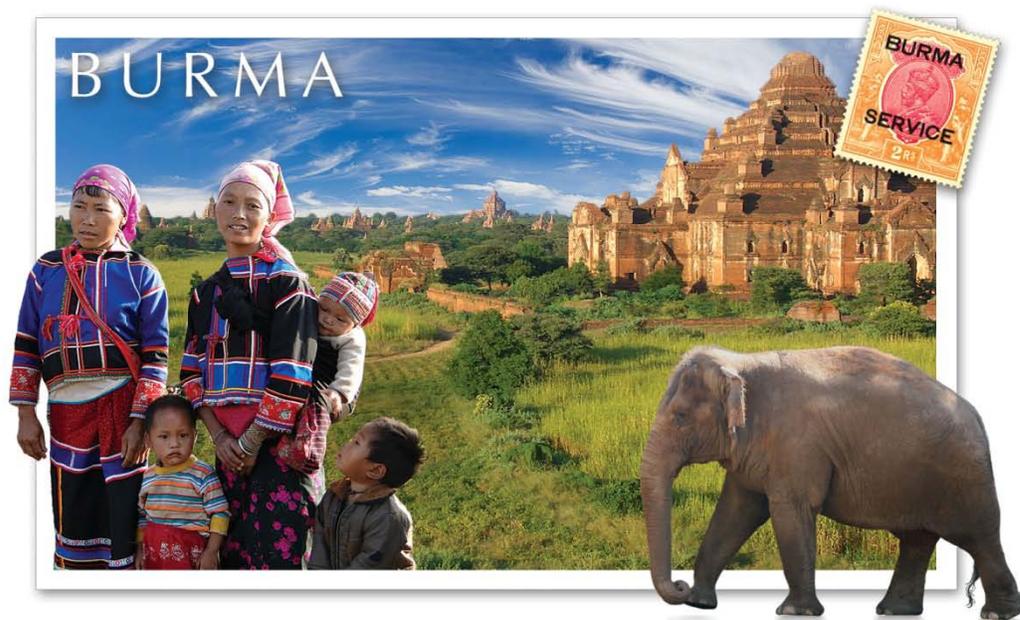


BURMA in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Technology Integration Division
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

Burma, slightly smaller than the state of Texas, is the westernmost and largest of the mainland nations of Southeast Asia.^{1, 2} Lying between the Tropic of Cancer and the equator, this kite-shaped country of approximately 55 million people shares land borders with Bangladesh to the west, India to the northwest, China to the northeast, Laos to the east, and Thailand to the southeast. The Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal form the south and southwestern borders.^{3, 4, 5} Burma slopes from its highest point, 5,881 m (19,295 ft) at Hkakabo Razi at the southern tip of the Himalayas, to sea level and is naturally divided into what is referred to as “Upper Burma” and “Lower Burma.”^{6, 7} Burma’s mountains, valleys, and rivers cross the country from the highlands near the Chinese and Indian borders to the Andaman Sea, running north to south. These mountains protect the interior from the rainy and drier monsoons of the coast. The thinly populated Western and Northern Mountains, as well as the Shan Plateau to the east, ring the country, forming a natural protection against neighbors.⁸



© Christopher Michel
Temples in Bagan, Burma

Geographic Divisions

Burma’s terrain consists of central lowlands surrounded by steep mountains. The central lowlands lie in the fertile river plains and the Irrawaddy delta area.^{9, 10} About 15% of the land is

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: Geography,” in *The World Factbook*, 5 February 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

² Donald M. Seekins, “Chapter 1: Introduction,” in *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 2.

³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: Geography,” in *The World Factbook*, 5 February 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar: Land,” 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁵ Robert Lee Hadden, “The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma’s Geology, Geography and Earth Science” (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 8, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: Geography,” in *The World Factbook*, 5 February 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

⁷ Robert Lee Hadden, “The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma’s Geology, Geography and Earth Science” (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 6, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁸ Josef Silverstein, “Chapter One: Sources of Burmese Political Culture,” in *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 3.

⁹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” December 2007, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/88022.htm>

¹⁰ Robert Lee Hadden, “The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma’s Geology, Geography and Earth Science” (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 6, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

arable and only 2% grow permanent crops.¹¹ Burma's land, however, is rich in natural resources. Besides forests and natural minerals, Burma has oil reserves and abundant natural gas.¹²

Burma has five natural divisions: the Western Mountains, the Northern Mountains, the Shan Plateau in the east, the Central Basin and Lowlands, and the Coastal Strip.¹³

Western Mountains

The Western Mountains, with an average altitude of 1,829 m (6,000 ft), run north-south for the entire length of the western border of Burma from their origin at the Northern Mountains to the coastline.^{14, 15} These mountains are composed of old crystalline and hard sedimentary rock. The upper half of the region, which includes the Patkai Range, Naga Hills, and Chin Hills, forms the boundary with India. The lower half of the Western Mountains is formed by the Arakan Mountain Range, which runs along the Bay of Bengal.¹⁶ The Arakan Mountain Range starts at the Chin Hills, running along the coastline to the Arakan (Rakhine) Peninsula in the Irrawaddy Division. The Western Mountains separate the coastline from the Central Basin and Lowlands, shielding central Burma from the southwestern monsoon rains.¹⁷ The semi-desert landscape of this region, known as the dry zone, is dotted with thorny trees and cactus as the primary vegetation.^{18, 19}



© Marc Veraart
Myanmar Inle Lake

Northern Mountains

The Northern Mountains lie entirely within Kachin, the northernmost state of Burma, and form a boundary with China. The mountains in this area meet with mountain chains in India and China, and form a complex set of mountain ranges that joins at the Hkakabo Razi, the highest mountain at 5,881 m (19,295 ft) high.²⁰ Some of Asia's most significant rivers originate in this area, including the Irrawaddy, the Salween, Mekong, and China's Yangtze.^{21, 22} This region is noted for its steep



© Emily and Michael Dzedzic
Mountains around Kalaw Burma

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 5 February 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

¹² Ian Storey, "China, Burma, and the 'Saffron Revolution,'" *China Brief*, 7, no. 19 (17 October 2007), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4485](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4485)

¹³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁵ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 586.

¹⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Rakhine Mountains," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31961/Rakhine-Mountains>

¹⁸ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 322.

¹⁹ Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 9.

gorges cut by the rivers. It is also known for its vast mineral reserves, especially jade and precious metals.²³ Subtropical vegetation and terraced rice paddies occupy the region's deep valleys.²⁴

Shan Plateau

Located in the eastern part of Shan State, the Shan Plateau ranges between 750 m (2,461 ft) and 1,200 m (3,937 ft) in elevation.²⁵ It has deep valleys and gorges cut by the Salween and Irrawaddy rivers flowing through the region.^{26, 27} The plateau originates in China, and extends west to the Sittang River. To the north, the plateau merges with Burma's Northern Mountains. To the south, it joins with the Dawna Range and the Tenasserim Mountains of Burma's Malay Peninsula.²⁸ The regional climate is tropical with the dry but humid season from March through May. The wet season lasts from June through September and the cool season from October through February.²⁹



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Shan Plateau

Central Basin and Lowlands

The Central Basin and Lowlands are located between the Arakan Mountain Range and the Shan Plateau, and run from the Northern Mountains to the delta. The fertile valleys that comprise the Central Basin and Lowlands are formed by the Irrawaddy River and the shorter Sittang River, and contain their alluvial deposits.³⁰ The delta of the Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers is a completely flat area, never reaching more than 18 m (59 ft) in elevation.³¹ The Pegu Mountains separate the

²⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Geography," 28 May 2012, <http://www.fao.org/forestry/18310/en/mmr/>

²¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

²² Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 8.

²³ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 6–7, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

²⁴ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Land of Rice and Rivers," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 47.

²⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Shan Plateau," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/538407/Shan-Plateau>

²⁶ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 589.

²⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Shan Plateau," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/538407/Shan-Plateau>

²⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

²⁹ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 589.

³⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

³¹ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 7, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

Irrawaddy Valley and the Sittang Valley.³² A line of extinct volcanic peaks are located in the basin including the largest of the eroded volcanic cones, Popa Hill, at 1,518 m (4,981 ft).³³

Coastal Strip

Burma has an extensive coast bounded by a multitude of islands. The upper half of the coast, the Arakan Coastal Plain, lies between the Bay of Bengal to the west and the Arakan Mountain Range to the east. This alluvial coast has rich farmland.³⁴ The coast winds east to the opening of the Irrawaddy-Sittang delta. South of the delta lies Burma's lower coast, the Tenasserim Coastal Plain. This thin strip of land, ranging from 48 km (30 mi) to 90 km (56 mi) in width, shares a border with Thailand on the Malay Peninsula. The coast is bound by the Andaman Sea to the west and the Tenasserim Mountains to the east.^{35, 36}



© Jason Tabarias
Ngapali Beach, Thandwe

Climate

Burma's climate varies by location.³⁷ The Arakan and Tenasserim coastal areas, as well as the southeastern and western mountain ranges, receive about 510 cm (200 in) of precipitation per year.^{38, 39, 40} Coastal area temperatures average 26°C (79°F) along the northern shores warming up to 28°C (82°F) south of the Irrawaddy-Sittang delta.⁴¹ Along the delta, including the capital of Yangon, rainfall averages approximately 254 cm (100 in) a year with average yearly temperatures hovering around 32°C (90°F). In the hottest months from April through May, temperatures can reach 40°C (104°F).⁴²

³² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Land," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

³³ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 7–8,

<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

³⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Geography," 28 May 2012,

<http://www.fao.org/forestry/country/18310/en/mmr/>

³⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tenasserim," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/587139/Tenasserim>

³⁶ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 589.

³⁷ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 10,

<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

³⁸ Jan Becka, *Historical Dictionary of Myanmar* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 1.

³⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Climate," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁴⁰ Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 10–11.

⁴¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Climate," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁴² Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 11.

The Arakan Mountain Range, running down Burma's northwestern coastline, protects the interior from the southwestern monsoon.^{43, 44, 45} The northern mountains receive snow two months a year.⁴⁶ In the highest mountain regions, temperatures during the cold season drop to freezing.⁴⁷

The interior dry zone receives only 50–100 cm (20–40 in) of precipitation per year, with transitional areas such as the Shan Plateau and the Irrawaddy Delta receiving at least twice that amount.^{48, 49, 50} Daily average temperatures range from 28°C (82°F) in the center of the country to 22°C (72°F) on the Shan Plateau.⁵¹ Dry zone temperatures can soar to 46°C (114°F) with the heat driving people to move beds outdoors during the evening. During the cool season, temperatures can drop to 15°C (59°F) or less during the evening hours.⁵²



© onourownpath / flickr.com
Yangon Rain

Bodies of Water

Burma has several major rivers running from north to south: the Irrawaddy, the Chindwin (a tributary of the Irrawaddy), the Sittang, and the Salween. In spring, the melting snow and the monsoon season bring an abundance of water to all the channels in Burma. Previously dry ditches surge with water and the valleys become marshes.^{53, 54, 55}

⁴³ Jan Becka, *Historical Dictionary of Myanmar* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 1.

⁴⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Climate," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁴⁵ Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 10–11.

⁴⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Climate," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁴⁷ Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 11.

⁴⁸ Jan Becka, *Historical Dictionary of Myanmar* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 1.

⁴⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Climate," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁵⁰ Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 10–11.

⁵¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Climate," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁵² Saw Myat Yin, "Chapter 2: Geography, History and Politics," in *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2011), 11–12.

⁵³ Shelby Tucker, "Chapter Two: Geography and Ethnicity," in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 9.

⁵⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Drainage," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁵⁵ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 10, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

Irrawaddy (Ayeyarwady) River

The principal river of Burma, the Irrawaddy, runs 2,170 km (1,350 mi) from its origins in the northern mountains of Kachin State to its mouth at the Irrawaddy Delta. With its tributaries, the Irrawaddy drains nearly 75% of Burma.^{56, 57}

The Irrawaddy merges with its main tributary, the Chindwin River, in the area just south of Mandalay. The river is significant as the source of irrigation to the Irrawaddy River Valley, the densely populated cultural center of Burma.⁵⁸ As the principal commercial waterway, the Irrawaddy bisects Burma, shaping historical settlement patterns and economic development.⁵⁹ Navigable from its mouth at the Andaman Sea for 1,448 km (900 mi) to the north, the river serves as a main artery for transportation in Burma, especially the transportation of rice for trade.⁶⁰



© Jason Eppink
Irrawaddy River

Sittang River

Much shorter than the other major rivers, the Sittang 418 km (260 m) flows through the primarily flat regions in the area between the Irrawaddy River and the Salween River.⁶¹ The Sittang is perilous for shipping, especially in the lower reaches, because of a strong tidal bore and currents. The silt carried and deposited by the river is not as rich as that of the Irrawaddy and is of limited agricultural importance.^{62, 63} It lies near the Gulf of Marbatan, and has not had much commercial or political importance. Year round, it is only navigable for 40 km (25 mi), but it is used to float timber south.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 580.

⁵⁷ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 10, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁵⁸ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 580.

⁵⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Irrawaddy River," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/294719/Irrawaddy-River>

⁶⁰ Jan Becka, *Historical Dictionary of Myanmar* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 34.

⁶¹ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 12, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁶² Shelby Tucker, "Chapter Two: Geography and Ethnicity," in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 8.

