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A Norm of Burmese Kingship?

The Concept of Raza-dhamma through Five Konbaung Period Texts

Aurore Candier ¹

Southeast Asian Studies have often focused on the Theravada Buddhist political culture in history. In a pluridisciplinary approach, scholars have tried to better appreciate the function of Buddhist kingship as the primary ordering principle of society (Aung Thwin 1983; Barwell 1978; Lieberman 1984; Lingat 1989; Mendelsohn 1975; Tambiah 1976). They have often underlined the importance of the concept *rāja dhamma*. S.J. Tambiah defines *rajadharmā* as a the 'whole duty of the king' in the Brahmanical conception of kingship. The king's duty is primarily that of protection and is developed as a branch of the social ethics

¹. Phd candidate, EHESS, Paris. I would like to thank Aung Soe Min, Nance Cunningham, Alexey Kirichenko, Jacques Leider, Christian Lammerts, Alicia Turner and Alice Vittrant for their valuable help and stimulating remarks. I use a conventional romanization of Burmese without diacritic signs. But I use 'q' to represent the glottal stops and I differentiate the consonant ɣ *ra-gauq* from ɰ *ya-paleiq* by using respectively 'r' and 'y'. The romanized word is given in Burmese characters in an endnote. Although directly borrowed from the Pāli, a word taken from a Burmese text is given in Burmese romanization. Names of places and proper names retain their standard romanization.

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under the label *rajadharmā* (Tambiah 1976: 24). In early Buddhist literature, the Pāli concept *rāja dhamma* refers to a tenfold code for righteous kings (Davids and Stede 1921-5: 570; Lieberman 1984: 65-67; Tambiah 1976: 49).

In this sense, recent historiography of Burma Studies has concentrated on the Early Konbaung period (1752-1819), known for its strong religious and intellectual activity and its quest for political legitimacy (Okudaira 2000: 253; Charney 2000, 2002; Leider 2004; Lieberman 1996). Several scholars have studied the Burmese concept of *raza-dhamma*³, which derives from the Pāli *rāja dhamma*, in Early Konbaung texts. A Buddhist ruler should refer in all his actions to a norm of kingship known as *rāja dhamma*, which pervades the texts of the Pāli canon, the *jātaka* or stories of the Buddha Gautama's former lives, and the Burmese historical and legal literature. The standard formulation of the *rāja dhamma* norm is a set of 'ten royal laws', most of the time associated with other sets of principles (Koenig 1990: 69). This norm of kingship *raza-dhamma*, corresponding to *min-kyin-tara*⁴ or 'kingly obligations' in Burmese language, was finally realized by king Bodawhpaya (1782-1819) (Okudaira 2003; Okudaira and Huxley 2001).⁴

³. ရာဇဝေပွ။

³. မင်းကျင့်တရား။

⁴. In the study of the legal text *Manugye dhammathat* of 1782, the authors find that certain chapters were added to the original manuscript from Alaungpaya's reign (1752-1760). The first chapter of the 1782 version has an addition of 22 lists concerning the royal duties and the principles of good government. The authors suggest that Richardson (1847) used a manuscript close to Alaungpaya's version. The lists of the 1782 version are not found in Richardson's. Then the authors conclude that the lists were added during Bodawhpaya's reign.

Historians, while studying the period loosely defined as the middle and late Konbaung period (1820's-1880's), never granted to this concept the importance it deserves, due to the absence of its detailed analysis, My objective is to fill this gap. In general, historians identify this period as starting in 1824 with the first Anglo-Burmese war and ending with the annexation more than sixty years later. Traditionally studies have understood this time in terms of a long struggle for the survival of Burmese cultural identity, in the resistance and the adaptation to the realities of a changing world (Myo Myint 1987). However more recently, the question of the gradual changes of the socio-political system has replaced the conceptualisation of the period of one as a struggle of tradition in a modernising world (Thant Myint Oo 2001). In fact, this time of transition between two relatively well-defined periods, the Early Konbaung period and the Colonial period, starts before the first Anglo-Burmese war and continues several decades after the annexation.

The study of texts is twofold. First, it enables us to understand the theory of power inasmuch as its practice can not be deduced from the texts themselves. Second, the choice of words in those texts helps to understand the mindset of their authors and hence the society they live in. Through a historical and linguistic investigation of five significant texts, I will show how the concept of *raza-dhamma* participated in the gradual changes of the socio-political representations during three periods: Bagyidaw's reign (1820's-1830's), Early Mindon's reign (1850's-1860's) and the Late Konbaung period (end of the 1870's-1890's).

These three periods were rich in socio-political and cultural changes. Bagyidaw's reign was marked by the First Anglo-Burmese War, which saw the

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defeat of the Court of Ava. The king had to cede the provinces of Manipur, Arakan and the Tennasserim to the British power under the peace treaty of Yandabo in 1826. A second defeat in 1852 was sanctioned by the amputation of the province of Lower Burma. In Early Mindon's reign, a new generation of scholars and officials, who had grown up in the shadow of British power and at a time of rapidly increasing knowledge about the outside world, had to face this geopolitical situation (Than Myint Oo 2001: 106). Mindon and his brother and heir-apparent the Kanaung Prince had the will to reform the government and to modernise the country. In the 1870's, Imperialists in Europe were pressing for further intervention in conquered territories. While commercial interests in Upper Burma were developing, British officials became increasingly involved in internal Burmese politics (Than Myint Oo 2001: 140). Thus, the Burmese were even more exposed to ideas and technology from the West during the late Konbaung period. A faction of reformist ministers dominated both the government of king Mindon and of king Thibaw (1878-1885). Some of these officials were appointed in the British civil service after the annexation of the country to British India in 1886, acknowledging the last defeat of the Mandalay court.

The first text I will investigate is from the *raza-win*³ genre, a Burmese genre specialised in the narrative of royal successions from the time of the first ruler Mahathammata through the progression of royal cities (Kirichenko 2005: 3). It is the compilation of *Hman-nan maha-raza-win-daw-kyi* (hereafter *Hman-nan*) by a

³. ရာဇဝင်

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committee of 13 scholars started in 1829 (Hla Maung 1963).⁶ The next four texts belong to the category of normative literature. They form a group of treatises on good moral and political behaviour addressed by a scholar to the ruler, his family and high officials. Although similar in their nature and composition, these treatises do not belong to a defined literary genre. However, as the major texts are political philosophy treatises, they are comparable to the literature of the Prince's counsellor in the West (Damien 2003). The *Razaw-wada-kyan* (hereafter MONYWE) was written by the Monywe *hsara-taw* (1766-1834) from 1827 to 1832 (Monywe Hsaya-taw 1926).⁷ The *Dhammaw-padetha-kyan* (hereafter *Dhammaw*) was written in 1829 by Maha-dhamma-thinkyan (1755-1833), the former Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* and *thathana-baing*⁸ of king Bodawhpaya (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962).⁹ The *Raza-thewaka-dipani-kyan* (hereafter *Raza-thewaka*) was written twenty years later by the third Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* (1815-1868) (Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901).¹⁰ The *Raza-dhamma-thingaha-kyan* (hereafter HPO HLAING) was submitted to king Thibaw (1878-1885) by a high official, U

⁶. In addition to the printed version cited here, I have also consulted a manuscript copy from 1210 M.E. (1848) of the manuscript, *Maha-raza-win-kyi* မဟာရာဇဝင်ကြီး, National Library of Yangon, Kinwun Mingyi collection n°186.

⁷. I also consulted a copy from 1238 M.E. (1876), National Library of Yangon, *Razaw-wada khaw monrwe hsara-taw mettasa* ရာဇဝင်(ခေါ်)မုံရွေးဆရာတော်မေတ္တာစာ, Bernard collection, n°845.

⁸. သာသနာပိုင်၊ a *thathana-baing* is the monk to whom the king entrusted the affairs of *sasana*.

⁹. I also consulted a manuscript from 1191 M.E. (1829) from the National Library of Yangon, *Dhammaw-padetha-kyan* ဓမ္မာပဒေသကျမ်း, Taung Twin collection, n° 3112.

¹⁰. I also consulted a copy of the original palm-leaf manuscript from the National Library of Yangon, Kinwun Mingyi collection, n° 198.

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Hpo Hlaing (1829-1883), in 1878 (Hpo Hlaing 1960).¹¹ To help the reader, an appendix lists the spelling and meaning of the ten *raza-dhamma* as found in the different texts.

I will briefly discuss the concept of *raza-dhamma* as it existed before the Early Konbaung period, through an analysis of a few Burmese *raza-win* and normative texts. Then, I will show the variations of the concept during Bagyidaw's reign through three contemporary texts: *Hman-nan*, MONYWE and *Dhammaw*. After that, I will look at the *Raza-thewaka* from Early Mindon's reign and show how it is related to *Dhammaw* from Bagyidaw's reign. Finally, I will present the concept in HPO HLAING and compare it with a post-annexation text, to show how the concept shaped the representation of the function of kingship in the Late Konbaung period.

The *raza-dhamma* before the Early Konbaung period

Prior to the Early Konbaung period, we find references and allusions to the concept of *raza-dhamma* or *min-kyin-tara* in various Burmese texts dealing with kingship, such as didactic poems adopting stories from *jātaka*, moral instructions and admonishments given to the king, royal orders, *raza-win* and law treatises or

¹¹. I also consulted the original *parabaiq* from the National Library, Kinwun Mingyi collection, n°852 (vol. 1); n°853 (vol. 2); n°854 (vol. 3); n°855 (vol. 4); n°856 (vol. 5); n°857 (vol. 6). A critical study of Hpo Hlaing's work can be found in (Houtman 1999). L.E. Bagshaw read a paper about Hpo Hlaing's work during the *Burma Studies* conference of Gothenburg in 2002 (Bagshaw 2002), and translated HPO HLAING under the title Yaw Mingyi U Hpo Hlaing, *Rajadhammasangaha*, [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/THE_RAJADHAMMASANGAHA.pdf) THE_RAJADHAMMASANGAHA.pdf, 2004, 181 p.

