



BROKEN GLASS

PIECES OF MYANMAR HISTORY

Tun Aung Chain

OUR THREE MAIN NATIONAL CAUSES

Non-disintegration of the union	Our cause
Non-disintegration of national solidarity	Our cause
Consolidation of national sovereignty	Our cause

PEOPLE'S DESIRE

- * Oppose those relying on external elements, acting as stooges, holding negative views.
- * Oppose those trying to jeopardize stability of the State and progress of the nation.
- * Oppose foreign nations interfering in internal affairs of the State.
- * Crush all internal and external destructive elements as the common enemy.

FOUR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

- * Stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity, prevalence of law and order
- * National reconsolidation
- * Emergence of a new enduring State Constitution
- * Building of a new modern developed nation in accord with the new State Constitution

FOUR ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES

- * Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
- * Proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system
- * Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad
- * The initiative to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples

FOUR SOCIAL OBJECTIVES

- * Uplift of the morale and morality of the entire nation
- * Uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character
- * Uplift of dynamism of patriotic spirit
- * Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

The Broken Glass: Changes in the Perception of the Myanmar Past

In 1829 Bagyidaw (1819-1838), seventh king of the Konbaung dynasty, appointed a Royal Commission of learned monks, laymen and brahmins to revise the existing chronicles and to compile a new one.¹ Although the earliest extant Myanmar chronicle dated back to the early 16th century² this was the first time ever that a Royal Commission was appointed to produce a chronicle which would bear the stamp of royal approval. The expressed reason for the work of the Commission was that there were several versions of the chronicles in existence, that these versions were at variance one with another, and that there was needless repetition in these various chronicles.³

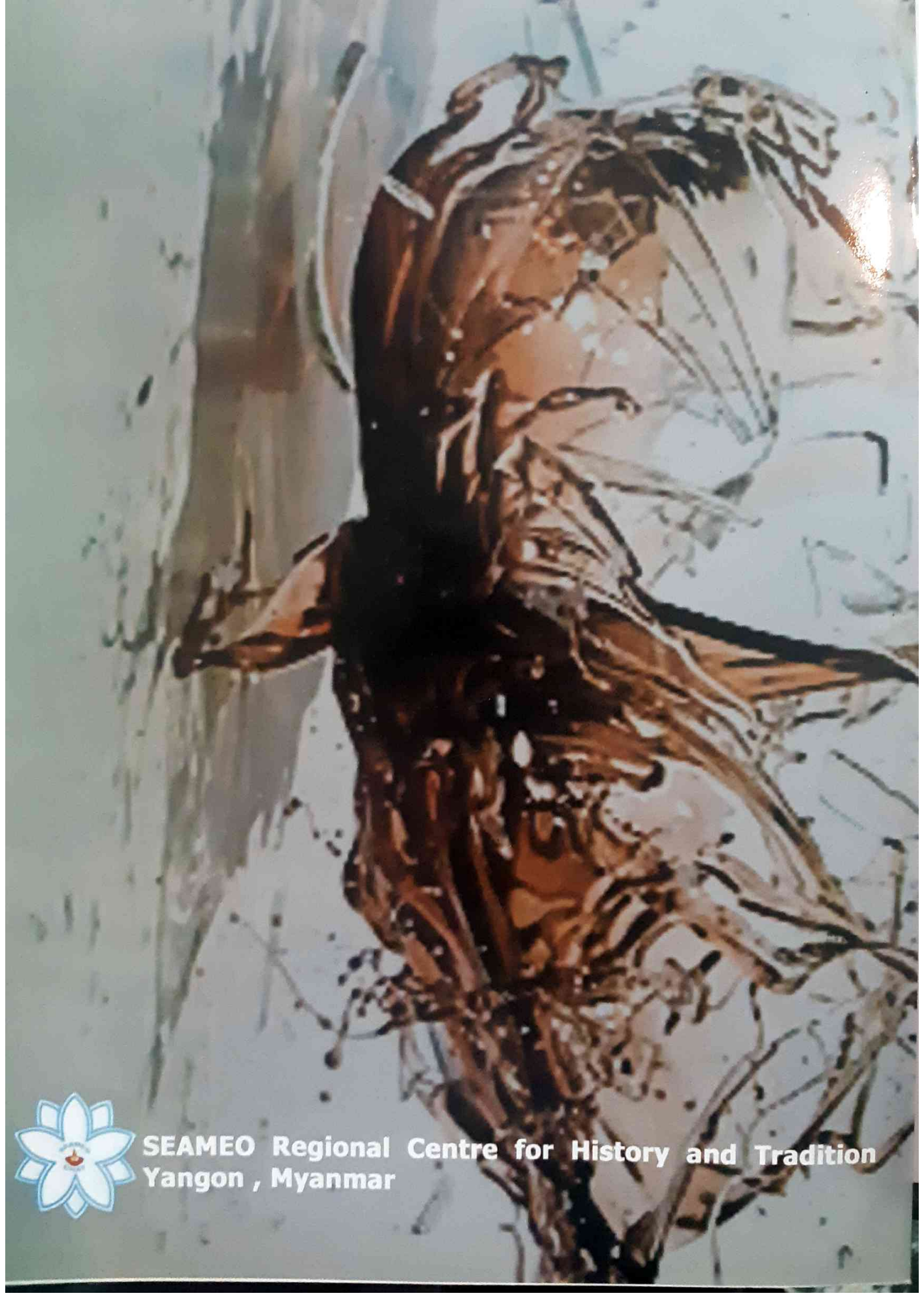
After a work of four years the Commission completed a chronicle of 38 books which covered Myanmar history from its mythical origins to 1821, the second year of Bagyidaw's reign. Because the Commission met in the antechamber of the *Glass Palace* (*Hmannandawzaung*) the chronicle became subsequently known as the *Glass Palace Chronicle* (*Hmannan Mahayazawindawgyi*)⁴ and it was under that title that the first printed edition was produced in the Royal Press at Mandalay in 1883.⁵

