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TIPITAKADHARA DHAMMABHAṄḌĀGĀRIKA

BHADDANTA VICITTASĀRĀBHIVAṂSA



TIPITAKA NIKĀYA MINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION
MYANMAR

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PAGODA ON MOMEIT HILL
COMMEMORATING MINGUN SAYADAW'S
ORAL RECITATION OF THE THREE PĪṬAKAS



*STUPA AT MANDALAY
STATE PARIYATTI
UNIVERSITY
FOUNDED BY
MINGUN SAYADAW*



THE NONPAREIL

Tipitakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika

(Bearer of the Three Piṭakas and Keeper of the Dhamma Treasure)

Abhidaja Mahāratthaguru

(Noble Banner and Great Preceptor of the State)

Aggamahāpāṇḍita

(The Supremely Learned One)

Visittha Vinayadhara Mahāvinayakovida

(Eminent Bearer of Vinaya, Great Possessor of Vinaya Wisdom)

Visittha Abhidhammika Mahā Abhidhammakovida

(Eminent Scholar of Abhidhamma, Great Possessor of Abhidhamma Wisdom)

Buddhasāsana Visittha Tipitakadhara Mahātipitakakovida

(Eminent Bearer of the Tipiṭaka and Great Possessor of Tipiṭaka Wisdom of the Buddhasāsana)

Sāsanadhaja Sīripavara Dhammācariya

(Banner of the Sāsana and excellent Splendid Teacher of the Dhamma)

Pariyatti Sāsanahita Dhammācariya Vaṭamsakā

(Benefactor of the Pariyatti Sāsana and Headgarland as Teacher of the Dhamma)

Chatthasaṅgīti Dhamma Vissajjaka

(Sixth Council Dhamma Respondent)

Chatthasaṅgīti Kāraka

(Sixth Council Editor of Redaction)

Chatthasaṅgīti Bhāṇaka

(Sixth Council Reciter)

Chatthasaṅgīti Bhāranitthāraka

(Performer of Various Duties at the Sixth Council)

Padhāna Nāyaka Sayadaw

Tipiṭaka Nikāya Upaṭṭhāka Sāsanāpyu Ahpwe

(Supreme Patron Sayadaw, Tipiṭaka Nikāya Ministrative Missionary Organization)

The boy who was to grow up to receive 31 titles such as sampled above, a few of which are extremely rare and one, the ninth is unique, was born on Wednesday November 1, 1911, to U Hson and Daw Hsin in Kyeebin Village, two kilometers south - west of Myingyan town in central Myanmar. He was the second of three children with an elder sister and a younger brother. His grandfather U Chai, a medical practitioner and an adept in astrology selected the name Maung Yan Shin but because the boy was lovable family and friends called him Maung Khin.

Maung Khin's father died when the boy was four and the boy went to live with his grandfather. At six he was sent to the local monastery and was initiated into the Order of the Sangha as a novice. He was delivered into the keeping of Minkyaung Taik Rahudaung Kyaung Sayadaw (preceptor) U Sobhita who recognized the special intellectual abilities of the young novice and helped them to develop. He named the novice Koyin Vicitta to emphasize the special intellectual abilities. On the Sayadaw's advice the family of the koyin's uncle presented him with a full set of the Pāli Canon and Commentaries which he kept in an almirah at the head of the bed.

At 13, the Koyin passed the township examination in the Kaccāyana Grammar reproducing it from memory with no error and no prompting. He repeated the feat next year with the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha. At 15 the Koyin appeared for and passed the Pariyatti Examination at the primary level. At 16, he passed the Examination at the middle level.

For the next two years he was occupied in ministering to his preceptor U Sobhita who had suffered a stroke and could not take any examination. For U Sobhita's funeral he wrote the Announcement, the Invitation to Monks and the Boat - song in Pāli verse and Myanmar language to convey the relics to the funeral pyre. He was much praised for those compositions by a novice.

After the funeral the Koyin was taken to U Paññācakka of Dhammanāda Monastery in Mingun, north - west of Mandalay across the Ayeyarwady River. U Paññācakka had occasionally visited Myingyan town so he was not unfamiliar with the Koyin. Landing there at half - past nine in the night and travelling some three kilometers inland the Koyin heard in the dark the voice of a novice reciting from a gloss of the Pāli grammar and realized that he had come to the right place to advance his learning.

In this he was right. The presiding monk and Preceptor U Paññācakka valued Pariyatti Learning. He held in great reverence the books which contained the Pāli Canon. He placed them on an altar and regularly paid respect to the Doctrine. He daily read a passage from the Canon so that when the year came round he had completed reading the whole Canon. The Koyin was to acquire the same respect for the Pāli Canon.

He was also fortunate in the person of the Venerable nun Daw Dhammacārī who not only provided material support but also instructed him in conduct in keeping with the Rules. Once in a later year, she was passing by while U Vicittasāra was teaching the younger monks. Impatient with a slow monk he raised his voice. Daw Dhammacārī heard him and later said: I thought U Vicittasāra was lecturing to the monks but in fact he was driving a bullock - cart.



The young Mingun Sayadaw

Daw Dhammacārī who was in her fifties at that time was herself a learned person. She came from a family of silk merchants of Mandalay. At 16 she left home and became a nun. At 20 she travelled to Sri Lanka and studied there for two years. On her return she studied under many learned monks and herself taught aspects of the Dhamma to nuns and girls. She wrote the famous Saccavādī Tīkā in Pāli. Because of her learning she was well connected not only with leading learned monks but also with the leading lay personages in Mandalay and Yangon. It was she who brought the Koyin Vicitta to the attention of Sir U Thwin, one of the most prominent devotees on high society.

She told Sir U Thwin about the brilliant Koyin and suggested that he sponsor the Ordination. Thus, on 23 March, 1931, Koyin Vicitta was ordained with his preceptor U Paññācakka as the Tutor. The Chapter was composed of Shweyaysaung Sayadaw, Nyaungyan Sayadaw, Masoeyein Sayadaw, Payargyi Sayadaw from Mandalay; Thammathati Sayadaw, Mahathitwin - gyaung Sayadaw from Sagaing and Chanthagyi Sayadaw, Baungdaungkoo Sayadaw and Ngwetaung - tawya Sayadaw from Mingun, senior monks famed for their learning. The Sayadaws were glad that the Ordination provided them the opportunity to come together. They were never to meet like this again.

