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POLITICAL SITUATION IN KACHIN STATE (1948 – 1962)

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The Second World War and Political situation in Kachin State

When the Second World War broke out, the Japanese army invaded British Burma, with the help of the Burmese nationalists led by General Aung San. The Japanese army reached and occupied nearly the whole Kachin land except Putao where British forces were enabling to resist the Japanese offensive. Therefore, British hurriedly withdrew from Myanmar to India by various routes. One among them was the route from Myitkyina via Sampabrabum, Putao and Hukawng valley to India. In their way back, British took the Thakin political prisoners along with them and sent Thakins to various prisons in Upper Myanmar. In this way, Thakin political prisoners were a massed in the prison of Katha, Bhamo and Myitkyina. Oil Field Strike leaders of Thakin Po Hla Gyi and Thakin Ba Hein were being sent to Bhamo prison.¹ These political prisoners carried out vigorous political campaign leading to the profound change of the way the political awakening process occurred. More and more Kachin, Myanmar and Shan nationals in Kachin territory became awakened and involved in various political movements and campaign.

In 1942 Japanese forces occupied Myitkyina and released Thakin political prisoners from the jail. With the help of these Thakin, Municipal administration was introduced under the charge of U Hla Tin. During the period of Japanese occupation, Dobama poor party (Dobamasingyetha Party) was formed in Myitkyina with Thakin Net Pe in the Chairman, Thakin Ko Lay as secretary and

¹ One O One, Kyaw Win Maung, *Thakin Net Pe who never surrender to the imperialist*, Rangoon, Bhamo Press, January, 1999, p. 2. (Henceforth: Kyaw Win Maung, 1999)

Thakin Tun Sein as executive member. Also servants' corps was instituted with U Sein as chief and Ko Avid (a) Thakin Tin Myint as assistance chief.² Dobamasinyetha Asiayon had formed many branches and said that they had undergone military training. We understand that most of nationals became believed in the policy and politic of the Asiayon and gave support to the effort of Thakins.

In July 1942, East Asia Youths Organization (EAYO) was formed with the following persons in Bhamo;³

Thakin Than Myaing	Chairman
Thakin Hla Kyaing	Vice-Chairman
Thakin Kyaw Zaw	Consultant Executive
Thakin Tin Lay	Member
Thakin Myint Than	Member
Thakin Ba Htay	Member
Thakin Tun Shwe	Member
Thakin Sein	Member
Ko Maung Ko	Member
Thakin Thein Han	General Secretary

In the same year Thakin Than Myaing established New Bhamo Developing Association.⁴ EAYO had carried out a series of activities in order to educate and upgrade the national people. They tried to raise the moral and morale of the people.

When on 3 August 1943, Japanese forces retreated from Myitkyina. As soon as Japanese were withdrawn, British had arrested 17 members of Myanmar Volunteer including Thakin Net Pe. Thakin Net Pe, Thakin Tin Myint, Ko Tin Mg Aye and Ko Gyi were indicted with Article 121 of Indian Penal Code, while Ko Tin Mg, Ko Hla Mg, Ko Nyo Htwe and Ko Ba Kun were also charge with the Article 121 and 320 of Indian Penal Code. In these cases, the judge was G.H. Peter and the prosecutor was Eden. The British court decreed that Thakin Net Pe was condemned to death and Thakin Tin Myint was punished by the deportation to island.⁵ After the ruling, a firing squared outside the court was killing Thakin Net Pe instantly. This harsh and severe action of the British must be seen as a kind of intimidation and repression over the nationals signaling they were not in a position to tolerate the anti-British movements and activities.

