



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“One and a Half Human Beings”

How Buddhist Monks Construct the Muslim Other in Myanmar



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Summary

This thesis provides an insight into the topic of the Buddhist-Muslim violence taking place in Myanmar. In the context of the refugee crisis of the Rohingya, this thesis looks at the role of religious actors in this current climate of religious and communal violence. As the majority religion in Myanmar is Buddhism, and the Buddhist monks are highly respected and loved, they have a great influence over the population. The research question posed is: **How do Buddhist monks construct the Muslim Other in Myanmar?** The aim of the thesis is to analyse the construction of Muslims in Myanmar as an “other”, and provide a snapshot of how the Buddhist monks present the religious tension in their text. To answer this question I analyse the discourse in texts of two prominent Buddhist monks. The chosen texts are a Facebook post, and an interview of Ashin Wirathu, and a sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw. The historical context and background is presented to better explain what is found in the texts, and theories on nationalism, othering and violence are used to analyse and discover themes and messages in the texts. Critical Discourse Analysis will be applied to analyse the discourse practice, the texts in depth and the sociocultural practice of the texts. Based on the analysis I discuss the themes of nationalism, othering and violence found in the texts to finally answer the research question. As a conclusion I state that these three texts construct the Muslims as one coherent group of violent and threatening invaders who are in Myanmar illegally and who do not belong. The group is presented as a threat to both the nation and the Buddhist religion, and the texts justify the use of violence on these threatening others.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments and Gratitude	3
Summary	4
1. What is Happening in Myanmar?	7
1.1. The Topic and the Research Question	8
1.2. A List of Terms and Abbreviations	10
1.3. History and Context	12
1.4. Buddhism in Myanmar	15
Buddhist Monks and Their Role in Myanmar	16
Sangha and the State.....	17
1.5. The Protectors of <i>Sāsana</i>	18
The 969 Movement.....	19
The Ma Ba Tha	20
Ashin Wirathu.....	21
Sitagu Sayadaw.....	21
1.6. Relevance of the Thesis	22
1.7. Muslims in Myanmar and the Crisis in Rakhine State	23
The Recent Violence in Rakhine State	24
1.8. Concluding Remarks	25
2. Theories on Nationalism, Othering and Violence, and the Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis	27
Theories from the West Explaining the East	27
2.1. Nations and Nationalism	28
Religion and Nationalism.....	30
Effects of Nationalism.....	31
Nationalism in Myanmar.....	32
Buddhist Nationalism	34
Burmanisation	34
Recent Buddhist Nationalism	36
2.2. Othering	37
The Fearsome Other	38
Othering in Myanmar	39
2.3. Violence and Just War in Buddhism	41
Justifications for Violence	41
Just War Theory	42
Just War Ideology in Buddhism.....	43
2.4. Methods of Analysis	45
Why Critical Discourse Analysis?	45
2.5. Gathering the Materials	46
The Ethics of Using Materials From the Internet	47
The Texts.....	48
The Facebook Post.....	48
The Interview.....	48
The Sermon.....	49
2.6. Critical Discourse Analysis	50
Analysing the Discourse Practice	52
Mediatisation	52
Analysing the Text	53
Analysing the Sociocultural Practice	54
2.7. Limitations and Challenges of the Methods and Texts	54

The Facebook Post by Ashin Wirathu	55
The Interview of Ashin Wirathu	56
The Sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw	56
2.8. Concluding Remarks	57
3. Analysis of the Texts	58
3.1. Analysis of the Facebook Post by Ashin Wirathu	58
The Discursive Practice	58
The Text.....	59
Nodal Points and Power	62
3.2. Analysis of the Interview of Ashin Wirathu	63
The Discursive Practice	63
The Text.....	64
Nodal Points and Power	68
3.3. Analysis of the Sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw	69
The Discursive Practice	69
The Text.....	70
Nodal Points and Power	80
4. Discussing my Findings.....	82
4.1. Themes of Nationalism in the Texts	82
Unity for Whom?.....	83
Unity Among Whom?.....	85
Protecting the Nation, Buddhist or Not?	86
Protecting Buddhism?.....	88
4.2. Construction of the Muslim Other	90
4.3. The Use of Violence Against the Other	93
4.4. Conclusion	94
Answering the Question	95
Relevance of the Results.....	96
4.5. Concluding Remarks	97
Military as the “Proper Authority”?.....	98
Final Remarks.....	99
5. References.....	101
5.1. Pictures and Models	118
Appendix A – Facebook Post by Ashin Wirathu with Translation	119
Appendix B – Transcript of Interview of Ashin Wirathu.....	121
Appendix C – Transcript of Sitagu Sayadaw’s Sermon in English and Burmese.....	123

1. What is Happening in Myanmar?

On December 24th 2017 there were reported 838,300 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh. 530,000 of these are children and youth (Humanitarian response, 2018). Jeffry Gettleman (2017) told the story of one such refugee, a woman who tried to flee from the military with her son through the river into Bangladesh.

Her name was Rajuma, and she was standing chest-high in the water, clutching her baby son, while her village in Myanmar burned down behind her. [...] [T]he soldiers clubbed Rajuma in the face, tore her screaming child out of her arms and hurled him into a fire. She was then dragged into a house and gang-raped. (Gettleman, 2017).

The military's crackdown in Rakhine State were said to be in response to an attack by the Muslim militant group Arakan Salvation Army (ARSA) on 30 police posts and an army base in Rakhine State in August 2017 (Lone & Naing, 2017). It is suspected, however, that the crackdown was planned by the military and that the attack from ARSA was a good excuse for the military to escalate a planned attack (Aagre, 2017, 10:48-11:11). But the military are not the only ones who have been targeting the Rohingya. Locals in Rakhine State, who are mostly Buddhist, have also attacked their Muslim neighbours.

Maung Maung [a Rohingya official at Ah Nauk Pyin village] said he had called the police at least 30 times to report threats against his village. On Sept. 13, he said, he got a call from a Rakhine villager he knew. "Leave tomorrow or we'll come and burn down all your houses," said the man, according to a recording Maung Maung gave to Reuters. When Maung Maung protested that they had no means to escape, the man replied: "That's not our problem." (Lone & Marshall, 2017).

So what makes the Buddhists want to attack their Muslim neighbours? Throughout the thesis I will refer to research on historical, cultural and political reasons for the violence, but the main focus will lie on the role of the religious actors, the Buddhist monks. In the midst of this crisis Buddhist monks have played a part in inciting fear and hate of Muslims to the Buddhist laity. The majority religion in Myanmar is Buddhism and monks are highly respected and loved, so their opinions carry weight. As Melford E. Spiro (1982, p.396) says "[t]here is probably no other clergy in the

world which receives as much honour and respect as offered the Buddhist monks of Burma”. The Organization for the Protection of Race, Religion and *Sāsana* (*sāsana* meaning Buddhism as practice), known by their Burmese acronym Ma Ba Tha, (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.203), has been especially outspoken against Muslims and the Rohingya. The group, consisting of monks and laypeople, fears the demise of the Buddhist religion (Walton, 2017b), and the islamisation of Myanmar (Frydenlund, 2017a), generating a fear of Muslims in general. Ashin Wirathu, a leading monk in the Ma Ba Tha, has been named both “the Burmese bin Laden” and “the face of Buddhist terror” (Beech, 2013) and is known for his anti-Muslim statements.

There are lots of difficulties due to the Muslims, they cause problems. They rape Burmese Buddhist women in many towns and cities. They rape teenagers and children under age ... The women are very vulnerable (in marriage). The man pretends to be Buddhist, and then she is allured into Islam and she is forced to wear burqa. Some women are tortured if she continues the practices of her religion. [...]When we as monks give sermons we inform laypeople about these stories so that they can shy away from Muslim males. - Ashin Wirathu (cited in Frydenlund, 2017a)

Wirathu is also an example of how the use of social media has changed rapidly in Myanmar, as he has been active on updating his Facebook page with his views on Muslims (Specia & Mozur, 2017). Facebook has been connected to the increase of hate speech (Safi & Hogan, 2018). The chairman of the U.N. Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar explained the “determining role” Facebook has had, stating that “as far as the Myanmar situation is concerned, social media is Facebook, and Facebook is social media”, and a U.N. Myanmar investigator also stated that “[e]verything is done through Facebook in Myanmar” (cited in Miles, 2018). Making a clear connection between a Facebook post and a violent event or riot, however, is nearly impossible, as not enough research has been done on this yet.

1.1. The Topic and the Research Question

The news coverage of the Rohingya crisis along with reports on “firebrand monks” (Lone, 2017) and a quiet Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, (Paddock & Beech, 2017) was initially what got me interested in research on Myanmar. With guidance from my supervisor I focused my attentions to the role of the Buddhist

monks in this situation, and statements such as the one from Wirathu above are what I am going to analyse in this thesis. The topic of the thesis will be the process of othering of Muslims in texts presented by Buddhist monks, and how religion and religious actors play a role in shaping nationalism in Myanmar.

I suggest that these monks shape the discourse on nation and nationalism through their position, and as part of this they are constructing the Muslim population as an “other” to be feared. Adrian Hastings (1997, p.4) describes nationalism as arising especially when a nation feels threatened, and this could be what is happening in Myanmar. The activities and goals of Buddhist organisations such as the 969 Movement and the Ma Ba Tha (discussed in detail later), consisting of both monks and lay people, have been described as “nationalist” or as a part of “Buddhist nationalism” (see Walton & Hayward, 2014, Schonthal & Walton, 2016 and Than, 2015). Their activities have also been tied to the crisis of the Rohingya in Rakhine State. When I first started reading about these events I wondered how the expulsion of a group of people was tied to a national identity, especially if the terms of belonging or not were determined by religion. In his description of nationalism Steven Elliot Grosby (2005) discusses of the importance of the distinction between “us” and “them” and Adrian Hastings (1997) states that nationalism arises when the “us” feels threatened either from outside or within the nation. I will use theories on nationalism and the role of religion, as well as theories of othering and violence, to answer my research question.

My research question is as follows:

How do Buddhist monks construct the Muslim Other in Myanmar?

To answer this question I will analyse texts produced by two Buddhist monks. The thesis is based upon analysis of written material, in particular a Facebook post, an interview and an outtake of a sermon to discover the discourse that constructs the Muslim as other. I use texts produced by prominent and well-known monks and the three different types of texts capture the different ways monks in Myanmar communicate with laypeople.

The structure of the thesis will consist of a historical and contextual introduction to Myanmar, Buddhism and the Rohingya crisis. Following this, theories on nationalism, othering and violence are presented and put in the context of Myanmar. These theories are presented to better identify topics of nationalism, othering and violence within the texts. The theories are also used to shape the discussion of the thesis. The methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and how these will be applied to the material is then presented before each text is introduced. CDA analyses how power is constructed and maintained through discourse. Norman Fairclough (2010, p.132-133) approaches Critical Discourse Analysis through three dimensions. The analysis is done through analysing the contents in a text, the discursive practice of how the text is produced and how it relates to other texts, and through analysing the social practice that the text is a part of. The methods of CDA will be applied to each text following a discussion drawing from the findings in the analysis as well as the chosen theories, to answer the research question and to conclude the thesis.

Before continuing I will present a list of terms and abbreviations that are useful for the thesis.

1.2. A List of Terms and Abbreviations

- *Arhat/Arahant* – one who has achieved enlightenment in this life. The translators of the sermon write *arahant* but I choose the Pali term *arhat* when not quoting the translation.
- Arakan/Rakhine State – As the country got a new name (see below), other names were also changed to create a distance to the former British colonial power. Rangoon was changed to Yangon and Arakan State became Rakhine State. Rakhine State is where the Rohingya crisis is taking place, the state is situated on the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh
- *Bhikku* – Pali for monk, meaning almsman
- BSSP – Burma Socialist Program Party
- Burma/Myanmar – In 1989 the military regime changed the name of Burma to Myanmar. When mentioning events prior to 1989 I will refer to the country as Burma, and after this date I will refer to it as Myanmar

- Dhamma – the cosmic law and order, and the teachings of the Buddha
- Ma Ba Tha - the Burmese acronym for the name *Amyo Ba-tha Tha-tha-na Ka-kwaè-saung-shauk-ye Apwè*. In English it is called the Organization for Protection of Race, Religion and Sāsana (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.203) but they also go by the name Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation. The organization consists of both monks and lay people who wish to protect and promote Buddhism
- Ma Ha Na – The State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, the state’s supervisory body of Buddhist authority in Myanmar
- NLD – National League for Democracy
- RUSU – Rangoon University Student Union
- Sangha – the order of monks and nuns
- *Sāsana/buddhasāsana* – the Buddha’s dispensation, Buddhism as practice and institution in this world
- Sayadaw – the title for a Buddhist abbot or senior monk, can also mean teacher
- National races/national groups/ethnic groups – these terms are used to describe the 135 recognized groups living in Myanmar¹. The terms are used interchangeably in the research I am referencing, but unless I am quoting someone I will use the term “ethnic group” throughout the thesis
- SLORC – State Law and Order Restoration Council
- *Sutta* – An episode from Buddha’s life from Buddhist canonical scripture
- Tatmadaw – the name of the military forces in Myanmar
- U – The U in front of a name is a respectful way to address a man who is a government official or has a high-ranking social standing, as with Prime Minister U Nu. The equivalence for a woman is Daw
- USDP – Union Solidarity and Development Party
- YMBA – Young Men’s Buddhist Association
- 969 – referring to the three jewels in Buddhism: Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and the number of their respective qualities. The 969 Movement was a movement spearheaded by Wirathu, among others, urging Buddhists to

¹ A. South & M. Lall (ed.), argue in their book “*Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma*” that there are 136 groups, but as 135 is the commonly claimed amount, I will use 135 here

support Buddhist shop owners, who would use 969 stickers, and not go to Muslim shops. Muslim shops used stickers saying 786, to signal that they sold halal food.

In the cases where I write the anglicised versions of Burmese words I will write them the way they have been written by the author I am referencing, or the way I have been taught when doing my own translations. In the case of names such as Dutthagāmani and Mahāvamsa I use Wilhelm Greiger's (1912) translation, which differs slightly from the translation of the sermon I am using. I have also chosen to use Pali words such as *arhat* and *bhikku*, although my source material uses both Pali and Sanskrit. Burmese words, except for names, have been put in italic but this has not been altered in direct quotations.

1.3. History and Context

Myanmar is divided into 7 states and 7 regions or divisions. The Bamar ethnic group mainly populates the regions, situated in the middle of the country, while the states that roughly make up the borders of Myanmar consist of ethnic minorities. Today there are 135 recognised ethnic groups in Myanmar (Thawnhmung & Yada, 2018, p.113). The major ethnic groups in Myanmar are (listed by size) Bamar, Shan, Kayin, Rakhine, Mon, Kacin, and Kaya, and smaller groups are Wa and Naga, among others. Within each of these groups there are several sub-groups, as well as groups of Indian and Chinese, making up the total of 135 ethnic groups. There are approximately 100 different languages in Myanmar, but the common language is Burmese, the language of the majority Bamar group. The different groups have their distinct cultural traits and ways of dressing, and although Buddhism is the majority religion, there are significant groups of Christians, Muslims and Hindus in the ethnic minority groups (Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2016). According to the 2014 census there are 87.9% Buddhists, 6.2% Christian, 4.3% Muslims and 0.5% Hindus in Myanmar. There are also different types of citizenships found in Myanmar, which are discussed further in South & Lall (2018), and Nick Cheesman (2017b) has written more about how the term “national race” (*taingyintha*)

came to surpass citizenship and exclude the Rohingya in Myanmar, but because of the constraints of the thesis these topics will not be discussed further here.

There is an on-going civil war in the country that has lasted since the end of British colonialism in 1948. In various stages and various degrees the Shan, Rakhine, Kaya, Kachin and Kayin/Karen have been the main fronts of the war, and although several fragile ceasefire and peace agreements and have been signed, the war is still active in some areas. According to a report by Amnesty International (2018) the fighting has intensified in northern Myanmar, where both the army and ethnic armed groups commit human-rights violations. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to go into the internal conflict, this topic shows how complicated the political landscape is in Myanmar.

Before all this, Burma was the land of kings and mainland Southeast Asia's greatest empire until the British colonized it. After three Anglo-Burmese wars (1824-26, 1852-53 and 1885) most of Burma was under British rule with Rangoon as its centre. During the colonial period the British brought in immigrants from India and China as workforce, and these were often prioritized over the Burmese workers, causing the Burmese to associate their complaints with the colonists with the immigrant communities. The distain for the colonial rulers morphed into a distain for immigrant workers and by extension Muslims, as many of the Indian workers were Muslim (Charney, 2009, p.5, 22-23).

Burma was officially a part of British India but became an independent British colony in 1937, the same year that U Nu, Burma's future Prime Minister, was elected as the President of the Rangoon University Student Union (RUSU). Aung San (1915-1947), the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, was also a member of RUSU, and he would later become an important symbol of Burma's independence. During the Second World War Japan occupied Burma from 1942-1945 and Aung San, now a general, worked with the Japanese to train the Burmese military, first to fight the British and then to gain independence from Japan. From March until October 1945 General Aung San and his forces fought the Japanese and gained their complete independence. From 1948-1958 Burma was democratic under President U Nu who tried to strengthen the relationship between Buddhism and the state, pursuing a "Buddhist Unity" as the national unity (Charney, 2009, p. 40-41, 50-51, 72, 88).

Between 1958-1962 the position of power changed back and forth between U Nu and the military, under General Ne Win, until the military seized power through a coup in 1962. The Revolutionary Council under Ne Win ruled until 1974 when the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSSP) took over. The establishment of BSSP meant no real change as the leadership was mainly the same as in the Revolutionary Council, but a new administrative system was established. During the military rule the borders were closed, there was strict censorship on the media, the economy was bad and the on-going civil war raged throughout the country. Students and monks who tried to speak up against the government were quashed which led to several uprisings (Charney, 2009, p.93-94, 107-147).

In 1988 there were protests and revolts and in 1989 a new election was held, where the National League for Democracy (NLD) gained popularity while the military junta had established itself as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Aung San Suu Kyi was the General Secretary for NLD, but because of the increase in popularity SLORC found a way to claim that Suu Kyi was instigating disturbances and she was put in house arrest. Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 “for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights” (Nobel Media, 2018). The military held power but was increasingly unpopular, and in 2007 the situation hit a boiling point when fuel prices were increased between 100 and 500 per cent. Buddhist monks took to the streets in the “Saffron Revolution” to protest against the military regime, and in 2010, 2012 and 2015 increasingly democratic elections were held (Charney, 2009, p.160-169,196-197).

Myanmar is a democratic country today with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi as State Counsellor. The NLD won the elections in 2015, but since she is constitutionally barred from becoming Prime Minister, she has the title of State Counsellor. Even if the NLD won the election the military party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), still holds much power. NLD has 135 seats in the House of Nationalities while the USDP holds 77 seats, 56 of which were not elected but reserved for the Defence Services Personnel Representatives, consisting of only military personnel. Also in the House of Representatives and in the State and

Regional Hluttaws (district seats) there are seats reserved for the military. This hybrid civilian-military regime shows the results of the many constitutional and legal changes the military put in place before the democratisation process started. As of today the civilian government, represented by Aung San Suu Kyi, has no power over the military forces, as this belongs to the commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

1.4. Buddhism in Myanmar

The teachings of the Buddha have many interpretations and traditions and the religion is traditionally divided into the Mahayana and Theravada traditions (Jerryson, 2016). In Myanmar the majority of the population is Buddhist and they follow the Theravada tradition. Spiro (1982, p.19) used the old slogan of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA): "to be a Burman is to be a Buddhist", drawing the connecting between the religious belief and the national identity. Buddhists believe that the Buddhist religion is in decline and that a future period of humanity will come when Buddhism will have become extinct. This belief is strengthened by events of actual decline, like when the monastic ordination-line in Sri Lanka had to be reimported from Burma in the late tenth century (Harvey, 2013, p.15, 216, 198). Buddhism was also in decline in the Indian subcontinent in the first millennium CE as a consequence of invasions, conversions with Hinduism and the loss of patronage and donations. As Buddhism is not a religion focusing on missionary work this fear of the religion vanishing is ingrained in Buddhist tradition.

According to Buddhist beliefs a person has innumerable past lives and will be reborn again in eternity. Life is seen as filled with pain and suffering, and salvation is to escape reincarnation and the suffering of the Wheel of Rebirth. In Buddhism each individual is responsible for his/her own salvation. To be set free from these continuous rebirths a Buddhist aims to reach Nirvana, an existence beyond heaven and earth. A consciously good act gives a person merit and good karma, which will lead to pleasant retribution, while a bad act will give demerit and bad karma, and lead to an unpleasant retribution. Merit is gained in three ways in Burmese Buddhism, through charity, morality and meditation, but only meditation gives the type of merit

that leads to salvation and Nirvana. Striving for good karma leads to a religion with a focus on peace, kindness and compassion, which are traits that many associate with Buddhism (Spiro, 1982, p.56, 67-70, 98-111). The first ethical precept in Buddhism is not to intentionally kill any living being, and pacifism is an ideal (Harvey, 2013, p.271). Within Buddhism there is a concept of *ahimsa*, or no-harm, which comes from *himsa* in Sanskrit and translates to “to desire to harm”. Violence is condemned in Buddhist doctrine as *akusala* or an “unwholesome act” (Jerryson & Juergensmeyer, 2010, p.6 and 18), but exceptions to this concept, relating to the nature of the victim and the intention of the killer, will be explored later in this thesis.

Buddhist Monks and Their Role in Myanmar

Monasticism is an important part of Burmese Buddhism, and it is customary that all Burmese Buddhist boys spend some time in a monastery. The monkhood collectively is called the Sangha, and is seen as one of the three gems of Buddhism, the other two being Buddha and Dhamma. The monks in Myanmar are perceived as the guardians of Buddhism, and have great power in the Burmese society, equal to that of official elites (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.187). In the monastery the monks read and memorize the teachings of the Buddha, and practice meditation. The Pali word for monk, *bhikkhu*, is better translated into “almsman” and there is a close relationship between the monks and the people, but the main focus for the monk is his own salvation. The monks hold sermons and perform rituals such as funerals or memorial services. The laity give the monks alms, like food or money to gain merit, or they help with practical work as monks cannot do labour (Harvey, 2013, p.287, 310, Spiro, 1982, p.279-290). The monks also function as teachers, especially on the topic of ethics, and people are always welcome to the monastery to ask for advice. With the dawn of social media, some monks also use the Internet to teach, interact with and give advice to the laity (see Specia & Mozur, 2017 and Miles, 2018 among others).

Kawanami (2009) writes on how monks can gain popularity among the laity based on a combination of charisma, talent and communication skills. By being devoted to academic achievement monks can pass state examinations, climbing a “hierarchy” within the monastic order. Other monks focus on gathering large crowds and giving lessons, sermons and spreading moral messages, although some also use this platform

to state political opinions. The most revered monk is the *arhat*, one that is rumoured to have reached enlightenment in this life and is therefore free from rebirth.

Sangha and the State

Throughout history there has been a close connection between the Sangha and the state in Myanmar. According to Spiro (1982, p.379) the king was seen as the protector of the religion, making Buddhism the state religion, and the king got his authority from Buddhist ideology. During colonial times, however, the colonial government refused to see Buddhism as the state religion, and distanced itself from the Sangha (Spiro, 1982, p.378-386). During the military regime, monks became an important force of resistance against the oppressive state. The conflict was presented as one of moral authority, where the Buddhist Universal Law, Dhamma, was set up against the secular state (Schober, 2011, p.120), as exemplified by the Saffron Revolution of 2007 discussed below. Today there is a closer relationship between the Sangha and the state mainly through the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (Ma Ha Na), which represents 500,000 monks² in Myanmar, and is seen as the state's supervisory body of Buddhist authority (Chambers, 2017).

In social crises monks have been active to promote change, as seen in the democratization process of Myanmar and the Saffron Revolution in 2007. Towards the end of the military rule monks took to the streets protesting against the military government using their significant position in Burmese society to fight, in their own way, for democracy. In 2007 tens of thousands of monks marched in the “Saffron Revolution”, demonstrating against the military regime. Monks were marching in the streets chanting the *mettā sutta* (loving-kindness), an act that was acceptable within their monastic tradition, showing their dismay of the military while not strictly acting “politically” (Walton, 2015a). Monks were also reported “turning over alms-bowls” to deny alms from the military to show their dismay (Mydans, 2007).

As part of becoming a monk one should renounce the world, and therefore not partake in political activities (Walton, 2015b). Nevertheless, Walton (2015a) discusses the topic of politically active monks who justify their activities as a way to protect Buddhism or to reduce suffering. There are different opinions of what is considered

² It is likely that this number in reality is lower than presented here

political activity (see Walton 2017a), but the general consensus in Myanmar is that a monk should not participate in any type of political activities (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.187). This is also supported by the constitution in Myanmar of 2008, where monks are banned from voting and forming political parties. Section 364 states “[t]he abuse of religion for political purposes is forbidden” (Burma library, Myanmar Constitution 2008). Despite this, members of Ma Ba Tha have tried to gain the rights to vote, arguing that clergy of other religions have this right (Kyaw Min, 2015c) and the monk Sitagu Sayadaw also argued for religious intervention in times of dire political situations (Kyaw Min, 2015b).

