

A Study of Some Myanmar Traditional Poems from the Perspective of Western Aesthetic Theories

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Abstract

Aesthetics is generally known as the philosophical study of the principles of beauty, especially in art. Aesthetics has been studied systematically in the West since 18th century though there were many art theories since around 400 B.C. On the Contrary, there were no systematic studies of art in the East until 19th century, but some artistic principles for judging the standard of the art object since in early days. In the case of Myanmar, the Rasa theories which adopted from Indian treatise of art have been used as the criteria of the Myanmar literary works since 14th century. However, there are some unique characteristics of Myanmar aesthetics can be found out in the Myanmar literature. In this paper, it will be focused on some Myanmar Traditional Poems in which we can study the unique sense of Myanmar aesthetic perspectives and its theoretical standard of artistic representation. As the contribution of this paper, having more understanding to the essence of Myanmar Traditional Poems and highlighting the new approach to study the Myanmar Rasa theories can be raised.

Key Terms: (1) Aesthetics, (2) Myanmar Traditional Poems, (3) *Rasa*

Introduction

Aesthetics is relatively newest to other branches of philosophical studies such as ethics, epistemology, ontology or metaphysics, and logic which arose in the eighteenth century. Prior to its emergence, aesthetics may be defined narrowly as the theory of beauty or Art Theory like in the sense of ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, or more broadly as that together with the philosophy of art like in the sense of eighteenth century philosophers, Kant and Baumgarten. Although aesthetics is generally known as the philosophical study of the principles of beauty in art, it is not only concerned with the autonomy of art, but also intimately related to the other branches of philosophy, especially to ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology. Consequently, it is interested in contemporary academic society, especially in the field of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary cultural studies in order to have the more mutual understanding between the respective cultures at the age of globalization. In fact, aesthetics and ethics are recognized as the value study (axiology) so that both are closely related to the moral value or moral standard of the respective society because of their intimate interrelationship with the religious thought of each culture. Thus, aesthetics and ethics are interrelated each other for their applications in the society. Especially, this tendency is most prominent in the artistic representation of the Eastern culture. Therefore, unlike the western theoretical approach of aesthetic studies, eastern approach is more inclined to practical and very rare to find out the theoretical studies of aesthetics in the East.

In the west, aesthetics has been studied systematically from the theoretical point of view since 18th century and numerable aesthetic theories have been raised up to the present time, namely Romanticism, Emotionalism, Formalism, Realism and so on. On the contrary, most of the artistic judgments in the East usually depend on the traditional treatise in which the creative principles of the art object. In the case of Myanmar aesthetics, Nine Rasa Theory which adopted from Indian tradition has been recognized as chief principles or criteria to judge the property of art object. In other words, aesthetic judgments of art objects are usually depended on the emotional

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reflections or direct feeling of artist and spectators. Thus, whether how can stimulate the feeling of spectators and how does convey the message of artist to spectators are recognized as the basic principles of aesthetic judgment in Myanmar culture.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy fact that this difference between the western aesthetics and Myanmar aesthetics are merely concerned with the different approach to study the art. In fact, the basic principles of judging art objects are built onto the same ground of reciprocity between the artist's will to create or express his emotional motivation and the spectator's will to appreciate the art object. It suggests that understanding any kind of art work may be accomplished in part by having our emotions aroused. For example, feeling surprised, bewildered, and finally relieved by the way the themes and harmonies behave in a piece of music may alert us to the form or structure of the piece. Accordingly, Myanmar works of art are capable to study from the perspectives of western aesthetic theories even though they are different from each other in the method of approach to study art.

In this research paper, it will be focused on some Myanmar traditional poems in which we can find out the uniqueness of Myanmar aesthetic perspectives from the theoretical approach of western aesthetics. It will be attempted to contribute that having more understanding to the significant features of Myanmar traditional poems and to show the new approach to study the Myanmar Rasa theories.

(1) The Genesis of the Term Aesthetics in Western Tradition

The English word *aesthetic* is derived from the Greek root *aesthetikos*, meaning "to be sensitive" in the etymological context of "coming to know through the senses." Aesthetics may be defined narrowly as the theory of beauty, or more broadly as that together with the philosophy of art. Traditionally, the philosophy of art concentrated on its definition, but recently this has not been the focus, with careful analyses of aspects of art largely replacing it.

Philosophical aesthetics is here considered to center on these latter-day developments. Thus, after a survey of ideas about beauty and related concepts, questions about the value of aesthetic experience and the variety of aesthetic attitudes will be addressed, before turning to matters which separate art from pure aesthetics, notably the presence of intention.

In the early eighteenth century, the paradigm of an aesthetic judgment was taken to be the judgment that something is beautiful; and the beauty was explained in terms of pleasure. In the later part of the century, however, the notion of aesthetic judgment was expanded to include judgments of the picturesque and the sublime, but the judgment of the sublime is no longer wholly pleasurable.

Once aesthetic judgments were no longer directed solely at the beauty, the way was clear for thinking of the aesthetic not as one particular kind of pleasure or as one particular kind of judgment, but rather as a certain kind of quality of an object. Beauty and sublimity might then be merely two among a much broader class of aesthetic qualities, such as "dainty," "garish," "delicate," "insipid," and so on. One question raised by expanding the range of aesthetic qualities is that whether all aesthetic qualities are correctly describable as formal qualities. Frank Sibley, who initiated the modern discussion of aesthetic qualities, includes on his list of examples not only clear-cut examples of formal qualities, such as "graceful" and "garish," but also qualities such as "melancholy," which are usually thought of as *expressive* properties, a special subset of aesthetic qualities.

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Some Prominent Western Aesthetic Theories

As a branch of philosophy, some prominent or basic aesthetic theories can be raised in western tradition. The origin of western aesthetics can be traced in the time of Plato and Aristotle as the art theories which based on the theories of "imitation". Then, the sense of imitation has gradually changed into wider sense of "representation". In this respect, Realism is a theoretically outcome of this aesthetical meaning of art. However, the definition of art as representation became to extend its autonomy towards the imagination or emotional reflect of the artist who create the art object for his own creative desire's sake which was prompted by two famous artistic movement, namely "Romantic Movement" and "Art for Art's Sake Movement" of 19th century. Consequently, Romanticism, Emotionalism and Formalism emerged as the foundations of modern aesthetic theories.