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dhammathaq.¹² These references are made to a list of 'ten laws of kingly conducts' *dasa rāja dhamma* in Pāli or *min-kyin-tara-hsè-pa*¹³ in Burmese: 1. *dāna* or alms-giving 2. *sīla* or morality 3. *pariccāga* or liberality 4. *ajjava* or straightness 5. *maddava* or gentleness 6. *tapo* or self-restriction 7. *akkodha* or non-anger 8. *avihiṅsā* or non-hurtfulness 9. *khanti* or forbearance 10. *avirodhana* or non-opposition. The interpretation of this list into Burmese and the association of this list with other sets of kingly duties differ according to the texts and contexts. Thus, the concept of *raza-dhamma* or *min-kyin-tara* is not static, but a developing concept both in regards of scope (in the association of the central *dasa rāja dhamma* list with other sets of kingly conducts) and content (the interpretation of the different components of *dasa rāja dhamma* list).

Ryuji Okudaira found that the earliest references to the list of ten laws appear in different *jātaka* and in the Burmese *nīti* literature, a Pāli corpus formed during the Ava period, containing didactic poetry of Indian origin (adapted from Sanskrit or Pāli works, the largest Pāli source being the *jātaka* collection), and translated into Burmese in the late 18th century. The list can be found in the *Dhammanīti*, the earliest surviving Pāli *nīti* text of Burma, which may be a late 14th century text (Okudaira and Huxley 2001: 253, 7). In the Pāli text *Dhammanīti*, we find the expression *rāja dhamme* which seems to represent a concept of 'law of the king' including several sets of laws. The first is the set of 'ten laws' or *dasa dhamme* which the king or *rājā* must always remember and practice. The second is the set of the four 'grounds of popularity' or *saṅgaha* (*Dhamma-niti pali nithaya* 1928;

¹². ဓမ္မသတ္တံ။

¹³. မင်းကျင့်တရားဆယ်ပါး။

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Gray 1886: 92-5).¹⁴ This list, usually given as 1. *dāna* or alms-giving 2. *peyyavajja* or kindly speech 3. *atthacariyā* or life of usefulness 4. *Samānattatā* or impartiality, can be found in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (*Davids and Stede 1921-5: 472*).

Okudaira mentions that the list of the ten laws can also be found in a non-standard order in the *Lawkathara pyo*, a *nīti* text in Burmese verse which may be a late 15th century text (Okudaira and Huxley 2001). Usually attributed by the Burmese historical tradition¹⁵ to the Kandaw-mingyaung *hsara-taw*, Sagaing division, the work is in fact a *hsonmasa*,¹⁶ a sort of poem of moral advice.¹⁷ We have to mention here that the *Lawkathara* is also attributed to the Rakhine *hsara-taw* Maha Thinga Yaza (14th century), tutor of the king Mingyizwa Sawkè of Ava (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1956: 137).¹⁸ In the first section of the moral advice to the king, the list of the ten laws can be found associated to the four *saṅgha*, represented by the Burmese form *thingyoq*.¹⁹ They are said to be traditional moral

¹⁴. I also consulted a copy of 1227 (1865), National Library of Yangon, *Dhamma-niti kyan nithya* ဓမ္မနိတိကျမ်းနိဿယ, Bernard collection n°861, f. ၁၂-၀၆၃/၇-ကျော်။

¹⁵. Charney (2002) refers to the Burmese historical tradition in his analysis of the early Konbaung literati. I talk about the Theravadin historical tradition when I refer to history as seen in canonical and post-canonical Pāli texts. The Burmese historical tradition is a continuation of this tradition, through different literary genres such as *raza-win*. Oral traditions participate in the making of the Burmese historical tradition as well.

¹⁶. ဆုမွေတ၊

¹⁷. The 1886 list of manuscripts kept in the royal library attributes the authorship of the *Lawkathara pyo* to Kandaw mingyaung *hasra-taw* (Maing Khaing Myosa 1956) more recently see (Hla Thamein 1961: 10)

¹⁸. As the verses contain Rakhine linguistic forms, the scholar Min Thu Wun follows this attribution (Yakhine Thu Mya 1996).

¹⁹. သင်္ဂါတိ. The concept is later represented by the Burmese form *thingaha* သင်္ဂါ borrowed from the Pāli *saṅgha*.

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conducts of the kings since Mahathammata (Yakhine Thu Mya 1996: 48-9). The list of ten laws (in the standard order) also appears in the *Ko-khan pyo* or *Sathudhammathara pyo*, a didactic poem based on the *Hattipala jāataka* and attributed to Shin Maha Rahtathara of Ava (1468-1530). The list is not associated to any other set however, the phrase *raza-dhamma* is used in the Burmese verses (Hsara Ma Ga 1957).²⁰

The list of ten laws is not found in the earliest surviving *raza-win*, the *Raza-win-kyaw* of Shin Thilawunta (1453-1518).²¹ The *Raza-win-kyaw* does give several sets of conducts or *a-kyin*²² including the four *saṅgaha* translated in to Burmese by the 'four conducts that cause the popularity of the kings'.²³ But the 'three conducts to be considered by the king as long as he lives' given by the *Raza-win-kyaw* are totally different from the list of *dasa rāja dhamma*.²⁴ Together with the four *saṅgaha*, the *Raza-win-kyaw* gives the list of the seven *aparihaniya*, or 'seven laws for the increase of the prosperity', translated into Burmese by the 'seven conducts that cause the prosperity of the royal city'.²⁵

²⁰. *Raza-dhamma* written as ရာဇဝံ၊

²¹. UHRC, *Shin-thilawuntha si-rin-thaw-raza-win-kyaw* ရှင်သီလဝံသစီရင်သောရာဇဝင်ကျော်, palm-leaf manuscript n°562 (copy from 1789), f. ဟဲ-ကျော်/ဟံ-ဝမ်း။

²². အကျင့်။

²³. *Min-to thingyo-ra-thaw a-kyin-le-pa* မင်းတို့သင်းမြို့တံရာသောအကျင့်လေးပါး။

²⁴. The three conducts or *a-kyin* အကျင့် that the ruler should consider are in fact related to three places: the place he was born or *hpwa-ra-a-raq* ဖွားရာအရပ်, the place where he was consecrated or *a-bhitheiq-khan-ra-a-raq* အဘိသိက်ခံရာအရပ်, and the place where he gained victory or *si-mye-aung-ra-a-raq* စစ်မြေအောင်ရာအရပ်။

²⁵. In *Raza-win-kyaw*, the list of the 'seven conducts that cause the prosperity of the royal city' *pyi-htè si-pwa-ra-thaw a-kyin-hkuni-pa* or ပြည်ထမ်းပွားရာသောအကျင့်ခုနစ်ပါး။ is given as 1. to hold meetings and to consult regularly 2. to be in unanimity in every field 3. to follow the old

The *Maha-raza-win-kyi* attributed to U Kala – I refer to it as KALA – enlarged upon *Raza-win-kyaw* 200 years later and broadened the scope of the *raza-dhamma* or *min-kyin-tara* concept (Kala 1960).²⁶ A reference to 'ten laws of the king' appears in the narrative of the origin myth of Mahathammata. After he received the *dhammathaq*, Mahathammata decided to give justice according to the law, to reject the four biases or *agati*.²⁷ In accord with the law of the four grounds of popularity or *thingyoq* and the 'ten laws of the king' or *min-i-tara-hsè-pa*, the king enjoyed the well-being of kings (Kala 1960: 14). Further in the text, KALA refers to the eleventh Mahathammata's good government, in accord with the *min-i-tara-hsè-pa*, the four *thingaha* and the seven *aparihaniya* as well (Kala 1960: 19). No reference to the source of this new law is given by KALA. But in the expression 'ten laws of the king', or *min-i-tara-hsè-pa*, we see a representation of the concept *rāja dhamme* as found in the *Dhammanīti*: a concept of 'law of the king' including several sets of laws, starting with the 'ten laws' or *dasa dhamme*.

prescriptions 4. to treat the elders with respect and veneration 5. to not abduct women 6. to pay respect to the Nat who watch over the capital city and the rest of the kingdom 7. to take proper care of the monks. We notice the absence of the Pāli form *aparihaniya* written in Burmese script အဝရိတဘနိယ. The original list of the seven *aparihaniya* can be found in the Mahāparinibbānasutta (*Dīgha-nikāya*).

²⁶. I also consulted a copy from the National Library to verify the spelling, Kinwun Mingyi collection n°186. On U Kala's chronicle, see (Lieberman 1986; Thet Htoot 1961). Kirichenko (2006) argues that *Maha-raza-win-kyi* may be considered a later name of the text *Mahayazawuntha*, an official court chronicle of Nyaungyan period which developed incrementally and could not be attributed to a single compiler. A version of *Mahayazawuntha* earlier than the one known to us must have existed.