A day's study schedule for the novice was heavy.

In the morning the Presiding Monk lectured on Moggallāna's Grammar.

After the midday meal the Abhidhāna was studied. In the afternoon the Tīkāthit treatise was taught.

In the early evening the Paṭṭhāna was studied.

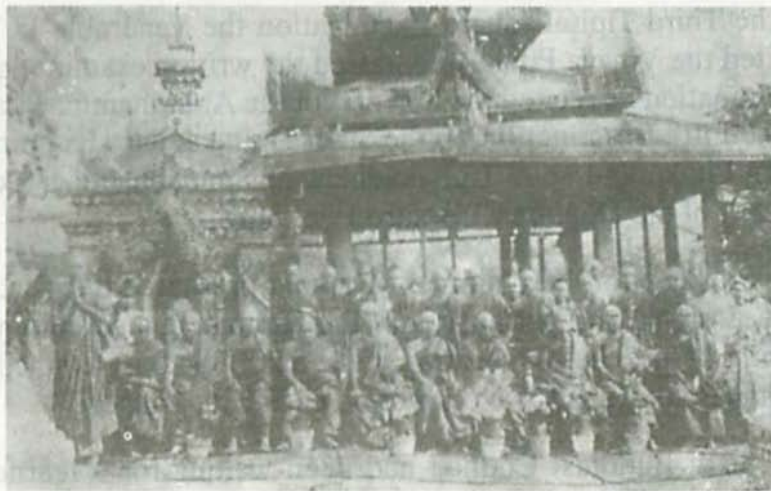
At night one attended the lectures on Bhedacintā (the Pāli aphorisms) and Kaccāyanasāra (resume of the Kaccāyana Grammar).

On Sabbath days the stories from the Dhammapada had to be written in Pāli.

Rhetoric was taught and the Maghadeva *Laṅkā* was studied for facility in versification. Composition of *ratu* and auspicious eulogies was practised.

Later, more advanced material such as the text of the Pāli Canon, the Major Commentaries, Sub - commentaries, exegeses and expositions were studied.

The year he was ordained U Vicittasāra passed the Government Pariyatti Examination in the higher level. The next year he passed the National Pariyatti Examination in the higher level. In the third year he passed the Sakyasiha Student Course Examination. In the fourth year (1934) he passed the especially difficult Sakyasiha Teachers Course Examination and also the Government Pathamagyaw having stood first. For his outright success in the Sakyasiha Teachers Course Examination he won the title *Vatamsakā* (Headgarland).



The young Mingun Sayadaw and learned senior Sayadaws at the Ordination

His preceptor U Paññācakka passed away in 1937 and U Vicittasāra became the presiding monk of the Mingun Dhammanāda Monastery, responsible for the management as well as for teaching. One of his favorite subjects was Moggallāna's Grammar.

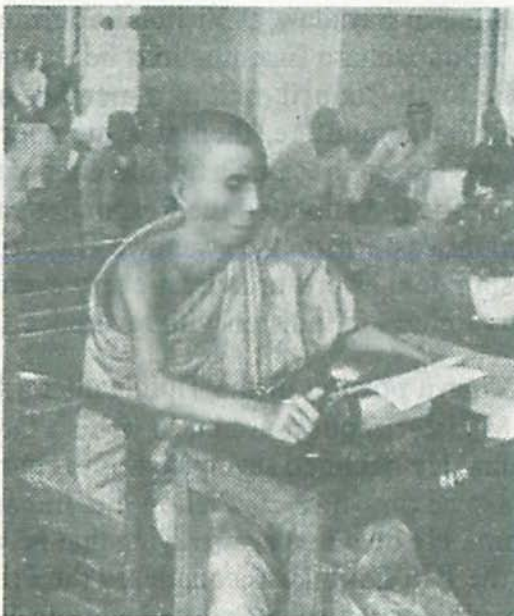
In 1949 he was one of the one hundred monks invited to attend the First Tipiṭakadhara Examination held by the newly independent Union of Myanmar. He observed the President of the Union holding high the palms brought together in reverence and never lowering them throughout the Opening Ceremony. He noticed the disappointment on the President's face and on the face of his Ordination Sponsor when the result was announced that no candidate had passed. He felt that the reverent palms were directed towards all the assembled monks in search of a Sāsana hero to emerge. He felt that the debt of reverence should be repaid. He resolved then to endeavour to become a Tipiṭakadhara, Bearer of the Tipiṭaka. He informed the nun Daw Dhammacārī who was like a mother to him in religion and also declared his intention to his Ordination Sponsor Sir U Thwin.

In the Third Tipiṭakadhara Examination the Venerable U Vicittasārābhivamsa successfully recited the Vinaya Piṭaka and passed the written examination with distinction. In the Fourth Examination he recited the first part of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, the second part being recited in the Fifth Examination. In the Sixth Tipiṭakadhara Examination he successfully recited the Sutta Piṭaka and so a Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika (Bearer of the Tipiṭaka and Keeper of the Dhamma Treasure) was born.

The President of the Union of Myanmar presented the Ven. U Vicittasārābhivamsa with the Title, Insignia and perquisites of the Honour in a ceremony in February 1954, barely three months before the convocation of the Sixth Buddhist Council which was held in the manmade Mahāpāsāṇa Guhā Cave on World Peace Hill, Yangon.

The Sixth Buddhist Council had been waiting for a learned monk to assume the role of
8 Respondent. This critical role could only be filled by a monk thoroughly and completely versed

in Kāśyapa three months after the Parinirvāna of the Lord
Buddha. It began well for the sake of the Sixth Buddhist
Council.