Realism

Realism begins its way in the realism of everyday life. Realism in philosophy is different from realism in art. Realism in art is very vague and elastic. It can be understood either as an attitude or as a style (method). It is simply a possible form of expression. The first concept of Realism expresses the initial link between art and the material world, the property of giving an objective reflection of reality as one of the forms of social consciousness. The second concept concerns the conscious aim of the artist to reflect the causal relationship of the social and natural phenomena. The basic features of the realistic methods are the absence of subjective arbitrariness, the true-to life motivation of human character and the conscious striving for authenticity.

Romanticism

Romanticism is one of the chief artistic movements of 19th century. It is in the 19th century, for the first time that the conception of art as a record of man's emotion and a vehicle for communicating it to others becomes widely influential. Romanticism holds that art is an expression of emotion. Art is a world of its own with no responsibility to copy or borrow from life. The Romanticists also accept the sense of inspiration as something unconscious and involuntary, but active and creative. But it is not godly gift like Plato's thought. It was influential that out of the conception of this movement, grow out some of the aesthetic theories. The aesthetic theory which speaks for Romanticism is the emotionalist theory.

Emotionalism

Emotionalism reveals explicitly that emotion is the most important thing to create works of art. The main essence of Emotionalism is that emotion is the most essential and basic element for creating arts. The artist must be absolutely candid and his speech must be absolutely free. According to Tolstoy, "Art is a human activity consisting in this that one man consciously, by means of a certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them".

Formalism

Formalism is one of the newest theories of art, whereas imitation is one of the oldest. The formalist theory of art is in many respects the anti-thesis of imitation theory. Formalism argues that true art is wholly divorced from this doings and objects that make up ordinary experience. Art is a world of its own with no responsibility to copy or borrow from life. The value of art cannot be found in any other area of human experience. Art if it is to be art must be independent and self-sufficient. The value of art depend on the significant form which is derived from the

imagination or emotional reflect of artist who is free from any limitation such as social obligation, religious thought, ethical norms.

(2) Aesthetic Theories in the Eastern Tradition

As mentioned above, most of the western aesthetic theories except Imitation Theories and Realism usually focus their intention onto the problem concerning individual emotion and imagination of artist as well as spectator in general. On the contrary, eastern aesthetics usually focus its artistic presentations and aesthetic problems onto the interrelationship between human being and natural world. This tendency can be found not only in the early artistic presentations of sophisticated societies but also in the realistic art work of contemporary artists. Because most of the eastern aesthetic judgments based on the religious philosophy and moral principles of which social unity or harmony is regarded as the aim of creating art object. Nevertheless, the crucial significance of eastern aesthetics is that the artist as well as the spectator usually finds the unity through their aesthetic experience by means of representation or reflection of the natural world. In this respect, most of the eastern art concerning with poetry, drama and song, contrary to the western art more emphasizing on fine art and music.

Chinese Aesthetics

Chinese poetry does not take its start from the act of positing the subject and object of cognition. In contradistinction to the mimetic practices and subject-object duality of the West, the Chinese poetic tradition assumes the existence of fundamental, mutually implicating correlations between the patterns immanent in nature and those of human culture. The Chinese poem was thus understood to invoke a network of pre-established categorical correlations between poet and world. Nature is thus conceived as the stimulus or semantic evocation and source of poetic imagery. It is a stimulus expression or affective conception of *poesis* in which natural images draw forth pre-established categorical "correlations" (*ganlei*) which "stimulate" (*ying*) or "arouse" (*qi*) in the "heart-and-mind" (*xin*) of the reader a morally didactic and "emotionally affective response" (*gan*). Then, through a process of contextualization, the poet's work is interpreted as a didactic response to the particular set of circumstances that occasion the poetic response.

Japanese Aesthetics

Japanese culture has nevertheless witnessed the proliferation of various arts and theories of art for over a millennium. Even our understanding about what constitutes art must alter when we consider such arts as the production of incense, the tea ceremony, the martial arts or flower arrangement, most of which do not have precise analogues in the West; or if they do, are not considered arts alongside poetry, drama, music and painting.

One of the hallmarks of Japanese art is the emphasis on an awareness of nature. Not only is the natural world a rich storehouse of images and metaphors for use as subject matter, but it is also the means whereby the practices, values and aspirations of the art are defined. Significantly, art itself is seen to be catalyzed directly by an encounter with the natural world. Of all the arts, poetry was seen as pre- eminent, in part because of poetry's powers to influence the spirits inherent in the natural world. Japanese theories of art also concerned themselves with various aesthetic ideals, distillations of the changing notion of beauty in each era. From *aware* (the beauty inherent in transience) and *miyabi* (courtly beauty) during the Heian Period (784-1185), to *yūgen* (the beauty of mystery and overtones) and *sabi* (the beauty of desolation and loneliness)

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in the medieval period, finally to *wabi* (the beauty of dearth and the humble) and *karumi* (the beauty of playful lightness) during the Edo Period (1600-1868), to mention only a few of the many ideals, we see an evolution of ideals as a response to cultural and historical change.

Indian Aesthetics

Indian Aesthetics is based on works of poetics. But it does not mean that there are no classics of other fine arts, such as music, dancing, painting, sculpture. Like other eastern aesthetics, Indian aesthetics emphasizes the aesthetic experience rather than the theoretical principles of creating art object. Thus, aesthetic experience is very important concept in Indian aesthetic studies. The broader concept of aesthetic experience had been defined mainly in the context of *rasa*. There are different versions of *rasa* theory in Indian aesthetics. Indian scholars gave various explanations about the term *rasa* by their own perspectives.

Etymologically, it has been translated by the term flavour, relish, taste, and mood in western terminology. However, the term *rasa* is supposed to be extraordinary pain or pleasure. Mind is entirely lost in it that even when the sentiment of grief or horror is relished in such a state, pain is not felt. For example, the tears which are shed by reading a poetry are not those of pain but those of sentiment. The emotions exist in the mind of readers in the form of latent expression derived from actual experiences. On reading a poem which describes a similar emotion and is presented in generalized form, it ceased to be "ordinary causes" but become "extraordinary causes". The factors, being generalized or impersonalized by the suggestive power of word and sense, do not refer to particularities. Thus, *rasa* can be regarded as an effect from contemplating the art object. But, it is not an ordinary effect, because in the sphere of poetry, the connection between cause and effect takes place in the imaginative system of relation.