² Kyaw Win Maung, 1999, 24

³ Oway Daily, Vol 1, No.9, August 1943

⁴ Oway Daily, Vol. I, No.8, August 1943

⁵ Kyaw Win Maung, 1999, 81-82

At the end of Second World War, all Kachin Youths Vigilant Association (Pawng Yawng Ram Rawt Hpung - (P.Y.R.Hp) was established under the leadership of U La Htoi at the place known as Nyaung Kaung - Sin Lum Mountain in the present Momauk township. It consisted about fifteen members of Japanese war refugee youths and veterans of Kachin Ranger. The major function of the Association was to open the eyes of youths politically by opening youth training courses. The P.Y.R.Hp was also founded at the Balawngkawng ward in Bhamo under the auspices of U Zau Awng.⁶

We have seen, the political awakening of Kachin State had significantly more developed during the short period of Japanese occupation, exactly fifteen month⁷ for Kachin State. Kachin national leaders and Myanmar leaders, along with the leaders of other national races, worked hard, hand in hand, till to the end, in that Myanmar won Independence.

Emergence of Political Parties in Kachin State

Of the political organizations the politicians who were being released during the CAS (B) government founded the AFPFL on 6 October 1949 at Naungkho village, Bhamo. First, U Ba Oo headed the AFPFL. Later, as he became the president of the Kachin State Council, the AFPFL chairmanship was transferred to U Hla Kyaing. The principle and policy of Kachin AFPFL was like those of the AFPFL in Ministerial Myanmar.⁸ Kachin Youth's League (KYL) was formed since 1947. Some of its members were the Red Flag who waged opposition against the AFPFL. This opposition was the repercussion of the expel of communist party from the AFPFL in the year 1946.⁹ This political repercussion was spread throughout the country and felt everywhere setting in motion of political machination and political schism. Kachin State was no exception. Therefore, the AFPFL representative Thakin Ba Hon arrived in Bhamo to explain the matters. As a counter measure to this AFPFL movement, Communist Party (CP) members led by Ko Tun Hla tried to organize youths by designating the AFPFL as enemy. Therefore, a schism occurred in the KYL, one faction was proponent to communist and the other the opponent.

Of the political organizations in Kachin State, Peoples' Economic and Cultural Development Organization (PECDO) headed by Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw, was the oldest, formed in the March of 1936 at Mayan village. Thirteen years later, Duwa Zau Rip founded KYL as a memorial to the

⁶ M.Roi Nau, *The Role of Kachin tribes in struggle for Independence*, M.A.,thesis, Rangoon University, 1991, pp.53-54 (Henceforth: Roi Nau, 1991)

⁷ Japan arrived at Myitkyina on 6 May 1942, Japan retreated from Myitkyina on 3 August 1943. American and Chinese Forces occupied Myitkyina Air force on 17 May 1944, Myitkyina on 3 August 1944, so called 78 days Battle.

⁸ Khin Lay, *The History of Bhamo (1948-62)*, M.A (Thesis). Arts and Science University, Mandalay,1977, p. 2 (Henceforth: Khin Lay, "1977")

⁹ Hanthawaddy News, 12 October 1946

Kachin State Day in the year 1949. It later changed its name into KNC in 1951, which became an opposition group to the PECDO from that time onward.

Political situation in Kachin State

After independence, it was hold an election to choose the people representatives for the Ministerial Myanmar and Frontier Areas within eighteen months from independence. But due to the outbreak of insurgency, the election could not be held throughout the whole country. However Kachin State was fortunate enough to see the first election after as soon as Myanmar won independence. Members to the Kachin State Council were elected by which Kachin State Government and Kachin State legislature were formed.¹⁰ During this period, the elected Kachin State Council was able to serve their first full term, in which we cannot find any personal conflict among the Kachin politicians and any party politic problem among the Kachin political organizations. No, development, due to KMT aggression and Naw Seng revolt notwithstanding, there seems, no conflict and dispute occurred in Kachin politic. All elected members of Kachin State Council worked together, it seems, without machination and schism. After serving the first full term, cracks appeared in Kachin politic and Kachin unity began to break down. The disunity popped up itself in the elected members of that of Kachin State Council, when it came to enter the election to be held at the end of 1951 and when it comes to form the New Kachin State Council with the newly elected representatives of various parties and organizations.