One hundred and thirty years after the compilation of the *Glass Palace Chronicle*—that is, in the mid-1960's—the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), formed in July 1962, four months after the military coup of March 1962, decided to produce a history of Myanmar. The BSPP had already made clear its philosophical standpoint in January 1963 in its *The Correlation of Man and his Environment*.⁶ Viewed from that standpoint, all previous histories of Myanmar were at fault: the chronicles written by Myanmar scholars of the “feudal” period; the distorted and topsy-turvy histories written by Western scholars in the colonial period to defend imperialism; the histories produced after Myanmar independence by Western scholars and Myanmar scholars—the former lacking in objectivity and analytical depth, the latter either echoing Western scholarship or writing with a strong chauvinistic bias.⁷ It therefore became necessary not to revise, but to rewrite the whole of Myanmar history.

The Central Organizing Committee of the BSPP took on the responsibility of producing the new history and the work was undertaken by party functionaries drawn from outside the academic circle. The plan was to produce a three-volume work, a *Basic Political History of Burma* (*Acheibya Myanma Naingnganyei Thamaing*), covering Myanmar history to 1962.⁸ The first volume was published in 1970⁹ and the second volume, in two parts, in 1977-78.¹⁰ The third volume was only partially completed in draft when the BSPP was dissolved in September 1988 during the pro-democracy upheaval.¹¹

Standing 130 years apart, the two histories—the *Glass Palace Chronicle* and the *Basic Political History*—provide two radically different views of the Myanmar past, indicative of the changes—political, social and intellectual—which Myanmar had gone through in that century and a half.

The view of the Myanmar past seen in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* was of an ordered past, with that order being provided by the king. The *Chronicle* began with an account of the origin of kingship. At the beginning of the present world-age, when the morality of men declined, theft, false speech and punishment appeared. Then men gathered together and raised up a king, Mahasammata—a name meaning revered as well as agreed upon, selected and authorized—with the performance of a threefold consecration (*abhiseka*). Mahasammata then established a royal city with the seven constituents. Observing the ten rules of royal conduct and the four characteristics of sympathy he worked for his welfare, the welfare of his descendants and the welfare of the people.¹²



**SEAMEO Regional Centre for History and Tradition
Yangon , Myanmar**