



Complete Essay on the Kingdom of Pagan in Burma (10th-13th centuries)

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Burma has had a checkered history. It reached its peak of power and wealth during the late 10th through late 13th centuries when the Kingdom of Pagan reigned in much of contemporary Burma. This essay thus focuses principally on the rise and fall of Pagan. The first part of the essay considers ancient Burma before Pagan came into power. The purpose is to show how the Pyu people utilized Burma's natural advantages to create a long-lasting kingdom and set the stage for the greatness of Pagan.

The second section of the essay shows how the Burman people entered the scene, absorbed the Pyus, and formed the Kingdom of Pagan. The Pagan kings unified upper and lower Burma and expanded eastward within Southeast Asia. But Pagan fell apart because the tax-free, Theravada-Buddhist temple societies gained control of two-thirds of the rice-producing land and undercut the kingdom's military strength. Pagan resisted the Mongol-Chinese invasion in the late 13th century, but the kingdom finally succumbed and splintered.

The third and last part of this essay discusses what has happened in Burma during the past seven centuries, after Pagan fell. A time line, an annotated bibliography, and a description of sites visited in Burma are appended at the end of the essay.

Recent Burmese history has been a see-saw of Burman ruling dynasties (14th-19th centuries), British colonialism (19th-20th centuries), and elected governments and military dictatorships (since 1948). What explains this uneven pattern, and why has Burma failed to develop as fast as its neighbors have done?

Not much is known about the early settlement of Burma, largely because the military government restricted archaeological investigations for half a century. The history of ancient Burma takes a sharper focus with the rise of the Pyu Kingdom in the 2nd century BCE. The Pyu people migrated into the Irrawaddy River plains of upper Burma from Tibet and southern China during the 1st millennium BCE. With productive wet-rice agriculture as their main source of wealth and basis of power, the Pyus created a

coherent kingdom in upper Burma that lasted for more than a millennium.

Four Burman dynasties – Pagan (990-1298), Ava (1364-1527), Toungoo (1539-1752), and Konbaung (1752-1885) – next ruled in the era of the Burman kingdoms (9th-19th centuries). All four dynasties rose and fell in a cyclical pattern. A charismatic leader would organize a dynasty during a period of decentralization and political weakness. He and his successors would rule until the state progressively weakened due to monastic landlordism – the practice of the king giving irrigated rice land to the Buddhist temples (*sangha*) to earn religious merit. Monarchs then would attempt to purify the religion by reclaiming many of the *sangha*'s assets. If the king succeeded, the dynasty would continue. If he failed, it would disintegrate. Then a new savior king eventually would emerge.

In retaliation for Burman expansion into Assam, Britain in 1824-1826 fought and won a war with Burma and appropriated two coastal provinces, Arakan and Tenasserim. Britain claimed

lower Burma in 1852-1853 and upper Burma in 1884-1886, following brief imperialistic wars based on trumped-up causes. British colonial rule featured harsh repression of dissent and heavy investments to expand rice and teak exports.

Japan ruled Burma for three years during the Second World War (1942-1945). The head of Burma's army under Japanese rule was General Aung San, a rising nationalist. In 1945, Aung San switched sides and aided the Allied victory in Burma. He then negotiated the terms of Burma's independence. Aung San was murdered in 1947 along with six members of his interim cabinet. A political opponent was charged with the murder, but some historians implicate the Burmese military.

During most of its first 14 years of independence (1948-1962), Burma was led by Nu, a colleague of Aung San, whose attempt to create a fragile democracy was undermined by communist and ethnic rebellions and weak administrative leadership. General Ne Win carried out a military coup in 1962 and instituted a brutal dictatorship based on repression,

isolationism, and military control of the economy. Following widespread anti-government protests in 1988, Ne Win resigned. Henchmen continued the dictatorship under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

Aung San Suu Kyi, the charismatic and courageous daughter of Aung San, and her National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election of 1990. But the SLORC refused to honor the results and confined her under house arrest. The communist rebellion imploded in 1989, but several ethnic rebellions continued, some funded by opium profits. During the 1990s, China became a major supplier of military equipment and investor in northern Burma and the dictatorship was aided by expanding natural gas exports. The Burmese people suffered under a repressive military dictatorship until 2011. Then a new government, led by Thein Sein, introduced a series of critical political and economic reforms. In November 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the NLD, won 80 percent of the contested parliamentary seats in a generally fair election. The NLD has governed Burma since then.

Ancient Burma before the Pagan Kingdom (2nd century BCE-10th century CE)

Geography and Natural Resources. Burma is a horseshoe of mountains and high plateaus that enclose river floodplains. The mountains in the north and west are sufficiently rugged to have imposed daunting physical barriers to easy movement of peoples and armies throughout Burma's pre-colonial history. Burma is dominated physically by three large, perennial rivers – the Irrawaddy, Salween, and Sittang – that rise in the Himalayan Mountains, flow from north to south, and empty into the Indian Ocean. The north-south orientation of the rivers and their floodplains has been reflected in a north-south political division in Burmese history. Burma is strategically located at the crossroads of East, Southeast, and South Asia and has long borders with China, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India. That location on Asian political fault lines has influenced Burma's foreign policy since it gained independence in 1948.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChinaGeography.png>

The Geography of Eastern Asia – The Himalayan Mountains and Tibetan Plateau Shield Burma From the North

Burma is potentially rich in natural resources, although many of them have yet to be exploited fully. The country has great agricultural potential because of its tropical climate, ample water resources (from natural rainfall and diversion of rivers), and water-retentive soils that receive natural fertilization (from river silt).

Burma has extensive stands of valuable tropical hardwood forests, containing about three-fourths of the world's remaining teak trees.

A variety of minerals – gold, silver, tin, lead, zinc, copper, coal,

Peoples and Settlement. Archeological evidence exists of settlements in the Irrawaddy River Valley at least 5,000 years ago, and Melanesian peoples might have lived in Burma for 40,000 years or more. Archaeological digs provide evidence of a Bronze Age culture, sometimes referred to as Hoabinhian after a similar culture in Vietnam, which inhabited parts of Burma during the 2nd millennium BCE. Little is known about what might have happened to those early settlers and when migrants from Tibet and China replaced them.

Two waves of migrants entered Burma during the 1st millennium BCE. By the 3rd century BCE, a group of Sino-Tibetan speakers, who have come to be called the Pyu people, had moved into upper Burma from Tibet (no Pyu descendants now survive). The Austroasiatic-speaking Mon people, who migrated from Central Asia to Southeast Asia with their Khmer cousins, moved down the Salween and Sittang Rivers into lower Burma perhaps at about the same time. For the first millennium of recorded history (2nd century BCE to 9th century CE), the Pyus

created a kingdom in upper Burma and the Mons occupied parts of lower Burma.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20160810_Bawbawgyi_Pogoda_Sri_Ksetra_Pyay_Myanmar_9252.jpg>

Bawbawgyi Buddhist Pagoda, Sri Ksetra, Pyu – 7th century CE

Starting about 800 CE, two new groups invaded from the north. The Burman people (also called Mrammas or Bamars) left southeastern Tibet, moved down the Irrawaddy River, and settled first around Kyaukse, a rich agricultural region in central Burma.

From their Kyaukse heartland, the Burmans expanded throughout

upper Burma, absorbing the Pyus. In the 11th century, the Burmans conquered the Mons, superimposed their culture, and unified Burma.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burmese_boys_Mandalay.jpg>

Burman Boys In Mandalay, 2009

Concurrently, the Shans, a Tai-speaking people from Yunnan (in southern China), began moving into upper Burma, especially the plateaus in east-central Burma now called the Shan Hills. Shan in-migration accelerated in the 14th century. Those migrations, and other minor ones from Tibet and China, created a mosaic of ethno-linguistic groups that populate contemporary Burma. Most speak Sino-Tibetan languages – Burmans (68 percent of the total),

Karens (8 percent), Kachins (2), Chins (2), Kayah or Karenni (1), Arakanese (1), and Nagas (1). A few speak Austroasiatic languages – Mons (2 percent), Was (1), and Paduangs (1) – or a Tai language – the Shans (7 percent).

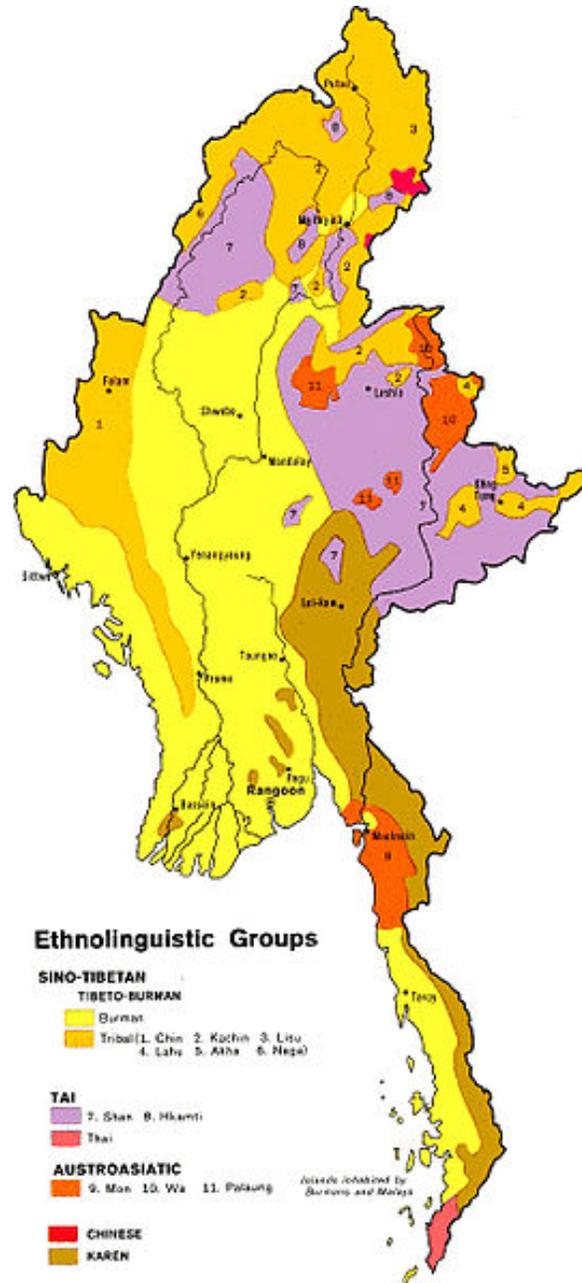


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thai_Earplug_5.jpg>

Karen Woman, Eastern Burma/Myanmar. 2007

Population growth in Burma was slow before the 19th century. From perhaps 2.5 million people in 1250, the population rose to only 4.2 million by 1820. Burma's population expanded to 10.5 million in 1901, grew to 16.8 million by 1941, and exploded

to 54 million by 2019. The World Bank estimates that the recent annual rate of population growth has been 0.6 percent.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MyanmarEthnolinguisticMap1972.jpg>

Ethnic-Linguistic Groups in Burma: Burman – yellow (68%); Karen – brown (8%); Shan – purple (7%); Mon – orange (2%)

The Pyu Kingdom in Ancient Burma. The Sino-Tibetan-speaking Pyu peoples dominated the Irrawaddy River plains of upper Burma between the 2nd century BCE and the 9th century CE. Subsequent Burman kingdoms, including Pagan, evolved from the cultural, political, and economic traditions established by the Pyus. The shifting locations of the Pyu capitals demonstrated the kingdom's dependence on irrigated rice agriculture.

The first Pyu capital, Beikthano Myo, which was a major Pyu center from the 2nd century BCE until the 7th century CE, was located in the Irrawaddy River Valley of upper Burma near the Minbu region of irrigated rice cultivation. About the 1st century CE, the Pyus established a second capital, Halin, in the far north of the Irrawaddy plain, with easy access to Kyaukse, a second leading rice-producing area. Then in the 7th century, both Beikthano and Halin were replaced by a much larger capital, Sri Ksetra, sited in the southern part of upper Burma.

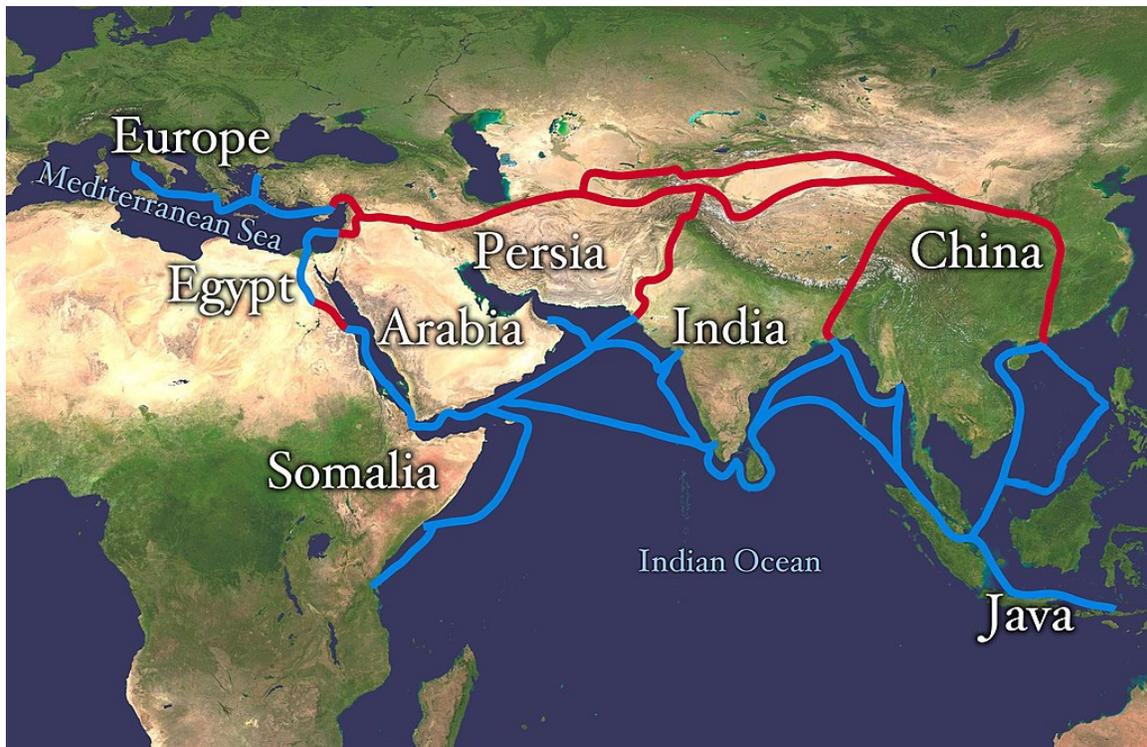


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyu_Realm.png>

The Pyu Kingdom and Its Capitals (Pagan Was Not Contemporary) – 3rd-9th centuries CE

Although the primary source of wealth and power in the Pyu kingdom was wet-rice agriculture, international trade provided a

supplementary bolster for Pyu rulers. Pyu merchants traded within the Southeast Asian region and also participated in the lucrative trade between India and China. In the early 9th century, Pyu officials sent an embassy from Sri Ksetra to Chang'an and established formal trade relations with Tang China.

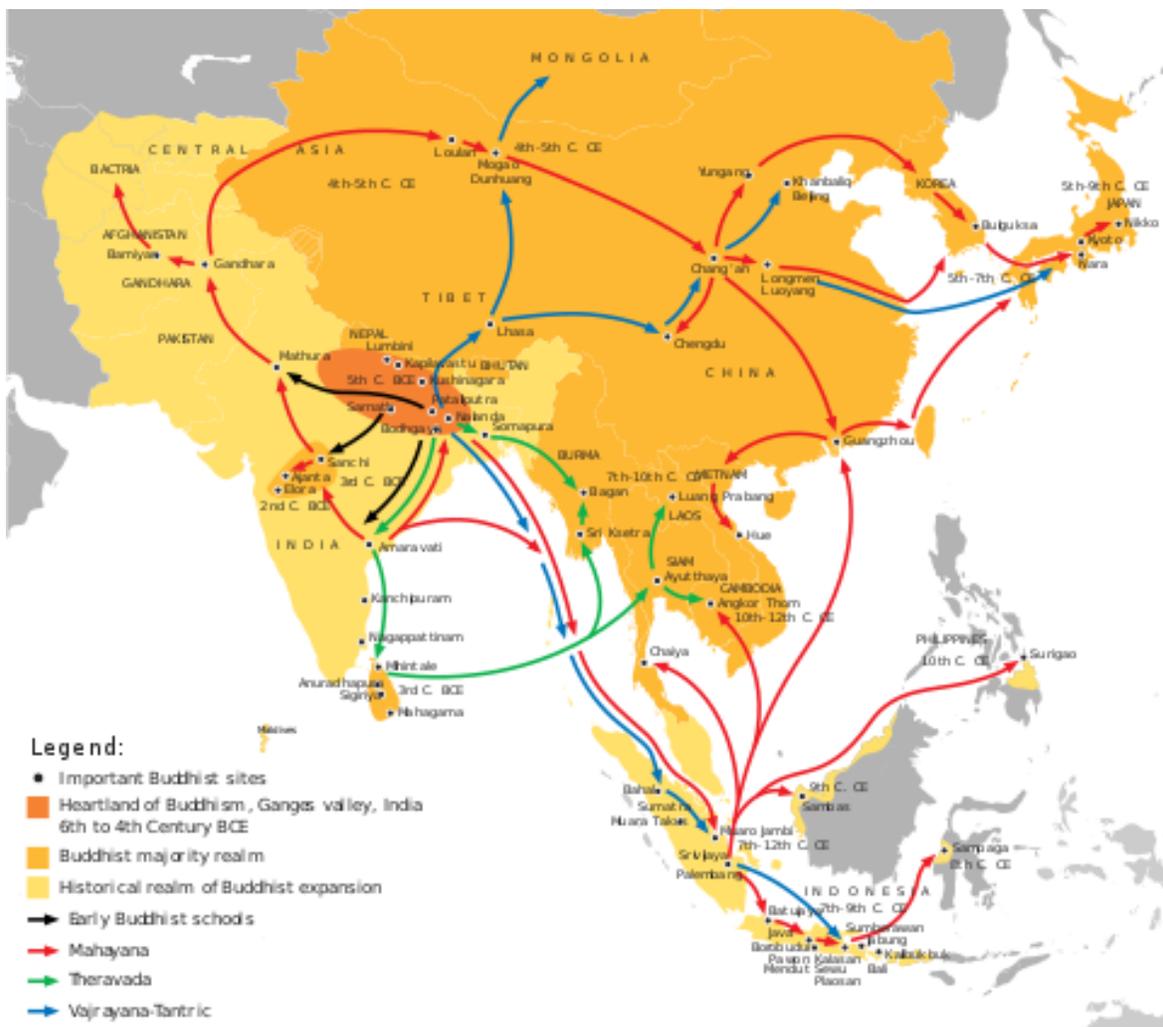


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_route.jpg>

Pyu (Located East of India) Traded On the Maritime Silk Route (Blue Lines) – Linking China With Europe, 3rd-9th centuries CE

Pyu culture was heavily influenced by links with India, especially South India. It is not known when Theravada Buddhism

entered Burma from India, but that religion was flourishing in Beikthano Myo by the 4th century CE and thereafter became the principal spiritual doctrine in subsequent Burman kingdoms. The Pyu state also adopted Indic political institutions and codes of law, although it remained politically independent.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddhist_Expansion.svg

Spread of Buddhism in Asia – 6th century BCE-11th century CE

The Pyu monarchy was based on a hierarchical system of royal families ruling over commoners, and the Pyu rulers took the Indic names of Varman and Vikrama. The Pyu system of writing was adapted from a South Indian script, although the Pyus' Sino-Tibetan language was completely unrelated to the Dravidian languages of South India.