⁶³ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 12–13, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁶⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Sittang River," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/546843/Sittang-River>

Salween (Thanlwin) River

The Salween, Southeast Asia's largest undammed river, flows 2,400 km (1,492 mi) through the deep gorges, hills, and tablelands of eastern Burma's Shan Plateau forming 160 km (100 mi) of the border with Thailand.^{65, 66} The intensity of the rapids prevents navigation 161 km (100 mi) north of the coast. As a result, the river is a minor trade route but is strategic for political and military control. From its origins in Tibet through China's Yunnan province, through the Shan State to the Gulf of Marbatan, the Salween creates a barrier for the peoples of that area, keeping them cut off from outside influence.^{67, 68} The main economic activity of the river is floating timber and logs from the southeastern sections of Burma to the sea.^{69, 70}



© Ken Marshall
Salween (Thanlwin) River

Chindwin River

The Chindwin is the largest tributary of the Irrawaddy. The river, approximately 1,158 km (720 m) long, drains western Burma. It rises in the Kumon Mountains in the north, flows northwest through the Hukawng Valley before turning south along the border with India, and finally empties into the Irrawaddy at Myingyan. It is navigable for about 800 km (498 m) of its length from below Mandalay to the Uyu River—a major tributary of the Chindwin. The rugged mountain region in the un-navigable portion of the Chindwin remains pristine. Lying in this area, a strip of 6,475 sq km (2,500 sq mi) in the Hukawng Valley is a sanctuary for the endangered tiger. The best jade in the nation lies in Hukawng Valley near the headwaters of the Uyu River.⁷¹

Major Cities

Rangoon (Yangon)

The city of Rangoon, renamed Yangon in 1989, is situated in the Irrawaddy Delta. It is home to approximately 4.1 million people.^{72, 73} The British chose Rangoon as the administrative capital

⁶⁵ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 580.

⁶⁶ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 12, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁶⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Salween River," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/520121/Salween-River>

⁶⁸ Shelby Tucker, "Chapter Two: Geography and Ethnicity," in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 8.

⁶⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Salween River," 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/520121/Salween-River>

⁷⁰ Carl Grundy-Warr, "Geography and Climate," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 580.

⁷¹ Robert Lee Hadden, "The Geology of Burma (Myanmar): An Annotated Bibliography of Burma's Geology, Geography and Earth Science" (paper, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, September 2008), 11,

<http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA487552&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>

⁷² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Yangon," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651821/Yangon>

of colonial Burma. It became the national capital after independence in 1948 and remained so until 2006 when the capital was moved to Naypyidaw. Rangoon is most famous for the Shwedagon Pagoda, more than a millennium old and the country's holiest site. Built on a hill, the pagoda's gilded spire is visible from all parts of the city.^{74, 75}

The origin of the present-day Rangoon was the settlement that grew up around the pagoda, a destination for Buddhist pilgrims. Upgraded to a town named Dagon by the Mons and later renamed Rangoon, it had a thriving shipbuilding industry reflecting its port status by the 19th century. Although the administrative functions of the government were moved to Naypyidaw at the end of 2005, Rangoon remains Burma's trade center accounting for more than 80% of the country's foreign commerce. Rice, teak, and metal ores constitute the main exports.^{76, 77}



© Axel Drainville
Downtown Yangon

Naypyidaw

The recently established and isolated site of the new capital, Naypyidaw (also Nay Pyi Daw or Nay Pyi Taw), lies about 320 km (200 mi) north of Rangoon, the former capital of Burma.⁷⁸ The move began in November 2005, and the junta government proclaimed Naypyidaw the capital in March 2006. The reasons for the relocation remain unclear. Some have speculated an interior location was sought to make it harder for an outside power to overthrow the government.⁷⁹ Located approximately half-way between Rangoon and Mandalay, Naypyidaw's population of 418,000 is much smaller than that of the other major cities.⁸⁰ Most of the government officials have relocated to the new capital, but most of the foreign missions remain in Rangoon.⁸¹ Naypyidaw, unlike other regions of the country, enjoys an uninterrupted supply of electricity 24 hours a day.^{82, 83}

⁷³ Thomas Brinkoff, "City Population: Myanmar," 25 July 2009), <http://www.citypopulation.de/Myanmar.html>

⁷⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Yangon," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651821/Yangon>

⁷⁵ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 39, 43–47.

⁷⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Yangon," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651821/Yangon>

⁷⁷ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Yangon," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 119–123.

⁷⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Nay Pyi Taw," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1219871/Nay-Pyi-Taw>

⁷⁹ *New York Times*, "Myanmar's New Capital: Remote, Lavish and Off Limits," 23 June 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/23/world/asia/23iht-myanmar.4.13919850.html?pagewanted=all>

⁸⁰ Thomas Brinkoff, "City Population: Myanmar," 25 July 2009, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Myanmar.html>

⁸¹ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 139.

⁸² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Nay Pyi Taw," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1219871/Nay-Pyi-Taw>

⁸³ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 139.

Mandalay

Located in the dry zone by the Irrawaddy River, Mandalay is the second largest city in Burma with a population of 960,000.^{84, 85} The city itself, founded in 1857, is relatively young. It served as the Burmese royal capital from 1861 until the British conquest in 1885.^{86, 87} Today, Mandalay is a major commercial center home to tea packing, silk weaving, jade cutting, silverware, and goldware industries. Mandalay is also the cultural heartland of the nation. Home to a Buddhist majority, the region is said to have been visited by Buddha himself. A small pagoda in the city contains the 729 marble tablets on which orthodox Buddhist scriptures are inscribed.^{88, 89, 90} The city is home to a number of institutions of higher learning including the Arts and Science University, a medical school, and a teacher training college.⁹¹



© onourownpath / flickr.com
Mandalay Hill, Handalay

Mawlamyine

With a population of approximately 220,000, Mawlamyine is an important port on the Gulf of Martaban near the Salween river's mouth.^{92, 93} Nearly 75% of the population is ethnic Mon. Mawlamyine was the capital of British Burma from 1827 until 1852.⁹⁴ Ancient pagodas dot the hills surrounding the town. It is home to an important diesel electric plant, Mawlamyine College, a teacher-training center, and a large regional hospital. It also has a solar-powered plant that extracts salt from seawater.⁹⁵

⁸⁴ Thomas Brinkoff, "City Population: Myanmar," 25 July 2009, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Myanmar.html>

⁸⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mandalay," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/361552/Mandalay>

⁸⁶ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 201.

⁸⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mandalay," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/361552/Mandalay>

⁸⁸ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 201.

⁸⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mandalay," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/361552/Mandalay>

⁹⁰ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Mandalay and Environs," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 173.

⁹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mandalay," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/361552/Mandalay>

⁹² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mawlamyine," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394523/Mawlamyine>

⁹³ Thomas Brinkoff, "City Population: Myanmar," 25 July 2009, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Myanmar.html>

⁹⁴ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 96.

⁹⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mawlamyine," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394523/Mawlamyine>

Environmental Issues

Burma is in an active geological zone and experiences earthquakes which can produce tsunamis. In 2004, a huge earthquake created a devastating tsunami along the coastal plains.⁹⁶ Tropical cyclones can cause devastating consequences as with cyclone Nargis in the spring of 2008. It claimed at least 140,000 lives when it struck and left 3 million in need of assistance.^{97,98} Hailed as the deadliest disaster in Burma's history, the cyclone destroyed a large portion of the country's rice crop and damaged other industries, resulting in a loss of livelihood for thousands.⁹⁹ To date, the area has still not been reconstructed, and some communities remain without power.^{100, 101}

Along with the floods that accompany cyclones, monsoon rains also increase the possibility of flooding and landslides, both of which are exacerbated by Burma's high rate of deforestation.¹⁰² Each year, approximately 4,662 sq km (1,800 sq mi) of forest are cleared, leading to one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world. Logging in the coastal regions of Burma increases the intensity of the effects of tropical storms, because the mangrove forests no longer provide protection.^{103,}
104



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Burma, flash flood devastation

Industrial pollution of air, soil, and water has become hazardous.¹⁰⁵ Air quality in the major cities is below the World Health Organization (WHO) standards for safety. Pollution from area mines is quickly polluting major rivers and the sea. Fragile ecosystems are threatened by the development of oil and gas fields in coastal regions and along pipeline routes to China and Thailand.¹⁰⁶ Burma does not have adequate sanitation, water, or wastewater treatment, and only

⁹⁶ C. Elders, "Geography and Climate: Geology of Myanmar and Thailand," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 593.

⁹⁷ Luis Ramirez, "Six Weeks After Cyclone, Burma Devastation Remains Uncertain," Voice of America, 11 June 2008, http://www.51voa.com/voa_standard_english/VOA_Standard_English_21881.html

⁹⁸ Jonathan Head, "Rebuilding Burma's Cyclone-Hit Irrawaddy Delta," BBC News, 20 December 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20778768>

⁹⁹ Richard Weitz, "Cyclone Nargis Exacerbated ASEAN's Myanmar Dilemma," *World Politics Review*, 30 June 2008, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/2360/cyclone-nargis-exacerbated-aseans-myanmar-dilemma>

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Head, "Rebuilding Burma's Cyclone-hit Irrawaddy Delta," BBC News, 20 December 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20778768>

¹⁰¹ Andrew Buncombe, "Lives Still in Limbo for Burma's Forgotten Cyclone Victims," *The Independent*, 3 December 2012, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/lives-still-in-limbo-for-burmas-forgotten-cyclone-victims-8374277.html>

¹⁰² Global Education, "Myanmar: Achievements and Challenges," 2012, <http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/2359.html>

¹⁰³ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 326.

¹⁰⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 5 February 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

¹⁰⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 5 February 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html#>

¹⁰⁶ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 327.

about 46% of the population has access to protected water supplies. Contamination is a greater risk in the coastal and delta regions.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Aquastat, “Myanmar: Geography and Population,” 1999, <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/espim/country/myanmar/print1.stm>

Chapter 1 Assessment

1. There are five main geographic regions in Burma.

True

The five main geographic divisions in the country are the Western Mountains, the Northern Mountains, the Shan Plateau in the east, the Central Basin and Lowlands, and the Coastal Strip.

2. Rangoon is the capital of Burma.

False

Rangoon was the capital of colonial Burma and became the national capital after independence in 1948. In 2006, the capital was moved to Naypyidaw.

3. The Irrawaddy is Burma's principal river.

True

The principal river of Burma, the Irrawaddy, runs for 2,170 km (1,350 mi). The river is significant as the source of irrigation to the Irrawaddy River Valley, the densely populated cultural center of Burma.

4. Cyclone Nargis was the deadliest natural disaster in Burmese history.

True

Cyclone Nargis claimed 140,000 lives when it struck in 2008. Another 3 million were left in need of assistance. It is hailed as the deadliest disaster in Burma's history.

5. Burma is slightly larger than the state of Texas.

False

The kite-shaped nation of Burma, slightly smaller than the state of Texas, is the westernmost and largest of the mainland nations of Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

Introduction

Human migration into present-day Burma began about 11,000 years ago.¹⁰⁸ The fertile lowland landscape was ideal for settled farming, and the proximity to water allowed trade and contact with other civilizations. The Mon and Pyu people were among the first to settle in this area, followed centuries later by the Burmans and Shans.^{109, 110} Each group had its own distinct language, culture, and political system, although the transfer of power was usually hereditary. The Burmans ruled over indigenous kingdoms during three unifying dynasties. Their dynasties did not have an established hereditary system for transfer of power, which created uncertainty when the ruling monarch died.¹¹¹ Two of the three Burman dynasties were brought down by outside conquerors. Although they did not stay to rule, they left deep footprints on Burmese history. Burma was in a state of turmoil for generations as its indigenous groups sought to fill the power vacuum left by the invasions.¹¹²



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Old Pagodas in Myanmar

Ancient History

The Mon people migrated to Burma before the first century C.E.¹¹³ Related to the Khmer of Cambodia, they established their capital on the Tenasserim coast, a portage route for Southeast Asia. Their capital was believed to be at Thaton, north of the Malay Peninsula. By the fourth century C.E., Thaton was becoming a prosperous city and a cultural center. Trade with India played a role in the Mon economy. They adopted Theravada Buddhism, spreading the practice throughout southern Burma. The Mon capital moved to Bago (Pegu), about 80 km (50 mi) north of Rangoon. From Bago, they controlled trade in southern Burma.^{114, 115}

¹⁰⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/214472/History>

¹⁰⁹ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., “From Earliest Times,” in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 21.

¹¹⁰ Gerry Abbott, “Chapter 1: Introduction: Burma Before Ava,” in *The Traveller’s History of Burma* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 1998), xiii–xv.

¹¹¹ Josef Silverstein, “Chapter One: Sources of Burmese Political Culture,” in *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 7.

¹¹² Josef Silverstein, “Chapter One: Sources of Burmese Political Culture,” in *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 4.

¹¹³ Josef Silverstein, “Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma,” in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 14.

¹¹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar: The Mon,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52593/The-Mon>

¹¹⁵ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., “From Earliest Times,” in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 21.

Beginning in the first century B.C.E., the Pyu people migrated from either present-day Tibet or India, establishing their first capital in the Irrawaddy River delta.¹¹⁶ They later moved to Halingyi in Burma's dry zone and, by the second century C.E., established a trade route down the Irrawaddy River. The route reached India by sea and connected to Chinese trade routes. The Pyu were believed to be of the Sarvastivada school of Buddhism and their sons, like those in most of Burma, spent a portion of their education as Buddhist novices.^{117, 118}

The Shans are believed to have migrated to eastern Burma in the seventh century C.E. from the Yunnan area of southern China.^{119, 120} They adopted Theravada Buddhism while retaining some of their indigenous culture and religion, especially in the more remote regions of Burma.¹²¹ They dominated much of Burma for 300 years between the 13th and 16th centuries, and their territories eventually merged into what is the present-day Shan State.¹²²



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Chedi Luang Phaw Utama

Sharing the northern dry zone with the Pyu, the Mongol Burmans came to Burma from the Himalayas, establishing themselves on the Irrawaddy River at Pagan. In the eighth and ninth centuries C.E., Pagan withstood the attacks of Southwest China's Nanzhao. The Mon kingdom, growing in power in southern Burma, was able to resist the Nanzhao raids. But the Nanzhao devastated the Pyu in central Burma, allowing the Burmans to fill the ensuing power vacuum in north-central Burma. Pagan became the capital of the Burmans in 849, and in 1044, the kingdom extended to all of Burma.¹²³

Burman Dynasties

Pagan Dynasty: The First Burmese Empire (1044–1287)

In 1044, the first of the Burman dynasties came to power in central Burma at Pagan. Their king, Anawrahta, strengthened military and political associations with neighbors to the north and east.¹²⁴ Drawing his authority from Buddhist doctrine, Anawrahta used Theravada Buddhism as the grounds for conquering the Mon kingdom. He defeated the Mons at Thaton in 1057, securing

¹¹⁶ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 295.