Tipiṭakadhara written examination



Tipiṭakadhara oral examination

in the Pāli Canon, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries, capable of immediately recalling and reproducing without error and hesitation passages under discussion and material relevant to the passage. It was a miracle that the Ven. U Vicittasārābhivamsa, Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika should emerge at such a time. It resembled so much the Venerable Ānanda becoming an arahat the night before the First Meeting of the First Buddhist Council



*Mingun Sayadaw on achieving
Tipiṭakadhara title*

in Rājagaha three months after the Parinirvāna of the Lord Buddha. It augured well for the success of the Sixth Buddhist Council.

Even while the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa was preparing for the Tipiṭakadhara Examinations he was busy editing the texts for the Sixth Council, first as a member of a primary regional redaction committee, then as a member of higher committee. He was later to become a full member of the Central Executive Committee. Appointed the Respondent, the Ven. U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa's performance was awe - inspiring. His statements as Respondent were broadcast every evening when the whole country tuned - in to listen with reverence.

When he passed the Vinaya portion of the Tipiṭakadhara Examination the Prime Minister requested him to write a Great Chronicle of the Buddha. He declined saying he was preparing for the Tipiṭakadhara Examination. When he became

Tipiṭakadhara the Prime Minister again requested him. He declined again saying that he was busy with the Sixth Council. When the redaction of the Pāli Canon was completed the Prime Minister requested him a third time. This time he could not refuse. He started work in 1956 and completed the six volumes in eight books of the Great Chronicle of the Buddha in 1969. The magnun opus may be seen in four parts. Part One is a chronicle of the earlier Buddhas. Part Two is a chronicle of the Buddha Jewel and provides an account of the life of Gotama Buddha. Part Three is devoted to the Dhamma Jewel and presents the principle suttas and doctrines. Part Four gives an accounts of the lives of the chief arahats, male and female and the main devotees. The writer drew information from the Pāli Canon, the Commentaries, Sub - commentaries and Exegeses. The information supplied is encyclopedic. The style is both

10 literary and readable and inspires reverence, awe and comprehension.

The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw was invited everywhere. He went even into the remotest villages to give devotees the opportunity to gain merit. He wanted everyone, the rich and the poor to have a part in the meritorious deeds of building pagodas, monasteries, seats of learning and in providing the four requisites of monks. Donors came forward with offers for his own monastery but he diverted them.

A donor came forward with the proposal to put up two huge leogryphs at the entrance to his monastery. The Ven. Sayadaw suggested that it would be better to build a clinic for the village. When another donor wished to erect a big residential building for monks in the monastery he suggested that Shweyaysaung Monastery in Mandalay where there were more monks would be a more suitable location. When yet another donor wished to build a dhammasal, he suggested that it would be better to build a township hospital. At the Ven. Sayadaw's suggestion a school and a police station were built together with residential quarters. A school, roads, bridges, monasteries and residential buildings for monks were constructed in the Ven. Sayadaw's birthplace and where he first became a novice.

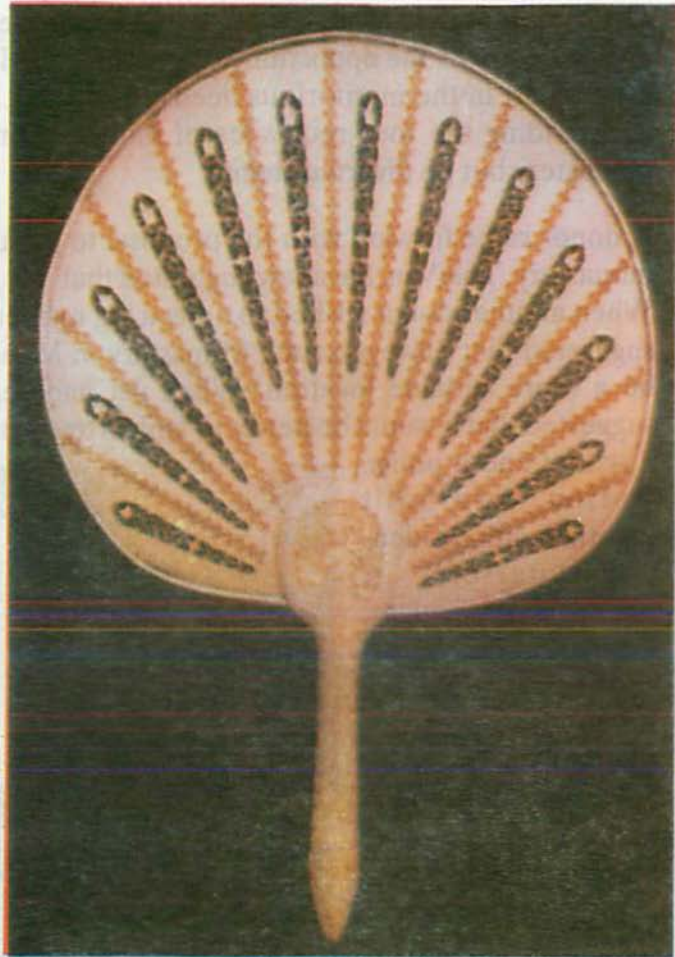
After the annexation by the British, monks and nuns in and around Mandalay



MINGUN SAYADAW FEEDING RURAL CHILDREN

were short of supplies. In 1896, the elders of Mandalay got together and formed the Malun Rice Donation Association to donate rice to monks and nuns in Sagaing, Mingun and Minwun range of hills while the Pariyatti Sāsanahita Association was formed a year later to do the same in Mandalay. Due to the Ven. Sayadaw's organizational efforts the Malun Association was able to distribute 5 baskets of rice to each monk, 4 to each novice and 3 to each nun. A Dhammasālā to house the Association was later erected.

The Ven. Sayadaw went wherever invited by plane, train, steamer, countryboat or bullock - cart. When delivering a sermon he would first recite the Pāli, give the paraphrase and then explain in Myanmar. When paraphrasing he would insert rhymes and parallelisms. When explaining in Myanmar his syntax would be perfect with no dangling phrases. The sermon would be supported with references from the Commentaries and Sub - commentaries. He had a full engagement year. When asked to reduce his travel and sermon schedule



Ivory fan inscribed with Tipiṭakadhara title



Mingun Sayadaw and Chief devotee Dr. Tha Hla responsible for Sayadaw's health

he replied that as a monk he was doing what a monk should do. He did not wish to be unemployed.