²⁷. အဝဝဝဝ။

Further, KALA gives, amongst other prescriptions and moral qualities, the list of the 'ten laws of kingly conduct' or *min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa*.²⁸ Here, we find a reference to the source. According to KALA, this list is taken from the sub-commentary or *ṭīkā* upon the Book of the Fives of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. The list is given as follow:

1. 'to give alms' or *a-hlu-pe* 2. 'to observe the moral precepts' or *thila hsauq-tè*
3. 'to dispense in charity' or *we-hpan sun-kyè* 4. 'to be upright' or *hpyaung-maq-thaw-hnalon-taw shi* 5. 'to be kind' or *nu-ñan-thein-mwe-thaw-hnalon-taw shi*
6. 'to perform austerities' or *cho-chan-thaw-akyin-taw shi* 7. 'absence of royal anger' or *a-myeq-taw ma-shi* 8. 'not to ill-treat the people of the royal city' or *pyi-thu-to-a hñin-hsè-hneiq-seq ma-mu* 9. to be tolerant or *thi-khan* 10. 'not to be oppressive' or *choq-chè-chin kin*.²⁹ On a morpho-syntactic and semantic point of view, the expression 'ten laws of kingly conducts' or *min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa* corresponds to the shorter form *min-kyin-tara-hsè-pa*. Along with the four *thingyoq* and the seven *aparihaniya*, we have to mention the presence of a list of 'twelve laws of kingly conducts' or *min-to-kyin-taw mu-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-hniq-pa*, taken from the *Suvaṇṇasāma jātaka* (Kala 1960: 41).³⁰

²⁸. *Min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa* or မင်းတို့ကျင့်ရာသောတရားဆယ်ပါး၊

²⁹. 1. အလှူပေး။ 2. သီလဆောက်တည်။ 3. ဝေဘန်စွန့်ကြဲ။ 4. ဖြောင့်မတ်သောနှလုံးတော်ရှိ။

5. နူးညံ့သိမ်မွေ့သောနှလုံးတော်ရှိ။ 6. ငြိမ်ခြံသောအကျင့်တော်ရှိ။ 7. အမြတ်တော်မရှိ။ 8. ပြည်သူတို့အားညှဉ်းဆဲနှိမ်စက်မမှု။

9. သည်းခံ။ 10. ချုပ်ချယ်ခြင်းကင်း။ I understand *pyi* as a royal city duly built and consecrated, following Kirichenko's definition (2005: 34 n1)

³⁰. *Min-to-kyin-taw mu-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa* or မင်းတို့ကျင့်တော်မူရာသောတရားဆယ်ပါး၊ This list seems to corresponds to the list of twelve kingly obligations given by Okudaira (2001: 250) or 1. Not to transgress against the Three gems 2. To avoid ignorance 3. To be well-disposed towards charitable donors [alms-givers or *a-hlu-pe-tha-thu* အလှူပေးသသူ] 4. To provide long-term support to scholars [I would translate here *piṇa-shi* or ပိညာရှိ by wise men] 5. To give alms to those in immediate need

Through the *Dhammanīti* and its various sources (mainly the *jātaka* collection), early Ava period scholars could have access to a Pāli *rāja dhamme* concept of 'law of the king', including the sets of 'ten laws' or *dasa dhamme* and the four grounds of popularity or *saṅgaha*. The concept is found in different didactic poems attributed to the early Ava period. Like in the *Dhammanīti*, the list of ten laws is associated with the four *saṅgaha* in the *Lawkathara pyo*, in a non-standard order. This same list is found alone and in a standard order in the *Ko-khan pyo* or *Sathudhammathara pyo*. But it seems it was not yet integrated in its extensive form into the *raza-win* narrative in the early 16th century. In the *Raza-win-kyaw*, we find no set of ten laws associated to other sets, such as the four *saṅgaha* or conducts that cause the popularity of the kings and the seven *aparihaniya* or seven conducts that cause the prosperity of the royal city.

In the early 18th century, KALA's narrative broadened the scope of the *raza-dhamma* or *min-kyin-tara* concept. The origin myth of Mahathammata refers to 'ten laws of the king' or *min-i-tara-hsè-pa*, related to the four *thingyoq* and the seven *aparihaniya*. It seems to represent the concept *rāja dhamme* as found in the *Dhammanīti*: a concept of 'law of the king' including several sets of laws, starting with the 'ten laws' or *dasa dhamme*. Further, amongst other sets of laws including the four *thingyoq* and the seven *aparihaniya*, KALA's narrative gives a set of 'ten

6. To follow *dhammathat* tradition faithfully [I would translate here as 'to establish the tradition from the *dhammathaq* on'] 7. To adopt the policy of following precedents 8. To keep the old stories well in mind 9. To observe the five precepts of Buddhism [moral precepts] 10. To control one's anger 11. To identify the twelve kinds of misdeeds 12. To govern the populace and the monks

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laws of kingly conducts' or *min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa*. The 'ten laws of kingly conducts' or *min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa* and the 'ten laws of the king' or *min-i-tara-hsè-pa* received by Mahathammata seem to be part of the same concept. The two different expressions may just reveal the use of several distinct sources for the compilation of KALA, bringing several representations to the shaping process of a single concept: a pristine law of kingly conduct. In fact, two traditions appear to be brought together: the Burmese historical tradition and its various sources on one side, and a normative literary tradition, including the *Dhammanīti*, other Pāli *nīti* texts and their various sources, as well as different Burmese didactic poems, on the other side.

***Hman-nan raza-win* and two contemporary texts**

It would be interesting to explore more pre-Konbaung and Early Konbaung texts taken from different genres (historical, legal and normative) to put the emergence of a norm of kingship *rāja dhamma* in a larger perspective. However for this article, I will focus on the gradual change of this norm from Bagyidaw's reign up to the late Konbaung period. In this period, we find the most comprehensive accounts with the maximum number of sets of kingly conducts associated to the list of 'ten laws of kingly conducts'. I will not concentrate on the *rāja dhamma* as a generic term which refers to all sets collectively, but on its central concept of *dasa rāja dhamma* or 'ten laws of kingly conducts', which interpretation varies between different sources. I will show how individual

components of the list of ten are understood in a certain context, starting with three texts from Bagyidaw's reign.

Hman-nan raza-win

Hman-nan was partly built on KALA, which it amended and developed, using other sources. Thus, *Hman-nan* refers to a concept of ten laws in the narrative of the origin myth of Mahathammata. Here we find both the expressions 'ten laws of kingly conduct' or *min-kyin-tara-hsè-pa* and 'ten laws of the king' or *min-i-tara-hsè-pa* (Hla Maung 1963: 18). *Hman-nan* does not follow KALA for the succession of several Mahathammata. Further, *Hman-nan* gives the list of the 'ten laws of kingly conducts' or *min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa* and specifies that these laws are found in the *Mahāham̐sa jāṭaka*, and not in the sub-commentary upon the Book of the Fives of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, despite the fact that KALA, known as '*raza-win-kyi*' in *Hman-nan*, refers to the latter (Hla Maung 1963: 68). The expression used by *Hman-nan* in the narrative of the origin myth of Mahathammata is *min-kyin-tara-hsè-pa*, the shorter form for *min-to-kyin-ra-thaw-tara-hsè-pa*. Where two expressions are found in two different parts of KALA, the same expression is now found in the corresponding two parts of *Hman-nan*. The 'ten laws of kingly conduct' and the 'ten laws of the king' of the origin myth of Mahathammata are clearly part of a same concept.

In *Hman-nan*, the list of the 'ten laws of kingly conducts' is not much different from that of KALA. However, slight changes taken as a whole give a different tone to *Hman-nan*. The third law was 'to dispense in charity' in KALA. In *Hman-nan*, the verb compound 'to dispense' or *we-hpan* is replaced by 'to offer' or

pe-kan.³¹ 'To offer' or *pe-kan* is still combined with the compound verb 'to give away in charity' or *sun-kyè*. Two centuries earlier, the *Raza-win-kyaw* used this verb compounds construction *pe-kan sun-kyè* to represent the concept of the first ground of popularity or *saṅgaha*, in fact 'to give alms'.³² *Hman-nan* brings closer two laws taken from different sets of kingly conducts and relates them to the same concept, 'to give away in charity'.

Along the same lines, the last law is no longer 'not to be oppressive' but becomes 'not to oppose the people' or *pyi-thu-to-hnin ma-hsan-kyin-chin*.³³ It conveys the meaning of 'not to go against the wishes' of the people. The expressions used may reveal a different view on the responsibilities of the king towards his people. And the people's wishes are taken into account as well. It is important to note that the expression *pyi-thu*, in its extended version, is the compound noun 'the monks, the laymen, people of the royal city' or *pyi-thu lu rahan*.³⁴ However in the Konbaung period, the translation of *pyi-thu* by 'people' instead of 'people of the royal city' seems to be more appropriate.

Hman-nan seems to place more emphasis on morality than KALA. The second law, that is 'to observe the moral precepts' in KALA, indicates in *Hman-nan* that the moral precepts or *thila* are divided into two sets, of five and ten.³⁵ In

³¹. *Pe-kan* is ပေးကမ်း။

³². *Raza-win-kyaw*, f. တဲ-ကျော်/တဲ-ဝမ်း။

³³. ပြည်သူတို့နှင့်မဆန့်ကျင်ခြင်း။

³⁴. See for example Than Tun (1986: 1:392), for an early usage (1638) of *pyi-thu lu rahan* or ပြည်သူလူရဟန်း။ Schober (1989: 63) translates *lu* as 'layman', one of the meanings given in Judson (Judson, Stevenson, and Eveleth 1953: 1015) .

³⁵. Schober (1989: 73) says that *sīla* are vows to adhere to a canonically prescribed set of ethical actions. The ten precepts are found in the *Dhammika sutta* of the *Sutta nipata*. They

this sense, the sixth law now encourages the observance of 'eight *thila*' rather than 'performing austerities' or *cho-chan-thaw-akyin-taw shi* as in KALA.³⁶ *Hman-nan* seems to reinforce the practice of the ten laws in conformity to one of the fundamental Buddhist practices, the observance of the *sīla*, and particularly the observance of the eight *sīla* on fasting days. This may just reveal that the compilers of *Hman-nan* chose to reproduce the commentarial interpretation upon the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka*, which was apparently not the case in KALA.