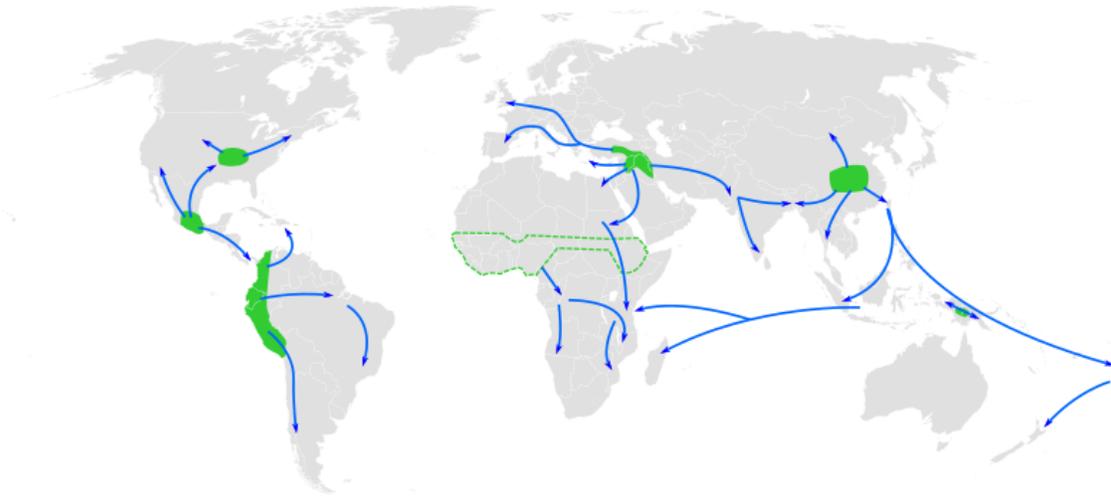
Indic cultural influences were reflected strongly in the Pyu design of large, fortified cities, located near the main rice-producing regions. The major Pyu cities were constructed to show the symbolic links between heaven and sacred spaces on earth. City walls were built from uniformly-sized bricks and had four pagodas and twelve gates, each featuring a different sign of the zodiac, and the capitals had centrally-located, elegant palaces. The Pyu kingdom was invaded by the strong Nanchao kingdom of Yunnan (China) in the 830s and went into a long decline. Starting in the late 10th century, the Pyu territory and people were absorbed gradually into the rising Kingdom of Pagan. But Pyu culture survived to influence Pagan and all subsequent Burman kingdoms.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gate_of_Beikthano_Historical_Sites.jpg>

Entrance Gate to Beikthano Myo, First Pyu Capital

Rice Agriculture in Burma. There is no evidence of agriculture arising independently in Southeast Asia. Rice agriculture spread into Burma at least 2,500 years ago from its initial point of origin in the coastal regions of southern China. Thereafter, the production of rice was the key source of wealth in all of the major kingdoms in Burma for more than two millennia until British colonization in the 19th century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Centres_of_origin_and_spread_of_agriculture
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*Origins and Spread of Agriculture –
Rice Moved From South China To Burma/Myanmar*

The early Pyu kingdoms (through the 9th century) and all of the Burman kingdoms (from the 10th through the 19th centuries) were built on the backs of rice farmers. The heartland of those kingdoms was upper Burma in the rich floodplain of the Irrawaddy River and its tributaries. Burman kings understood that if they could control and collect taxes in the main rice-producing areas, they could expand their kingdoms to control the port cities to the south and the mountain passes to the west, north, and east. The

capitals of the Burman kingdoms, however, were located in dry zones that would not support rainfed rice agriculture.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oryza_sativa_-_K%C3%B6hler%E2%80%93s_Medizinal-Pflanzen-232.jpg>

*Rice (Oriza sativa), Indigenous to South China –
Source of Much Wealth in Burma for Three Millennia*

Like the Pyus, the Burmans diverted water from the perennial rivers to their rice paddies. The large rice surpluses came from four key regions – Kyaukse, Minbu, Shwebo (Mu Valley), and

Tonplon (Mandalay) – that could produce twice the rice needed for subsistence.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mature_Rice_\(India\)_by_Augustus_Binu.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mature_Rice_(India)_by_Augustus_Binu.jpg)>

Rice Production in the Kyaukse Flood Plain, Upper Burma

When Britain colonized lower Burma in 1853, the new colonial government sought ways to earn export revenues. It invested in drainage of the Irrawaddy River Delta and doubled rice acreage there in 20 years. The British complemented their drainage and irrigation investments with expansion of road and rail transportation, and, by 1930, rice planted area in the delta had

expanded to 10 million acres. Labor moved in from upper Burma and India, and the locus of political and economic power shifted to lower Burma. Burma became the world's leading exporter of rice and exported 3 million tons in 1930. Rice surpluses thus generated wealth for both Pyu and Burman kings and British imperialists.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rijstvelden_Myanmar_2006.jpg>

*Harvesting Rice Manually in Kyaukse, Upper Burma –
Technique Unchanged Since Pagan Era*

The Kingdom of Pagan (10th-13th centuries)

The Rise of Pagan. Starting about the eighth century, Burman migrants moved from southeastern Tibet via Yunnan into

northern Burma and gradually displaced and absorbed the Pyu indigenes. In the 9th century, Burman armies overran their Pyu opponents and gained control of the rich irrigated rice area of Kyaukse in the Irrawaddy River floodplain of central Burma.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-of-southeast-asia_900_CE.png

Southeast Asian Kingdoms, c. 900 – Pagan Kingdom (Dark Pink), Mon States (Light Pink), Khmer Kingdom (Red), Champa Kingdom (Yellow). and Tang Chinese Vietnam (Orange)

In the late 10th century, the Burmans moved downriver and established a new fortified capital city at Pagan, a former Pyu village. Burman progress then accelerated.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pagan_Empire_-_1044.PNG

The Kingdom of Pagan, c. 1044

King Anawrahta (ruled 1044-1077), a talented military commander and public administrator, expanded the Kingdom of Pagan southward to extend from Bhamo in the north to the Gulf of

Martaban in the south. Anawrahta first developed the Minbu irrigated rice perimeter downriver from Pagan.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pyinoolwin_--_DSA_Anawrahta.JPG>

*Statue of King Anawrahta (Ruled 1044-1077) –
Pyin Oo Lwin, Burma/Myanmar*

In the mid-11th century, Anawrahta overran the Mon capital of Thaton, conquered the Mon Kingdom, and fortified the Mon ports in the Irrawaddy Delta and along the Martaban coast.

Anawrahta moved most Mon artisans and scholars to Pagan,

patronized them, and converted from Mahayana Buddhism to the Theravada Buddhist religion. Mon traders remained active in the ports, and the Mon language became the lingua franca in the Pagan court. The culture of Pagan influenced all later Burman kingdoms.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shwesandaw_Pagoda_Bagan_Myanmar.jpg>

*Anawrahta's Shwesandaw Pagoda, Pagan, 1057 –
Absorbed State Resources*

King Kyanzittha (ruled 1084-1111) consolidated Anawrahta's territorial gains and formed a strong, syncretic kingdom based on the assimilation of Pyu cultural traditions,

Burman military rule, and Theravada Buddhist spiritualism. Two of Pagan's most remarkable religious monuments, the Schwezigon stupa and the Ananda temple, were built during Kyanzittha's reign.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ananda_Temple_Bagan.jpg

Kyanzittha's Ananda Temple, Pagan – Completed c. 1091

Pagan's human resources were diverse and hierarchical. The Burmans, Pyus, Mons, and Shans dominated the Karens, Chins, Kachins, Arakanese, and Indians. The royals and officials ruled over the commoners and controlled them through patron-client ties, based on birth, occupation, and spiritual rank. Pagan rose to

become a powerful regional kingdom with a peak population estimated at between two million and two and one-half million people.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burmes_equestrian_sports.jpg>

Burman Nobles Playing Equestrian Sports in Pagan

Sources of Wealth – Rice Agriculture. Rice agriculture was the major source of wealth in the Kingdom of Pagan. The Burman officials expanded rice output by increasing productivity and by extending the area cultivated. They improved irrigation networks to support flood retreat farming – the use of small dams to divert river water after the annual floods. Most rice

planted in the Pagan era was of *Japonica* varieties, until higher-yielding *Indica* varieties were introduced from India. Two crops of rice were grown annually in the irrigated perimeters, and the best-watered areas could support three crops of rice per year. The crown initially owned most of the rice land, but mounting land grants to the Buddhist *sanghas* resulted in church control of about two-thirds of rice-growing areas by the late 13th century.

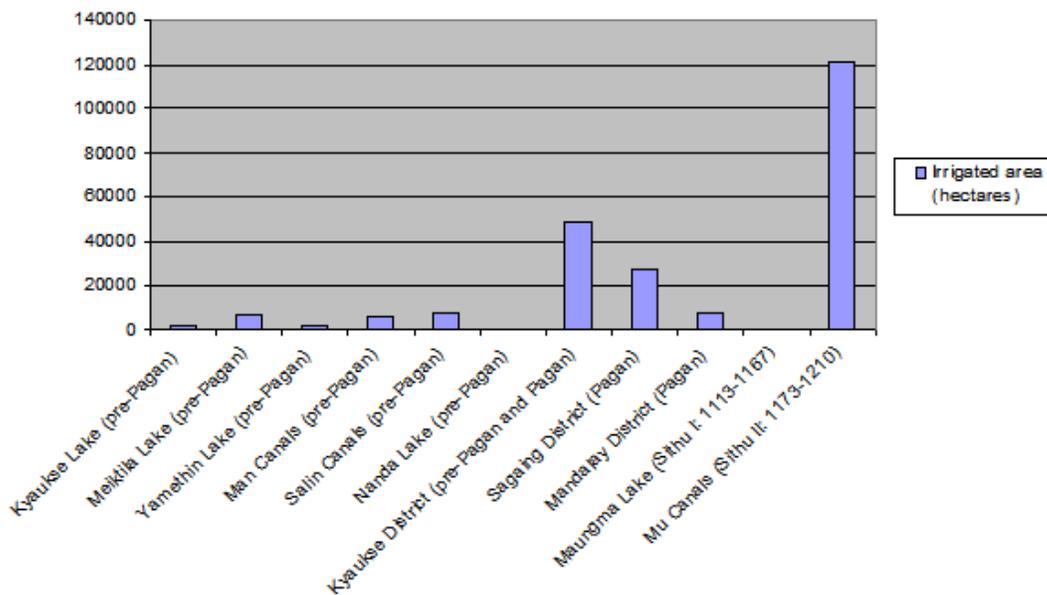


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Farming,_Myanmar.jpg>

*Plowing A Rice Paddy in Burma (Myanmar) –
Pagan Kings Expanded Rice Production to Create Wealth*

Pagan kings made impressive increases in irrigated rice area and had nearly 500,000 acres under production in the mid-13th

century. The kingdom was based initially on Kyaukse (120,000 irrigated acres), incorporated Minbu (70,000 acres) in the mid-11th century, and then later added Tonplon (70,000 acres) and parts of the Mu Valley (230,000 acres at its peak). The construction of the Mu Canal and water distribution system to expand acreage in the Mu Valley was the kingdom's largest and most successful agricultural project.

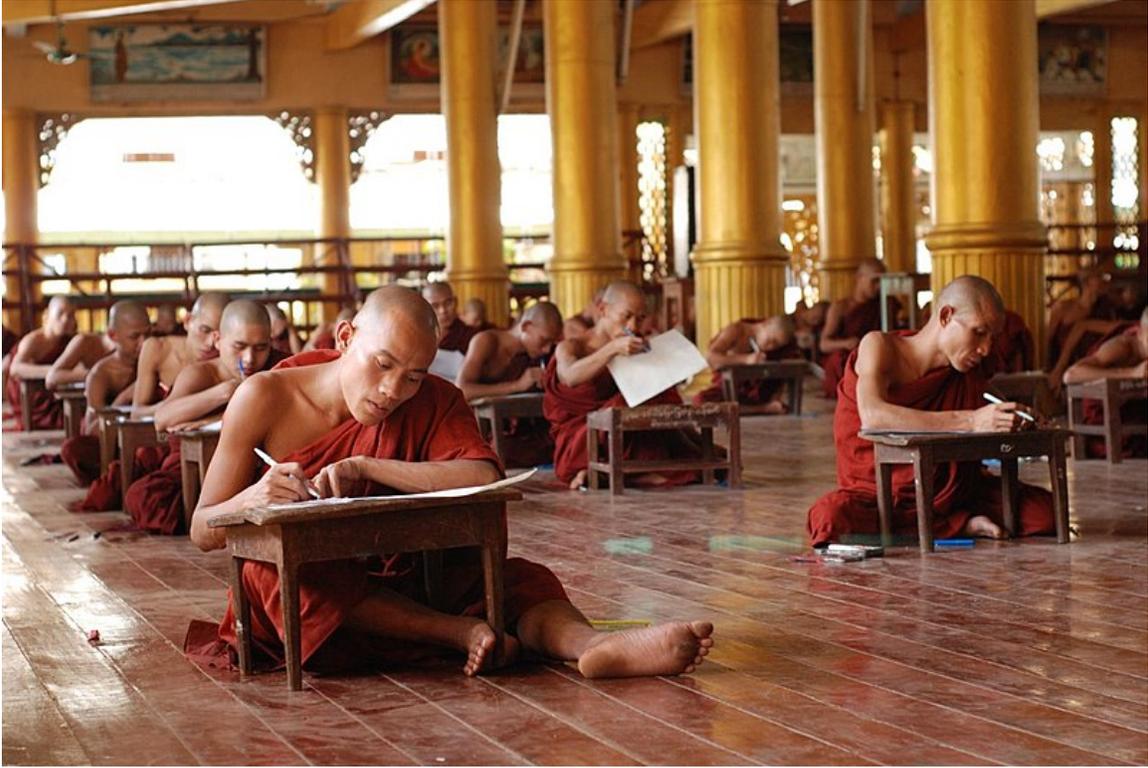


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pagan_Irrigated_Areas.PNG

Major Irrigated Regions of Upper Burma (Pre-Pagan and Pagan))
 – *Kyaukse, Minbu, Tonplon, and Shwebo (Mu Valley)*

The sophisticated irrigation networks consisted of dams on the larger rivers, major and minor canals from those rivers, weirs to divert water and tanks to store it, distribution channels, and sluices within the watercourses in the farming areas. Labor was scarce and was bonded but paid (usually in rice or silver), not enslaved. Laborers were bonded to individual land owners, the church, or the state. Farmers paid a tax of 10 percent of their agricultural produce to the state and an additional head tax, but were not forced to provide labor services to the state (*corvée*).

To expand rice output on temple land grants, the *sanghas* provided bonded labor, finance from donations, and technical advice. The state built and stocked granaries to help prevent famine during years of drought, floods, or pestilence. The system of individual-, state-, and church-owned land, bonded but paid labor, and state-sponsored irrigation development produced large rice surpluses to underpin the wealth of Pagan, an inland agrarian polity.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monk_examinations,_Bago,_Myanmar.jpg>

*Educated Buddhist Monks Aided Agricultural Expansion in Pagan
– Monastery Examination, Bago, Burma/Myanmar*

Sources of Wealth – Foreign Trade and Conquest.

Foreign commerce was an important supplemental source of wealth for Pagan during its last 250 years. But Pagan was mostly self-sufficient and did not have to rely on trade. The kingdom produced all of its food, precious minerals (gold and silver), gems (rubies and sapphires), wood, metal (iron and bronze), and bricks. Moreover, before Pagan expanded southward to the coast in the

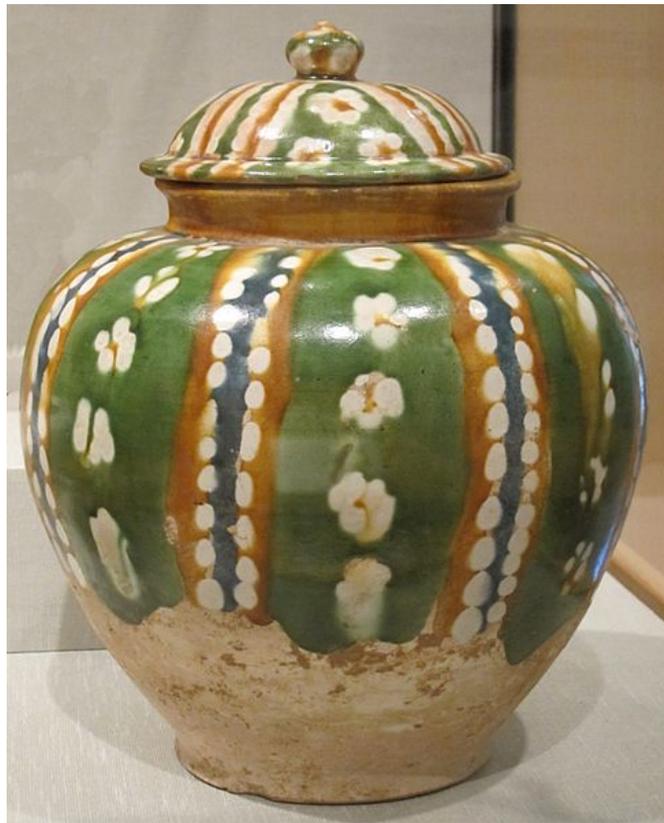
mid-11th century, it was an inward-looking, land-locked kingdom. Once it gained control of the ports on the Burmese portion of the Bay of Bengal, Pagan engaged in regional trade with India (notably the Chola Kingdom in South India) and kingdoms in Southeast Asia (Khmer, Champa, Srivijaya, and Kediri).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southeast_Asia_trade_route_map_XIIcentury.jpg

*Pagan's 12th-century Southeast Asian Trading Partners –
Khmer, Champa, Srivijaya, and Kediri*

By the late 11th century, Pagan benefited when the commercial route linking India with China shifted northward creating regular stops at Burmese ports that supplied entrepôt services. Pagan exported mostly raw materials (rice and wood) and imported luxury goods (silk and porcelain).



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_covered_jar,_Tang_dynasty,_earthenware_with_sancai_glaze,_HAA.JPG>

*Tang Chinese Porcelain Was A Major Import Item In Pagan –
Covered Jar With Sancai Glaze, Honolulu Museum of Art*

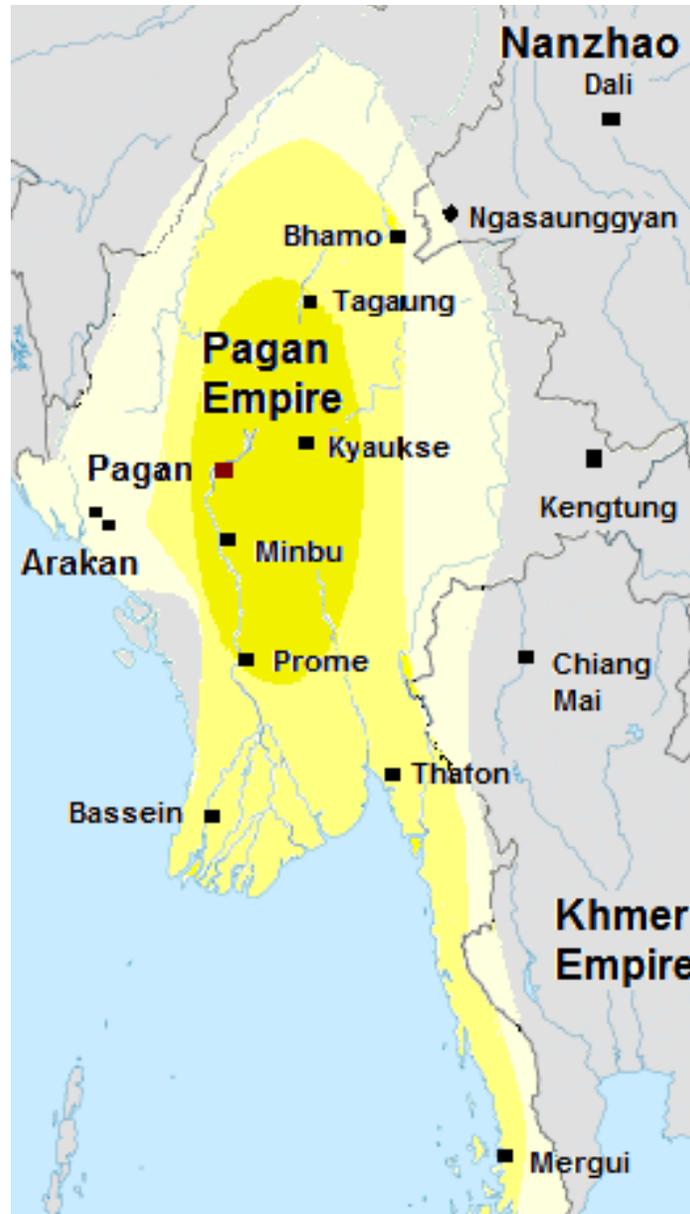
The Kingdom of Pagan attempted foreign conquest mainly in one direction, southward, and successful conquest generated significant supplemental wealth. In 1050, Pagan was still confined to its heartland in upper Burma. Anawrahta made the kingdom's key conquest in the mid-11th century when he conquered lower Burma, gained control of its ports, and transferred Mon, Indian, and other manpower to the Pagan center.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SHWEDAGON_BUDDIST_PAGODA_YANGON_MYANMAR_JAN_2013_\(8553760103\).jpg?](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SHWEDAGON_BUDDIST_PAGODA_YANGON_MYANMAR_JAN_2013_(8553760103).jpg?)

Shwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon – Pagan's 11th-century Conquest

By 1210, King Narapatisithu (ruled 1173-1210) had widened Pagan's control and created coastal fiefdoms run by princes who appropriated immense wealth from trade taxes. Under Narapatisithu's rule, the Kingdom of Pagan reached its largest extent and stretched along the Irrawaddy River Valley from Bhamo on the China border in the north to the Tenassarim Peninsula on the Indian Ocean in the south. During its peak (mid-11th-early 13th centuries), Pagan lost no territory in wars with neighboring kingdoms.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pagan_Empire_-_Sithu_II.PNG>

Pagan At Its Largest Territorial Extent, c. 1200

Religion and Politics. Religion was tightly linked to politics in Pagan. Mahayana Buddhism was the dominant religion before Anawrahta introduced Theravada Buddhism as the state religion in

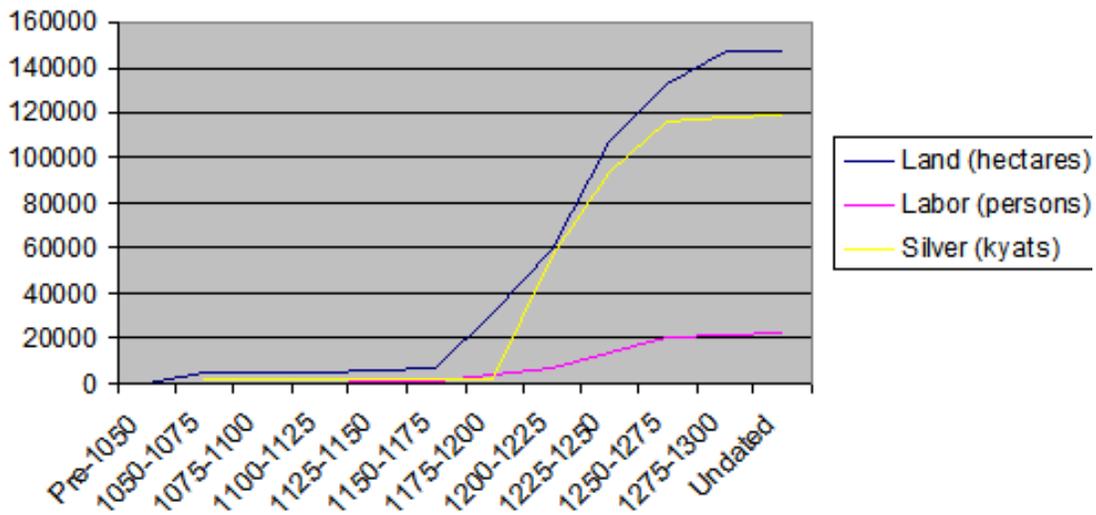
the mid-11th century. The Mahayana, or northern, branch of Buddhism is eclectic in its beliefs, stresses the importance of helping others to find *nirvana* by earning merit to free themselves from the cycle of rebirths, and incorporates *bodhisattvas*, humans who have achieved *nirvana* but remain on earth to help others find salvation. The Theravada, or southern, branch strictly follows the preaching of Gautama Buddha and emphasizes the need for individuals to find *nirvana* through meditation and donations.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monkey_gives_honey_to_Buddha_Shakyamuni,_India,_Bihar,_probably_Kurkihar,_Pala_dynasty,_c._1000_AD,_black_stone_-_C3%96stasiatiska_museet,_Stockholm_-_DSC09270.JPG>

*Buddha Shakyamuni, Meditating in the Lotus Position, c. 1000 CE
– Ostasiatiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden*

In Pagan, the kings earned religious merit by donating land and bonded laborers to the *sangha* (the Buddhist church). The relationship between state and *sangha* in Pagan initially was complementary. The state provided administration, military protection, and irrigation development, and the king earned merit by donating land and labor to the church. The *sangha* constructed temples, supported monasteries, and expanded rice agriculture. The state occasionally made forays abroad to add needed laborers. Pagan prospered.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pagan_period_religious_donations_-_cumulative.PNG

Cumulative Religious Donations During the Pagan Dynasty – 11th-14th centuries

But as the *sangha* increasingly usurped state revenues, a dilemma appeared. The *sangha* developed agriculture and generated wealth, but it could not govern and had no military. All of the major kings of Pagan (Anawrahta, Kyanzittha, and Narapatisithu) carried out purification (*sasana*) to return assets and control to the state.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gawdawpalin_Temple_Bagan_Myanmar.jpg>

Gawdawpalin Temple, Pagan – Constructed By King Narapatisithu After Carrying Out Purification (Sasana)

Sasana was justified religiously because kings were required to keep the Theravada Buddhist religion pure and to prevent church leaders from becoming sectarian. But *sasana* was risky politically because the landed gentry supported the *sangha* orders in their regions. Only very strong kings could regain power over the *sangha*. Of the nine kings who ruled Pagan during the 11th through the 13th centuries, only one was in the direct line of royal succession. The eight others gained power through other means. Power in Pagan went to innovative risk-takers.

The Decline of Pagan. After 200 years of splendor, the Kingdom of Pagan declined in the late 13th century. Pagan fell because of internal erosion and external incursions. Pagan reached its peak under King Narapatisithu in the early 13th century, and most of its 4,000 Buddhist temples were completed by 1250. Thereafter, no kings were strong enough to carry out *sasana* (religious purification), and the revenue drain to the *sangha* became an increasing problem. By the mid-13th century, the *sangha* owned two-thirds of all productive land and paid no taxes.

The cash-strapped state had to reduce spending on its military, irrigation development, and donations to the *sangha*. That belt-tightening resulted in factionalism at court, as interest groups no longer could be bought off, and consequent political instability. The military weakness was reflected in refusals of tributary regions to pay taxes and losses of some areas.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bagan,_Burma.jpg>

*Buddhist Temples In Pagan –
Burman Government Overspent on Religious Monuments*

Foreigners soon took advantage of that internal erosion. To the east, a new Thai kingdom, Sukothai, arose in the 13th century

and detached the Chiengmai region (in contemporary northern Thailand) from struggling Pagan. The final blow was the Mongol-Chinese invasion of Pagan that began in 1277 and ended in 1301. The Mongol armies did not reach Pagan city and destroy its temples, but the brutal war ended in the defeat of Pagan and sapped the energies and resources of the vulnerable kingdom.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol_invasions_of_Burma_\(1277-87\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mongol_invasions_of_Burma_(1277-87).png)>

*Yuan (Mongol-Chinese) Dynasty's Invasions of Burma, 1277-1301
– Battle Sites Indicated in Red*



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YuanEmperorAlbumKhubilaiPortrait.jpg>>

Kublai Khan, Leader of Yuan China, Destroyed But Failed To Conquer Pagan, 1277-1301 – Portrait by Anige, 1260s, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

The former Kingdom of Pagan splintered. The Mons rebelled in 1284, gained their independence, and established a Mon Kingdom, Ramannadesa, in lower Burma. The hill tribes regained their autonomy and stopped paying tribute. The Three Shan Brothers (Asankhaya, Rajasankram, and Sihasura) who had been in the nobility at the Pagan court, rebelled and defeated Klawcwa, the last Pagan king. They then relocated their capitals in the Mu

Valley and Kyaukse, the primary zones for producing irrigated rice. The glorious Kingdom of Pagan was destroyed, and the famed city of Pagan thereafter became a spiritual center, pilgrimage site, and cultural museum rather than a center of political power.

The Pagan Kingdom in Burma had much in common with the Khmer Kingdom in Cambodia. Both kingdoms were inland agrarian polities, based on wet rice agriculture and controlling disaffected coastal areas. Pagan and Khmer devoted enormous resources to the construction of remarkable religious monuments, and both eventually fell because of the excessive shift of economic power from the state to religious institutions and of the incursions of recently immigrated, Tai-speaking peoples.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cambodia_2638B_-_Angkor_Wat.jpg>

*Angkor Wat – The Khmer Kingdom’s Highest Temple-Mountain
 and the World’s Largest Religious Monument*



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-of-southeast-asia_1300_CE.png>

The Khmer Kingdom (Red) After the Fall of Pagan, c. 1300

Burma after the Kingdom of Pagan (13th century-present)

Successor Burman Kingdoms. For the next six centuries, successor Burman kingdoms attempted to emulate the glories of Pagan. Successor dynasties appeared and disappeared according to the religious purification cycle established in Pagan, and their fundamental sources of wealth – rice agriculture supplemented by foreign trade – remained unchanged. In the dynastic cycle of Pagan, a charismatic savior king (*min laung*) formed the dynasty, the *sangha* exercised monastic landlordism, successful kings carried out religious purification (*sasana*), and unsuccessful kings failed in *sasana* and caused the dynasty to fall.

That cycle was repeated three times in the 14th to 19th centuries, as the Ava (1364-1527), Toungoo (1539-1752), and Konbaung (1752-1885) dynasties rose and fell. In contrast to the dynasty of Pagan, which ruled for three and one-half centuries, the three successor Burman dynasties were weaker and shorter-lived. Ava lasted for one and one-half centuries, Toungoo for over two centuries, and Konbaung for about one and one-quarter centuries.

Six decades of political instability followed the splintering of Pagan in the late 13th century. In 1364, King Thado Minbya played the role of *min laung* and formed the Ava dynasty with its capital at Ava – a new, elegant city located 80 miles northeast of Pagan (and ten miles south of contemporary Mandalay).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ruins,_Innwa,_Mandalay_Division,_Burma.j
pg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ruins,_Innwa,_Mandalay_Division,_Burma.jpg)>

*Ruins of Ava, Capital of the Kingdom of Ava –
Founded by Founder-King Thabo Minya in 1364*

The economic strength of Ava grew out of its control of the three most important rice-producing regions in upper Burma – Kyaukse, Minbu, and the Mu Valley – and its international trade

overland with China and overseas across the Bay of Bengal. The Ava rulers created a ministerial council, the *Hlutdaw*, to assist them in maintaining order, collecting agricultural and trade taxes, and supporting the Buddhist *sanghas*.

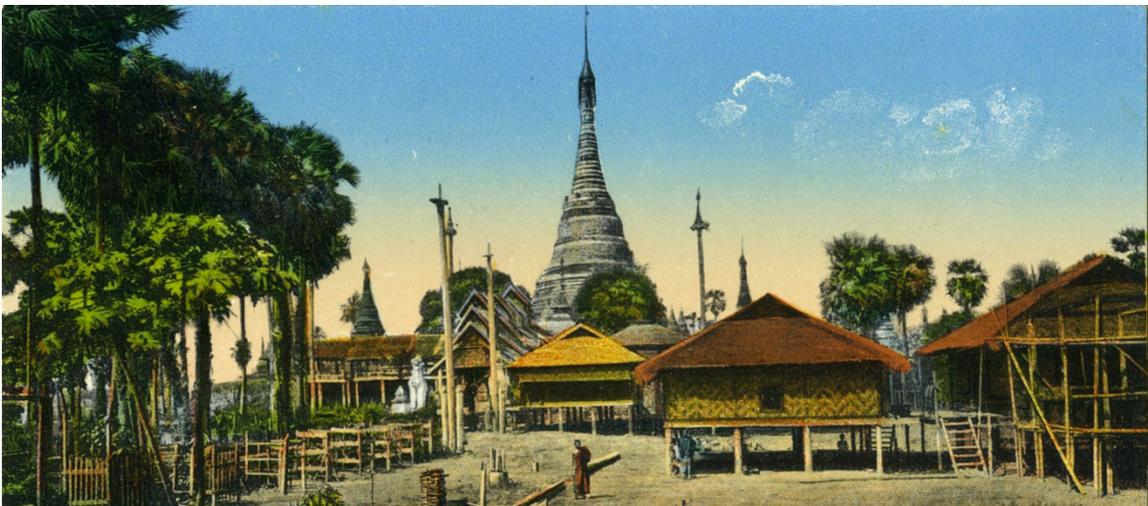


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burma_in_1450.png>

Kingdom of Ava (Bright Yellow Area), c. 1450

Like their Pagan predecessors, the Ava kings used their wealth to earn merit by building Buddhist religious monuments and donating land to the *sanghas*. King Mohnyin Thado successfully purified the *sangha* in 1438 to continue the Ava dynasty. But in 1527, Ava disintegrated under weaker leadership and fell to a Shan invasion without re-unifying Burma.

Shortly thereafter, between 1539 and 1555, King Tabinshwehti, the new *min laung*, conquered upper and lower Burma from his home base in Toungoo.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toungoo_ou_taung%C3%BB.jpg>

*Post-card Drawing of Former Toungoo –
Capital of Toungoo Dynasty (1539-1752)*

In upper Burma, he gained the support of the Burman elite of Ava and subdued the rebellious Shan princes in the Shan plateau, and in lower Burma he conquered the Mon Kingdom of Ramannadesa and its capital at Pegu. The Mons had successfully maintained their independence for nearly three centuries (1284-1555). The Toungoo rulers not only reunited Burma but also expanded the territory of their kingdom through militaristic invasions of their neighbors.

King Bayinnaung (ruled 1551-1581) conquered the Mon center at Pegu, gained control over the Shan princes, invaded Arakan to the west, and in 1569 overwhelmed the strong Thai kingdom of Ayudhya on Burma's eastern frontier. He then moved the capital to Pegu to control the Mons and to gain access to and control over the trade revenues in lower Burma. The Toungoo dynasty lasted for more than two centuries. But factionalism in the court and the lack of successful purification to re-gain religious land undercut the authority of the king, and the Toungoo dynasty fell to a Mon rebellion in the mid-18th century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Taungoo_Empire_\(1580\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Taungoo_Empire_(1580).png)>

Kingdom of Toungoo (Dark Green Area), c. 1580

King Alaungpaya arose as a savior king, founded the Konbaung dynasty, and reunified Burma – re-claiming Rangoon in 1755 and Pegu in 1757 from the Mons. A Burman from the Mu Valley city of Shwebo, Alaungpaya (ruled 1752-1760) moved the capital back to Ava after he consolidated his power.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alaungpaya.JPG>>

Alaungpaya (Ruled 1752-1760), Founder-King of the Konbaung Dynasty (1752-1885) – Statue, National Museum, Yangon

King Bodawpaya (ruled 1782-1819), Alaungpaya's son, successfully carried out a *sasana* purification to curb the economic power of the *sanghas*, and he extended the power and frontiers of Burma in both the west and the east. Like the earlier Toungoo kings, Bodawpaya defeated the Thai kingdom of Ayudhya and curbed its growing power. He also incorporated independent Arakan and Tenasserim into Burma in 1784 and later expanded into India, claiming Manipur and Assam in 1819 and provoking

British ire. The Konbaung dynasty ruled parts of Burma until the final British takeover in 1885.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Konbaung_dynasty.png?uselang=th

Burmese Kingdom of the Konbaung Dynasty, c. 1820

All three successor dynasties relied on irrigated rice agriculture (in Kyaukse, Minbu, Mu Valley, and Tonplon), using state and church land and bonded labor. All traded regionally, especially with China and India, and the Konbaung dynasty re-

conquered lower Burma, Arakan, and Tenasserim to permit active maritime trade. The Burman dynasties exported gemstones and elephant ivory and imported porcelain and luxury goods. The patterns established in the Pagan era thus continued until Britain abolished the Burman monarchy in 1886.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rice_paddy,_Chin_State,_Myanmar.jpg>

Irrigated Rice Production, The Mainstay of Burman Kingdoms for a Millennium – Rice Paddy in Chin State

Origins of British Involvement in Burma. Economic motivations – promoting English trade on the India-China trade route), transferring Burmese resources to Britain (teak), and expanding markets for English exports (cotton textiles) – remained central throughout Britain’s 124-year involvement in Burma.

Strategic goals – protection of Indian trade and military security – buttressed the economic advantages. But imperial objectives – to take over Burman territories and preempt competitors (mainly France) – became central only in the 19th century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:16th_century_Portuguese_Spanish_trade_routes.png

Global Trade Routes from Britain to India and Burma – 16th-19th centuries

Widespread innovations in the 19th century provided enormous trade advantages to Britain. The Industrial Revolution gave the English gains in technology development, capital accumulation, and social organization. Inexpensive English cotton textiles flooded world markets. Innovations in communications –

steamships, railroads, the telegraph, and the Suez Canal – sharply reduced the costs of moving goods. For Britain, Burma was a market for Lancashire textiles and a site for British investment.

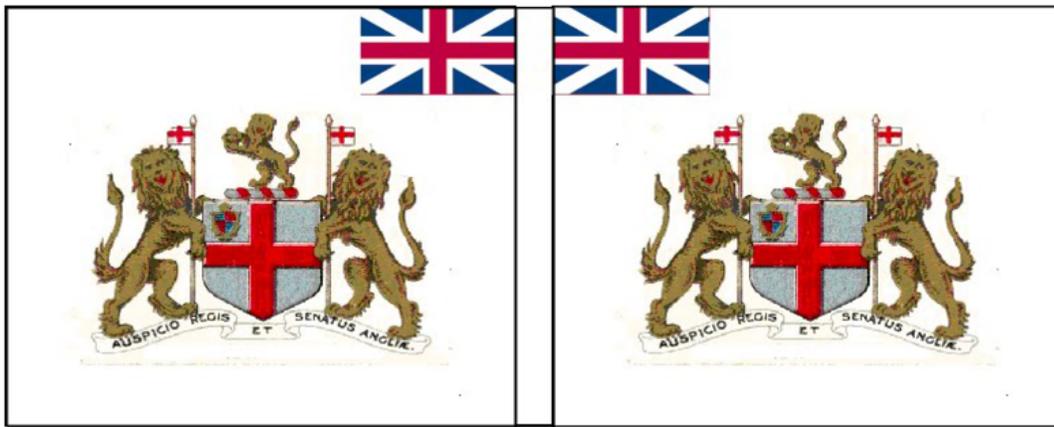


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:East_Indiaman_Warley.jpg>

Warley, An English East India Company Ship – Painting By Robert Salmon, 1804, National Maritime Museum, London

Beginning in the late 18th century, the English East India Company (EEIC), Britain’s colonial representative in India, clashed with King Bodawpaya, the Konbaung ruler of Burma (ruled 1782-1819). The EEIC objected to Bodawpaya’s expansion along the frontier between India and Burma. Burma annexed coastal Arakan and Tenasserim in 1784 and interior Assam and

Manipur in 1819, thereby blocking EEIC opportunities for eastward expansion. Bodawpaya also instructed his officials in the port of Rangoon to bar EEIC trading activities in Burma to safeguard his royal monopolies. The EEIC and Great Britain claimed those irritants were sufficient cause for war.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colour_of_the_British_East_India_Company.png

The Colour (Flag) of the English East India Company, 1600-1858

Three Stages of British Takeover of Burma (1824-1886).

Britain instigated the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826) to counter Burma's refusal to allow the English East India Company (EEIC) to trade in Burmese ports. But Britain's central goal was to stop Burmese expansion along the Burma-India frontier. The

EEIC's British-Indian army, with 200,000 troops, was the most powerful military force in Asia. Its expeditionary force overwhelmed the Burmese army. In the Treaty of Yandabo (1826), Burma was forced to cede the coastal provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim to Britain, yield Assam and Manipur to the EEIC, pay a \$5 million indemnity, and agree to a commercial treaty.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_rangoon.jpg>

British Naval Forces Entering the Harbor of Rangoon, Battle of Rangoon, 1824 – Painting By J. Moore, 19th century

British commercial interests became increasingly active in the Burmese coastal region and desired greater access. The

Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-1853) broke out when British traders protested against Burmese actions to restrict British commerce in Burma. A British naval officer precipitated the war by exceeding his official orders and seizing a ship owned by the Burmese king. The British-Indian army took control of Burma's ports and marched into the interior to claim valuable teak forests. With the annexation of Lower Burma, Britain centered its commercial efforts in Rangoon and promoted teak and rice exports.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
< <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ElephantTrainingCamp.jpg> >

Captive Elephants Being Trained for Teak Production

Britain combined its conquests of Arakan, Tenasserim, and Pegu (Lower Burma) to create a new province of British Burma. In the 1860s, Britain forced Burma to accept two commercial agreements that gave British traders better access to Burmese exports and improved access to overland trade into China.

Britain took its final bite of the Burmese apple with the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885-1886). The English hoped to beat France to trading opportunities in Yunnan (interior southern China) and pressured Burma for access. King Thibaw, the last Konbaung ruler, sought to obtain French military assistance. But in 1884 France refused to guarantee Burma's political independence and agreed only to a weak commercial treaty.

In 1885, war was precipitated after the Conservative government in Great Britain presented King Thibaw of Burma with a humiliating three-part ultimatum, demanding that Burma allow Britain to decide a disputed case over teak exports, accept a British Resident in Mandalay and give him full access to the king, and place Burma's foreign relations under control of Britain's

colonial government in India. Britain won the trumped-up war in just two weeks, exiled the Burman monarch, and undercut the political power of the *sangha*, thereby ending the purification cycles in Burmese history. The British then colonized all of Burma and developed the Irrawaddy River trade route into China.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_forces_arrival_mandalay1885.jpg>

*Arrival of the British Forces in Mandalay, Upper Burma, 1885 –
Photograph By Willoughby Wallace Hooper*

British Colonial Rule of Burma (1886-1942). For a decade, British rulers encountered widespread opposition in upper Burma.

Displaced leaders – court officials, provincial governors, and Buddhist monks – led the opposition in the Burman regions. The traditional leaders of ethnic minority groups – Shans, Karens, Kachins, Chins, and Was – resisted British rule in hopes of gaining relief from their tributary status and tax obligations. British officials brutally repressed all opposition and gained full control by 1895.