The Origin of the Rasa Theory in Pāli Version

In the twelfth century, *Subodhalañkāra*, a treatise on rhetoric was composed in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) by the writer Sangharakhita. Sangharakhita took the basic concepts from some Indian Sanskrit aesthetic texts including the Bharata Muni's *Nātaya Śāstra*. He rewrote them in the Pāli language and named it the *Subodhalañkāra*. The text *Subodhalañkāra* reached Bagan together with Buddhist literature in the thirteenth century. The text *Subodhalañkāra* is especially concerned with the nature of the work of poetry such as the usage of language, grammar, rhyme, etc. And it also contains the theory of 'Rasa' which was previously proposed by Bharata.

Traditionally the *Rasa* are nine in number which are derived from the nine inner permanent human moods (*Thāyībhāva*). They distinctly arise as *Rasa* when they are confronted with stimuli such as the determinants (*Vibhāva*), the consequents (*Anubhāva*), the involuntary emotions (*Sāttikābhāva*) and the transient moods (*Byābhicārībhāva*) which are contained in a novel or drama or any work of art. These Nine *Rasa* are:

Singāra Rasa is the inner permanent mood of Erotic which promoting the state of Love as the aesthetic emotion. *Ruddha Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Fury which promoting the state of Cruelty as the aesthetic emotion. *Hassa Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Humor which promoting the state of Amusement as the aesthetic emotion. *Vīra Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Heroism which promoting the state of Courage as the aesthetic emotion. *Bhayānaka Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Terror which promoting the state of Fear as the aesthetic emotion. *Vibhaccha Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Odium which promoting the state of Loathing as the aesthetic emotion. *Abbhuta Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Wonder which

promoting the state of Amazement as the aesthetic emotion. *Karuṇā Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Pathos which promoting the state of Compassion as the aesthetic emotion. *Santa Rasa* is the inner permanent mood of Peacefulness which promoting the state of Serenity as the aesthetic emotion.

In the book *Nātaya Śāstra*, Bharata stated only Eight *Rasa* and did not include serenity (*Santa Rasa*). Some scholars thought that Bharata might have left it out because it cannot be expressed in a drama. Serenity (*Santa Rasa*) is said to be a later addition. In this way, it is assumed that ‘*Rasa*’ are the aesthetics emotions which arise in the mind of the spectator (*rasika*).

(3) Historical Background of Myanmar Rasa Theory

In the early part of the Bagan period, King Anawrahta unified, modernized and developed the kingdom. He built dams and reservoirs to water the parched countryside and promotes agriculture. He propagated the teachings of the Buddha brought to Bagan by the Primate Shin Araham. He set up religious learning centers, including the *Piṭaka Taik*, the first library in Myanmar, built large temples and monasteries. Most scholars assumed that Shin Araham and Anawrahta tried to get the *Piṭakas* (Buddhist Scriptures) from Thaton, but Myanmar historical researcher Dr. Than Tun and Mabel Haynes Bode maintain that the *Piṭakas* reached Bagan probably from Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Nevertheless, Theravada Buddhism took firm root and prospered in the early part of the Bagan period after the arrival of the *Piṭakas*, accompanied by the development of Bagan art and architecture.

Most Myanmar scholars assume that aesthetic concepts came to Bagan together with the Buddhist literature from Sri Lanka (Ceylon). It can be assumed that the theory of ‘*Rasa*’, which is still used as the criteria to judge the excellence of a work of art in Myanmar aesthetics, reached Myanmar since the Bagan period in its Pāli version.

Revised and Adapted versions of Rasa Theory in Myanmar Culture

The text *Subodhalaṅkāra*, as said earlier, reached Bagan together with Buddhist literature in the thirteenth century. *Subodhalaṅkāra*, a treatise on rhetoric was composed by the writer *San gharakhita*. *Sangharakhita* took the basic concepts from some Indian Sanskrit aesthetic texts including the Bharata’s *Nātaya Śāstra*.

Later, many scholars translated the text *Subodhalaṅkāra* from Pāli to Myanmar for the benefit of Myanmar readers. At about 1800 A.D in the Konebaung period, Yaw Myo Sā (the minister of Yaw district) U Pho Hlaing wrote a book titled *Alaṅkānissaya* in Myanmar language. The *Alaṅkānissaya* is a *San gharakhita*’s *Subodhalaṅkāra*, with a commentary. Moreover, U Pho Hlaing also consulted the original Sanskrit texts and made some revisions. In this book, U Pho Hlaing especially expounded the theory of *Rasa*. Later, many scholars up to now have written about and expounded their own views on the theory of *Rasa*. Some of the more well-known books are Ashin Paṇḍita’s *Myanmar Alaṅkā Kya n*, Ashin Kumāra’s *Alaṅkā Pankum*, U Thaw Zin’s *Sapeyaeyar Alaṅkā*, U Shwe Aung’s *Rasa Sape Eii Rasa*, Zaw Gyi’s *Rasa Sape Aphwin hnin Nidan*. So it can be said that the theory of *Rasa* has been adapted from Indian aesthetic concepts and widely used in Myanmar art and literature, but distinctly Myanmar overtones.

Ashin Kumāra in his text *Alaṅkā Pankum* (Garland of Verse) traces the trend that leads to the Theory of *Rasa* in five different chapters. In the first chapter (*Dosāvabodha*) he identifies the errors that are committed in poetic writing. These are altogether eight such errors that occur

in the use of terminology (*Padadosa*), nine in construction of sentences (*Vākyadosa*) and six due to misinterpretation of the meaning of sentences (*Vākyatthadosa*). In the second chapter (*Dosaparihārāvabodha*) he shows the way to avoid such blunders. The third chapter (*Guṇāvabodha*) is in a positive vein and explains how a poem can be composed to avoid errors and achieve an aesthetic standard. He gives a detailed clarification of the ten aesthetic qualities or principles of euphony which are the requisites of poetic literature. He then explains how allusions and embellishments are made on the basis of the principles of harmony or euphony in the fourth chapter (*Attālaṅkāravabodha*). But according to Ashin Kumāra there are generally two methods for using words for allusion and embellishment. One is the direct method of prosody (*Sabhāvavutti Alaṅkā*) and the other is the indirect method of prosody (*Van kavutti Alaṅkā*). He then continues to classify five kinds of direct prosody and the infinite ways of indirect versification or prosody which he summarizes into thirty-five kinds. In the fifth chapter (*Rasabhāvāvabodha*), of the many indirect kinds of prosody, there is one which concerns the concept of *Rasa* (*Rasī Alaṅkā*). An elaboration on this concept of *Rasa* is thus considered to be one of the sources of the theory of *Rasa*.

