

Unwritten *Chapter Four*
of the
Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing

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Introduction

Beginning with *The New Chapter of The American Bando Association*, published and distributed in November 2017, steps were made by Grandmaster U Maung Gyi through the Fall of 2018 to reorient the preservation/protection, expansion, and propagation of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* toward a new future through:

1. Dissolving (closing) the “*Chapter*” of The American Bando Association (ABA) which has been preserving/protecting, expanding, and propagating the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* in America and globally for over sixty years.
2. Establishing (opening) a new “*Chapter*” through formulizing a new organization, the National Bando Association of America (NBAA), to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate a *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* over the ensuing future, facilitate the independent expansion of its sub-systems by their respective grandmasters/sub-system heads, and focus on and emphasize the unique aspects of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* in light of the present martial arts’ scene.
3. Reorienting an ABA *Burmese martial art with American characteristics* to a NBAA *Burmese martial art with Burmese characteristics*.

In 2019, the ABA Board of Directors, after due consideration, made the decisions not to dissolve the ABA or establish a new independent NBAA, but to rebrand the ABA as the ABA/NBAA.

This Paper looks at the earlier “*Chapters*” of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* to provide a context for the then proposed NBAA/*Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing*, and then to revisit Dr. Gyi’s proposed *New Chapter* of a NBAA/*Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* along with his subsequent related statements toward this same topic.

Furthermore, this Paper is written as an interpretation of *The New Chapter of The American Bando Association* and related subsequent events from the perspective of the Author, and is solely for historical purposes and not intended to be a proposal for any reconsideration for the establishment of an independent NBAA.

It should be noted that this Author only possesses fragmentary oral/written knowledge in respect to the Military Athletic Club (*Chapter One*), National Bando Association (*Chapter Two*) with its formulation/establishment of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando*, and the associated fore-systems whose functional aspects were analyzed, organized, and formalized to create the eclectic *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* which was propagated by the NBA and later the ABA, and now the ABA/NBAA as the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing*.

Chapter One

Military Athletic Club

(1933-1941)

Chapter One opened in 1933 when the Military Athletic Club was established at Maymyo (Burma) by nine Gurkha officers to study and practice various martial arts' systems of Asia so as to enhance their combatives' skill sets. Three years later, selected non-military men, who were highly-skilled in the Asian martial arts, were admitted into the Club. Unfortunately, the Club ceased to exist with the advent of the Japanese invasion of Burma in January 1942. Both its military and civilian members fought against the Japanese either in the Allied armies or affiliated guerrilla forces. Unfortunately, over 90% of the original members of this unique Club were said to have died in battles against the Japanese.

Chapter Two

National Bando Association

(1948 - 1969)

Chapter Two of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* began during 1948 in Mandalay (Burma) when nine of the surviving members of the Military Athletic Club officially established the National Bando Association (NBA) in honor of those who fought and died in the China-Burma-India Theatre of World War II. U Ba Than (Gyi) - one of their number and the then Director of Physical Education & Athletics for the Union of Burma - was elected the Chairman of the NBA. The grandmasters and masters of the NBA - original members of the Military Athletic Club - were:

Yogi Abehananda (Indian)
Guruji G. Bahadur (Gurkha)
C. C. Chu (Chinese)
A. K. Khan (Pakistani)
Duwa Naung (Kachin)
U Zaw Min (Burmese)
Boji Mein Sa (Arakanese)
U Ba Saw (Karen)
U Ba Than (Gyi) (Burmese)

These grandmasters and masters are the pillars and foundation of the NBA and the ABA, and helped to restore the Burmese fighting systems. They shared the functional aspects of their respective systems to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate them through the NBA which systematized them into the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando*. Along with the functional aspects of their respective martial arts' systems, they also invited other martial arts' masters to demonstrate their systems. Inclusion within the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* was determined by their functional aspects, not their forms' aspects (akas

or katas) unless the forms contained important functional principles. The founders of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* considered many indigenous martial arts' systems of Burma and combined their functional/practical advantages into a new eclectic/hybrid martial arts' system of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando*. Thus, the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* has many "fathers". The term "*Hanthawaddy*" represents a connection to the early Mon kingdom in Burma and its people.