I found that the list of 'ten laws of kingly conducts' is clearly related to the 'ten laws of the king' found in the origin myth of Mahathammata. They are two representations of the same concept pervading the narrative, that is, a 'law of the king' inherited from the original king, including several sets of laws and starting with the 'ten laws of kingly conducts'. The sources of the concept are better identified. Earlier I discussed the importance given to the accurate reference to sources in *Hman-nan*. The 'ten laws of kingly conducts' are attributed to the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka* and related to the origin myth of Mahathammata. However, it is important to note that *Dhammanīti* is not cited as a reference. The interpretation of the 'ten laws of kingly conducts' delineates better the relations between the ruler and the ruled emphasizing moral precepts or *thila* and the act of 'giving away in charity'. In this, *Hman-nan* seems to reproduce the commentarial interpretation of the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka*. I do not have space here to discuss the latter texts of the *raza-win* genre except to note that they follow the conventions

contain the following prohibitions: 1. taking life, 2. taking what is not given, 3. sexual adultery, 4. lying, 5. intoxicants, 6. eating after noon, 7. pursuit of entertainments and music, 8. use of garlands, scents and unguents, 9. use of high seats or beds, 10. receiving gold and silver.

*. *Ahtinga thila* or အဂ္ဂိဒီလဲ can be translated as 'moral precept with eight parts'.

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of *Hman-nan* concerning the concept of *dasa rāja dhamma* or 'ten laws of kingly conducts'.³⁷

Two contemporary normative texts

A study of normative texts is useful to put the concept of dhamma raza into perspective. Two contemporary treatises were written by two of the 13 scholars belonging to the redaction committee of *Hman-nan*, i.e. Monywe *hsara-taw* and the official Maha-dhamma-thinkyan. I understand these important normative texts to be political philosophy treatises.

MONYWE (1827-1832)

At this point, I would like to give a few details about the composition of Monywe *hsara-taw*'s *Razaw-wada-kyan*. According to the Burmese historical tradition, the Monywe *hsara-taw* (from the district of Alon) was invited to Ava by king Bagyidaw.³⁸ The king built a monastery for Monywe *hsara-taw*, and gave him the title of 'tutor of the king' or *raza-guru*.³⁹ In 1827, Monywe *hsara-taw* first wrote for the king a poem of kindly advice or *metta-sa*.⁴⁰ The *thathana-baing*

³⁷. The publication of *Hman-nan* contains only the first three bundles of the original manuscript and covers Burmese history from the origins up to 1754. The last two volumes of the original manuscript are published as the first part of Maung Maung Tin (1967 /1905: v1), henceforth *Konbaung-hset*. This first part covers the history of the Konbaung dynasty from Alaunghpaya's reign up to 1821. For a thorough analysis of the *Konbaung-hset maha-raza-win-taw-kyi*, see Htun Aung Chain (2005). I would mention here that the *Konbaung-hset maha-raza-win-taw-kyi* does not relate the origin myth of Mahathammata. However, a chronicle from 1891, Maung Maung Tin (1969 /1891) gives the set of 'ten royal rules' as in *Hman-nan*.

³⁸. For biographies, I use Hla Thamein (1961), Tin Naing To (2001), and Ba Thaug (2002). Biographies are often based on oral traditions.

³⁹. ရာဇဂုရု၊

⁴⁰. မေတ္တုစာ၊

advised Monywa *hsara-taw* to develop on his poem. The original poem was composed of 165 verses. In the treatise, each of them was enlarged upon in prose, starting with the story of one of the 550 lives of the Buddha Gautama or *jātaka* or some other edifying tale, and ending with an 'instruction' or *upadetha*.⁴¹ The object is to teach the king through his reading of the work by giving him examples of kings who made fatal mistakes in the past. Mistakes that were 'as many as the cells in a beehive' (Monywe Hsaya-taw 1926: 548).

The section on the ten laws does not start with a story. First, the author speaks of the many instructions or *upadetha* that a king has to follow, but mentions that amongst them, ten are essential. Here, the author uses the Burmese expression *raza-dhamma*. The two most important *raza-dhamma* are the 'absence of anger' or *a-kawdha raza-dhamma* and the 'tolerance' or *khanti raza-dhamma*.⁴² When a king follows these two *raza-dhamma*, his subjects or *taing-naing-ganthu*⁴³ are happy even in bad times. As the king is not angry, he does not make mistakes and he can avoid hell. We notice here that the principle of non-opposition or *a-kawdha* is not restricted to the people or *pyi-thu*, but involves all subjects of the king.

In MONYWE, the concept of 'ten laws of the king' is represented by the expression *raza-dhamma-hsè-pa*.⁴⁴ The original list in Pāli is given.⁴⁵ Then, using

⁴¹. The Burmese word ဥပဒေသ is borrowed from the Pāli *upadesa*.

⁴². *A-kawdha raza-dhamma* is အကောဓရာဇဓမ္မ and *khanti raza-dhamma* is ခန္တိရာဇဓမ္မ။

⁴³. ထိုင်းနိုင်ငံသူ။ literally 'the people of the conquered territories'.

⁴⁴. ရာဇဓမ္မဆယ်ပါး။

⁴⁵. 1. ဒါနံ stands for the Pāli *dāna* 2. သီလံ for *sīla* 3. ပရိတ္တံ for *pariccāga* 4. အဇ္ဈံ for *ajjava* 5. မဒ္ဒံ for *maddava* 6. တပံ for *tapo* 7. အကောဓံ for *akkodha* 8. အဝိဟိန္ဒံ for *avihinsā* 9. ခန္တိံ for *khanti* 10. အဝိရောဓနံ for *avirodhana*.

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a style of composition that is close to *nissaya*, Monywa *hsara-taw* translates Pāli phrases into Burmese and then interprets them (Okell 1967; McDaniel 2003; Pruitt 1994). He gives their 'meaning' or *a-neq*.⁴⁶ In MONYWE, the phrase *raza-dhamma* is not only the Pāli form *rāja dhamma* written in Burmese script. In addition, in the commentaries, *raza-dhamma* is sometimes used a substitute for the Burmese phrase 'laws of the king' or *min-i-tara* and is used as an independent phrase in Burmese sentences.

MONYWE does not mention the reference the original list of the 'ten laws of the king' is taken from, contrary to *Hman-nan* that gives the *Mahāhamsa jātika* as the only source for the 'ten laws of kingly conduct'. But translation in MONYWE's list is not much different from the lists found in both KALA and *Hman-nan*. Like in KALA, the second law, the 'observance of the moral precepts', does not mention the two sets of five and ten *thila*. We may attribute this precision to *Hman-nan*. Like *Hman-nan*, MONYWE seems to reproduce the commentarial interpretation upon the *Mahāhamsa jātika* and encourages the observance of the eight *sīla* on fasting days. The sixth law *tapa* is now translated by 'to observe the eight moral precepts' or *u-po thi-tin-thon-chin*.⁴⁷

Then Monywa *hsara-taw* comments the theme of the two essential laws presented in the introduction:

'The absence of anger is the most important of all laws. The anger of the king ruins the lives and the possessions of his subjects. Who does not destroy gives life. That is to

⁴⁶. *A-neq* is အနက်။

⁴⁷. ဥပုသ်သီတင်သုံးခြင်း။ The author specifies that he found the word *eindare* ကြေညံ့ in a treatise, which is meant today for controlled action or speech.

practice the law of *dana*. If you are not angry, you do not kill. Then you follow the *thila* prohibiting killing, and you respect the law of the observance of the five *thila*. If you get angry, you will ruin families. Not to ruin them is to respect the law of 'giving away in charity' (*sun-kyè*).⁴⁸ If you get angry, you act in opposition to *dhamma*.⁴⁹ When you are not angry, you can see what is righteous, and you follow the law of kindness as well. When angry, the observance of the eight *thila* and the control of action and speech cannot be maintained. When there is no anger you follow the law of restriction. In anger, you give ill-treatment. When there is no anger, you show 'love' (*metta*) and pity (*karuna*)⁵⁰ and follow the law of absence of ill-treatment. When there is no anger, you follow the law of tolerance. In anger, you go against the 'old records' (*thamaing-mawgun-haung-ko hpyeq*)⁵¹ by taking more than the customary tax. When there is no anger, you do not oppose your subjects and you follow the path of tradition (*lan-ro-ñi*).⁵² When you respect the law of non-anger (*a-kawdha*) you follow the nine other principles." (Monywe Hsaya-taw 1926: 480-1)⁵³

Then, Monywa *hsara-taw* presents three stories which show the negative effect of violence. The first two stories are *jātaka* with a common plot: the king of Benares gets angry and kills his son. The third story is taken from the Burmese historical tradition. During the Pagan era, the emperor of China sent his ambassadors to the Burmese court, but King Narathihapathe had them executed. That is why China invaded and devastated the royal city of Pagan. The author concludes by the instruction or *upadetha* that opened the section i.e. the fundamental laws of the king are the 'absence of anger' and the tolerance

⁴⁸. Literally 'not united' or *ma-ñi-ma-ñuq-kyin* မညီမညွတ်ကျင့်။

⁴⁹. ကရုဏာ။

⁵⁰. သမိုင်းမော်ကွန်းဟောင်းကိုဖျက်။

⁵¹. လမ်းရိုးညီ။

⁵². rough translation.

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(Monywe Hsaya-taw 1926: 482-88). In this exegesis, and especially in the story of king Narathihapathe, Monywe *hsara-taw* suggests using the diplomatic way that can be one of the application of the law of tolerance and absence of anger, rather than using force, that is, the rule of anger. The treatise was written after the Burmese were defeated by the British in the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824. King Bagyidaw had to cede the Tenasserim and Rakhine provinces to British India by signing the treaty of Yandabo. Monywe *hsara-taw*'s discourse reflects this context.

The morpho-syntactic and semantic analysis of *nissaya* parts in MONYWE reveal that the form *raza-dhamma* is used as an independent phrase in Burmese sentences as well. The discourse of MONYWE, following the commentarial interpretation upon the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka*, emphasizes the observance of the moral precepts and particularly the eight *sīla* on fasting days. MONYWE emphasizes the responsibilities of the king towards his subjects. The king should not oppose the wishes of his subjects. The discourse tries to discourage the king from using the force that leads to the ill-treatment of his subjects and encourages him to control his anger. In this sense, MONYWE suggests the diplomatic way to king Bagyidaw, humiliated a few years before by the British.