1.5. The Protectors of *Sāsana*

A more recent example of political activism among monks in Myanmar can be seen in the passing of the four “race and religion” laws in 2015. These laws seek to regulate interfaith marriage, “to prevent forced conversion, to abolish polygamy and extra-marital affairs, and to promote birth control and family planning in certain regions of the country” (Frydenlund, 2017a, p.56). Even if the laws do not explicitly target Muslims, it is clear that the goal is to prevent Buddhist women from marrying Muslim men (see Crouch, 2015, Frydenlund, 2017a, Frydenlund, 2017b). The Buddhist organisation Ma Ba Tha, spearheaded by monks, collected signatures and supported a draft for the interfaith marriage law and sent it to Myanmar’s parliament. This, however, was not a new campaign in Myanmar as Buddhist nationalists discussed this same topic during colonial times to promote a separation from British colonialism. This plays on the rising fear of the “Islamisation” of Myanmar that has been there since colonial times (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.203-204), when the resistance against the British became synonymous with resisting the Indian workforce who were mainly Muslim and Hindu.

Than (2015, p.16) writes on the role of monks in connection to nationalism and violence in Myanmar:

Monks have played key roles by partaking in secular affairs and presenting themselves and acting as vanguards of tradition, race, and religion. Such an interference in secular affairs has often resulted in monks preaching and acting in non-peaceful means.

In recent years Buddhist “nationalist” movements have enjoyed increasing popularity in Myanmar along with prominent monks who have been voicing their opinions on political matters. Two such groups are the 969 Movement and Ma Ba Tha (The Organization for Protection of Race and Religion), and Ashin Wirathu and Sitagu Sayadaw are prominent monks related to these organizations.

The 969 Movement

Nyi Nyi Kyaw (2016) explains that the 969 Movement started in October 2012 with the aim to protect Buddhism in Myanmar. The 969 numbers are based on the number of qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha and the number of their qualities respectively. The use of the 969 numbers are inspired by the Islamic symbol of 786, which refers to a passage in the Quran and is used to show that a shop is selling *halal* food in Myanmar. Some Buddhist leaders claimed that this symbol was being used to help Muslims to only support Muslim shop-owners, and so the 969 stickers were established for Buddhists to only support Buddhist shop-owners. There were also those who thought that the numbers 786 referred to a plot to Islamise Myanmar by the end of the 21st century, because the numbers 7, 8 and 6 add up to 21. Through the 969 Movement many monks spread speeches with clear anti-Muslim messages (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.195-210). Both President Thein Sein and the Minister of Religious Affairs gave the movement their unofficial support in 2013, thereby also supporting the anti-Muslim sentiments of the movement (Marshall, 2013).

There is a close connection between the 969 Movement and the Ma Ba Tha, and Walton & Hayward (2014, p.15) explains that

Indeed, multiple people (sympathetic to the organization, it must be noted) explain the genesis of MaBaTha as an initiative on the part of some senior Burmese monks who felt that the 969 movement was in danger of creating a negative perception of Burmese Buddhism and wanted to bring it under more control. While this may have been the intention of some of the monks who launched the organization, its creation has certainly not resulted in the disappearance of anti-Muslim preaching or violence against Muslims.

Although the 969 Movement have quieted down, the Ma Ba Tha is spread nation wide and enjoys major popularity.

The Ma Ba Tha

Many of the monks who were a part of the 969 Movement are also members of the Ma Ba Tha, which is an organization spread all across Myanmar. The Burmese acronym stands for *Amyo Ba-tha Tha-tha-na Ka-kwaè-saung-shauk-ye Apwè* (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.202-205). The name is based on the words *a-myo*, which can be translated into race, nation or ethnicity, *batha*, which means language or religion, and finally *thathana*, which comes from the Pali word *sāsana* and refers to the Buddhist practice and institution in this world. The Ma Ba Tha published a news-style periodical called *Aungzeyadu* containing sermons with anti-Muslim messages, articles on legal and political changes to protect Buddhism, and reports connecting Islamic terrorism to the Rohingya Muslims (Cheesman, 2017a, p.341). According to Schonthal & Walton (2016, p.102) Ma Ba Tha stepped into a “religio-political vacuum” as there are no other Buddhist political organisations in Myanmar. The organisation has therefore had a great influence politically, especially regarding the passing of the aforementioned “race and religion laws” in 2015 (Walton, Kyi & Thein, 2017, p.14-15).

Leading up to the fourth annual conference for Ma Ba Tha, the Ma Ha Na, the state’s Buddhist authority in Myanmar, issued a statement banning the name of the organisation. They changed their name to the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation to please the Ma Ha Na, and to be able to continue their activities (Kyaw Min, 2017). Many misunderstood this as a ban on the group altogether, but that was not the case according to Walton (2017b), as the group continues their activities under the new name. The statement from the Ma Ha Na echoes the statement made in 2013 on the use of the 969 symbols, where the Ma Ha Na seemed to be disciplinary without actually being so, telling the organization not to use the symbols, but not condemning their actions or views (Walton, 2017b, Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.205).

I have chosen two prominent monks as the focus for this thesis. A more comprehensive study could include texts produced by several more monks connected to the Ma Ba Tha or texts from opposing monks to get a broader perspective, but for the scope of this thesis I have narrowed it down to two. These are monks who are known both in Myanmar and internationally, and they have been reported on in

international media on several occasions (see Walton, 2017c, Lone, 2017, Barron, 2018, among others).

Ashin Wirathu

Ashin Wirathu is a prominent monk connected to both the 969 Movement and Ma Ba Tha. He got involved with the 969 Movement in 2001 and was imprisoned in 2003 for inciting religious conflicts. The prison sentence was for 25 years but he was released in 2012 along with several political prisoners (The Irrawaddy, 2013). He became apt at using social media to spread his beliefs, and videotaped his sermons to be published on YouTube and Facebook. In his sermons he plays on the rising fear that many have of the growing population of Muslims in Myanmar, claiming that Muslims are violent troublemakers and “mad dogs” (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2013). Wirathu also uses interviews as a way to communicate his views, and several can be found online (see AJ+, 2014, Oppenheim, 2017 among others). He even agreed to appear in the movie “Venerable W” which was the third instalment of Barbet Schroeders’ “Trilogy of Evil” documentary series (Weissberg, 2017), a choice that could indicate an “any publicity is good publicity”-attitude from Wirathu. Even if the Ma Ha Na were vague in their resistance to the 969 and Ma Ba Tha, they made a clear statement concerning Wirathu in 2017. He was banned from delivering sermons for one year, starting on March 10th, due to his use of religious hate speech (Htun, 2017).

Sitagu Sayadaw

Bhante Ashin Nyanissara, also known as Sitagu Sayadaw is a respected public figure in Myanmar and is an Honorary President in the non-governmental organization Religions for Peace. He has established his own monastery and a missionary center, and is known for his philanthropic work especially for providing aid after the cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008. He is considered an authority on the Buddha’s teachings, he runs meditation centres in many countries and frequently travels abroad (Religions for Peace, 2017). The sermons of Sitagu Sayadaw are renowned and sought after, and his charismatic leadership and social engagement have made him popular (Kawanami, 2009, p.218-220). After the violence in Rakhine in 2012 Sitagu held interfaith discussions and was praised by commentators abroad for his work (Walton, 2017c).

Sitagu was also the deputy chairman of Ma Ba Tha although he distanced himself from the organization in 2015 (Kyaw Min, 2015a), and his role there now seems unclear. According to Walton (2017c), there is a big contrast between what Sitagu will say in English and what he will say in Burmese, as the Burmese sermons often describe Islam as a violent intruder in Myanmar. In the sermon I use in this thesis Sitagu explains the unity between the military and the monkhood, which Walton (2017c) responds to, saying: “This might seem an unusual comment from a monk who fled his country in 1988 after criticizing its then-military government. Today, however, Sitagu counts high-ranking military officials among his donors”.

1.6. Relevance of the Thesis

The activities of the organisations and monks mentioned above have been related to the recent religious and communal tensions in Myanmar, which is why they are the focus of this thesis. The aim is to expand the knowledge of how the Muslim other is constructed by monks in Myanmar. Through the thesis I will show how the two revered and popular monks use different types of media to spread their messages, creating a wedge between Muslims and Buddhists. It is a relevant topic in the light of the Rohingya crises in Rakhine State, and it is also relevant to increase an understanding of the current political and social climate in Myanmar. If we can get a better understanding of how Muslims, and in particular the Rohingya, are viewed in Myanmar, it might give insights as to how this narrative could be changed. Although the monks are not in the forefront of violent attacks, I suggest that by constructing the Muslim other, these monks have helped create a climate of hate and fear, and a public opinion that accepts violence against the Rohingya and other Muslims.

I present this as an addition to the research that already exists, as researcher such as Gerry van Klinken and Su Mon Thazin Aung (2017) suggest a political explanation to the othering of Muslims, my thesis aims to look at another aspect on the subject of othering. My aim is to look more closely on the discourse presented by the two monks, to explain how the studied texts construct the Muslims as other. I refer to, and build on, the research done by van Klinken & Thazin Aung (2017), Walton & Hayward (2017), Frydenlund (2017b) and several others, as my thesis illuminates a

small part of a bigger topic. This thesis can be a contribution to increase understanding of the role of religion in nation building, and an understanding of discrimination of religious minorities. It can also give insights in the field of Buddhism and violence.

The relevance of the topic can also be presented through a summary of the situation in Rakhine state and the situation for Muslims in Myanmar in general. Although the Rohingya crisis is not the main focus of this thesis it is an important part of the context of the discourse. A short historical presentation of Muslims in Myanmar and the crisis in Rakhine state will therefore be given here, before the theoretical and methodological part of the thesis.

1.7. Muslims in Myanmar and the Crisis in Rakhine State

Though the population is primarily Buddhist there have been Muslims in Myanmar for centuries. Some came for trade and work and some were even military personnel or advisors to the Burmese kings (Phyu Phyu Oo, 2016, p.158-159, Crouch, 2016, p.18-19). When Burma became a colony under British India in 1852 many Muslim Indians came to work in Burma (Phyu Phyu Oo, 2016, p.159) and during this time Burma saw a rise of anti-India and anti-Muslim sentiment (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.191).

When Japan invaded Burma in 1942 inhabitants from Arakan, including Buddhist monks, were recruited to fight for the Japanese, while the local Muslim communities, mostly from the Rohingya ethnic group, were fighting for the British (Schonthal, 2016, p.239-240). There were waves of violent communal clashes and Jacques P. Leider (2018, p.193-194) argues that the term “ethnic cleansing” would have been appropriate for these events. This caused deep polarization in the state, and both Buddhist- and Muslim-led separatist movements wanted to separate Arakan from Burma after the Second World War. The connection between Islam and separatism grew in the minds of the Burmese people, and in a period where the country was trying to unify, the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan were described as illegals from

Bangladesh who did not belong in Burma (Schonthal, 2016, p.240-241). Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya were denied citizenship and the group was not recognized as an ethnic group of Burma (Tonkin, 2018, p.222-229).

Not all Muslims in Myanmar belong to the Rohingya ethnic group. The Kaman ethnic group, for instance, is the only recognized Muslim ethnic group in Myanmar (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2018, p.279), and there are other Muslims within other ethnic groups as well. Even if the Rohingya Muslims are not the only Muslims in Myanmar, there seems to be a growing idea among the Buddhists that Islam and Muslims in general are a threat.

The Recent Violence in Rakhine State

As explained above the tensions in Rakhine State date back several decades. For the purpose of this thesis I will give a brief account of what happened in 2012, 2016 and 2017. In May 2012 three Muslim men reportedly raped and killed a Buddhist woman in the Rakhine State. On June 3rd a group of Rakhine villagers brutally murdered 10 Muslims on-board a bus, probably as retaliation. These actions seem to have further pitted the Muslim Rohingya population against the majority Buddhist population in Rakhine, and there were several violent clashes. Human Rights Watch (2012) reported that villages and neighbourhoods were raided, many were killed, over 100,000 were internally displaced from their homes and several thousand Rohingyas fled to the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia. In June the Burmese army, known as Tatmadaw, stepped in against the Rohingya, opening fire while Rakhine mobs burned down villages. Leaders and Buddhist monks in the area were trying to force the Muslim community out of the state, asking Buddhists not to trade with or befriend Muslims (Wade, 2012).

In October 2016 a military crackdown lasting for months started in Rakhine State after fighters from the Rohingya militant group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked several border posts (UNHCR, 2016). Al Jazeera (2017a) reported in March 2017 that more than 120,000 Rohingya were internally displaced in camps that they were not allowed to leave, where they were denied healthcare and education, and where food and shelter was scarce. Among the thousands of Rohingya who managed to flee to Bangladesh many reported systematic rape and murder carried out

by the military. On August 12th 2017 Al Jazeera reported that curfews were imposed and further military troops were sent to Rakhine State (2017b). Later in August the ARSA again attacked police and military posts in Rakhine State. The Tatmadaw responded to this in full force, burning villages, raping, killing and effectively chasing more Rohingya across the boarder to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh (Asrar, 2017, The New Daily, 2017). The number of refugees in Bangladesh is now close to 900,000 in total (Humanitarian response, 2018).

The United Nations human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Hussein called the situation in Rakhine State a "textbook example" of ethnic cleansing in September 2017, although the situation still was hard to assess fully because human rights investigators were denied access (UN News Centre, 2017). The United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has not provided a definition of ethnic cleansing, although it has been recognized as a crime under international law. The term was used to describe crimes in the former Yugoslavia where people from specific ethnic or religious groups were removed from an area by force, to render this area homogeneous. The means used to remove the groups are listed and include military threats and attacks, rape and sexual assaults, murder and torture. A United Nations Commission of Experts stated that such crimes could be considered crimes against humanity, and fall within the Genocide Convention (United Nations). Myanmar's security advisor answered the United Nations Security Council by rejecting the allegations of ethnic cleansing happening in Myanmar, claiming that people fled because of terrorists (Holmes, 2017).

1.8. Concluding Remarks

I suggest that what is happening to the Rohingya is a conflict based on ethnicity and a long historic tension in the state, but that it has been "cloaked" in a religious language. Juliane Schober (2007, p.10-11) says it very well:

"The causes of religiously justified collective violence are likely to be as varied and predictable as any sources of conflict: economic deprivation, social inequity, political exploitation, and so forth. In other words, in the absence of such universal causes of conflict, religious discourse is not likely to spark

communal violence. At the same time, even religions that teach nonviolence are not immune to forces that create violent conflict with religious inflections. [...] Religious discourse [...] engages believers in multiple realities at the same time, be they social, political, psychological or sacred. It decontextualizes causes of conflict and lends them authoritative truths, thus precluding successfully negotiating context-based resolutions. Difference expressed between social groups is no longer one of degree, but an absolute difference that cannot be bridged”

It is an oversimplification to say that this is a case of Buddhists vs. Muslims, but I think that actors like Ashin Wirathu and Sitagu Sayadaw as well as the military, can benefit from framing the conflict in this way. Even if the Rohingya crisis cannot be explained in these simple terms, I suggest that it could be beneficial to look at how the “simple” story of Muslims vs. Buddhists is being told for an increased understanding of the tensions and conflicts in general and the Rohingya crisis in particular.

The historical and religious backdrop play an important role in the discourse discussed in the following chapters, as these historical and societal references are used in the texts. An understanding of the importance of Buddhism and the status of the monks is also necessary, to explain how the texts analysed here can have an impact on the society, and how the monks and the organizations presented above can shape the discourse in the country. The content of this chapter will also be of importance for understanding the theories and research presented in the following chapter.

2. Theories on Nationalism, Othering and Violence, and the Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis

The theories presented in this chapter will be used to analyse and understand the texts I am using to answer the research question posed in the introduction of the thesis. I will present the theoretical framework and put the theories in the context of Buddhist Myanmar by referring to research done in these fields. I have chosen are theories on nationalism, othering and violence. Grosby (2005, p.4) points out that nationalism is as much about unification as it is about distinction, asserting what unites “us” and what separates “us” from “them” or “the other”. As this is an integral part of nationalism, and as the monks whose texts I am analysing are connected to nationalist movements, theories on nationalism is relevant in discovering the constructing of “the other”. Below I discuss the challenges of using theories established in a western context to analyse a phenomenon in a South East Asian context before presenting the theories and concluding the chapter.

Theories from the West Explaining the East

The theories I use were originally established in a “western context”. Although this does not mean that the theories are not transmissible to an “eastern context”, I must keep in mind that the theories for understanding one part of the world might not be perfectly suited for understanding another. It is likely that some aspects can be lost when trying to understand South-East Asia through the lenses of the west. In example, Hastings (1997) presents Nationalism from a British and Christian context, but this can be countered by pairing his research with the research of Walton (2013), Kawanami (2016) and Than (2015) among others, on Nationalism in Myanmar. Just as important is the position of the researcher, as views from my Norwegian standpoint might obscure or miss some details that a local would not. To handle these obstacles I will try to put the theories and their theoretical tools in the context of Buddhist Myanmar.

2.1. Nations and Nationalism

A nation is a large body of people inhabiting a particular state or territory. According to Grosby (2005) a nation has historical roots connected to a tribe or a kingdom. The memories about these roots are key to the individuals that comprise the nation, and these memories may stem from myths or factual history. Either way, these memories help to distinguish one nation from another. This is the “temporal depth” of the nation, where the memories of the past shape the present and future. Being born into this context helps shape an individual’s identity. A child will learn the language, customs and stories of the nation it is born into. These traits are shared by the people of the nation, creating relationships between them and a “collective consciousness” or culture. The culture that arises in the nation helps shape the borders of social relations that divides “us” and “them”. The people of the nation express their unity through things like the language they speak, the clothes they wear and the faith they share. Institutions like government or a temple can give a structure to the nation where the people can gather. Territory and borders also become important, referring to the specific area where the people come from. The people who share the culture, history and identity of this specific territory comprise the nation (Grosby, 2005, p. 7-11).

Grosby (2005, p.5) states that “nationalism refers to a set of beliefs about the nation”, while the Stanford Encyclopedia for Philosophy (2014) determines nationalism as twofold, explaining it to be:

(1) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take in seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty (Nationalism, 2014).

There is a discussion on whether nationalism is a modern phenomenon or not.

Hobsbawm (1992) represent the modernist aspects while Hastings (1997) is critical of Hobsbawms views, and presents a “primordialist” view on nationalism.

Hobsbawm (1992) does not agree with the objective criteria of a nation, and subsequently nationalism, as suggested by Grosby (2005) above. Hobsbawm (1992) claims that a nation cannot be based on criteria such as ethnicity or language, because these criteria are ambiguous and shifting. A subjective criteria for nationalism based on a consciousness of belonging, is also insufficient, as it is perfectly possible to live in England and identify among the Brits as an Indian, or as a Gujarati among other Indians. Hobsbawm (1992) uses the political definition of nationalism by Ernest Gellner stating that it is a principle that claims that the political and national unit should be harmonious. According to Hobsbawm (1992, p.5-11), nationalism is to be understood as a particular and modern principle, relating to the modern nation-state. A nation should both be analysed from the top, through politics and technology, but also from below based on the hopes, needs and interests of the people. However, the interest of some of the people may not be representative for all, the national identity may not be seen as a superior identity above all others, and national identity is also subject to change.

Hastings (1997) disagreed with Hobsbawm, and presented a “primordialist” view on nationalism in a response to Hobsbawm’s work. Similar to Grosby (2005), Hastings (1997) states that a nation is a self-conscious community consisting of one or more ethnicities, possessing political autonomy and territorial control. Nationalism is, according to Hastings (1997), theoretical by relating to political theory, and practical by:

deriving from the belief that one's own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at almost any cost through creation or extension of its own nation-state. [...]It arises chiefly where and when a particular ethnicity or nation feels itself threatened in regard to its own proper character, extent or importance, either by external attack or by the state system of which it has hitherto formed part; but nationalism can also be stoked up to fuel the expansionist imperialism of a powerful nation-state, though this is still likely to be done under the guise of an imagined threat or grievance. (Hastings, 1997, p.4).

According to Hastings (1997) religion is of greater importance than what Hobsbawm presented. Hastings (1997, p.186, 190) writes on the historic role of Christianity in the shaping of the nation and nationalism, stating that they are “characteristically Christian things which, in so far as they have appeared elsewhere, have done so within a process of westernisation and of imitation of the Christian world, even if it

was imitated as western rather than as Christian”.

Applying Hastings’ views to nationalism in Myanmar presents some interesting questions. Did nationalism in Myanmar grow as a result of western influences from the British and is Buddhist Burman nationalism therefore an imitation of Christian British Nationalism? Then again if nationalism in its essence is primordial, as Hastings claims (1997, p.4), and stretches back long before the British came, can one argue that nationalism in Myanmar was created in imitating the Christian West?

The primordialist, Christian, Western view on nationalism presented by Hastings (1997) does not seem to sufficiently explain nationalism in Myanmar. Heinz Bechert (1979, p.5), on the other hand, claims that nationalism can be traced back many centuries in Burma. This would indicate that the primordialist theories on nationalism presented Hastings (1997) are more applicable than the modernist theories of Hobsbawm (1992), although the Christian aspects and the imitation of the West, as suggested by Hastings (1997), are mistaken when it comes to Asian countries such as Myanmar and Sri Lanka, based on the argument of Bechert (1979). Further below, Buddhist nationalism prior to British colonialism is also presented by Schober (2012) and Kawanami (2016), arguing the view that nationalism existed in Myanmar long before they would “imitate the West”. Even if nationalism can be traced back centuries it develops and changes over time, and this will be discovered in the analysis and discussion of this thesis regarding nationalism in Myanmar.

Religion and Nationalism

Even if nationalism is not always based on Christianity, religion can still play an important role in nationalism. In his analysis, Juergensmeyer (1996) divides religious nationalism into two types: ethnic and ideological. Ethnic religious nationalism describes a movement where religion is the uniting force connecting a group of people, often defined by a common culture and history, to a specific place. “[T]he ethnic approach to religious nationalism *politicises* religion by employing religious identities for political goals” (1996, p.5). Juergensmeyer (1996) describe Muslims in Chechnya, Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus and Kashmiri Muslims as examples of oppressed social groups who wish to establish their own identity.

Ideological religious nationalism resists secularist ideologies and *religionises* politics, putting political issues in a religious context. It combines traditional religious beliefs with the modern notion of the nation-state. A third type could be called ethno-ideological religious nationalism, where the nationalists are fighting both ethnic rivals and secular leaders (Juergensmeyer, 1996, p.4-5, 7). Ethnic religious nationalism might be what describes the nationalism presented by the Ma Ba Tha in Myanmar, although Buddhist nationalism does not represent the nationalism of an oppressed minority group seeking an independent identity. Yet, the aspect of employing religious identities to reach political goals is relevant in the context of these texts.

I will focus on Grosby (2005) and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's (Nationalism, 2014) viewpoints on nationalism, namely the beliefs, attitudes and actions of people within a nation. I will also keep in mind Hastings' (1997) practical approach of nationalism arising as a response to a threat, as the theme of a threatening other, discussed below, is relevant to the texts analysed in the thesis. Juergensmeyer's (1996) theories of ethnic religious nationalism will also be applied in the discussion of the findings in this thesis.

Effects of Nationalism

Grosby (2005) points out that nationalism is as much about unification as it is about distinction. To assert an "us" and "them", it is necessary to look at what unites the "us" (Grosby, 2005, p.4). During the First World War there were both inward- and outward looking aspects to nationalism in Europe. Internally, the nations quarrelled with those who did not fit into the parameters of the national community because of language, culture or ethnicity. This would later lead to what is now known as "ethnic cleansing". Outward the nations were aggressive towards other nations, while they felt blood-bound and familial with those inside the nation, as one was no longer a subject but a child of the nation (Rosenthal & Rodic, 2015, p.1-2). To better understand nationalism in Myanmar as a source for fear of outsiders, and Muslims especially, it can be useful to look at the nationalism of far right parties in Europe.

Today, nationalism in Europe again has focus on the inward looking aspects. There is no longer a need to motivate the population to go to war in service of the motherland, but there is a rise of far right parties applying nationalist rhetoric to appeal to the voters. An example of this was clearly shown in the elections in The Netherlands in 2017, where Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV) showcased the increase in interest for far right parties in Europe, later also seen in elections of countries like France and Italy. Wilders was outspoken on his wish to fight for "Henk and Ingrid", the typical Dutch couple that were suffering the consequences of immigration (Kirk & Scott, 2017), to "make Netherlands ours again" (Goldman, 2017) and to "de-Islamise the Netherlands" (John, 2017). Wilders' party won 20 out of the 150 seats in parliament, losing to the liberals who got 33 seats (The Economist, 2017). There are similarities to the newer nationalism in European countries, which focuses on the need to save or preserve an "original" culture and values from outside threats, and what is happening in Myanmar.