¹¹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Pyu State," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/214472/History>

¹¹⁸ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "From Earliest Times," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 21.

¹¹⁹ Josef Silverstein, "Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma," in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 8.

¹²⁰ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 403.

¹²¹ Josef Silverstein, "Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma," in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 9.

¹²² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Shan," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/538388/Shan>

¹²³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Advent of the Burmans at Pagan," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52593/The-Mon>

¹²⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Unification of Myanmar," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52596/The-unification-of-Myanmar>

dominance over all of Burma. The Mon capital in southern Burma, Bago, became the base of Pagan culture for the next 200 years. Many Mon civilians, including monks, scholars, artists, and architects, were captured and brought to Pagan. This advanced the Pagan kingdom through culture, art, and the sacred Pali script. Mon art and customs were absorbed into Pagan culture, creating Burma's "Golden Age."^{125, 126} The Pagan kings built a great city along the Irrawaddy River with more than 2,500 pagodas and monasteries that reflected the Indian influence of the Mon architects.¹²⁷ This is now recognized as one of the most significant contributions to Asian art and architecture.¹²⁸

Weakened by financial burdens, Mongol invasions broke Pagan's defenses in 1287, and by 1300, the power vacuum allowed ethnic Shan rulers to dominate north-central Burma for the next 200 years.^{129, 130} The Shans soon assimilated with the Burmans, becoming indistinguishable from them. The Burmanized Shans continued to war against the other Shans.^{131, 132, 133}



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
King Anawrahta

The Pagan period was marked by constant warfare between the Burmans, Mons, Arakanese, and Shans.¹³⁴ The Mons reclaimed Bago, and by the 15th century, Bago became the center of Theravada Buddhism.¹³⁵ During Burman rule, the Mons, Arakanese, and Burman people were under direct governance of the Burman leaders. The Chin, Kachin, and Shan people from remote regions were afforded more independence, exercising their own political and social customs. All were indirectly ruled by the Burmans through their own chiefs.¹³⁶

¹²⁵ Shelby Tucker, "Chapter Two: Geography and Ethnicity," in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 13.

¹²⁶ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "From Earliest Times," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 22–23.

¹²⁷ Josef Silverstein, "Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma," in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 10.

¹²⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Bagan Archaeological Area and Monuments," 2013, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/819/>

¹²⁹ Josef Silverstein, "Chapter One: Sources of Burmese Political Culture," in *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 5.

¹³⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Unification of Myanmar," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52596/The-unification-of-Myanmar>

¹³¹ Shelby Tucker, "Chapter Two: Geography and Ethnicity," in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 16–17.

¹³² Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "From Earliest Times," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 23.

¹³³ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 294.

¹³⁴ Josef Silverstein, "Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma," in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 23.

¹³⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Pagan State and Society," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52596/The-unification-of-Myanmar>

¹³⁶ Josef Silverstein, "Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma," in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 19.

Toungoo Dynasty: The Second Burmese Empire (1486–1752)

The second Burman dynasty was firmly established under the Toungoo king, Tabinshwehti. Tabinshwehti regained control from the Shans and Mons, securing dominance over northern and southern Burma.^{137, 138}

His successor, Bayinnaung, ruled from 1551–1581 as an accomplished warrior, permanently defeating the Shans. Under Bayinnaung, Burma became the most powerful kingdom in the mainland of Southeast Asia.¹³⁹ After Bayinnaung's death in 1581, the kingdom began to decline. By 1636, the capital had been relocated to a remote location in the north. A Bago-led but French-inspired rebellion felled the dynasty in 1752.^{140, 141}



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
King Tabinshwehti

Konbaung Dynasty: The Third Burmese Empire (1752–1886 C.E.)

The third of the ethnic Burman dynasties, the Konbaung began when the Bago forces were driven from the north and the Shan states were defeated.¹⁴² The first king, Alaungpaya, waged wars with the Mons, Arakanese, and Siamese.¹⁴³

Alaungpaya was able to reclaim Burman-controlled territory in 1752, finally defeating Bago by 1759.¹⁴⁴ Although he continued to promote the Burman and Mon traditions of cultural integration and assimilation through intermarriage, the Mons retained their own identity.¹⁴⁵ Alaungpaya conquered southern Burma in the 1750s, developing this port area into an important trading center and renaming it Rangoon.¹⁴⁶ He conquered the Arakanese and regained the Tenasserim Coast to the south from the Siamese, as well as the Shan states to the east.^{147, 148}



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Burmese couple

¹³⁷ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” July 2009, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/106321.htm>

¹³⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar: The Toungoo Dynasty, 1531–1752,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52600/The-Toungoo-dynasty-1531-1752>

¹³⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Bayinnaung,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/56860/Bayinnaung>

¹⁴⁰ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 295.

¹⁴¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar: The Toungoo Dynasty,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52600/The-Toungoo-dynasty-1531-1752>

¹⁴² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar: The Alaungpaya Dynasty, 1752–1885,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52600/The-Toungoo-dynasty-1531-1752>

¹⁴³ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” July 2009, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/106321.htm>

¹⁴⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar The Alaungpaya Dynasty, 1752–1885,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52600/The-Toungoo-dynasty-1531-1752>

¹⁴⁵ Josef Silverstein, *The Struggle for National Unity in the Union of Burma* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1961).

¹⁴⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Yangon,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651821/Yangon>

¹⁴⁷ Josef Silverstein, “Chapter One: The Peoples of Burma,” in *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 13.

¹⁴⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar The Alaungpaya Dynasty, 1752–1885,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52600/The-Toungoo-dynasty-1531-1752>

Meanwhile, the British had become increasingly interested in Burma's natural resources. They fought the first Anglo-Burmese War against the Konbaung from 1824 to 1826, during which time they gained control of the upper and lower coastal regions. The British East India Company, as part of British Burma, administered by Indian staff under British officials, oversaw the regions won in the war.¹⁴⁹ The second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852 gave the British control over the Irrawaddy Delta and its tributaries and Bago. The British renamed the region Lower Burma.¹⁵⁰ Finally, in the third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, the British crushed the Konbaung Dynasty.¹⁵¹ In 1886, with its king in exile, Burma became a part of British India.¹⁵²

British Colonial Rule (1885–1948)

The British government eliminated the Burmese monarchy and separated religion from government. This deprived the monkhood (*sangha*) of the status and patronage it once enjoyed. Destroying these two main pillars of Burmese culture had a devastating effect during colonialism.¹⁵⁴

The elimination of the monarchy and reform to the religion did not sit well with many Burmese. A band of fighters, led mainly by former officers of the Royal Army, village headmen, and former royalty, waged guerilla war. The British response was brutal, and thousands of Burmese were executed or fell victim of atrocities, including the burning of whole villages. By 1890, much of this armed struggle had ended.^{155, 156}



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Aung San

By the early 1900s, however, a resurgence of Burmese nationalism had taken hold.¹⁵⁷ By the 1930s, a group of university students, led by a student named Aung San, emerged calling themselves the Thakin movement.^{158, 159} Viewing their nation as victimized by British

¹⁴⁹ Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Robert H. Taylor, and Tin Mauung Maung Than, *Myanmar: Beyond Politics to Societal Imperatives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 4.

¹⁵⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Anglo-Burmese Wars," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/24993/Anglo-Burmese-Wars>

¹⁵¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Alaungpaya Dynasty, 1752–1885," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52600/The-Toungoo-dynasty-1531-1752>

¹⁵² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Anglo-Burmese Wars," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/24993/Anglo-Burmese-Wars>

¹⁵³ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "The Loss of Independence," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 27.

¹⁵⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Initial Impact of Colonialism," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁵⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Initial Impact of Colonialism," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁵⁶ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "The Loss of Independence," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 27.

¹⁵⁷ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 298.

¹⁵⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Emergence of Nationalism," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

exploitation, they saw socialism as the best means to redress the imbalances created under colonial rule and reduce the risk of economic contraction.^{160, 161, 162}

Burma became an independent colony in 1937. A bicameral legislature was introduced, partly charged with governing central Burma. The more remote regions, inhabited by ethnic minorities, were governed indirectly through tribal institutions.^{163, 164} In 1939, when World War II broke out in Europe, the Burmese government did not immediately give its support to the British who had issued an arrest warrant for Aung San. The Japanese government promised independence for Burma and Aung San, to whom the Japanese had promised aid, and formed the Burma Independence Army (BIA) in 1941. The BIA disbanded into the smaller Burma Defense Army with Aung San as the commander. Prime Minister Ba Maw was made head of state by the Japanese but was only a Japanese puppet. Disillusioned with the Japanese, Aung San, also a cabinet member of the Japanese-installed government, approached the British in 1943 to offer his assistance, and in March 1945, the Burma National Army joined the British.^{165, 166, 167}

Burma (1947–1989)

In 1947, the British granted Burma its independence. Later that year, in national elections for a Constitutional Assembly, Aung San became a leader in the cabinet of the transitional government. Before the constitution was completed, Aung San and several cabinet members were assassinated. Thakin Nu (also known as U Nu) formed a new cabinet, and on 4 January 1948, Burma became an independent republic, the Union of Burma.^{168, 169, 170}

The first three years following independence were violent ones. At least five ethnic groups took up arms to fight the new state. The Burman, prohibited from serving in the armed forces since 1886, now occupied all high-ranking military positions. The members of the Karen ethnic group,

¹⁵⁹ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd., December 2011), 298.

¹⁶⁰ Tin Maung Maung Than, "Chapter Two: Enduring Ideas and Lingering Notions," in *State Dominance in Myanmar* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 15.

¹⁶¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Aung San," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/43222/Aung-San>

¹⁶² Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Robert H. Taylor, and Tin Maung Maung Than, *Myanmar: Beyond Politics to Societal Imperatives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), 4.

¹⁶³ Jan Becka, "Introduction," in *Historical Dictionary of Myanmar* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995), 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Emergence of Nationalism," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁶⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: World War II and After," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁶⁶ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "The Loss of Independence," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 28–29.

¹⁶⁷ Donald M. Seekins, "Introduction," in *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 22–24.

¹⁶⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: World War II and After," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁶⁹ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Independence and Military Rule," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 35–37.

¹⁷⁰ Donald M. Seekins, "Introduction," in *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 25–28.

which opposed the Union, were expelled from the military now commanded by General Ne Win.^{171, 172}

In 1958, Thakin Nu sought military assistance to restore order in the face of mounting unrest. Military rule lasted 18 months. Premiere Ne Win attempted to extend his control of the government but following the 1960 general elections, Thakin Nu returned to office. He was overthrown in 1962 by a military coup led by General Ne Win who immediately suspended the constitution.^{173, 174}



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
President Ne Win

In September 1973, a constitutional referendum enshrined Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism" and made him president.¹⁷⁵ It also ushered in an economic thaw. Assistance from the Asian Development Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, however, made little impact given falling commodity prices and rising trade deficits. In 1987–1988, socialist policies came under question as the Burmese acknowledged the need for economic restructuring to relax controls on foreign investment.^{176, 177}

Few concrete steps to initiate liberalization were taken, however. In response to deteriorating economic conditions, protests erupted in 1988. The size of the protests grew and lasted until 8 August 1988, when the military killed more than 1,000 demonstrators on one day.¹⁷⁸ Martial law was implemented throughout most of the country, and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) superseded Ne Win's constitutional government. Saw Maung led the ruling junta as chairman and prime minister.¹⁷⁹

Burma to Myanmar (1990–2010)

In 1990, Burma officially changed its name to Myanmar and held elections in May.¹⁸⁰ The junta was stunned when the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party, led by Aung San

¹⁷¹ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Independence and Military Rule," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 36–37.

¹⁷² Donald M. Seekins, "Introduction," in *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 28–30.

¹⁷³ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Independence and Military Rule," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 37–38.

¹⁷⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Since Independence," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁷⁵ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., "Independence and Military Rule," in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 37–38.

¹⁷⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: The Socialist State," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁷⁷ Donald M. Seekins, "Introduction," in *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 32–36.

¹⁷⁸ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Burma," December 2007, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/88022.htm>

¹⁷⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Myanmar since 1988," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁸⁰ The junta proposed the name change in 1989 but it was not formally adopted until 1990. Although the United Nations recognized the name change, the United States did not. A statement by the British foreign office noted that the opposition movement in Burma did not accept the right of the junta to change the country's name. See BBC,

Suu Kyi, daughter of former General Aung San, won 81% of the parliamentary seats. The SLORC refused to recognize the election results and imprisoned many political activists, including Aung San Suu Kyi.^{181, 182, 183}

General Than Shwe became the head of the junta in 1992.¹⁸⁴ In 1997, the junta renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) but other than the name, little else changed.¹⁸⁵ In 2000, they opened dialogue with Suu Kyi's party, released some political prisoners, and afforded some political freedom to the NLD. In May 2002, Suu Kyi was allowed to travel freely in the country where she spoke to large crowds of supporters. In May 2003, her convoy was attacked under mysterious circumstances at night killing and injuring many in her entourage. Others disappeared in what appeared to be a power struggle within the government. The NLD was shut down and Suu Kyi was returned to house arrest.^{186, 187}



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Aung San Suu Kyi

In 2004, General Than Shwe consolidated power by ousting his rivals.¹⁸⁸ In August 2007, the government doubled the price of fuel, placing an unbearable burden on its poverty-stricken citizens. Street protests followed, led by monks whose religious and moral authority made them less likely to be targets of a violent crackdown than students. Burmese took to the streets across the nation on a scale not seen since 1988.¹⁸⁹ Demonstrators called for a reduction in commodity prices, the release of political prisoners, and national reconciliation. The “Saffron Revolution,” received a great deal of international attention which the hard-line military regime could not tolerate.¹⁹⁰ During the violent crackdown, members of the monastic community were killed, imprisoned, or disrobed.¹⁹¹

“Should It Be Burma or Myanmar?” 26 September 2007,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/7013943.stm

¹⁸¹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” 3 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/189439.htm>

¹⁸² Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., “Independence and Military Rule,” in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 39.