Dhammaw (1829)

Maung Htaung *hsara-taw*, the author of the *Dhammaw-padetha-kyan* was invited to the royal city after king Bodawhpaya took the throne. A few years later, the king entitled him *thathana-baing* (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: v-vi). In the last years of Bodawhpaya's reign, the first Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* retired

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from monastic life and became an official under the title of Maha-dhamma-thinkyan. In 1829, king Bagyidaw's officials invited him to write a treatise appropriate for the king and the four divisions of society (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: xx).⁵³ This same year Maha-dhamma-thinkyan was also a member of the committee for the compilation of *Hman-nan*. According to a late Burmese historical tradition, a 'song interpreted as a prophecy' or *tabaung*⁵⁴ revealed the spiritual influence of Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* in the early part of king Bodawphaya's reign (Aung 1954: 68; Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: vii-viii). From the time of this prediction on, the quality of the teaching of Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* was destined to influence the Konbaung rule. Although four succeeding Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* are found in the Burmese historical tradition, they are seen as unified in the single school of thought under the name Maung Htaung.

While *Hman-nan* exclusively referred to the *Mahāhamṣa jātaka*, *Dhammaw* mentions that references about the *raza-dhamma-tara-hsè-pa* are found in multiple *jātaka* (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: 23).⁵⁵ The original Pāli list is given as in MONYWE and the translation is very close to that of MONYWE. The second law or 'the observance of the *thila*' follows *Hman-nan* in the division of

⁵³. The four social divisions are part of the origin myth, see for example Tambiah (1976: 10-20) . As for the Burmese historical tradition, see Kala (1960: 14). The four divisions, အမျိုးလေးပါး *a-myo-le-pa*, are the မင်းမျိုး *min-myo* or in Pāli *khattiya*; the ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်မျိုး *ponna-myo* the *brāhmaṇa* in Pāli; the *thu-hte thu-kywè* သူဌေးသူကြွယ် for *vessa* in Pāli; the ဆင်းရဲ *hsin-rè* for the Pāli *sudda*.

⁵⁴. တဘောဇီ။

⁵⁵. Besides the *Mahāhamṣa jātaka*, seven other *jātaka* are mentioned, transcribed in Burmese «Mahathutathawma», «Razawwada», «Kukku», «Thumingala», «Zanathandha», «Gandhateinduka», «Sulahantha», «Rawhana» as well as other classical literary works.

two sets of five and ten *thila*. Following MONYWE, the sixth law is translated as 'to observe the eight moral precepts'.⁵⁶ The seventh law, the 'absence of royal anger', is transformed into a 'minimum of anger' or *a-myeq-nè-chin*.⁵⁷

The exegesis of Maha-dhamma-thinkyān is not based on the translation of this original list, but on the commentaries or *ahtakahta*⁵⁸ of the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka*.⁵⁹ The explanation about the third law, 'giving away in charity' or *pareissaga*, is particularly interesting. We remember that the concept of 'giving away in charity' was emphasized in the third royal law of *Hman-nan*. In fact, the original Pāli concept *pariccāga* means 'renunciation' or 'sacrifice' (Davids and Stede 1921-5: 424). But in the Burmese Buddhist understanding, it comes closer to the idea of 'giving away in charity', an idea that pervades the principle of 'alms-giving' or *dana*, a principle found both in the set of the *dasa rāja dhamma* and the set of the four grounds of popularity or *saṅgaha*, and as one of the ten perfections or *pāramī* to be practiced by the future Buddha. Thus in both *Hman-nan* and *Dhammaw*, the translation of the third royal law or *pareissaga* brings it closer to the general idea of *dāna*.

Hman-nan reflects this semantic blur of the concepts *dana* and *pareissaga*. But *Dhammaw* throws light on it through a rigorous semantic analysis, based on the commentarial interpretation of the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka*. *Dhammaw* notes that

*. *U-poq-hsauq-tè-chin* or ဥပုသ်ဆောက်တည်ခြင်း:

°. *A-myeq-nè-chin* or အမျှတ်နည်းခြင်း: is a compound of the noun *a-myeq* and the nominalized verb *nè-chin*. Notice the absence of the affix of sacred power *taw*.

*. *Ahtakahta* or အဋ္ဌကထာ stands for the Pāli *aṭṭhakathā*.

°. Authors certainly refer to the Buddhaghosa's commentary upon the *jātaka*. See NORMAN K.R., *Pali Litterature*, Jan GONDA (éds.), *A History of Indian Litterature*, vol. VII, fasc. 2, Wiesbaden, Harrasowitz, 1983, 209 p. NORMAN K.R. (1983: 118-128).

the two actions *dana* and *pareissaga* have different objectives. *Pareissaga* is meant only to reward officials 'commensurate with their contribution' or *a-htaiq-a-laiq*.⁶⁰ The rule of 'alms-giving' or *dana* is translated by the verb 'to make offerings' or *hlu*.⁶¹ The offering must be done with 'benevolence' or *sedana*.⁶² This action is meant to have an impact on the future lives of the giver, as this one literally 'aims at' the cycle of rebirth or *saṃsāra* while acting.⁶³

The explanations about the second law 'to observe the moral precepts' or *thila* and the sixth rule 'to observe the eight *thila*' or *tapa* are paired in the analysis, insisting on the observance of the eight *thila*. I understand here that the king has to lead the others to observe the eight *thila*. Following MONYWE, *Dhammaw* pairs the laws of 'minimum of anger' or *a-kawdha* and 'absence of ill-treatment' or *a-wihimtha*, which is associated with the feelings of compassion and pity for the social division of the 'destitute people' or *hsin-rè* (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: 26).⁶⁴

After this first exegesis based on the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka aṭṭhakathā*, the author goes on analysing the ten laws through different sources. The explanation of the concepts *a-wihimtha* and *a-wirawdhana* are particularly interesting, as they focus on the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. In the *Tesakuna jātaka*, the author finds that the law of 'absence of ill-treatment' or *a-wihimtha* discouraged the king from making his subjects 'destitute' or *hsin-rè*, because

⁶⁰. အထိုက်အလိုက်၊

⁶¹. လှူ

⁶². ဧဝတနာ၊

⁶³. သံသရာရည်၊ *thanthara-ri*.

⁶⁴. On *hsin-rè*, see explanation above, note 72.

destitute men are not afraid of committing crimes, a situation that will lead to the ruin of the king (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: 30).

We remember that *Hman-nan* gives the last law as 'not opposing the people of the royal city'. MONYWE interpreted it as 'not opposing the subjects'. *Dhammaw* uses the *Aṅguttara nikāya* to develop the principle of *a-wirawdhana*. In Buddha's teachings, it is said that fighting is dangerous. To avoid it gives tranquillity. 'To act unanimously' or *ñi-ñuq* is required.⁶⁵ Then the author illustrates this with reference to *Vuttaka jātika*. The future Buddha was then the leader of a group of quails trapped in the net of a bird hunter. The leader succeeded in coordinating the birds' flight so they could break out of the net (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: 32).

Like *Hman-nan* and MONYWE, *Dhammaw* is in line with the commentarial interpretation on the *Mahāham̐sa jātika aṭṭhakathā*. Furthermore, *Dhammaw* explores the semantic confusion of the concept of 'alms-giving' found in the principle of *dana* and the concept of 'giving away in charity' found in the principle of *pareissaga*. Two different types of donation are pinpointed. After this first exegesis based on the *Mahāham̐sa jātika aṭṭhakathā*, the author goes on analysing the ten laws through different sources, other *jātika* and the *Aṅguttara nikāya* as well. *Dhammaw* develops the law of non-opposition or *a-wirawdhana*. The discourse encourages the king and his subjects to act unanimously.

⁶⁵. ညီညွတ်၊

The three contemporary texts *Hman-nan*, *MONYWE* and *Dhammaw* have common characteristics. They all place emphasis on finding the origin of the 'ten laws of kingly conduct' and on accurate reference to the sources. The three texts agree that the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka* is the classical literary work of reference and choose to follow its commentarial interpretation. The morpho-syntactic and semantic analysis of *Hman-nan* narrative show that the concept of 'ten laws of kingly conduct' is clearly related to the origin myth of Mahathammata and its 'ten laws of the king'. They are two representations of a same concept pervading the narrative, a pristine 'law of the king', including several sets of laws and starting with the 'ten laws of kingly conducts'. An exploration of *nissaya* shows that the phrase *raza-dhamma* is sometimes used as an independent phrase in Burmese sentences as well.

In the normative texts, the exegesis emphasizes the responsibilities of the king towards his subjects. He is responsible for the socio-political harmony, through the principle of tolerance or *kanthi*, the principle *a-wirawdhana*, interpreted as the 'non-opposition to the wishes of his subjects', the principle 'minimum anger' or *a-kawdha* and the principle 'absence of ill-treatment' or *a-wihimtha*, interpreted as 'to not ill-treat his subjects', principles more or less emphasized according to the text. *MONYWE* recommends the diplomatic way to king Bagyidaw rather than the way of force. The king is responsible for the moral behaviour of the subjects as well, particularly in the observance of the eight *thila* on fasting days. *Dhammaw* insists on the importance of the king being responsible for the collective merit-making acts of *dana*. Through a rigorous analysis of the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka aṭṭhakathā*, *Dhammaw* explores the semantic confusion of the

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Pāli concepts *dāna* and *pariccāga* and differentiates a religious donation with a 'samsaric' objective from a civil donation from the king to his followers according to their contributions.