Britain then instituted a dual system of colonial administration. In the predominantly Burman regions, the British introduced a form of parliamentary home rule and ruled directly, whereas in the frontier areas, populated mostly by minority groups, the British ruled indirectly by permitting local chiefs to wield limited authority within the British colonial framework. Britain trained a non-hereditary governmental bureaucracy to permit promotion through merit and to undercut the former elite officials. To Burma's chagrin, the colony was governed as a part of India within the British Empire until 1937.



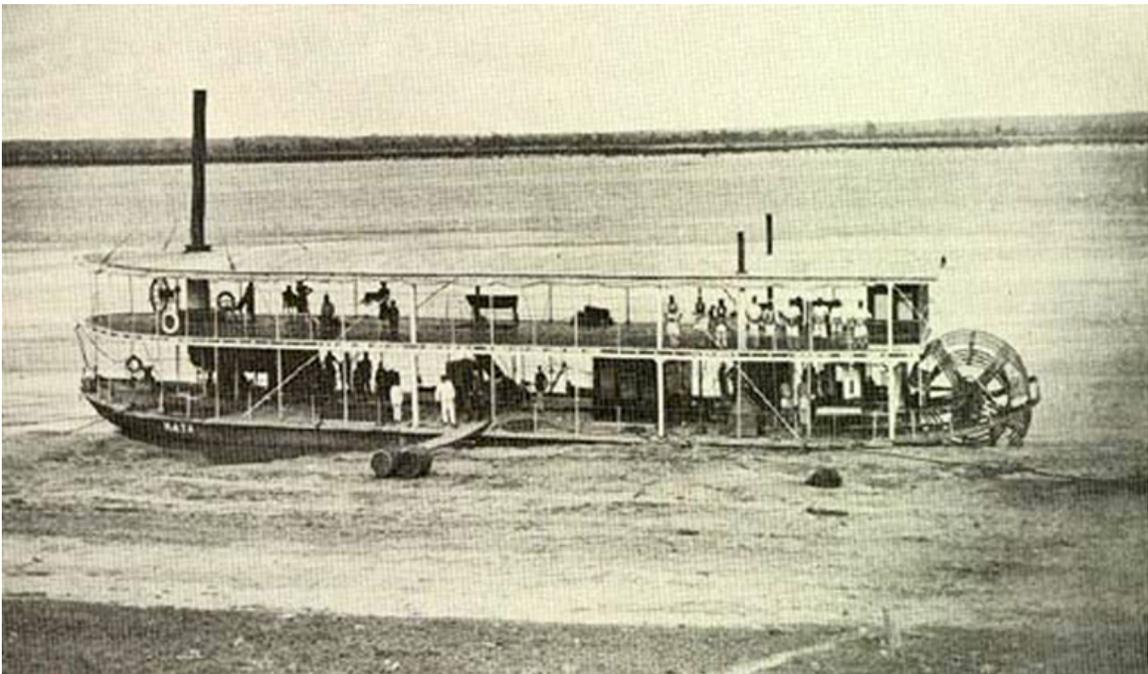
Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_Indian_Empire_1909_Imperial_Gazetteer_of_India.jpg>

*The British Indian Empire At Its Peak, 1909 –
Burma Was Governed As a Part of British India Until 1937*

Colonial officials ran Burma with two main goals – to maintain security and increase exports. Most development efforts focused on expanding rice production in the Irrawaddy River Delta. The British drained the swamps, cleared the forests, expanded river transportation, and built 2,000 miles of railroads by

1920. The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, founded in the 1860s by Scottish investors, transported paddy rice to the mills for processing and export. Small-scale farmers moved from upper Burma into the virgin delta lands. Additional labor was imported from India, and by 1929 nearly 800,000 Indians resided in Burma.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hata_\(1888\)_of_IFC_Burma.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hata_(1888)_of_IFC_Burma.jpg)>

*Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's Riverboat Hata –
In Service 1887-1914*

Moneylenders – Burmans, Indians (especially Chettyars from Madras), and Chinese – provided credit for inputs. The area cultivated under rice in the newly-opened delta expanded from 0.5

million acres in 1855 to nearly 10 million acres in 1940. Rice exports reached a peak of 3 million tons in 1930, when Burma was the world's leading exporter of rice. The total value of exports from British Burma increased more than thirty-fold during the six decades before 1930.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ShanFields.jpg>>

*Burma Was the World's Leading Exporter of Rice in 1930 –
Transporting Rice in Shan District, Burma*

The onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s precipitated a rural financial crisis. Rice export prices fell by more than half, but land rents, debt payments, taxes, and the prices of purchased farm

inputs declined by much less, if at all. Farm incomes were severely squeezed, and many farmers could not pay their debts. The pyramid of credit collapsed. Moneylenders foreclosed on mortgages covering two million acres – one-fifth of the delta land planted in rice – between 1929 and 1934. Anti-Indian riots and peasant rebellions ensued. The British colonial government grimly put down the protests, and 3,000 peasants died in the most significant one, the Hsaya San Rebellion (1930-1932). Although Britain had military superiority, its political prestige was shaken.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Image_mini.png

*Hsaya San (1876-1931) –
Leader of the Hsaya San Rebellion (1930-1932)*

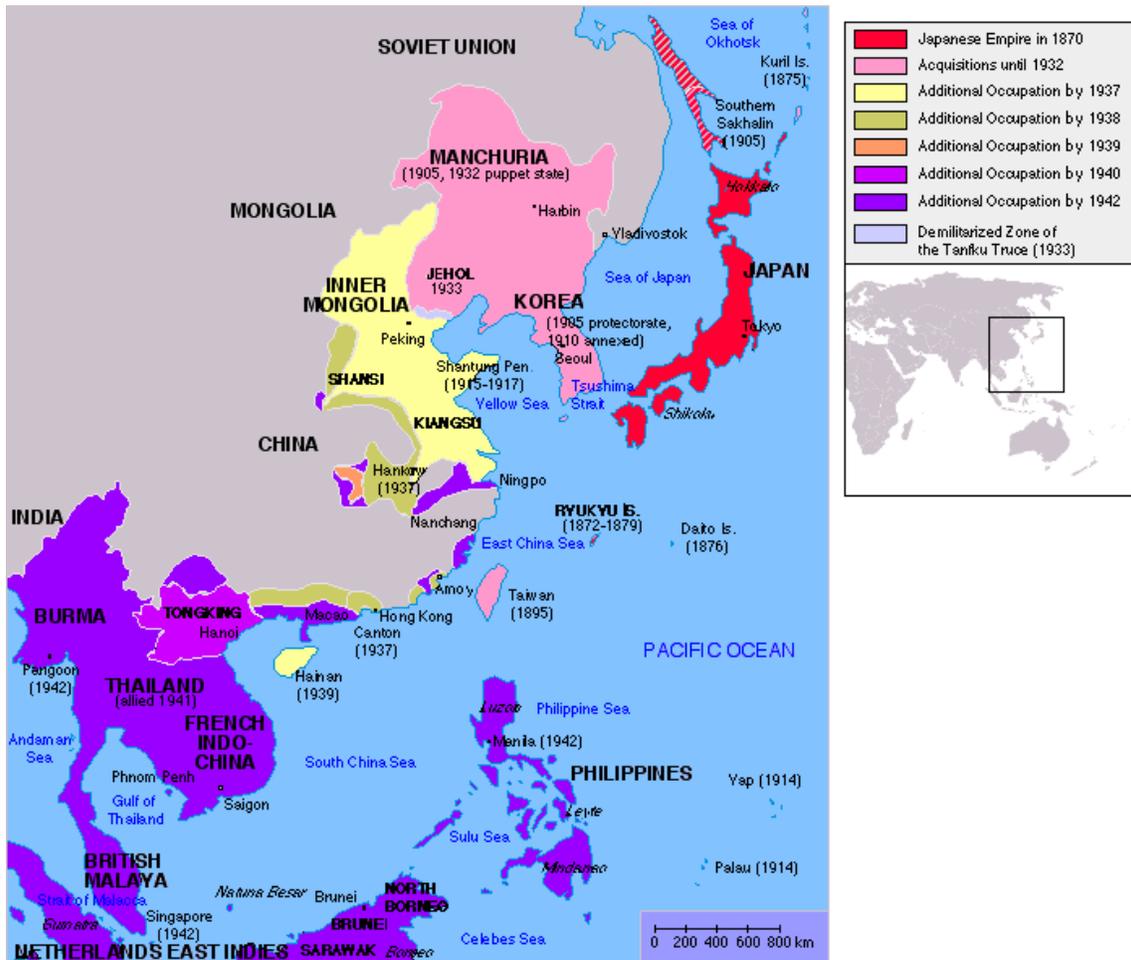
Japanese Conquest of Burma (1942-1945). Japanese strategists included Burma within their imperial Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. Japan's fascist government hoped to rule Southeast and East Asia and the western Pacific region to ensure Japanese power in Asia and the Pacific and to guarantee ample supplies of needed raw materials – rice, petroleum, tin, timber, rubber, and precious metals – for resource-poor Japan.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Empire_-_1942.svg>

*Japan's Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere –
At Its Greatest Extent, 1942*

Japanese militarists also wanted to control Burma to cut the Burma Road supply route that the Allies used to move materials from northeastern India into southern China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Empire2.png

*Japan's Conquered Territories, 1870-1942 –
Japan Occupied Burma, 1942-1945*

Japan invaded Burma in January 1942. The British-Indian army put up only token resistance, because British strategy was to

fall back and defend India. The British army and colonial administrators quickly retreated into India. The Thirty Comrades, a group of young Burmese nationalists who had been recruited by General Aung San under Japanese tutelage, led a small Burmese liberation army that fought alongside the Japanese. Aung San, who had been an anti-colonialist leader, became a Major General in Japan's Army and was decorated by the Japanese Emperor.

Asian nationalists, including those in Burma, at first acclaimed Japan's victories over European colonists in Asia because they demonstrated that Asian liberators could defeat European imperialists. But Japanese fascist rule quickly turned out to be far worse than European colonial rule. Burma, like the other Asian countries liberated by the Japanese, experienced economic and social disaster – rampant inflation, loss of export markets as Allied submarines sank Japanese transport ships, forced labor demands by Japanese commanders, unreasonable rice requisitions followed by shortages of rice locally, and damaged infrastructure from fighting, sabotage, and bombing. Japanese liberation soon

became oppressive foreign occupation, albeit by another Asian country.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:European_colonisation_of_Southeast_Asia.png

Japan Claimed to Liberate Southeast Asia from Western Colonial Rule – British (Red), French (Blue), Dutch (Orange), and American (Yellow)

In 1943, Japan declared Burmese “independence” and set up a puppet government under the leadership of a veteran Burmese politician, Ba Maw.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons, available at*
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ba_Maw,_1943.jpg>

*Ba Maw, Head of Burmese Puppet Government, 1943-1945 –
Upon Receiving Japan's Order of the Rising Sun*

Several leading Burman nationalists collaborated in that government. Aung San (later Burma's premier nationalist and negotiator for independence) was Minister of Defense, Nu (later Burma's first prime minister) was Foreign Minister, and Than Tun (later leader of Burma's Communist Party) was Minister of Agriculture. In August 1944, those leaders and other nationalists, socialists, and communists switched sides and secretly formed the

underground Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) with the aims of driving the Japanese out, declaring independence for Burma, and forming a leftist government. Aung San and the AFPFL helped British troops re-conquer Burma in early 1945. That support of the Allies removed the sting of their earlier collaboration with the Japanese.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aung_San,_1943.jpg>

*General Aung San, Minister of Defense, 1943 –
Switched Sides To Lead the Anti-Japanese Resistance Movement*

Aung San and Burma's Road to Independence (1945-1948). The post-war Labor government in Britain, led by Clement

Attlee, wanted to end British colonial government in South and Southeast Asia. India and Burma would no longer be profitable in a non-imperial, post-war world, and friendly, independent allies would be preferable to discontented colonies. But Britain desired a transition to independence for Burma because it had pledged to protect the future political rights of the ethnic minority groups.

Aung San, the leader of the AFPFL coalition of nationalists, socialists, and communists, used his organization to apply intense pressure on the British. Aung San's main goal was to remove Britain and gain control of Burma's resources, not to promote Western-style democracy. Aung San's preferred economic policy was ardent socialism. He hoped to improve the lot of poor Burmese people through state ownership of industries and assets, strong protection of workers' rights, and land reforms that would limit the size of landholdings and redistribute land to farmers. In January 1947, he led a group of Burmese negotiators to London and with British Prime Minister Attlee successfully negotiated the

Aung San/Attlee Agreement, which promised full Burmese independence within one year.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aung_San_color_portrait.jpg>

Aung San (1915-1947), Premier of British Crown Colony of Burma, 1946-1947 – Negotiated Burmese Independence In 1947

During the first half of 1947, Aung San won several other political victories. He negotiated the Panglong Agreement under which leaders of the ethnic minority groups (except the Karens) promised to remain loyal to the union of Burma in return for ethnic

statehood and autonomy within a decentralized federation. The AFPFL won 171 of the 182 seats in the election for the Constituent Assembly and thereby gained control of the team that was drafting a new constitution. Aung San convened a national conference to debate the future options for governing Burma.

Tragically, in July 1947 Aung San, six other members of the executive council, and two guards were assassinated during a cabinet meeting. Blame for the murders was placed on a disgruntled politician, but recent research has implicated the military. Aung San's longtime colleague, Nu, succeeded him as leader of the AFPFL and served as Burma's first prime minister when the country became independent in January 1948. Nu had strong nationalist credentials, but he lacked Aung San's leadership ability and charisma.

Assessment of British Colonial Rule in Burma. The principal politico-economic benefits for Burma derived from infrastructure, higher education, and the civil service. Under British rule, the government drained the alluvial swamps of the

Irrawaddy River Delta, built 2,000 miles of railroads, and constructed and maintained numerous ports. The British colonialists also promoted higher education and improved the civil service. Although those accomplishments were intended to facilitate British control and exploitation, they would have proven valuable to independent Burma if the country had experienced better leadership.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Railway_map_of_Myanmar.png

Britain Built 2,000 Miles of Railroads in Burma

But the costs of British imperialism were very high. British policy ensured British gains and controlled Burmese resistance. Whereas new infrastructure aided Burmese growth, British policies to protect Britain's export markets in Burma, promote the interest of elite landowners (and deny land reform), and transfer tax revenues to Britain curbed Burmese economic development. Harsh suppression of Burmese dissent left an indelible political scar. The British roles in the Burman-ethnic minority conflict and the rise of military power also were unfortunate. British policy obliterated Burman social institutions and failed to promote political development among the majority Burman people.

Britain also found it convenient to rule the ethnic minorities indirectly by leaving their traditional rulers in place. Hence, there was inadequate opportunity for political cohesion to develop between Burmans and the hill peoples. When Britain decided to extricate itself from Burma quickly after World War II, it failed to guarantee political rights for the ethnic minority peoples and

civilian control over the military. Burma has suffered from ethnic conflicts and military dominance ever since.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KNLA_medic_treating_displaced_civilians_\(Steve_Sandford-VOA\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KNLA_medic_treating_displaced_civilians_(Steve_Sandford-VOA).jpg)>

Britain Reneged on Minority Rule – A Medic of the Karen National Liberation Army Treats Displaced Persons, Kayin State

Nu and Burma’s Fragile Democracy (1948-1962). Burma became independent in January 1948. Nu, the first Prime Minister, ruled the country through its first turbulent decade of independence (1948-1958). Nu was a respected leader but a weak administrator.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U_Nu_portrait.jpg>

U Nu – Burma’s First President (1948-1958, 1960-1962)

Nu introduced the philosophy of Buddhist Socialism to be implemented under the Pyidawtha (“Happy Land”) Plan. He saw socialism as a rationalization for regaining Burmese control of the non-agricultural economy (which had passed into European, Indian, and Chinese ownership under colonial laissez-faire policies), reining in the perceived abuses of capitalism, and achieving social equity. Prices for goods produced in state-owned

industries were set according to consumer budgets rather than to costs of production, and losses mounted. The AFPFL government was weak administratively, and its annual tax collections were lower than those of the previous colonial government.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddhist_monk_in_Myanmar_\(1068571\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddhist_monk_in_Myanmar_(1068571).jpg)>

Young Theravada Buddhist Monk – What Was Buddhist Socialism?

Independent and democratic Burma was not a happy land in its first decade. Two opposition groups – the Communist Party of Burma and ethnic minority organizations – fought civil wars

against the AFPFL government. Aung San had forced the Communists out of the AFPFL in 1946, precipitating a bitter rivalry. The hill people wanted greater autonomy and felt done in by Britain's failure to guarantee that outcome.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:They_go_back.jpg>

Insurgents of the Communist Party of Burma Return To Their Bases After Failed Peace Talks, 1963

Nu's weak administration, the raging civil wars, political infighting in Rangoon, and a stagnating economy led General Ne Win, the head of the army, to install a caretaker military government in 1958 to prepare for fresh elections in 1960. The military then extended their growing control of the economy. The

Defense Services Institute, started in 1951, received special governmental privileges, expanded from retail into trade, banking, and shipping, and became the country's largest firm by 1960. Nu's personal popularity outweighed his government's poor past record, and he was re-elected in 1960 in a relatively open and fair election. Continuing political instability and economic stagnation resulted in a military coup in 1962. Ne Win's second takeover was nonviolent and met with little opposition initially.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Ne_Win_Portrait.JPG>

General Ne Win – Dictator of Burma (1958-1960, 1962-1988)

Ne Win and Military Dictatorship (1962-1988). General Ne Win, one of the Thirty Comrades during the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942, seized the opportunity to impose his version of socialism on Burma. Following his coup d'état in March 1962, Ne Win jailed many civilian politicians and suspended the constitution. He established himself as the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council government (1962-1974) and installed his loyal sidekick, General San Yu, as his deputy. Ne Win and San Yu both came from Paungdale in Prome district, central Burma. As Chairman of the Council, Ne Win assumed full executive, legislative, and judicial powers. Ne Win and San Yu retained control, as Chairman and General Secretary, after the military promulgated a new constitution and set up the Socialist Republic (1974-1988).

Throughout that period, both the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and ethnic minority groups, united within the National Democratic Front (NDF), rebelled against the military government and its party, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kachin_Independence_Army_cadets_in_Laiza_\(Paul_Vrieze-VOA\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kachin_Independence_Army_cadets_in_Laiza_(Paul_Vrieze-VOA).jpg)>

*Minorities Rebelled Against the Ne Win Government –
Cadets In Training, Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Laiza*

The BSPP's ruling philosophy, called The Burmese Way to Socialism, was revolutionary politically and disastrous economically. That version of socialism had three components. It glorified Burman nationalism, claiming links to Pagan and Aung San. Its distrust of non-Burmans bordered on xenophobia and included the forced repatriation in 1963-1964 of 200,000 Indians and Pakistanis without their economic assets. It also featured

central economic planning, near complete nationalization of industry and trade, and military control of economic activity.

The Ne Win government expropriated 15,000 private firms in 1963 to gain near total control of productive assets and prohibited foreign investment except in oil and gas development and the manufacture of arms. Its most radical component was self-imposed international isolation to maintain neutrality in the Cold War, avoid conflict with China and India, and ensure Burmese Buddhist purity. Those fascist policies, coupled with an abysmal human rights record, caused Ne Win's Burma to become an international pariah state.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mao_Zedong_sitting.jpg>

*Ne Win Avoided Conflict With Communist China – Mao Zedong,
In “Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung,” c. 1955*

SLORC and Aung San Suu Kyi (1988-present). In mid-1988, Ne Win resigned in the face of student-led popular uprisings and instructed his military colleagues to form the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to restore order.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Info_box_collage_for_8888_Uprising.jpg>

Anti-government Demonstrations (8888 Uprising), August 1988

In hopes of receiving international legitimacy, the SLORC held an election in 1990. Aung San Suu Kyi, Aung San's daughter who had returned to Burma from England in 1988, took over the leadership of the opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD). The SLORC put Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest in 1989 for allegedly having been manipulated by

foreign intelligence agencies and communists. The military junta harassed NLD supporters and strongly supported its own party, the National Unity Party (NUP). In a shocking victory, the NLD won 80 percent of the seats (396 of 485) in the People's Assembly (*Pyithu Hluttaw*) and the NUP won only 10 seats. But the SLORC ignored the election results and continued to rule.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aung_Suu_Kyi_17_November_2011.jpg>

*Aung San Suu Kyi, Under House Arrest during the 1990 Campaign
– Pictured in Yangon, 2011*

Aung San Suu Kyi, a charismatic speaker, leader, historian, and author, was apolitical before she returned to Burma. Threatened by her political popularity, the military regime held her under house arrest during all but six years between 1989 and 2010 (1989-1995, 2000-2002, and 2003-2010). In 1991, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her courageous opposition to Burma's military junta and her unyielding support of democracy and human rights. But a quarter-century later, Aung San Suu Kyi thoroughly disappointed her admirers outside of Burma.