Rasa can be realized in two aspects, one is the objective aspect and the other is the subjective aspect. The objective aspect of *Rasa* depends on the aesthetic merit of a work of art itself. There is also the subjective aspect; what someone gains from looking at a painting or sculpture, listening to the lyrics or melody of a song, to the music of instruments being played, from the reading of a poem or watching of the performance of a dancer will depend on the subtle impressions evoked in our consciousness. So art and literature, or any kind of art for the matter, to achieve excellence must be able to stimulate the spectator's sensitivities, susceptibilities, and empathy. The subjective aspect of *Rasa* therefore also depends on the aesthetic experience of the audience or spectator contemplating a work of art. In other words, *Rasa* arises when the emotions are evoked in the individual (audience) experiencing a work of art.

Thus it can be said that the feelings or emotions of the audience are evoked only if a work of art has aesthetic merit. But aesthetic values of a work of art are determined by the abilities of the artist who created it. In this way, the audience, the work of art and the artist are interconnected in stimulating the *Rasa* experience. In Myanmar the following nine varieties of *Rasa* are recognized as traditional aesthetic elements experiencing the art object. These are Love and beauty (*Singāra Rasa*), the comic (*Hassa Rasa*), the compassionate (*Karuṇā Rasa*), the cruel and brutal (*Ruddha Rasa*), the heroic (*Vīra Rasa*), the terrible (*Bhayānaka Rasa*), the odious / loathsome (*Vibhaccha Rasa*), the amazing and wondrous (*Abbhuta Rasa*), and the serenity (*Santa Rasa*). These are the criteria of Myanmar aesthetic experience and a work of art is judged as excellent only if it has any one or more of these Nine *Rasa*.

A famous Myanmar writer Zaw Gyi said that the *Rasa* literature is a work of art which contains at least any one of the Nine *Rasa*. Moreover, he generally categorized these nine *Rasa* into three main groups; *A-lwan* (Yearning/Nostalgia), *Asway* (The Tragic) and *Athaw* (The Comic and Humorous). According to him, *A-lwan* (Yearning/Nostalgia) includes *Singāra Rasa* (Love), *Abbhuta Rasa* (The amazing and wondrous), *Vīra Rasa* (The heroic) and *Santa Rasa* (serenity). *Asway* (The Tragic) includes *Bhayānaka Rasa* (The terrible), *Ruddha Rasa* (cruelty and brutality), *Vibhaccha Rasa* (The odious/loathsome) and *Karuṇā Rasa* (The compassionate). *Athaw* (The Comic and Humorous) includes *Hassa Rasa* (The comical). He also assumed that literary art proper always contains any one of *A-lwan* (Yearning/Nostalgia), *Asway* (The Tragic) and *Athaw* (The Comic and Humorous).

So it may be said that the aesthetic experience in Myanmar theory of *Rasa* is especially concerned with the relishing of the beholder. But some may argue that "Can the *Ruddha Rasa*,

the *Bhayānaka Rasa*, the *Vibhaccha Rasa* or the *Karuṇā Rasa* be an enjoyment?" The answer is that, one's feelings or emotions are evoked by appreciating a work of art such as looking at a painting or sculpture, watching a drama or film, listening to the lyrics or melody of a song, reading a novel or poem. These *Rasas* may be joy or sorrow, love or hate, pleasure or pain. Nevertheless, all of these emotions lead to a certain climax which leads to an understanding of life. Moreover through appreciation of a work of art, one may become more sympathetically aware of nature and of others (including human beings and other livings). It is also one way of achieving a state of mind that is tranquil and peaceful, which is, *Santi Sukha*, considered as the end value or highest level of *Rasa*. This point however has led to some controversy among scholars, some of whom maintain that this is the religious aspect that has crept into Myanmar aesthetic criteria.

(4) Aesthetic Analysis of Some Myanmar Traditional Poems

From the previous discussion, it is obvious that Myanmar aesthetics based on the Indian aesthetic concepts of Nine Rasa. In other words, Myanmar aesthetic norms generally depend on the emotional reflects of spectator like other eastern aesthetics. However, as mentioned in introduction, the differences between the Western aesthetics and Myanmar aesthetics are merely concerned with the different approach to study the art object. In fact, basic principles of judging the art object are built onto the same ground of reciprocity between the will to create and to appreciate the art object of artist and spectator. It suggests that understanding any kind of art work may be accomplished in part by having our emotions aroused. Accordingly, it is capable to study the Myanmar works of art from the western theoretical approach of aesthetic studies. In this paper, some Myanmar classical poems of Innwa, Toungoo, Nyaungyan and Kongbaung periods will be chosen to study from western aesthetic theoretical point of view.

According to some scholar, Innwa period (1364-1526 AD) is the years of prosodic prosperity in historical development of Myanmar literature as in development of prosody with the appearance of numerous *pyos*(ပျို့များ), *mawguns*(မော်ကွန်းများ), *e-chins*(ဧချင်းများ), *mettasars*(မေတ္တာစာများ), *lingas*(လင်္ကာများ) and *ratus*(ရတုများ). Of these compositions, *pyo* and *mawgun* were most flourishing genre in this period. As the noteworthy fact that monk poets _Shin Maha Thilawuntha, Shin Ohn Nyo, Shin Khemar and Shin Maha Rahtathara, Shin Uttama-gyaw_ of Innwa period are very famous as the pride of the history Myanmar literature. The most significant feature of Toungoo period is its massive body of *ratu* poems. Especially, Nawadegyí and Nat Shin Naung are the pride of Toungoo period as their unique styles of *ratus*. In Nyaungyan period, not only traditional genre of *ratu*, *mawgun*, *pyo*, *e-chin*, but also some significant poetic compositions such as *tann-chin*, *nat-chin*, *thanbauk*, *tyar-chin*, *aing-chin* were appreciated as popular literature. Among these poems, Minister Padetha Raza's *tyar-chins* are noteworthy and very significant for its advanced attention to the life style of ordinary peoples whereas the subject matter of most poetic literature had being paid attention on the religious sense and the social affair of court society or royal family since Innwa period. Moreover, many interested poets and dramas which are illustrative examples for their significant styles and subject matters can be found out in the Kongbaung period such as *ratu*, *rakan*, *pyo*, *mawgun*, drama and so on. Especially, the development of dramatic or theatrical literatures is the unique feature of Kongbaung period. However, only poetic literatures are chosen to focus the main object of Myanmar poetic literature in other periods in this research paper. Among the prominent poetic literatures in Kongbaung period, Letwe Thondra's *Meza Taung-che Ratu* is one of the well-known poems.