During the Sixth Council the Ven. Sayadaw became very ill and specialist Dr. U Tha Hla was assigned to cure the Sayadaw. Since then, Dr. U Tha Hla has looked after the Ven. Sayadaw's health and has become the Sayadaw's closest chief devotee.

About three kilometers from the Dhammanāda monastery, beside the Ayeyarwady River there was an old pagoda and near it a replica of Buddha's Footprint covered with brush and jungle. Nearby was also the tomb of the first presiding Sayadaw of the monastery, the Ven. Sayadaw's Preceptor.

The pagoda had been erected by the Prince of Momeit, son of the sixth king of the Konbaung Dynasty. The hill on which the pagoda stood was known as Momeit Hill. Dr U Tha Hla and wife Daw Khin Nyunt offered to repair the pagoda and place on it a new *htee* or finial. The hoisting of the *htee* was celebrated in 1960. Lands in the vicinity were slowly purchased and donated till the

area became extensive. Buildings arose.

A Momeit Pagoda Trust Committee was formed.

To attempt the Tipiṭakadhara Examination in one try is onerous and almost prohibitive. The Ven. Sayadaw considered that it would be beneficial to have a bridging examination. There could be none better than an examination in the Five Nikāyas or Collections which covered virtually the same ground but was tested less rigorously.

The Pariyatti Sāsanahita (Sakya Siha) Association of Mandalay was already experienced in holding high level examinations. Thus, the Nikāya Examinations came to be held in Mandalay, Yangon and Bago.

The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw then considered the benefit which would accrue if an institution be established where would - be candidates for the Tipiṭakadhara Examination could dwell without anxiety about material support and study material. The Ven. Sayadaw consulted the Momeit Pagoda Trustees. They pointed out that the buildings in the area were fully utilized only a few days in the year at the annual pagoda festival. If an institution were established for would - be candidates there those buildings would be better utilized for the benefit of the Sāsana.

On 18 February, 1978, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw donated all the monies awarded by the Government as Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhandhāgārika to the newly established Tipiṭaka-Nikāya Monastery. On Myanmar New Year Day of that year, the Momeit Pagoda Trustee Committee was enlarged and converted into the Tipiṭaka - Nikāya Missionary Organization with the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw U Vicittasārābhivamsa as Supreme Patron Sayadaw. The Tipiṭaka Nikāya Monastery in Yangon was opened on 23 November, 1980.

14 In December 1979, the Minister for Religious Affairs toured the country and supplicated leading monks on the desirability of convoking a Congregation of all orders for the purification,

perpetuation and propagation of the Sāsana. The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw agreed to help. He too toured the country and approached the Sayadaws to support the idea.

The Congregation of all Orders for the Purification, Perpetuation and Propagation of the Sāsana was held in the Mahāpāsāṇa Guhā Cave on World Peace Hill in Yangon on 26 May, 1980. The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw was elected General Secretary of the governing Sangha Mahā Nāyaka on the same day.

During the First Congregation the Sangha Mahā Nāyaka adopted a Pariyatti Education Scheme which laid down the principles for the establishment of a Sāsana Pariyatti University.

1. To perform at a higher level of effectiveness the purification of the Sāsana.
2. To develop monks replete with the following qualities.
 - (a) High moral behavior.
 - (b) Full conversance with the Tipiṭaka.
 - (c) Proficiency in Pāli.
 - (d) Skill in Myanmar writing.
3. To produce monks capable of missionary work at home and abroad and to develop the spirit to serve in areas urban or rural, poor or prosperous.
4. To alleviate the physical pain, mental suffering, anxiety and anguish by means of the teachings of Lord Buddha.

To realize these principles, the Sangha Mahā Nāyaka felt that a Pariyatti University should be instituted with one establishment in Mandalay and one in Yangon. The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw had at his disposal an experienced and widespread body in the Tipiṭaka - Nikāya Missionary Organization. So on May 10, 1982, the Sangha Mahā Nāyaka resolved to request the General Secretary in the person of the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw to undertake the task of establishing the Pariyatti Sāsana University together with the required buildings in Mandalay and Yangon.

The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw travelled the length and breadth of the country accepting donations towards the Pariyatti Sāsana University. With his Tipiṭaka - Nikāya Missionary Organization as the mainstay Upaṭṭhāka Ministrative Committees were formed to continue the work. Now, the construction work is virtually complete. The University opened in Yangon in June and Mandalay in August, 1986.

The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw always solicitous for the well being and Pariyatti learning advancement of the monks initiated a major project for the construction of a specialist Sāsana hospital in Mandalay. The hospital started accepting in- patients in November 1989.

In reverent honour and high recognition of the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw's pure moral conduct, deep and extensive learning, encyclopaedic literary effort, inspirational sermons and great service to the Sāsana, the Government of the Union of Myanmar presented to the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw the title of Aggamahāpaṇḍita in 1979 and the highest title Abhidhajamahāratṭhaguru in 1984.

Though he is now 80, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw continues to travel and to preach. He is greeted by huge crowds wherever he goes and his sermons are well attended. His voice is still firm, his mind clear, his reasoning incisive, his judgement unerring, his health good though he is still thin. His energy is unflagging, his resolve unshaken, the vision of his task undimmed as he journeys onward from his eightieth birthday.

THE MOMEIT PAGODA





TIPITAKADHARA DHAMMABAṄḌHĀGĀRIKA THE MOST VENERABLE MINGUN SAYADAW

THE INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT OF MINGUN SAYADAW

It is three months after the All-Enlightened Buddha passed away into Pārinirvana with no more possibility of renewed birth. Five hundred monks are assembled in a cave on a hill in Rājagaha, north India. They are all arahats who have dispelled the cloud of ignorance and have totally overcome craving. They have assembled to recite the teachings of Buddha during fortyfive years, thereby to make known what they are and so preserve the Teachings.