In 1993, the military government set up the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a mass political organization of young people and government workers that grew to have more than 11 million members. Some analysts feel that the USDA was groomed to have a political role similar to that formerly played by the GOLKAR party in Indonesia under ex-dictator Suharto through which youth, civil servants, and the military provided political support for the repressive government.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Union_Solidarity_and_Development_Party_logo.png>

Logo of the Union Solidarity and Development Association

The SLORC changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997. The SPDC was led by a troika – Than Shwe (prime minister), Maung Aye (deputy military commander), and Khin Nyunt (director of intelligence). Khin Nyunt was regarded as the more moderate reformer, Maung Aye as the hardline conservative, and Than Shwe as the deciding force in the middle. In 2003, Than Shwe was installed as head of state and Khin Nyunt as Prime Minister, and the troika continued to rule.

But that troika ended in 2004 when Khin Nyunt was placed under house arrest and removed from the government.



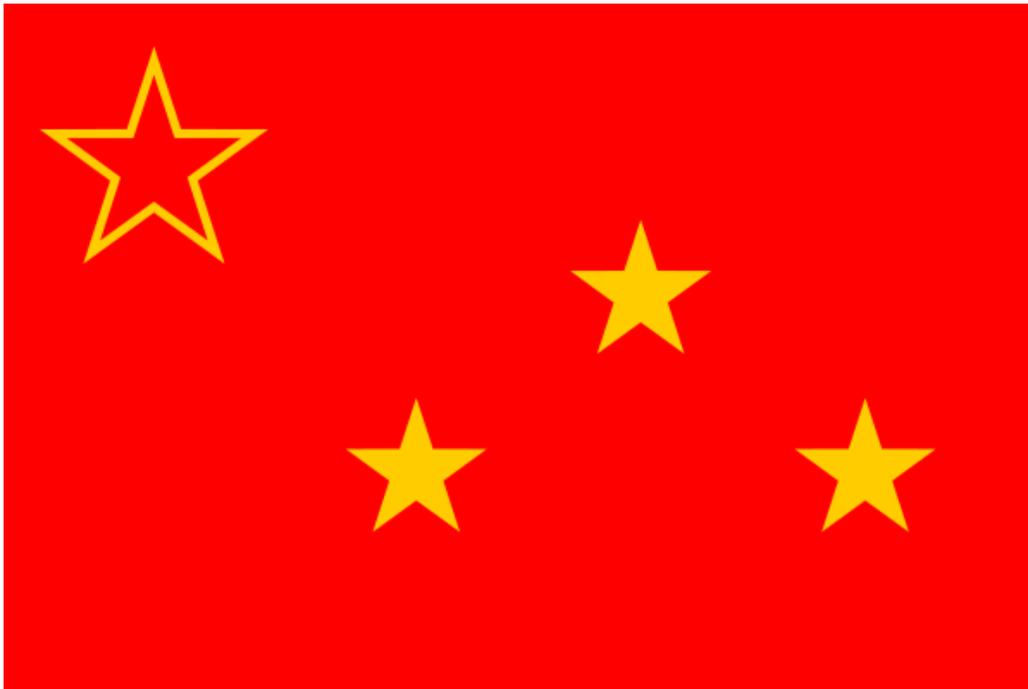
Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Than_Shwe_2010-10-11.jpg>

General Than Shwe – Military Leader of Burma (1992-2011)

Than Shwe, who had been the *de facto* leader of the country since 1992, continued as head of state, and General Soe Win became Prime Minister and head of government. Burma had almost as many monks (400,000) as troops (480,000), and the government infiltrated monastic organizations to avert opposition.

The army was reported to be under-trained and poorly equipped with second-hand Chinese weaponry, and its main function was to control and harass the Burmese people.

During Burma's first four decades of independence, relations with China were frigid because China supported the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) insurgency against the government.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Communist_Party_of_Burma_flag_\(1939-1946\)_and_\(1946-1970\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Communist_Party_of_Burma_flag_(1939-1946)_and_(1946-1970).svg)>

Flag of the Communist Party of Burma (BCP), 1939-1989

Following the implosion of the BCP in 1988-1989, however, Burma forged strong military and economic links with China.

From China, Burma has received more than \$3 billion of military equipment (including fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles), inexpensive consumer goods, foreign investments in northern Burma, and a degree of international legitimacy. In return, China has benefited from a nearby market for consumer goods and its huge military industry, cheap raw materials, access to Indian Ocean ports and perhaps intelligence on Indian Ocean shipping, creation of a closely-linked buffer state on its southern border, and support in its border dispute with India.

Official and unofficial exports from China to Burma probably amount to more than \$1 billion annually, and Chinese firms have set up factories in northern Burma, especially Mandalay, to manufacture labor-intensive goods for the Burmese market. In the early 2000s, the military regime spent about 60 percent of the national budget on military purchases, mostly from China. There were rumors of growing opposition within the junta to the high military and economic dependence on China, when some of the military equipment was deemed to be inferior.

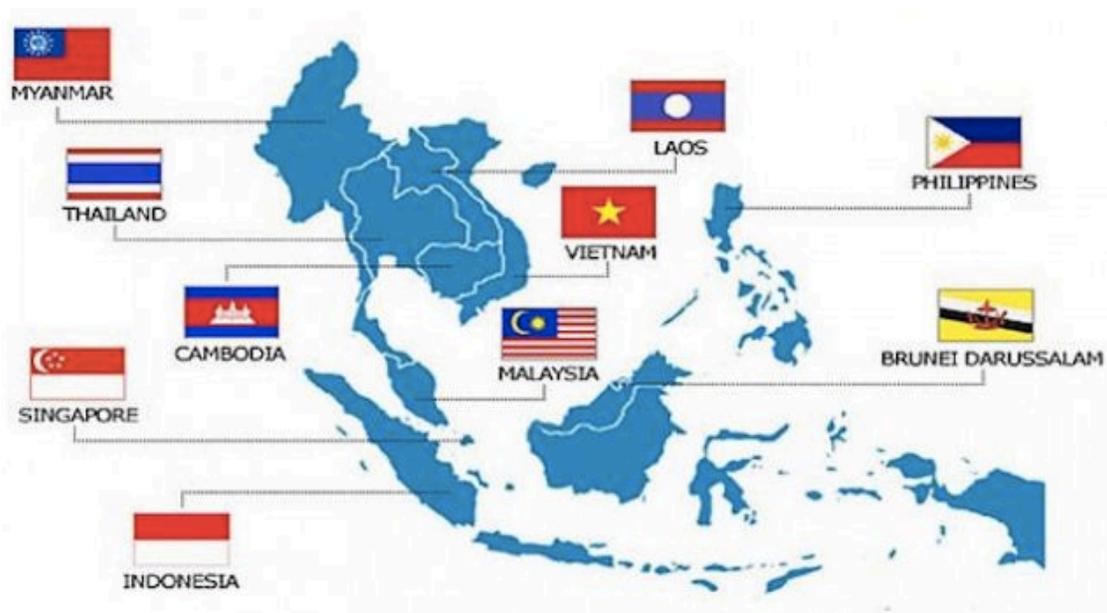


Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandalay_street.jpg>

*Mandalay, Northern Burma –
Half of Its Population of 1 million are Ethnic Chinese*

In 1997, Burma joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and gained regional legitimacy and access to foreign investment, aid, and technology. Businessmen in some of the ASEAN countries also saw attractive opportunities in Burma. After the 1988 revolt in Burma, the government granted concessions to Thai companies to extract more than a million tons of logs (mostly teak) annually in Burma. Under the philosophy of constructive engagement, firms from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia have invested in hotels,

shopping centers, department stores, clothing factories, and resource extraction in Burma. Although India is not a member of ASEAN, it switched its policy stance from isolation to constructive engagement of Burma, and it strongly supported the accession of Burma to ASEAN in hopes that membership would lead to less Burmese reliance on China.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ASEAN-member-countries.jpg>>*

Ten ASEAN Member Countries – Burma/Myanmar Joined In 1997

Ethnic Insurgencies and the Drug Trade (1948-present).

The ethnic minorities, about one-third of Burma's population, have held grievances against the Burmans for more than a millennium.

During the 9th-19th centuries, most minority peoples lived in states that were tributaries of the Burman kingdoms. In return for acknowledging Burman suzerainty, paying tribute, and supplying troops, the minority groups ruled themselves and retained their own cultures. Indirect rule continued under British colonialism. But Britain reneged on its promise that independent Burma would be a federal union with protection for minority states' rights. After independence, several minority groups rebelled, and many continued to fight for more than half a century.

The National Democratic Front (NDF), an alliance of nine minority forces formed in 1976, fought for a decentralized federal union in which strong states would protect minority rights. They argued that the constitution of 1947 promised that states would be strong and the federal government would be weak, the opposite of what actually occurred. The NDF and the Burmese Communist Party funded their activities by dealing on the black markets in timber, cattle, luxury goods, and opium. No reliable estimates of the loss of life in the ethnic and communist rebellions

have been made, but in 1990 the SLORC chairman put the death toll at more than one million.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Armed_conflict_zones_in_Myanmar.png

Armed Conflict Zones in Burma, 1995

In 1989, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) imploded. Its 15,000 (mostly ethnic) ground troops rebelled against their (mainly Burman) leaders and divided into four armed remnants. Those groups made peace with the ruling junta, took over parts of the golden triangle region of northeast Burma and other areas bordering China or Thailand, and greatly expanded opium production. Chinese drug lords moved their heroin factories from Thailand to Burma and started manufacturing amphetamines as well. The drug outlet shifted from Thailand to China, and Burma began exporting drugs worth \$500 million to \$2 billion annually.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coquelicots_-_Parc_floral_6.JPG>

*Opium Poppy (Papaver somniferum) –
Grown in Shan State, Northeastern Burma*

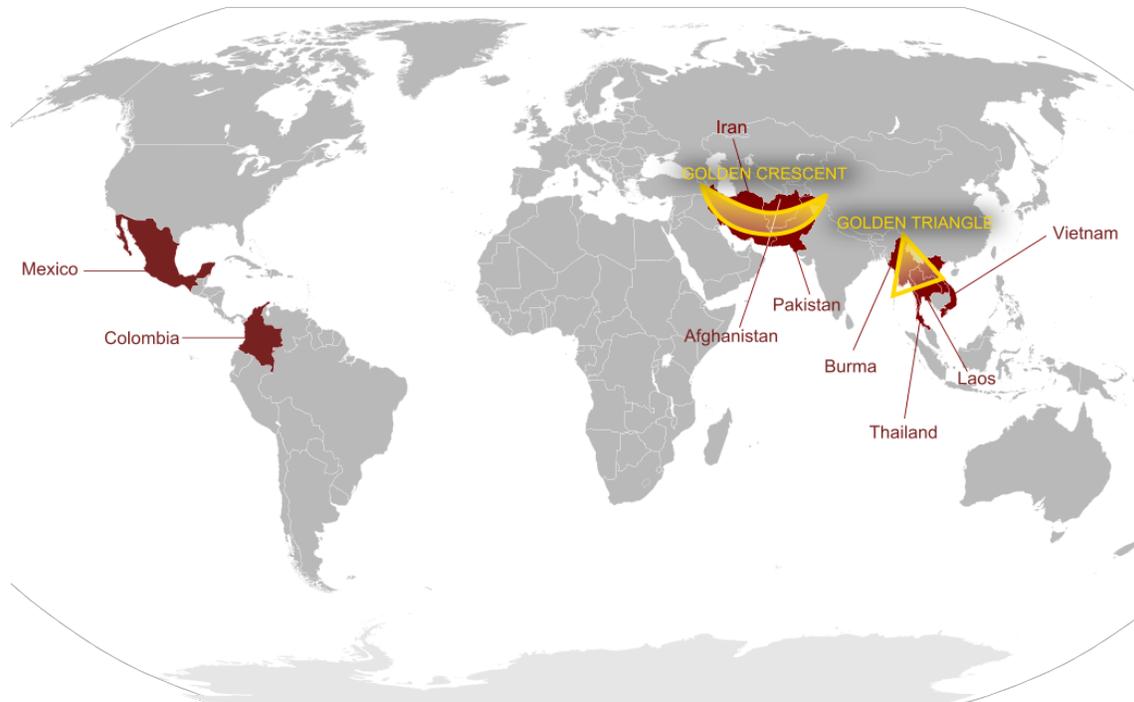
The SLORC, led by Khin Nyunt, rediscovered the policy of indirect rule in their ceasefire agreements with the CPB remnant armies and other ethnic insurgent groups. In return for ending the fighting, the ethnic forces could rule in their regions, keep their weapons, and practice their cultures. During the 1990s, most of the ethnic forces signed ceasefires. The two major hold-outs were the Karens and the Mons, and parts of both of those groups eventually entered into ceasefire agreements before the decade was over. By 2002, fifteen ethnic forces had signed peace agreements, and in 2004 the principal hold-out, the Karen National Union, agreed to a temporary cease-fire. But skirmishes between the military and Karen, Shan, and Kachin insurgents resumed.



*Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KhinNyunt_cropped.jpg>*

*Khin Nyunt – Member of the SLORC Troika and Negotiator of
Ceasefires, 1995-2004*

In 2019, Burma continued to be the world's second largest producer of illicit opium, after Afghanistan, and a major producer and exporter of other illicit drugs – heroin, methamphetamine, and methylfentanyl (an analogue of fentanyl, a drug that is 50 times stronger than heroin). About 90 percent of drug production in Burma is in northeast Shan State, in a region known as the Golden Triangle, which Burma shares with Thailand, Laos, and China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HeroinWorld-en.svg>>

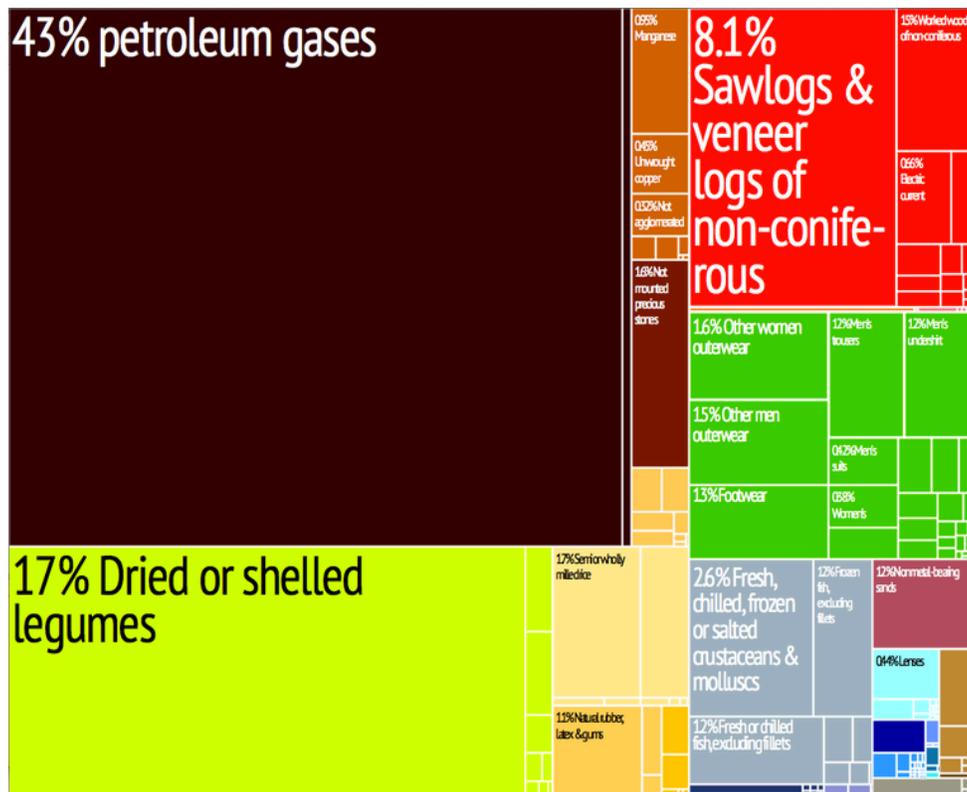
*Principal Producers of Opium/Heroin –
Burma is Part of the Golden Triangle*

Burma's Changing Economy – Isolation, Controls, Drugs, and Natural Gas. For half a century after independence, Burma was a tragic case of economic policy failure. At independence in 1948, the country had rich natural resources and adequate infrastructure. Pundits were optimistic about its prospects. The civilian government (1948-1962) experimented with socialism and was sapped by insurgencies. The first military dictatorship (1962-

1988) nationalized industry and trade, banned foreign investment, but engaged heavily in foreign borrowing to finance military spending. Per capita income was nearly stagnant between 1962 and 1988, growing at the miniscule rate of 0.7 percent per year during that period.

The second military government (1988-2011) encouraged foreign investment in joint ventures, expanded cross-border trade with China, and attracted investment from ASEAN countries. Those economic reforms led to a very rapid growth of income (GDP per capita measured by the World Bank at Purchasing Power Parity and in constant dollars), which increased at an annual rate of 8.3 percent between 1990 and 2011. The Burmese military created the Myanmar Economic Holdings Corporation, which controlled an important portion of Burma's non-agricultural economy and was involved in numerous joint ventures with foreign investors. Illicit export earnings from opium, heroin, and methamphetamines grew to \$500 million annually. Exports to Thailand of natural gas produced in the Gulf of Martaban earned \$600 million in 2002.

The principals in the Yadana natural gas project, the country's largest industrial venture, are the Burmese government, Total of France, Unocal of the United States, and the Petroleum Authority of Thailand.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myanmar_treemap.png

Proportional Representation of Burma's Exports in 2009 – Two-fifths of Earnings Were From Natural Gas

According to the most recent World Bank estimate, 25 percent of the people of Burma earned incomes less than the poverty line in 2017. Most poverty in Burma is rural. Rural

Burma is made up of 4.5 million farm households that inhabit 40,000 small, mostly self-sufficient villages. The agricultural sector provides 60 percent of jobs and half of national income. Farms are small (85 percent are less than ten acres), and 40 percent of rural workers are landless laborers.

In the 1970s, Burma doubled rice output with a Green Revolution based on high-yielding varieties and chemical fertilizer. But policies that taxed rice heavily discouraged subsequent increases in rice production, and farmers shifted to growing pulses for export. The stagnant agricultural sector has not provided incomes and jobs to alleviate rural poverty.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons* available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20160810_Pyain_Myanmar_9198.jpg>

Plowing a Rice Field – Near Pyay, Burma/Myanmar

A critical dimension of poverty alleviation is education. But in 1997, only 15 percent of the Burmese population had finished middle school and just six percent had graduated from high school. Recently, only one-fifth of middle-school-age children were enrolled in school. For the standard of living in Burma to increase on a sustainable basis, these woeful results will have to improve dramatically.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tambon_Mae_La,_Myanmar_\(Burma\)_\(_Unsplash_FQ1L770x6l8\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tambon_Mae_La,_Myanmar_(Burma)_(_Unsplash_FQ1L770x6l8).jpg)>

*Inferior Education In Crowded Classrooms –
Tambon Mae La, Burma/Myanmar*

Political and Economic Reforms in Burma. The military junta, led by General Than Shwe, rammed through a new

constitution in 2008 to ensure continued military rule. The NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, chose not to participate in the rigged election of November 2010. The military party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), won nearly 80 percent of both the People's Assembly and the upper house of parliament. General Thein Sein, who had been prime minister (2007-2011), was elected president and took office in March 2011.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IRRI_Thein_Sein_IMG_9764-7_\(11228831655\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IRRI_Thein_Sein_IMG_9764-7_(11228831655).jpg)>

Thein Sein, President of Burma (2011-2015) – Pictured in 2013 at the International Rice Research Institute, The Philippines

In August 2011, Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi formed a working alliance. The new Thein Sein government introduced a series of critical reforms, which caught most observers by surprise. Burmese people were allowed free speech, and the media was no longer censored. All but about 200 political prisoners were freed. Aung San Suu Kyi was freed from house arrest. Trade unions were permitted. The government negotiated 13 new ceasefires with ethnic minorities, including the first with the Karens, although fighting continued in the Kachin region.

The by-election in 2012 (to replace parliamentarians who had been appointed as ministers) was free and fair. The NLD won 43 of the 44 seats (which amounted to only 8 percent of the total seats), and Aung San Suu Kyi was elected to parliament. The purpose of the gamble to reform seemed to be to reduce dependence on China. By 2013, Burma had received \$15 billion of direct foreign investment and \$3 billion of military aid from China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Remise du Prix Sakharov %C3%A0 Aung San Suu Kyi Strasbourg 22 octobre 2013-18.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Remise_du_Prix_Sakharov_%C3%A0_Aung_San_Suu_Kyi_Strasbourg_22_octobre_2013-18.jpg)>

Aung San Suu Kyi – Elected to Parliament in the 2012 By-election

Promises of foreign investment and aid from Western countries abounded. In the first quarter of 2013 alone, Western investment of \$1 billion was promised. For all of 2013, foreign direct investment amounted to \$2.3 billion and pledged development assistance was \$3.9 billion. The Thein Sein

government also set up programs to investigate ways of alleviating poverty and improving agricultural performance.

