintba*"(promote the Buddhism), and "*Pyinnya-go-Aapeba*"(encourage the education)(Mya Han 1991: 174-178). In short, the YMBA, employing Buddhism as a common base of the Burmese society, tried to protect the Burmese Buddhist, as I have mentioned in the article.

As I have briefly touched in the introduction, Schefold pointed out

that ethnicity could be expected to appear in a community in which people is believing that they possess a specific cultural tradition are interacting in a social context and external condition facilitate the sentiment of potential alternatives to a group attachment(Schefold 1998: 261).

In the case of colonial Burma, foreigners who emigrated to colonial Burma were not only the Europeans, including the British, the colonizer, but also Asians, Chinese and Indians who were believed to have overwhelmed the Burmese economy. Burmese nationalist, therefore, demarcated the ethnic boundaries by the religion, Buddhism, since the very beginning of the Burmese nationalist movement. The ethnic attachment was, in other words, apparently divided by the Buddhist culture in colonial Burma.

It is obvious in the slogans that the YMBA coined the term Buddhist by evaluating the role of Buddhist tradition, culture, religion and language different from those of foreigners. It seems to have believed that the YMBA referred to the term Buddhist to represent all indigenous people in Burma proper. Because, at the time being, most of the people who lived in Burma proper were Buddhist such as Burmese, Karen, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. However, the term Buddhist coined by the YMBA could not claim to represent all indigenous ethnic minorities, at least to non-Buddhist.

In order to shed light the inherent characteristic of Burmese national ideology, it is worth to analysis the statements of the YMBA made in the very beginning of the movements. U Lay Maung's *Myanma Nainggan-ye Thamine*(History of Burmese Politic) volume one(1973), documented work on Burmese political history, records

the events and activities of nationalist organizations chronologically. For this purpose, this study will focus on the descriptive analysis of the decision, demands and requests made in the conferences held in the cities, in this section.

The YMBA held eight conferences from 1911 to 1920, and make decisions and reported its aforementioned goals and activities to the people. As I have described below, in order to protect the Buddhist community, an imagined community(Anderson 1991), the association held conferences in the big cities of Burma proper respectively.

First	Yangon	May 7, 1911
Second	Yangon	May 10, 1914
Third	Mandalay	October 24-26, 1915
Fourth	Hinthada	October 24-26, 1916
Fifth	Pyinmana	October 17, 1917
Sixth	Mawlamyaing	October 22-23, 1918
Seventh	Patheingyi	October 11-13, 1919
Eighth	Pyi	October 29, 30, 1920

Due to the purpose of this research is to figure out the inherent character of Burmese national ideology, I will discuss the ethnic attachment of the YMBA. For this research purpose, a descriptive analysis of the statements issued by the association will be conducted as follows.

In order to create a homogeneous society, the YMBA tried to spread out Buddhist education throughout Burma proper. Based on the Buddhist education, the association proposed a statement on the teaching of Buddhism in schools in the first conference held in Yangon(Lay Maung 1973: 107) and in prison in the second

conference in 1914(Lay Maung 1973: 107-108). The association, in addition, tried to teach *Mingalasutta*, a sermon given by the Lord Buddha containing the 38 rules for a beatific life, in Buddhist schools (Lay Maung 1973: 165). For this purpose, the YMBA decided to establish Buddhist schools in respective areas, for example, a school in Zalon, a town in Ayeyawady delta(Lay Maung 1973: 117, 141), and a high school(Lay Maung 1973: 112) and a Buddhist University in Yangon(Lay Maung 1973: 142). The YMBA supported to begin teaching Buddhism not only in Buddhist schools but also in government schools and private schools such as vernacular schools and Anglo-Burmese school(Lay Maung 1973: 120, 107-108). The association, moreover, tried to establish a Buddhist education fund to support Buddhist education and to be appointed qualified teachers in the Buddhist schools(Lay Maung 1973: 111-119). Viewing the above mentioned demands, it can be seen that the YMBA enthused spreading Buddhism among the people to mobilize Buddhism as an ideology for the Buddhist community.

Another attempt of the YMBA for the development of the Buddhist community was to raise the role of it. For this the YMBA made requests to the government and the Buddhists in colonial Burma. The YMBA firstly tried to raise the moral character of Buddhists in its first and second conference. In the conferences held from one to five, for this purpose, the association continuously requested to the Buddhist to strive for abstinence of Buddhists(Lay Maung 1973: 107-140), and to the government to prohibit selling alcohol to the Buddhists live in Lower Burma(Lay Maung 1973: 108, 114-128) and not to allow gambling in the monk's funeral ceremonies(Lay Maung

1973: 125). For the role of monks, the YMBA requested the Railroad Department to arrange a car only for the Buddhist monks(Lay Maung 1973: 123), and tried to contact foreign Buddhist associations(Lay Maung 1973: 125) and to teach English to Buddhist monk for their Buddhist missionary work. The association repeatedly requested to the colonial government to recognize Kason full moon day, the day fell on full moon day of the second month in Burmese calendar, as a holiday and one time to recognize the important days for the Buddhist as holidays(Lay Maung 1973: 107, 125) due to it is an important day for the Buddhists.

The next attempt of the YMBA was to establish a Buddhist community systematically. For this purpose, the YMBA demanded the government to enact a law for the legacy of Buddhist right which one can distribute his heritage by will(Lay Maung 1973: 118). In addition, the association requested the government to judge cases of Buddhist women who got marriage with non-Buddhist under British law(Lay Maung 1973: 174). Moreover, the association requested the authority to create an identification system of monk and to register monasteries(Lay Maung 1973: 165), and to create a post which is responsible for the Sanghas(Lay Maung 1973: 116).