¹⁸³ Donald M. Seekins, “Introduction,” in *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 44–45.

¹⁸⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Myanmar: Myanmar Since 1988,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

¹⁸⁵ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” 3 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/189439.htm>

¹⁸⁶ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” 3 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/189439.htm>

¹⁸⁷ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., “Independence and Military Rule,” in *Insight Guide: Burma* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers Ind., 2005), 40.

¹⁸⁸ Zaw Oo, “Power Struggle: Is History Repeating Itself in Myanmar?” *New York Times*, 23 October 2004,

http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/23/opinion/23iht-edoo_ed3.html?_r=0

¹⁸⁹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” 3 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/189439.htm>

¹⁹⁰ Frontline World, “Burma: Inside the Saffron Revolution,” PBS, 25 September 2008,

http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2008/09/burma_the_saffr.html

¹⁹¹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” 3 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/189439.htm>

In February 2008, the National Assembly completed a draft of the new constitution and announced a referendum would be held in May.¹⁹² The referendum was widely criticized as a deeply flawed process. Those who advocated “no” were threatened with arrest.¹⁹³ The referendum results approved the military-backed constitution.¹⁹⁴

Burma Today

In 2010, the government released Aung San Suu Kyi after nearly 16 years of house arrest, counting multiple detentions. An estimated 2,100 political prisoners remain incarcerated. The government announced plans for a new election later that year. On 7 November 2010, Burma held its first elections in more than two decades. The elections, in which the junta won 75% of the parliamentary seats, were widely condemned as a sham. But Aung San Suu Kyi was elected to one of the remaining seats, and a nominally civilian government under President Thein Sein took office on 1 April 2011.¹⁹⁵



© Inmediahk / flickr.com
Than Shwe and Thein Sein

In spite of a deeply flawed electoral process, democratic reforms have been underway since the new government took office. Although it is unclear whether they will continue, the new president appears to be committed to reform in Burma. The U.S. government has lifted some of its sanctions in recognition of the changes, and President Obama visited the country in late 2012.^{196, 197, 198, 199}

Increasing democratization will not be easy in the coming years. President Thein Sein’s government is carefully watched by a military he does not control. Armed conflict with ethnic groups could threaten future reforms. Burma’s infrastructure damage threatens an improving economy, which could help promote national stability.²⁰⁰ For the moment, the international

¹⁹² Human Rights Watch, “Vote to Nowhere: The May 2008 Constitutional Referendum in Burma,” May 2008, http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/burma0508/6.htm#_Toc197150522

¹⁹³ Amnesty International, “Defend the Three Freedoms in Myanmar,” September 2010, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/myanmarelections.pdf>

¹⁹⁴ Andrew Gilmore, “Myanmar Constitutional Referendum Erases 1990 Opposition Triumph: Junta,” *The Jurist*, 3 June 2008, <http://jurist.org/paperchase/2008/06/myanmar-constitutional-referendum.php>

¹⁹⁵ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Burma,” 3 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/189439.htm>

¹⁹⁶ Murray Hiebert and Tracy Quek, “Will Myanmar’s Reforms Prompt Lifting of U.S. Sanctions?” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 February 2012, <http://csis.org/publication/will-myanmars-reforms-prompt-lifting-us-sanctions>

¹⁹⁷ Chloe Arensberg, “Unheard of Becomes Real as Obama Visits Burma,” CBS News, 19 November 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57551647/unheard-of-becomes-real-as-obama-visits-burma/

¹⁹⁸ Jack Healy and Dan Adler, “Aung San Suu Kyi and the Power of Unity,” CNN, 2 October 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/02/opinion/healey-adler-myanmar/index.html>

¹⁹⁹ Steven Lee Myers and Thomas Fuller, “U.S. Moves Toward Normalizing Relations with Myanmar,” *New York Times*, 4 April 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/05/world/asia/myanmar-sanctions.html>

²⁰⁰ Matt Sullivan, “The Future of Burma: An Interview with Dr. Michael Green,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 11 December 2012, <http://journal.georgetown.edu/2012/12/11/the-future-of-burma-an-interview-with-dr-michael-green/>

community and the Burmese themselves are cautiously optimistic about Burma's prospects.^{201,}
202

²⁰¹ *The Economist*, "Brave New World: A Reformed Myanmar Could Have a Big Effect on Its Neighbours," 2 June 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21556293>

²⁰² "Burma Future Looks Bright but No Guarantees," *The Irrawaddy*, 7 May 2012, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/3706>

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Burmans were the first group to settle in the region now known as Burma.
False
The Mon and Pyu were among the first peoples to settle in present-day Burma followed centuries later by the Burmans and the Shans.
2. The first Burman dynasty to rule over Burma was the Toungoo dynasty.
False
In 1044 C.E., the first Burman dynasty, the Pagan dynasty, came to power in central Burma. The second Burman dynasty was firmly established under the Toungoo king, Tabinshwehti.
3. In the 16th century, Burma was the most powerful kingdom in mainland Southeast Asia.
True
Bayinnaung ruled from 1551–1581 as an accomplished warrior, defeating the Shans in a permanent victory. Under Bayinnaung, Burma became the most powerful kingdom in the mainland of Southeast Asia.
4. Burma became an independent country in 1937.
False
The British made Burma a separate colony from India in 1937. It became an independent republic, the Union of Burma, on 4 January 1948.
5. The “Saffron Revolution” of 2007 was led by Buddhist monks.
True
The “Saffron Revolution” was led by monks whose religious authority was thought to make them less likely to be targets of a violent crackdown. Many monks, however, were killed, imprisoned, or disrobed in the repression that followed.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

Introduction

Although only about 15% of its land is arable, Burma is rich in natural resources.²⁰³ It has rich stores of timber, tin, and minerals including zinc and copper, marble, limestone, and precious gemstones. It also has major reserves of petroleum and natural gas.^{204, 205} Natural gas is Burma's most valuable export, but gas extraction is a capital-intensive undertaking that provides few jobs. Although the natural gas sector helps increase revenues, it contributes to Burma's dependency on exports, which is hampering the development of the economy and employment.^{206, 207, 208} As a result, most Burmese remain impoverished. Moreover, the nationalized economy has led to chronic shortages of essential commodities such as rice, cooking oil, gasoline, and electricity, which cannot be offset by a thriving black market.²⁰⁹ Once the largest rice exporter in the world, Burma now claims the dubious distinction of being the second largest supplier of opium after Afghanistan. An estimated one million Burmese have sought refuge in Thailand, where they support themselves by working in the tourist industry or on fishing boats.²¹⁰



© Gusjer / flickr.com
Rice farmers

The Burmese economy faces serious challenges including a lack of electricity and roads, lack of foreign investment, lack of credit, rampant corruption, unpredictable inflation, multiple official exchange rates, and ever-changing trade policies. Land reform favors large interests rather than farmers, who comprise 70% of Burma's population. Burma has the potential to become the next "Asian tiger," but its reliance on the export of natural resources and its lack of technical expertise make future growth uncertain.^{211, 212, 213} Whatever direction the new government takes, the

²⁰³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁰⁴ Carin Hall, "Myanmar—An Emerging Natural Resources Powerhouse," Energy Digital, 21 October 2012, http://www.energydigital.com/global_mining/myanmar-an-emerging-natural-resources-powerhouse

²⁰⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁰⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁰⁷ Economy Watch, "Myanmar Trade, Exports and Imports," 17 March 2010, http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/myanmar/export-import.html

²⁰⁸ Sam Hatfield, "A Window of Opportunity in Burma," OpenOil, 10 May 2012, <http://openoil.net/2012/05/10/a-window-of-opportunity-in-burma/>

²⁰⁹ Priscilla Clapp, "Burma's Long Road to Democracy," United States Institute of Peace, November 2007, <http://www.usip.org/publications/burmas-long-road-democracy>

²¹⁰ Asia Pacific News, "Burmese Flocking to Thailand Looking for Work," 7 July 2008, http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/asiapacific/news/article_1415339.php/Burmese_flock_to_Thailand_looking_for_work

²¹¹ Jared Bissinger, "Think Again: Burma's Economy," Foreign Policy, 18 September 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/18/think_again_burmas_economy

²¹² Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

challenges of bringing Burma into the 21st century global economy are difficult. Building infrastructure, reducing poverty, improving education, and removing trade barriers are but a few things that Burma must effectively manage in the coming years.²¹⁴

Agriculture

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Burmese economy. It accounts for approximately 40% of GDP and employs 70% of the Burmese labor force.^{215, 216, 217} Major crops include rice and edible seeds such as peas or lentils, beans, sesame, nuts, and sugarcane. Rice is the most important crop and nearly half of all agricultural lands are devoted to its cultivation.^{218, 219} The government still controls the agricultural sector dictating what crops will be grown and setting production quotas.²²⁰ Fish, fish products, and hardwood are other significant crops. Burma has the most of the world's exploitable stands of teak, all of which are owned and operated by the government.^{221, 222} If the current rate of harvesting continues, within a few years, Burma's teak forests will be depleted.²²³



© Roger Price / flickr.com
Teak shavings

Although Burma actually produces a surplus of food at the national level, regional food insecurity remains a significant concern.^{224, 225, 226} Food insecurity is behind at least some of the

²¹³ Michael Schuman, "Will Burma Become Asia's Next Economic Tiger?" *Time*, 22 August 2012, <http://business.time.com/2012/08/22/will-burma-become-asias-next-economic-tiger/>

²¹⁴ Dwight H. Perkins, "Industrial Policy Reform in Myanmar," (research paper, Harvard University, Kennedy School, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, April 2012), 6–7, <http://www.ash.harvard.edu/extension/ash/docs/industrialization.pdf>

²¹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²¹⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization, "Myanmar and FAO Achievements and Success Stories" (research report, FAO representation in Myanmar, May 2011), 1, <http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/rap/files/epublications/MyanmaredocFINAL.pdf>

²¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²¹⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Economy," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

²²⁰ Roy Prosterman and Darryl Vhugen, "Land to the Tillers of Myanmar," *International Herald Tribune*, 14 June 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/14/opinion/land-to-the-tillers-of-myanmar.html?_r=0

²²¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²²² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Economy," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

²²³ Dwight H. Perkins, "Industrial Policy Reform in Myanmar" (research paper, Harvard University, Kennedy School, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, April 2012), 7, <http://www.ash.harvard.edu/extension/ash/docs/industrialization.pdf>

²²⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), "Food Security and Natural Disasters: Country Status Paper" (paper, Food Security in Myanmar presentation, 2009), 2, <http://www.unescap.org/LDCCU/Meetings/HighLevel-RPD-food-fuel-crisis/Paper-Presentations/C2-FoodSecurity/Myanmar-FoodSecurity-doc.pdf>

increase in poppy production. Many farmers raise poppies, from which heroine is made, because it is more lucrative for the nation's impoverished farmers.²²⁷ Burma's agricultural sector has much promise but realizing that potential requires huge investments in infrastructure, transportation, and technology.^{228, 229}

Industry

The industrial sector accounts for approximately 19% of GDP and employs about 7% of the Burmese labor force.²³⁰ Most industries are owned and operated by the military or the state. Recent talks about privatizing some industries are underway but have not yet reached resolution.^{231, 232} The Burmese manufacturing sector has sustained slow growth in recent years. Major industries include petroleum, liquefied natural gas, and minerals. Other industries include agricultural processing, wood and wood products, construction, and textiles.^{233, 234} Burma also mines precious gems such as rubies, jade, and emeralds. Some of the highest-quality rubies and jades in the world are mined in Burma which has tremendous potential to expand its mining operations.^{235, 236}



© Roger Price / flickr.com
Copper mine

Burma's energy potential has been ignored. The greatest potential is in hydroelectricity and natural gas.²³⁷ The country's largest export is natural gas, and oil and gas account for about a

²²⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization, "Myanmar and FAO Achievements and Success Stories" (research report, FAO representation in Myanmar, May 2011), 2,

<http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/rap/files/epublications/MyanmaredocFINAL.pdf>

²²⁶ World Food Programme, "Food Security Update-November 2012," November 2012,

<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp254050.pdf>

²²⁷ Nan Tin Htwe, "Opium Fight Fuels Food Insecurity," *Myanmar Times* 32, no. 634 (9–15 July 2012),

<http://www.mmtimes.com/2012/news/634/news63415.html>

²²⁸ Myo Lwin and Victoria Bruce, "Farmers Can Benefit with Good Policies," *Myanmar Times*, 10 September 2012,

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/special-features/150-investment-myanmar/2914-farmers-can-benefit-with-good-policies.html>

²²⁹ United Nations Development Programme, "Myanmar: Agriculture Sector Review," 2011,

<http://www.mm.undp.org/HDI/Agricultural.html>

²³⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²³¹ Dwight H. Perkins, "Industrial Policy Reform in Myanmar" (research paper, Harvard University, Kennedy School, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, April 2012), 14,

<http://www.ash.harvard.edu/extension/ash/docs/industrialization.pdf>

²³² David I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66–67, 162–163.