The new government honored its promise to hold fair parliamentary elections. In November 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won 80 percent of the contested parliamentary seats in a generally free and fair election. The new parliament elected Htin Kyaw, a close ally of Aung San Suu Kyi's, as president. He resigned for health reasons in 2018 and was succeeded by Win Myint, another ally. Aung San Suu Kyi could not become president because the 2008 constitution contains a provision disallowing anyone whose spouse or child has a foreign passport from serving as president. The government then created the new position of State Counsellor to permit Aung San Suu Kyi to become *de facto* head of government.

Her NLD government focused on ending the rebellions by disaffected ethnic minorities and concluded a ceasefire in 2015. However, starting in 2016 the new government permitted Burma's military and police to carry out inhumane violence against the

Muslim-minority Rohingya people in Rakhine State. At least 750,000 (and perhaps as many as 1 million) Rohingyas fled to exile in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Aung San Suu Kyi and her government have denied US State Department charges of ethnic cleansing and genocide and have refused to permit UN investigators to enter Burma. Her once sterling international reputation has been completely tarnished as a result.

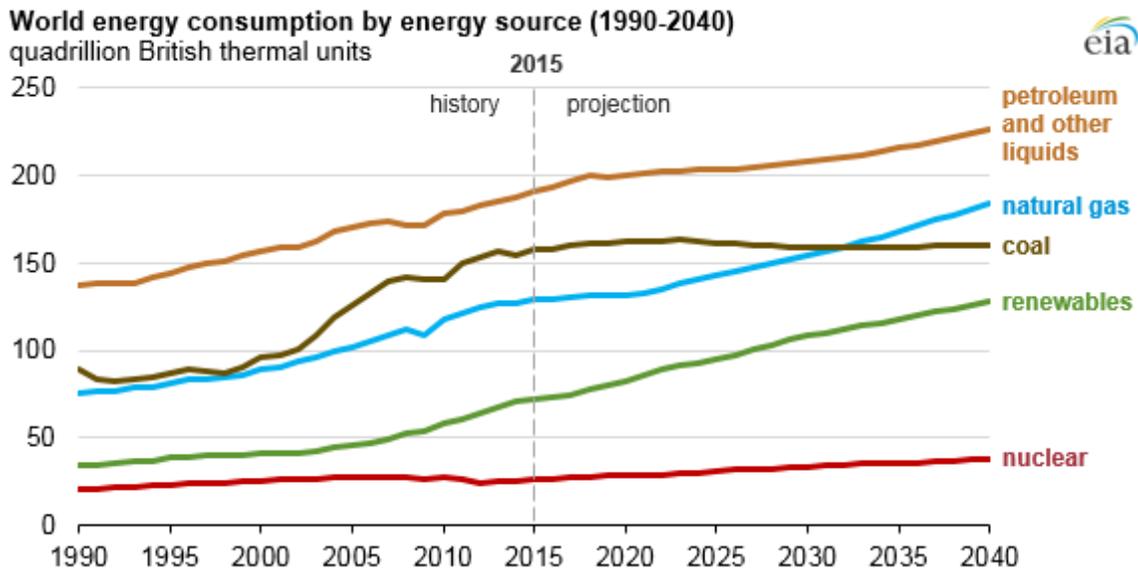


Source: Wikimedia Commons available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aung_Suu_Kyi_31_ott_13_021.jpg>

Aung San Suu Kyi – Her NLD Government Refuses To Permit UN Investigation of Ethnic Cleansing of the Rohingya People

The growth of per capita income (price-adjusted) in Burma decelerated to a still impressive annual rate of 5.8 percent between

2011 and 2019 – but significantly slower than the 8.3 per cent rate achieved by the second military government between 1990 and 2011. Aided by low population growth rates (0.6 percent per year in 2019), per capita income in Burma reached \$5,355 (estimated in Purchasing Power Parity prices), 8 percent of the U.S. level, in 2019. Natural gas exports increased six-fold between 1999 and 2019, and earned over \$3 billion in 2019 – just over half from Thailand and slightly less than half from China.



Source: US Energy Information Administration available at <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=32912>

US Energy Information Administration Projects a 20 Percent Increase in World Energy Consumption Between 2015 and 2040 – The Future For Burma’s Oil and Gas Production Seems Promising

But the quality of life for most Burmans has not yet improved much. The average life expectancy of Burma's 54 million people is only 67 years, the lowest among ASEAN countries. Adult literacy (for people ages 15 and older) is just 76 percent, and the World Bank estimates that about one-fourth of Burma's people eke out a living on incomes beneath the poverty line.

Emerging countries compete to improve their places in three prestigious sets of international rankings, all watched closely by private (foreign and domestic) investors. It is instructive to see how well Burma/Myanmar ranked in comparison with three other emerging Southeast Asian countries – Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The gold standard of quality-of-life indicators is the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), because it incorporates income, health, and education data. In 2019, Burma ranked only 145th of 189 countries in the HDI (in the bottom quartile) – far behind Vietnam (118th), somewhat beneath Laos (140th), and just ahead of Cambodia (146th).

The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (EDBI) incorporates ten measures of government controls and regulations that can make it difficult to establish and run businesses. In 2019, Burma ranked a very disappointing 165th of 190 countries in the EDBI, considerably lower than Cambodia (144th) and Laos (154th). These three countries have retained a wide range of inefficient bureaucratic regulations. In contrast, Vietnam ranked 70th, demonstrating that the country has enacted significant reforms to attract investors.

shameful 162nd. As these three rankings demonstrate, a great deal needs to be accomplished before Burma's people will benefit economically from the country's political opening.

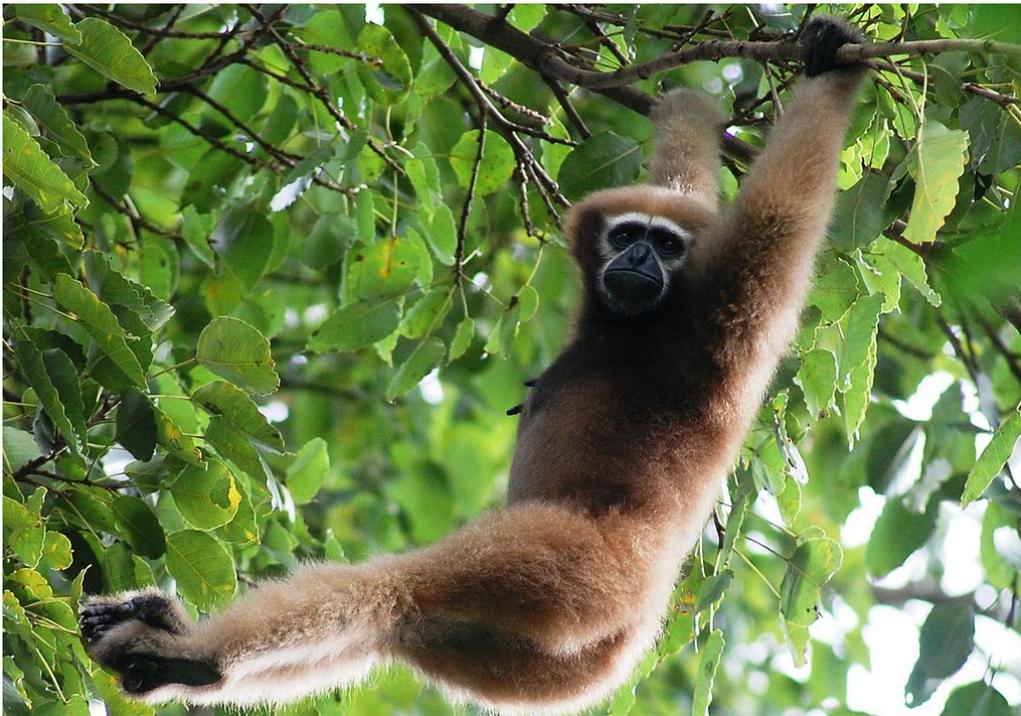


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myanmar1.gif>>

Contemporary Burma

Appendix on Conservation in Burma

Threats to Biodiversity in Burma. The overarching goal of conservation is to preserve global biodiversity, the wealth of different forms of life on this planet. According to the Red List of Threatened Animals published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Burma houses 7,000 species of plants, 300 species of mammals, 310 species of birds, 262 species of reptiles, and 80 species of amphibians.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gibbon_Hoolock_de_l%27ouest.JPG>

Species Richness – Hoolock Gibbon (Hoolock hoolock)

Of those species of flora and fauna in Burma, at least 37 plant species, 39 mammal species, 35 bird species, and 20 reptile species are threatened. These figures represent low estimates, since the actual state of many species in Burma is poorly known due to the difficulty of doing research there.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burumahoshigame.jpg>>

Endemism – Burmese Star Tortoise (Geochelone platynota)

The main threat to most species is habitat loss. Estimates of current deforestation rates in Burma vary greatly, ranging from official government estimates of 0.3 percent per year to estimates by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

of 1.4 percent per year. The FAO figure places Burma among the most rapidly deforesting countries in the world.

Deforestation and forest degradation are caused by several factors. A surge in commercial timber exploitation has taken place since the ethnic insurgencies have paused. The increased timber exports have been fueled by demand from China and Thailand, following the imposition of domestic logging bans. Coupled with limited government ability and desire to regulate logging, commercial timber exploitation has been particularly destructive.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandalay_32_TeakIndustry_g.jpg>

Rafted Teak Logs on the Irrawaddy River, Burma

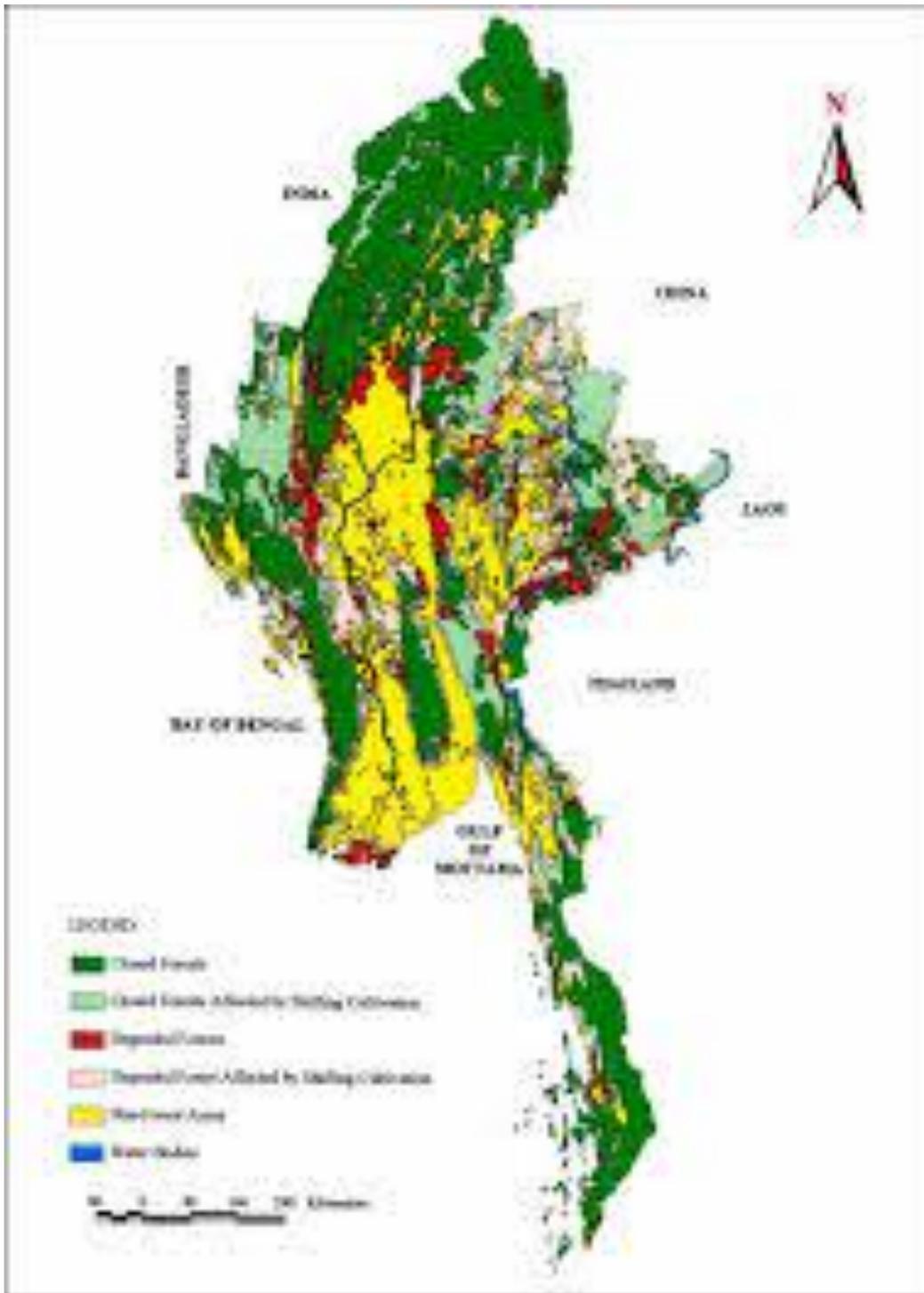
Shifting cultivation, for hill rice and other subsistence crops, such as yams, cassava, and vegetables, also contributes to habitat loss. Increasing land scarcity has shortened fallow periods and forced people to cultivate in less suitable areas, such as steep slopes that are prone to erosion. Poaching, for subsistence but more importantly for the wildlife trade, is also an extreme threat to the wildlife of Burma. Cross-border demand, especially from China, for wildlife products – such as tiger bone, snakeskin, and turtles – sustains an extensive illegal hunting sector that is rapidly driving many species toward extinction. That illicit trade in wildlife products is paired with demand for valuable plant species, such as rare orchids and medicinal plants. Large areas of forest are rapidly succumbing to what is referred to as the “empty forest syndrome,” where the presence of ample numbers of trees obscures the fact that the forest has been emptied of many species of flora and fauna.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tree_in_new_leaves_\(Tectona_grandis\)_I_I_MG_8133.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tree_in_new_leaves_(Tectona_grandis)_I_I_MG_8133.jpg)>

Teak (Tectona grandis) – Endemic to Burma

Managing Protected Areas in Burma. Forests cover 30-50 percent of Burma's land area. The wide range is caused by differing definitions and measurement techniques. Myanmar's Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry claims that 47 percent of Burma's area is forested and that the country has more than 2,000 species of trees. Burma is the most forested country in Southeast Asia and the best hope for survival in the wild of many species if an adequate protected area can be maintained.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/18235-0f3b0fe3d30c9a36cd09f449ed339d87c.pdf>

Closed Forest (Green), Degraded Forest (Red), and Non-forest (Yellow) Areas in Burma

Before 1990, Burma had eighteen parks and wildlife sanctuaries, comprising only 1.1 percent of the country's total land area. Seventy-five percent of those areas were less than 100 square miles in size – too small to house viable populations of large mammals, such as tigers, elephants, and bears. Following the establishment of new protected areas in the 1990s, the creation of the Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in 2004, and its expansion in 2010, nearly 5 percent of Burma's total land area currently is under some form of protected status. However, the effectiveness of this protected area system leaves much to be desired.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%22Hukaung_Valley%22.jpg>

Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary – Established in 2004

Legislation to protect wildlife and their habitats was not introduced until 1994. Only in 1998 did protected area design focus on large-scale ecological processes. As a result, older protected areas were too small and were inappropriately managed, particularly with respect to large mammal species. The capacity to manage the protected area system is lacking. Staff numbers, training, and funding all are inadequate. Wildlife management training for protected area staff did not commence until 1995, and by 2002, only one-third of the staff had received any training.

As a result of weak legislation and limited capacity, many of Burma's protected areas are little more than lines on a map.

Within protected areas, encroachment is widespread, as is the hunting of wildlife and the collection of valuable plant species. A review in 2002 found illegal human activity – incompatible with effective conservation management – in every protected area in Burma. Extraction of non-timber forest products (medicinal plants, valuable plants for collectors, and building materials) took

place in 85 percent of the protected areas, and hunting was carried out in 60 percent of the areas.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myanmar_Illicit_Endangered_Wildlife_Market_06.jpg>

Illicit Trade in Live Endangered Bengal Slow Lorises (Nycticebus bengalensis) – Mong La, Shan State, 2008

Habitat disturbance in the forms of domestic animal grazing, shifting and permanent cultivation, mining, human settlements, and plantations occurred in 90 percent of protected areas. Making the protected area system of Burma meaningful will require enormous technical and financial assistance from outside the country. The challenges to conservation in Burma are exacerbated by extensive

poverty, limited economic opportunities, and restricted ability of the government to impose the rule of law in much of the country.

Conservation and Tourism – Elephants, Tigers, and Turtles. Until recently, tourism in Burma was very limited. The country received only 700,000 visitors in 2005, three percent of the levels attained by neighboring Thailand. Following the political opening in 2011, tourism accelerated. One million tourists visited Burma in 2012, 3 million in 2014, and 3.6 million in 2018. The potential for further expansion of tourism is enormous, because Burma has significant cultural and natural attractions.



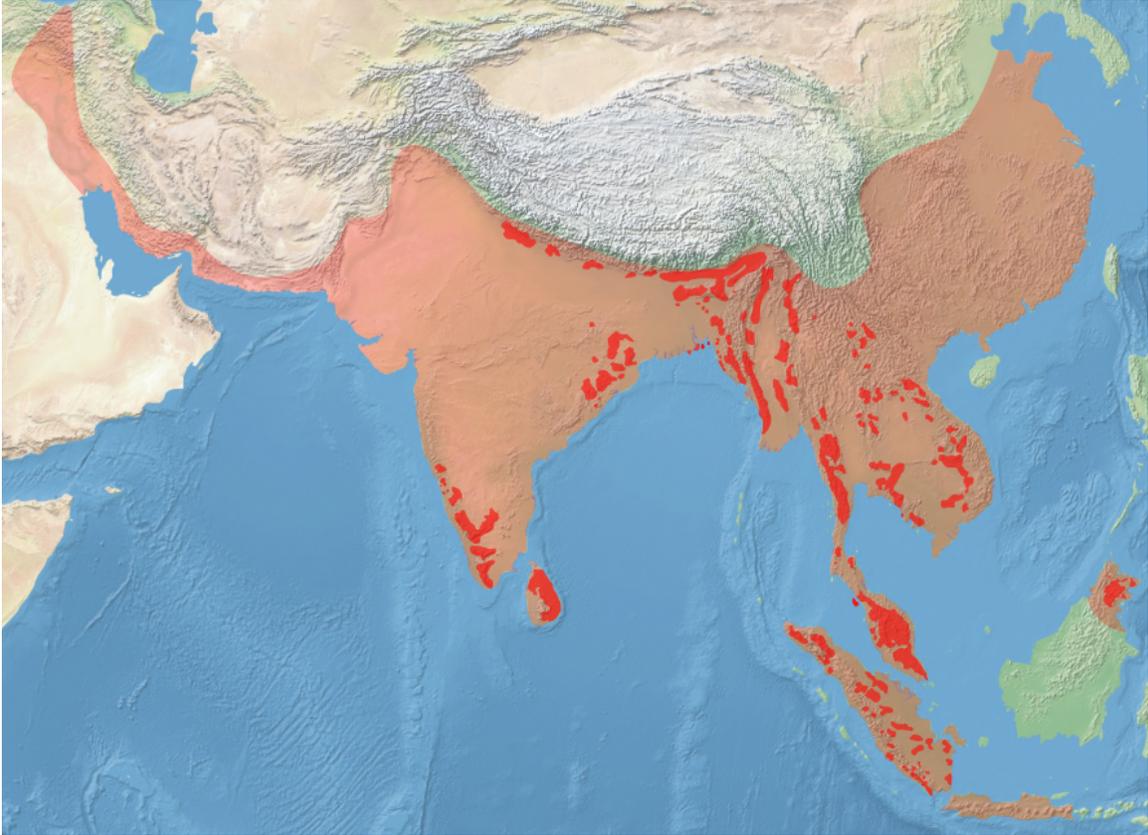
Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phaung_Daw_U_Pagode.jpg>

3.6 Million Tourists Visited Burma in 2018 – Phaung Daw U Pagoda, Inle Lake

In addition to its diverse and spectacular scenery, Burma is home to three types of large animals – elephants, tigers, and turtles – that could attract tourists from Asian and Western countries.

Conservation could achieve both greater income through tourism and the promotion of global biodiversity and species preservation.

The Indian, or Asian, elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is the largest terrestrial mammal in Burma. Indian elephants once occurred from the Tigris-Euphrates basin in Iraq through Asia.