The final attempt of the YMBA was to protect the Buddhist community. For this purpose the YMBA adopted two ways: one was to protect the image of Buddhism; and the other was to protect the rights Buddhist women who got marriage with non-Buddhist. In order to protect the image of Buddhism, the YMBA tried to prohibit the coming of non-Buddhist shoes on to pagodas(Lay Maung 1973: 138), to move British Army based in the Shwedagon Pagoda(Lay Maung

1973: 173), and to condemn the use of Buddhist pagoda pictures as a trademark used by non-Buddhist(Lay Maung 1973: 135). For the protection of the rights of Buddhist women, the association firstly condemned the marriage of Buddhist women with non-Buddhist in its fifth conference held in Pyinmana(Lay Maung 1973: 138). Secondly, it tried to publish a book condemning the marriage of Buddhist women with non-Buddhist. Finally, it demanded the government to judge cases of divorce of the Buddhist women who got married with non-Buddhist by the British law(Lay Maung 1973: 170).

To sum up, having a recourse to Buddhism, it can generally be said that the YMBA tried to protect the Buddhist community, promoting various aspects including educating, consolidating, requesting to systematize the community and called for demands legally for protection from economic, social and cultural oppressions by foreigners. The YMBA, in specific, set down the inherent character of the Burmese national ideology. By the inherent characteristic of Burmese national ideology means the focus only for the interest of indigenous ethnic groups whose religion is Buddhism, reflected in the ethnic attachment since the very beginning of the nationalist movements occurred in colonial Burma.

IV. Discussion

This study considers the inherent characteristic of Burmese national identity, specifically it reexamines the ethnic attachment focused on the Buddhists in Burma proper. Not only the character,

anti-colonialism, but also ethnic attachment, only which focus for the Burmese Buddhist, is an inherent character of Burmese Buddhist national ideology which shaped the Burmese national identity. As I have explained above, Burmese national identity were formed along with the nationalist movements during the colonial period. Colonial Burma, later independent Myanmar, shaped by the colonizer British, and from the beginning of British administration in the mid of the 19th Century, to the separation of British Burma from British India in 1937, a lot of Indians emigrated to colonial Burma, like some Chinese. The ethnic formation in colonial Burma provided a new variation of the example that mentioned the ethnic attachments by the religion become manifest with equal intensity and exclusivity.

Along with the bureaucratic reforms, social, economic and political conditions were changed and anti-colonial movements broke out in colonial Burma by the nationalist associations: the Young Men's Buddhist Association(1906-1920) and the General Council of Burmese Associations(1920-1930), which asked for Home Rule; that when We, Myanmar Association(1930-1938), which aimed at regaining independence; and that when Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League(1945-1948) which target to build "Union of Burma."

In order to portray the inherent character, this study re-examines the Burmese national identity devoted on a descriptive analysis of the Burmese national ideology raised by the YMBA. From the discussion so far, it can be concluded that there is an inherent character, which only focused for the interest of indigenous ethnic groups whose religion is Buddhism, in the ethnic attachment of the Burmese national identity. The YMBA had coined the term Buddhist and

advocated the indigenous people, a community being oppressed by foreigners such as Indian, Chinese and Europeans. In this way, this inherent character, as a Burmese national ideology, came out since the very beginning of the nationalist movements. The DBA, We Myanmar Association, also coined the term Burmese which included all indigenous ethnic groups who were suffering from political and economic distress. Since then, the term Burmese has been defined from the wider perspectives. On the eve of the independence, the 1947 Constitution adopted the term Myanmar composed of all homogeneous ethnic groups lived in Union of Burma(Myanmar).

As mentioned in the article, however, the YMBA was the association which protected the indigenous ethnic people whose religion is Buddhism promoting various cultural activities and made requests and demand legally for the release from economic, social and cultural oppression by foreigners in the colonial order. In distinguishing the community, the YMBA only focused for its indigenous people. The association, although, defined the Burmese national identity from wider perspectives, at least in theory, it was difficult to aloof all ethnic minorities lived in British Burma due to some Chinese are Buddhist and all indigenous people are non-Buddhist. On the other hand, the DBA, We Burmese Association, mobilized the Burmese national identity from the wider perspective included the all indigenous in Burma proper, at best all citizens of British Burma including the Chinese and the Indians. The ideology raised by the DBA, however, entirely relied on the language and history of major ethnic Burmese. Following the same line, on the eve of the independence, Burmese nationalist leaders adopted the Burmese

national identity in order to incorporate the national identity, for the purpose of integrating a single state composed of Burma proper and frontier areas. As a matter of fact that the essence of the ideology was originated in the term Burma by the DBA and has been interchangeably used after the independence period.

Keywords: Burmese national identity, Myanmar, Buddhism, Burmese, Colonia Burma

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<국문요약>

“버마인은 누구인가?": 버마 민족 정체성 기본이념에 관한연구

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본 연구의 목적은 현 미얀마 민주화 과정에 관심을 갖는 정치인들과 국민들 사이에 논쟁을 가져오는 미얀마 민족 정체성에 대한 논의를 심도 있고 폭넓게 하는 것이다. 이 연구는 주로 YMBA로 인해 형성된 ‘버마인’의 민족 정체성을 검토하고, 이후 독립 정부에서 채택된 미얀마 민족 정체성을 미얀마 독립운동의 역사와 함께 검토하였다. 미얀마 민족 정체성의 기본 이념은 민족주의 운동 초기에 형성되었다. 기본적인 민족이념에 대한 연구는 식민지배 하에서 출발하였으며, 이러한 연구는 미얀마 정계에서 중요한 역할을 하고 있는 미얀마 민족 정체성의 핵심적 본질을 이해하는 데에 중요한 요소가 된다.

주제어: 버마 민족 정체성, 미얀마, 불교도, 버마인, 식민지 미얀마