²³³ Economy Watch, "Myanmar Economic Structure," 17 March 2010,

http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/myanmar/structure-of-economy.html

²³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²³⁵ Mungpi and Solomon, "Burma's Gem Industry: Profit that Fills the Generals' Pockets," *Mizzima News*, 14 January 2009, <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/1545-burmas-gem-industry-profit-that-fills-the-generals-pockets.html>

²³⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Burma's Gem Trade and Human Rights Abuses," 29 July 2008,

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/07/29/burma-s-gem-trade-and-human-rights-abuses>

third of Burma's foreign direct investment.²³⁸ But without an infusion of major amounts of capital, the industrial sector will remain underdeveloped.²³⁹

Industrial development and expansion, at least in the near term, is likely to be centered around Rangoon where there is better electrical and transport infrastructure. Successful industrial development demands an improved infrastructure, especially in the electrical power and transport areas.²⁴⁰

The services sector contributes 42% to national GDP and employs 23% of the labor force.²⁴¹ The sector is underdeveloped but has much potential. Travel and tourism remain vastly underdeveloped, but efforts are underway to expand them.^{242, 243} Nearly 500,000 international visitors travelled to Burma in 2012, and hotels report an upsurge in advance bookings.^{244, 245}

Trade

Myanmar has no recent history of good trade relations, relying mostly on neighboring countries such as India and China. Burma's large trade deficit has severely stunted economic growth. The nation's major export partners are Thailand (37%), China (19%), India (14%), and Japan (7%). Major exports include natural gas, wood products, peas or lentils, beans, fish, rice, clothing, and precious gems.^{246, 247} Major import partners are China (39%), Thailand (23%), Singapore (10%), South Korea (5%), Malaysia (5%), and Japan (4%). Major imports include fabric, petroleum products, fertilizer, plastics, machinery and transport equipment cement and other



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Fine gem stones

²³⁷ Asian Development Bank, "ADB Energy Assessment Shows Wealth of Possibilities in Myanmar," 27 November 2012, <http://www.adb.org/news/adb-energy-assessment-shows-wealth-possibilities-myanmar>

²³⁸ Justin Heifetz, "ADB Study Spotlights Myanmar's Energy Sector," *The Myanmar Times*, 3 December 2012, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/business/3466-ADB-study-puts-spotlights-myanmar-s-energy-sector.html>

²³⁹ Energy Market Authority, "ADB Report: Capital Needed to Unlock Wealth of Opportunities in Myanmar's Energy Sector," Singapore International Energy Week, 13 December 2012, <http://siew.sg/energy-perspectives/renewable-energy/adb-report-capital-needed-unlock-wealth-opportunities-myanmars->

²⁴⁰ Dwight H. Perkins, "Industrial Policy Reform in Myanmar" (research paper, Harvard University, Kennedy School, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, April 2012), 10, <http://www.ash.harvard.edu/extension/ash/docs/industrialization.pdf>

²⁴¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁴² Economy Watch, "Myanmar Economic Structure," 17 March 2010, http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/myanmar/structure-of-economy.html

²⁴³ "Burma Developing Master Tourism Plan," Mizzima News, 4 October 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/business/8166-burma-developing-master-tourism-plan.html>

²⁴⁴ Danielle Bernstein, "Burma Tourist's Industry Booms," Mizzima News, 5 April 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/business/6907-burma-tourists-industry-booms.html>

²⁴⁵ Ko Ko Thett, "Responsible Tourism in Myanmar: Current Situation and Challenges," 2012, <http://www.ecoburma.com/responsible-tourism-in-myanmar-current-situation-and-challenges/>

²⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁴⁷ Economy Watch, "Myanmar Trade, Exports and Imports," 17 March 2010, http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/myanmar/export-import.html

construction materials, and food products.²⁴⁸ Trade is expected to increase with other countries, particularly since many of the economic sanctions have been lifted. The United States and the European Union lifted sanctions against Burma in 2012.^{249, 250}

Banking and Finance

After the 1962 coup, Burma nationalized all banks. The Central Bank of Myanmar was established in 1990 to preserve the value of the national currency (*kyat*).²⁵¹ The present banking system is one of the most antiquated and rudimentary in the world. Moving funds internationally is difficult and often requires underground money-transfer agents. In 2012, private banks introduced a series of changes, including ATM machines and electronic banking. The Central Bank is preparing a nationwide launch of an ATM network which will introduce international banking.²⁵² Currently, in addition to the Central Bank, 19 private and 4 state-owned banks operate in Burma.^{253, 254} There is no corporate bond market and no long-term mortgage lenders in operation. Although not allowed to operate, 20 foreign bank offices have opened in advance of regulations which may allow limited operations.²⁵⁵ The Central Bank has granted 11 Burmese banks the right to trade in U.S. dollars, Singapore dollars, and the European Euro. Four banks now offer remittance services to handle money from migrant workers in Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia. The World Bank plans to open a branch in Burma soon.²⁵⁶



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Yangon bank delivery

Banks do not play a central role in the daily lives of most Burmese. Most keep their cash at home rather than open bank accounts. The country operates a primarily cash economy. Credit cards carry stiff fees and are accepted at few places.²⁵⁷

²⁴⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: Economy,” in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁴⁹ “EU Lifts Sanctions Against Burma for 12 Months in Recognition of Moves Towards Democracy after 50 Years of Military Rule,” Mail Online, 23 April 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2133990/EU-lifts-sanctions-Burma-12-months-recognition-moves-democracy.html>

²⁵⁰ Associated Press, “Burma’s Reforms Bring Easing of U.S. Sanctions,” CBS News, 27 September 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57521324/burmas-reforms-bring-easing-of-u.s-sanctions/

²⁵¹ Central Bank of Myanmar, “Central Bank of Myanmar,” 2010, <http://www.cbm.gov.mm/>

²⁵² Jason Szep, “Myanmar Banking’s New ‘Wow’ Factor—ATMs,” Reuters, 30 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/30/us-myanmar-banking-idUSBRE84T04H20120530>

²⁵³ “Burma’s Banking Landscape Changing Fast,” Mizzima News, 28 June 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/business/7413-burmas-banking-landscape-changing-fast.html>

²⁵⁴ Asia Trade Hub, “Burma Banking,” 2013, <http://www.asiatradehub.com/burma/banks.asp>

²⁵⁵ Patrick Barta, “Myanmar Might Open Bank Sector Next Year,” *Wall Street Journal*, 23 August 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444358404577606984101684906.html>

²⁵⁶ “Burma’s Banking Landscape Changing Fast,” Mizzima News, 28 June 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/business/7413-burmas-banking-landscape-changing-fast.html>

²⁵⁷ Lucy Hooker, “Could Burma Be the Next Emerging Market Miracle?” BBC News, 17 June 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18284085>

Foreign Investment

In November 2012, Burma enacted a new foreign investment law allowing foreign firms to fully own business in the country. The move was a necessary one to attract desperately needed investment.^{258, 259} Foreign firms clearly see potential, even if they are acting cautiously. Nevertheless, foreign direct investments from March 2010 to March 2011 surged past the USD 20 billion, up from only USD 302 million the year before. Most of the funds (58%) were for the extraction industries and another 41% went to electricity projects. Although there is some international excitement over investment opportunities, to date, gas and oil have been heavily supported, but little else.²⁶⁰



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Chinese pipeline

Although the USD 20 billion investment is significant, most of it came from only seven countries.²⁶¹ China and Thailand are the two largest foreign investors in Burma. China's recent investments include projects in hydroelectricity, natural gas, and infrastructure. Among Thailand's recent investments are plans to develop a deep-sea port, an industrial estate, and a biodiesel plant.^{262, 263, 264} Other major investors include South Korea and Hong Kong.²⁶⁵

Standard of Living

Although the standard of living has increased for most Burmese since 2005, it remains low in all major development indicators. According to the United Nations, Burma ranks 149 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index.^{266, 267} Poverty is severe with about one-third of the

²⁵⁸ Aung Hla Tun, "Myanmar State Media Details New Foreign Investment Law," Reuters, 3 November 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/03/us-myanmar-investment-idUSBRE8A204F20121103>

²⁵⁹ *The Economist*, "Burmese Haze: A New Law on Foreign Investment Is Not Entirely Reassuring," 10 November 2012, <http://www.economist.com/news/business/21565986-new-law-foreign-investment-not-entirely-reassuring-burmese-haze>

²⁶⁰ Joseph Allchin, "Foreign Investment Soars to \$20bn," Democratic Voice of Burma, 10 June 2011, <http://www.dvb.no/news/foreign-investment-soars-to-20bn/16062>

²⁶¹ Jared Bissinger, "Behind Burma's Rising FDI," *The Diplomat*, 31 August 2011, <http://thediplomat.com/asean-beat/2011/08/31/behind-burmas-rising-fdi/>

²⁶² "China Becomes Biggest Investor in Myanmar," *China Daily*, 22 February 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7295205.html>

²⁶³ Manop Thip-Osod, "Massive Investment for Dawei," *Bangkok Post*, 21 May 2012, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/learning-from-news/294427/thailand-invests-in-burma-deep-sea-port-industrial-estate>

²⁶⁴ Biofuels Digest, "Thai Company to Invest \$26.8 Million in Myanmar Palm Oil Plant," 25 December 2012, <http://www.biofuelsdigest.com/bdigest/2012/12/25/thai-company-to-invest-26-8-million-in-myanmar-palm-oil-plant/>

²⁶⁵ Jared Bissinger, "Behind Burma's Rising FDI," *The Diplomat*, 31 August 2011, <http://thediplomat.com/asean-beat/2011/08/31/behind-burmas-rising-fdi/>

²⁶⁶ United Nations Development Programme, "Myanmar: Country Profile; Human Development Indicators," 2011, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MMR.html>

²⁶⁷ United Nations Development Programme, "Myanmar: The Second Nation-wide Household Living Conditions Survey Shows Progress in Poverty Reductions although Challenges Remain," 10 June 2011, http://www.mm.undp.org/NewsandPressreleases/NarNewsandPressreleases/Pressreleases/UNDP_MMR_PR_IHLC_A_Launch.html

population falling below the poverty line.²⁶⁸ Per capita income is about USD 857, the lowest in the region.^{269, 270} Approximately 32% of the population was malnourished in 2010 with rural rates (34%) higher than in the cities (26%).²⁷¹ Food poverty is highest in four states: Chin (25%), Rakhine (10%), Tanintharyi (10%) and Shan (9%).²⁷² Poverty rates are also highest in those states: Chin (73%), Rakhine (44%), Tanintyaryi (33%) and Shan (33%).²⁷³



© Greg Walters
Burmese people

Average life expectancy is about 65 years (63 for men and 68 for women).^{274, 275} The infant mortality rate is three times that of Indonesia, seven times that of Thailand, and thirty times that of Singapore.²⁷⁶ The average adult completes only four years of education and less than half of children complete primary school.²⁷⁷ About one-quarter of the population has access to electricity, 1% to telephone landlines, and 70% to safe water.^{278, 279}

Employment Trends

In spite of the high rates of poverty, unemployment is low at 1.7%. The problem is not lack of jobs but low wages.²⁸⁰ Employment opportunities are expected to increase rapidly as



© Greg Walters
Burmese workers

²⁶⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁶⁹ "Burma's Average Income Could Overtake Laos, Cambodia: Minister," Mizzima News, 25 July 2012, <http://www.mizzima.com/business/7595-burmas-average-income-could-overtake-laos-cambodia-minister.html>

²⁷⁰ Mark Tran, "Burma Poised to Emerge from the Global Economic Wilderness," *The Guardian*, 26 October 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/oct/26/burma-emerge-global-economic-wilderness>

²⁷¹ United Nations Development Programme, "Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009–2010)" (survey report, June 2011), 78,

http://www.mm.undp.org/ihlca/01_Poverty_Profile/PDFs/12%20Poverty%20Profile_Complete%20Report.pdf

²⁷² United Nations Development Programme, "Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009–2010)" (survey report, June 2011), 7,

http://www.mm.undp.org/ihlca/01_Poverty_Profile/PDFs/12%20Poverty%20Profile_Complete%20Report.pdf

²⁷³ United Nations Development Programme, "Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009–2010)" (survey report, June 2011), xi, 12, 15,

http://www.mm.undp.org/ihlca/01_Poverty_Profile/PDFs/12%20Poverty%20Profile_Complete%20Report.pdf

²⁷⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 2 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁷⁵ United Nations Development Programme, "Myanmar: Country Profile; Human Development Indicators," 2011, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MMR.html>

²⁷⁶ Knowledge@SMU, "Myanmar at Sixty: On the Brink of an Apocalypse or Reconciliation?" (paper 273, Institutional Knowledge, Singapore Management University, 4 June 2008),

<http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1272&context=ksmu>

²⁷⁷ United Nations Development Programme, "Myanmar: Country Profile; Human Development Indicators," 2011, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MMR.html>

²⁷⁸ Patrick Barta, "Myanmar's Growing, but Has a Long Way to Go," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 August 2012, <http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2012/08/20/myanmars-growing-but-has-a-long-way-to-go/>

²⁷⁹ Asia Development Bank, "Myanmar: Overview," 2013, <http://www.adb.org/countries/myanmar/main>

²⁸⁰ United Nations Development Programme, "Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009–2010): Poverty Profile" (survey report, June 2011), xiii, 56–57,

http://www.mm.undp.org/ihlca/01_Poverty_Profile/PDFs/12%20Poverty%20Profile_Complete%20Report.pdf

new investment enters the country. Although Burma has a ready supply of unskilled workers, skilled workers are at a premium. The level of education and training has been insufficient to produce the kinds of workers that will be needed in the new economy. Many of Burma's best and brightest fled the country but are not expected to return in large numbers. The most pressing needs are likely to be in the technical fields like accounting, banking, manufacturing, and corporate government.^{281, 282}

Outlook

Although some international sanctions against Burma were lifted in 2012, the country still has poor trade relations with much of the international community. Burma's infrastructure is a major drag on economic growth, including trade.²⁸³

Currently one of the world's poorest nations, Burma could become a middle-income country if per capita income triples by 2030 as projected.²⁸⁴ The government has taken several steps toward rejoining the global economy and is working with the Asian Development Bank to develop an economic strategy designed to meet Burma's economic promise.^{285, 286} Poised to see improved economic growth, including an increase in GDP of 6%–8% in 2013, progress depends on the reforms currently being developed and on the reduction of national poverty levels.^{287, 288} But progress also depends on creating alternatives to the growing poppies, too. Poverty, the inability to feed themselves, and the insecurity caused by insurgent movements fuel opium production in the Golden Triangle. Worldwide opium yields increased 5% in 2010 because of Myanmar.²⁸⁹ Burma's development depends on establishing alternative livelihoods, particularly in Shan State, where most of the poppies are grown.²⁹⁰



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Hotel construction

²⁸¹ Christopher W. Runckel, "Myanmar (Burma) in 2012," *Business in Asia*, 2012, <http://www.business-in-asia.com/burma/burma2012.html>

²⁸² Justin Kent, "Can Manufacturing Succeed in Myanmar?" *Forbes*, 18 October 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/connorconnect/2012/10/18/can-manufacturing-succeed-in-myanmar/>