"Come, therefore, friends, let us recite together both the Dhamma and the Vinaya before what is not Dhamma flourishes and the Vinaya is thrust aside; before those who teach what is not Dhamma become powerful and those who teach the Dhamma become weak, those who teach what is not Vinaya become powerful and those who teach Vinaya become weak."

The Venerable Mahā Kassapa is presiding. He is also the Catechizer. He is going to ask questions leading to the recital of the body of the Vinaya which comprises the rules of discipline to regulate the conduct of the disciples of Buddha admitted into the Order of the Sangha. The questions will first cover the circumstances under which each rule was laid down asking where the rule was promulgated, concerning whom, the subject of the rule and other details. The Venerable Upāli will be the Respondent.

The Venerable Mahā Kassapa brings the assembly to order.

suṇātu me āvuso saṃgho

"Let the assembly, friends, hear me. If it please the assembly I will question the Venerable Upāli regarding the Vinaya."

It seems agreeable to the Assembly so it remains silent.

Then the Venerable Upāli puts a proposal to the Assembly, saying:

"Let the assembly, revered sirs, hear me. If it please the assembly, I when questioned by the Venerable Mahā Kassapa regarding the Vinaya, will reply."

It seems agreeable to the Assembly so it remains silent.

Then the Venerable Mahā Kassapa speaks to the Venerable Upāli.

"Where friend Upāli, was the first expulsion rule ordained?"

In this manner the Venerable Mahā Kassapa questioned the Venerable Upāli regarding twofold Vinaya and as questioned the Venerable Upāli replied.

After the recitation of the Vinaya had been completed Mahā Kassapa put a proposal to the Assembly saying:

"Let the assembly, friends, hear me. If it please the assembly, I will question the Venerable Ānanda regarding the Dhamma."

The Assembly seems agreeable and so remains silent.

The Venerable Ānanda, cousin of the Lord Buddha, was not yet an arahat when the decision was taken to hold the First Council. He had been closely ministering to the Lord Buddha. It had been decided that members of the Council would be chosen only from among arahats. When five hundred arahats less one had been chosen, the monks spoke to the Venerable Mahā Kassapa.

"The Venerable Ānanda although still a learner is incapable of going astray through liking, through enmity, through misapprehension or through fear, and much of the Vinaya and

Dhamma has been mastered by him in the presence of the Lord Buddha. Therefore let the Elder choose also the Venerable Ānanda."

The Venerable Ānanda had also been declared by the Lord Buddha to be the foremost among His disciples who were learned in the Dhamma, who was skilled in mindfulness, who was upright in conduct, who was established in enduring and who was well versed in ministering.

So the Venerable Mahā Kassapa chose the Venerable Ānanda also. But the Venerable Ānanda had not let the matter lie there. He had practised with supreme effort the night before the first day meeting of the Council. But so great was his effort, he did not realise the final fruition of the arahat. As dawn broke he decided to rest a moment. As he raised his feet to lie on the couch, the distraction of his supreme effort was removed and he attained arahatship.

The Venerable Ānanda put a proposal to the Assembly saying:

"Let the assembly, revered sirs, hear me. If it please the assembly, I when questioned by the Venerable Mahā Kassapa regarding the Dhamma will reply."

The Assembly seems agreeable and so it remains silent.

Then the Venerable Mahā Kassapa spoke to the Venerable Ānanda.

"Where, friend Ānanda, was the Brahmajāla spoken?"

"Between Rājagaha and Nālanda, revered sir, at the King's pleasure house in Ambalaṭṭhika."

"Concerning whom?"

"Suppiya the Wanderer and Brahmadaṭṭa the youth".

And so the Venerable Mahā Kassapa continued to question the Venerable Ānanda.

It is two thousand five hundred years after the passing of the All-Enlightened One into Parinirvāna. Two thousand four hundred and thirtyseven monks from Myanmar and one hundred and fortyfive monks from foreign countries are assembled in the manmade cave, Mahāpāssāṇa Guhā, on World Peace Hill, Yangon, Myanmar. Over two hundred thousand lay devotees are in attendance. The monks have come together for the sixth time in the Sixth Council to recite the teachings of the Lord Buddha and thereby to make known again what they are and so preserve the Teachings.

The Venerable Abhidhaja Mahāraṭṭhaguru Nyaungyan Sayadaw is presiding. He brings the Assembly to order,

suṇātu me āvuso saṃgho

"Let the assembly, friends, hear me."

With the permission of the Venerable Nyaungyan Sayadaw, the Venerable Pakokku Sayadaw Aggamahāpaṇḍita Bhaddanta Javana reports to the Assembly that he will be the Catechizer on the Vinaya.

The Venerable Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika Mingun Sayadaw reports to the Assembly that he will be the Respondent on the Vinaya.

And so the catechism begins.

"Where, friend, was the first expulsion rule ordained?"

With no hesitation, in a clear firm voice, neither loud nor soft, the Venerable Mingun Sayadaw responds precisely.

"The rule on the first expulsion was ordained in Vesālī."



State Pariyatti Sasana University founded by Mingun Sayadaw

the Three Baskets, was covered. The Catechizer changed but not the Responder. The Venerable Mingun Sayadaw responded, his measured tones never weakening, his syntax correct as ever, the texts having no error. Then after the redacted Pāli Canon had been adopted the Sixth Council continued with the recitation of the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries. The Venerable Mingun Sayadaw was again the Respondent with almost superhuman unflagging zeal and intellectual power. He was thoroughly qualified for the role and function of Responder in the Sixth Council.

When questioned in Pāli, the Venerable Mingun Sayadaw responded in Pāli. When questioned in Myanmar he replied in Myanmar. The answers were always organised in correct syntax however long they might be. The flow was smooth and unhesitant and well-paced. The sacred Pāli Canon was recited in measured tones as befitted their dignity.

This went on for two years till the Pāli text of the whole Piṭaka,



Mandalay Sasana Specialist hospital founded by Mingun Sayadaw

In 1948, the first year of independence from British rule the Government considered the need to purify, perpetuate and propagate the Sāsana, to promote the emergence of a heroic Sāsana personality with the ability to memorize and recite by heart the whole of the Pāli Canon, the Tipiṭaka, and to seek out personalities with special intellectual powers to receive the reverence and praise of the devotees. The Government decided to institute the Tipiṭakadhara Examination.