**The perpetuation of the Maung Htaung *hsara-taw*'s school of thought:
the *Raza-thewaka* (1856)**

A comparison between *Dhammaw* and *Raza-thewaka*, a later treatise from the same school of thought will provide further insight into the evolution of the concept of raja dhamma. The third Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* was the disciple of the second Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* and like him was made *raza-guru* of king Mindon. According to the Burmese historical tradition, he started to write the *Raza-thewaka* in 1856, on the request of king Mindon's officials (Hla Thamein 1961: 86-8, 181).^{*} *Raza-thewaka* was meant to teach the king's officials and the members of the royal household about the customs of past kings, and how to respect them. The Burmese historical tradition tells us that the clerk Nemyo-zeya-thu and the treasurer Min-hla min htin kyaw-thu were fond of *Dhammaw* and asked the third Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* to enlarge upon that text (Maha

^{*}. The second Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* (1799-1865), whose religious name was U Neya, was a disciple of the first Maung Htaung *hsara-taw*, but resided in the monastery of the Thè In *hsara-taw*. He was made *raza-guru* and *thathana-paing* under king Thayawati's reign (1837-1845), and made *thathana-paing* again under Mindon's reign. The third Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* (whose religious name was U Paññasami) did not succeed U Neya as a *thathana-paing* after this one died in 1865. But U Paññasami was influential in the royal city and was one of the most talented Pāli writers of his time, as shown in the history of religion in Pāli he wrote in 1861 (Paññasami 1952).

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Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: xxii). The resemblance is evident in the section about the ten royal laws.

Following MONYWE – where the source is not quoted – and *Dhammaw* – where the source is quoted – *Raza-thewaka* refers to and quotes *Mahāham̐sa jātaka* for the original Pāli list of the 'ten laws constantly upheld by the lords of water and earth'.⁶⁷ However, this first list is not directly translated from the Pali text. The *nissaya* starts with an interpretation based on the *Mahāham̐sa jātaka atṭhakathā*. Here we find the Pāli expression *dasa rāja dhamme* which does not appear in *Dhammaw*.⁶⁸ The interpretation based on the *atṭhakathā* is slightly different from the one found in *Dhammaw*. We remember that *Dhammaw* used the verb 'to make offerings' or *hlu* only to translate the first royal rule of 'alms-giving' or *dana*. In *Raza-thewaka*, the author borrows the Pāli word *dana* in the interpretation of the first law. *Dana* is to have benevolence in *dana* matters. The verb *hlu* is used for the translation of *pareissaga*, that is to give away things (good to be offered) (Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901: 190).⁶⁹ But later in the commentaries, *Raza-thewaka* confirms the distinction between *dana* and *pareissaga* made by *Dhammaw*. *Dana* means to 'make an offering in token of homage' or *pe-hlu pu-zaw* to a venerable person or *poggo*.⁷⁰ *Pareissaga* means to 'give away in charity' or *pe-kan-sun-kyè* to a person with little personal power or

⁶⁷. *Ye-mye-the-nin-min-to a-sin ma-pyaq saung-htein-aq-thaw tara-hsè-pa*

ရေမြေသေဋ္ဌ်နှင်းမင်းတို့အစဉ်မပြတ်စောင့်ထိန်းအပ်သောတရားဆယ်ပါး၊

⁶⁸. The expression is written in Burmese *datha-thu raza-dhamme* ဒဿသုရာဇဝေဓမ္မ၊

⁶⁹. The translation of *pareissaga* combines the nominal form *hlu-hpwè-wuqhtu* လှူဖွယ်ဝတ္ထု (which refers to things that are good to be offered) and the verb 'to give away' or *sun*.

⁷⁰. *Pe-hlu pu-zaw* is ပေးလှူပူဇော် and *poggo* is ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်။ *Poggo* is here understood as a venerable person and not as an individual.

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hpon (such as a beggar).⁷¹ *Raza-thewaka* states that, in this world, it is not conventional to say 'to make an offering in token of homage' to beggars and 'to give away in charity' to monks (Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901: 191). *Raza-thewaka* shows that the aim of *dana* is soteriological, while *pareissaga* is to reward officials according to their contributions. Here, the author uses the verb 'to make offerings' or *hlu* only to interpret *dana*.

Further, *Raza-thewaka* refines *Dhammaw*'s interpretation of *raza-dhamma* by making a doctrinal reading of the concept, based on the scriptures. For example, the law of *dana* is illustrated by an explanation about all kinds of *dana*. The author particularly insists on the explanation about *dhamma dāna* or offerings for the *dhamma*. *Dhamma dāna* consists in preaching about *dana*, *thila* and the celestial realm, and in urging those who do not revere the Buddha's teachings or *thathana-daw*⁷² yet to revere them, those who have not taken refuge in the triple gems yet to take it, those who do not observe the moral precepts or *thila* yet to respect them, those who do not make offerings or *dana* yet to make it, those who do not listen to the sermons about the Law or *tara* yet to listen to them (Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901: 192). *Raza-thewaka* insists on *dana* as a donation supportive of the propagation of the Buddha's teachings.

Raza-thewaka does not revise *Dhammaw* on the subject of the *raza-dhamma-hsè-pa*. *Raza-thewaka* includes the Pāli expression *dasa rāja dhamme* which does not appear in *Dhammaw*. But the morpho-syntactic and semantic analyses of

⁷¹. On *hpon* or ဘုံနိုး, see Schober (1989: 129).

⁷². သာသနာတော်။ For a discussion about Buddhist identity and the concept of religion in Burma, see (Kirichenko forthcoming; Turner 2006).

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nissaya confirm that *Raza-thewaka* developed *Dhammaw*'s comments, referring to more sources. The concept of *raza-dhamma* in 1856 is then directly related to the one from 1829 through the same school of thought, actively participating in the larger intellectual movement which started in the late 18th century. Through a rigorous analysis based on canonical and commentarial texts, the Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* insist on the practice of *thila*, the high merit-making act of *dana*, and the social-political dimension of the concept *raza-dhamma*. The action 'alms-giving' or *dana* is religious and of a soteriological nature. *Pareissaga* is more of a socio-political tool. *Raza-thewaka* puts up more clearly the responsibility of the king for the moral behaviour of his subjects and its effect on the collective *kamma*. The doctrinal reading of the *raza-dhamma* gives a new dimension to the exegesis of *Raza-thewaka*. In the frame of *dhamma dāna*, *dana* is seen as a donation supportive of the propagation of the Buddha's teachings. Through *dana*, the king is not only responsible for the collective action of merit making, but as well for the propagation of the religion.

The late Konbaung political thinking: HPO HLAING (1878)

The last text I want to put into perspective was not written by a monk. Although a layman, the scholar and official U Hpo Hlaing worked within the tradition of normative texts written by religious figures to edify the king and his officials. His treatise, presented to king Thibaw in 1878, starts with a prayer dedicating the book to the presentation of the 'collection of the laws of moral

conducts of kings'.⁷³ This expression brings together the concepts of 'law of the king' and of 'law of kingly conducts'. Despite the fact that the text was strongly rejected by king Thibaw, HPO HLAING remains a valuable source to understand the socio-political representations of the Mandalay court by the end of the 1870's, since in this study I am interested in the political thinking, and not in the practical political use of the text,

There are three parts to HPO HLAING, the first part dealing with affairs of the state, the second with kingship, and the last with family and hierarchical duties. In the second part, HPO HLAING discusses the abilities of the king with the help of lists or catalogues of *dhamma* principles. *Raza-thewaka* and the majority of books mentioned here, consist of discrete divisions on themes to show what is or is not *dhamma*, with no overarching argument. But HPO HLAING's lists are themselves arguments showing throughout his discourse that the strength of a just king lies in his wisdom, not in his physical strength. He starts with the *Tesakuṇa jātaka*, showing the five strengths of the king: 1. the 'physical strength' or *leq-ron-a*⁷⁴ 2. the strength of his armed forces 3. the strength of his wise men 4. the strength of his lineage 5. the strength of his wisdom or *piṇa-a*.⁷⁵ Among these strengths, the last is of greatest necessity, and the first the least (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 107-10).

⁷³. Here, the Pāli compound noun 'collection of the laws' *dhamma-thingaha* ဓမ္မသင်္ဂဟံ is translated into Burmese by the expression 'to be appropriate and good to practice' or *kyin-htaiq-kyin-kaung-thaw* ကျင့်ထိုက်ကျင့်ကောင်းသော subordinated to the expression 'collection of the laws' or *tara a-su paung* တရားအစုပေါင်း (the word *thingaha* does not refer to the four grounds of popularity, but to a 'collection' or 'compendium', translated into Burmese by *a-su paung*).

⁷⁴. HPO HLAING uses the Pāli word *bahu-bala* or ဗဟုဗလ and translates it into Burmese as *leq-ron-a* or လက်ရုံးအား။

⁷⁵. Pāli word *piṇa-bala* or ပညာဗလ translated into Burmese as *piṇa-a* or ပညာအား။

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Most of the texts refer to the *Tesakuṇa jātaka*, and reach the same conclusion about the strengths of the king (Monywe Hsaya-taw 1926: 77; Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901: 167).⁷⁶ But HPO HLAING goes further. The traditional concept of political skill is represented by the Burmese expression *hna-lon leq-ron*⁷⁷, in fact the alliance of the 'physical strength' or *leq-ron* (the 'upper arm' where the 'personal power' or *hpon* is located) and the 'mental power' or *hna-lon* (the 'heart' where lie the collective mental strengths of intelligence, planning, patience, wisdom). HPO HLAING explores this concept and shows that the mental power is stronger than the physical power (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 113-5).

After the *Tesakuṇa jātaka*, HPO HLAING presents the long version of the *Mahāhamṣa jātaka* in Pāli verses and in *nissaya*. The original list of the 'ten laws of kingly conduct' or *min-kyin-tara-hsè-pa* is taken from the *Mahāhamṣa jātaka*. But in HPO HLAING's list, an interpretation of each single law is paired with the translation of the Pāli words, while in previously mentioned books this first step consists in a simple translation. The interpretation is found only in the exegesis, based on the commentarial interpretation of the *jātaka*. In a way, HPO HLAING's list, translated and interpreted, is a sort of synthesis of the commentarial 'debate' carried on in the previous treatises.