The NBA and indigenous martial arts' systems in Burma slowly disappeared due to dictatorships, poverty, closed society, and competition from new foreign martial arts introduced into Burma from Japan, Korea, and China. Moreover, many of the remaining indigenous martial arts' systems became more focused toward sports, artistic expressions (i.e., forms), and self-defense. In 1946, some indigenous martial arts' groups established the Youth Thaing Group which later, in 1966, became today's Myanmar Thaing Federation. The NBA chose to remain independent, during this period so as to have more oversight over the preservation/protection, expansion, and propagation of its unique martial arts' system.

The NBA transmitted its composite *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* to America in 1960 under the banner of the ABA through U Maung Gyi - the son of the NBA Chairman U Ba Than (Gyi) - to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate it given the then unfavorable circumstances in Burma. The NBA ceased to officially exist in 1969 with the deaths and retirement of its elders, and the continued unfavorable social, economic, and political conditions inside Burma.

Chapter Three

The American Bando Association

(1960 - 2019)

The American Bando Association/ National Bando Association of America

(2019 - Present)

A modified form of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* was introduced into America in 1960 by U Maung Gyi ("Dr. Gyi") with classes held in the basement of the Embassy of the Union of Burma in Washington (DC). This was the beginning of *Chapter Three* of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando*. Later, Bando classes were formally conducted at the American University in Washington (DC) until the Fall of 1966 when Dr. Gyi moved to Athens (OH) to assume a professorship at Ohio University and thereafter, began Bando classes at the University.

The original form of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* from the NBA was a nine-limbs' system (i.e., head, two hands, two elbows, two knees, and two feet). This form of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* was modified by Dr. Gyi to a four-limbs' system (i.e., two hands, and two feet) to adapt to the then martial arts' competition scene in America and meet liability insurance requirements. The nine-limbs were, however, still preserved and practiced within the various drills, combinations, and forms of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* of the ABA.

During this formative period, there was no formal Bando organization until 1967 when the ABA was officially established in Athens (OH) and later developed a related unique organization emblem/logo and underlying philosophy. Those who worked closely with Dr. Gyi during this period are considered as the *Founding Fathers of Bando* in America:

Mark Bjishkian

Lloyd Davis

U Maung Gyi

Paul Kwan

Marc Lewis

Douglas Soe Lin

Joe Manley

Robert Maxwell

Mashito Nashida

Yutaka Nashida

Geoff Willcher

The establishment of the ABA also recognized other members, in addition to the *Founding Fathers*, as those who dedicated themselves to the preservation/protection, expansion, and propagation of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* in America and globally. They are known as the "Bando Elders":

U Maung Gyi

Laszlo Balogh

Mark Bjishkian

Lloyd Davis

Stephen Denty

Timothy Fleming

Gene Freeze

Charles Gaston

Robert Hill

Paul Kwan

Marc Lewis

Douglas Soe Lin

Joe Manley

Robert Maxwell

Mashito Nashida

Yutaka Nashida
James Pugh
Robert Simpson
Brice Stolz
Robert Vanne
Randall Webb
Geoffrey Willcher
Errol Younger

A driving force for the ABA was to honor all military veterans, especially those who fought in the China-Burma-India Theatre of World War Two.

The nonprofit status of the ABA as a fraternal order and its legal incorporation were completed in 1987. The fraternal designation of the ABA, through the US Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(8), is unique among American martial arts' organizations as it formally recognized the ABA's fraternal Bando Brotherhood with its groups/clubs as "lodges" and allowed the establishment of its Gurkha Welfare Fund to which donations, made to it, are tax-deductible by the donors. The Gurkha Welfare Fund passed these donations to the Gurkha Welfare Trust (UK) to provide financial, medical, and developmental aid to Gurkha veterans, and their families and communities in Nepal.