he *Bhayānaka Rasa*, the *Vibhaccha Rasa* or the *Karuṇā Rasa* be an enjoyment?" The answer is that, one's feelings or emotions are evoked by appreciating a work of art such as looking at a painting or sculpture, watching a drama or film, listening to the lyrics or melody of a song, reading a novel or poem. These *Rasas* may be joy or sorrow, love or hate, pleasure or pain. Nevertheless, all of these emotions lead to a certain climax which leads to an understanding of life. Moreover through appreciation of a work of art, one may become more sympathetically aware of nature and of others (including human beings and other livings). It is also one way of achieving a state of mind that is tranquil and peaceful, which is, *Santi Sukha*, considered as the end value or highest level of *Rasa*. This point however has led to some controversy among scholars, some of whom maintain that this is the religious aspect that has crept into Myanmar aesthetic criteria.

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Romantic Expressions in Some Myanmar Traditional Poems

Like other eastern tradition, the development of Myanmar art and literature originated in court society by means of introducing the religious literature. Especially, Buddhist literatures and arts are crucial foundation stone of Myanmar literary works. Accordingly, some classical poems reflect the religious aspects. However, most are romantic expressions in rich diversity of the subject matters such as romantic reflections of royal family, love affair of court society, the seasonal phenomena, the sentiment of warriors in military campaign, supplication to Buddha and so on.

Innwa period is known as the most prosperous years of Myanmar poetic literature. Thus, there were respectable numbers of romantic poems in Innwa period. Most of the famous poets were monks and officers of court society as their sophisticated experience and literacy skills by learning Buddhist literatures. Nevertheless, the subject matter or content of *ratus* were not only concerned with the religious aspect but also the rich of sentimental about natural beauty. In this respect, among the poets of Innwa period which were rich in imagination or romantic expression, the genre of *ratus* will be chosen to the object of discussion in this paper. The romantic expressions of natural phenomena in Myanmar poetic literature can be found in compositions of *tawlar-ratu* (တောလားရတု) since Innwa period.

As the illustrative examples of romantic expression concerning the beauty of natural phenomena in *ratu* composition, the two *tawlar-ratus* by Shin Uttama-gyaw and Shin Maha Rahtathara can be raised. These two are recognized as the best of that genre in Myanmar poetry. Literal meaning of the term *tawlar* is a journey through the forest. In the *tawlar-ratu* of Shin Uttama-gyaw, he composed the beauty of natural phenomena in summer season with the reconsideration of the Buddha's journey from Rajagaha to Kapilavashtu in view of the pleasant season. According to the comment of U Pe Maung Tin, *Shin Uttama-gyaw's tawlar* was of the first class as the poet's dignity of diction and supple mastery of words (Pe Maung Tin, 1977). The imaginative power and creative power of Shin Uttama-gyaw vividly reflects in it. By means of his talented skills in using words, the beauty of landscape—the blossom of seasonal flowers, the colourful scenery of clouds, the fall of spring withered leaves, the scenery of watercourse to pond and brook in the forest after the rain—become to reflect vividly in the spectator's thought as reality and able to arouse the spectator's emotion. In contrast, the *Shwesettaw-thwarTawlar* of Shin Maha Rahtathara is less of the creative or imaginative sense than the former. Shin Maha Rahtathara composed it simply with his impression to the natural gesture and sound of birds and beasts in ponds and brooks or on the trees, blowing breeze and his emotion while through the passage which from a forest to a forest in the journey to Shwesettaw pagoda. Nevertheless, the imaginative idea and romantic expression can be found in both *ratus*. These facts are highlighting that Myanmar poetic literatures in Innwa period have a rich of romantic expression or imagination in spite of the majority of poets were Buddhist monks.

Toungoo Period is regarded as the years of prosodic prosperity in the development of Myanmar literature because of its uniqueness in creating style and choosing subject matter rather than that of Innwa period. Among the romantic poetries, some *ratus* of Nat Shin Naung are very significant. According to the comments of U Pe Maung Tin in his work, *The History of Myanmar Literature*, "In composition of *ratus*, Nat Shin Naung is significant from other poets since his unique style of composition by rich thesaurus of poetic terms and used them in diverse ways." (Pe Maung Tin, 1977) In contrast to Min Nawadegy, a famous poet in *ratus* genre for thirty years early from him, he is very skilful to compose the genre of romantic expression. The subject

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matters of his *ratus* were diverse such as love affair, tributes to the lady (Raza Dartu Kalyar) he is falling in love, the sentiment of warriors in military campaign and so on. Although the subject matter whether ordinary affair or marvellous, it become to the enchanting art object in his romantic or imaginative expression. As a best example which showing his wealth of words can be raised up in his unique style of composing opening *ratu* and another *ratu* that follow up opening one. For example, he composed an opening *ratu* beginning with the words တသောင်းရှစ်ပြန် and followed up with another *ratu* beginning with the words တသောင်းရှစ်မည် as follows;