On the fourteen March of 1952, the New Kachin State Council meeting was held in which it was necessary to elect a new chairman who would become, by the Article 173 of 1947 Constitution, the head of Kachin State Government. Kachin State saw its very first political crack in the election of its chairman. At the council meeting, rival factions' proposed rival candidates to the chairmanship. Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw, the Deputy for Myikyina West, led one faction, who was being proposed to elect to be chairman by Duwa Zau Rip, the Deputy for Myitkyina East and Bo Aung Kho,¹¹ the Deputy for Myitkyina South, which was supported by U Ba Sein, the Deputy for Myitkyina South, U Ba Thaug, the Deputy for Bhamo North, U Poe Chon, the Deputy for Myitkyina West, Duwa Padit La Taung, the Deputy for Myitkyina West and Duwa La Wanli, the Deputy for Myitkyina Central. The other faction was led by Duwa Zau Lawn who was being proposed to elect as chairman by U Zan Hta Sin, the Deputy for Myitkyina West, which was supported by Ugyi Htainnan, the representative of the Chamber of Nationalities. As there were two candidates for the chairmanship, casting of vote in which Sa ma Duwa Sinwa Naw got eleven votes and that of Duwa Zau Lawn seven votes decided it. Therefore, Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw

¹⁰ Interview with Duwa Zau Rip, 22 December 1999

¹¹ Secretary of Kachin State of chairman

became the chairman of Kachin State Council and accordingly he formed the Kachin State Government.¹² But Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw, the Head of Kachin State Council was appointed as Minister for National Unity and Solidarity in the Union Government.¹³ To fill up the office of the Head of Kachin State, the Kachin State Council, by the Article 173 of the constitution elected Duwa Zau Lawn as Head of Kachin State Council and by the approval of the Prime Minister; he became the Head of Kachin State Council on 1st August 1953.¹⁴

The removal of Sinwa Naw and the investiture of Duwa Zau Lawn set off a political schism in Kachin State politic. In protest to the removal of Sinwa Naw, his State Cabinet Minister Duwa Zau Rip, U Ba Thaug and U Hla Kyaing presented their letters of resignation to the fourth meeting of Kachin State council held at the rest room of Chamber of Nationalities on Monday 3rd August 1953. Therefore, State Ministers were again to reelect by the Article 175, No.3 of State constitution and the newly reformed Kachin State Ministers.

From this time onward, we see a range of factional disputes, sectarian conflicts and various kinds of political infightings and political machinations in the politic of Kachin State. In other word, the dance of democracy began with the split story of factional disputes and rivalry between the two leading factions: one faction led by Sinwa Naw (PECDO) and the other led by Duwa Zau Lawn (KNC). By the kind of membership, PECDO was a multi-national organization forming with all leading nationalities of Kachin State: Kachin, Shan and Myanmar. But KNC was the Kachins only organization. By the analysis of membership structure of these groups, we find that PECDO was a multi- national and that of KNC a national, which means that a multi-national organization was more visionary, broad minded and less rigid and flexible, while that of a national organization in the context of Kachin State politic would mean racially narrow minded which could change into racial hatred and eventually brooding Kachin chauvinism.

Of the political organizations in Kachin State, the two leading organizations were that of PECDO and KNC. The two organizations were very different in their actions and activities as they had different principle and different symbols. The KNC flag bore the emblem of Kachin sword and spear, which by Kachin tradition means friendship between and among the peoples, designating the unity of Kachins. The objective of KNC was to establish a Democracy system.¹⁵ The PECDO flag had the emblem of sun and moon, which mean peace and tranquility, and shinning, which denotes the prosperity. The objective of PECDO was to establish an industrialized state within

¹² Kachin State Council, First meeting, Vol.1, No. 5, Rangoon, Government Press, 1953

¹³ Interview with Duwa Zau Rip, 22 December 1999

¹⁴ Kachin State Council, Fourth meeting, Vol.4, No.7,Rangoon, Government Press, 1955

¹⁵ Policy and Process of Kachin National Congress , Rangoon, Pyidaungsu Press, 1951

which will be reside d all national races.¹⁶ AFPFL in Kachin territory was just a political organization, which never won state authority through it was a leading force for the whole of Myanmar and a major political organization in ministerial Myanmar. We can understand that in a nascent democracy, such an ideology based political party could not win everywhere, as Myanmar itself and its member states were established based on the line of nationality, not on the line of peoples and population. Naturally, Kachin political organizations would win in their state, which was established based on the line of Kachin nationality. Therefore, the AFPFL movement in Kachin state was not so great and big enough to recognize it as a major political force.