Following *Raza-thewaka*, the verb 'to make offerings' or *hlu* is here exclusively used to translate the 'alms-giving' action or *dana*. An expression

⁷⁶. KALA presents the five strengths based on the «Mugapakkha» *jātaka* (Kala 1960: 40). *Hman-nan* presents the list based on the *Tesakuṇa jātaka* and mentions the mistake of KALA (Hla Maung 1963: 66). In *Dhammaw*, a reference to *Tesakuṇa* is found (p. 30) to illustrate *a-wihimtha* (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: 30).

⁷⁷. *Hna-lon leq-ron* is နှလုံးထပ်ရံ။

represents the 'ones who receive alms' or *a-hlu-khan*.⁷⁸ *Thila* is divided into the two sets of five and ten. *Pareissaga* is still translated as 'to give away in charity' or *sun-kyè pe-kan* but is interpreted as 'to provide the civil and military officials' or *hmu-maq rè-meq leq-neq-kaing*⁷⁹ with the 'supplies' due to them or *myo-reiqkha*.⁸⁰ HPO HLAING interprets the meaning of the fourth law 'to be upright' or *azzawa* as a combination of the ideas of 'absence of artifice' and 'honesty' or *kauq-kyiq-sin-lè-chin ma-shi*.⁸¹ The fifth law 'to be kind' or *maddawa* still focuses on the kindness in the attitude and speech. The sixth law, *tapa*, is translated by the expression 'to observe the eight *thila*' or *u-po hsauq-tè-chin*.

Social matters are a main concern in the interpretation of the seventh law 'minimum of anger' or *a-kawdha*. The king should not have any resentment against the 'sentient beings' or *thattawa*.⁸² They should be left to live in tranquillity or *chan-tha-se-chin*.⁸³ These sentient beings are to be considered as the king's own children, literally 'like a son who comes from one's chest' or *rin-hma hpyiq-thaw-tha-kè-tho*.⁸⁴ It is the first time in our texts that we find this symbolic kinship so clearly suggested.⁸⁵ And this is as well seen in the definition of the eighth law 'absence of ill-treatment' or *a-wihimtha*: 'You would no more torment a sentient

⁷⁸. အလှူခံ။

⁷⁹. မှူးမတ်ရဲမက်လက်နက်ကိုင်း။

⁸⁰. မျိုးရိက္ခာ။

⁸¹. ကောက်ကျစ်စဉ်းလဲခြင်းမရှိ။ The verb compounds *kauq-kyiq* 'to be crooked', *sin-lè* 'to be crafty' are nominalized.

⁸². The Burmese word *thattawa* or သတ္တဝါ။ is a derivative of the Pāli *satta* or 'living beings'.

⁸³. ချမ်းသာစေခြင်း။

⁸⁴. ရင်မှဖြစ်သောသားကဲ့သို့။

⁸⁵. There is no direct reference to the king, no presence of the suffix of sacred power *taw*.

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being than you would a son who was ill' (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 112).⁸⁶ The definition of the ninth law, tolerance or *khanti*, shows that the king has to be tolerant although there is a verbal or a physical offence against him.⁸⁷

The interpretation of the last law, 'non-opposition' or *a-wirawdhana* is particularly interesting to understand the socio-political representations of the late Konbaung period. *Hman-nan* interpreted the law as the non-opposition of the king to the people or *pyi-thu*. MONYWE interpreted it as the non-opposition of the king to his subjects or *taing-naing-gan-thu*. *Dhammaw* encouraged the king and his subjects to act unanimously. HPO HLAING broadens the concept and makes of *a-wirawdhana* the principle of the non-opposition of the king to the wishes of the 'others', in fact a gathering of 5 groups 'the monks, the novices, the laymen, the officials and the people' or *rahan shin lu hmu-maq pyi-thu* (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 113-5).⁸⁸ This representation is still based on the two traditional social taxonomies i.e. the four social divisions belonging to a primordial hierarchy and the 'samsaric' classification of the groups monks, novices, laymen and sentient beings or *thattawa*. But the juxtaposition of the compound nouns *hmu-maq* and *pyi-thu* is very interesting. In this expression bringing together the 'high officials' or *hmu-maq* and the 'people' or *pyi-thu*, we can perceive that the *hmu-maq* represent an intermediary group between the king and the *pyi-thu* within the socio-political hierarchy.

To stress the importance of *a-wirawdhana*, HPO HLAING refers to the *Ko-khan pyo* or *Sathudhammathara pyo*, the didactic poem of Shin Maha Rahtathara,

⁸⁶. မကျန်းမာသောသားကို။မနိပ်စက်လိုသနားသကဲ့သို့။သတ္တဝါတို့ကိုမနိပ်စက်လိုသနားခြင်းငင်း။

⁸⁷. The verbal and physical dichotomy is represented by the expression *ko-hnoq-to* ကိုယ်နှုတ်တို့။

⁸⁸. ရဟန်းရှင်လူမှုမတ်ပြည်သူ။

containing the list of the ten royal laws (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 122-3).⁸⁹ These were laws not only for the great kings of the world to respect, Gautama Buddha himself had to respect them as well. For example, he had to adapt his speech according to his audience's needs. A long sermon for a certain kind of audience, an abridged sermon for a different kind of audience, etc (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 124). In a new section, HPO HLAING develops the idea of non-opposition to the wishes of the *pyi-thu*. When the king does not respect the wishes of the *pyi-thu*, the *pyi-thu* 'hate'⁹⁰ him and then try to find a new ruler, and destroy the current one. If the king is too strong to destroy, the *pyi-thu* run away, and this also leads to the ruin of the country. HPO HLAING argues that many countries have been destroyed like this, and many examples of this can be found in the 550 lives of the Buddha and the *raza-win*. Along the same lines, earlier in the text, Hpo Hlaing comments enthusiastically on the parliamentary system in England, saying that its success lies in its respect of the principle of *a-wirawdhana* (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 21).⁹¹

HPO HLAING emphasizes not only the non-opposition, but also on tolerance towards the *pyi-thu*. Once again, not only the great kings had to respect this law, but also the king of the *deva*, Sakka himself had to respect it, as shown in a speech of Gautama Buddha in the Jetavana monastery. Sakka and the king Vepacitti were in conflict. Sakka proposed a debate on the subject of the Wise or

⁸⁹. I found a reference to this poem in the list of MAING KHAING MYOSA under its third name, the *Haqtipala pyo* ဘုရားတော်တို့ (Maing Khaing Myosa 1956: 246). This poem seems to inspire the scholars of the middle and late Konbaung period. I found several copies of the *Ko-khan pyo* in the National Library, the earliest dated from 1206 (1844), Bernard collection, n° 2467.

⁹⁰. The term used is *mon* or မုန့်။

⁹¹. For an analysis of HPO HLAING as a work bringing up democratic ideas, see (Houtman 1999: 199-206; Bagshaw 2002)

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*piña-shi*⁹² and the Fool or *thu-maiq*.⁹³ It was decided in advance that the one with the finest words would win the debate. The high ranking military officers and soldiers of both Vepacitti and Sakka witnessed the debate. In the end, they deduced that the words of Vepacitti spoke of weapons and punishment, while the words of Sakka were free of these, thanks to the tolerance he put in his speech. So Vepacitti was defeated (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 125-32). Once again, HPO HLAING demonstrates for the king the superiority of mind over body in the political action. He shows as well the role of the *hmu-maq* as an intermediary group, unanimously judging the king's political action and speech.

The end of the second part of HPO HLAING is mostly based on *nīti* literature, and focuses more on diplomatic and strategic issues (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 133-200). It is less interesting for the concerns of this study, and I will end my comparative study of the concept of *raza-dhamma* according to HPO HLAING here. But a quick reading of a post-annexation text is useful to put HPO HLAING in a larger perspective.

The *Myanma-min oq-choq-pon-sadan* was compiled and published by U Tin (1861-1933), one of the officials of the last king Thibaw, who became a civil servant under the British after the annexation (U Tin 1963).⁹⁴ Although U Tin's work is usually referred to as the annals of royal administration, it is a sort of ultimate political philosophy treatise, directly related to the normative texts presented earlier. In the section concerning the ten royal laws, U Tin's major

⁹². ပိညာရှိ။

⁹³. သူမိုက်။

⁹⁴. Henceforth *MMOPS*. I use as well the translation of the *MMOPS* by L.E. Bagshawe, (Bagshaw 2001).

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reference is not the most recent text, i.e. HPO HLAING. Instead, he quotes the first part of the section written about the ten royal laws in *Raza-thewaka* (U Tin 1963: 1:101:47).⁹⁵ He gives the title of the poem *Ko-khan-pyo*, referred to in *Raza-thewaka* without a title. The reference to the Maung Htaung school of thought is not surprising; as I mentioned earlier it is perpetuated throughout the Konbaung period (Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901: 190; Hpo Hlaing 1960: 122; U Tin 1963: 1:110:47).⁹⁶

In the next section, U Tin focuses on the law of 'tolerance' or *khanti*, but this time based entirely on HPO HLAING'S narrative about Sakka and Vepacitti (Hpo Hlaing 1960: 115-33; U Tin 1963: 1:102:48-51). U Tin just adds that this story could be found in the *nīti* text *Mahārahanīti*, which is not specified in HPO HLAING. The next section speaks about the 'non-opposition' or *a-wirawdhana*. There, U Tin writes in a more personal manner, using different sources and the vocabulary of his time. The 'ruler' is represented by the expression 'the one who rules' or *oq-so-thu*⁹⁷ instead of 'lord' or *min*⁹⁸ as in HPO HLAING. The 'ruled' are represented by the expression 'those who have to bear the rule' or *oq-so-khan-ra-*

⁹⁵. U Tin confesses that one of his major references is *Raza-thewaka* (U Tin 1963: 3:154).

⁹⁶. Maung Htaung *hsara-taw* does not give the title of the famous poem, as we can assume that the readers were able to identify it by its content. HPO HLAING and *MMOPS* give the title, either as a scientific measure, or because the audience targeted is not able to identify the poem by its content only – HPO HLAING was printed and we can assume that the audience was larger.