တသောင်းရှစ်ပြန်၊လေးထောင်လွန်သား၊ယုဂန်လှည့်သွား၊လရထားနှင့်၊နတ်သားနီးကြ၊သောကာလတွင်၊
သောကဓမ္မာ၊ဌာပနာသား၊သစ္စဉာဏ်ပေါင်း၊မရူတောင်းသည်၊ညီနှောင်းနောင်စော၊မြတ်မုဋ္ဌော။ ။
တသောင်းရှစ်မည်၊လေးထောင်တည်ကို၊ရစ်လည်လှည့်ပတ်၊လပြာသာဒ်နှင့်၊ရန်နတ်နီးချိက်၊သောစဉ်
ကြိုက်ဝယ်၊ထိန်၊ရိုက်သပြေ၊အာဏာမွေ့သား၊သရေဓမ္မ၊သောကရွှေမှောက်၊တည်ခဲ့မြောက်သည်။ ။
ကျောက်ဆောက်လျှင်မြောင်းမိတည်းနှောင်။

Nat Shin Naung is capable of adoring a damsel in a variety of poetic appellations as, for example, လှခေါင်ငြိမ့်၊လှခေါင်ထွတ်၊ခြောက်ယောက်နှောင်း၊ယဉ်ရွန်းမြည့်နွဲ့၊နှောင်၊ယဉ်မျိုးစု. When he expressed himself to the object of his love, dainty words seeped out of his bosom. This sentiment elevated Nat Shin Naung to the pedestal of the champion of *ratus*. In his *ratu* that Tributes to the Raza Dartu Kalyar, he expressed his passion to her beauty in a *ratu* as follows;

တင့်လှပေဟန်၊ဘက်မရန်တည်၊ခြောက်တန်နတ်ရွာ၊ဘုံကလာသို၊ပြာပြာလတ်လတ်၊မွတ်မွတ်ရေး
ချေ၊ထုံးနေမကျော့၊ပတ်လျော့ဆံကြာ၊ကျတိုင်းသာလျှင်၊ရွှေဝါပိတ်ရှင်း၊ထည်ချင်းစံပယ်၊နံ့ကြွယ်လိုင်
ကြူ၊မဉ္ဇူမျက်မည်း၊ပေါ်ထပ်စည်းနှင့်၊မရည်းမထင်၊ဖြုတ်ခြည်းမြင်က၊နတ်ပင်ယိုးမှား၊ဝိုးဝါးတွေးချွတ်၊
စိတ်လုံးညွတ်သည်။ ။ဘုံထွတ်နတ်တောင်နေတို့လော။

His *ratus* on military campaigns are more comprehensive than those of other masters. But they all express the usual sentiments of love and longing for the mate and of anxiety to be at her side at the seasonal flower festivals. Moreover, his *moetaw-ratus*, poem of composing the scenery of rainy season are very significant because his skilful in using similes and metaphor by which the rain is not seen in the spectator's mind as mere a natural phenomenon but an animate existence. In one of his *moetaw-ratus*, he expressed as follows:

ဆွတ်ပျံ့ဘွယ်အောင်၊ယုဂန်တောင်က၊ဝေမှောင်အုံ၊ပျူနေနှောင်းလကို၊ခြိမ်းမျှသံလေး၊ ရင့်ရှုကြွေးက၊ နီးဝေး
ပတ်ကုန်း၊ တိုင်းအလုံးဝယ်၊ညွတ်ရုံးကြာတူ၊ဘော်နည်းသူကို၊သည်း အူပြတ်ခေါင်၊ကြွေလွယ်အောင်လျှင်၊
လေဆောင်ပြင်းထန်၊ကြောက်ဘွယ်လွန်စွ။

For that reason, it can be concluded that the romantic expression of Myanmar poems reached a climax in Toungoo period compare to other periods in the history of Myanmar poetry.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable fact that the crucial source of art object is the artist's motivation which derived from his emotion, imagination and creative skilful. In this respect, romantic expressions in poetic literature can be seen in every ages of the history of Myanmar literature. In Kongbaubg period, the Letwe Thondra's famous *ratu* of *Meza Taung-che* is a best example of romantic expression in which he composed his anxiety and lonely exile life vividly by highlighting the natural phenomenon.

Realistic Expressions in Some Myanmar Traditional Poems

In Myanmar classical literary works, realistic expression which reflects the reality of social or natural phenomena can be found since early years of the history of Myanmar art. As the genre of poetic literature, it can be said that Nyaungyan period is most flourishing time of realistic expression compare to other periods. Among the poetic literatures of Nyaungyan period, realistic expressions which represent the ordinary life of farmers, toddy-climbers, boatman and hill-climbers are found in *aing-chin* (အိုင်ချင်း) and *tyar-chin* (တျာချင်း). *Aing-chins* existed as a unique genre of poetry in Myanmar literature. It humorously describes rural characters and traditions. Generally, rural way of life and feeling the affection between young girls and boys were composed in direct, simple and easy way by clear folk language. Nevertheless, it is undeniable fact that they are capable to convey the poet's emotion to the spectator like other poetic literatures. One of the illustrate example of *aing-chins* which was written by famous poet Tauntwin Shin Nyeinme in Nyaungyan period is as follows;

ချစ်တဲ့သူငယ်လေး၊သူငယ်ချင်းကောင်း၊ယောက်မတို့လေး။ ငါ့ကိုကွယ်၊အမယ်ကြီးနှင့်ဘကြီးမျက်
လို့၊အိမ်လေးထောင့်မှာ၊ဆူးတွေချလျက်၊မျက်နှာငယ်မှစေ့စုံ၊လှေကားရုံမှာ၊ဂဠုန်မောင့်ကြောင့်စောင့်
တော့တယ်။ လှေကားဦးမှာ၊ဘီလူးမောင့်ကြောင့်စောင့်တော့တယ်။ လှေကားခြေမှာ၊ဆူးလေမောင့်
ကြောင့်ကြံတော့တယ်။အိမ်တိုင်တိုင်းမှာ၊နွားရိုင်းမောင့်ကြောင့်ချည်တော့တယ်။ ထရုံကြားမှာ၊ပြား
သွာမောင့်ကြောင့်ထားတော့တယ်။အိမ်ကြမ်းကြားမှာ၊အပ်သွားမောင့်ကြောင့်စီတော့တယ်။ အိမ်မိုး
ခေါင်မှာ၊လှံထောင်မောင့်ကြောင့်စိုက်တော့တယ်။ မောင်လဲဘယ်ကတက်ပမယ်။မယ်လဲဘယ်ကဆင်းရမယ်။
ကြွက်ကဲ့အယောင်၊ကြောင်ရဲ့အလား၊ထုပ်နှင့်လျှောက်ကို၊တိုးဖောက်သွားက၊ထုပ်သားငယ်မှမခိုင်၊ ထုပ်တိုင်
ငယ်မှပိုးထိုး၊အလယ်ကောင်မှာဖောင်ဖောင်ကျိုးက၊ သူရိုးဆိုညွှန်း၊ မီးတင်ထွန်းလို့၊ ဝန်းကြသော့ခါ၊ဆင်း
ချခုန်၊လမ်းဆုံရောက်ပါလိမ့်မလားရှင်။ ညီမအထွေးရွှေတလေးကို၊ ပြေး၍ကြည့်ချေ၊ စေလေသော့ခါ၊
အမယ်မမ၊ကျွန်မမဲအိုမြင်ငဲ့ငါတို့၊ရွာလယ်ကောင်တွင်၊ခုတင်ကြီးမှာ၊စောင်းတီးလို့လေး။ ။