On 12 June 1951 to hold the Parliamentary Election systematically, the Kachin State authority had formed the steering committee on Deputy with thirty-eight members with U Tha Wa as Chairman, U Ba Khin (Rtd. Forest Ranger) Vice-Chairman and U Thi Hla, Secretary.¹⁷

In the 1951 Parliamentary Election, in the KNC candidates, there was only one youth candidate of Duwa Zau Rip who won the election. The selection of Duwa Zau Rip as election candidate caused to occur the misunderstanding between the Young and Elder in the KNC. Therefore, Duwa Zau Rip reorganized and reactivated the once near dead organization of KYL in 1951, which was formed in the year 1946. The one advantage for Duwa Zau Rip's KYL was that Youths only can be its members, making the elder membership illegible, leaving Duwa Zau Rip free hand to control and manipulate the KYL as he like.¹⁸ Duwa Zau Rip also formed United Jinghpaw Organization (UJO) on 16 December 1952 in Bhamo with an objective of to make it a rival organization to KNC in Bhamo district. Duwa Zau Lawn and Ugyi Htainnan objected the formation of UJO on the ground that the KNC was a Kachin organization to which every Kachins could join. They also spread the propaganda that UJO was the same to that of Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw's PECDO.¹⁹ When UJO broke down within one year, he joined the PECDO, making it stronger than others in Bhamo area.

In Bhamo district major political organization were KNC, AFPFL and PECDO. Of them, only KNC had its headquarters in Bhamo Town. Therefore, it had more advantage in its political activities than the other two. But the AFPFL and PECDO were very active in Bhamo district and also in their rivalry. Opponents of both organizations joined each other's party. At one point, the AFPFL planned to knock out PECDO by issuing an announcement to the public On 20 December 1952. The announcement read that:-

¹⁶ The Aim, Objects and Constitution of the Peoples' Economic and Cultural Development Organization, Rangoon, Thudhammawaddy Press, 1952

¹⁷ Khin Lay, 1977, 8

¹⁸ H. Naw Awn, *Wunpawng Labau Ginshi (Kachin History)*, Typing Manuscript 1983, pp.136-137 (Henceforth: Naw Awn, 1983)

¹⁹ Khin Lay, 1977, 18

“Temporary PECDO formed by Saya Hti, U Saw Yi and Mr. Pattike did not concern with the AF PFL. Therefore, all mass and class associations under the banner of AFPFL should not take part in all activities of the PECDO.”²⁰

Concerning with the Parliamentary election, we see that there cropped up various schism and factions, which exchanged accusation and recrimination who waged smearing and slandering campaigns. These actions and activities caused to disintegrate the political unity and to fall into pieces the public integrity.

Kachin State government was also reformed with representatives of KNC and AFPFL on 1 August 1953.²¹ When the eight Kachin State council meeting was held at 11:30 a:m on 10 August 1953, Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw requested to the president of the meeting, Thakin Pyant, for permission to make a criticism on the policy of the incumbent Head of State declared on 6 August 1953.²² On this case, the President of the meeting warned the Hluttaw Deputies not to raise such cases in the meeting. We find that such cases frequently occurred, not by the schism in political creed and conviction, differences in programmes and plans but the personal dissatisfaction and dislike. This can be seen a kind of power politics and a competition among the power manager which make damage to the interest of the people.