Nationalism in Myanmar

Buddhist nationalism seems to merge with, or present itself as, Burmese nationalism. For the purpose of this thesis I will make no clearer distinction between the two, but mostly focus on Buddhist nationalism because the Buddhist religion seems such an integral part of the nationalism that is presented by the Ma Ba Tha. A discussion on the possibility for a Burmese nationalism without Buddhism or including other religions and ethnic groups would be interesting for further research. The discussion on Buddhist nationalism as separate from Burmese nationalism is brought up as "Buddhist Protectionism" in the final discussion of the materials. Finding one national identity for 135 groups in 7 states and 7 divisions is no doubt a difficult task. The Burmese I talked to when I went to Yangon in 2017 were quick to introduce their ethnicity or to tell me of their home state. It seemed a natural part of their introduction, mentioned directly after their name. These were people from Karen and Chin State, and it seemed important to them to make this distinction clear, as if they had a closer connection to their home state than to the country of Myanmar.

Before discussing the attempts on a nationwide nationalism project in Myanmar, I will briefly present some research done on separate nationalism found in the border-states among the ethnic minorities. Brown (1994, p.56-59) discusses the Shan nationalism brought by the traditional elites (*sawbaws*) that fought for autonomy for Shan state in the 1950's. But within the Shan nationalist movement the *sawbaws* met resistance from the educated youth who sought to assert their leadership of the nationalist movement by fronting "anti-feudalist" issues. Various movements and armies were established and each fraction of the nationalist movement tried to call for Shan autonomy from the Burman state. Also Karen state has experienced stages of nationalism. In the 1850's and 1880's interventions from Burma against Karen and the rise of Christian educated elite groups led to the first stage in Karen nationalism. In the 1940's there was a rebellion, as the Karen felt betrayed in the decolonisation process, feeling excluded from the authority positions in their own community (Brown, 1994, p.59-62). Brown (1994, p.59) states that the Burman ethnocentric character of the country made it impossible for Karen to work within the state and still be "loyal Karens". Instead, being a "loyal Karen" led to rebellion. These are just examples of the many forms of nationalisms found in Myanmar. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore all types of nationalist movements within the country, and the focus will therefore be on the efforts for a nationwide nationalism promoted by the state, based on Buddhism and/or Burmanisation.

Following a presentation of the use of Buddhism in nation-building and the project of "Burmanisation" I will explore newer expressions of Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar to try to explain why Burmese and Buddhist nationalisms can be seen as one and the same. For clarification: the term "Burman" refers to the Bamar majority ethnic group, while "Burmese" refers to all citizens of Myanmar. The fact that these two words are so similar is a good example of the complicated notion of nationalism in Myanmar where, essentially, the name of one group is used to define all the 135 groups. Before presenting modern nationalism in Myanmar, the attempts of nation-building after the colonial period through projects of "Buddhist nationalism" and "Burmanisation" will be explored.

Buddhist Nationalism

Before the British colonised Burma, the king was the ruler of the country and the protector of the religion. During British colonial rule the Mandalay Palace was turned into a fort, the king exiled and the Lion Throne, the polity's cosmic centre, was moved from Mandalay to Calcutta. The British reconstructed the society and the monastic institutions experienced a crisis of authority. Along with this the colonial power increased the Buddhist cultures in Southeast Asia's interest in identity and national language. Because the only legal way to gather in groups was for religious purposes, the Buddhist domain became the place for nationalist voices. The Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), based on the model of the YMCA, became a forum to promote a Burmese national identity within the middle class. The slogan of the YMBA: "To be a Burmese is to be Buddhist" was later used by the post-independence Prime Minister U Nu (Schober, 2012, p.12-15).

In 1948 the Burmese Prime minister U Nu wanted to build a modern nation state in the newly independent Burma and saw potential in using Buddhism as a unifying factor. "Buddhist nationalism" was promoted in the 1950s as a way to unify the majority Buddhists to fight Communism. U Nu met resistance from Buddhist monks when he wanted all religions to be taught in the schools, and as a result of this resistance he suspended all classes on Buddhism. This resulted in even larger protests from the Buddhist majority. Nationalist opinions were mixed in with religious aspirations among young monks in the rural areas of Myanmar, causing demonstrations and riots as a reaction to high taxes and mistreatment of farmers by the police. During the elections in 1960 U Nu's Clean Party gained popularity although some criticised him of using Buddhism as a political weapon (Kawanami, 2016, p.33-35).

Burmanisation

Burmanisation was the project of reinforcing the Burman cultural identity as the national identity of Myanmar (Walton, 2013, p.11). The name Burma came from the central control area occupied by the British, who named the area "Ministerial Burma" where the Bamar was the dominant ethnic group. The attempt to "Burmanise" the country was initiated by the military regime, but many considered it a repressive tactic rather than an inclusive one. The re-naming of the country by the military in

1989, from Burma to Myanmar, was said to invite a more inclusive nationalism for all ethnicities. The problem with this is that the word Myanmar is another common word for the country in the Burmese language, which is the language of the majority Bamar ethnic group. During the military dictatorship, commanding general Ne Win spoke of “Burmese-ness” as something that Burmans were born with, in contrast to the other ethnic groups that somehow had to prove their loyalty to the Burmese nation (Walton, 2013, p.9, 13-14). The process of Burmanisation implied spreading the Burman culture to the other ethnic groups in Myanmar (Walton, 2013, p.8). A major part of that culture is the Buddhist religion, as “to be a Burman is to be a Buddhist” (Spiro, 1982, p.19), and the government did try a cultural assimilation through Buddhist mission to the ethnic minorities (Brown, 1994, p.49). Gustaaf Houtman (1999, p.9-10, 47-49, 53) calls this same process “Myanmafication” pointing out that after the death of General Aung San and with the rising popularity of Aung San Suu Kyi, the military government had to do something to regain support from the people. Because Suu Kyi’s party the NLD and supporters fighting for democracy had reclaimed General Aung San through Suu Kyi, the military instead tried to re-brand Burma to legitimise their rule. Not only was the name of the country and cities changed but also the names of streets where the names of British figures were swapped for those of Burmese personalities. Even the flag was changed, as it previously had 14 stars representing the 7 states and 7 divisions, it now only has one to represent unity.

Burmanisation can be seen as the process of inciting nationalism from a political level, and it can therefore be seen as an act of repression from the state. Buddhist nationalism was connected to resistance against the British colonial rulers. Buddhist nationalism can be described as grass root nationalism, representing the majority Buddhist population. Even if Buddhist Nationalism in Myanmar started on the grass-root level, it now seems to be making its way up to the political level, especially considering the new direction of the Ma Ba Tha (Kyaw Phyo Tha & May Sitt Paing, 2017).

Recent Buddhist Nationalism

Research on nationalism in Myanmar is now focusing on Buddhist Nationalism through the activities of the 969 Movement and the Ma Ba Tha. As stated in the previous chapter, the name of Ma Ba Tha shows the strong connection between ethnic, racial and religious identities felt by many Burmese Buddhists (Walton & Hayward, 2014, p.14-15). Ma Ba Tha has been especially focused on the protection and promotion of Buddhism from the threat of Islam through the new “race and religion” laws (Schonthal & Walton, 2016, p.84-86), and monk Ashin Wirathu went as far as calling civil society groups “traitors of national affairs” when they opposed one of these laws concerning interfaith marriage (Nyein Nyein, 2014). Iselin Frydenlund (2017b) points to the fear expressed by Ma Ba Tha of an “Islamisation” of Myanmar when the laws were written. These laws are all aimed at reducing the increasing numbers of the Muslims through controlling conversion and family planning (Frydenlund, 2017b, p.10-12). Than (2015) quote a pamphlet distributed by the Ma Ba Tha in Yangon 2015, where they state that the national duty of citizens was to protect the Burman race, making nationalism seem more of a weapon against an enemy, than a tool for upholding patriotism. According to Than (2015, p.16-17) monks have gone from the peacekeepers to the agitators, preaching nationalism that protects Buddhism against “the other” at any cost.

In the Burmese language the word for nation and people is *pyi-su-pyi-sar*, while the word for country is *pyin*. The word for race and nationality is *lu-myò*, although *a-myò* is also used for nationality, species, kind and race. An ethnic group is called *lu-myò-hcu* and the Bamar ethnic group is called *Bamar ko*. Someone with Indian origin is called *kalar*, and this can also be used to describe a foreigner and a Muslim (Thalun, 2000). These words are included to show the many faceted dictionary in the Burmese language connected to nation and nationalism, on who belongs and who does not.

So why can't Muslims belong in a Myanmar nationalism? On the question of belonging in modern Myanmar, Schober (2017, p.160-161) states:

Contemporary Buddhist discourse in Myanmar is inflected by a heightened awareness of religious identity, ethnic difference, and gender in a new nation that is in transition from a totalitarian state framed by Theravada Buddhist ideology to a democratic federation whose future will require embracing

multi-religious identities and multi-ethnic belonging. [...] Whether recent outbreaks of communal violence are understood as distractions initiated by partisan politics or, more broadly, as endemic to Myanmar's nation-building efforts, they have been justified by a powerful Buddhist discourse that draws distinctions between 'us' and 'them' in absolute, moral terms.

Schissler, Waltong & Phyu Phyu Thi (2017) discuss the complexities of belonging in the process of opening up and democratising. According to their article, the benefits of the open market has also brought the media coverage of an unstable Middle East, giving rise to the fears of the perceived threats from non-Buddhist neighbours and a growing Muslim population in general. This along with capital coming from Muslim nations in the Middle East, Central and Southeast Asia and the growing international support for the Rohingya strengthens a narrative that the "natives" in Myanmar are losing their land, religion and sovereignty to the Muslim other.

2.2. Othering

Othering can be seen as a part of defining nationalism, as stated by Grosby, (2005, p.4) in establishing "us" and "them". Yet, the practice of othering does not only happen in the context of constructing nationalism. Othering is a natural process in the human psyche where one distinguishes what is "me" and what is "not me" or "the other". The term othering was used in social science in theorising postcolonial societies, establishing that it is a structurally based process that underscores the privilege of the dominant group. "Power circulates within the structures in ways that enable the dominant group to define what "other" is" (MacQuarrie, 2010, p.635-636). This means that it is the dominant groups that define what is "different" and this difference is often established as something negative.

Jonathan Z. Smith (2004, p.230-239) states that the essence of othering is seen through the opposition of IN/OUT and the limits used to construct ourselves in relation to others. He presents three basic models for othering. The first model presents "the other" as someone with or without a cultural trait or physical feature. In this way "the other" is easy to distinguish, and is often identified by names such as "fish-eaters". The second model focuses on centre and periphery, where those outside are others. This might relate to those who are inside or outside the borders of a country,

and “the other” is established as an outsider who is not welcome. The third model distinguishes the other through language, where difference is represented linguistically in terms of intelligibility. In this model the other is unintelligible and will remain so, leading “us” to speak for a mute “other”. This model is not as applicable here and will therefore not be focused on, although further studies on othering of the different ethnic groups based on language could be interesting. A relevant example of othering that could be described by both the first and second model of Smith (2004), and which is relevant to the topic of the thesis, is Islamophobia.

Islamophobia can be linked to the term xenophobia, which describes a fear or dislike of something that is foreign or different, and can also be linked to racism (unesco.org, 2017). It is difficult to establish where the term Islamophobia first originated, but it was being used in Britain in the 1980s and 90s. In 1997 the Runnymede Trust Commission published a report titled “Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All”, where Islamophobia was seen as a normative term, referring to those who disapproved, had negative judgments about or discriminated Muslims and their values (Taras, 2012, p.3). Not satisfied with the definition given in the Runnymede Report, Chris Allen (2010) worked on establishing a new definition of the term. In summary Islamophobia is, according to Allen (2010, p.190), very similar to racism, perpetuating a negative meaning on Muslims and Islam. This influences interactions, attitudes and understandings, shaping the Muslim as other.

The Fearsome Other

In 1998 Veena Das wrote an article focusing on the events in Punjab, India in the 1980’s when tensions were high between the Hindus and Sikhs in the area. She explains how discourse of difference and animosity strengthened the creation of two distinct, opposing groups, or “others”.

The social production of hate can give birth to discourses and practices of genocide, but there are many special conditions through which such transformations become possible. *My fear of the other* is transformed into the notion that *the other is fearsome*. [...] [S]uch transformations are bound to the

conception of important past events as ‘unfinished’ and capable of molding the present in new and unpredictable ways (Das, 1998, p.126)

Othering is therefore not only the act of differing between “us” and “them”, but there is also an implicit idea of “the others” being different from “us” in a negative way. This differentiation can lead to discrimination or hate, or even fear of “the other”.

Othering in Myanmar

In 1989 a national newspaper published fourteen articles titled “We Fear Deracination!” that focused on the demographic threat of Muslims to Buddhism in Myanmar. The ministry of Immigration and Population also show a fear of the other, through their use of an old colonial era slogan: “The Earth Will Not Swallow a Race to Extinction but Another Will!” (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2016, p.194-195 & 204). Frydenlund (2015b, p.3) writes of how Muslims today are portrayed as terrorists, associated with Islamic global imperialism. The connection to the perceived international global threat has conveniently taken root in local competitions for power in Myanmar. In their article Schissler, Walton & Phyu Phyu Thi (2017) use interviews of Myanmar nationals to show the prejudice and mentality that exists regarding Muslims and Islam. The article shows how everyday customary actions, that are dependent on an ability to see other people as monsters, rationalise the practices of violence (Schissler, Walton & Phyu Phyu Thi, 2017, p.377). The article features quotes from interviews done with locals from six different cities in Myanmar. The quotes show some of the opinions people have on Muslims and Islam:

In my opinion, for the first point, it is religion. They [Muslims] are swallowing our religion. . . I am so worried about it for our future generations, our grandchildren and so on. In our time, horrible things like this happen to our religion. For the future of our children, I am so worried that our religion will disappear. I have these worries and concerns. I don’t want this religion to disappear for our future generation. I want it to last forever (Woman, 38, Buddhist, Myanmar, Lashio, March 2015).” (Schissler, Walton & Phyu Phyu Thi, 2017, p.383)

“Q: Why are you afraid to communicate with Muslims?

A: They are very strong in racism and always live separately from us. Even if they come and communicate with us, their mind-sets are not honest.

Q: Can you give me some examples?

A: I can give many examples of worldwide incidents. For example, they attacked the World Trade Center in America and you can also see [examples] in Myanmar. They are the sources of these incidents. Nowadays, we are more and more afraid of them and also you can see the situation of ISIS. I don't trust Islam in Myanmar because of this ISIS. For example, Islam [Muslims] from Indonesia are involved in ISIS so nobody can say that Islam [Muslims] in Myanmar are not involved or participating in the processes of ISIS. That is why we are afraid of them (Man, 36, Buddhist, Chinese/Myanmar, Mawlamyine, March 2015). (Schissler, Walton & Phyu Phyu Thi, 2017, p.384-385)

As previously mentioned the events following the Japanese occupation cemented the divide between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State. The attempts at unifying the nation through Buddhism often saw the Rohingya portrayed as Bengalis and outsiders, and later as illegal citizens from 1948 and onward (Tonkin, 2018, p.226-237). Not recognising Rohingya as one of the national ethnic groups in Myanmar solidified the want for separatism for the Rohingya people. This decision also signals that the state sees them as illegal immigrants. Connecting the idea of separatism to Muslim terrorist abroad has alienated the Rohingya from Myanmar, and given room for Muslim political and military groups (Yegar, 1972, p.97, 110-112).

In the crisis in Rakhine State the act of othering is twofold. On the one hand it separates the Rohingya Muslims from the Rakhine Buddhists, and on the other it groups all Muslims into one other (Schonthal, 2016, p.238). Schonthal (2016, p.237) refers to the "Muslim-Buddhist" framing of the conflict, writing that "[the] recent violence is interpreted not as much as a conflict between certain communities of Buddhists and Muslims, but between Buddhist and Muslims *writ large*, or between Buddhism and Islam".

2.3. Violence and Just War in Buddhism

“Sympathy is not for everyone” – Tilawka Biwuntha, leader of Ma Ba Tha (cited in Than, 2015, p.12).

Schober (2007, p.2) writes that “[i]n contrast to other world religions, Buddhism does not uphold a belief in religious redemption through warfare like the Crusades. Nor does it have a doctrine or history to mobilise religious communities to act violently against unbelievers”. Deegalle (2014, p.93) agrees with Schober, concluding that Buddhism under no circumstance can justify violence. On the other hand, Than (2015, p.18) claims that there are instances of violence being condoned by Buddhist monks because it was done in protection of the nation and the religion, which are reasons that can override the rules of moral conduct in the Dhamma. As can be seen in the crisis in Rakhine State, but also in other Buddhist majority countries like Sri Lanka (see for instance Fryndelund, 2017 and Schonthal & Walton 2016), Tibet (Maher, 2008) and Thailand (Jerryson, 2010), Buddhists are just as prone to violent acts as anyone else. Contrary to what Schober claims (2007, p.2) Jerryson (2016) and Bartholomeusz (2002) explain that there is a Buddhist scripture that has been used to justify warfare, namely the Mahāvamsa, as will be discussed below.

Justifications for Violence

According to Jerryson (2016) the Buddhist scriptures that condone or justify violence often do so to rationalise previous violence or to sanction violent acts conducted by a Buddhist state. These justifications can be seen as “exceptions” to the rule of *ahimsa*. Jerryson uses the monastic scriptures *Vinaya Patika* where these exceptions are discussed. As the monks represent the ideals of moral behaviour, the discourse on ethics found in these scriptures are the guidelines for both the monks and the laity. The Buddhist exceptions to the prohibition of violence consist of three variables: (1) Is the action intentional or accidental (2) what is the nature of the victim and how moral is it, and (3) what is the stature of the one who commits the violent act (Jerryson, 2016, p.146-147).

The first variable discusses the intention behind the action. If an act of violence is committed with the intent to harm or kill someone, it is a grave offence, but if an act

of violence is committed unintentionally it is not as bad. The intention to “defend Buddhism” is the most powerful and controversial exception in this variable, and Jerryson (2016, p.148-149) goes on to describe the 969 Movement as an example of someone who is referring to this variable.

The second variable, the nature of the victim, is often paired with the first variable of intention. There is a distinction between hurting a non-human and a human, but there are some nuances regarding humans that can lead to exceptions to the rule. The moral virtue of the victim plays a role, and is mostly discussed in regards to harming someone of high virtue, which is considered an extreme offence. Harming someone of no virtue is very different. Here Jerryson (2016, p.149-151) uses the story of King Dutthagāmani from the Mahāvamsa, where the king is told that because those who were slain on the battlefield were of no virtue, and therefore not fully human, the act of killing them was not unwholesome (*akusala*).

The third variable relates to soldiers in war. There are different ethics related to different roles, but the role of the soldier is not directly condemned because s/he is doing her/his duty. The emphasis is rather on the mind-set of the soldier, who is warned not to act out of aggression. The Buddha was closely connected to kings, and in times of conflict he would accept “wars of defence” over “wars of aggression” (Jerryson, 2016, p.152-153).

Just War Theory

Just War Theory is the basis of what is now called “law of war” such as the international treaties of the Geneva Conventions (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2014). The tradition of Just War revolves around two poles of inquiry, the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello*. *Jus ad bellum* refers to the conditions to justify going to war, listed as proper authority, just cause, right intent and last resort. *Jus in bello* is directed at how one should behave during war, relating to discrimination, proportionality and the double effect (Lang & O’Driscoll, 2013, p.1).

The proper authority is in most cases political authorities. Lang & O’Driscoll (2013, p.4) presents two types of authority identified by Friedman and Flathman. A practical

authority comes from a fulfilment of an agreed-upon procedure, like the winner of an election. A theoretical authority gains authority from his or her knowledge. Henrik Syse (2003, p.69-70) similarly suggests two types of proper authority that can initiate war, namely procedural and substantial. The procedural source of authority aims at the way the authority decides to go to war, as it should be done according to the right procedures. The substance of the authority refers to the authority that serves the greater good.

The just cause is usually “self defence” or “defence of others”, while the right intent must be a wish for peace for both parties of war and a good intention for going to war (Syse, 2003, p.69-72, 85 and 96). Syse (2003, p.105) differs a bit with Lang & O’Driscoll (2013), placing proportionality under *jus ad bellum* as well as in *jus in bello*. Syse (2003, p.106-107) writes that one must consider the negative consequences of using military force up against the gains of going into war, as a part of *jus ad bellum*.

The final point of the *jus ad bellum* list states that the use of military force must be the last possible resort if it is to be justified. As a final point Syse (2003, p.106, 109, 114) also mentions the criteria of “a possibility to succeed”, where this possibility must be weighed against the possibility of defeat or failure.

The aspects of *jus in bello* consider actions during a war. Acting, or reacting, in proportion to the threat is important. This can relate to the choice of weapons or the size of the armed forces. Discrimination or differentiation refers to the targeting of legitimate targets such as military, and not civilian. The principle of the double effect relates to the two categories of the effects of war. One is the intended effects and the other is the unintended effects, especially in regards to civilians (Syse, 2003, p.139, 143, 146-147).

Just War Ideology in Buddhism

Bartholomeusz (2002, p.55) states that the Buddhist canonical texts do not have a Just War tradition but that one can use the post-canonical Mahāvamsa and the tale of King Dutthagāmani to discuss a Buddhist Just War “thinking”. Bartholomeusz states that a

possible “just cause” from *jus ad bellum* in Just War Theory in a Buddhist context could be to protect or promote Buddhism. Proportionality comes through the statement of the *arhats* in the story, claiming that only one and a half being was slain in this war, making the gain greater than the loss. King Dutthagāmani also has the proper authority to go to war, being the king (Bartholomeusz, 2002, p.57, 60). In her book Bartholomeusz (2002, p.167) is discussing the case of Sri Lanka, arguing that the Sinhala-Buddhist culture possesses a Just War thinking based on the Mahāvamsa. As the Mahāvamsa is used in the sermon by Sitagu Sayadaw, analysed in the thesis, the observations by Bartholomeusz (2002) are also relevant for Myanmar.

Frydenlund (2013, p.105-106) also states that there is no real ground for a “holy war-ideology” in Theravāda Buddhism, although there might be some exceptions. Even if radical pacifism is strong in Buddhist canon, Buddhism can legitimise violence carried out by the state for the protection of the Buddhist tradition, because violence belongs to the sphere of the warrior caste. This can be linked to the ideas within Just War Theory, of the authority (state) and the intention (to protect Buddhism), but also the actor (a warrior or someone belonging to the warrior cast).

2.4. Methods of Analysis

To answer the research question I have chosen to analyse the discourse found in three texts produced by Buddhist monks. As part of my research I did fieldwork in Yangon in November 2017, and I will give a brief summary of that experience in this chapter. Following this I will introduce the texts that are being used in this thesis and the methods I use to analyse these. I have chosen the method of Critical Discourse Analysis, which will be presented further below. As a conclusion I will discuss the challenges of using the chosen texts and methods.

To analyse the construction of the Muslim other I will apply Critical Discourse Analysis as my method in this thesis. Øyvind Bratberg (2014, p.9-10, 18) explains discourse as a collective understanding of reality, and discourse analysis as the interpretation of the discourse found in text. Discourse does not only present an aspect of society or social life, it also constructs and constitutes that aspect. Through studying discourse one can analyse the construction, reproduction and changing of society (Hjelm, 2011, p.135). The way we understand the world around us does not only depend on the “ruling” discourse, but the circumstances of our reality can also have an affect on that ruling discourse (Bratberg, 2014, p.44). According to Hjelm (2011, p.134) “[d]iscourse analysis examines how actions are given meaning and how identities are produced in language use”.

Why Critical Discourse Analysis?

Critical Discourse Analysis is an analysis of discourse in text that also considers the context the texts is a part of and how this relates to a discursive and social practice. Combining discursive analysis with theories from social sciences gives an interpretation of the meanings and intentions in texts (Bratberg, 2014, p.43-44). By doing an in-depth analysis of the discourse of the three texts and combining the analysis with the chosen theories I can discuss and answer the research question:

How do Buddhist monks construct the Muslim Other in Myanmar?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, an important part of the monk’s interaction with the laity is through sermons and conversations on ethics. This interaction is now also taking place on the Internet, where words of wisdom and advice are published

along with videos of sermons. The two monks I have chosen use Facebook explicitly for these purposes (Sitagu MG MG HD Video Production & Live Streaming Group, 2018), although Wirathu's page was eventually shut down (Barron, 2018). As the use of social media, and Facebook in particular, has increased in Myanmar (Miles, 2018), a study of the texts found there is relevant to understanding the present discourse. As Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on the production of power and the construction of a hegemonic discourse (Fairclough, 2010, p.126-130), it seems well suited to analyse the discourse of texts produced by leading monks in the influential Ma Ba Tha organisation. I have chosen to analyse texts by only two monks, which therefore cannot be claimed to be representative for all monks in Myanmar, nor all monks in the Ma Ba Tha. Still, as they are central, popular monks, the texts they produce can give an insight into the topic of the thesis.

2.5. Gathering the Materials

In November 2017 I went to Yangon, Myanmar to gather materials for my thesis, as I initially planned to use texts from magazines printed and distributed by the Ma Ba Tha. I spent three weeks in Yangon and hoped to find their magazines on sale somewhere in the city. From various sources I had heard that these magazines would be easy to buy on the streets, at markets or in bookstores. As the magazines are published in Burmese I would need to get them translated, but I also wished to have some knowledge of the language, to be able to pick the relevant texts and translate some of it myself. I therefore planned my fieldwork around a three-week intensive introductory language course at the French Institute in Yangon/Institute Francaise de Birmanie.