The ABA's relationship with the Gurkhas of the British military was established through the military service of Dr. Gyi's grandfather, father, and himself. This relationship is further recognized through the preservation of the Gurkha kukri weapon system of the ABA and its prominent position in its official emblem/logo.

In the martial arts' competition in America, ABA members were recognized for their distinctive black uniforms and aggressive fighting style. They were also noted for their impressive skills sets with the kukri. Moreover, the ABA's Animal and Weapon Systems, along with Monk, Yoga, Min Zin, and Weikza Systems, added to the distinctiveness of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando*.

Hanthawaddy System of Bando Sub-Systems of the ABA:

Middle Style Sub-System

Bando Kickboxing (aka Bando Boxing) Sub-System

Naban Sub-System

Weapons Sub-Systems

- Dhot (incl. Magical Cane, Cyclone Stick, Sling Stick, & Police Baton)
- Dha
- Kukri

Animal Sub-Systems

- Black Panther
- Boar

- Bull
- Cobra
- Eagle
- Python
- Scorpion
- Tiger
- Viper

Monk Sub-System

Min Zin Sub-System

Yoga Sub-System

Weikza Sub-System

In November 2017, Dr. Gyi, as the ABA Chief Instructor, wrote the document *The New Chapter of The American Bando Association* which outlined his vision for the next chapter, “Chapter Four”, of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando*. Later in the Fall of 2018, Dr. Gyi indicated that he sought a dissolution of the ABA as, from his perspective, it had completed the mission given to Dr. Gyi by his father and proposed a new organizational structure. This structure would emphasis more traditional Burmese sub-systems, characteristics, and related relationships with the indigenous martial arts’ systems in Burma; become a “confederation” of affiliated sub-systems with no central leadership to promote the preservation/protection, expansion, and propagation, and further development of these sub-systems on a global basis; and, further the expansion and depth of those *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* sub-systems whose focus would be toward the healing and harmonize aspects.

In March 2019, the ABA’s Board of Directors considered Dr. Gyi’s propositions in the light of comments from its members. Their decision was not to dissolve the ABA, but to rebrand the organization as *The American Bando Association/National Bando Association of America (ABA/NBAA)* with an emblem/logo for the NBAA to accompany the emblem/logo of the ABA. Some changes were also made in the composition of the Board of Directors with the nine Animal sub-system heads serving in lifelong director positions and the other directors elected by the Full Members to serve three-year terms. Thus, this *Third Chapter* of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* continues to be written through the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* of the ABA/NBAA.

Proposed New *Chapter*

National Bando Association of America

Although the ABA’s Board of Directors decided not to dissolve the ABA, Dr. Gyi’s proposal for a *New Chapter* and the associated NBAA organization to build upon the foundation of the ABA and earlier NBA, and his subsequent comments expanding upon this proposal, brought forth some very interesting perspectives. Dr. Gyi felt that the ABA had laid a foundation for a new NBAA, as did the

NBA for the ABA, to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* into the future given the changes occurring in the martial arts' environment and provide for a new generation of leadership to carry out this mission.

According to Dr. Gyi, many traditional martial arts' organizations, across America, had evolved and underwent dramatic changes in structures, programs and curriculum in response to the ever-changing martial arts' environment. There also had been a marked decline in the number of adult practitioners and competitive events within the traditional martial arts' community. Dr. Gyi proposed that the ABA should not be an exception and be left behind due to a failure to respond to this evolving martial arts' landscape. In this same respect, he also expressed serious concerns about the future viability of certain components of both Bando Kickboxing and Bando Middle Style in light of the changed martial arts' environment.

The NBAA was an attempt by Dr. Gyi to further differentiate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* and adapt it to survive in light of the major changes taking place over the past thirty years in the martial arts' environment away from kickboxing and the traditional forms and sparring of karate, kung fu, taekwondo, and kickboxing. They had become superseded, in the eyes of the public, by mixed martial arts, Brazilian Ju Jitsu, Muay Thai, and more recently, Burmese Lethwei.