²⁸³ Economy Watch, "Myanmar Trade, Exports and Imports," 17 March 2010, http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/myanmar/export-import.html

²⁸⁴ Wichit Chaitrong, "Myanmar Well Placed to be Mid-income Country by 2030, ADB Says," *The Nation*, 21 August 2012, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Myanmar-well-placed-to-be-mid-income-country-by-20-30188712.html>

²⁸⁵ Mark Tran, "Burma Poised to Emerge from the Global Economic Wilderness," *The Guardian*, 26 October 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/oct/26/burma-emerge-global-economic-wilderness>

²⁸⁶ Cyn-Young Park, et al., "Chapter 1: Myanmar in Transition," in *Myanmar in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges*, (Asian Development Bank Report, August 2012), 1, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2012/myanmar-in-transition.pdf>

²⁸⁷ Asian Development Bank, "Myanmar's Economic Outlook Improving But Broad Reforms Still Needed," 11 April 2012, <http://www.adb.org/news/myanmars-economic-outlook-improving-broad-reforms-still-needed>

²⁸⁸ Phisanu Phromchanya, "Myanmar's GDP Could Grow by 7%-8% Annually for a Decade or More—ADB," 4-Traders, 19 August, 2012, <http://www.4-traders.com/news/Myanmar-s-GDP-Could-Grow-By-7-8-Annually-For-A-Decade-Or-More-ADB--14465357/>

²⁸⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "World Drug Report: 2011," 2011, 45, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2011/The_opium-heroin_market.pdf

²⁹⁰ UNODC, "UNODC Myanmar: Working to End Shan State Dependence on Opium Poppy," 21 May 2012, <http://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/myanmar/2012/05/food-distribution/story.html>

Burma has significant supplies of gas, oil, minerals, and precious gems. Trade relations are improving, which could provide a greater flow of money into the country. Realization of this economic promise depends on major improvements in Burma's inadequate infrastructure, decreasing inequality throughout the country, diversification of industry, improving educational levels, and continuing political reforms.^{291, 292, 293}

²⁹¹ Mark Tran, "Burma Poised to Emerge from the Global Economic Wilderness," *The Guardian*, 26 October 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/oct/26/burma-emerge-global-economic-wilderness>

²⁹² Wichit Chaitrong, "Myanmar Well Placed to be Mid-income Country by 2030, ADB Says," *The Nation*, 21 August 2012, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Myanmar-well-placed-to-be-mid-income-country-by-20-30188712.html>

²⁹³ Cyn-Young Park, et al., "Chapter 1: Myanmar in Transition," in *Myanmar in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges*, (Asian Development Bank Report, August 2012), 15-16, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2012/myanmar-in-transition.pdf>

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Most Burmese depend on farming for a living.

True

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Burmese economy. Agriculture accounts for approximately 40% of GDP and employs 70% of the Burmese labor force.

2. Burma lacks sufficient natural resources to contribute to economic growth.

False

Burma has rich stores of timber, tin, and minerals including zinc and copper, marble, limestone, and precious gemstones. It also has major reserves of petroleum and natural gas.

3. Burma's largest export trading partner is China.

False

Burma relies largely on its neighbors as foreign trade partners. Thailand is its largest export partner (37%) followed by China (39%).

4. Foreign banks are prohibited from operating in Burma.

True

Although foreign banks are not allowed to operate in Burma, by the end of 2012, 20 foreign bank offices had opened in advance of regulations which may allow limited operations.

5. Burma has one of the lowest standards of living in the world.

True

Although the standard of living has increased for most Burmese since 2005, it remains low. According to the United Nations, Burma ranks 149 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

Introduction

Burma is one of Southeast Asia's most ethnically diverse nations with more than 100 ethnic groups.^{294, 295, 296} Most groups have been in Burma since the end of the first millennium C.E. and have remained in the areas where their ancestors originally migrated. Burma's ethnic groups converged from the areas of present-day Cambodia and China, drawing their ethnic heritage from diverse cultures. The major ethnic groups are Burman, Shan, Karen, Mon, Rakhine (Arakan), Chin, and Kachin, but each ethnicity has many subgroups. These subgroups are ethnically distinct and have their own languages.²⁹⁷ The most widely-spoken language is Burmese.²⁹⁸



© dany13 / flickr.com
Burma, Chin people

Burma's history of ethnic relations has been a troubled and violent one. Mistrust, tensions, and politics continue in contemporary Burma. Since independence, armed conflict between ethnic groups and against the government has persisted. Although the election of a nominally civilian government offered a new chance to put aside ethnic differences and end the strife, some groups have refused to lay down their arms. The government is working to end the divisions and to create a more unified nation.^{299, 300, 301}

²⁹⁴ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 6.

²⁹⁵ Hannah Beech, "A Closer Look at Burma's Ethnic Minorities," *Time*, 30 January 2009,

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1874981,00.html>

²⁹⁶ Chizon Eken and Martin Smith, "Minorities in Burma," Minority Rights Group International, 30 October 2007,

<http://www.minorityrights.org/3546/briefing-papers/minorities-in-burma.html>

²⁹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: People," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52569/Plant-and-animal-life#toc52572>

²⁹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012,

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

²⁹⁹ Asia Portal, "The Ethnic Crises in Burma/Myanmar: 2010 and Beyond Dilemmas and Opportunities for the

International Community," 11 June 2010, <http://infocus.asiaportal.info/2010/06/11/blogsin-focus2010junethe-ethnic-crises-burmamyanmar-2010-and-beyond-dilemmas-opportunities-inter/>

³⁰⁰ *The New Light of Myanmar*, "No Problems Unsolvable with Mutual Trust, Understanding and Empathy:

President," 6 January 2013, <http://www.networkmyanmar.org/images/stories/PDF14/NLM06012013.pdf>

³⁰¹ Renaud Egretau, "Burma's Civil Wars," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2012,

<http://mondediplo.com/2012/12/08burma>

Ethnic Groups and Languages

The Burman (Bamars)

The Bamars (also known as the Burman) are the largest ethnic group and make up 68% of the population.^{302, 303, 304}

Originating in the Himalayas more than 1,000 years ago, their language is from the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Concentrated in the Irrawaddy River Valley and along the coastal strips, the Burman are overwhelmingly Theravada Buddhists.^{305,306}



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Earring Ceremony

Education is highly valued, and literacy among the Burman is high.^{307, 308} Much of their culture involves rituals and rites of passage including the *shinpyu* ceremony marking a young boy's service as a novice monk.³⁰⁹ Burman families often have at least five children, and most children live in extended families that include four generations. Upon marriage, men usually live with the woman's family. This reduces problems with in-laws since men are out-of-the-house working all day. This limits contact with the mother-in-law. If the couple lived with the husband's family, a woman would be home with her mother-in-law most of the day. The Burman have respect for the elderly and are expected to care for them.³¹⁰

Although women occupy a lower status in Theravada Buddhism, men and women have equal rights in property, marriage, and divorce. The husband turns his entire paycheck over to his wife who is in charge of family household finances. Women have played active roles in society, particularly in business. Although women generally have not held positions of political power, one notable exception is Aung San Suu Kyi, head of the opposition party and member of parliament.^{311, 312}

³⁰² The political term "Burmese" refers to all the people of Burma, whereas the term "Burman" identifies just the ethnic group. See Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 129–130.

³⁰³ IRIN, "Briefing: Myanmar's Ethnic Problems," 29 March 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95195/Briefing-Myanmar-s-ethnic-problems>

³⁰⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁰⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: People," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52569/Plant-and-animal-life#toc52572>

³⁰⁶ Oxford Burma Alliance, "Ethnic Nationalities of Burma: Bamar," n.d., <http://www.oxfordburmaalliance.org/ethnic-groups.html>

³⁰⁷ Myanmar Image, "Bamar: Dominant Ethnic Group of Myanmar," n.d., <http://myanmar-image.com/myanmar/races1/bamar/>

³⁰⁸ E. Mirante, "Burman: Education," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 178.

³⁰⁹ E. Mirante, "Burman: Religion," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds. (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 176.

³¹⁰ E. Mirante, "Burman: Family Life," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 178.

³¹¹ Myanmar Image, "Bamar: Dominant Ethnic Group of Myanmar," n.d., <http://myanmar-image.com/myanmar/races1/bamar/>

³¹² E. Mirante, "Burman: Gender Issues," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby, eds. (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 180.

The Shan

The Shan constitute 9% of the population and are Burma's largest minority group.³¹³ They migrated from the Yunnan area of southern China and settled in the valleys of Burma. Their language is from the Tai language group.^{314, 315, 316} They adopted Theravada Buddhism, retaining some indigenous religious elements, especially in the more remote areas of the Shan Plateau.³¹⁷



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Shan woman

The Shan are a monogamous group that generally lives in nuclear family settings. The typical Burmese Shan family has six children.³¹⁸ In traditional Shan culture, men and women were viewed as equals but within their Buddhist religion, women occupy a lower status. Shan women were politically active until the military junta took power. Still, many women have taken an active role in security rights for the minority Shan, especially for Shan women, while they continue to work outside their homes, in business.³¹⁹

Under British colonial authority, Shan princes negotiated agreements with the British which allowed them to continue to rule their traditional lands.^{320, 321} Following independence, the Shan became increasingly disillusioned by what they saw as a Burman attempt to destroy Shan culture and often engaged in armed conflict with the Burmese government. Armed militias formed to protect the Shan states. Today, the Shan Army-South remains a major armed threat to the government.^{322, 323, 324}

³¹³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³¹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: People," 2012,

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³¹⁵ IRIN, "Briefing: Myanmar's Ethnic Problems," 29 March 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95195/Briefing-Myanmar-s-ethnic-problems>

³¹⁶ E. Mirante, "Shans: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 866.

³¹⁷ E. Mirante, "Shans: Religion," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 866–867.

³¹⁸ E. Mirante, "Shans: Family Life," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 868–869.

³¹⁹ E. Mirante, "Shans: Gender Issues," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 870.

³²⁰ SitaSao Ying, "The Tradition of Democracy in the Shan State," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 13 no. 4 (Winter 1989), <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/the-tradition-democracy-shan-state>

³²¹ E. Mirante, "Shans: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 866.

³²² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Shan," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/538388/Shan#>

³²³ E. Mirante, "Shans: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 866.

³²⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Non-state Armed Groups," 10 January 2012.

The Karen

The Karen, making up about 7% of the population, are Burma's second-largest minority group.^{325, 326} They originated in the areas of the Gobi Desert, Tibet, and Mongolia and were among Burma's first inhabitants, arriving in southern Burma in the 6th or 7th century.³²⁷ Among the major subgroups are the Pwo Karen who are concentrated in the deltas of Burma, the Sagw Karen who live in the mountains, the Karenni (Kayah), Pa-Os, and the Kayan who are concentrated in the Shan and Karenni states.^{328, 329} About 70% of Karens are Buddhists or animists, and the rest are Christian.³³⁰ During the British colonial period, they were recruited into the police and military and were acclaimed guerilla fighters for the Allied forces during WWII.^{331, 332} Today, most Karens make their living growing rice, fishing or working in the mines.³³³



© Steve Jurvetson
Karen mother and daughter

The Karen are a matrilineal monogamous group among which adultery is taboo. They tend to marry for life and have an average of between three and four children, although their infant mortality rates are high.^{334, 335}

Treated as inferior and enslaved by Mons and Burmans, the Karens retreated to more remote areas to avoid oppression. They were the group most loyal to British missionaries and

³²⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³²⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: People," 2012,

<http://britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar#>

³²⁷ E. Mirante, "Karens: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 467.

³²⁸ IRIN, "Briefing: Myanmar's Ethnic Problems," 29 March 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95195/Briefing-Myanmar-s-ethnic-problems>

³²⁹ E. Mirante, "Karens: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 467.

³³⁰ Centers for Disease Control, "Chapter 2: Overview of Karen Culture," in *Promoting Cultural Sensitivity: A Practical Guide for Tuberculosis Programs That Provide Services to Persons From Burma* (Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), 23,

<http://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/guidestoolkits/ethnographicguides/burma/chapters/chapter2.pdf>

³³¹ E. Mirante, "Karens: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 467.

³³² Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 248–249.

³³³ E. Mirante, "Karens: Work," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 471.

³³⁴ E. Mirante, "Karens: Family Life," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 470.

³³⁵ Centers for Disease Control, "Chapter 2: Overview of Karen Culture," in *Promoting Cultural Sensitivity: A Practical Guide for Tuberculosis Programs That Provide Services to Persons From Burma* (Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), 21,

<http://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/guidestoolkits/ethnographicguides/burma/chapters/chapter2.pdf>

colonialists.³³⁶ The Karen National Liberation Army and the Karenni Army are still active. The Karen are one of the few ethnic groups that have not signed a peace accord and continue to fight for their independence. They pose no significant threat to the federal government but continue to wage low-level guerilla war.³³⁷

The Mon

The Mon, a minority group related to the Khmer of Cambodia, make up about 2% of Burma's population.³³⁸ Their Mon-Khmer dialect is distantly related to some Indian languages. The current government policy discouraging learning the Mon language has resulted in many Mon being able to speak only Burmese.³³⁹ Among the original inhabitants of present-day Thailand, the Mon live in southern Burma in Mon State.^{340, 341} They are Theravada Buddhists, and many young men and women enter monasteries for a period of time. Most Mon villages have a pagoda and a monastery, which also serves as a school.^{342, 343} Mon families are large, often with seven children, but their infant mortality rates are high. Divorce is permitted in Mon culture.³⁴⁴



© Rebecca Stanel
Mon ringing a bell

The suppression of Mon by the Burmese government has fueled considerable resentment. Efforts to create an autonomous Mon region led to the creation of the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA) and one of the Burma's longest running insurgencies. The MNLA signed a cease-fire agreement with the government in 1995, but the agreement fell apart in 2010. The MNLA has thus far refused to heed government demands to disarm. As a result, the government no longer attempts to communicate with the MNLA.³⁴⁵ Mon society suffers from other problems including drug-addiction and a high rate of HIV/AIDS infections resulting from intravenous heroine use.³⁴⁶

³³⁶ Shelby Tucker, "Chapter Two: Geography and Ethnicity," in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001), 15.