After a period of not finding anything I contacted some Burmese friends and asked them for help. They also thought it would be easy to find, and one of them took me to several bookshops. He had no problem asking the clerks, but quickly found out that there were no magazines by the Ma Ba Tha being sold anymore. Later I also went to Ywama Pariyatti Monastery, a monastery related to the Ma Ba Tha in Insein Township in Yangon, to see if they had any magazines or materials there, but went home empty handed.

I knew that the Ma Ha Na, had issued a ban regarding Ma Ba Tha (Walton, 2017b), but I had also read that this would not stop the organisations activities (Min, 2017). I was therefore surprised that the material was so hard to come by. Finding nothing is also a discovery, it shows that the Ma Ba Tha had reacted to the decision of the Ma Ha Na and was now reconsidering their tactics (See Kyaw Thu, 2017 and Kyaw Phyotha & May Sitt Paing, 2017).

When I came home my supervisor told me about another possible material for my thesis, the sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw of October 2017, and I decided to use this. I chose to pair Sitagu's sermon with an interview of Ashin Wirathu done in September 2013 and a post from Wirathu's Facebook page posted in July 2014.

The Ethics of Using Materials From the Internet

Materials that are found on open, public forums online can be used for research without obtaining consent from the concerned parties, according to The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics (NESH) (2015). The materials used in this thesis were found on the open and public pages of public figures. The pages on Facebook were open for anyone to access, as well as the video on YouTube. The monks behind the texts are well known public figures that use Facebook and interviews as a platform to publish and communicate their views. I therefore argue that there was no need to contact Sitagu or Wirathu to ask for their consent.

The interview and the sermon are still available on open pages on YouTube and Facebook respectively, while the Facebook post was deleted along with Wirathu's public Facebook page. Yet, the post was saved as an image and is available on the public blog of Kenneth Wong (Wong, 2014). The translated version of Sitagu's sermon was also made available on the public blog of Dr. Paul Fuller (2017) although this blog also was deleted³. According to NESH (2015) some people consider blogs to be publicly available but containing private content. As the content used from the blogs do not relate to the persons owning the blogs, I argue that the use of these materials safeguard the integrity of the blog owners.

³ By contacting Dr. Fuller via e-mail I learned that this was because of copyright reasons considering his future publications

The Texts

Below I will present the three texts briefly and give a short summary of the contents. In the Analysis Chapter I will go into further detail on the consumption and production of the texts as well as doing the in-depth analysis of the discourse in each text, in line with the chosen method of Critical Discourse Analysis.

The Facebook Post

Facebook deleted Wirathu's Facebook-page because of his use of hate speech (Barron, 2018), but this post was saved as an image and posted on the blog of Kenneth Wong (2014) who wrote about the post and the riot that followed it. I translated this post from Burmese into English, with some help from friends. The picture of the original post and the translation can be found in the appendix (Appendix A).

In 2014 Ashin Wirathu wrote a post on Facebook describing an alleged criminal case in Mandalay. In the post he presents the case of a Burmese Buddhist woman that has been raped by two Muslim men whom she worked for. Wirathu states that the men are a part of the mafia and that the police have not found them yet. He also provides the full names of these men and the address of their place of work, while telling his readers that they should not stand idly by and watch as such criminal actions are taking place around them.

The Interview

Ashin Wirathu did an interview with Global Post in Mandalay, June 2013. The interview was published on You Tube with the title "A Burmese Journey Q&A With Ashin Wirathu (English subtitle)" by the channel Rohingya Video News on September 12th 2013 (Rohingya Video News, 2013b). The full transcript of the interview, copied from the subtitles in the video clip, can be found in the appendix (Appendix B).

In the interview Wirathu is asked about the religious violence happening in Myanmar. He states that the monks are doing what they can to mediate the different religious groups but that the problem lies with the Muslims. He describes the Muslims as

violent and destructive by nature comparing them to African carp fish, and he claims that they, not the Burmese, are to blame for the unrest in Myanmar. Wirathu also states that the Muslims are a threat to the Buddhist religion.

The Sermon

On October 30th 2017 Sitagu Sayadaw held a sermon at a military training school in Karen State, Myanmar (Walton, 2017c). This sermon was live streamed and published on Sitagu's Facebook Page and on YouTube. A part of it was later translated into English and this was subsequently published on Dr Paul Fuller's blog (Fuller, 2017), who is a lecturer in Religious Studies at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University (Cardiff University). My supervisor, as mentioned, first sent the English translation to me and in contacting Dr Fuller I was sent the Burmese transcript as well. Both the English and Burmese text can be found in the appendix (Appendix C).

In his sermon Sitagu Sayadaw talks of the military's responsibilities to protect both the country and the religion. He refers to the story of King Dutthagāmani from the Mahāvamsa to exemplify a leader who fought not for glory but for the protection of the Buddhist faith. An explanation of the Mahāvamsa text will be given in the analysis. The *arhats* who visit the king in the story claim that there will be no ramifications for the king, even if he has caused many deaths on the battlefield, because the *arhats* know that those who are fallen were not Buddhists. Sitagu Sayadaw uses the words of the *arhats* to tell the military that there are no bad consequences from killing a non-Buddhist.

2.6. Critical Discourse Analysis

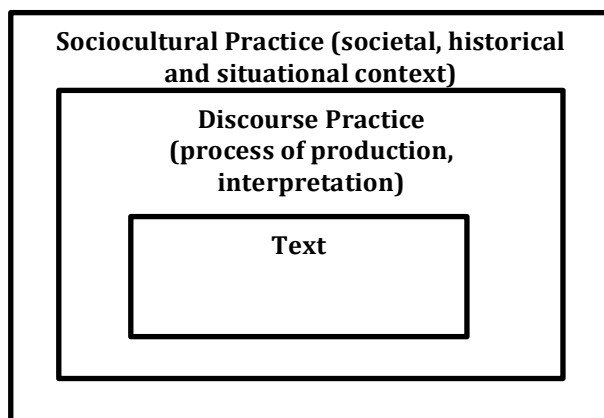
There are several varieties of discourse analysis, and according to Hjelm (2011, p.142) each study using the method of discourse analysis needs an individual design. All types of discourse analysis aim to analyse the construction of the world, but the method of CDA has a specific focus on power and ideology in discourse, and the ability discourse has to reproduce and change reality. Ideology, within CDA, refers to discourse that supports or produces power. If a discourse only presents one side of a case it is said to have an ideological function (Hjelm, 2011, p.140). According to Fairclough (2010, p.30) social institutions, such as the Ma Ba Tha, contain “ideological-discursive formations”. Within each institution there can be several of these discursive formations, but usually one is clearly the dominant. The dominant discursive formation can “naturalise” an ideology and make this into “common sense”. Going into the different ideological-discursive formations of the Ma Ba Tha is not within the scope of this thesis; therefore only the formations presented by Wirathu and Sitagu are included here.

Hegemony is an example of an ideology that produces power, where all alternatives are denied to support one dominating view. An example of this could be to define a group of people as “Muslim terrorists” as a way of eliminating all variations within that group (Hjelm, 2011, p.140-141). Yet, hegemony can only be achieved partially and temporarily, through alliances and integration of subordinate classes (Fairclough, 2010, p.61). CDA also analyses the things that are taken for granted and therefore not said or expressed explicitly in the text. This is based on the idea of “common sense”, the hegemonic interpretation of reality. A Critical Discourse Analysis of a text will consider the political and social context to analyse how hegemony is produced and variety suppressed (Hjelm, 2011, p.140-141). Analysing common sense requires an understanding of the context of the text. For this thesis I will base this on the background information presented in the previous chapter and on my own common sense, but this will not be a dominating part of the analysis as I am not familiar with every aspect of the common sense specific to Buddhist Myanmar.

Sayadaw and Wirathu have the power to shape the dominating ideological-discursive formation through their roles in society. In this thesis they will be representing the

dominant discourse in regards to the protection and promotion of the Buddhist religion, as is the aim of the Ma Ba Tha. Their texts will also represent the naturalising of the idea of a threatening Muslim other as common sense.

Fairclough (2010) presents Critical Discourse Analysis as a three-dimensional model consisting of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. CDA gives a “micro” analysis of the discourse in the text and a “macro” analysis of the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice. “The method of discourse analysis includes linguistic *description* of the language text, *interpretation* of the relationship between the (productive and interpretive) discursive processes and the text, and *explanation* of the relationship between the discursive process and the social process” (Fairclough, 2010 p.131-132). This is illustrated by the model below.



(Model based on Fairclough 2010, p.133)

The three dimensions lead me to do a three-part analysis, although this is not the only way to use this analytical tool, as many combine the three dimensions into one analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.81). For my texts I have chosen to analyse each individual text and their discursive practices separately in the following analysis. The discourse practice will be presented first, drawing on the background information provided in the introduction, and giving an introduction to each text, before the text itself is analysed. The third step, analysing sociocultural practice, I will do in the Discussion Chapter where I combine what I have found in the analysis of all three texts to discuss the topic of othering and conclude by answering my research question.

Analysing the Discourse Practice

Analysing the discourse practice includes looking at how the text is produced and how it is consumed. This analysis can include looking at the process of producing the text and searching for an “intertextual chain” to similar texts (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.81-82). In this thesis such an intertextual chain can be found between the sermon by Sitagu Sayadaw and his use of the Mahāvamsa text. Analysing the consumption could involve research on how readers interpret the text, which can be done through interviews with readers (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.86). Due to the constraints of this thesis an analysis of the consumption and interpretation by the readers will not be done here. The analysis will include some information on the production and spreading of the three types of texts based on the context presented in the introduction and other information gathered about the texts. The theory of mediatisation will also be used to describe an aspect of the discursive practice. As mentioned, the monks have several ways of mediating their beliefs, through sermons and conversations with people and, increasingly, through social media. The aspect of mediatisation and media’s role in framing religion is therefore relevant for this topic.

Mediatisation

Mediatisation describes the role of media and mediated communication in the transformation of society. Every part of life in high modern societies is infused with media and mediated communication. Radio, television and the Internet make communication and the spreading and obtainment of information easy (Lundby, 2009, p.1). Stig Hjarvard (2008, p.3-4) states that mediatisation also affect religion and exemplifies this by referring to the popular novels and films by Dan Brown, such as *The Da Vinci Code*, which became very popular and caused the Catholic Church in particular to respond in the public debate by publishing their own books and creating websites and television programs to counter Dan Brown’s views. Hjarvard (2008, p.3) states that institutionalised religion may be declining because of secularisation, but that media is a new framework for religious experiences.

According to Hoover (2009, p.131) the media is an important source for how the public comes to understand the religious other. In Myanmar, the rapid growth of mobile phone use and Internet access has also lead to an increasing use of social media as a news-source. Facebook has become increasingly important part of

communication while the tradition of spreading rumours is still intact (Schissler, 2016, p.212-220, Miles, 2018). Facebook also played a massive role in spreading hate speech considering Rohingya and Muslims in general. According to Safi & Hogan (2018), signs for “Muslim-free” areas were shared more than 11.000 times, and posts on an anti-Rohingya group on Facebook saw an increase of 200% in interaction. As the texts that I analyse were posted on Facebook and/or YouTube, this way of spreading religious messages is an important factor in the discourse practice. This will be elaborated on for each text in the analysis.

Analysing the Text

Jørgensen & Phillips (2002, p.25-26) describe discourse as a fishing-net where all linguistic signs are the knots in the net, deriving their meaning from their positioning in the net. Some of the linguistic signs have a more central role within the discourse, and these are called “nodal points”. “A nodal point is a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p.26). Within a medical discourse a nodal point can be “the body”, and the linguistic signs “tissue” and “scalpel” get their meaning in relationship to that nodal point. In the analysis of the three texts I will look for nodal points in the discourse to discuss and describe the construction of the Muslim other.

When doing a discourse analysis of a text there are other different aspects to focus on, such as metaphors, wording or ethos used in the text (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.83). Analysing metaphors can reveal a collective understanding of an event, which is rooted in an idea that not only illustrates but also reproduces our perception of that event (Bratberg, 2014, p.40-41). In this thesis I will look for the “common sense” presented in the texts, as well as metaphors and themes. The analysis will also point to nodal points in the discourse and the distribution or establishment of power in the texts.

Analysing the Sociocultural Practice

Analysing the sociocultural practice means analysing the social, cultural and institutional context the text is a part of. This part of the analysis can uncover which networks of discourse the discursive practice belongs to. In the cases of these texts the belonging networks of discourse can be the political discourse, the religious discourse and the nationalistic discourse. A comprehensive study could analyse how the discursive practice found in the chosen text interacts with these other networks of discourse, to get a better understanding of the sociocultural practice surrounding the texts. Analysing the sociocultural practice also requires the use of other theories to account for non-discursive aspects of a phenomenon. In this thesis the theories on nationalism, othering and violence are chosen to address the broader social practice. This is how the methods of CDA can provide a comprehensive answers to what changes and what is maintained in society, through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.86-87).

2.7. Limitations and Challenges of the Methods and Texts

If everything is discourse then everything is relative, how can we then say anything about reality? Such critique is common within and outside the field of discourse analysis, but Hjelm (2011, p.145) argues that an analysis done with focus on the context can yield useful results. Such critique can also help focus the research question. Discourse analysis is better equipped to answer “how” than “why” questions, because there is not a strictly casual explanatory power. It is, however, possible to discuss the discourse in the context it is found and to look at the historical background, to better argue for causality between discourse and actions.

Another challenge to consider is the time it takes to preform a discourse analysis, which limits the amount of materials used. To be able to do a thorough analysis the researcher has to choose materials s/he can get through in a reasonable amount of time. The challenges of representation must then be discussed depending on the research questions (Hjelm, 2011, p.144-146). Validity, in a broad sense, must in discourse analysis be provided by showing what the interpretations and arguments

that are presented are based on, and also showing the implications of the interpretations. The reliability of the research relies on an argument of why interpretations and conclusions have been made, and why the analysed texts were chosen to answer the research questions (Bratberg, 2014, p.54-55).

The challenges of translating or using translated texts must be addressed. A translator filters the text through his/her own experiences and if the researcher uses a translator then s/he must ask her-/himself about the implications of choosing a translator (Temple & Young, 2004, p.165-167). The interview and the sermon used in this thesis are translated by others, but the translators were not chosen by me. I did not have the capacity or time to translate all the texts myself and I therefore chose to use the translations provided by others, and do my own translation of the Facebook Post. According to Temple and Young (2004, p.171) the one who translates a text represents the views of the author of the texts. The thesis provides the views of the researcher on what the translator produced, but the researcher can rarely show the “actual meaning”. The translations of each text will be addressed in further detail below.

For my thesis the chosen texts cannot be claimed to be representational for how all Buddhist monks in Myanmar view Muslims. Yet, the monks in question are very popular in Myanmar and their statements are heard and read by many in the laity. Is it possible that the discourse presented here represent the discourse of lay Buddhists as well? Walton & Hayward (2017) have studied the discourse on Muslims among lay Buddhists, but the direct connection between the chosen texts and the discourse among the readers of these, were not within the scope of this thesis. As such, my material provides a “snapshot” into a larger material.

The Facebook Post by Ashin Wirathu

I wanted to include the Facebook post because this has been an important way for monks, Wirathu in particular, to communicate with his followers (Specia & Mozur, 2017, Miles, 2018). The choice to include a Facebook post from Ashin Wirathu was made after Facebook had deleted Wirathu’s Facebook Page (Barron, 2018). This

made sampling limited, but luckily the chosen post had been saved as an image on the blog of Wong (2014).

I translated the text myself, using what I had learned in the language class. I also got some help from Burmese friends in Oslo, who could help me clarify some things and aid me in the translation. This was done in a group of many where they talked among them selves and explained their thought-process as we were translating together. This was very helpful as it enabled me to translate the text into meaningful English sentences. As such the translation cannot be claimed to be professional, and this does limit the credibility of the translated text somewhat. Yet, by the help of my Burmese friends I have a good understanding of what is written and will use this text despite the potential limitations of the translation.

The Interview of Ashin Wirathu

The translation being done by someone else is a liability for the last two texts I am using. According to the video Thet Zaw Win did the translation of the interview of Ashin Wirathu (YouTube, 2013). The video was not available on the webpages of PRI or Global Post, only on YouTube. This might somewhat diminish the reliability of the video but the statements made by Wirathu are still relevant for the discussion of this thesis. The editing of the video is out of my control and one can only trust that the statements that are being made by Wirathu are paired with the questions he was actually answering, and that not much was edited out. The interview contains similar views presented by Wirathu in other interviews, which confirms the accuracy of the statements being made by him here.

The Sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw

The English translation is a challenge also with the sermon. Through e-mailing with Dr Paul Fuller I was told that this selected section of the sermon was chosen and translated by several professional translators, but because of the sensitivity of the material, the translators wished to remain anonymous Even if he claims that the translation was done professionally, some of the sentences in the English translation are not well constructed. A translation, even when done professionally, can lose some nuances of the messages, but as I do not have the capacity to translate the text myself

I must trust the translation that is provided. The Burmese transcript does not include as much of the sermon as the English transcript, so I will therefore rely mostly on the English translation. Having a limited understanding of the culture of Myanmar and Theravāda Buddhism can also mean that some nuances will be lost on me, even if they are captured in the English translation. This relates to what was being said previously about understanding the “common sense”. Dr. Fuller writes that the full sermon was 3 hours long (Fuller, 2017), which means that the translators chose what part of it to translate. This selecting of the material was out of my hands, and it is likely that I miss some of the context of the content, as the translated part is only 12 minutes 7 seconds out of the 3 hours.

2.8. Concluding Remarks

Above I have presented the theories, methods and texts that are being used in the thesis, and discussed some of my challenges and limitations. By using the theoretical framework and the chosen methods on the texts summarised above, I will now analyse the texts and discuss my findings. The first two dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis: analysing the discourse practice and analysing the texts will be applied first, looking at each text individually. The third dimension: analysing the sociocultural practice will utilise the chosen theories of nationalism, othering and violence to discuss and answer the research question.

3. Analysis of the Texts

As an introduction to each text the discursive practice will be presented as well as some information on the text and the monks who are presenting the discourse. I will go through the texts analysing the statements that are made by looking at wording, phrases and themes. As part of the Critical Discourse Analysis I will also look for nodal points in the texts, and for the production of power presented in the discourse. Each text will be analysed separately, starting with the Facebook post and interview of Ashin Wirathu followed by the sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw. A deeper discussion of the findings from the texts, on how the Muslim other is constructed, will be found in the following discussion.

Some words will also be presented in the Burmese language to reflect the possible significance of that chosen word, but the overall analysis will focus on the English translations. I have translated the first text myself and for the other two I will rely on the translation done by others.

Before analysing the texts I will give a brief reminder of the meanings of some important words found in the texts. Dhamma refers to the cosmic law and the teachings of the Buddha, while Sangha is the order of monks and nuns. *Buddhasāsana* refers to Buddhism as a practice and an institution in this world, and a *sutta* is a canonical scripture. I choose to write the name of Dutthagāmani as it is written in the Mahāvamsa translated by Geiger (1912). When I write “us” and “our” here, I include the speaker/author and listener/reader, but not myself or the readers of this thesis.

3.1. Analysis of the Facebook Post by Ashin Wirathu

The Discursive Practice

In the previous chapters Ashin Wirathu was presented as the monk who used Facebook as an arena to spread hate speech (Specia & Mozur, 2017). Facebook later deleted his account (Barron, 2018) and the Ma Ha Na, the state’s supervisory body, banned Wirathu from preaching (Htun, 2017). According to a news article, the Ma Ha Na stated that the reason was that he “was repeatedly delivering hate speeches against religions to cause communal strife, hinder rule of law, and that he took sides with

political parties to inflame tensions” (Htun, 2017). According to Wong (2014), who saved the post by Wirathu as a picture to use in his blog, the post was shared over 800 times on Facebook on July 3rd 2014. Wong (2014) writes that the news case first was published by a Burmese news site called Thit Htoo Lwin and then picked up by Wirathu. Instead of sharing a link to the news site, Wirathu produced this text by conveying the details of the case and adding his own opinions on it on his personal Facebook page. The post was published in Burmese and as with the sermon of Sitagu it was available for anyone with access to Facebook, and the post is directed at the followers of Wirathu’s Facebook page. The audience of the text is therefore Burmese speaking Facebook users, but this case is particularly directed at people from Mandalay, as that is the scene of the alleged crime. The importance of this text is elaborated on in the discussion chapter below, where I go into the sociocultural practice of the texts, regarding the riots in Mandalay. In this case this text is connected to riots breaking out after this was posted, although the causality of these events is hard to prove.

The Text

As this text is short I see it as useful to insert the full translation here, while the original Burmese post along with the English translation also can be found in Appendix A. The translation is my own and the words in parentheses are alternative translations or explanations to the translation, while the words in italic show the Burmese word used in the text.

The Mafia is growing (spreading)

The owners of the teashop Sun Café, foreigner (*kalar*) mafia twin brothers Ne Win and San Maung raped (gang raped) the Burmese (*Myanmar lu-myò*) Buddhist cook (worker) Ma Soe Soe the 28.06.2014 after midnight in Aung Myae Thar Sann, Mandalay. We read about this case on the Thit Htoo Lwin website the 30.06.2014 at 12. Although this news is very exact (correct), we have to investigate (make sure) because the mafia gangs will fight each other. However, even if this news is correct there are no evidence, which is why it takes a long time to publish the news. The victim Ma Soe Soe is under the guidance of a policewoman in Pyinn Ma Nar (police station). Ma Ba Tha are trying to contact Ma Soe Soe. At Pyinn Ma Nar police station, they opened the case rule nr.293/2014 section 376. The twins have escaped and have not yet been caught; the police are still trying to find them. Last night the police looked for them at their home but they (the police) did not find them. Like a

fire spreading from one home to another it is needed not to just (stand by and) watch and not to abandon (leave) like the Mafia who live in anarchy (without a king or ruler). We need to care and be aware. Because we did not take action, and just watched these crimes, the consequences are that the foreigner (*kalar*) crimes are affecting Burmese people (*bamar ko*). (Appendix A)

Wirathu's Facebook post has a headline, marked by a rim or border (see original in Appendix A), which gives it the structure of a news article. This structuring is deliberate and makes the following statements seem trustworthy and true. The headline states as a fact that there is a mafia presence in Myanmar, or at least in Mandalay where this case is from, and that this criminal organisation is growing. The text states that there is a foreign criminal element in Mandalay that is now spreading and affecting the Burmese. The headline captures the reader and sparks an interest in the text that follows. It is also a frightening headline because the word mafia is associated with organised criminal activity and people who forcibly take power and control. The notion that this group is spreading in Myanmar is threatening to the reader.

Without any introduction Wirathu directly starts describing a rape case. This is presented with facts such as dates, names, addresses, where the news first came from and the relationship between the victim and perpetrators. There is information on the case number for the case and the name of the police station handling it. It is stated in the text that there is no evidence connected to the case, yet it assures the readers both directly, and indirectly through all the other facts provided, that the crime has taken place, and that the information is correct.

Allegedly the two owners of a teashop in Mandalay have both raped a woman who works as a cook in their shop. In the text it is also included that the men are twin brothers, foreigners (*kalar*) and mafia. The word *kalar*, which is used here, refers to a foreigner of Indian decent, but is now also used as a derogatory term and is very often connected to Muslims. The religion of the men is not stated here, only implied by the use of the word *kalar* that points to Islam. The text makes it clear that the woman who was raped was Burmese (*Myanmar lu-myò*) and Buddhist, and contrasting the men to the woman also alludes to the notion of them being Muslim. In this text it is stated as

a known fact that there is a mafia in Mandalay and that these brothers are connected to this mafia. No more information on the presence of organised crime is given, nor any information on how these men are connected to the mafia.

Wirathu goes on to suggest that the facts of this incident are correct but that an investigation is needed because there is a danger of the mafia gangs fighting each other. It is not clear whether the gangs will fight because of, or in spite of this incident. Regardless, Wirathu is telling his readers that an investigation is needed, implying that the readers might need to join this investigation. The text also implies that the police needs help with the investigation, because the men are not yet caught, and even the Ma Ba Tha are taking action in contacting the woman.

In this text it is also claimed that there are several mafia gangs in Mandalay, and that they are having disputes. Following this, Wirathu again assures the readers that the news of the rape-case is correct, but that there was no evidence, which is why the media did not report the case until two days later. The fact that there was no evidence of the crime, does not seem to be a hindrance for placing blame, it only leads to a delay in spreading the news.

Wirathu then informs the readers that the brothers have not been caught and that the police are still searching, and that the men were not found in their homes. He continues to warn his readers that they should not stand idly by and watch while a fire spreads from one house to the next, nor should they run from their problems like the mafia do. He states that the mafia lives a life of anarchy, but that “we” need to be aware of what is happening and care about it. He says that people have just been watching the crimes of the mafia without caring and now these crimes are affecting the Burmese people. There is no actual call to action in this text, yet by stating that an investigation is needed and that the people should not stand idly by and watch, it indicates a call for action by the readers.

Again, Wirathu uses the term *kalar* to distinguish that these are the crimes of foreigners that are now affecting the Burmese “us”. He uses the term *bamar ko* which can be used to describe both the Bamar ethnic group and Burmese people in general.