It is an oral and written examination lasting thirtythree days. The candidate is examined in the three Piṭakas: Vinaya, Sutta and Abhidhamma.

The oral examination in the Vinaya covers five volumes in five books comprising 2260 pages.

The oral examination in the Sutta covers three volumes in three books comprising 782 pages.

The oral examination in Abhidhamma covers seven volumes in twelve books comprising 4941 pages.

The oral examination on these 7983 pages or about 2.4 million words is not a viva voce, a question and answer examination. It is an examination on total recall and faultless reproduction. The Candidate will be given a point in the Pāli Canon, any point, and asked to continue reciting from there, line by line, para by para and page by page. Or he would be given a point and asked to go back from there a certain number of sections and to recite from there. There must be no error in the word form, the pronunciation must be correct, the flow must be smooth and the enunciation must demonstrate the proper understanding of the meaning of the passage being recited. A certain number of pages of text must be covered in a fixed time. A candidate who requires prompting for five or more times fails.

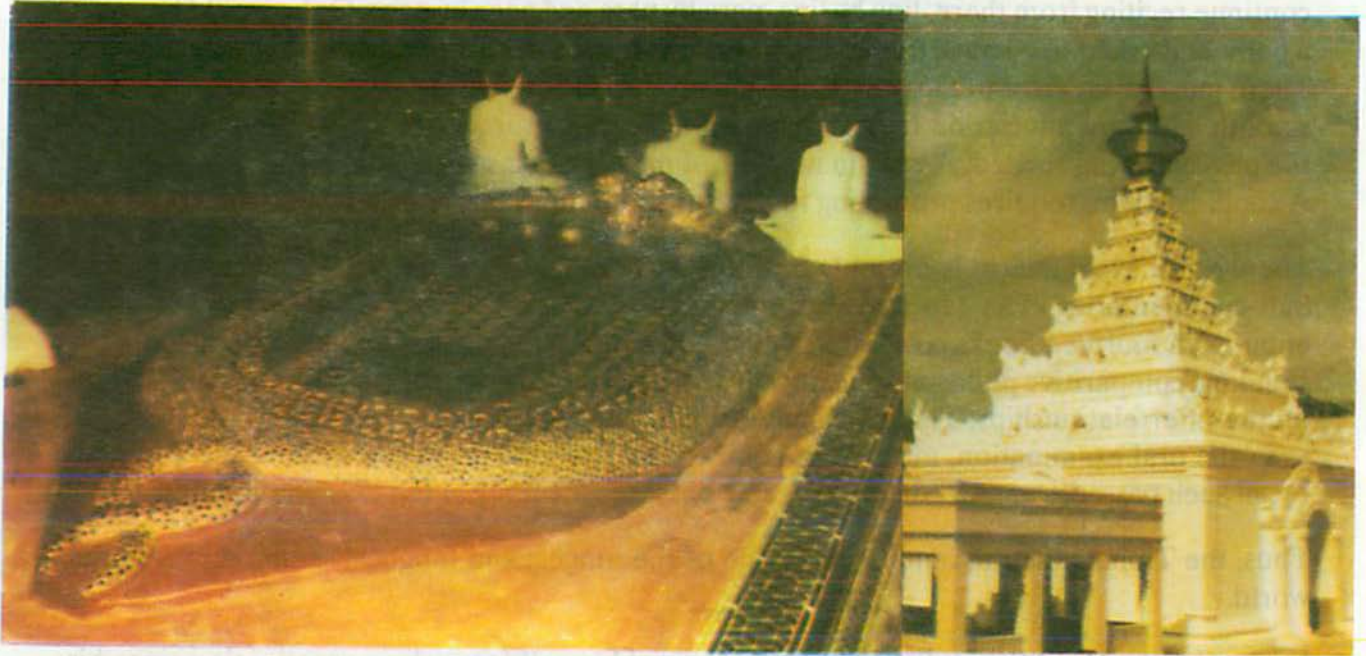
The written examination is not only on the Pāli Canon but also on the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries. The ten major Commentaries in ten books and the major Sub-commentaries in fourteen books cover 17917 pages. Candidates are tested on the doctrinal understanding, comparative philosophy, textual discrimination, taxonomic grouping and analysis and on the interrelationships. Though candidates are not expected to reproduce whole passages as in the oral examination, many of the questions cannot be answered without the ability to recall such passages and to compare diverse passages mentally at the examination desk.

Thus, the Tipiṭakadhara Examination is one of the longest and toughest examinations in the world.

In a sense, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw had prepared himself for such an examination since his youthful days as a novice. The intellectual power which was to win him the highest honours was first demonstrated when at 13 at the township examination he recited the 300 pages of the Kaccāyana Pāli Grammar without error and with no prompting. The next year he recited the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, having learnt it by heart in one month.

His uncle presented him with a complete set of the Pali Canon and Commentaries which served as a rich pasture for his mind.

At 15, he took the primary examination, the *Pathamange*, which consisted of examination in the first section of the Vinaya, Kaccāyana Grammar, Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, Mātikā and early sections of the Dhātukathā and translation between Pāli and Myanmar.



Ancient Buddha footprint recovered by Mingun Sayadaw & Pavilion Housing the same

The next year he took the middle level examination which covered additionally the Yamaka book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

He could not appear for any examinations in the following years because he was busy looking after his Preceptor Sayadaw who had suffered a stroke. After over two years, the Sayadaw

passed away and the novice was sent out to study at the Dhammanāda Monastery in Mingun across the river from Mandalay. When he came of age there he was ordained a full-fledged monk with the title U Vicittasāra.

Knowing his abilities, the presiding monk made him attend classes in the Vinaya and commentaries, the Abhidhamma and commentaries and the Shweyaysaung Grammar together with study of exegeses incorporating the views of famous Sayadaws and conclusions on the issues.

Before he had been a monk for one vasa, U Vicittasāra took the Government Examination at the higher level. The next year he took the National Examination at the higher level.