The NBAA, according to Dr. Gyi, would also seek to elevate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* from an earlier 4-limbs' system of the ABA, then adapted to the martial arts' environment in America, to a more contemporary 9-limbs' *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* of the NBAA which would adapt, in turn, to today's martial arts' environment and recognize its Burmese roots and unique characteristics.

Dr. Gyi wanted ABA members to focus on those aspects that can be offered to the martial arts' community which were unique to the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* as he did with the ABA and to expand what he had taught in the ABA before he completely passed from the scene. Moreover, Dr. Gyi brought much knowledge and skill sets to America which he had not yet shared and wished to continue sharing through the NBAA. Dr. Gyi was very serious in stating that he wanted to focus on those aspects of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* that had not been emphasized in the past. He provided the purpose, needed at that earlier time, to not just fit into the new martial arts' reality, but for the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* to stand out and be recognized as unique.

Moreover, Dr. Gyi proposed the dissolution of the ABA as it completed the mission given to him by his father and to establish, preserve/protect, expand, and propagate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* in America – a *Burmese martial art with unique American characteristics*. At the same time as outlined in the *New Chapter* and subsequent statements, Dr. Gyi proposed the establishment a new organization, the NBAA, to carry on the mission that he gave to various grandmasters/sub-system heads to further the preservation/protection, expansion, and propagation of their respective sub-systems.

The *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* is a Burmese martial arts' system, yet it had not really, in fact, been acknowledged as such even by its practitioners except through the word "*Bando*" and its unique Burmese dha sword. In recognition of its Burmese roots and unique characteristics, and with a specific emphasis toward the preservation/protection, expansion, and propagation of the indigenous martial arts of Burma, Dr. Gyi proposed that the ABA should re-establish itself as a *Burmese martial art with unique Burmese characteristics*. The *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* would be renamed as the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing*, and the organization would become the NBAA. The organization's emblem/logo would contain a Chinthe and two dhas to depict that the new organization's mission is to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate the indigenous martial arts of Burma.

The Chinthe, a Burmese mythological lion-dragon, is recognized in Burma as a protector of the country and its people. The dha national weapon of Burma, on the NBAA emblem, symbolizes the protection of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* within the NBAA, and recognizes and honors military veterans, Law Enforcement Officers, and First Responders who also protect the people in their communities and the country as a whole.

Dhas have been used for centuries by Burmese warriors to protect the Burmese people and the sovereignty of Burma from foreign invaders. Furthermore, the dha would help to define the NBAA as the kukri had defined the ABA: both are unique weapons within the martial arts' community.

The kukri would remain as an integral weapons' sub-system in a Burmese-oriented NBAA since it is intimately linked to Burma. Gurkha soldiers in the British army fought to free Burma from the Japanese and thousands of Gurkhas settled in Burma after World War Two. Furthermore, with the independence of Burma, the Fourth Burma Regiment, consisting solely of Gurkhas was transferred from the British army to the Burmese army and fought in Burma's early campaigns, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, against ethnic insurgents and Chinese Nationalists' invasions. Today many Gurkha veterans from World War Two and those who served as soldiers of the Burmese military reside in Maymyo (Burma). Kukris from these Gurkha veterans are prized possessions within their communities and handed down within their families.

The mission of the ABA was to also specifically honor military veterans in the early days and had later evolved into additionally recognizing the importance of Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders, yet the primary emphasis was still toward military veterans. Dr. Gyi now sought, in a NBAA, to specifically also recognize Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders as those who are protecting their communities and the people within them.

With a new openness in Burma, the popularity of Lethwei, and the spread of the traditional Burmese martial arts into other parts of Asia as well as in Europe, it was also the time to reconnect with the indigenous martial arts' systems inside Burma. Dr. Gyi was very much aware that there are significant and important Thaing systems that are slowly disappearing. The NBAA mission was designed to

additionally help preserve/protect, expand, and propagate some of the endangered knowledge through communications and the exchange of knowledge with indigenous martial arts' groups inside Burma.