This is different from the word he uses to describe the victim, who is described as *Myanmar lu-myò*, which means Burmese national or people/person from Myanmar.

Nodal Points and Power

In this text there are “fishing nets” of meaning both for the brothers and for the Burmese victim(s). The nodal points in the first “net”, I suggest, are foreigner (*kalar*) and Mafia. From this the brothers are described as owners of a business, rapists and criminals who escape the police and who partake in organised crime through the mafia. In extension the text seems to state that all *kalar* are mafia, making the description of violent criminals who escape the police, abandon their problems and do not care for the consequences, a description of all Muslims. This is based on the notion that a *kalar* refers to a Muslim. As *kalar* also means foreigner, it conveys the message that these criminal activities are not the acts of Burmese natives but of foreigners, and that these foreigners are Muslim.

The text also provides a description of the Burmese, being separate from the foreigners, as “we” need to be aware of the crimes of committed by “them”. The Burmese are described both as *Bamar ko* and as *Myanmar lu-myò* without a clear explanation for why this distinction is made. This could also imply that there is no real distinction between a native of Myanmar (*Myanmar lu-myò*) and someone belonging to the Bamar ethnic group (*bamar ko*). These nodal points are presented as separate from *kalar* as the Burmese are the ones who are law-abiding and honest. The Burmese are described as honest workers and the innocent victims of both this case and of the other criminal activity of the foreign mafia. They have been idle but must now stand together with the police and the Ma Ba Tha to investigate and to care.

In this text the foreign mafia is described as a powerful and threatening force that is growing in Myanmar. They own businesses, partake in organised crime, fight other mafia groups (or within the group) evade the police and rape innocent women. Yet, the Burmese Buddhist community with the help of the police and the Ma Ba Tha are presented as someone who can regain power and restore law and order. The Burmese Buddhist community has the law on their side and is presented as the “good guys” who have to defeat the “villains” by taking action and caring for their country and

community, and help innocent victims such as Ma Soe Soe. This text conveys a theme of how the criminal *kalar* are affecting the Burmese and how the Burmese along with police and the Ma Ba Tha can take action and fight this criminal element.

3.2. Analysis of the Interview of Ashin Wirathu

The Discursive Practice

At the time of this interview Wirathu and the 969 Movement enjoyed increasing popularity and his messages reached many through his sermons and his Facebook page (see Fuller, 2013 and Fisher, 2013). The chosen interview was done only months after he was called “The Face of Buddhist Terror” on the cover of Time Magazine (Time Magazine, 2013) but that did not seem to demotivate him from doing interviews, even if this crew of journalists also had connections to the American press.

The interview of Ashin Wirathu was published on You Tube by the channel Rohingya Video News on September 12th 2013 (Rohingya Video News, 2013b) and was done by the Global Post as part of the series “Myanmar Emerging” (Public Radio International, 2016b). The video has over 40.000 views on YouTube (as of April 17th 2018). This text is different from the other two used in this thesis because it is not controlled or produced by Wirathu himself. He must answer the questions that are posed, and only by aiming his answers in a certain direction is he able to convey his desired message. As this text is not fully orchestrated by Wirathu there are parts of the construction and consumption that is different from the other two texts that are analysed. That being said, Wirathu has often used interviews as a way to communicate, and is therefore has some skills in navigating this medium.

The aim of the interview is unknown and it is uncertain whether the people behind the interview wanted to convey Wirathu’s views to support him or to expose him. The introduction to the clip states “The monk preaching Myanmar’s Buddhist nationalism [...] Mandalay, Myanmar” (Rohingya Video News, 2013b). This, along with the title of the clip “A Burmese Journey Q&A With Ashin Wirathu” (Rohingya Video News, 2013b) and the questions asked in the interview, does not clearly point in a direction

of support of or protest against Wirathu. In itself the intention of the interviewers is not important, as it is the messages conveyed by Wirathu I am interested in, but the intentions behind the making of the interview comes into the “process of production” in the discourse practice. The video is, however, published by the channel “Rohingya Video News” (Rohingya Video News, 2013a), which is a channel publishing videos about the Rohingya. This channel might have wanted to publish the interview of Wirathu to prove his negative views on Muslims. Nevertheless, the intentions of the makers and publishers of the interview cannot be taken into consideration here as I am analysing the discourse of the monk. The transcribed interview can be found in Appendix B.

Wirathu is no stranger to interviews as he answers in a calm and collected manner. As the interviewer uses Wirathu’s answers to pose the following questions, Wirathu has some control of the direction of the interview. He manages to twists his answers so that they in a way answer the question that is posed as well as stating his opinion on the topic of an allegedly increasing Muslim population in Myanmar. He keeps a straight face, presenting his statements as truth, without providing any concrete examples or facts.

The Text

The interviewer starts by asking Wirathu about the role of Buddhism in the politics of Myanmar, and Wirathu explains:

The role of the monk is inseparable from Myanmar’s politics. Monks will be working for the people in Myanmar’s politics without expecting any returns. (Appendix B)

Wirathu does not directly answer the question, as he does not talk of the role of the Buddhist religion in politics. He instead makes the connection to Buddhist monks, and states their importance in supporting the politics of the nation. This indicates that the monks, both in politics and elsewhere, naturally are representing the Buddhist religion. This statement also “naturalises” the monk’s engagement in politics.

The interviewer goes on to ask about the religious conflicts in Myanmar, and the responsibilities of the monks in mediating these conflicts. Wirathu gives what seems a well-rehearsed reply, claiming that the monks practice non-violence and operate within the legal system to find solutions (Appendix B). This answer points to Wirathu's understanding of the media and the format of interviews as he is careful to point out that the monks operate legally and peacefully. Wirathu also explains that the monks are organising teams of people from all religions to work out solutions. These problem-solving teams are said to be located in towns and cities "within our reach" (Appendix B), although it is not quite clear whom he refers to when he talks of "our reach". There is a vast network of monks and monasteries all over the country that he could be referring to, that could organise these types of problem-solving teams. He might also be talking about the Ma Ba Tha here, to state that the Ma Ba Tha is working for peace in Myanmar, in a legal and peaceful way.

The interviewer continues on the topic of inter-religious dialogue, and asks if Myanmar can be said to be a harmonious country consisting of many different ethnic and religious groups. Since the interviewer's previous question referred to the religious conflicts in Myanmar it is a bit strange to state that the country is harmonious. Wirathu non-the less gives a positive answer to this as he states that a harmonious Myanmar would be possible if everyone genuinely wanted to be friends. What is said after "if" implies that this is not the case and that everyone doesn't wish for harmony. This indicates that there are people in Myanmar who want conflicts.

If every race and religion will become good, genuine friends, there is no reason we can't live together peacefully. Whether we live together peacefully or not it is not up to the Burmese people. It depends on the Muslims. They are devouring the Burmese people, destroying Buddhism and Buddhist order, forcefully taking actions to establish Myanmar as an Islamic country and forcefully implementing them. If they don't do these things, then we can be peaceful. (Appendix B)

He states that this potential harmony will not depend on the behaviour of the Burmese people, but on the Muslims, making the Muslims the ones who wish for conflicts. His answer goes from talking of many different races and religions coming together in problem-solving teams, to distinguishing between two groups, the Burmese and the Muslims. This type of distinction makes it clear that he does not see the Muslims

as a part of the Burmese people in this text. With this answer Wirathu is also generalising a group based on their religion, claiming that all Muslims can be described this way and be blamed for the country not being harmonious.

This answer also states that Muslims are devouring the Burmese people, destroying Buddhism and are forcefully trying to make Myanmar an Islamic country. Here, Wirathu makes a connection between Buddhism and the Burmese people, describing a united Buddhist-Burmese people under threat from a dangerous growing Islamic power. In this way Wirathu is uniting all Burmese-Buddhists into one group, as he implies that all Burmese people are Buddhists and that everyone in this group are threatened by this Muslim other. In this text Wirathu is claiming that it is the forceful “Islamisation” of Myanmar that is the cause for the religious violence in the country. All these statements are made without providing concrete examples of the “destruction” and “Islamisation”, it is just presented as facts.

The interviewer states that the population of Muslims in Myanmar is low, but asks Wirathu what he thinks would happen if half the population became Muslim. Wirathu answers this by first comparing Muslims to the African carp, explaining:

They breed rapidly, have violent behaviour, and eat its own kind and other fishes. They also destroy the natural resources and beauty underwater. Even though they are the minority, our entire race has been suffering a great deal under the burden of the minority. The majority Burmese have not intruded, corrupted or abused them but we have been suffering under their burden. That is why if there are as many Muslims as there are Buddhist, Myanmar could never be at peace. (Appendix B)

By comparing Muslims to fish he is dehumanising this entire group lowering their worth from that of a human to that of an animal. Comparing a group to an animal and then describing the behaviour of the animal seems a deliberate move by Wirathu. Not only does it dehumanise the Muslims it also conveys the message that Muslims have the violent traits of the African carp, without directly saying that Muslims are violent.

The first statement Wirathu makes about the African carp is that it breeds rapidly, implying that Muslims also breed rapidly. This points to a fear that the Muslim population could grow fast because they have many children. It could also be a

warning to Buddhist men by claiming that this other group is more virile and they can be seen as a threat to the masculinity of the Buddhists. Secondly, the text claims that the African carp, and by extension Muslims, are violent. This statement presents the entire group as a threat to society, as they will inherently bring violent behaviour. Again, there are no examples provided, it is just stated as fact. This violent behaviour is also shown in the next statement, where it is claimed that the African carp eat their own kind and other fish. Here, the metaphor or comparison to the fish is very helpful, because it effectively conveys a message of the dangers of this group, without necessarily being truthful. Wirathu could not have stated that Muslims are cannibals, as this is not the truth, and people might not have accepted it. Yet, by stating that Muslims are like the carp that eat their own, Wirathu can underline his point made earlier when he stated that Muslims are “devouring the Burmese people”. Like the carp, Muslims are presented as having no regard for life, neither the life of their own or of others. The idea of violence is also continued in the last statement where Wirathu says that these fish destroy natural resources and beauty. All in all, Muslims are presented as a group that will grow fast and destroy everything around them.

Wirathu goes on to explain that even if the Muslims are a minority in Myanmar the majority race has been suffering because of them. In this reply he marks the difference between the majority Burmese race and the Muslims, again stating that Muslims are not considered Burmese. He also claims that all Burmese are one race, without mentioning ethnic groups, and that Muslims belong to a different race. Wirathu then has another indirect way of describing the negative traits of Muslims. He states that the Burmese have not “intruded, corrupted or abused” (Appendix B) the Muslims but that the Burmese have suffered under their burden. This could imply that the Muslims are the ones who have been intruding, corrupting and abusing the Burmese. By using the term “intruding” it suggests that the Muslims have come uninvited into the country and “contaminated” of “corrupted” the otherwise harmonious Buddhist country and that the Buddhist Burmese are the rightful “natives” in the places that the Muslims have intruded. The term corrupt can also refer to actual corruption, while the abuse can be linked to violent behaviour or sexual abuse, which is the topic of his Facebook post. Wirathu ends the interview by stating that these are the reasons why a Myanmar with as many Muslims as Buddhists could never be at peace.

Nodal Points and Power

In this text Wirathu creates a web of meaning describing the Muslims as intruders that are the source of all problems in Myanmar. The word “Muslim” can be a nodal point in this context. Wirathu uses linguistic signs such as devouring, destroying, violent behaviour, forceful, intrude, corrupt and abuse. These terms create a negative image of this minority group that allegedly burdens the majority. According to this description the Muslims have the power create unrest or even war (not peace), and they are presented as a threat both to society and to the Buddhist religion.

The nodal points “Buddhist”, “Burmese” and “majority” describe the contrasting group in this text. This group is described as the peaceful group that has done nothing wrong, and genuinely want to be friends, but that suffer from the minority’s actions. The monks are those who work peacefully and within the law to solve problems and cooperate to bring peace to the people. In this text the monks also have some political power as they work closely with the people in politics, and they also have power in the society where they arrange for the problem-solving teams to meet.

This text presents the Muslims as a growing power that has forcefully come from the outside to destroy the Buddhist Burmese majority. The theme of the texts suggests Muslims, as a collective group to be a violent and dangerous enemy that should not be allowed to prosper because it will conquer the Buddhist Burmese majority. The Buddhist Burmese along with the monks are portrayed as the peaceful natives that are under threat and burdened by this rising force from the outside.

3.3. Analysis of the Sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw

The Discursive Practice

As previously mentioned the popular monk Sitagu Sayadaw held a sermon at a military training school in Karen State on October 30th 2017 (Walton, 2017c). Sitagu is known for his sermons (Kawanami, 2009, p.218-220), and here he was holding a three hours long (Fuller, 2017) sermon for military personnel and their families, as can be seen in another clip from that same day (Sitagu MG MG HD Video Production & Live Streaming Group, 2018). From this clip we can see that the audience in the room consists of men, women and some children. Sitagu sits on a lavishly decorated stage while the audience sits on the floor where men and women sit separately. The sermon is directed first and foremost to the audience in front of him who are connected to the military, but it is also for the people who watch the sermon online. The sermon was held in the Burmese language making it accessible for all audiences, as Burmese is the common language across the country. As the sermon was live-streamed and published on Facebook this means that anyone in Myanmar with access to Facebook will be able to access what Sitagu is saying here.

The sermon was published on a Facebook page dedicated to live streaming and publishing Sitagu's sermons (Sitagu MG MG HD Video Production & Live Streaming Group, 2018). Searching the Facebook page reveals that there are several videos of Sitagu's sermons, affirming the fact that this is a tactic Sitagu uses often to spread his sermons to a wider audience. The Facebook page containing the videos has over 500.000 followers (Sitagu MG MG HD Video Production & Live Streaming Group, 2018), and the clip showing the part of the sermon used in this thesis has been viewed 26.000 times, shared 2.700 times and has 7.200 likes (as of April 17th 2018) (Sitagu MG MG HD Video Production & Live Streaming Group, 2018). The clip is also available on YouTube.com (2017) where it has been viewed 256 times (as of April 17th 2018). It seems that the digital audience of Sitagu Sayadaw is larger than the one in the room, supporting Hjarvard's (2008, p.3) statement that the media is the new framework for religious experiences.

There is an intertextual chain between this sermon and the Mahāvamsa text of King Dutthagāmani. The Mahāvamsa, or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, is a collection of

stories of the ancient kings of Sri Lanka. These texts are seen as important recounts of historical events in Sri Lanka (mahavamsa.org, 2007) but have also been used to justify the use of violence in Buddhism (see Bartholomeusz, 2002, Jerryson, 2016). The texts are not part of “Buddhist canon” and do not recount stories from the Buddha’s life but chronicles from Sri Lankan history. Wilhelm Greiger (1912) translated the Mahāvamsa into English in 1912, and this is the translation I will be referring to (Mahāvamsa XXV). The story tells of King Dutthagāmani who united Sri Lanka into one Buddhist country and overpowered 32 Tamil Kings (Mahāvamsa XXV, 75). Despite his victory the king felt remorseful because he knew he had caused the death of many in the wars he had won. Eight *arhats*, who has attained enlightenment, visited him and they told him not to worry (Mahāvamsa XXV, 104).

“From this deed arises no hindrance in thy way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways” (Mahāvamsa XXV, 109-111).

One of the men slain had committed himself to the ethical code of Buddhism, making him a full human being, while the other had taken a lesser vow, making him half a human, according to the *arhats*. The Mahāvamsa text is used and re-told in fragments throughout the sermon of Sitagu Sayadw. This allows him to draw from the text and use the words of the *arhats* to make his statements. Sitagu uses the Mahāvamsa and the *arhats* as a legitimate religious source to strengthen his arguments.

The Text

I will insert quotes from the translated text throughout this analysis, while the full text in English and the Burmese transcript can be found in the appendices in Appendix C. As the sermon is a long text I will do a detailed analysis of most of it, but as I consider some of the text less important this will be explored in lesser detail.

During Burma’s fight for independence, under the leadership of General Aung San, almost every one of the prominent warriors in the Burmese Army took shelter at the Buddhist monasteries in the rural villages, all over the country. We have learnt and read about that in history books. Buddhist monks and [Burmese] soldiers are inseparable. (Appendix C, 00:00-00:25)

Sitagu Sayadaw starts this part of the sermon by referring to Burma's fight for independence, putting his following messages in the framework of a proud battle that the country won in the past. Sitagu also refers to the leader General Aung San who was the leading army general who was the people's hero in the story of Burma's independence. This emphasizes a nationalistic theme for the sermon. Continuing, Sitagu explains that all prominent warriors took shelter at the monasteries, and that there still is an inseparable bond between the monks and the soldiers. He emphasises that it was the "prominent warriors" who took shelter in the monasteries, giving the impression that a prominent warrior has a good connection to the Buddhist monks and the Buddhist religion. This is all stated as a fact that everyone learned in school, and is something that everyone should know, it is stated as collective "common sense".

Without further introduction, the story of King Dutthagāmani and the "flying alms-bowl" (Mahāvamsa XXIV) is told. This story is from another chapter in the Mahāvamsa, "The War of the Two Brothers" (XXIV), which tells the tale of prince Gāmani (later Dutthagāmani, "the angry" Gāmani) and his brother prince Tissa (Geiger, 1912, p.164). This shows another intertextual chain between the sermon and the Mahāvamsa. The story of a monk's alms-bowl that fed the king, his soldiers and their horses, and that was sent flying through the air, is told as if it is well known to the listeners. This story is alluding to the close connection between the king and the monks, which will be explored and elaborated on later in the sermon.

King Duttagamani had won the battle triumphantly. Millions of Tamils (Damilas) had died in the battle. After the battle, King Damainla, King Kyae were killed. King Duttagamani managed to unite the divided island of Lanka. Did you know that the island of Sri Lanka was separated into two sides? One side was Tamil (Damila) and the other was Buddhist. So who managed to combine the two separated parts into one country? King Duttagamani. After the battle, the King was too exhausted to fall asleep. He couldn't fall asleep and stayed awake in the middle of the night. What was happening to him was that he was being overtaken by remorse. What is that called? (to the audience)
- "remorse" (The audience answers)
(Appendix C, 00:46-01:20, 01:21-01:40)

Just seconds after talking of the fight for independence in Myanmar Sitagu is now talking about the triumphant battle of Dutthagāmani that united Sri Lanka. By doing

this he seems to be drawing a comparison between these events, without saying so directly. The comparison between the story of Dutthagāmani and Myanmar continues throughout the sermon. Sitagu states that millions of Tamils were killed in the battle to unite the land. Notably he does not talk of the loss of the lives of soldiers or civilians on the side of Dutthagāmani in this war, it might not be of importance or it might not serve his argument.

He then poses what seems to be a rhetorical question, asking the audience if they knew that Sri Lanka used to be divided. He answers this question himself by stating that it used to have a Tamil and a Buddhist side. Here, Sitagu makes a distinction between an ethnic group (the Tamils) and a religious group (the Buddhists), while he could have made the distinction of Tamil and Sinhalese or Hindu and Buddhist. By making this distinction he achieves to things; he is stating that the winning or conquering side are Buddhists i.e. “us”, and the losing side are the non-Buddhists.

Sitagu does not focus on the battles of Dutthagāmani but rather on the aftermath. He explains that the king could not fall asleep after the battle because he was too exhausted and overtaken by remorse. Sitagu then asks the audience “What is that called?” and the audience replies “remorse” (Appendix C, 01:21-01:40). It seems that the audience is used to these types of questions because they know how to answer. Questions and answers like these are common in Buddhist sermons. By talking of the concept of remorse as a direct result of battle, and making the audience repeat this, Sitagu seems to be addressing the fact that these acts of war lead to distress and bad karma. Sitagu does not have to say himself that the acts of war are unwholesome, but he does it through the remorse of Dutthagāmani.

We are talking about the powers of the Dhamma. The victory of this battle is due to the power/quality of the Dhamma over King Duttagamani. The battle was won because of the effects of the power of the Dhamma. And as a result of the unity of the monks in fighting the battle together, the battle was over. That was how they had a landslide victory in beating the invaders. It's about unity, right? There must be unity between the King (leadership) and its people as well as the unity between the Army and Sangha (the Monks). The Four of them also have to be united. It's like the four legs of a chair. They all have to support the country. (Appendix C, 01:41-02:05, 02:06-02:21)

Sitagu explains that he is talking about the powers of the Dhamma, the cosmic law and the teachings of the Buddha. It is not clear here whether he means that it was the powers of Dhamma that caused the king to feel remorse, but he does make it clear that Dhamma was the reason the king won his battles. Sitagu then continues to say that the unity (*nyi nyut yae*) of the monks helped win and end the fight in Sri Lanka. A strong connection to the monks and the Buddhist religion helped Dutthagāmani win. This could imply that such a connection is also necessary for the military audience if they wish to win battles. It seems as if Sitagu is strengthening his position and connection to the military through these statements.

Sitagu confirms to the audience that this is how the battle was won, and how Dutthagāmani beat “the invaders” (*kyue kyaw thu*). Here, the Tamils are reduced to invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*), portrayed as outsiders who do not belong and that invaded a land that was not theirs to begin with. In the story of Dutthagāmani these invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*) are not driven out of the country but they are beaten in a “landslide victory” (Appendix C, 01:41-02:05).

Sitagu then seems to step out of the telling of Dutthagāmani’s victory, addressing an overall theme in the sermon. In this side-note he asks “It’s about unity, right?” (Appendix C, 02:06-02:21) and answers this himself by stating that there must be unity (*nyi nyut yae*) between a king and his people, and between the military and the Sangha. It seems that he is referring to the statement above, where unity (*nyi nyut yae*) between military and Sangha was the reason for victory in battle of Dutthagāmani. He discusses this unity (*nyi nyut yae*) first in pairs of “king & people” and then of “military & Sangha”. King Dutthagāmani united a divided land through battle, and both his battle and the battle for independence in Myanmar was strengthened by the unity (*nyi nyut yae*) between monks and soldiers. In this text Sitagu states that these are four “legs of a chair” (Appendix C, 02:06-02:21): the king, the people, the military and the Sangha all must unite to support the country. This theme of unity (*nyi nyut yae*) is now rooted both in history through the war for independence, and in Buddhist text through the “Victory of Dutthagāmani”. Sitagu seems to be drawing a comparison, claiming that this unity (*nyi nyut yae*) also is necessary to support the country today.

The King was unable to sleep until midnight because he was thinking about those millions of opposing Tamil soldiers, whom he had killed in the battle. He feared he would go to four hell realms due to the his unwholesome actions (B. arkhutho. P. akusala-kamma) he committed by killing millions of human beings. He was mentally exhausted because of fighting in the battle; the worries of having to rebuild the country again; the worries of resisting and defending the country against the Tamils; the worries about the unwholesome actions he committed. All these worries accumulated because of the millions of lives lost in battle.

The Arahants residing in the countryside become aware of the remorse of the King [through their ‘spiritual powers’, *abhiññā*].

-Who are they? (He asked the audience)

-The Arahants. (The audience answered)

You all need to understand that these arahants are always taking care of the King.

The King receives metta [loving-kindness] from the arahants, which is well received. (Appendix C, 02:22-03:02, 03:00-03:30)

The sermon then moves back into the story of Dutthagāmani who is thinking of the millions of Tamils killed in the battles and fears the consequences of causing these deaths. Sitagu explains that Dutthagāmani was afraid he would go to the four hell realms because of the unwholesome acts (*akusala*) of killing millions. Sitagu continues to explain all the reasons why Dutthagāmani is tired in an attempt, it seems, to make the listeners sympathise with the man responsible for so much death. Dutthagāmani is said to be tired from fighting, which shows him as a good Buddhist who does not find pleasure in using violence. This worry of a soldier after a fight, a remorse from actions and a worry for their consequences, is likely relatable to the audience of military men and their families. The king is also tired from the worry of rebuilding a country and resisting future attacks from the Tamils. Here the king is shown as a wise king, who knows what tasks and challenges lie before him, but who also is worried about the negative consequences of these challenges.

Again, Sitagu is posing questions for the audience to answer, and it is clear that the audience knows the story of Dutthagāmani and the *arhats*. Sitagu goes on to explain the relationship between the king and these enlightened monks (*arhats*) yet again alluding to a close relationship between the state and the Sangha, as an example of good leadership.

As soon as they were aware of the King's remorse, eight of these arahants arrived in the middle of the night. They asked the guard to open the palace gate. The guard informed the King and he let the Arahants go in to see the King.

They asked the King why he isn't sleeping well.

The King said he was remorseful.

He said he had remorse about the unwholesome actions he had committed and that he will go to hell for those actions.

The eight Arahants said "Do not be worried at all, your Majesty. It was only a tiny bit of unwholesome action that you have committed"

"Why only a tiny bit", the King asked.

The Arahants answered that "even though millions of beings had been destroyed, there was only one and a half human beings who is a genuine being. There was only one and a half beings who can be regarded as a human being. Out of these Tamil invaders, there was only one who had adopted the five precepts, and one who had adopted the five precepts and taken the three refuges in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Therefore, there was only one and a half human beings.

The arahants have the 'spiritual power' (abhiññā) to see this.

So, even the person who practices the five precepts is not a complete being. He is half a human being.