One of the more difficult Pariyatti doctrinal examinations is held by the Pariyatti Sāsanahita Association of Mandalay. Candidates are examined in the Vinaya, Grammar, Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, Abhidhammattha-vibhāvanī (Ṭikākyaw), Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī (Commentary on the Pātimokkha of the Vinaya Piṭaka), Saddatthabhedacintā (Kaccāyana's Pāli aphorisms and Sanskrit authorities), Kaccāyanasāra (resume of textbook on Kaccāyana Pāli Grammar), Abhidhānappadīpikā (Moggallāna's Dictionary of Pāli), Mātīka of the Dhammasaṅgani, Dhātukathā, Yamaka, these last three texts in extended and profound sense, and rhetoric.

U Vicittasāra passed the oral and written examinations in one attempt which is a rare achievement.

U Vicittasāra stood first in the Government Examination at the higher level and was awarded the title, *Pathamagyaw*.

The year after passing the Sakyasiha Examination he sat for and passed the Sakyasiha Teachers' Course Examination, something never achieved before. He was awarded the title of *Vaṭaṃsakā* (Headgarland) which permitted him to add Abhivaṃsa after his name.

Six years later when the First Government Examination on the teachers course was held in 1934, U Vicittasārābhivamsa passed the examination with credit and was awarded the title Sāsanadhaja Sirīpavara Dhammācariya.

By then he was the presiding monk at the Dhammanāda monastery at Mingun, the previous monk having passed away three years earlier. The Ven. U Vicittasārābhivamsa undertook the management of the monastery as well as the task of teaching. His special classes on Moggallāna's Grammar, Atthasālinī Commentary and Sammohavinodanī were famous and well-attended.

When the first Tipiṭakadhara Examination was held, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw was one of over one hundred monks invited to observe the proceedings. When the result was a disappointment with no candidate successful, he resolved to repay the nation's debt in search of a hero of the Pariyatti Sāsana.

He set about the task systematically. He took up the Pāli Canon passage by passage, book by book. He first set out to understand the passage thinking in Myanmar and in Pāli. He broke the passage into sentences, paragraphs or sections according to the degree of difficulty. If necessary, he noted the number of modifications and variations in the selected pieces. He read aloud each section five times, then closing the book, he repeated what he had just recited. If he was hesitant or felt he had not mastered the passage he would open the book and read aloud five more times. If it was recalled smoothly he would recite it ten times and then pass on to the next passage. In the evenings when reciting the day's passages he would not do it alone but request some other monk to check with the open book. This ensured that he did not pass over any word, phrase or sentence and that each declension was correct.

When two or three books had been mastered he would set aside each evening two or three periods required for their recall and recitation. The intention was to go through the finished

books simultaneously so that the mind would be active in all the books at the same time and all interrelationships would be discerned.

The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw also trained for the physically gruelling examination. Where an oral session would last for three hours he would practice reciting for five, thus accustoming himself to a test of ten hours a day. And he would do this for longer than the stretch of 33 days of the examination. He trained likewise for the written examination.

When the Third Tipitakadhara Examination came around in 1950, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw was ready to repay the debt to the devotees of the nation. He appeared for the oral examination on 2260 pages of the Vinaya Piṭaka.

In a clear, firm voice, unhesitatingly, without error, without prompting, with full understanding, he precisely enunciated each word and phrase audible to the whole audience. When there were different versions he pointed each out and suggested the most suitable one. The virtuoso performance received the appreciation and acclamation of the audience.

In the written examination in the Pāli text, Commentaries, and Sub-commentaries on the Vinaya, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw received the following marks out of a possible 100.

Pārājika	98
Pācittiya	99
Mahāvagga	92
Cūlavagga	98
Parivāra	100

In the Fourth and Fifth Examinations, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw appeared for the oral and written examinations on the Abhidhamma and passed with equal facility. By that time preparations for the Sixth Buddhist Council were underway. The Ven. U Vicittasārābhivamsa was a member of the Regional Mūla Pāli Visodhaka, Primary Redaction Committee responsible for the Mahāvagga section of the Vinaya Piṭaka. He completed the work in 19 days

so his regional committee was further assigned the Parivāra. This too was finished expeditiously.

In undertaking the assignments, the Ven. Sayadaw did not just read through the texts with the committee but sought out the different versions, brought out the reference in the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries, explained the implications to the clear understanding of the committee members, sought a unanimous conclusion and wrote the report.

The Ven. Sayadaw also participated in next higher redaction Committee, the Paṭi Pāli Visodaka Committee. In sessions of the Committee, Myanmar monks who were well-versed in the Pāli texts but not proficient in the language and Sri Lanka monks who were proficient in the language but not so well-versed in the texts could not get the understanding of each other. When such occasions arose the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw would respectfully and pleasantly explain the issue and possible solution to each side and thus arrive at a satisfactory understanding. Observing the performance of the Sayadaw, the Sri Lanka monks would say, "There is none such in Sri Lanka, there is none such in Jambudīpa."

The Ven. Sayadaw returned to his monastery in Mingun and worked on the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries. He foresaw that after redacting the Pāli Canon, the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries would follow. At the same time he had to prepare for the Tipiṭakadhara Examination on the third and final Piṭaka. He was not unduly worried. After the voluminous prescriptions of the Vinaya and Abhidhamma, the less than 800 pages of the Sutta Piṭaka were not onerous.

On a January afternoon in 1954, the Venerable U Vicittasārābhivamaṣa successfully completed the recitation of the Pāthika Vagga of the Sutta Piṭaka and a Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika was born in Myanmar.



LITHIC INSCRIPTIONS OF MINGUN SAYADAW'S WRITINGS



MINGUN SAYADAW PRAYING



Homage was paid to the Ven. Sayadaw in an official ceremony on February 13, 1954 when the President of the Union of Myanmar presented him with the title Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika and with the Seal, the Ivory Fan and the three white Umbrellas.

The Venerable Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika Mingun Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vicittasārābhivamsa was invited all over the country and homage was paid by hordes of devotees. In spite of the pressure of duties, for the Sixth Council was imminent, the Ven. Sayadaw visited even the remotest villages for the benefit of the devotees.