⁹⁷. *Oq-so-thu* or အဝိနိဿယ

⁹⁸. Originally, a *min* or မင်း is the lord of a consecrated royal city, as shown by Kirichenko (2005: 3). In the middle and late Konbaung period, the word *min* has several meanings. But the core-meaning remains. A *min* is a person receiving a share of the political authority according to *MMOPS*, (U Tin 1963: 3:414:157).

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*thu*⁹⁹ followed by the traditional compound noun *rahan shin lu pyi-thu*. The rulers who did not respect the principle of non-opposition to the wishes of the ruled had a tragic destiny.¹⁰⁰ U Tin quotes HPO HLAING and then gives a short biography of the author. Then he enlarges upon HPO HLAING and illustrates the subject by giving examples taken from the *jātaka*, the *raza-win*, and from his own experience as an official (U Tin 1963: 1:103:52-4). Furthermore, U Tin refers to the idea of *min-kyin-tara* and other moral conducts inherited from Mahathammata, saying that amongst all of them, *a-wirawdhana* is the most important, being the reciprocal law, which must be respected by the king and the people alike in order to reach a consensus (U Tin 1963: 2:172:3).¹⁰¹

The composition style in HPO HLAING is simpler, combining translation and interpretation in the *nissaya* to present a synthetic approach of a subject. But the Late Konbaung socio-political representations do not radically depart from the Bagyidaw's and Early Mindon's representations, but undergo gradual changes. MONYWE suggested the diplomatic way to king Bagyidaw. HPO HLAING's discourse demonstrates the superiority of mind over body in the political action. The socio-political interest I found first in the texts from Bagyidaw's reign is firmly rooted by the end of the 1870's. *Hman-nan* interpreted *a-wirawdhana* as the non-opposition of the king to the people or *pyi-thu*. MONYWE interpreted it as the non-opposition of the king to his subjects or *taing-naing-gan-thu*. *Dhammaw*

⁹⁹. အုပ်စိုးခံရသူ။

¹⁰⁰. Compare HPO HLAING (HPO HLAING 1960: 115) and *MMOPS*, (U Tin 1963: 1:103:51-2).

¹⁰¹. I follow Bagshaw (2001) for the translation of *a-wirawdhana* by 'consensus' only in the frame of *MMOPS*.

encouraged the king and his subjects to act unanimously. HPO HLAING interpreted it as the non-opposition of the king to the high officials and the people or *hmu-maq pyi-thu*. HPO HLAING relies on traditional social taxonomies, but reflects as well a changing representation of the socio-political hierarchy. HPO HLAING encouraged the king to see his high officials not only as counsellors, but as an intermediary group between him and the people. This discourse, specific to HPO HLAING's reformist context, is not followed by U Tin. U Tin instead chose to express the non-opposition of the ruler to the 'monks, novices, laymen and the people, those who have to bear the rule' *oq-so-khan-ra-thu rahan shin lu pyi-thu*, more appropriate to the new socio-political context under the British rule.

In this sense, the responsibilities of the king towards the people are clearly laid down in the interpretation of the non-opposition principle or *a-wirawdhana*. However I note a two-step semantic change. During Bagyidaw's reign, the meaning was brought closer to 'unanimity' or *ñi-ñuq-chin*.¹⁰² This Burmese word is the traditional translation for the Pāli concept 'being in unity, harmonious' or *samagga*. *Samagga* is in fact the second amongst the seven 'laws for the increase of prosperity' or *aparihaniya*. In the Maung Htaung school of thought, it is interpreted as 'the obligation for officials to sit together and decide unanimously and quickly on matters of the State' (Maha Dhamma Thinkyan 1962: 9, 18-9; Maung Htaung Hsaya-Taw 1901: 171-3). By the end of the 1870's, these two principles are definitely paired to form the full concept of 'consensus', better adapted to a changing socio-political reality. *A-wirawdhana* becomes the essential

¹⁰². *Ñi-ñuq-chin* or ညီညွတ်ခြင်း။

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raza-dhamma in HPO HLAING and as U Tin mentions, the essential moral conduct inherited from Mahathammata.¹⁰³

Conclusion

To complete this study, and put the emergence of a norm of kingship prior to the Early Konbaung in a larger perspective, it would be profitable explore more pre-Konbaung and Early Konbaung texts from different genres, as well investigate the two sets of kingly conducts most often associated with the central *dasa rāja dhamma* concept, i.e. the seven laws for the increase of prosperity or *aparāhaniya* and the four grounds of popularity or *saṅgaha*. However, this survey has given a clearer image of what the concept of *raza-dhamma* or *min-kyin-tara* was: a developing concept both in regards of scope (in the association of the central *dasa rāja dhamma* list with other sets of kingly conducts) and content (the interpretation of the different components of *dasa rāja dhamma* list) essential to the representation of the function of kingship.

Mahathammata perpetuated the *dhamma* in his desire to respect the prescriptions that the *dhamma* imposed. Like Mahathammata, a righteous king commits himself to rule following the *dhamma*. The king must act according to ancestral traditions or *she-hton-she-san-hnin a-ñi*.¹⁰⁴ It is the function of scholars, wise men or *piña-shi* to provide him with not only didactic poems, but also manuals of good conduct or political philosophy treatises. They illustrate that

¹⁰³. On the evolution of the *samagga* concept from HPO HLAING's time up to the modern times, see Houtman (1999).

¹⁰⁴. See Than Tun (1986: 4:229) for the expression *she-hton-she-san-hnin a-ñi* or ရှေးထုံးရှေးစံနှင့်အညီ။ in a royal order from 1782.

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ancestral traditions are *dhamma* prescriptions, by referring to the Buddhist scriptures, normative texts and the Burmese historical tradition. The *raza-dhamma* or *min-kyin-tara* are seen as part of these ancestral traditions.

Through the *Dhammanīti* and its various sources (mainly the *jātaka* collection), early Ava period scholars could have access to a Pāli *rāja dhamme* concept of 'law of the king', including the sets of 'ten laws' or *dasa dhamme* and the four grounds of popularity or *saṅgha*. The concept is found in different didactic poems attributed to the early Ava period, but it seems it was not yet integrated in its extensive form into the *raza-win* narrative in the early 16th century. Since then, the concept has been progressively imported, transcribed and interpreted into Burmese, incorporated in the successive normative texts and compilations of *raza-win*, to be definitely related to the origin myth of Mahathammata. The few semantic and morpho-syntactic differences I found in KALA reveal the use of several distinct sources and literary traditions, bringing several representations to the shaping process of a single concept: a pristine 'law of the king' starting with the 'ten laws of kingly conducts'.

Through a historical and socio-linguistic investigation of five middle and late Konbaung significant texts, I chose to focus on the gradual changes in the representation of the *dasa rāja dhamma*, the core of the general concept *rāja dhamma*. The *raza-dhamma-hsè-pa* is the first argument of a discourse on kingship, constantly redefined by the successive normative texts throughout the middle and late Konbaung period. According to the context, certain main points are fleshed out in detail, and new themes appear. The interpretations of Pāli words vary to answer to the needs of the king's counsellors. Prescriptions taken from

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different sets of laws can be paired in the analysis. This literary process can lead to certain semantic changes.

I noticed the growing interest for the accurate reference to the source. *Hman-nan* revises KALA's attribution of the ten laws of kingly conducts list to the sub-commentary upon the Book of the Fives of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. All texts of our selection establish the *Mahāham̐sa jāṭaka* as the classical literary work of reference for the ten laws and choose to follow its commentarial interpretation. The successive normative texts refer to different *jāṭaka*, didactic poems and *nīṭi* works as sources for the ten laws. But the *Dhammanīṭi* is never mentioned. For the interpretation of the original list of the ten laws, the authors progressively select certain references, quote some of them, and leave others out. *Raza-dhamma* is often used as an independent phrase in Burmese sentences. In the late Konbaung period texts, the composition style is simpler, combining translation and interpretation in the *nissaya* to present a synthetic approach of the subject. The Burmese expressions are preferred to the Pāli forms. When sources are used without being cited in earlier works, particularly in the Maung Htaung's works, the late Konbaung political philosophy treatises cite them by name, referring to the Buddhist scriptures, the Burmese historical tradition, the normative literary tradition, including the early Ava period didactic poetry.

I have shown how the discourse on kingship brought out moral interpretations of the *raza-dhamma-hsè-pa* in the span of a few decades. The authors emphasized the moral interpretation of the ten laws, based on the *Mahāham̐sa jāṭaka aṭṭhakathā*. The king was responsible for the moral behaviour of his subjects, particularly in the observance of the eight *thila* on fasting days,

and for the collective merit-making act of *dana*. The Maung Htaung school of thought explored the semantic of the Pāli concepts *dāna* and *pariccāga* and differentiated a religious donation with a soteriological aim from a civil donation with a socio-political objective. In Early Mindon's reign, a doctrinal reading of the *raza-dhamma* gave a new dimension to the exegesis. Through *dana*, the king was not only responsible for the collective action of merit making, but for the propagation of the religion as well.

The gradual changes in the socio-political interpretations of the *raza-dhamma-hsè-pa* reflect certain shifts in political thinking. In the texts from Bagyidaw's reign, the king was being responsible for the socio-political harmony, encouraged to choose the diplomatic way and to act unanimously with his subjects. *A-wirawdhana* was brought closer to the concept of 'unanimity' and progressively paired with one of the *aparihaniya*. In the late 1870's, HPO HLAING did not depart from these earlier representations, but emphasized the superiority of the mind over the body in the political action. In this sense, he encouraged the king to see his high officials not only as counsellors, but as an influential political group essential to the socio-political harmony. *A-wirawdhana* became the most important *raza-dhamma*, in fact the essential prescription inherited from Mahathamata. *A-wirawdhana* was brought closer to the western concept of consensus when political thinking was influenced by the positivist thought coming from Europe, to progressively reach its full meaning in U Tin's work.

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