³³⁷ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Non-state Armed Groups," 10 January 2012.

³³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³³⁹ E. Mirante, "Mons: Language," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 670.

³⁴⁰ IRIN, "Briefing: Myanmar's Ethnic Problems," 29 March 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95195/Briefing-Myanmar-s-ethnic-problems>

³⁴¹ E. Mirante, "Mons: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 669.

³⁴² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mon," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/388675/Mon#>

³⁴³ E. Mirante, "Mons: Religion," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 670.

³⁴⁴ E. Mirante, "Mons: Religion," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 671.

³⁴⁵ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA), 15 January 2013.

³⁴⁶ E. Mirante, "Mons: Social Problems," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 4, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 673.

The Chin

The Chin make up 2.5% of Burma's population and live in Chin State, the sparsely populated Western Mountains of northern Burma. The Chin language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family although the many subgroups speak various dialects.^{347, 348} Traditionally animist, the Chin were adopted Christianity during the British colonial period.^{349, 350} Today, about 90% of the Chin are Christian.^{351, 352}

The majority of Chin live a rugged lifestyle as farmers who clear new plots of land every year by burning out vegetation. They often transport goods on their backs and shoulders since few people own horses or carts. In the Chin culture, women are the main source of agricultural labor as well as responsible for household duties. The Chin weave their own clothes and fabricate their own utensils from bamboo.³⁵³ Families are large with an average of five children. Women live with their husbands' family. Sons are supposed to care for parents in their old age with the major responsibilities falling to the daughter-in-law.³⁵⁴

The Kachin

The Kachin make up a mere 1.5% of Burma's population. This ethnic group comprises seven tribes who live in the Northern Mountains.^{355, 356} The tribes, who migrated from China, speak a version of the Tibeto-Burman language. Approximately 67% of Kachin are Christian and the rest are Buddhist or animist. Spirits (*nats*) are important not only to



© Jonas Merian
Kachin family trip

³⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁴⁸ E. Mirante, "Chin," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 202.

³⁴⁹ IRIN, "In Brief: Chins Denied Religious Freedom in Myanmar," 5 September 2012,

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/96244/In-Brief-Chins-denied-religious-freedom-in-Myanmar>

³⁵⁰ E. Mirante, "Chin: Religion," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 203.

³⁵¹ Chin Human Rights Organization, "Burma/Myanmar" (paper, 2011), 1,

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/CHRO_UPR_submission_Myanmar.pdf

³⁵² Benedict Rogers, "Zing Cung, General-Secretary of the National Democratic (NDF) and Vice Chairman of the Chin National Front (CNF)," *Chinland Guardian*, 14 May 2003,

<http://www.chinlandguardian.com/interviews/interviews/413-zing-cung-general-secretary-of-the-national-democratic-front-ndf-and-vice-chairman-of-the-chin-national-front-cnf.html>

³⁵³ E. Mirante, "Chin," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 204, 206, 207.

³⁵⁴ E. Mirante, "Chin: Family Life," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 205.

³⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁵⁶ E. Mirante, "Kachins: Introduction," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 442.

animists, but also to Buddhists and Christians who worship some of these *nat* spirits.³⁵⁷

The Kachin trace their descent only through their fathers. Unlike most groups in Burma, the Kachin use family names.³⁵⁸ Most Kachin marry in their teens or early twenties and have six or more children. The Kachin clan system establishes rules for who can marry whom. Most of the population is engaged in farming but joining the military has long been a valued tradition.^{359, 360} Kachin were among the military ranks of both the British and Burmese armies, and today, many have enlisted in the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) which operates in both Kachin and Shan states.^{361, 362} The KIA is one of the strongest militant groups in Burma and has recently formed alliances with other insurgent groups in the region. The KIA has thus far rejected appeals from the government for a ceasefire and continues to inflict casualties and disrupt peace talks in the region.^{363, 364}

Religion

Burma has no official state religion, but 89% of the population are Theravada Buddhists. Of the remainder, about 4% are Christian, 4% are Muslim, 1% practice traditional animistic religions, and 2% adhere to other forms of religion including Hinduism. Most Burman, Shan, Mon, and Arakanese are Buddhist while the Karen, Kachin, and Chin have the largest concentrations of Christians. Animist practitioners are mainly hill people.^{365, 366, 367}



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Monks at a monastery

Theravada Buddhism

Theravada Buddhism, the oldest and most conservative form of Buddhism, was first adopted by the Mon around the third century B.C.E. By the ninth century C.E., it had spread to the northern areas of Burma where it was combined with other religious forms including Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism. By the 11th century, the Bamar king decided to purify the kingdom's

³⁵⁷ E. Mirante, "Kachins: Religion," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 443.

³⁵⁸ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 239.

³⁵⁹ E. Mirante, "Kachins: Work," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 445.

³⁶⁰ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 236–237.

³⁶¹ E. Mirante, "Kachins: Work," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life* Vol. 3, 2nd ed., eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009), 445.

³⁶² Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Kachin Independence Army," 7 September 2012.

³⁶³ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Kachin Independence Army," 7 September 2012.

³⁶⁴ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 239.

³⁶⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁶⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Burma: Religion," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52575/Religion>

³⁶⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Burma: July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report," 13 September 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168349.htm

religion. Yet elements of other religions, including animism, remain embedded within the Theravada practices.³⁶⁸

Theravada Buddhism does not believe in one omnipotent creator of the Universe but instead holds that there are multiple spiritual gods with limited powers. Buddha taught that ignorance of the four Noble Truths left people in a state of misery from which one could not escape until reaching a state of enlightenment or Nirvana. Meditation represents the way to enlightenment rather than supernatural powers outside the individual. Each individual must find and travel his/her own path to enlightenment without a god's help. For a Theravada Buddhist, the ideal life is monastic dedication to meditation in search of true enlightenment. Followers are admonished to refrain from taking things which are not freely given; to avoid lying, idle chat, and gossip; to refrain from hurting any living thing; and are prohibited from drinking and using drugs. Monks are forbidden to eat after noon and may not handle money.^{369, 370, 371}

Today, Burma's Buddhist temples have many social functions, as well as provide welfare services and schooling opportunities. The temple serves as a guest house, a community center where people can go for music and dance, and the place where official information is disseminated.³⁷² Monks, but not nuns, perform ceremonies for lay people. Virtually every ethnic Burman male joins a monastery at some point in his life.

Christianity

Christianity, in the form of Roman Catholicism, first came to Burma in the 16th century although serious attempts by missionaries to spread the religion did not take hold until 1722. In 1813, a Baptist missionary arrived, translated the Bible into Burmese, and began active efforts to convert the population.³⁷³

Today, Baptists represent the largest of the Christian denominations (about 75%) in Burma, and Roman Catholics represent about 25% of all Christians.³⁷⁴ The Christian

population is concentrated primarily among the Chin, Kachin, Karenni, and Karen ethnic groups. Some Christians have been victimized by discrimination and pressured to adopt Buddhism.³⁷⁵



© thaths / flickr.com
Baptist church in Yangon

³⁶⁸ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 338–339.

³⁶⁹ BBC, “Thervada Buddhism,” 10 February 2002,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisions/theravada_1.shtml

³⁷⁰ John T. Bullit, “What Is Theravada Buddhism,” *acesstoinsight.org*, 2013,

<http://www.acesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bullitt/theravada.html>

³⁷¹ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 339.

³⁷² Michael C. Howard, “Burma,” *Countries and Their Cultures*, 2012, <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Burma.html>

³⁷³ George Appleton, “The War and After: Burma,” 1946, <http://anglicanhistory.org/asia/burma/appleton1946/>

³⁷⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: People and Society,” in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁷⁵ IRIN, “In Brief: Chins Denied Religious Freedom in Myanmar,” 5 September 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/96244/In-Brief-Chins-denied-religious-freedom-in-Myanmar>

^{376, 377, 378} Some reports show that the Burmese military has resorted to forced-labor, rape, and torture against the Christians in Chin State.³⁷⁹ Other reports suggest that the junta engaged in daily human rights violations among the Christian Karen including attacking churches and murdering villagers. The army has justified its actions by saying that portions of Karen State are controlled by armed militant groups. A significant number of Christian refugees live in Thai camps along the Burma-Thai border.^{380, 381}

Islam

Approximately 4% of the Burmese population is Muslim with most being Sunnis. Muslims are concentrated in Rakhine State and in Rangoon, Irrawaddy, Magwe, and Mandalay Divisions.^{382, 383} Many face discrimination based partly on the restrictive Burmese citizenship law. The citizenship law requires citizens to trace their Burmese ancestry before British rule.

Because most Muslims arrived during the era of the British, they are denied citizenship rights. One group which has been granted citizenship is the Panthay Chinese Muslims in Shan State.^{384, 385}

Muslims in Rakhine State face severe discrimination and have been victims of violent persecution. In 2012, riots erupted following the rape of a Buddhist woman allegedly by Rohingya men in western Burma. By June 2012, approximately 650 Rohingya had been killed and thousands displaced by violent protests which continue to spread.^{386, 387, 388, 389}



© Scott Edmunds
Angry Nats

³⁷⁶ IRIN, “In Brief: Chins Denied Religious Freedom in Myanmar,” 5 September 2012,

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/96244/In-Brief-Chins-denied-religious-freedom-in-Myanmar>

³⁷⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Burma: July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report,” 13 September 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168349.htm

³⁷⁸ World Watch Monitor, “Burmese Army Oppresses Chin Christians, Study Says,” Compass Direct News, 19 January 2013, <http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/english/country/burma/31621>

³⁷⁹ World Watch Monitor, “Burmese Army Oppresses Chin Christians, Study Says,” Compass Direct News, 19 January 2013, <http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/english/country/burma/31621>

³⁸⁰ World Watch Monitor, “Burmese Army Oppresses Chin Christians, Study Says,” Compass Direct News, 19 January 2013, <http://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/english/country/burma/31621>

³⁸¹ Voice of America, “Report: Burmese Army Continues Rights Violations in Karen,” 28 August 2012, http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/Burma_12_08_28_Report_Burmese_Army_Continues_Rights_Violation_in_Karen.pdf

³⁸² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Burma: July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report,” 13 September 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168349.htm

³⁸³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: People and Society,” in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁸⁴ Islam Awareness, “Islam in Burma and Rohingya Muslims,” 1996–2004, <http://www.islamawareness.net/Asia/Burma/>

³⁸⁵ Associated Press, “Burma Begins Verifying Muslim Citizenship,” Fox News, 30 November 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/11/30/burma-begins-verifying-muslim-citizenship/>

³⁸⁶ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Burma: July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report,” 13 September 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168349.htm

³⁸⁷ Muslim Hands, “Myanmar (Burma) Emergency Appeal,” 2013, <http://muslimhands.org.uk/emergencies/2012/myanmar-emergency-appeal/>

³⁸⁸ Gwen Robinson, “Anti-Muslim Violence Spreads in Myanmar,” FT.com, 5 November 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/711ce09e-26fc-11e2-9295-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2HJA2Tywp>

Indigenous Religion and The Worship of Nats

Before Buddhism arrived in Burma, the people practiced spirit (*nat*) worship, but today, only about 1% of the population count themselves as *nat* worshippers. Most are located in the hill country or rural areas of Burma.^{390, 391} Animists worship 37 nature spirits called *nats* who represent natural forces including, water, wind, rocks, and trees. *Nats* are the spirits of humans who suffered some great tragedy or unnatural death and have not been released from this earthly world. The spirits appealed to a Burmese king who granted each a territory over which the spirit would have dominion. Although the specific individual spirits among these *nats* changed, their number remains constant at 37.^{392, 393} All are ghosts or spirits of heroes except the chief *nat*, *Thagyamin Nat*. Shrines to each of the 37 *nat* spirits can be found on top of Mount Popa, their spiritual home, in central Burma.^{394, 395, 396}

Nats could be forces for both good and evil. Many Burmese have a household shrine where offerings are left in an unhusked coconut.³⁹⁷ Ceremonies are officiated by shamans who combine music, dance, and trances to communicate with the spirits. Many such ceremonies are conducted by female shamans in private homes. The most important *nat* ritual is held each year in the town of Taungbyon close to appearance of the full moon in August. The six-day festival brings people from around the nation.^{398, 399}

Cuisine

Burmese cuisine varies by region but rice is the main staple making up about 75% of a typical diet.^{400, 401} In the highlands where rice is less common, millet, sorghum, and corn are staples.⁴⁰²

³⁸⁹ Associated Press, “In Myanmar, Muslim Survivors Recall Buddhist Assault that Forced Mass Exodus,” *Washington Post*, 29 December 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-myanmar-muslim-survivors-recall-buddhist-assault-that-forced-mass-exodus/2012/12/29/4e6ea236-51bc-11e2-835b-02f92c0daa43_story.html

³⁹⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “Burma: July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report,” 13 September 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168349.htm

³⁹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Burma: People and Society,” in *The World Factbook*, 19 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

³⁹² Sarah M. Bekker, “Talent for Trance: Dancing for the Spirits in Burma,” in *Tradition and Modernity in Myanmar*, eds. Uta Gärtner and Jens Lorenz (Berlin: Verlag Münster Publishers, 1994), 288.

³⁹³ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 327–328.

³⁹⁴ Asian Studies Center, “Burma: Religion,” Michigan State University, 2013, http://asia.isp.msu.edu/wbwoa/southeast_asia/burma/religion.htm

³⁹⁵ Micha F. Lindemans, “Nats,” *Encyclopedia Mythica*, 28 September 2006, <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/n/nats.html>

³⁹⁶ Evelina Rioukhina, “Legend of Mount Popa,” UNSpecial.org, March 2003, http://www.unspecial.org/UNS616/UNS_616_T11.html

³⁹⁷ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 328.