"The one who adopts the five precepts together with the three refuges in Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga, is a complete (full) human being. Among the millions of beings who he killed by shooting, hitting & chopping, there was only one whom can be called a human being and one whom can be called half a being. Thus, there's only one and a half human beings in total. Please do not be worried, your Majesty"

We did not say it. Who said it? (He asked the audience)

He answered to his own question - The Arahants said it.

The King then had peace of mind.

(Appendix C, 03:31- 03:50, 03:51-04:02, 04:03-04:42, 04:43-05:20)

Sitagu continues the story by talking of the *arhats* living in the countryside in Sri Lanka at that time. The *arhats* come to the king and calm him by telling him not to worry about going to the hell-realms, because he has only committed a "tiny bit of unwholesome action" (Appendix C, 03:51-04:02) (*akusala*).

Sitagu explains that the king was confused and he summarises and explains what the *arhats* gave as an answer to the king. This gives Sitagu the chance to clarify and explain his point to his listeners. The *arhats*, according to Sitagu's sermon, explain that there were only one and a half of the beings that were slain on the battlefield that

could be considered as genuine human beings. Sitagu again calls the Tamils “invaders” (*kyue kyaw thu*) and explains that one of the Tamils that were slain had adopted the five precepts and taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, making him a full human being. Another had only adopted the five precepts and was therefore merely half a human. Using the words of the *arhats* Sitagu is explaining what makes a human a complete being, and clarifies that only practicing the five precepts is not sufficient. Sitagu then repeats the *arhats*’ explanation with different words, thereby giving the explanations to what makes a full and a half human being, twice. Again, he is very carefully explaining his point to his audience, while making it clear that these are not *his* arguments, but the arguments of the *arhats*. In this statement the text is claiming that practicing Buddhism is what makes a person a genuine human being, and those who are not Buddhist can therefore be considered as not genuine human beings. By doing this, Sitagu is dehumanising anyone of a different faith than Buddhism, all the while using the *arhats* as an authoritative source.

According to a comment by the translators, Sitagu then continues his sermon by reciting a *sutta* or a sermon, and according to the translators Sitagu is also adding to the *sutta*. A *sutta* and a sermon are not the exact same thing, as a *sutta* is from canonical scripture, while a sermon does not have to be. I choose to refer to it as a *sutta*, even if the translator’s note says *sutta*/sermon. As the translators know the original text cited by Sitagu here, it is likely that the audience knows it as well. Similarly the audience might also know what has been added to it, as the comment by the translators suggests that there are interpolations. As it is unclear whether this is a *sutta* or a well-known sermon, and that something has been added to it but it is not specified what this addition is, I was not able to find the original *sutta* cited by Sitagu. The *sutta* makes another intertextual chain in the sermon.

Laypeople lead by their leader and members of Sangha lead by the Venerable monks shall be mutually dependent and support each other. After having totally freed from 62 years of being a slave’s life, our native land shall be built again. Our country, our land, our inheritance shall be established and prospered. Don’t let it falter. (Appendix C, 05:21-06:49)

By using this *sutta* Sitagu repeats the theme of unity (*nyi nyut yae*) that was mentioned earlier. He states that laypeople and monks, and their respected leaders, depend on each other's support. He mentions three of the "four legs" mentioned earlier, not including the military here. Sitagu continues reciting the *sutta* and states that the country now is free after 62 years of slavery. It is unclear what he refers to here although it is likely he is referring to foreign occupation, even if this lasted longer than 62 years. He might also refer to the military occupation, although he seems to be deliberately vague here, focusing on themes of unity (*nyi nyut yae*), freedom and prosperity, and not on other details. Comparing the former military rule to slavery while addressing a military audience seems a bold move by Sitagu, but instead of placing blame he tells the military to re-build the country. In the text Sitagu says that now that the country is finally free it shall be built again and it shall prosper, and he tells his audience not to let the country falter. Giving the military the task of re-building the country touches upon the topic of the military leader's plans for the upcoming election in Myanmar, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

This *sutta* makes an interesting transition in Sitagu's sermon. He goes from talking about how Dutthagāmani does not need to worry about the consequences of his actions in war, to telling his audience, who are members of the military, not to let their country falter. Even if the military is not mentioned in the *sutta* he recites, he addresses the military directly after this. The last words of the quoted *sutta* "Our country, our land, our inheritance shall be established and prospered. Don't let it falter" (sic) (Appendix C, 05:21-06:49) almost sound like a rallying cry or a propaganda message. It also indicates that there is a possibility for growth along with a danger of the country faltering.

Sitagu goes on to talk directly about the military's role in this process of growth. He addresses the three parts of the military as land, water and sky representing the army, navy and air force respectively. He makes a reference to a monk who saw the Tipitaka books being buried and he is connecting this to the army. This might be a reference that the audience understands and the link to the infantry army might be "common sense" to the listeners, but this reference is unclear to me. Sitagu then makes a statement about how the monks can see that the military has a big heart for the country. He continues to state that all parts of the land, and the water, should be

protected with no exceptions. This again gives a strong nationalistic theme to the sermon, which has moved from stories in old texts to situations in the present day.

Sitagu mentions “the straits” (Appendix C, 07:21-07:40), but he might be referring to rivers, as there are no straits in Myanmar. In that case it is likely that he is thinking of the Naf River that divides Myanmar and Bangladesh, although this is not stated directly. He then has another statement resembling a rallying cry when he says “Don’t take anything for granted” (Appendix C, 07:21-07:40). He is addressing the military telling them to protect the land and warning them not take anything for granted, which gives the impression of a looming danger.

Do not worry. No matter how much you have to fight, how much you have to shoot them, just remember what was being said earlier. There are only one and a half beings that can be regarded as human beings. The persons who cannot be called human beings are not important. (Appendix C, 07:41-07:43)

The reality of this danger is then expressed when Sitagu confirms that the military will have to fight. Yet, he is reassuring them by referring to what the *arhats* was saying earlier relating to killing non-Buddhist opponents. He does not use the word “kill” but it is understood by using the words “fight” and “shoot them”. He repeats the statement of there only being one and a half beings regarded as human, and then enforces this by stating that “[t]he person who cannot be called a human being is not important” (Appendix C, 07:41-07:43). Sitagu refers to a “them” and “the person”, using the words of the *arhats* on Tamil Hindus to describe any opponents of the military.

Sitagu then goes back to talking about the three parts of the military and how they together, as an assembly of troops (*tut paung*) must safeguard the country. This statement is also rooted in a historical context where Sitagu refers to Gadaryone Sayadaw who also spoke of the “*tut paung*” (Appendix C, 07:44-08:30). I was not able to find out who Gadaryone Sayadaw is, although it is likely that he was a senior monk or abbot, from his Sayadaw-title. There is also a monastery called Mahagandayon (Mahar Gandar Yone) in Amarapura in Myanmar (visitmyanmar.com). Sitagu then makes a reference to king Dutthagāmani and king

Ajātasattu. Ajātasattu was a Buddhist king who conquered large areas of Magadha in Northern India 4th century B.C. and became a patriot of the religion (Dutt, 1978, p.1) Sitagu explains that these kings did not only fight for the country but also for the *buddhasāsana*. *Buddhasāsana* refers to Buddhism as a practice and an institution in this world. In this text this is presented by Sitagu as a just cause for going to war. He then returns to the theme of unity (*nyi nyut yae*) stating that like the kings, the military should not only fight for the protection of the country but for the protection of the Buddha's *sāsana* as well. Sitagu says “[t]his should be the way” (Appendix C, 08:31-08:55) reaffirming the military's role as protectors of both the country and of the religion.

He then recites a solemn vow made by Dutthagāmani before going into war. The vow states that the king did not fight for the luxury of being a king but to preserve the Buddha *sāsana* in Sri Lanka. Sitagu repeats the meaning of the vow by again posing and answering a rhetorical question about why Dutthagāmani fought his battles. When citing the vow, Sitagu uses the words “*kyay kalar*” to refer to the Tamils that Dutthagāmani fought. In the English translation the translators have put “the Damilas, Tamils” in parentheses to explain this expression, but I believe this to be misleading. The term *kalar* is used in Myanmar to describe foreigners, usually from India, but has also got derogatory connotations in relation to Indian Muslims. When used in this context it creates a clear connection to Muslims in Myanmar, and especially the Rohingya as these are the opponents of the military today as the Tamils were for Dutthagāmani. This is, however, the only link to Muslims and the Rohingya in this text. Sitagu then repeats the vow of Dutthagāmani in English, claiming it to be from the London Pali text society, and he then explains the English statement in Burmese.

Similarly, our soldiers should take this example of King Duttagamani and King Ajātasattu in your heart. Thus, I would like to conclude this ceremony by encouraging you undertake this military responsibility of serving for the country and *sāsana*. (Appendix C, 10:36-10:49).

Again he poses a rhetorical question on who made this vow, and answers it himself by stating that this was the vow of the kings Dutthagāmani and Ajātasattu. This shows his recurring technique of repeating and explaining important aspects of his sermon. Sitagu suggests that this example should be taken by the military as well, that they

should “undertake military responsibilities” (Appendix C, 10:36-10:49) to serve both the country and the *Buddhasāsana*. Sitagu then finishes his sermon by repeating the *sutta* that was recited earlier, ending with the sentence; “Our country, our land, our inheritance shall be established and prospered. Don’t let it falter” (sic) (Appendix C, 10:50-12:07). Again, this sounds like a rallying cry and this whole ending can be seen as some sort of motivational speech to soldiers going to battle. As it is likely that the people of the audience, being in a military training camp, soon will be sent out, his words of reassurance might resonate with them. Sitagu finishes his sermon by repeating “*sadhu*” three times, which is common in Buddhist ritual practice, often meaning “good” or “it is well”.

Nodal Points and Power

Throughout this sermon there is a theme of nationalism and nodes like unity, nation, borders and protecting, forms a web of meaning. If the term “our country” is a nodal point then linguistic signs surrounding it will include prosperity, protection of land water and sky and protection from invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*) be a part of the “fish net” here. Alongside this are the nodes of religious meanings such as *Buddhasāsana*, *sutta*, Sangha, Dhamma and *arhat*. There is also a web of meaning surrounding the nodal point of a “victorious King” including words and terms such as: triumphant, conquered, receives *metta* (loving kindness), devout Buddhist, fighting for Buddhism, feels remorse, no unwholesome act, just authority and just cause. Towards the end of the text Sitagu makes it clear that these nodes are a part of one net considering the responsibilities of the military to protect both the country and the religion, comparing the military to the kings of old. The web of meaning describing “the other” in this text has the nodal point “half human”, and from this “the other” is described as an invader, not important, *kyay kalar*, Tamil (in the story of Dutthagāmani) they (when related to the present day), less than human and non-Buddhist.

In this text the power lies with the leader who is supported by the monks. This is represented first by king Dutthagāmani who won triumphantly with the support of monks and *arhats* and through the power of Dhamma. The power also lies with the *arhats* who are able to sense the king’s remorse and also the “worth” of his opponents. The Burmese soldiers are also described as powerful, both in the example

of the fight for independence and the war of Dutthagāmani the Buddhist (and Burmese) soldiers won. The war hero General Aung San and the soldiers who sought refuge in the monasteries also represent this power through unity (*nyi nyut yae*) with the Sangha. Lastly this comparison is drawn to the military audience, where Sitagu tells them to take the examples of the king and the general and use the power that they have in being the military force, to protect the country and the religion. Throughout the sermon the victorious Buddhists rightfully hold the power.

“The other” has little power in this text, represented as an invader who is defeated, who is less than human and not important, and who can be killed without consequence.

4. Discussing my Findings

In the following I will discuss my findings from the analysis focusing on topics from the theoretical framework and the background information presented earlier. The three texts are not part of a cohesive body of work from one source but I look at them collectively to get an impression of the discourse used by these two monks, to see how they construct and constitute the Muslim other. Through the findings in the previous chapter I will discuss what the texts are conveying about the topic, to answer my research question. I have structured the discussion into themes based on the theoretical framework and the context of the thesis, but many of the topics discussed below are intertwined and relate to each other in different ways. I focus a large part of this discussion on the discourses of nationalism discovered in the texts, and discuss a possible distinction between nationalism and “protectionism”. The process of othering in this case is partially integrated in the discourse on nationalism. As Grosby (2005, p4) suggests, the establishing of “us” requires an establishing of “them”. As I discuss the discourse(s) on nationalism discovered in the texts the process of othering become clear, which leads the discussion into a conclusion of how the Muslim other is constructed in these texts. In this discussion I establish that “the other” is also constructed as “fearsome” and therefore a legitimate target for violence. As a concluding remark I turn my attention to the military and their role in Rakhine State and their possible gains from the Rohingya crisis. This is presented as a suggestion for further study, before the final ending of the thesis.

4.1. Themes of Nationalism in the Texts

In these texts the race or nationality (*lu-myò* / *a-myò*) that belongs to the country (*pyin*) of Myanmar seems not to include the “foreign” Muslims (*kalar*). Only the Facebook post by Wirathu touch on the topic of belonging, where he states that the *Myanmar lu-myò* and *bamar ko* belong to the nation. None of the texts talk of which other ethnic groups (*lu-myò-chu*) or races (*a-myò*) that are included in the nation (*pyi-su-pyi-sar*) but from the analysis of these texts it seems that Muslims are not a part of it. Below I discuss who the texts present as a part of the nation, and how the Muslims are excluded as “others” who do not belong.

Unity for Whom?

Sitagu taps into the traditional aspects of nationalism, as presented by Grosby (2005), namely the collective historical roots. He is talking of Burma's fight for independence, putting everything that follows in the framework of this national struggle and victory, and giving the sermon a nationalistic theme. Sitagu also refers to the fact that the monasteries where the prominent warriors took refuge, were in the rural villages all over the country, thereby including listeners all across Myanmar in this history of the nation. He is stating the fact of this matter as something that everyone knows through learning and reading about it in history-books. Both the reference to the country's fight for independence and the remembrance of this in history books establishes communality among the listeners; he is talking of "our shared history".

A question that arises from this is: who belongs to the nation? In the first chapter I presented that not everyone were fighting on the side of the Burmese in the time leading up to independence from the British. The detailed facts of alliances and allegiances aside, the memories of Indian Muslims representing the British colonial rulers and the Rohingya fighting alongside the British against the Japanese and Burmese might still be present. This is not stated clearly in the sermon, but the history of Burma's independence is not a history of one united country finally free from colonial rule. While Sitagu does not express this directly, he does point to the connections between the independence warriors and the Buddhist monasteries, effectively excluding other religious groups from that fight and from that shared history.

Sitagu presents a divided Sri Lanka, consisting of the conflicting sides of Buddhists and "the other", naturalising the Buddhists in the tale as representing the Burmese "us". In line with Grosby's (2005) explanation of the collective consciousness the Buddhist "us" are also portrayed as the victorious group who unified the country, and one can draw parallels to a desire for a peaceful, unified and Buddhist Myanmar. In the analysis I also pointed out that the telling of Dutthagāmani and the Tamils makes the distinction between the Buddhist side and a Tamil side, without mentioning the religion of the Tamil other. By not defining the religion of "the other" in this story, it

makes the story transmissible to other examples of any other battles waged and won to protect Buddhism, regardless of the “enemy’s” religion.

The unity (*nyi nyut yae*) expressed in the *sutta* recited by Sitagu also emphasises the importance of the presence of the religious institutions in the country. He states that for the native land to rise and be built again, the laypeople and the monks need to support each other to not let the country falter. He does not talk of “the people of Myanmar” here, but of the Buddhist laity. This could be seen as a subtle way of saying that the Buddhist people and the monks are the ones who are native to the land and who will build it up so that it can prosper. Using the word “laypeople” and not inhabitant can lead to the interpretation that in “our country”, there is no difference between an inhabitant and a Buddhist layperson. In extension this excludes anyone who is not Buddhist from “our country”, clearly establishing groups of native “us” and a foreign “them”.

In Wirathu’s texts he also refers to the Burmese people as inherently Buddhist and described the Muslim minority as foreigners (*kalar*) or a different race. This connects with the first model of othering presented by Smith (2004) where “the other” is identified with a name and distinguished by a feature, which in this case is both the religion of Islam and/or the Indian heritage. Wirathu discusses of the possibility of a unified and harmonious Myanmar, but claims that this is not possible because of the Muslims. He also appeals to his readers, saying that “we”, meaning the Burmese Buddhists, must care about the country because the criminal activity happening among the Muslims is now affecting “us”. Wirathu even states that if Myanmar consisted of as many Muslims as Buddhists the country could never be at peace. It seems that the unified nation portrayed here is a Burmese Buddhist nation. While the nation is described as Burmese Buddhist in these texts there are also other forms of unity (*nyi nyut yae*) expressed by the monks.

Unity Among Whom?

The theme of unity (*nyi nyut yae*) comes up several times during Sitagu's sermon and both the unity of the divided Buddhist country of Sri Lanka and the unity of king and people are set as examples of a desirable situation in Myanmar. This unity (*nyi nyut yae*) within a nation is a classic trait of nationalism, as suggested by Grosby (2005), Hobsbawm (1992) and Hastings (1997). Even more concretely, Sitagu talks of "our country" and "our inheritance" (Appendix C, 05:21-06:49), and he alerts the listeners of the danger of the country faltering, compelling the military to fight for their country and for the *buddhasāsana*.

The importance of cooperation and support between monks and laypeople is emphasised in the texts, and Sitagu states that these two parts must support each other to rebuild the country. Wirathu appeals to cooperation between monks, the Ma Ba Tha in particular, laypeople and police to fight crime in the country. He also presents monks as a unifying force that will always work for the politics and people of Myanmar, organising their problem-solving teams across the country and working within the law to find peaceful solutions. As political activity among monks is a disputed topic (as shown in the first chapter) his statement is somewhat controversial. On the other hand, Wirathu does not state that monks should seek political power, only that they are working for people in politics. This suggests that monks can support candidates and their political viewpoints, convince people of whom to vote for in a coming election, and suggest laws, like the Ma Ba Tha did in 2013. As previously mentioned, this statement naturalises the role of the monks in politics. This resembles Hobsbawm's (1992) view on nationalism where the political and national unit should be harmonious. The texts suggest a preferred unity (*nyi nyut yae*) between the state and the people mediated by the monks and excluding other religious groups.

In Sitagu's sermon he states that the military has to protect the country and fight the non-Buddhists. He argues for a strong connection between the Sangha and the military throughout his sermon. When he addresses the military audience he does not mention the Tamils in Sri Lanka any further, but makes it clear that the words of the *arhats* to Dutthagāmani are applicable to situations the military might be in today. By referring to the opponents as "them" and "the human" (Appendix C, 07:41-07:43) these statements can be applicable to anyone the military must fight. He is reminding

the soldiers and their families in the audience that if “the enemy” is not Buddhist, s/he does not matter and there will be no bad consequences from shooting him/her. I use the word “enemy” here, but Sitagu does not, he only says “them”. He claims that the country must be protected, but does not specify whom it must be protected against or what threat these “others” pose. He does, however, say that “they” cannot be regarded as human beings, which suggests that “they” are non-Buddhist.

The nationalism presented here reflects a Burmese Buddhist Myanmar where there are tight bonds between the laity, the Sangha, the state and the military. This is what Sitagu refers to as the four legs of a chair, which holds the country (chair) steady. The texts refer to a type of nationalism suggested by Hastings (1997, p.4) as arising when a group or a nation feels threatened. This reflects the inward-looking aspects of nationalism present during the First World War, where the wish for a hegemonic culture led to ethnic cleansing (Rosenthal & Rodic, 2015, p.1-2). This could also relate to what Juergensmeyer (1996, p.4-5) calls ethnic religious nationalism where religion is the uniting force. However, Juergensmeyer’s (1996) idea was based on a minority using religion as a way to shape an independent identity from that of the majority, which is not the case here. In these texts the religious unity (*nyi nyut yae*) as basis for nationalism comes from the majority religious group, and the role of Buddhism in Myanmar nationalism as expressed in these texts is discussed further below.

Protecting the Nation, Buddhist or Not?

Putting the religious aspect aside momentarily, allows for a discussion of whether nationalism devoid of religion is presented in these texts. Wirathu and Sitagu both talk of protecting the country quite specifically. When Wirathu mentions this it is on more of a grass root level, among the laypeople, relating to the attitudes and beliefs of individuals (as was suggested by Grosby 2005, p.5 and Nationalism, 2014). He appeals to the everyday lives of Buddhists, claiming in his texts that the Muslims are the ones who have brought, or will bring, violence and destruction to their lives. Sitagu, on the other hand, is taking this to another level when cooperating so closely with the military, asking them to protect the nation from this threat. In the texts the protection of the state and protection of the religion is expressed as going hand in

hand. The texts refer to two different groups for protecting the nation, Wirathu to the laity and Sitagu to the military.

In Wirathu's Facebook post he states that the Buddhist rape victim is in contact with the police and he also says that the Ma Ba Tha are trying to contact the woman. It is not stated why the organisation wants to get in touch with a rape victim, but this might provide the explanation for why Wirathu is posting these news. Wirathu is claiming that criminal activities have been going on for a while without people caring or responding to it, but now that it is affecting the Burmese people, not just the foreign Muslim (*kalar*) mafia, it is cause for concern. The Burmese Buddhist community must take action, like the Ma Ba Tha is said to be doing here. Yet, Wirathu does not directly ask his followers to do anything. Unlike Sitagu who tells the military to take action, Wirathu suggests that inaction from the Buddhist Burmese regarding these crimes has now led to the crimes affecting them. He compares it to a fire spreading from one house to another and tells his followers not to stand idly by and watch.

For this Facebook post more is known on the interpretation of the text, as Wong (2014) reported that mobs showed up at the teashop mentioned in the post, and that a riot later broke out in Mandalay after Wirathu's post was published. According to an article in *The Diplomat* (Palatino, 2014) riots lasting for four days erupted in Mandalay after the news of the rape case spread, leaving two dead and 14 injured. Muslim shops and businesses as well as Islamic institutions were targeted in what seemed a well-planned operation. A definitive connection between the post and the riot is very hard to prove, but the possible connection is worth mentioning. There is also a striking similarity between this case and the case that triggered the violence in Rakhine State in 2012, although this case did not go as far. The referred case in 2012 was that of three Muslim men who raped and killed a Buddhist woman in Rakhine (Human Rights Watch, 2012). These news also spread quickly and caused the violent attacks and counterattacks of 2012.

The protection of the nation is presented alongside the protection of the religion in these texts. The sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw is the text that most clearly discusses a threat to the country's borders, but he is also adamant on the duality of this protection.

The texts do not present a secular nationalism it does not seem an alternative to protect the nation without protecting the religion. Even if a secular Burmese Nationalism separated from Buddhism is not supported by these texts that does not mean it does not exist, and this topic would be interesting for further studies.

Protecting Buddhism?

The notions of nationalism are still prominent in these texts and if it is not a Burmese nationalism devoid of Buddhism that is presented, the next question I ask is: are these texts promoting a Buddhist nationalism, or no nationalism at all?

Looking at the texts while using Just War ideology can be helpful in discerning a possible discourse of Buddhist nationalism and discover the reasons why this leads to a fear the Muslim other. Bartholomeusz (2002, p.55) states that the protection of Buddhism can be considered a “just cause” for violence, as see in Just War Theory, and this seems to be claimed by both Sitagu and Wirathu as well. All three texts portray Buddhism as under threat, although Wirathu is more direct in his statements on this than Sitagu. Both monks are clear on where this threat is coming from, although Wirathu more directly names Islam as the threat, and Sitagu is suggesting that non-Buddhists are threatening Buddhism in Myanmar.

The protection and growth of Buddhism was presented as the reason for Dutthagāmani to go to war in Sri Lanka, and Sitagu draws this comparison to the military forces in his audience, saying that “this should be the way” (Appendix C, 08:31-08:55) for them as well. Wirathu is also claiming that the forceful implementing of Islam is destroying and devouring Buddhism. He does not give instructions to what measures should be taken, while Sitagu tells the military to do their duty and not to worry about the consequences of fighting and shooting. Wirathu is subtler, telling his listeners that they should not stand idly by and watch. Predictably, the information he gave did lead to riots in Mandalay, as discussed above.

Recent studies on nationalism in Buddhist Southeast Asia have applied the term “Buddhist protectionism” to describe this type of religious “nationalism”. Here, the

focus if aimed at the protection of the religion rather than on the protection or unity of the nation. This suggests that the term Buddhist Nationalism does not sufficiently describe the phenomenon, even if there are hints of nationalism found in these texts. Frydenlund (2017a) calls the 969 and Ma Ba Tha “protectionist movements” rather than nationalists, emphasising the importance of religion over nation. She (2015a) also ascribed Ma Ba Tha a “protectionist agenda” during the democratisation process in Myanmar, where the organisation would support a military led regime if that regime were thought to protect the Buddhist religion. Frydenlund (2017b, p.4) also writes that

Buddhist protectionism (which covers a wide range of concerns) certainly was the motivational factor behind the establishment of the 969 and the MaBaTha—as well as the race and religion laws— [...] Noteworthy, this Buddhist protectionist discourse is shared by a number of different actors, including state, religious and civil society actors. Also, Thein Sein supported the laws as he saw himself as a ‘protector of Buddhism’.