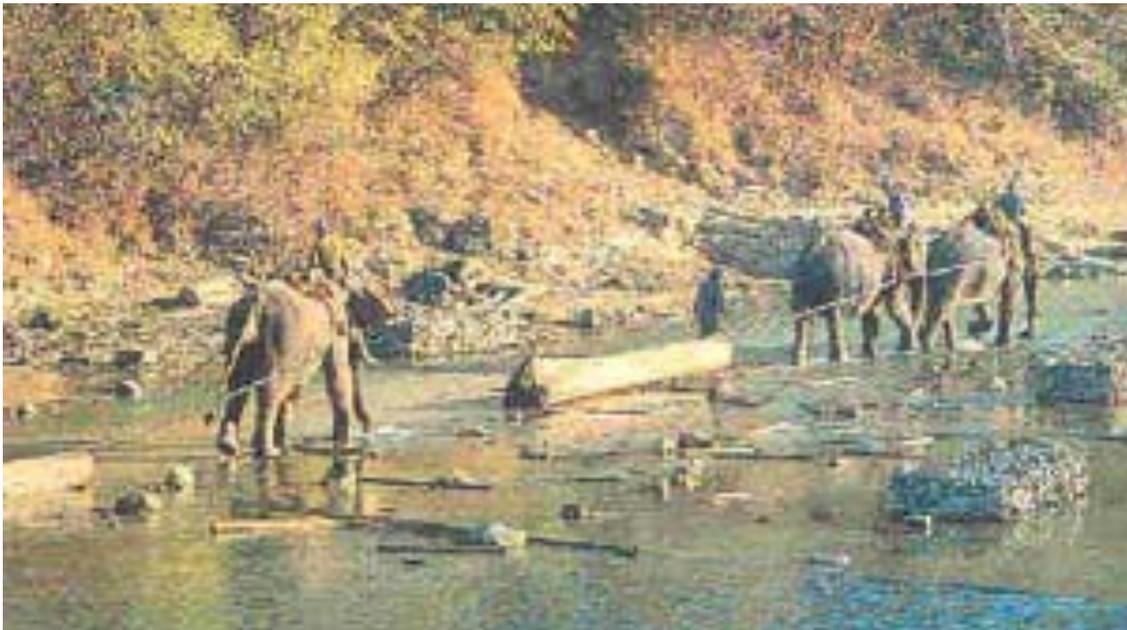


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elephas_Maximus_distribution_evolution_ma
p.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elephas_Maximus_distribution_evolution_map.svg)>

*Shrinking Habitat of Asian Elephants (Elephas maximus) –
Historic Habitat (Pink) and Habitat in the Early 21st century (Red)*

Today, the species occupies scattered fragments of its former range in 13 countries – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. At the start of the 20th century, about 100,000 wild Indian elephants existed. But only between 30,000 and 50,000 remain, concentrated in India (17,000-22,000 head) and Burma

(4,000-5,000 head). Approximately 16,000 tame elephants are employed in the timber industry in Burma, India, and Thailand. Burma has about 5,000 of those domesticated elephants.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<http://www.fao.org/3/ad031e/ad031e0d.htm>>

Captive Asian Elephants – Mostly Used in Logging in Burma

The Asian elephant is legally protected in most countries of its range, but poaching for ivory (and in Burma for hides that are exported to Thailand) continues. However, the species is not greatly threatened by the international ivory trade. Unlike the African elephant, only male Asian elephants have tusks and many males are tuskless. Even intensive poaching for ivory leaves a

nucleus of breeding females. The broader problem faced by Indian elephants is habitat destruction and fragmentation of populations. Human settlement and cultivation have almost completely excluded Indian elephants from lowland habitats, and in hilly areas they are compressed into small pockets of remnant forest.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elephas_maximus_\(Bandipur\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elephas_maximus_(Bandipur).jpg)>

Habitat Loss – Principal Threat to Asian Elephants

The population of Indian elephants in Burma is declining due to habitat loss, capture for live animal trade, and poaching for ivory and other products, such as skin, bone, and hair. The capture

of live animals is linked to the timber industry, since domesticated elephants extract as much as half of the timber harvested in Burma, and to provide animals as tourist attractions, primarily in Thailand. Many elephants are killed through crude capture techniques, such as pitfall traps and killing of mothers to obtain their young. Before 1995, the Government of Myanmar set quotas for wild animal capture to maintain wild populations, but there was little enforcement of those rules. Capture has continued, both to serve the domestic timber industry and to provide animals as tourist attractions, primarily in Thailand.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thailand_06_-_19_Elephant_ride_at_Ayuthaya_\(158623042\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thailand_06_-_19_Elephant_ride_at_Ayuthaya_(158623042).jpg)>

Tourist Riding An Asian Elephant – Ayuthaya, Thailand

In 1997, when Myanmar became a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), all trade in elephants or elephant products became illegal. Nevertheless, illegal trade in live animals continues, as does the sale of ivory, primarily to foreign travelers in Burma and across the border to India. The sale of government-owned ivory, derived from natural deaths of state-owned elephants, remains legal,

creating a channel to launder illegal ivory. Adequate protection of the elephant populations of Burma will require much better enforcement of existing legislation, strengthening of that legislation, the control of cross-border flows of live animals and elephant products, stronger enforcement of anti-poaching measures in existing protected areas, and the creation of additional protected areas.

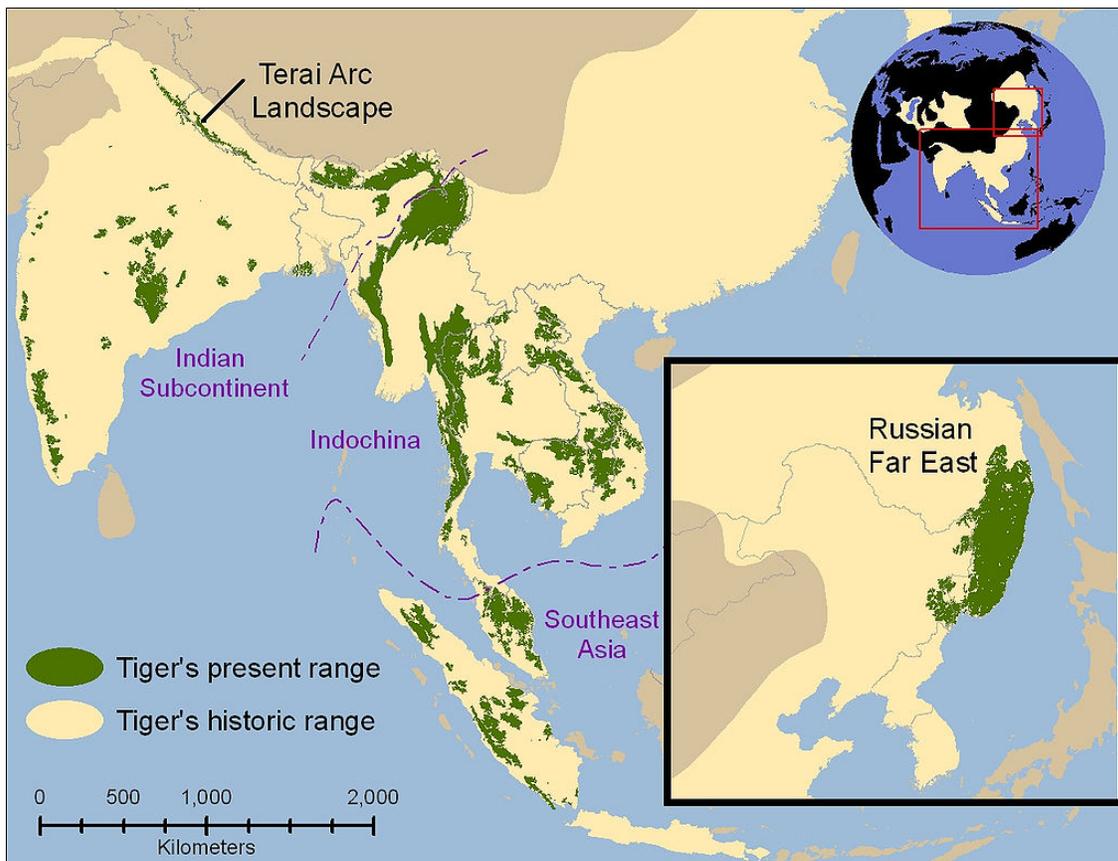


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Asian_Elephant.jpg>

*Asian Elephant In the Wild –
Still Threatened Despite Burma's Joining CITES in 1997*

Historically, tigers (*Panthera tigris*) occurred from eastern Turkey across Central Asia to Southeast Asia. However, the range

of tigers was greatly reduced in the 20th century. The current IUCN estimate of the tiger population in the world is 3,000, down from an estimated 100,000 a century ago. Today, tigers survive only in scattered populations in India, Bangladesh, Burma, Sumatra (Indonesia), China, and the Russian Far East. The largest national population is in India.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tiger_map.jpg>

*Declining Range of Asian Tigers (Panthera tigris) –
Habitat In 1850 (Pale Yellow) and In 2006 (Green)*

Commercial poaching, a declining prey base due to over-hunting, and loss of habitat to agriculture, logging, and malaria-eradication programs are the principal threats to the tiger. Deliberate eradication programs and persecution for fear of attacks on humans and domestic livestock further threaten tiger populations. Tigers have traditionally been hunted primarily for their skins and for bones and other body parts used in traditional Chinese and Korean medicines.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myanmar_Illicit_Endangered_Wildlife_Mark_et_01.jpg

Illicit Trade in Endangered Wildlife, Mong La, Shan State, Burma/Myanmar, 2008 – Tiger Paw, Teeth, and Tallow For Sale

Estimating the tiger population in Burma remains an inexact science, and early estimates were exaggerated. The estimates have fallen – from 600-1000 in 1996, to 250-500 in 1998, and to about 150 in 2002. Because Burma has some of the largest remaining blocks of forest in Southeast Asia, there is hope that sufficiently large areas can be set aside to allow tiger populations to rebound. In 2010, the Myanmar Government tripled the size of the Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary to over 17,000 square kilometers – about the size of Delaware – creating the largest tiger reserve in the world.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Panthera_tigris_corbetti_090901.jpg>

*Indochinese Tiger (Panthera tigris corbetti) –
Inhabits Hukaung Wildlife Sanctuary, Northern Burma*

The establishment of protected areas is one component of the National Tiger Action Plan issued by the Government of Myanmar in 2003, formulated in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society. Other components of the plan include vigorous action against poaching and trade in tiger products, improved management of the forestry sector, planning the

development of roads and dams to avoid habitat destruction, and addressing conflicts between rural humans and tigers.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Panthera_tigris_corbetti_\(Tierpark_Berlin\)_841-723-\(118\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Panthera_tigris_corbetti_(Tierpark_Berlin)_841-723-(118).jpg)>

Indochinese Tigress and Cubs – Will They Have a Future in Burma?

One of Burma's more remarkable natural assets is its wealth of turtle species (chelonians). Burma supports one of the most diverse chelonian faunas in Southeast Asia, and 27 species of non-marine (freshwater) chelonians, including seven endemics, occur in the country. A destructive harvest of Southeast Asian

freshwater turtles and tortoises is currently occurring, fueled by food, medicinal, and pet markets in southern China. Exports have reached a massive scale due to rapid gains in purchasing power in China and the increasing scarcity of turtles in southern China.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manouria-emys-asian-forest-tortoise.jpg>>

*Asian Brown Tortoise (Manouria emys) –
Endemic to Burma and Facing Extinction*

The number of freshwater turtles and tortoises consumed by the Chinese markets is staggering. Over 10 million turtles are sold

annually in southern China, resulting in widespread declines of turtle populations throughout Asia.

There is an urgent need for scientific assessment and conservation of Burma's unique turtle species, because the volume of the turtle export trade from Burma is dramatically increasing. Over-harvesting has eliminated two species of large river turtles (*Batagur baska* and *Kachuga trivittata*) from the Irrawaddy Delta. Illegal harvesting of yellow tortoises (*Indotestudo elongata*) and Burmese star tortoises (*Geochelone platynota*) in protected areas threatens the viability of remaining populations. The Asian brown tortoise (*Manouria emys*) has disappeared in much of the country. The giant Asian softshell tortoise (*Amyda cartilaginea*) is rapidly approaching commercial extinction. Unless appropriate conservation is implemented rapidly, over-harvesting will extirpate many species of chelonians.

The conservation of Burma's unique turtle species requires improved enforcement of protected areas and concerted efforts to control illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. The success

of both will depend on a massive investment in training and capacity building. To conserve species known to be under severe threat will require education of surrounding human populations, monitoring programs, and captive breeding and reintroduction efforts. A sound conservation strategy will depend on reliable data on population distribution, status, and behavior of turtles.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Geochelone_platynota_by_OpenCage.jpg>

*More Research and Better Enforcement Are Needed To Conserve
the Burmese Star Tortoise (Geochelone platynota) and Other
Tortoise Species*

Lessons for Contemporary Powers

What lessons for contemporary powers can be drawn from the experiences of the Kingdom of Pagan and of successor governments in Burma? Three lessons emerge from the rise, rule, and fall of Pagan. Pagan became a powerful regional kingdom largely because the Burman settlers combined astute public investments and administration with military capability. Successful invasion and military takeover are only the first steps in the creation of sustainable kingdoms. Military prowess must be matched with an ability to run the show and produce wealth.

Pagan's leaders understood that rice wealth was power. Hence, they had to raise rice yields, increase the number of rice crops that could be harvested each year, and expand the area under rice production. They accomplished those goals by investing in new techniques to irrigate rice fields in the plains of the Irrawaddy River. Sources of wealth need to be nurtured by constant government attention.

A second lesson for success is to have a balanced economic base to create wealth and sustain power. After Pagan was up and running in the 11th century, its Burman rulers realized that rice alone would not be enough to sustain an expanding kingdom. They sought a balanced economic base through the foreign conquest of lower Burma. Part of the rationale for conquest was chauvinism – to control untrustworthy Mons on the southern flank. But lower Burma also offered two key economic advantages – labor and ports. In upper Burma, good rice land was plentiful but labor was scarce. Conquest of the south brought new bonded laborers to upper Burma's new rice fields.

Expansion further allowed access to and control of southern ports on the Indian Ocean. Pagan took advantage of the location of those newly-acquired ports to become an important player in regional trade with Southeast Asia and in long-distance trade between India and China. Foreign conquest thus was profitable so long as the Mon population could be controlled. Trade taxes

supplemented agricultural taxes as sources of revenue for Pagan's royal government, and economic balance was neatly achieved.

The fall of the Kingdom of Pagan in the late 13th century provides a classic example of the importance of maintaining a strong tax base. Throughout most of the 13th century, the kings in Pagan were powerless to check the expanding economic control of the tax-free Theravada Buddhist church (*sangha*), which thus came into control of two-thirds of the country's productive rice land and bonded laborers. The rulers were too weak to invoke a purification cycle (*sasana*) to transfer much of the rice-growing assets back to state control. The loss of much of its tax base undercut the ability of the royal government to pay its governing bureaucracy, buy off its political opponents in court, police and control its tributary states, and protect its borders from foreign invasion. Pagan fell mainly because the government lost control of its tax base and only secondarily because of the Mongol-Chinese invasion.

Two further lessons for contemporary powers arise from the mistakes of Burma's governments since the country became

independent in 1948. The first lesson is the essential need to take care of ethnic minorities. The beleaguered country's two democratically-elected governments (1948-1958 and 1960-1962), both led by Nu, were unfortunate failures. Part of the problem was inadequate leadership and administration. But the Nu governments' failures grew fundamentally out of the unwillingness to recognize the legitimacy of the demands of Burma's ethnic minorities for regional autonomy.

Minority insurgencies destabilized the country politically, bled its human and financial resources, discouraged domestic and foreign investment, and created black markets in drugs, timber, and precious stones. Ultimately, the insurgencies provided an excuse for military takeover of the government. Democratic governments cannot afford to ignore the needs of their ethnic minorities or their under-classes.

The second lesson from independent Burma is the critical influence of government economic policy on the standard of living of the masses. Socialism – government ownership of economic

assets and central planning of asset allocation – harms poor people because it debilitates private initiative to save and invest efficiently and it puts an enormous burden on the government to manage the economy effectively. Burma's experiments with socialism were disastrous for its poverty-stricken citizens. The military governments used socialism as an excuse for military control of the economy in a kleptocratic power-grab.

For 40 years after independence, Burma's people were little better off economically than they were in 1948. Moreover, the abject failure of economic policy under the military dictatorship caused it in 1989 to turn to China for military and economic assistance. Burma's economy increasingly became an appendage of China while Burma's people continued to struggle. Starting in the late 1980s, a combination of political and economic openness and natural gas exports improved Burma's economic performance and prospects.

Burma Time Line

2 nd millennium BCE	Hoabinhian culture – agriculture and bronze metallurgy
from c. 500 BCE	origins of rice agriculture – introduced from southern China
3 rd century BCE	Pyu people migrated into upper Burma – Sino-Tibetan speakers
c. 3 rd century BCE	Mon people migrated into lower Burma – Austroasiatic speakers
2 nd century BCE- 9 th century CE	Pyu Kingdom – Irrawaddy River plains of upper Burma
2 nd century BCE- 7 th century CE	Beikthano Myo – Pyu capital in center of upper Burma
4 th century	Theravada Buddhism practiced widely
1 st -7 th centuries	Halin – Pyu capital in north of upper Burma
7 th -9 th centuries	Sri Ksetra – Pyu capital in south of upper Burma
7 th -13 th centuries	Kingdom of Srivijaya in Sumatra and Malaya – trading entrepôt controlled Straits of Malacca and Sunda
9 th century	Burman people migrated into upper Burma – Sino-Tibetan speakers

9 th -14 th centuries	Shan people migrated into upper Burma – Tai speakers
830s	Nanchao kingdom of Yunnan – invaded Pyu Kingdom
9 th century	Burmans controlled Kyaukse in upper Burma – irrigated rice area
late 10 th century	Burmans built fortified capital city at Pagan – former Pyu village
1044-1077	King Anawrahta ruled in Pagan – unified upper and lower Burma
mid-11 th century	King Anawrahta introduced Theravada Buddhism into Pagan – state religion
1084-1111	King Kyanzittha ruled in Pagan – built Schwezigon stupa and Nanda temple
late 11 th century	India-China trade route shifted northward – Burmese ports supplied entrepôt services
1173-1210	King Narapatisithu ruled in Pagan – kingdom at territorial peak
1250	population about 2.5 million
mid-13 th century	Sukothai (new Thai kingdom) – detached Chiengmai from Pagan
late 13 th century	Pagan in decline – Theravada Buddhist <i>sanghas</i> controlled two-thirds of rice-growing areas

1277-1301	Mongol-Chinese invasion – defeated and debilitated Pagan
1284-1555	Mon Kingdom, Ramannadesa – capital at Pegu, lower Burma
late 1290s	Three Shan Brothers (Asankhaya, Rajasankram, and Sihasura) – rebelled and defeated Klawcwa, last Pagan king
1364-1527	Ava Dynasty – Thado Minbya founding king
1438	Mohnyin Thado – successfully purified Buddhist <i>sangha</i>
1527	Shan invasion – ended Ava Dynasty
1539-1752	Toungoo Dynasty – Tabinshwehti founding king
1551-1581	King Bayinnaung ruled in Toungoo – conquered Mon Kingdom of Ramannadesa, unified Burma, defeated Thai Ayudhya
1752-1885	Konbaung Dynasty – Alaungpaya founding king
1752-1760	Alaungpaya moved capital back to Ava – defeated Mons at Pegu
1782-1819	Konbaung King Bodawpaya ruled – carried out purification – claimed Tenasserim, Arakan in 1784, Manipur, Assam in 1819

1820	population about 4.2 million
1824-1826	First Anglo-Burmese War – opened trade in Burmese ports
1826	Treaty of Yandabo – Burma ceded Arakan, Tenasserim to Britain, paid \$5 million indemnity, agreed to commercial treaty
1852-1853	Second Anglo-Burmese War – Britain annexed Lower Burma
1885-1886	Third Anglo-Burmese War – Britain overthrew King Thibaw, colonized all of Burma
1886-1942	British colonial rule of Burma – focused on rice, teak exports
1895	British military brutally repressed opposition – gained full control
1901	population about 10.5 million
1930	Burma was world's leading exporter of rice – 3 million tons
1930-1932	Hsaya San Rebellion – peasant protest against land foreclosures, 3,000 peasants died
1937	British Colony of Burma – separated from British India

1941	population about 16.8 million
1942-1945	Japanese Conquest of Burma – economic and social disaster
1943	Ba Maw led puppet Burmese government – Aung San was Minister of Defense
1944	formation of Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League – anti-Japan
early 1945	Japanese forces driven out of Burma – British, AFPFL forces
January 1947	Aung San/Attlee Agreement – Burmese independence in one year
April 1947	Panglong Agreement – ethnic minority group loyalty for statehood
July 1947	assassination of Aung San and 8 others – military implicated
January 1948	Burma became independent – Nu was first prime minister
1948-1958	Nu served as Prime Minister – popular but weak administrator
1951	Defense Services Institute founded – country’s largest business
1958-1960	first military government – General Ne Win ruled as caretaker