We find the split of Kachin State political system to be only “the priority” that is which project or plan should come first, not the political principles or isms. The priority problem, in other words can be seen as the occurrence and dominance of subjectivism among the Kachin politician. The more they became the subjectivist; the more there occurred political conflict of factionalism and sectarianism. The faction led by Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw went to give first priority on the industrial development, while those of Duwa Zau Lawn that of Education, Health and Economy. Various records of those days Kachin State Council point out this fact in which state ministers were found emphasized their pet project or plan in the council meeting. The different priority coupled with lack of cooperation and coordination made every projects and plans to be unsuccessful in Kachin State, generating different opinions and divisions only. Based on these contradictions, suspicion and schism germinate intensifying the rivalry among political forces. Sometime the split was based on cronyism, which can be found in the discussion of the sixth Kachin State Council meeting held on 12 August 1954, where Duwa Zau Rip complained about the plight of the government officials.²³ Therefore, we find that cronyism and favoritism caused a

²⁰ Khin Lay, “1977”, Appendix 5, 136

²¹ Kachin State Council: Fourth Meeting, Vol.4, No.7, 6 August 1953, Rangoon, Government Press, 1955

²² Kachin State Council: Fourth Meeting, Vol.4, No.8, 10 August 1953, Rangoon, Government Press, 1955

²³ Kachin State Council: Sixth Meeting, Vol.6, No.5, Rangoon, Government Press, 1957, p.226

great destruction in the interest of Kachin State where every politician²⁴ and their followers disregard the interest of the people, but only the interest of themselves and their henchmen.

In Kachin politics, we also notice that there were proxy wars waged on behalf of their leaders among the followers. Such cases can be seen in their election campaign, compelling and threatening each other's supporters and followers.²⁵ For instance in a political canvassing, a cooperative officer of Mohnyin solicited local voters by saying that;

“If you do not cast vote for our AFPFL, you would not get cooperative loan.”²⁶

The meddlesome of government officers in the Kachin politics can be best seen in the discussion of Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw in the fourth meeting of Kachin State Council held on 28 August 1956 in which he complained that some Kachin State police officers had said such following words to the voters: -

“Why did you cast vote for PECDO? You will be punished by exile. We will expel you at once. We will deport you China.”²⁷

We have already mentioned that major political organizations of Kachin State were PECDO, KNC, AFPFL and KYL. All these organizations, by examinations, had their influencing sphere and field with the dominating area and region. PECDO was all Union nationals political organization with its stronghold at an around Myitkyina. KNC was Kachin nationals' only political organization with the stronghold at and in the environs of Bhamo. Both parties had state wide political activities. KYL was Youths political organizations that have political actions and activities both in Myitkyina and Bhamo. All these political parties had their influence mostly only in Kachin State. Outside of their territories, the influence of these parties can be felt rarely. The remaining AFPFL was a nationwide National party which influence had felt throughout the country in that Kachin was no exception. Therefore, every sneeze in the AFPFL had to be felt in every corners of the Nation. Thus, the split of the AFPFL by personality cult, factionalism, sectarianism, different isms, cronyism, favoritism and Burmese chauvinism, was felt in every political organizations regardless of Ministerial or state political parties, in which every bad causes of the split can also be found. For example, the split of AFPFL in Ministerial Myanmar caused to break down the AFPFL- Kachin State into two of the Stable AFPFL Kachin and the Clean AFPFL Kachin, which can be seen in Mohnyin Township,²⁸ and in Bhamo district.²⁹ Of all

²⁴ Kachin State Council: Sixth Meeting, Vol.2, No.1,2,3 & 4, Rangoon, Government Press, 1958, p. 15

²⁵ Kachin State Council: Second Meeting, Vol.2, No.1,2,3 & 4, Rangoon, Government Press, 1958, pp. 39, 155-158

²⁶ Kachin State Council: Second Meeting, Vol.2, No.1,2,3 & 4, Rangoon, Government Press, 1958, p.39

²⁷ Kachin State Council: Second Meeting, Vol.2, No.1,2,3 & 4, Rangoon, Government Press, 1958, p.155

²⁸ Pyidawsoe News, 28 May 1958

²⁹ Pyidawsoe News, 18 May 1958

the organizations of Kachin State, the three main political organizations were PECDO, KNC and AFPFL. Among them, the real power player of Kachin politic was that of PECDO and KNC. The AFPFL was formed to be a player of supportive role to the PECDO and KNC as it was a national level organization.