Even the name of the Ma Ba Tha, The Organisation for the Protection of Race and Religion, points to the organisation being more concerned with the religion than with the nation. There is not a traditional nationalist focus in these texts, although there are traits of nationalism found here, as shown in the discussion. The texts and the discourse they present could be used for a nationalist purpose as well, but the intention seems to be focused on the protection of the religion more than the nation. “Separating” these movements, and monks such as Wirathu and Sitagu, from a nationalist agenda and way of thinking, and doing research with protectionism in mind would be interesting for further studies.

In these texts, both the country and the religion are presented as being threatened. The protection of the country and the protection of the religion can be seen as two equally just causes for using violence or going to war, and it seems useful to look at the motivation and justification as a sign of both Burmese nationalism and of “Buddhist protectionism”. The use of violence against the other will be discussed further below.

4.2. Construction of the Muslim Other

Both Sitagu's and Wirathu's expressions of nationalism are articulated subtly, and are intertwined with religious aspects. The monks walk a fine line between religious expression and political and social activism. Through their roles as highly respected religious authorities, they express ideas of national unity (*nyi nyut yae*) through a shared history and religion, a national need for protecting the Buddhist religion, and an othering of the "opposing" religious group who threatens both the nation and the religion. The first model of othering presented by Smith (2004, p.231-246), focused on cultural traits, and the religious grouping of the Muslim other juxtaposed to the Buddhist "us" is clear in these texts. The "ideological-discursive formations" (Fairclough, 2010, p.30) presented by Wirathu and Sitagu similarly naturalises the Muslim other as "common sense".

"The others" in the story of Dutthagāmani are the Tamils who are juxtaposed with the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, but when this story is related to Myanmar the Tamil other are just an example. As mentioned in the analysis, the withholding of the religious identity of the Tamils makes it easier to relate any group that is non-Buddhist as "the other", while Buddhism is what signifies the "us" in both cases. Through the words of the *arhats* Sitagu explains that those who do not practice Buddhism are not genuine beings, thereby dehumanising "the other". As seen above, both Sitagu and Wirathu diminish the value of those who are not Buddhist, making a clear distinction between the Buddhist "us" and "the other", where the "us" is superior. In Sitagu's sermon he argues that the country needs the support of the monks and laypeople together, effectively excluding people of other religions from being a part of establishing and rebuilding the country. Sitagu also claims the non-Buddhists to be a viable threat, and an enemy that might be attacked without consequence.

The most notable statement that constructed the other in these texts was, in my opinion, taken from the sermon of Sitagu Sayadaw; "there was only one whom can be called a human being and one whom can be called half a being. [...] The persons who cannot be called human beings are not important" (Appendix C, 07:41-07:43). Notably, Sitagu does not state that he is talking about Muslims here. Only from the context of the situation in Myanmar today and by considering his leanings towards the

Ma Ba Tha and that it is a military audience he is talking to, can I discern that this is aimed at Muslims. This is smart rhetoric from Sitagu, as he cannot be accused of directly supporting or encouraging violence against Muslims and in extension the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya. It is likely that the soldiers of this training camp in Karen state will be sent to Rakhine State and the non-Buddhists they will face are the Rohingya.

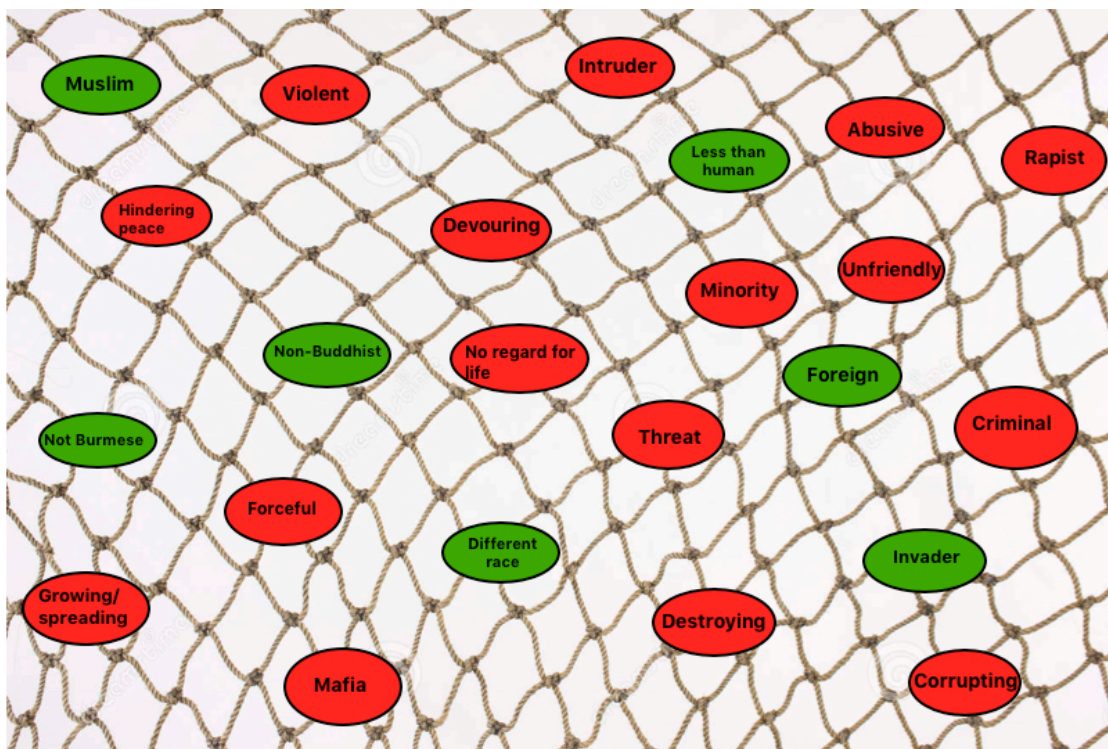
In Wirathu's texts it is clear that the "other" are Muslims, and that these are a separate group from the Burmese people. Both Sitagu and Wirathu uses the derogatory term *kalar* to describe the "other", and Wirathu goes on to claim that all Muslims are violent and seek to Islamise Myanmar. As seen in the analysis chapter, Wirathu describes Muslims as violent and forceful and as a direct threat to Buddhism. Some are even accused, without any evidence in this case, of committing rape and of belonging to organised crime groups.

In the sermon the Tamils are classified as invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*), who did not belong and who needed to be defeated. If the story of Dutthagāmani and the Tamils of Sri Lanka is seen as a metaphor for the situation in Myanmar, I argue that the classification of non-Buddhists as invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*) to be defeated can be transmitted to several groups in in the country. This can especially be the case for the Rohingya who are both Muslim (and non-Buddhist), and who do not have citizenship as a recognised ethnic group in Myanmar, and who could therefore be considered "invaders" (*kyue kyaw thu*). The "other" classified as an outsider coincides with Smith's (2004) second model of othering, where "the other" is one outside the borders who do not belong inside the country.

In these texts Muslims are presented as one homogeneous, minority group different from the majority Buddhists in Myanmar. The Muslims are described as violent criminals who are invading the country aiming to Islamise it and eradicate Buddhism. These monks are portraying a clear distinction between the two groups, and are in a way unifying the Buddhist majority, which in reality consists of many different groups. This unity (*nyi nyut yae*) is expressed by referring to a shared history but especially the shared religion, and a form of nationalism arises through the idea of unity (*nyi nyut yae*) against this threatening group, as was suggested by Hastings

(1997, p.4). As seen above the Muslims are presented as a threat to both the stability and harmony of the country, as well as the sustaining and prospering of Buddhism, and the differences between the groups are presented as absolute, as Schober (2007, p.10-11) described in the introduction of this thesis. The Muslim other has become fearsome, which is what Das (1998, p.125) presented as a social production of hate that could lead to genocide.

For illustrative purposes I have created a model to show what the “fishing net” or web of meaning concerning the discourse on the “fearsome other” might look like. In this model the green nodes represent the linguistic signs related to “the other” while red signs represent what makes “the other” fearsome. In this model I have not taken into account the placement of the nodes in relation to one another, the model only illustrates the discourse from the texts that construct the Muslim as a “fearsome other”.



(Own model, picture from dreamstime.com found April 10th 2018)

4.3. The Use of Violence Against the Other

Throughout his sermon Sitagu refers to the *arhats* as the source of the arguments he is making. The justification for violence and war, and a relief from the consequences of “unwholesome actions” (*akusala*) is presented as coming from *arhats*, enlightened beings, and not from Sitagu himself. He distances himself from the justifications given by the *arhats*, as not being his own arguments. This does, however, strengthen his arguments while he can also state that these are not his original idea but the ideas of *arhats*: “We did not say it. Who said it? [...] The Arahants said it” (Appendix C, 04:43-05:20). Using the words of the *arhats* Sitagu dehumanises anyone who does not belong to the Buddhist religion. He does not mention Muslims at all in this sermon, but he does talk of the dangers on the borders, which could indicate neighbouring Muslim countries as well as the Rohingya on the border to Bangladesh. Through the text Sitagu also states that the military does not have to worry about fighting the non-Buddhists, indicating that the “enemies” they will face will be non-Buddhist.

The texts suggest that both Myanmar and the Buddhist religion are in need of protection and as stated above this can be seen as a just cause for the use of violence against a “Muslim threat”. The constructing of the Muslim other in these texts also suggests that “the other” has become fearsome. Using Jerryson’s (2016) three variables, or exceptions, for the rule of no harm (*ahimsa*) to discuss my findings, can give further insight into the discourse of the texts. The first variable concerns the intention behind the act of violence matters (Jerryson, 2016, p.147-149). In Sitagu’s sermon, the presented intention for the military to fight is for the protection of the country and the *Buddhasāsana*. Wirathu does not directly tell his readers to act violently, but he does suggest that the rape case, mentioned on Facebook, needs further investigation and that inaction has led to the spreading of criminal activities. As mentioned above, these statements by Wirathu led to violent actions directly related to the case. All three texts talk of a growing threat, both to the peace in the country and to the Buddhist religion, which can be addressed by violent acts by the military or by laypeople.

The second variable is related to the nature of the victim (Jerryson, 2016, p.149-152). Here the texts have different approaches to achieving the same goal, that is, to

minimise the worth of the victims or potential enemies. Wirathu dehumanises the Muslims by comparing them to carp, demeaning them by using the derogatory term *kalar*, and describing them as violent and part of the criminally organised mafia. Sitagu reminds his listeners that *arhats* before him has said that those who are not Buddhist, and therefore not human beings, do not matter, and killing them will not be considered an unwholesome action (*akusala*). As stated by Jerryson (2016, p.150) the killing of a non-human or a non-virtuous human is less blameworthy. He also explains the words or the *arhats* in the Mahāvamsa as stating that the non-Buddhists were considered to be on the same level as animals, and therefore killing them was not an unwholesome act (*akusala*). Jerryson (2016, p.151) states that this story has a combination of both the “right intention”, the preservation of Buddhism, and the stature of the victims, to justify the use of violence.

The final exception is related to soldiers in war, who are acting out of duty (Jerryson, 2016, p.152-153). The soldiers listening to Sitagu’s sermon have acted, and will act, out of duty. Sitagu underlines this when he urges them to “undertake military responsibilities” (Appendix C, 10:36-10:49) to protect the country, like the triumphant warrior king Dutthagāmani, who slayed millions of invading Tamils, and like the great General Aung San that fought for independence in Burma. It is up to the military to defeat the threat, and not to let the country falter. The words of the *arhats* through Sitagu are like a blessing, allowing and urging the military to do what “needs to be done” to the non-Buddhist threat.

4.4. Conclusion

Through the discussion and illustration above I have shown how the three chosen texts construct the Muslim “other”. By describing the Muslims as one separate group from the Buddhists and the Burmese, the Muslims become both different from the “us” on a religious level, and on a level of national belonging. The discourse in the texts also suggested that the Muslims are a “threatening other”, posing a threat to the safety of the people of Myanmar, and to the Buddhist religion. By constructing the Muslims as a “threatening other” this discourse then allows for violence against “the other”.

This thesis has done research on the discourse surrounding nationalism and the construction of a “Threatening Muslim Other” in Myanmar. I started by presenting the historical and religious background of Myanmar, and the research that already exists in this field. This material revealed that the separation between groups based on religion, among other factors, is taking place in Myanmar both in the political and in the social spheres. Such separation has been the case for Muslims who are constructed as an “other” and even a “threatening other”. This has become increasingly apparent in Rakhine State where the Muslim Rohingya have been driven out by force, fleeing to neighboring countries such as Bangladesh. The aim of this thesis, however, was to look at the discourse of othering of Muslims in general, not only related to the Rohingya. In my thesis I wanted to take a few steps back from the Rakhine crisis to take a closer look at *how* Muslims are being constructed as “the other”, focusing on the discourse used by prominent Buddhist monks Ashin Wirathu and Sitagu Sayadaw.

Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyse the texts, and the theories of nationalism, othering and violence were presented to create a framework for the following discussion. The analysis focused on a Facebook post and an Interview of Ashin Wirathu, and a sermon by Sitagu Sayadaw. The limited amount of materials leads to a conclusion that might not reflect the whole truth about the othering of Muslims in Myanmar. Yet, by relating my findings to other research done on this topic it seems that my conclusions concur with that of other researchers, as presented throughout the thesis.

Answering the Question

As an answer to the research question, “**How do Buddhist monks construct the Muslim Other in Myanmar?**” the thesis concludes that Muslims, as one coherent group, different from the Buddhist/Burmese “us”, are constructed as inherently violent and a threat to the peace of the country, while Islam is portrayed as a conquering religion, aiming to destroy Buddhism in Myanmar. Muslims are described as less than human, and violent actions against them for the protection of the country and the religion is therefore not an unwholesome act. Violence is presented as a reasonable and necessary response to this threat. In the case of the military this is

presented directly by Sitagu, while Wirathu presents the need for violent actions indirectly to the Burmese Buddhist people.

I specify here that this is related to all Muslims in Myanmar, not just the Rohingya. I do not do this to trivialise the crisis in Rakhine State, but to say that this discourse could affect every Muslim in the country, even the Kaman ethnic group who are the only recognised Muslim group with citizenship in Myanmar (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2018). Many have already stated that the crisis in Rakhine State must be seen as multifaceted, not just as a result of religious conflict or the othering of Muslims (see Frydenlund, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, Walton & Hayward, 2017, van Klinken & Thazin Aung, 2017, Crouch, 2016 and others). Based on the materials used in this thesis and on the answer to the research question, I see a danger in the discourse applied to all Muslims as a whole, and I am fearful that the violence and hate might not be limited to the Rohingya.

Relevance of the Results

Understanding more about the how the Muslim other is constructed by discourse in Myanmar can be a step in the process of changing that discourse. Through my findings I have analysed examples of othering done by monks, but this should also be seen together with other work, such as that done by Schissler, Walton & Phyu Phyu Thi (2017). Their research, presenting interviews from six towns in Myanmar, provides some information about the “social practice” of the discourse. Through my research I have also shown a development between 2013 and 2014 when Wirathu was talking about the general dangers of a growing Muslim threat, and then to October of 2017 where Sitagu Sayadaw promoted violent action as a response to this threat. It also shows a difference between the two monks as Wirathu, who spoke mostly to the laity, did not directly encourage violence, while Sitagu encouraged the military to act violently to protect the nation and the religion.

Throughout this thesis the focus has been on the hate and violence spreading in Myanmar, but although this is a large part of the troubling reality, there are those who try to counter this discourse. From the outside many have urged for a peaceful solution in Rakhine, including Buddhist monks in Bangladesh (Dipananda, 2017) and

the Dalai Lama (Worley, 2017). On the government level, Aung San Suu Kyi arranged a meeting for inter-faith prayer for peace at a stadium in Yangon in the beginning of October 2017, which included Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Christian participants (Naing, 2017). On the local level Buddhist and Muslim friends, U Tun Aye Thein and U Ka Lu, both living in Rakhine State, discussed how they as community leaders could work together to handle the tensions in their community (Macgregor & Lynn Aung, 2016). Although these measures may not individually be the cause for change, they at least show that there are people with different views than those expressed in the discourse analysed in this thesis.

4.5. Concluding Remarks

Building on the research referred to in this thesis, including my own results, further research could be done on the prospects of reconciling and re-building trust among Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar. It would be interesting to know more about those who speak against the military crackdown in Rakhine State and who work for a peaceful co-existence and reconciliation. The book titled “Peace and Reconciliation: In search of Shared Identity” by Kim, Kollontai & Høyland (2008) could give interesting insight into the peace processes of other conflicts with religious aspects and Cecilia Clegg has written a chapter in the same book about “embracing the threatening other” in Northern Ireland, which could be especially relevant.

This being said, the road to a peaceful solution seems long, and I think that the initiative must come from within the country for it to fully take root. If the people on the grass-root level show their discontent with the military crackdown, build trust and communicate between the faith groups and challenges the hatred spread by some of the monks there might be a chance for a peaceful resolution locally. A peace brokered by religious and secular leaders protecting all citizens and working for equal rights for all persons regardless of religion or ethnicity, could be a lasting peace. Frydenlund (2015, p.3) also suggests:

Engaging religious leaders is paramount in these deeply religious societies because they can challenge exclusivist discourses by pointing at diverse interpretations of how one is to protect Buddhism in a way that does not foster communal conflict. This requires an intra-Buddhist debate on Buddhist

principles, religious pluralism, and human rights. Moreover religious peace initiatives might offer alternative spaces for cooperation between religious communities, for example through a shared interest for the common good. [...] [T]he rising levels of religious tension require the engagement of religious actors, unless exclusivist ideologies, intolerance, and violence are to win.

Peace must be fought for on all levels, but figuring out what a peaceful Myanmar would look like and how to attain it, is a very difficult question. Electing and supporting the right leaders to promote this peace is also a challenge, as well as creating an arena for peaceful cooperation and communication between all those involved.

Military as the “Proper Authority”?

As a concluding remark I want to touch upon a topic that arose as a part of the analysis and discussion of this thesis. Myanmar is nearing a new election and it is likely that the military will want to retake as much power as possible after their devastating loss to the NLD in 2015. With this in mind I want to look at the aspect of “proper authority” within Just War Theory along with the developing discourse of the “threatening Muslim other”.

In traditional Just War Theory there is the need for a proper authority to declare war or order the military forces to go into battle. Also, within the scope of nationalism and the nation, it is natural to look to the ruling power, be it a dictator or a democratically chosen president, as the authority that rightfully can choose to go to war. In the sermon of Sitagu the proper authority was the king, as it also has been for many centuries in Myanmar. King Dutthagāmani goes to war to unify a divided land, to defeat the invading Tamils, and to protect the Buddhist religion. He has both the proper authority to do this and his cause is just, as was discussed above.

In Myanmar today there is no such leader. The civilian government has no control over the military forces, that power belongs to the commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. He has the proper authority to order his forces, for instance into Rakhine State, and it seems as if Sitagu Sayadaw is giving him his blessing to do so. I base this statement on the sermon Sitagu held in the military

training camp and on the current situation in Myanmar, and Walton (2017c) drew the same conclusion.

It is a common perception that there are “two governments” in Myanmar, the civilian and the military. As this is the case it is not clear who has taken over the role as “protector of the religion”, which used to be the role of the king. As the majority of the voters in Myanmar are Buddhist, it is important for the ruler of the country to convince the voters that the candidate is the right person both to rule the country and to protect the religion. As Sitagu in his sermon is encouraging the military to go out and fight for the country and for the religion, he seems to be giving this role to the military leaders. With this development it could be argued that the Senior General is trying to brand himself, maybe not as king, but as the next best thing, as Prime Minister. As the election is getting closer, this is proving to be a good tactic for him as the military is now enjoying an enormous rise in popularity after their expulsion of the Rohingya (Paddock, 2017). Frydenlund (2017c, 15:35-16:38) also suggested that the military’s actions in Rakhine state could be seen as a morbid part of a long-term electoral campaign. I also suggest that the military might be using the protectionist agenda of the Ma Ba Tha and associated monks, and combining it with their own form of nationalism. Even if the Ma Ba Tha itself is not concerned with the nationalist aspects, the military can use the support of this organisation to claim that the generals will provide protection of the religion, as suggested by Frydenlund (2015a). From my analysis there is not much more I can say on this topic, but it is definitely a relevant angle for further studies.

Final Remarks

Going back to the topic of this thesis it is clear that the monks and their texts that have been studied help to construct Muslims as a threatening other. The danger of such discourse is apparent in the case of the Rohingya and, as previously mentioned, their case has been labeled as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing by the UN (UN News Centre, 2017).

The statement I chose as the title for this thesis “one and a half human beings” was what captured my interest in these texts. The idea of someone being regarded as less than, or only half, human is terrifying and is it, as Das (1998) states, the groundwork

for genocide. It brings to mind historical events such as the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire 1914-23, the Hutu slaughtering of Tutsi in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the mass killings of Bosnian Muslims by the Serbian forces in 1995. As of now the crisis of the Rohingya is considered as ethnic cleansing, but with this type of discourse it seems dangerous for them to return, and possibly dangerous for the remaining Muslims who live with this brand of a “threatening other”. How long can the Rohingya stay in refugee camps, “cleansed” from their home country? Will they ever be allowed to return safely? And what about the other Muslims living in Myanmar, are they safe? In the current climate where Islamophobia is increasing, where violence is preached as a viable option and where the military aims to win back power, no matter the casualties, a future of peaceful coexistence between all ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar seems distant.

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5.1. Pictures and Models

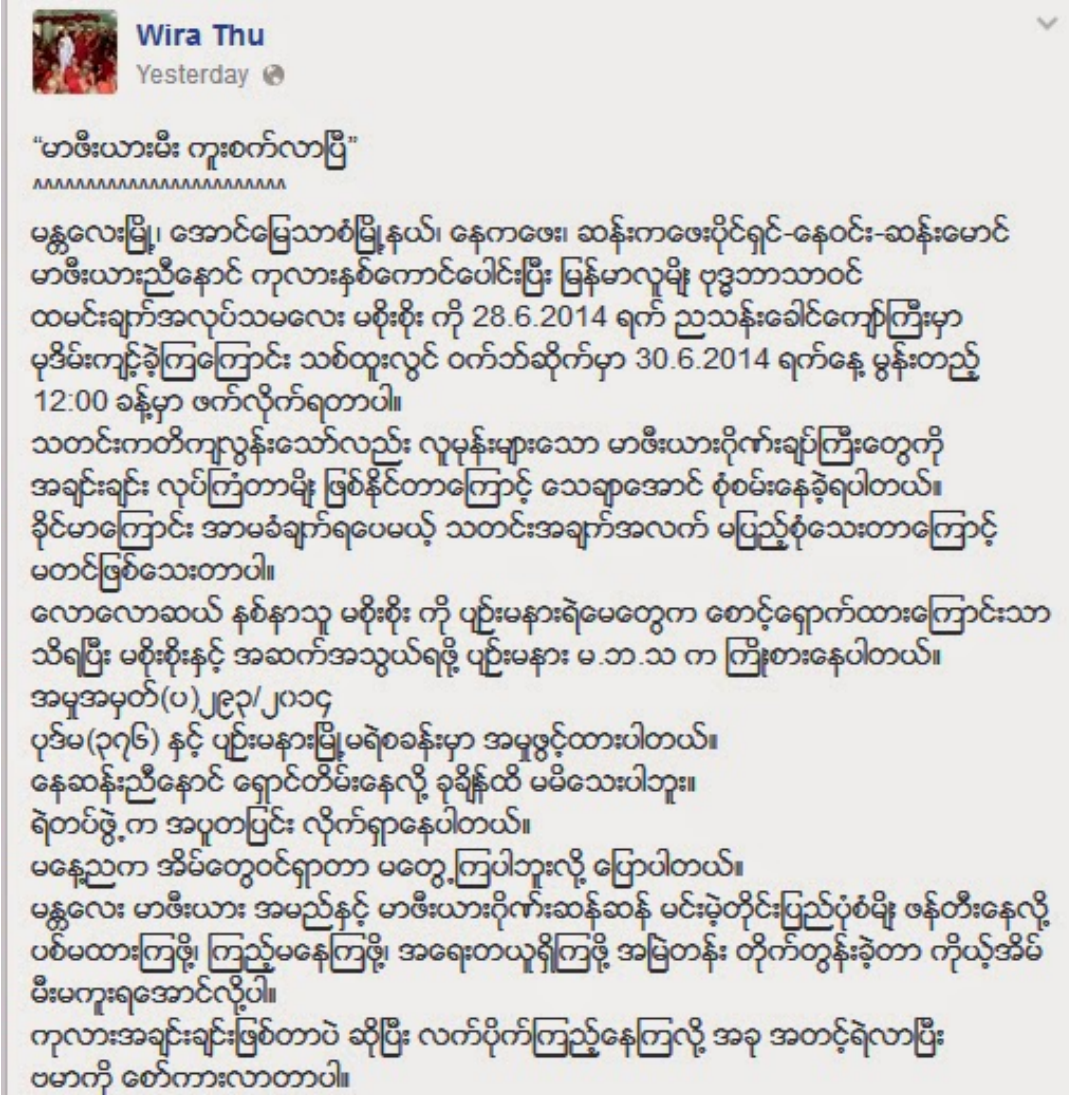
Picture on the front page by me, taken in Yangon, Myanmar November 2017


Model on page 55 based on Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (second edition), p.133. Edinburg Gate: Pearson Education Limited