Dr. Gyi's goal for the future was to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing*, and otherwise improve upon the foundations of ABA whose own foundation was built upon the NBA, and further elevate and enrich the skills and knowledge of its members. The NBAA would add to the knowledge and skill sets that the ABA already possessed and promote those aspects of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* which had not been taught or emphasized in the past. Furthermore, Dr. Gyi envisioned that the NBAA would uplift and inspire its members, and also embrace its Burmese roots and allow for the inclusion of new martial arts' systems.

Dr. Gyi did not want the ABA's community to become disbanded or the key knowledge and skill sets of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* lost. He sought a viable organizational structure that reflected the current martial arts' environment and encouraged a new generation of leadership to be responsible for evolving, expanding, and propagating their own expressions, lineages, and sub-systems of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* into the future. No one was seeking to ignore or dismiss the ABA's past as it provided the strong foundation to build a new future for the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* of the NBAA.

In the Fall of 2018, Dr. Gyi declared his intention to dissolve the ABA and encourage the grandmasters/sub-system heads to establish their own organizations to match their respective *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* sub-systems with their corresponding knowledge, experience, and skill sets.

Dr. Gyi felt that the ABA, as an organization, had successfully converted his father's vision into reality and carried out the mission to preserve/protect, expand, and propagate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* in America and globally through the efforts of the Bando Elders and other senior members. Consequently, it was the time to close this *Third Chapter* of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* by dissolving the ABA, and establishing a new organization – NBAA – to carry on a *New Chapter* of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* into the future with a new mission and next generation of leadership.

Dr. Gyi had promoted his most senior members to become grandmasters/sub-system heads. It was the time and the NBAA was the organization proposed for them to stand on his and the Bando Elders' shoulders to elevate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* to higher levels with their own lineages and sub-systems in "collaboration" with each other in a loose confederation. The NBAA was to be that vehicle for the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* grandmasters/sub-systems' heads to become independent of the ABA and develop their own sub-systems, lineages, and legacies apart from the ABA, and Dr. Gyi, Bando Elders, and other senior members who had contributed to the ABA since its founding up through this present time.

Each grandmaster/sub-system head would establish their own global sub-systems, lineages, and legacies to move out from under the shadow of the ABA and affiliate together through a new NBAA - a confederation of sub-systems of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing*.

The new NBAA sub-systems would do what Dr. Gyi and his father did, that is, to establish their own mission, underlying philosophy, curriculum, ranking system, principles, associated functional fitness, matrices, drills, combinations, forms, practical applications, testing, and other aspects of their respective sub-system. They would carry their sub-systems into the future as he did with the ABA from the NBA and the NBA founders did from the Military Athletic Club. Dr. Gyi had learned to organize and lead a martial arts' organization under his father's guidance and mentorship, and he expected the grandmasters/sub-system heads to be able to do themselves.

The grandmasters/sub-system heads would, thus, have their own sub-systems and lineages, and build further on them based upon general principles of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* and those of their respective sub-systems, not just simply replicate what they have already been taught by Dr. Gyi. This would be the mark of true grandmasters/sub-system heads. By dissolving the ABA, it would allow the grandmasters/sub-system heads to become grandmasters/sub-system heads in function not just in the form of titles/rankings. The grandmasters/sub-system heads should all be capable of that and thus, it would honor Dr. Gyi and reflect his confidence in them. Dissolving the ABA would encourage the various grandmasters/sub-system heads to establish their own reputations through the NBAA based upon their own achievements. With his confidence in their dedication, knowledge, and skill sets, Dr. Gyi would continue to deepen existing aspects of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* and continue to expand it with new knowledge and skill sets as long as he was able to do so.