1960	open and fair election – Nu elected Prime Minister
1962-1974	second military government – Ne Win Chairman of Revolutionary Council
1963-1964	Ne Win's forced repatriation – 200,000 Indians and Pakistanis
1974-1988	third military government – Ne Win head of Socialist Republic
1976	National Democratic Front (NDF) formed – alliance of nine ethnic minority forces, fighting for decentralized federal union
mid-1988	student-led popular uprisings – Ne Win resigned
1988-1997	fourth military government – State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)
1988	Burma-China rapprochement – military, trade, investment links
1989	Communist Party of Burma (CPB) imploded – divided into four armed remnant forces
1990	open and fair election – National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won 80 percent of parliamentary seats
1990-1997	SLORC ignored election results – military continued to rule

- 1990-2002 15 ethnic minority forces signed peace agreements – local rule
- 1989-2010 Aung San Suu Kyi led NLD – under house arrest for all but six years
- 1991 Aung San Suu Kyi won Nobel Peace Prize – unyielding support of democracy, courageous opposition to military junta
- 1993 formation of Union Solidarity and Development Association – mass political organization of youth, government workers
- 1997 SLORC replaced by State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) – led by Than Shwe (prime minister), Maung Aye (military commander), Khin Nyunt (director of intelligence).
- 1997 Myanmar joined Association of Southeast Asian Nations – regional legitimacy – access to foreign investment, aid, trade, and technology
- 1997 Myanmar signed Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) – trade in endangered animal products illegal
- 2001-2004 creation, expansion of Hukaung Wildlife Sanctuary – 5 percent of Burma’s land under protected status

2003	National Tiger Action Plan – established protected areas for tigers
2004	Karen National Union – last major insurgent group – agreed to temporary cease-fire
2004	Khin Nyunt removed from government – placed under house arrest
2004-2011	SPDC military government – led by Than Shwe as head of state – Maung Aye still military commander – Soe Win became prime minister
2011-present	civilian government – led by Thein Sein as president – Union Solidarity and Development Party controlled parliament
2012	National League for Democracy, led by Aung Sang Suu Kyi – won 43 of 44 seats in parliamentary by-election
2014	population 53.4 million
2015	National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung Sang Suu Kyi – won 80 percent of contested seats – controlled parliament
2016-present	NLD government – Aung Sang Suu Kyi, State Counsellor, <i>de facto</i> head of government
2016-present	humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State – military and police brutality caused 750,000-

1 million Rohingya Muslims to flee to
refugee camps in Bangladesh

2016-2018

Htin Kyaw, President – NLD, close ally of
Aung Sang Suu Kyi – resigned, poor health

2018-present

Win Myint, President – NLD, close ally of
Aung Sang Suu Kyi

Bibliography

I am offering below annotations on selected books that I found particularly helpful in understanding Burma's political and economic history. I have divided my recommendations into five categories – histories of ancient Burma, histories of modern Burma, complementary histories of Southeast Asia, special topics in Burmese history, and biographical, narrative, and fictional books on Burma. In each category, I list two highly suggested readings and two supplementary readings.

Histories of Ancient Burma

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Michael Aung-Thwin, *Pagan, The Origins of Modern Burma*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985. This insightful and well-researched book is the best treatment of the history of Pagan. Aung-Thwin argues that the construction of 4,000 Buddhist temples helped to create and later destroy Pagan. He meticulously mines data from stone epigraphs, sorts out political relationships, and then challenges readers with economic causality in spelling out the links between *sangha* (Buddhist church) and state.

2. Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times, Traditions and Transformations*, London: Reaktion books, 2012. This newer volume covers the entire history of Burma/Myanmar. Throughout the book, the Aung-Thwins question long-accepted historical interpretations. For insights into the rise and fall of Pagan and successor Burman kingdoms, I prefer Michael Aung-Thwin's earlier book. But this study contains some useful updated information and analysis.

Supplementary Readings

1. Michael A. Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Ramanna, The Legend That Was Lower Burma*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005. In this work, Aung-Thwin turns the received history of Burma on its head. Following a thorough review of the sources, he argues controversially that no Mon kingdom existed in lower Burma before the late 13th century and that cultural influences historically moved from upper to lower Burma – from the ancient Pyu through Pagan to the Mon, not from the Mon to Pagan.

2. Michael Aung-Thwin, *Irrigation in the Heartland of Burma*, Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, 1990. This short book is an extension of Aung-Thwin's larger study of Pagan. The piece is nicely done, but likely to appeal mostly to those interested in how Pagan (and later pre-colonial Burmese kingdoms) developed irrigated perimeters to boost rice production in semi-arid Upper Burma, generate substantial wealth through rice surpluses, and supply revenues for Buddhist temples.

Histories of Modern Burma

Highly Suggested Readings

1. David I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar, What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013. Steinberg, a professor at Georgetown University, has long been a leading American expert on Burma/Myanmar. He combines political insights based on lengthy experience with clear writing. His comparison of the contrasting roles of the military in the 1990 and 2010 elections and his analysis of the political evolution of Aung San Suu Kyi are exceptional. This book is a must read.

2. Benedict Rogers, *Burma, A Nation at the Crossroads*, London: Rider Books, 2012. Rogers is a well-respected journalist, television personality, and human rights activist who specializes in Asia. He has authored earlier books on Than Shwe and on the

Karen people. This well-crafted study examines political changes in Burma since 1988. It is especially strong in analyzing the conflicts between ethnic minorities and the military government and in explaining how Aung San Suu Kyi gained political power.

Supplementary Readings

1. David I. Steinberg, *Burma, the State of Myanmar*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001. Steinberg has specialized in Burma and Korea during much of his distinguished career. This earlier book provides the best and most complete extant treatment of Burma's political and economic history between the failed revolution of 1988 and 2000. Steinberg draws on his four decades of study of Burma to frame the difficult policy debates for those who would like to precipitate change in Burma.

2. Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *Burma, Prospects for a Democratic Future*, Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998. The World Peace Foundation sponsored a conference on Burma at Harvard in 1996. This volume reports the contributions by sixteen Burma specialists who write for non-specialists. The coverage is broad – politics, the military, the economy, and social welfare. Most authors are decisive and often gloomy. The book is one of the finest available collections on modern Burma.

Complementary Histories of Southeast Asia

Highly Suggested Readings

1. David Steinberg, et al., *In Search of Southeast Asia, A Modern History*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987 (revised version). This dated collection of essays by leading historians of Southeast Asia is still the best in its field. Eight experts provide an interpretation of 18th-20th century history from the perspective of Southeast Asians rather than foreign intruders in the region.

Because the book is very detailed, travelers might prefer to read selectively, focusing mainly on the excellent sections on Burma.

2. Clark D. Neher, *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002. This well-written comparison of the political evolution of the ten Southeast nations is a first-rate introduction to the region. The book provides insightful comparative perspectives on politics, development, and foreign policy. See also Neher, *Southeast Asia, Crossroads of the World*, 2000 on culture and Neher and Marlay, *Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia*, 1995 on democracy in the region.

Supplementary Readings

1. Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume One, Part One, From Early Times To c. 1500, Volume One, Part Two, From c. 1500 to c. 1800, Volume Two, Part One, From c. 1800 to the 1930s, Volume Two, Part Two, From World War II to the Present*, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999. This marvelous four-volume series offers the most comprehensive analysis of Southeast Asian history. Given its detail, I recommend it only for serious readers.

2. Donald W. Mitchell, *Buddhism, Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. This book provides an authoritative and accessible introduction to Buddhism, the religion practiced today by about 90 percent of the peoples of Burma. Mitchell taught Buddhism for more than three decades, and his book is a very thorough treatment of the tenets of the variants of the Buddhist faith. But this book contains much more explanation and detail than casual readers are likely to want.

Special Topics in Burmese History

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Aung San Suu Kyi and Michael Aris, *Freedom from Fear*, London: Penguin Books, 1995. Aung San Suu Kyi is the courageous leader of Burma's democracy movement and the daughter of Burma's leading nationalist at independence, Aung San. Her late husband, Michael Aris, compiled this collection of writings by and about Suu Kyi in 1991 when she was under house arrest and won the Nobel Peace Prize. This book explains how and why she returned to Burma to fight for a return to democratic rule.

2. Alan Rabinowitz, *Beyond the Last Village, A Journey of Discovery in Asia's Forbidden Wilderness*, Washington: Shearwater Books, 2001. Rabinowitz is a conservationist, a biological explorer, a natural historian, a creator of national parks, an observer of exotic cultures, and a gifted writer. This book is an exciting account of his explorations of the far north of Burma in the 1990s, where he sought and found new species of animals and encountered unexpected hurdles and assistance. It is a fine read.

Supplementary Readings

1. Aung San Suu Kyi, *Letters from Burma*, London: Penguin Books, 1997. Aung San Suu Kyi wrote this amazing collection of letters between November 1995 and December 1996, shortly after her release from six years of house arrest. Despite her personal ordeal, Suu Kyi writes inspiring letters that reflect her deep idealism, humanity, and courage. Some of the letters are intensely political, but others demonstrate the multiple facets of Suu Kyi's persona. Reading this book is an uplifting experience.

2. Shelby Tucker, *Burma: The Curse of Independence*, London: Pluto Press, 2001. Tucker's book is provocative, well-informed, and passionately argued, but it is very uneven in coverage and not an easy read. Tucker examines the motivations for British colonialism, the shifting roles played by Aung San, Burma's

leading nationalist, the duplicity of the military in the murder in 1947 of Aung San and his ministerial colleagues, and the military government's creation of a kleptocracy based on drug profits.

Biographical, Narrative, and Fictional Books on Burma

Highly Suggested Readings

1. Pascal Khoo Thwe, *From the Land of Green Ghosts*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003. Khoo Thwe has written an award-winning and moving autobiography. His book tells how he became the first of the minority Kayan Padaung ethnic group to attend Cambridge University. His life story artfully combines the horrors of military oppression with the wonders of Burmese resiliency. This well-reviewed page-turner draws unforgettable images of the problems and hopes of modern Burma.

2. Charmaine Craig, *Miss Burma*, New York: Grove Press, 2017. Craig has written a powerful novel, based on her mother and maternal grandparents. Khin, a resilient Karen woman, marries Ben, a Jewish-Burman British official, in 1940. Their daughter, Louisa, becomes Miss Burma in 1956 and later marries a general in the Karen National Liberation Army. Their story is a poignant tale set insightfully within the Japanese occupation of Burma and the post-war ethnic insurrections in independent Burma.

Supplementary Readings

1. George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, New York: Time Incorporated, 1934. Rather than going on to Oxbridge, Orwell (then Eric Blair) went from Eton to Burma to serve for five years in the Indian Imperial Police. He wrote this bitingly insightful book a decade later. Orwell expresses both his hatred of British imperialism and his own sense of personal guilt for once being a colonialist. He

despises the pomposity yet admires the courage of his countrymen abroad. The book provides deep insights into colonial Burma.

2. Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*, New York: Random House, 2001. Ghosh has emerged as one of India's best younger fiction writers. In this impressive book, he weaves an intriguing story that begins at the time of the British invasion of Upper Burma in 1885. Rajkumar, a poor Burmese, makes a fortune in teak and later searches for Dolly, his lost love. Ghosh has created an all-embracing story that teaches us much about the struggles of British colonialism and native resentment in Burma.

Sites Visited in Burma (Myanmar)

Burma

Stanford Travel/Study Program

November 10-25, 2014

River-boat based, Aboard the *Paukan 2007*

Rangoon (Yangon)

We began and ended our Burmese visit in Rangoon (now officially called Yangon), the bustling former capital and home to about one-tenth of Burma's 51 million people. Rangoon is an historical and architectural hodge-podge. The first recorded settlers of what is today Burma, the Mon (a Mon-Khmer-speaking group, who emigrated from Central Asia into modern Burma and Cambodia), built the first Buddhist Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon about 300 BCE. But Rangoon had mainly religious significance for the Mon rulers and for the Burman kings who ruled lower Burma intermittently between the 11th and 19th centuries, because the surrounding Irrawaddy Delta was swampy and of little agricultural importance. Rangoon rose to prominence as a capital and port after Britain colonized lower Burma in 1853, drained the Irrawaddy swamps, and turned Burma into the world's leading exporter of rice in the 1930s. Burma's military junta moved the capital of Burma from Rangoon to Naypyitaw in 2006, squandering billions of dollars.

The golden Shwedagon Pagoda today is a priceless monument and the primary place of pilgrimage for Burma's Theravada Buddhists (90 percent of the population). Rangoon's contains some beautiful colonial buildings (including the classic hotel, The Strand, first built in 1901, in which we stayed). But much of the colonial center of the city is run-down and overcrowded. An overlay of militaristic buildings (reminiscent of the Stalin-gothic style in

former Communist countries) adds to the architectural confusion of the expanding city. We took a walking tour through the old city and saw the octagonal Sule Pagoda, believed to be 2000 years old, the restored colonial City Hall (built in 1912), and the yet-to-be-revived High Court (1922). On our return visit to Rangoon, we went to the National Museum, which features treasures from the deposed Burman monarchy, and the American Embassy, where we received a briefing from four embassy officials.

Inle Lake

The Inle Lake region of central Burma provides a stark contrast to the bustle and noise of Rangoon. Exotic Inle Lake is located 200 miles north of Rangoon in the Shan State. About 7 percent of Burmese are Shans – Tai-speaking people who migrated in from south China starting about 800 CE. But the people who live on and around Inle Lake are not Shans. The Mon-speaking Intha people moved to Inle Lake about 800 years ago and constitute the majority of the 120,000 people who live in 80 villages around the lake. The Inthas are skilled fishermen (who fish by hand while simultaneously rowing their boats with one leg), farmers (who grow tomatoes on floating fields on the lake), and artisans (who weave silk-and-lotus cloth and carve teak boats in buildings built on stilts in the lake). But the Inthas face severe challenges because they are over-fishing the lake with new effective nets and polluting it with chemicals used in tomato production.

All of our transportation on Inle Lake was in comfortable small teak boats, powered by Chinese diesel engines (22-horsepower long-tails). We motored first along the lake's eastern shore to the exquisite Aureum Palace Hotel, where we enjoyed luxurious five-room suites. Later we boated around the lake to visit a Buddhist monastery, opened in 1852 (Nga Hpe Chaung), a silk-and-lotus weaving establishment (In Paw Khone), and an artisanal boat-making operation (Nam Pan). During our second day at Inle Lake,

we boated to In Dein, an up-river village near the lake. The Pa'o residents were holding a periodic (five-day) market, where we observed women smoking local cheroots (tobacco is a key crop in the region). Later, we hiked up to Shwe In Dein, a site containing nearly 1000 mostly-dilapidated, yet intriguing, stupas. A Shan king in the 17th century earned Buddhist merit by creating the site and encouraging his followers to donate stupas.

Pagan (Bagan)

We next flew west to Pagan, the former capitol of Burma's most important kingdom – the Kingdom of Pagan (9th-13th centuries). The wealth and power of Pagan were derived mainly from irrigated rice production. To commemorate their conversion to Theravada Buddhism in the mid-11th century, Pagan kings gradually donated two-thirds of the kingdom's rice-growing land and bonded laborers to Buddhist temple societies. As a result, about 4,000 Buddhist temples were built in two centuries (ending about 1250), all within an area of 16 square miles. Pagan's monumental religious excesses weakened the kingdom and made it vulnerable to a debilitating invasion by an army from Kublai Khan's Yuan Chinese Empire in the late 13th century. Because the Mongol/Chinese army was prevented from entering Pagan city, the temples were largely preserved. Despite subsequent earthquakes, nearly 3000 of them remain intact today.

From the tower of the Aureum Hotel, we photographed the sun rising and setting over Pagan. We had informative guided visits to several impressive religious monuments. We climbed the five terraces of the Shwesandaw Pagoda, constructed by Anawrahta, the expansionist king of Pagan, in 1057. We proceeded on to Pagan's masterpiece, the Ananda Temple – the creation of King Kyanzitha, which features four matching statues of the Buddha and was completed in 1091. We next visited the Gu Byauk Gyi Temple, built in 1113, to observe the finest mural paintings in

Pagan, mostly of the Buddha's life in various incarnations. Our final temple visit was to the gold-domed Shwezigon Pagoda, which was begun by Anawratha and completed in 1102 by Kyanzittha and is believed to contain a bone and a tooth of the Buddha. Those visits demonstrated the creative architectural, artistic, and construction skills of a devout, medieval kingdom.

Irrawaddy River

Near Pagan, we boarded the *Paukan 2007*, a luxurious, teak-paneled riverboat that was our home for four comfortable days of sailing up the Irrawaddy River through upper Burma. The Irrawaddy River is navigable for 1000 miles from Bhamo near China to Bassein on the Bay of Bengal. Scottish investors started the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in 1865. The Company transported nine million passengers annually and moved workers to the delta rice fields and rice to Company-owned mills. When Japan conquered Burma in 1942, the Company destroyed all 625 of its riverboats and went out of business. In 1995, new Scottish investors resurrected the Company and began transporting tourists on the Irrawaddy. Cruising on the *Paukan 2007* is an ideal way of seeing central Burma. The riverboat has comfortable public spaces, a good room for lectures and gatherings, spacious cabins, a skilled and attentive staff, diverse entertainment, and excellent cuisine.

On our delightful trip up the Irrawaddy River, we made daily stops at interesting villages and towns to observe local agriculture (rice and pulses), craftsmanship (pottery and weaving), and religious shrines (stupas and temples). We also visited two significant historical sites – Yandabo (the site of the signing of the treaty in 1826 that ended the first Anglo-Burman War through which Burma was forced to cede Arakan and Tenasserim provinces to British India) and Ava (the Burman dynastic capital for much of the five centuries between 1354 and 1860). We observed the

specialized production of terra cotta water jars in Yandabo, where women threw the pots, and of glazed, 50-gallon urns in Kyauk Myaung, where men were the artisans. In Ava, we toured the Bagaya Monastery, built of teak logs and planks in the 1830s, and in Mingun, we saw the 90-ton, 19th-century bell for what was intended to be the largest Buddhist pagoda in the world.

Mandalay

Mandalay is a booming city of 1.6 inhabitants, Burma's second largest. Rudyard Kipling's poem and the subsequent song, "On the Road To Mandalay," have made Mandalay the best-known site in Burma to Westerners. But Mandalay is not very old. The city was founded in 1860 when King Mindon (the penultimate king in the Konbaung Dynasty, the last in the Burman millennia of rule) moved his capital there from nearby Amarapura to fulfill a Buddhist prophecy. Due to its location on the Irrawaddy River and the Burma Road (to China), Mandalay has had significant economic and strategic importance. Today, one-third of Mandalay's residents are Chinese. Mandalay is prospering because of the inflow of Chinese investment, managers, and traders who supply the Burmese market with labor-intensive goods (textiles, shoes, and mopeds) made in Mandalay with low-cost Burmese labor and Chinese parts and technology.

We disembarked the *Paukan 2007* near Mandalay and bussed to Amurapura, where we walked across the world's longest teak footbridge (1300 yards), the U-Bein Bridge. We next visited the Mahamuni Paya (the big Buddha pagoda), a pilgrimage site featuring a 13-foot teak Buddha, covered with gold-leaf, and several 13th-century bronze statues originally from Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Then we toured the magnificent Shwe Nandaw Kyaung (Golden Palace Monastery), a splendid teak hall originally constructed for the new palace in Mandalay. After consulting his astrologer, in 1860 King Mindon disassembled and relocated the

building at its current site, away from the palace. The remaining 124 buildings in the palace complex were destroyed by bombs during the Japanese invasion in early 1942. Our final site in Mandalay was Sandamuni, a collection of 729 stupas that contain marble slabs depicting the entire Theravada Buddhist canon.

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**The Himalayas By Air
Bushtracks Expeditions
March 21-April 6, 2008
Airplane-based**

Putao, Burma

Our first stop in Burma was in Putao, located in the far north of Burma. Although the Himalaya Mountains are visible from the Putao Valley, the town of 30,000 people is sited at an elevation of only 1800 feet. Putao is accessible by road during only half of the year (the dry season). We drove a half hour out of the town to stay in the delightful Malikha Lodge, a gem in the heart of this almost magical, remote region. Malikha Lodge, sited on the banks of the Namlang River, is exquisitely designed, appointed, and managed. Our group wandered through nearby villages (populated by Lisu and Rawang peoples) – on foot or aboard elephants – and floated down the Namlang River – on paddle-driven rubber rafts or in long-boats. We took challenging hikes alongside rice paddies on paths made slippery by recent downpours. At night, we watched a Lisu dance troop perform something akin to line dances, with a caller dictating the uniform steps and movements. Most of all, we relaxed in the luxury of a beautiful place, built in the middle of a remote sub-tropical rainforest.

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