The Guinness Book of Records of 1985 has this entry.

Human memory: Bhandanta Vicitsara recited 16,000 pages of Buddhist canonical texts in Rangoon, Burma in May 1954. Rare instances of eidetic memory - the ability to reproject and hence "visually" recall material are known to science."

From the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw's study practices it will be noted that Myanmar monks accord much importance to reading aloud and recitation when handling material for memorizing. Hence it may be considered that auditory aid to retention and recall play as important a role as the visual.

When the Sixth Council was first being mooted some monks from Sri Lanka expressed anxiety about the availability of a qualified personage for the critical role of Respondent. Now, barely three months before the First Day Meeting of the Sixth Council, a person fully qualified for the role of Respondent had emerged in the person of the Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika Mingun Sayadaw. This happening was similar to the realisation of arahatship by the Venerable Ananda in time for the First Day Meeting of the First Council.

In the conduct of the Catechism there was no prior consultation between Catechizer and Respondent. The Catechizer questioned on whatever was required by the situation and the Respondent answered directly, precisely and without hesitation. The Catechizer once put a

question on a difficult issue in the Sutta Piṭaka and was anxious about how the Ven. Sayadaw would respond. But just as a whale receives the opportunity to frolic freely in the deep sea so also the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw's mind took the opportunity to range freely in the deep and difficult matter. The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw replied fully and completely to the question.

When the Most Venerable Nyangyan Sayadaw, President of the Sixth Council passed away the Most Venerable Abhidhajamahārattḥaguru Masoeyein Sayadaw was elected President and the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw was elected to fill the vacancy in the Executive Committee of the Sixth Council.

When the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw had successfully passed the examination on the Vinaya, the Prime Minister requested him to write a Chronicle of Buddha. The Sayadaw declined as he was engaged with the Tipiṭakadhara Examination. Three years later the Prime Minister repeated the request but the Sayadaw requested postponement till after the redaction of the Pali Canon in the Sixth Council. After the successful conclusion of this portion of the Sixth Council, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw began work on the Great Chronicle of Buddhas.

When completed this magnum opus of 5516 pages was in six volumes to commemorate the Sixth Council, in eight books for the Eightfold Path and in 45 chapters for the 45 years the Lord Buddha promulgated the Dhamma.

The first volume which is of two books deals with the story of Sumedha, the Future Buddha when he asked for and received the Prophecy uttered by Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The second book is devoted to the various aspects of Pāramī, "Perfections", to be fulfilled by the Bodhisattas and with the life stories of twenty four earlier Buddhas.

The volumes from the second to the fourth and the first book of the fifth volume are devoted to the Buddha Jewel. The second volume contains the events leading to the birth of the Buddha, seeing the Four Signs, Renunciation, the Ascetic Practices, Enlightenment, the conversion of the Kassapa brothers and the visit to Rājagaha.

The third volume presents the attainment of arahatship by the Venerable Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna, the visit to Kapilavastu, the initiation of cousin Venerable Ānanda into the Order, the establishment of the Jetavana monastery, the founding of Vesālī, the recitation of paritta and the rule prohibiting display of supreme powers.

The fourth volume contains many suttas preached by the Buddha while travelling widely in the middle country.

Part One of the fifth volume contains the events leading to the final passing away of the Lord Buddha into Parinirvāna with no more birth. It also contains an account of the distribution of the holy Relics.

Part Two is devoted to the Qualities of the Dhamma Jewel and expositions of the Paṭiccasamuppāda, "dependent origination", the Dhammacakka and the Anattalakkhaṇa Sūttas.

The two books of the sixth volume are devoted to the Sangha Jewel and provide accounts of the male and female arahats and famous lay devotees.

This is the general framework. Within that framework, the Ven. Sayadaw has supplied so much information from the Canon, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries touching on so many topics that the Great Chronicle is virtually encyclopedic. The Ven. Mingun Sayadaw has applied a literary style that is appropriate to the topic being presented. He arouses reverence, devotion and awe when describing the qualities, endeavors and accomplishments of the arahats and noble personages. Deep religious feelings suffuse the reader when the Ven. Sayadaw propounds the profound aspects of the Dhamma. The reader is pleasantly calmed by descriptions of natural beauty and wonderment is aroused by the splendor of cities. To read the Ven. Sayadaw's Great Chronicle is to set forth on a valuable journey of edification, illumination and bliss.

The Ven. Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika Mingun Sayadaw U Vicittasārabhivaṃsa continues to write and preach at 80. His sermons are famous for their facility of language, value of information not easily accesible even to a person familiar with the literature of Buddhism, for the power to help people understand the Dhamma and power to stimulate religious endeavour. Four volumes of sermons have been published; dozens of audiocassettes await transcription. A month before the Ven. Sayadaw was to appear for the oral examination in Abhidhamma, the Ven. Sayadaw preached a four-hour sermon on the Dhammacakka at the laying of the foundation stone of the Sāsana Vimāna hall of the Mandalay Pariyatti Sāsanaḥita Association. That famous sermon too awaits publication.

Intellectually, the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw as Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika has the marvelous power to retain, recall and reproduce a truly voluminous amount of material in a language, Pāli, which is not only not his mother tongue but also a language not used in daily commerce. He is able to see interrelationship between diverse elements and produce references over the vast territory of the Canon, Commentaries, Sub-commentaries, exegeses and expositions. His expression even in extempore sermons is clear, firm, syntactically correct, logical, building upon each thought and moving inexorably towards an edifying, memorable conclusion. This intellectual achievement is possible only through training in the Perfections through saṃsāra, "round of births" and through the most rigorous moral and mental discipline in this life such as in the case of the Most Venerable Ānanda, Buddha's cousin, whom the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw so much resembles.



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TIPITAKADHARA DHAMMABHANDĀGĀRIKA
AGGAMAHAĀPANDITA ABHIDHAJAMAĀHĀRATTHAGURU

THE MOST VENERABLE MINGUN
SAYADAW
HONORARY SECRETARY OF
THE STATE SANGHA MAHĀ NĀYAKA COMMITTEE