Model on page 92 by me, picture from <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photography-fish-net-image7397712> found April 10th 2018

Picture of Wirathu's Facebook post in Appendix A from the blog of Kenneth Wong (2014), from <http://kennethwongsf.blogspot.no/2014/07/mandalay-from-mouse-clicks-to-mob-rule.html>

Appendix A – Facebook Post by Ashin Wirathu with Translation




Wira Thu
 Yesterday

“မာဖီးယားမီး ကူးစက်လာပြီ”
 ~~~~~

မန္တလေးမြို့၊ အောင်မြေသာစံမြို့နယ်၊ နေကဖေး၊ ဆန်းကဖေးပိုင်ရှင်-နေဝင်း-ဆန်းမောင်  
 မာဖီးယားညီနောင် ကုလားနှစ်ကောင်ပေါင်းပြီး မြန်မာလူမျိုး ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်  
 ထမင်းချက်အလုပ်သမားလေး မစိုးစိုး ကို 28.6.2014 ရက် ညသန်းခေါင်ကျော်ကြီးမှာ  
 မုဒိမ်းကျင့်ခဲ့ကြကြောင်း သစ်ထူးလွင် ဝက်ဘ်ဆိုက်မှာ 30.6.2014 ရက်နေ့ မွန်းတည့်  
 12:00 ခန့်မှာ ဖတ်လိုက်ရတာပါ။

သတင်းကတိကျပွန်းသော်လည်း လူမုန်းများသော မာဖီးယားဂိုဏ်းချုပ်ကြီးတွေကို  
 အချင်းချင်း လုပ်ကြံတာမျိုး ဖြစ်နိုင်တာကြောင့် သေချာအောင် စုံစမ်းနေခဲ့ရပါတယ်။  
 ခိုင်မာကြောင်း အာမခံချက်ရပေမယ့် သတင်းအချက်အလက် မပြည့်စုံသေးတာကြောင့်  
 မတင်ဖြစ်သေးတာပါ။

လောလောဆယ် နှစ်နာသူ မစိုးစိုး ကို ပျဉ်းမနားရဲမေတွေက စောင့်ရှောက်ထားကြောင်းသာ  
 သိရပြီး မစိုးစိုးနှင့် အဆက်အသွယ်ရဖို့ ပျဉ်းမနား မ.ဘ.သ က ကြိုးစားနေပါတယ်။

အမှုအမှတ်(ပ)၂၉၃/၂၀၁၄  
 ပုဒ်မ(၃၇၆) နှင့် ပျဉ်းမနားမြို့မရဲစခန်းမှာ အမှုဖွင့်ထားပါတယ်။  
 နေဆန်းညီနောင် ရှောင်တိမ်းနေလို့ ခုချိန်ထိ မမိသေးပါဘူး။  
 ရဲတပ်ဖွဲ့က အပူတပြင်း လိုက်ရှာနေပါတယ်။  
 မနေ့ညက အိမ်တွေဝင်ရှာတာ မတွေ့ကြပါဘူးလို့ ပြောပါတယ်။  
 မန္တလေး မာဖီးယား အမည်နှင့် မာဖီးယားဂိုဏ်းဆန်ဆန် မင်းမဲ့တိုင်းပြည်ပုံစံမျိုး ဖန်တီးနေလို့  
 ပစ်မှတ်ထားကြဖို့၊ ကြည့်မနေကြဖို့၊ အရေးတယူရှိကြဖို့ အမြဲတန်း တိုက်တွန်းခဲ့တာ ကိုယ့်အိမ်  
 မီးမကူးရအောင်လို့ပါ။  
 ကုလားအချင်းချင်းဖြစ်တာပဲ ဆိုပြီး လက်ပိုက်ကြည့်နေကြလို့ အခု အတင့်ရဲလာပြီး  
 ဗမာကို ဖော်ကားလာတာပါ။

(Picture taken from Wong, 2014).

The Mafia is growing (spreading)

The owners of the teashop Sun Café, foreigner (*kalar*) mafia twin brothers Ne Win and San Maung raped (gang raped) the Burmese (*Myanmar lu-myò*) Buddhist cook (worker) Ma Soe Soe the 28.06.2014 after midnight in Aung Myae Thar Sann, Mandalay. We read about this case on the Thit Htoo Lwin website the 30.06.2014 at 12. Although this news is very exact (correct), we have to investigate (make sure) because the mafia gangs will fight each other. However, even if this news is correct there are no evidence, which is why it takes a long time to publish the news. The victim Ma Soe Soe is under the guidance of a policewoman in Pyinn Ma Nar (police station). Ma Ba Tha are trying to contact Ma Soe Soe. At Pyinn Ma Nar police station, they opened the case rule nr.293/2014 section 376. The twins have escaped and have not yet been caught; the police are still trying to find them. Last night the police looked for them at their home but they (the police) did not find them. Like a fire spreading from one home to another it is needed not to just (stand by and) watch and not to abandon (leave) like the Mafia who live in anarchy (without a king or ruler). We need to care and be aware. Because we did not take action, and just watched these crimes, the consequences are that the foreigner (*kalar*) crimes are affecting Burmese people (*bamar ko*).



## Appendix B – Transcript of Interview of Ashin Wirathu

Rohingya Video News 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2013

Global Post

Ground truth – entry date June 2013

Interviewer: Buddhism has played an important role in the political history of Myanmar. What is the role of Buddhism in Burmese politics now?

Wirathu: The role of the monk is inseparable from Myanmar's politics. Monks will be working for the people in Myanmar's politics without expecting any returns.

Interviewer: Since there are some religious conflicts in Myanmar now, what responsibilities have the Buddhist monks taken in stopping these religious conflicts?

Wirathu: we practice non-violence and finding solutions within the confines of the legal system. In order for no new problems to arise, we are assembling problem-solving teams that include people of all faiths, to cooperate with each other in towns and cities that are within our reach.

Interviewer: Can we not say that Myanmar is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where different groups are living together in harmony?

Wirathu: If every race and religion will become good, genuine friends, there is no reason we can't live together peacefully. Whether we live together peacefully or not it is not up to the Burmese people. It depends on the Muslims. They are devouring the Burmese people, destroying Buddhism and Buddhist order, forcefully taking actions to establish Myanmar as an Islamic country and forcefully implementing them. If they don't do these things, then we can be peaceful.

Interviewer: Right now, the Muslim population in Myanmar is low. If half of Myanmar becomes Muslim, what do you think will happen?

Wirathu: Muslims are like African carps. They breed rapidly, have violent behaviour, and eat its own kind and other fishes. They also destroy the natural resources and beauty underwater. Even though they are the minority, our entire race has been suffering a great deal under the burden of the minority. The majority Burmese have not intruded, corrupted or abused them but we have been suffering under their burden. That is why if there are as many Muslims as there are Buddhist, Myanmar could never be at peace.

On-camera reporting: Tin aung Kyaw

Reporting: Van Patrick King, Pailin Wedel and Htoo Tay Zar

Camera: Pailin Wedel and Marc Laban

Translation and editing: Thet Zaw Win

Team leader: Charles Sennott and Marc Laban

Produces in partnership with Open Hands Initiative, GlobalPost and The GroundTruth Project.

## Appendix C – Transcript of Sitagu Sayadaw’s Sermon in English and Burmese

SITAGU MG MG

00:00-00:25 During Burma’s fight for independence, under the leadership of General Aung San, almost every one of the prominent warriors in the Burmese Army took shelter at the Buddhist monasteries in the rural villages, all over the country. We have learnt and read about that in history books. Buddhist monks and [Burmese] soldiers are inseparable.

00:26- 00:45 King Duttagamani accepted a flying alms-bowl. Not only was there food for himself, but his horse and the soldiers were also fed, as it was full of food. After they had had the food, they washed it [the bowl] and the empty alms-bowl was sent flying back. This was called the “flying alms-bowl”.

00:46-01:20 King Duttagamani had won the battle triumphantly. Millions of Tamils (Damilas) had died in the battle. After the battle, King Damainla, King Kyae were killed. King Duttagamani managed to unite the divided island of Lanka. Did you know that the island of Sri Lanka was separated into two sides? One side was Tamil (Damila) and the other was Buddhist. So who managed to combine the two separated parts into one country? King Duttagamani.

01:21-01:40 After the battle, the King was too exhausted to fall asleep. He couldn’t fall asleep and stayed awake in the middle of the night. What was happening to him was that he was being overtaken by remorse. What is that called? (to the audience) - “remorse” (The audience answers)

01:41-02:05 We are talking about the powers of the Dhamma. The victory of this battle is due to the power/quality of the Dhamma over King Duttagamani. The battle was won because of the effects of the power of the Dhamma. And as a result of the unity of the monks in fighting the battle together, the battle was over. That was how they had a landslide victory in beating the invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*).

02:06-02:21 It's about unity, right? There must be unity between the King (leadership) and its people as well as the unity between the Army and Sangha (the Monks). The Four of them also have to be united. It's like the four legs of a chair. They all have to support the country.

02:22-03:02 The King was unable to sleep until midnight because he was thinking about those millions of opposing Tamil soldiers, whom he had killed in the battle. He feared he would go to four hell realms due to the his unwholesome actions (B. arkhutho. P. akusala-kamma) he committed by killing millions of human beings. He was mentally exhausted because of fighting in the battle; the worries of having to rebuild the country again; the worries of resisting and defending the country against the Tamils; the worries about the unwholesome actions he committed. All these worries accumulated because of the millions of lives lost in battle.

03:00-03:30 The Arahants residing in the countryside become aware of the remorse of the King [through their 'spiritual powers', abhiññā].

-Who are they? (He asked the audience)

-The Arahants. (The audience answered)

You all need to understand that these arahants are always taking care of the King. The King receives metta [loving-kindness] from the arahants, which is well received.

03:31- 03:50 As soon as they were aware of the King's remorse, eight of these arahants arrived in the middle of the night. They asked the guard to open the palace gate. The guard informed the King and he let the Arahants go in to see the King.

They asked the King why he isn't sleeping well.

The King said he was remorseful.

03:51-04:02 He said he had remorse about the unwholesome actions he had committed and that he will go to hell for those actions.

The eight Arahants said "Do not be worried at all, your Majesty. It was only a tiny bit of unwholesome action that you have committed"

04:03-04:42 “Why only a tiny bit”, the King asked.

The Arahants answered that “even though millions of beings had been destroyed, there was only one and a half human beings who is a genuine being. There was only one and a half beings who can be regarded as a human being. Out of these Tamil invaders (*kyue kyaw thu*), there was only one who had adopted the five precepts, and one who had adopted the five precepts and taken the three refuges in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Therefore, there was only one and a half human beings.

The arahants have the ‘spiritual power’ (*abhiññā*) to see this.

So, even the person who practices the five precepts is not a complete being. He is half a human being.

04:43-05:20 “The one who adopts the five precepts together with the three refuges in Buddha, Dhamma and Sanga, is a complete (full) human being. Among the millions of beings who he killed by shooting, hitting & chopping, there was only one whom can be called a human being and one whom can be called half a being. Thus, there’s only one and a half human beings in total. Please do not be worried, your Majesty”

We did not say it. Who said it? (He asked the audience)

He answered to his own question - The Arahants said it.

The King then had peace of mind.

05:21-06:49 [Then Sitagu Sayadaw recites a sermon/*Sutta*, with interpolations]:

“Laypeople lead by their leader and members of Sangha lead by the Venerable monks shall be mutually dependent and support each other. After having totally freed from 62 years of being a slave’s life, our native land shall be built again. Our country, our land, our inheritance shall be established and prospered. Don’t let it falter.”

06:50-07:20 Land, water, sky [alluding to the three parts of the military: Army, Navy and Air Force]. There was that monk who saw the Tipiṭaka books being buried inside the meditation compound. So that counts as “Land”- your infantry Army, “water”- your navy, “sky” –that means your Air Force, right?

07:21-07:40 The monks see that. They have a big heart for the country. Land, water and sky. One should not lack anything, no omissions. Our Land should be protected. Our water should be protected thoroughly including the Straits. Don't take anything for granted.

07:41-07:43 Do not worry. No matter how much you have to fight, how much you have to shoot them, just remember what was being said earlier. There are only one and a half beings that can be regarded as human beings. The persons who cannot be called human beings are not important.

07:44-08:30 All three of them - land, water, sky, should not lack in any protection and should be safeguarded by the Army. So, this is to the officers in the Army here - land, water, sky - should not lack anything. What does it mean? Safeguarded by the assembly of troops, during the military parades ceremony, on the Armed Forces Day, the chief of the military parade offered all the troops to the Chief of Defence. Doesn't he use this particular term while doing so? It was the same term written 80 years ago by Gadaryone Sayadaw called "*tut paung*" (assembly of troops).

08:31-08:55 This term was already written 80 years ago by Gadaryone Sayadaw. Land, water and sky should be safeguarded by the assembly of troops. Like King Duttagamani and King Ajātasattu, they not only fight for the country, but they also fight for the Buddha *sāsana*. This should be the way.

08:56-09:54 If you want to hear, just listen to this. King Duttagamani made a solemn vow before he marched towards the battle [solemn vow recited in Pali.] This was King Duttagamani's solemn vow, meaning "the reason I fight for this battle is not to sustain the luxury of being a King. The reason I am fighting Kyay Kalars (the Damilas, Tamils) is to preserve Buddha's *sāsana* for as long as possible on this island of Sri Lanka. This was King Duttagamani's solemn vow. He did not fight to preserve the luxury of being in the palace. Why did he fight? He fought to preserve Buddha's *sāsana* for as long as possible.

09:55-10:35 The London Pali text society wrote this in English: [not clear where this is from, it is quoted by Sitagu Sayadaw in English], "My battles are not only to the

secure kingship, but also for the future security long establishment of Buddhism.”

[Then he explains this quote in Burmese]: In order to have a safe and secure Buddha *sāsana* and to preserve and sustain Buddhism in this country and in the future, I fought this battle” Who made this solemn vow? King Duttagamani and King Ajātasattu.

10:36-10:49 Similarly, our soldiers should take this example of King Duttagamani and King Ajātasattu in your heart. Thus, I would like to conclude this ceremony by encouraging you undertake this military responsibility of serving for the country and *sāsana*.

10:50-12:07 [Then Sitagu Sayadaw repeats the sermon/*Sutta* that he gave earlier]: “Laypeople lead by their leader and the members of Sangha lead by the Venerable monks shall be mutually dependent and support each other. After having totally freed from 62 years of being a slave’s life, our native land shall be built again. Our country, our land, our inheritance shall be established and prospered. Don’t let it falter.”

Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.

အောက်ပါ Transcript လုပ်ထားသောသူကို ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါသည်။

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သူတို့စားနေတဲ့ထဲကနေ တစ်ဆုပ်စီတစ်ဆုပ်စီအကုန်လုံး နည်းနည်းချင်းထုတ်ကြတယ်တဲ့။ အားရစရာကြီးနော်။ သံဃာတော်အပါး၅၀၀ ကျော်လောက်ရှိချင်ရှိမှာပေါ့။ သပိတ်တစ်လုံးပြည့်သွားတယ်။ တစ်ဆုပ်စီဝိုင်းထည့်တာ။ ပြီးတော့မှ ရဟန္တာပုဂ္ဂိုလ်ကြီး ရှင်ဂေါတမက မိဋ္ဌာန်ပြီး ကောင်းကင်ကနေပြီး ပျံပြီးလွတ်လိုက်တယ်။ စစ်မြေပြင် စစ်တလင်း စစ်ဦးရောက်နေတဲ့ မင်းကြီးရဲ့ လက်ထဲကို ဒီသပိတ်ကြီးရောက်စေသတည်းဆိုပြီး ကောင်းကင်ကနေ မိဋ္ဌာန်ပြီးလွတ်လိုက်တာ သပိတ်ပျံ ဆိုတာ အဲ့တာ။ သပိတ်ကြီးကောင်းကင်ပေါ်ကပျံပြီးတော့ မင်းကြီးလက်ထဲကျတယ်။ သံဃာနဲ့ စစ်သည်တော်တွေနဲ့ ပေးစားကြတဲ့ အကြောင်းလေးပေါ့နော်။ သီဟိုဠ်သမိုင်းမှာ ချစ်မြတ်နိုးစရာ သိပ်ကောင်းတယ်။

လွတ်လပ်ရေးခေတ် ဗိုလ်ချုပ်နဲ့ခေါင်းဆောင်တွေ လွတ်လပ်ရေးယူပေးတဲ့ခေတ်တုန်းကလည်း စစ်သေလာကြီးတွေအကြီးအကဲ အကုန်လုံးလောက် နီးနီး မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရဲ့ ကျေးလက်တောရွာ ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်းတိုင်းမှာ ခိုအောင်းခဲ့ဖူးတာကြီးပဲဆိုတာလည်း တို့တွေ သမိုင်းတွေမှာဖတ်ရတယ်။ သံဃာတော်တွေနဲ့ စစ်သည်တော်တွေနဲ့က ဘယ်လိုမှခွဲလို့မရဘူး။

ကောင်းကင်ထဲကသပိတ်ကြီး မင်းကြီးလည်း ဝအောင်စားရတယ်။ သပိတ်တစ်လုံးပြည့်နေတော့ စစ်သူကြီးလည်းစားရတယ်။ ဘုရင်ကြီးလည်းစားရတယ်။ ပြီးတော့ သပိတ်ကြီးရေဆေးပြီး အခွံကြီးလွတ်လိုက်တာ။ သပိတ်ကြီးပျံသွားတယ်။ သပိတ်ပျံတယ်ဆိုတာ အဲ့တာ။

ဒုဋ္ဌဂါမဏီစစ်ပွဲ ကောင်းကောင်းအောင်တယ်ဆိုတာ တမိလ်တပ်ကြီး သိန်းပေါင်းများစွာ တမိလ်တွေသေကြတယ်။ စစ်ပွဲကြီးပြီးသွားတော့ တမိလ်မင်း၊ ကျေးမင်းကျဆုံးတယ်။ သီဟိုဠ် ကျွန်း နှစ်ပိုင်းကွဲနေတာကို တပေါင်းထဲပြန်ဖြစ်အောင်လုပ်နိုင်တယ်။ သီဟိုဠ် ကျွန်း နှစ်ပိုင်းကွဲနေတာနော်.. နားလည်လား။ တမိလ်တစ်ပိုင်း ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာတစ်ပိုင်း။ နှစ်ပိုင်းကွဲနေတဲ့ သီဟိုဠ်ကို တပေါင်းတည်းလုပ်သွားတာ ဘယ်သူလဲ။ ဒုဋ္ဌဂါမဏီ။

စစ်ပွဲကြီးပြီးသွားတော့ ဘုရင်ကြီးမောလွန်းလို့ အိပ်တာ...အိပ်မပျော်ဘူး။ သန်းခေါင်ယံနီးပြီးတော့ အိပ်မပျော်ဘူး။ ဘာဖြစ်သလဲဆိုတော့ ကုက္ကုစ္စ ဖြစ်တယ်။ ဘာဖြစ်တာလဲဟေ့..။ ကုက္ကုစ္စဖြစ်တယ်။ ဓမ္မရဲ့ စွမ်းရည်ကိုပြောပြနေတာနော်။ ဒုဋ္ဌဂါမဏီ မင်းကြီးရဲ့ အပေါ် မှာ ဓမ္မရဲ့ စွမ်းရည်တွေ ဓမ္မရဲ့ ပါဝါတွေသက်ရောက်နေလို့ စစ်ပွဲကြီးနိုင်တဲ့အကြောင်း။

သံဃာတော်တွေနဲ့ ညီညွတ်စွာ တိုက်ပွဲကြီးပြီးဆုံးတဲ့အကြောင်း ၊ ကျူးကျော်ဝင်ရောက်သူများကို အပြတ် အပြတ်တိုက်ခိုက်နိုင်ခဲ့တဲ့အကြောင်းကို တို့ပြောပြမယ်။

ညီညွတ်ရေးအပေါ် မင်းနဲ့ပြည်သူညီညွတ်ရမယ်။ တပ်နဲ့ပြည်သူညီညွတ်ရမယ်။ လေးဦးလေးဖက်လည်းညီညွတ်ဖို့ ကုလားထိုင်ရဲ့ လေးခြောင်းလို အားလုံးနိုင်ငံတော်ကို ဝိုင်းထောက်ဖို့သာပြော။

ညသန်းခေါင်ယံ အိပ်မပျော်ဘူး ဘာဖြစ်လဲဆိုရင် ...ငါသတ်လိုက်တာ.. ဆန့်ကျင်ဘက် ကျေးကုလားတမယ်တွေ သန်းပေါင်းများစွာသေသွားတယ်။ အဲ့ဒီ အကုသိုလ်ကြီးအတွက်တော့ ငါအပါယ်လေးပါးမှာခံရတော့မှာပဲ။ စိတ်ပန်းတယ်။ စစ်တိုက်လို့ ပန်းတာကတစ်မျိုး။ နိုင်ငံထူထောင်ဖို့ ပန်းတာကတစ်မျိုး ။ တမိလ်ရန်ကို တွန်းလှန်ပြီးတော့ နောက်ထပ်ကာကွယ်ဖို့ ကပန်းတာတမျိုး။ အကုသိုလ်ကိုတွေ့ပြီးတော့ ပင်ပန်းတာကတမျိုး ။

သန်းပေါင်းများစွာ သေသွားတဲ့ စစ်ပွဲကြီးကို အဲ့တာပိုပန်းနေတာကို တောမှတောင်မှာနေတဲ့ အဘိဉာဏ်ရ ရဟန္တာကြီးတွေတောင် သိတော်မူသွားတယ်တဲ့။

ရဟန္တာကြီးတွေက မင်းကြီးကို အမြဲတန်း ကြည့်ရှုစောင့်ရှောက်နေတယ်ဆိုတာ နားလည်ရမယ်နော်။ ရဟန္တာကြီးရဲ့ မေတ္တာကိုကောင်းကောင်းရတယ်။ သိတော်မူသွားတဲ့အတွက်ကြောင့် ရဟန္တာကြီး ရှစ်ပါး သန်းခေါင်ယံကြီးကြွလာတယ်။ နန်းတော်စောင့်က တံခါးပေါက်ကို တံခါးဖွင့်ခိုင်းတယ်။ ဘယ်သူလဲ။ သံဃာတော်များ ။ မင်းကြီးကို သတင်းပို့။

ဖွင့်ပေးလိုက်။ သံဃာတော်တွေဝင်သွားတယ်။ မင်းကြီး အိပ်မပျော်ဘူးလား။ ဘာဖြစ်လဲ။ စိတ်ပူတယ်။ လုပ်ပြီးတဲ့ အကုသိုလ်ကြီး ခံရတော့မှာပဲလို့ဆိုပြီး



စိတ်ပူတာဆိုတော့ ရဟန္တာရှစ်ပါးကပြောတယ်။  
မင်းကြီး ဘာမှမပူနဲ့။ အကုသိုလ်နည်းနည်းလေးပဲဖြစ်တယ်။ ဘာဖြစ်လို့  
အကုသိုလ်နည်းနည်းလေးဖြစ်သလဲ။  
မင်းသတ်လိုက်တာ သန်းပေါင်းများစွာဖြစ်ပေမဲ့။ တကယ့်လူစင်စစ်က တစ်ယောက်နဲ့  
တစ်ပိုင်းပဲပါတယ်တဲ့။  
လူပီသတဲ့သူကဘယ်လောက်?။ အဲ့ဒီကျူးကျော်ပင်ရောက်လာတဲ့ ကျေးကုလား တမိလ်တွေထဲမှာ  
ငါးပါးသီလ စောင့်တည်တဲ့သူကတစ်ယောက်။ ငါးပါးသီလနဲ့ သရဏဂုံတွဲစောင့်တည်တဲ့သူက  
တစ်ယောက် ဒါပဲပါတယ်။ အဘိဉာဉ်က ရဟန္တာမို့လို့သိတာနော်။ ပြော... ငါးပါးသီလစောင့်တည်သူက  
... အဲ့တာလူမပီသဘူး။ အဲ့တစ်ပိုင်း။  
ဗုဒ္ဓိ သရဏံ ဂုဏ္ဍာမိ၊ ဓမ္မံ သရဏံ ဂုဏ္ဍာမိ၊ သံဃံ သရဏံ ဂုဏ္ဍာမိ နဲ့ ငါးပါးသီလနဲ့ တွဲစောင့်တည်တဲ့သူက  
တစ်ယောက်..အဲ့တာ လူ့အပြည့်တစ်ယောက်၊ သန်းပေါင်းများစွာ စစ်ပွဲမှာ ပစ်သတ်လို့၊ ခုတ်သတ်လို့၊  
ထိုးသတ်လို့ သေသွားတဲ့ထဲမှာ လူပီသတဲ့သူကတစ်ယောက်၊ လူမပီတပီတဲ့သူက တစ်ပိုင်း၊  
လူတစ်ယောက်နဲ့ တစ်ပိုင်းပဲပါတယ်။  
မင်းကြီးမပူနဲ့ ကိုယ်တွေမပြောဘူး ဘယ်သူပြောလဲ သီဟိုရ်ကရဟန္တာကြီးပြောတာ။ အဲ့တော့မှ  
မင်းကြီးစိတ်အေးသွားတာ။