From the realistic expressions of *aing-chin*, the spectator can easily glimpse the life style and sincere heart of village girls and boys, and can feel the pleasure through the humorous sense.

In contrast, *tyar-chins* composed by Minister Padetha Raza are recognized as the superior than other genre of poetry that composed about country life. For example, one of poems in this genre vividly reflects the reality of farm labourer as follows;

ဝသန်ကာလ၊မိုးကျတည့်လျှင်၊ပျော်ပျော်ပါးပါး၊မယားနှင့်ဆွေငယ်လင်၊လက်တွဲငယ်ခြေငင်၊ကိုယ်
တွင်အဝတ်၊ပုဆိုးအင်္ကျီ၊စုတ်ပြီပြီ၊ချည်နီပေါင်းတွတ်တွတ်ကယ်နှင့်လေး။မိုးရေစွတ်လို့၊ အဝတ်ကယ်မပါ၊
သားသမီးကို၊ကိုယ်ထီးပွေ့လို့၊သာဆေးတံတထွာ၊ကိုက်ကာထွန်ရင်း၊လယ်ကွက်ကယ်တခွင်၊ထွန်ရေးငင်၊
ရေဝင်ပုစွန်တွင်းငယ်နှင့်လေး။ ဖါးပေါင်စင်းငယ်၊ခြင်းပလှိုင်းဝယ်၊ခရူပီလော၊ရောနှော၍သာလွယ်၊
ဟင်းရွက်ကယ်နုနယ်၊တသွယ်ကန်စွန်း၊ဆူးပုတ်ကယ်ကင်းပုံ၊အလုံးစုံ၊ဖူးငုံသာရော၍ ငြိမ်းသည်နှင့်လေး။
ချိုလည်းချိုလွန်း၊ရည်ရွန်းများစွာ၊ကြီးဟင်းကြွက်နားပေါင်း၊သောင်းပြောင်းရော၍သာ၊အိမ်သို့ရောက်ခါ၊
လျင်စွာချက်ပြုတ်၊ထမင်းကပူဟင်းကပူ၊ရှူရှူသာရှမ်းငရုပ်ကယ်နှင့်လေး။ အလုပ်ကယ်ဧရာသာငုံ၊ကာ
လွေးတော့သည်။ သားမြေးငယ်မာချာဘယ်ညာလွေးတော့သည်။

According to Saya Zawgyi, Minister Padetha Raza is admirable poet for his contributions to Myanmar poetic literature. When at his time, he broke new ground for Myanmar poetic literature by means of his attention to the powerless, the pauper and the serf. Through the realistic expression of his *tyar-chins*, the spectator can glimpse his deep consideration to the life of lower classes. Thus, he should be congratulated for his advanced insight and artistic achievements. Literature

that blossomed out of this new type of motivation should be regarded as New Literature (Zawgyi, 2004).

However, the realistic expressions of Myanmar poetic literature can also be seen in *tawlar-ratus* and *moetaw-ratu* of every ages in the history of Myanmar literature. Although these *ratus* are classified into the group of romantic expression since the artist's imagination and sentiment were reflected through the rhetorical expression as the "form", the subject matters or "content" of these poems are derived from the artist's perceptual experience of natural or social realities. For this reason, the romantic compositions of classical Myanmar poems are suggesting the realistic sense at the same time.

Nevertheless, from the Nyaungyan period the Myanmar poetic literature has gradually changed its sense toward more realistic expressions. Especially, from the later part of Kongbaung period the realistic expression have become more typical in the sense of subject matter or content as well as the style of composition or form which were in the diverse genre of poetic literature such as *kauk-site-tays* (ကောက်စိုက်တေးများ) and other genre of country poems.

Conclusion

As mentioned hereinbefore, it is clear that there are two crucial differences between the western and eastern aesthetics. The first one is that western aesthetic studies emphasize to build the theoretical norms or creative systems for judging art object whereas eastern aesthetic norms usually focus on the actual feeling or emotional reflect of the spectators rather than theoretical norms or creative systems. The second is that most western aesthetic studies focus on the emotion and creative imagination of artist rather than the subject matter whereas most eastern aesthetic studies usually focus on the natural phenomena and social reality rather than the mere imagination of artist.

In the case of Myanmar aesthetics, it is obvious that Myanmar poets' wealth of suggestive thought is reflected in the vast canvas of themes. In good Myanmar poems, always more is meant than the words in it. Thus, the subject matter that is directly expressed in a poem not only suggests the one message, but it implies miscellaneous meaning or message that are capable to be interpreted by spectators. In other words, most Myanmar poems can not merely convey the pleasure of appreciating art work, but always suggest the message to contribute the spectator. For example, no matter though the content of a poem describes the sentimental about the natural phenomena, it suggests more messages such as the ephemeral or impermanent nature of the lives and ignorance of pretended nature of physical world. This means that the aesthetic values of Myanmar traditional art fundamentally emphasizes on the application to life. The artistic responsibility of the artist is to contribute the spectator or his society by suggesting the new perspectives of life and world outlook through his art object. Some Myanmar artists accept that through the good art spectators become to refresh and free from distress or anguish and they are encouraged to struggle or overwhelm the sufferings of life (Zawgyi, 2004).