However, there was a general consensus among the Full Members that the ABA should continue to exist and not be dissolved. These Full Members felt that they wanted to continue the ABA and also to preserve Bando Middle Style and Bando Kickboxing with their fighting aspects. Thus, Dr. Gyi agreed instead to a rebranding of the ABA to the ABA/NBAA with an additional organizational emblem/logo representing the NBAA. The name style "National Bando Association of America" would honor the establishment of the NBA in 1948 by Dr. Gyi's father - U Ba Than Gyi. Dr. Gyi's desire to carry on the ABA as the ABA/NBAA, instead of a new NBAA, was due to his respect for the strong dedication and service, over many decades to the ABA, by the ABA's senior members.

Furthermore, in light of the decision by the Board of Directors of the ABA not to dissolve the ABA, Dr. Gyi requested that the Animal sub-system heads be made lifelong directors of the organization and given the full authority to decide the future of the ABA/NBAA. In this regard, Dr. Gyi asked that they seriously consider certain very important questions:

- What unique aspects of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* should be preserved/protected, expanded, and propagated into the future? Such as:
 - Bando Animal Systems
 - Bando Dha System

- Bando Dhot System
 - Magical Cane System
 - Gurkha Kukri System
 - Bando Yoga System
 - Bando Min Zin System
 - Bando Weikza System
 - Bando Monk System
- Who would be able to preserve/protected, expand, and propagate them into the future?
 - How should they be preserved/protected, expanded, and propagated into the future?

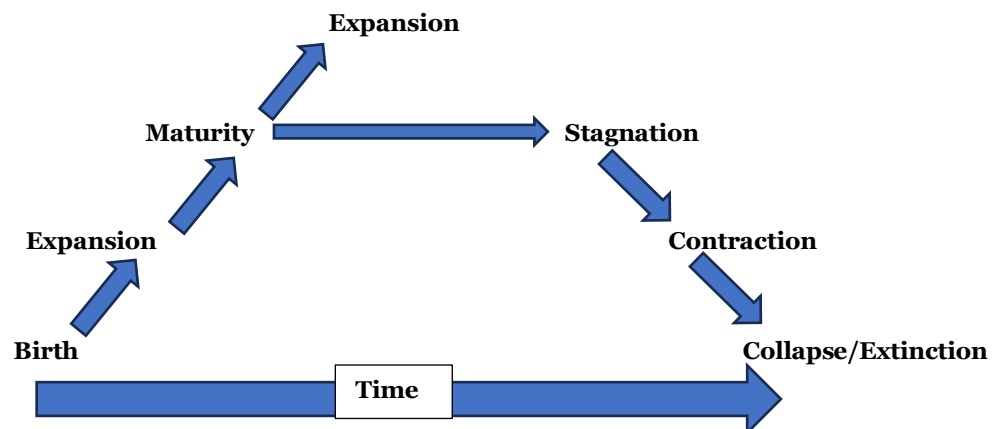
Yet, Dr. Gyi was extremely disappointed that his desire for the closing of the ABA *Third Chapter* of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando* was not accomplished to recognize the successful completion of the mission given to him by his father. It was very important to him to have this accomplished at this point in the latter part of his life. Furthermore, he had hoped to open up a *Chapter Four* of a *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* together with the establishment of the NBAA. The NBAA would preserve/protect, expand, and propagate the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* through a new generation of leadership of grandmasters/sub-system heads.

Conclusion

While a *Chapter Four* of the *Hanthawaddy System of Bando & Thaing* has not yet been written, it is hoped that this Paper will provide insights into not only the past, but also into the future, which may prove useful during the continuation of *Chapter Three* of the ABA/NBAA. Within this context, the Author offers the following observation and a related *Martial Arts' System Phasic Cycle* diagram.

To move beyond the maturity stage in the evolution of a martial arts' system, a martial arts' system must recognize the then present martial arts' environment and associated future implications as Dr. Gyi did when he wrote *The New Chapter of The American Bando Association* and made subsequent statements concerning the future of the ABA. From this standpoint, a martial arts' system can choose to either begin a new expansion phase with changes to its organizational model and its sub-systems as an adaptation to a new environment, or alternatively ignore a new environment, and make no, or only, cosmetic changes, and become stagnant and begin a decline toward eventual extinction.

Martial Arts' System Phasic Cycle



END