In the time of Care Taker Government, we can also notice the same split stories occurred in the Kachin State, between the KNC and PECDO, who recriminated each other, waged smear and slandering campaigns over one another. A good example of one such recrimination was Duwa Zau Rip's question asked in the ninth conference of second Kachin State Council held on 4 August 1959, who asked like that-

“Do the Government know that KNC leaders themselves are collecting ten kyats per a plot of opium field from the opium farmers in Sadon Township, Myitkyina District for their KNC fund?”³⁰

When the election held in 1960, of the seven places reserved for Kachin State, the Clean AFPFL and the Stable AFPFL won a place each and the remaining were divided among the others.³¹ After the election, Kachin State Council provisional president U Driang Tang announced that the nominations for the election of Kachin State Chairmanship should be sent to the council secretary well before at 12:00 hours Tuesday 19 April 1960.³² There were three nominations, all proposing to elect Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw as chairman. The proposers were U Ba Than, U Hla Din and U Aung Thu and that of supporters were U Sein Toe, Duwa Laghon Tu Hkaung and U Kyaw Win. As these were in conformity with the rules and regulations, Sama Duwa Sinwa Naw was being elected as Kachin State Council Chairman.³³ It seems that it was a rare case to have been nominated one person by three independent nominations, which no longer could be found in later period of Kachin State politic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kachin leaders seemed to have split into two camps. The split was probably caused by the British maneuvering. The first camp led by Sama Duwa Sinwa Nawng and Duwa Wabaw Zau Rip called for alliance with the Burmans to gain immediate political freedom from the British colonial rule.

³⁰ The Ninth Conference of 2nd Kachin State Council , Vol.9, No.1,2,3, Rangoon Government Press, 1960, pp.8-9

³¹ The record of the Third Pyithu Hluttaw, the parliament of Union of Burma , Vol.2, N0.22, Rangoon,1959, pp. 2337-2378

³² The record of first meeting of the Third Kachin State Council, Vol.1, Nos. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, Rangoon, 1960, p.2

³³ The record of first meeting of the Third Kachin State Council, Vol.1, Nos. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, Rangoon, 1960, p.13

The second political camp favored gradual transition toward independence for a separate Kachin land through dominion status as planned by the British themselves. According to the British Plan, District Councils were already formed under Frontier Area Administrations, directly controlled by the Governor. The Kachin National Congress led by Duwa Zau Lawn, from Manmaw, was known to prefer the British Plan, whereas the first camp of Kachin leaders from Myitkyina zone flatly rejected it.

We can notice that dance of democracy began well before the independence of Burma in the struggle for independence notable in the process of Panglong conference. As we all know the Panglong Agreement, reached among the Ministerial Myanmar leader of Bogyoke Aung San, who at that time was in fact a national leader, and the leaders of FA, that of the Kachins, the Chins and The Shans, was obtained by following the seven suggestions³⁴ made by Bogyoke Aung San in his speech at the Constituent Assembly which at that time was considering how to draft a state constitution, which should be included in it and how these should be described.³⁵

Political parties and organizations, in Kachin State politics of the Parliamentary Era (1948 – 1962), had no sound principle and policy with clear visions. If we study the speeches of Kachin State Chairmen, we find, they only contained all the bombastic words and phrases of demagogic politicians of the nation, not of practicable plans and works. Therefore Kachin peoples did not have a chance to know and understand what their leader's political belief on ism was, what their guiding principles were and what their holding policies were. Thus they did not even know the names of these political organizations, which claimed that they were doing for them. Instead they know them by the name of their organization. In this way, Kachin politic became, not of the politics of ideology and ism, but of the politics of persons, leading to the occurrence and emergence of personality cult, personal rivalry by which to prevail the subjectivism, cronyism, favoritism and so on. This is the example of the political immature, which can be found in every nascent democracy.

³⁴ (1) Sovereign-constitution
 (2) Autonomous States
 (3) The power must come from the people
 (4) Equality in Politico-Socio-Economic rights
 (5) Recognition of minority rights
 (6) Rule of Law
 (7) Peaceful co-existence.

³⁵ Discussions at the Meeting on Federal Principle held at the hall of Burma Broadcasting Service, Pyay Road. Rangoon. From 24 February 1962 to 1 March 1962, p.10 (Henceforth: Discussions at the Meeting on Federal Principle)

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