One faculty of great literature or artistic work is the capacity to convey values and beliefs of a certain tradition. This notion is especially true for Eastern aesthetic views. It is because in Eastern traditions the emphasis is more on the inner features of the human mind where as the emphasis of the West is more on the physical science or external world. One of the general characteristics of the Eastern thought is that it focuses on the human condition and that it gives priority to the internal life rather than external. It does not ignore the important of the external inanimate world, but it is more concern with the animate and the law of impermanent. This is

especially true of Myanmar thought. Art and literature in Myanmar is therefore more concerned with the emotional and spiritual animation. Thus Myanmar aesthetic view is more romantic and realistic than formalist.

Western Formalism in reaction to the simple imitation maintains that art is not a copy of life but something entirely independent and self-sufficient. The formalists said that only if there is aesthetic sensibility can there be aesthetic experience and that the essence of art is the significant form created by line and colour: only this can evoke aesthetic emotion. To have significant form may contribute to aesthetic beauty, for symmetry and proportion are important, especially in visual arts. This tendency leads to the movements of art for art's sake and for artist's sake. In other words, for formalists, art has its own world and free form responsibility to life. From the point of view of Myanmar aesthetic, though Myanmar traditional poetries like *pyo*, *ratu*, *mawgun*, *tyar-chin* and *e-chin* have rigid rules to compose, to confine aesthetic criteria or value of art object to form alone is not enough. The Myanmar aesthetic view of art appreciation is a wider concept accessible to all human capable of thought and feeling. Art is for the benefit of all and not just for the elite. Myanmar artists believe that art is the reflection of human life and art encourage humans to understand the nature of the world in which they live.

In the creation of an artistic work, an artist creates a work of art because his intense feeling, which is reflected from his understanding to human nature and his world outlook, stimulates him to share with others, which is known as the content of a work of art. In order to create new styles and techniques in painting the painter illustrate the art object through his skills, intellectual and imaginative abilities which then becomes the form of his art work. Similarly, in order to bring alive the aim of the subject matter or imaginative idea the poet use the power of words, diction, rhyme, rhythm, simile and metaphor in poetic literature, Well known Myanmar writer and aesthetician Saya Zaw Gyi said that a good literary work must have a proportional combination of form and content like a glass and a certain amount of water that are mutually depended to fulfilment (Zaw Gyi, 2004).

But the Myanmar aesthetic view is more favour in realism than formalism in art. According to realistic view, the function of the artist is to express the social realities as they are. This notion can be prominently found in Myanmar poetic literature throughout the many centuries and still alive. Minister Padetha Raza, a prolific writer of *pyo*, *drama*, *tyar-chin* and other forms of literature of Nyaung-Yan period, was acknowledged as a pioneer in the expression of the actual experiences of society. He depicted the real habitual nature of rural life with the use of simple and pure Myanmar language in his poems and so they were not only admired at court but also understood and became popular in the common people. So it can be said that the realistic view is favour in Myanmar aesthetics since the ancient time.

There does not go to extent of saying that the expression of real life experience is more important than imagination in the creation of a work of art, as said by the Western realists, but the Myanmar aesthetic view allowed that imagination is also as necessary as realism in art. Moreover since the emphasis of the Myanmar thought is more on the inner features of human mind rather than the external physical objects, the Myanmar also appreciate romantic expression in poetic literature since early centuries. In the *tawlar-ratus* of Innwa period composed by poets Shin Uttama-gyaw and Shin Maha Rahtathara, Buddhist monks, romantic expressions were vividly reflected even though the subject matters of these poems concerning the religious sense. It suggests that Myanmar poets embrace the love of natural world, have a rich of imagination and artistic freedom since ancient times. Nevertheless, it is undeniable fact that the romantic expressions in Myanmar poetic literature reached a climax through the poetic works of the famous *ratu*-poets

Nawadaygyi and Nat Shin Naung. So it may be said that the Myanmar aesthetics had not merely emphasized on the classical rules but also had appreciated the emotional faculties as well as the applicable faculties of the art work in its tradition. Accordingly, it can be regarded that the Myanmar aesthetics is independent and stands its own unique characteristics of synthetic tendency which is different from some other eastern and western aesthetics.

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မြန်မာဘာသာကိုးကားကျမ်းများ

- ၁။ ကုမာရအရှင်။ (၁၉၅၈)။ *အလင်္ကာပန်းကုံး*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ယံသာဝတီပိဋကတ်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။
- ၂။ ဇော်ဂျီ၊ (၂၀၀၄)။ *ရှုမဝပေအဖွင့်နှင့်နိဒါန်း*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ စိတ်ကူးချိုချိုအနုပညာ။
- ၃။ ထီလာစစ်သူ။ (၁၉၉၈)။ *မြန်မာကဗျာပေဖန်ရေးစာပေ (တတိယအကြိမ်)*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ မိုးမင်းစာပေ။
- ၄။ ဒဂုံတာရာ။ (၁၉၉၆)။ *အလှပေ*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ပတ္တမြားမောက်စာပေ။
- ၅။ ဒီးဒုတ်ဦးဘချို။ (၁၉၆၆)။ *အလင်္ကာဂီတ*။ မန္တလေးမြို့၊ မြကန်သာစာပေ။
- ၆။ ပါရဂူဦးအံ့မောင်၊ နန္ဒာသိန်းခံ၊ ချစ်ဦးညို၊ ချစ်စံဝင်း၊ ဦးမင်းနိုင်၊ ဦးမြင့်စံ၊ ဖိုလ်ကလေးတင့်အောင်၊ ဂီတလှလင်မောင်ကိုကို။ (၂၀၀၄)။ *အနုပညာဆိုင်ရာရှုမဝပေတမ်းများ*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ယဉ်ကျေးမှုဝန်ကြီးဌာန။
- ၇။ ဖေမောင်တင်ဦး။ (၁၉၇၇)။ *မြန်မာစာပေသမိုင်း (တတိယအကြိမ်)*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ အတွေးရှင်မိမာန်စာပေတိုက်။
- ၈။ မြဝင်း (ဒဿန)။ (၁၉၆၇)။ *ရှုမဝပေအဖွင့်နှင့်နိဒါန်း*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ စာပေလောကစာအုပ်တိုက်။
- ၉။ ရွှေအောင်ဦး။ (၂၀၀၃)။ *ရှုမဝပေ၏ရှုမဝ*။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ရာပြည့်စာအုပ်တိုက်။