³⁹⁸ Asian Studies Center, “Burma: Religion,” Michigan State University, 2013, http://asia.isp.msu.edu/wbwoa/southeast_asia/burma/religion.htm

³⁹⁹ Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière, “Chapter 4: The Taungbyon Festival: Locality and Nation-Confronting in the Cult of the 37 Lords,” in *Burma at the Turn of the 21st Century*, ed. Monique Skidmore (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 65–66, 69–74.

⁴⁰⁰ Myanmar, “Lifestyle: Myanmar Traditional Foods,” 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/lifestyle/traditional_foods.html

Blending Burmese, Mon, Indian, and Chinese flavors, typical food mainly consists of oil-based curries, vegetables, salted fish, and soups.^{403, 404} Most protein dishes are cooked in oil along with garlic, ginger, turmeric, and chilies, and onions.⁴⁰⁵

Burmese eat soup with almost every meal. Soups may be the Indian inspired lentil soup (*peh-hin-ye*) or a clear sweet broth with meat and a few vegetables or a bean soup. Soups may also be bitter or peppery depending on what accompanies it.^{406, 407} Salads (*thoke*) are another common feature of Burmese meals. They generally are a combination of vegetables to which leaves, cooked fish or meat, slices of onion, tamarind juice, soy sauce or fish paste are often added.^{408, 409} One favorite salad (*athouq*) is made from raw vegetables, tossed with lime juice, onions, peanuts, roasted chickpea powder, and chilies. Other popular salads include one made of tamarind leaves (*maji-yweg thouq*) and one made with the indigenous lemon (*shauq-thi dhouq*).⁴¹⁰



© Go Travel / flickr.com
Cooking food

The main meal is often an oil-based fish or meat curry. Pork or mutton are the most common meats and beef is rarely served. Popular dishes include rice noodles with curry (*k'auq sen*), noodles in coconut sauce (*ohn-no khaut swei*), rice noodles with deep-fried pork and deep-fried bean curd puffs (*mishee*), golden egg curry (*ou hin*), and southern pork with sour bamboo shoots (*wet thar hmyit chin*).^{411, 412, 413, 414} Desserts are uncommon except on special occasions or when

⁴⁰¹ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 328–329.

⁴⁰² Michael C. Howard, “Burma: Food in Daily Life,” in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001), 350, <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Burma.html>

⁴⁰³ Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2011), 138.

⁴⁰⁴ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 328–329.

⁴⁰⁵ Myanmar, “Lifestyle: Myanmar Traditional Foods,” 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/lifestyle/traditional_foods.html

⁴⁰⁶ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 328.

⁴⁰⁷ Myanmar, “Lifestyle: Myanmar Traditional Foods,” 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/lifestyle/traditional_foods.html

⁴⁰⁸ Myanmar, “Lifestyle: Myanmar Traditional Foods,” 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/lifestyle/traditional_foods.html

⁴⁰⁹ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., “Cuisine,” in *Insight Guides: Burma Myanmar* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers, Inc., 2005), 82.

⁴¹⁰ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 328.

⁴¹¹ Naomi Duguid, “Coconut Sauce Noodles Recipe (Ohn-No Khaut Swei),” SBS.com, 2010, http://www.sbs.com.au/food/recipe/14835/Coconut_sauce_noodles_%28ohn-no_khaut_swei%29

⁴¹² Naomi Duguid, “Golden Egg Curry Recipe (Ou Hin),” SBS.com.au, 2010, http://www.sbs.com.au/food/recipe/14831/Golden_egg_curry_%28ou_hin%29

⁴¹³ Francis Doral, Clare Griffiths, and Brian Bell, eds., “Cuisine,” in *Insight Guides: Burma Myanmar* (Maspeth, NY: Langenscheidt Publishers, Inc., 2005), 82.

⁴¹⁴ cornFusion, “A Short Essay on Burmese Cuisine,” Chowhound.com, 7 June 2007, <http://chowhound.chow.com/topics/409024>

entertaining guests. The most common is pickled tea-leaf salad with roasted sesame seeds, peanuts, fried beans, garlic, and a little dried prawn. Other desserts include seaweed jelly (*kyauk kyaw*), a lump of palm sugar (*jaggery*), and tapioca pudding sweetened with *jaggery* and coconut (*thagu byin*).^{415, 416} Beverages usually served with the meal include lemonade, tea or beer.⁴¹⁷

Clothing and Traditional Dress

Clothing has both an ethnic and a political dimension. Prominent activists argued against Western attire.⁴¹⁸ Traditional clothing became a symbol of pride in Burmese heritage and became part of a “wear-homespun” campaign.^{419, 420} Western dress is becoming increasingly common, particularly in the cities. Many, however, prefer to wear the traditional Burmese clothing.⁴²¹



© Hella Delicious / flickr.com
Burmese family

Men

The typical outfit for men is a short-collared shirt (*ingyi*), a round-necked jacket (*tai-bon*) and an ankle-length sarong (*longyi*). The round pink or yellow silk cap (*gaung-baung*) is reserved for ceremonial settings.⁴²² Male *longyis* are called *pa-soe* and the female version is the *hta-mein*. Men knot their garments in the front while women fold it, fix it and knot it on one side.^{423, 424}

Longyi colors and patterns vary by ethnic group and may carry other symbolic meanings.^{425, 426,}
⁴²⁷ A Burman *pa-soe* uses fabric with checks, plaids, or stripes in any color. Among the Kayin, however, the *pa-soe* is solid red with parallel horizontal stripes in the middle. Rakine patterns are light blues and grays while the Kachin is generally a pattern of checks in black, purple, or green.

⁴¹⁵ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 328–329, 331.

⁴¹⁶ Myanmar, “Lifestyle: Myanmar Traditional Foods,” 2006,

http://www.myanmar.com/lifestyle/traditional_foods.html

⁴¹⁷ cornFusion, “A Short Essay on Burmese Cuisine,” Chowhound.com, 7 June 2007,

<http://chowhound.chow.com/topics/409024>

⁴¹⁸ Peter Olszewski, *Land of a Thousand Eyes: The Subtle Pleasures of Everyday Life in Myanmar* (New South Wales, Australia: Unwin and Allen, 2006), 77–78.

⁴¹⁹ Shelby Tucker, “Chapter Four: We Burmans,” in *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 82.

⁴²⁰ Eric Trachtenberg, “Burma—The Golden Land, Part I,” *The New Progressive*, 30 November 2011,

<http://www.et1964.com/2011/11/burma-the-golden-land-part-i/>

⁴²¹ “Myanmar: Personal Appearance,” CultureGrams Online Edition, ProQuest, 2012.

⁴²² “Myanmar: Personal Appearance,” CultureGrams Online Edition, ProQuest, 2012.

⁴²³ Mo Mo Cho Win, “What Traditional Clothes Myanmar People Wear?” ASEAN-Korea Centre blog, 4 June 2012,

<http://blog.aseankorea.org/archives/12238>

⁴²⁴ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 274.

⁴²⁵ Vietlong Travel, “Myanmar Traditional Costumes,” n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴²⁶ Ma Thanegi, “Kayin Clothing,” *Enchanting Myanmar* 2, no. 3 (April–June 2003), <http://www.myanmar-image.com/enchantingmyanmar/enchantingmyanmar2-3/kayin.htm>

⁴²⁷ Myanmar, “Arts & Literature,” 21 May 2006,

http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

The Mon *pa-soe* is similar to the Kachin except that the fabric features small red checks.^{428, 429, 430} Males from the Shan, Chin, and Kayah groups wear loose trousers. Shan trousers are light brown, brown, terracotta, or grey in color while those for the Kayah are always black.^{431, 432}

The traditional collarless jacket (*tai-bon*) may be white, black, grey, or terracotta in color.⁴³³ Kayin and Chin males, however, wear long dresses.^{434, 435} The *gaung-baung*, which also reflects ethnic differences, is wrapped around the head and knotted on the right side.^{436, 437, 438, 439} In some rural areas, farmers may wear the cone-shaped bamboo hat known as a *khamauk*.⁴⁴⁰ Simple rubber or velvet slippers finish the look.^{441, 442, 443}

Women

Longyis for the Burman women are calf-length and come in a variety of solid colors, flowered prints, or other designs. Rakhine *longyis* are longer and feature horizontal stripes. The Mon *longyi* is red with stripes or checks; for the Kayin and Kayah, the fabric sports parallel horizontal striped designs on a red or green base. The Kachin fabric has vertical designs on a red or black base and is the shortest of all the groups.^{444, 445, 446} The traditional upper garment is the form-

⁴²⁸ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴²⁹ Eric Trachtenberg, "Burma—The Golden Land, Part I," *The New Progressive*, 30 November 2011, <http://www.et1964.com/2011/11/burma-the-golden-land-part-i/>

⁴³⁰ Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

⁴³¹ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴³² Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

⁴³³ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 274.

⁴³⁴ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴³⁵ Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

⁴³⁶ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴³⁷ Ma Thanegi, "Kayin Clothing," *Enchanting Myanmar* 2, no. 3 (April–June 2003), <http://www.myanmar-image.com/enchantingmyanmar/enchantingmyanmar2-3/kayin.htm>

⁴³⁸ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 274.

⁴³⁹ Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

⁴⁴⁰ "Myanmar: Personal Appearance," CultureGrams Online Edition, ProQuest, 2012.

⁴⁴¹ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴⁴² Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2011), 70–71.

⁴⁴³ "Myanmar: Personal Appearance," CultureGrams Online Edition, ProQuest, 2012.

⁴⁴⁴ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴⁴⁵ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 274.

⁴⁴⁶ Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

fitting waist-length blouses with long sleeves (*ingyi*).^{447, 448} Kachin women are distinguishable by the silver coins and studs often attached to their blouses. Kayah women commonly wear black *ingyi* covering a single shoulder. The blouses of the Chin and Kayin may be short-sleeved.⁴⁴⁹ Women wear headgear which, like men's, reflects ethnic differences.⁴⁵⁰

Gender Issues

Burmese women enjoy greater equality with men than other women throughout the region. They wield considerable influence in the home and can fully participate in activities outside the home including work. Among most groups, kinship is traced through both the mother's and the father's lines.^{451, 452}

Men and women have equal rights with respect to inheritance, marriage, and divorce. Girls and boys are educated together, and today, more Burmese women attend universities than men.

In other areas, however, women lag seriously behind men, especially in positions of power. Only 20 of the 659 members of the new parliament are women. Women rarely occupy other powerful positions, including in the military.⁴⁵³



© Simon falvo
Women building roads

In the predominant Theravada Buddhist view of most Burmese, girls occupy a lower status. The birth of a girl child receives less celebration than that of a son. Nevertheless, both girls and boys are treasured. The inability of women to become monks, however, consigns females to a second-class status in a society in which religion is woven into daily life. Women can achieve the state of Nirvana, but only if she is reincarnated as a man. Some areas of Buddhist shrines are forbidden to women.^{454, 455, 456, 457}

Although they take primary responsibility for household duties as well as overseeing the family budget, women run businesses and work alongside their husbands. Daughters are not viewed as a

⁴⁴⁷ Vietlong Travel, "Myanmar Traditional Costumes," n.d., <http://www.heritagecruise.net/myanmar/myanmar-facts/myanmar-traditional-costumes.html>

⁴⁴⁸ Donald M. Seekins, *The A to Z of Burma (Myanmar)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 274.

⁴⁴⁹ Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

⁴⁵⁰ Myanmar, "Arts & Literature," 21 May 2006, http://www.myanmar.com/artsandliterature/traditional_costumes.html

⁴⁵¹ Than Than Nwe, "Gendered Spaces: Women in Burmese Society," *Transformations* 6, (February 2003): 11, http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_06/pdf/nwe.pdf

⁴⁵² "Myanmar: Family," CultureGrams Online Edition, ProQuest, 2012.

⁴⁵³ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 313.

⁴⁵⁴ Than Than Nwe, "Gendered Spaces: Women in Burmese Society," *Transformations* 6, (February 2003):7, 9–10, http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_06/pdf/nwe.pdf

⁴⁵⁵ Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2011), 38–39.

⁴⁵⁶ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 313.

⁴⁵⁷ Than Than Nwe, "Gendered Spaces: Women in Burmese Society," *Transformations* 6, (February 2003):8–9, http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_06/pdf/nwe.pdf

financial liability because Burmese have no tradition of marriage dowries. They, along with their brothers, will look after their parents in old age.^{458, 459}

The Arts

Art and Architecture

Burma has various traditional arts that have survived since the 11th century C.E., and under government patronage their practice has been revived.⁴⁶⁰ Lacquerware artisans make boxes, vases, and bowls from bamboo and resin. They etch or paint scenes of the *Jatakas*, stories of the former lives of the Buddha, on the more traditional-style items. Other arts include masonry and stone carving, metal working including bronze casting, and fine wood carving. The Burmese are expert silk weavers, and well known for tapestries sewn with delicate needlework and gold thread.^{461, 462}



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Weaving silk

Architectural styles reflect both Buddhist, and in the case of Rangoon, colonial influences. The most important structures are the Buddhist temples, and Burma's temples are among the most elegant in Asia. Historically, only the religious buildings were constructed of permanent materials such as brick and stucco.⁴⁶³ The largest temples are layered in gold leaf. The stately Shwedagon Pagoda, the unofficial center of Rangoon, was built centuries ago on the hillside, where its height of 99 m (326 ft) makes it visible from most of the city. It draws pilgrims from all over, since it is said to house relics of the Buddha.^{464, 465}

Dramatic Performances

The dramatic form *za' pwè* is performed at temple festivals and other special occasions. The *za' pwè* is similar to the Javanese Shadow Play or to Thai folk drama, which are also performed outside at night. Shows incorporate dance, music, drama, and even clowning. Each part of the *za' pwè* has its own tradition, and both modern and classical pieces are interwoven in a show that plays until dawn. Burmese pop songs follow the traditional opening ritual. Following this is an

⁴⁵⁸ Than Than Nwe, "Gendered Spaces: Women in Burmese Society," *Transformations* 6, (February 2003):7, 9–10, http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_06/pdf/nwe.pdf

⁴⁵⁹ Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2011), 38–39.

⁴⁶⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar>

⁴⁶¹ Myanmar Travel Information, "Myanmar Arts," 2012, <http://myanmartravelinformation.com/2012-03-20-05-40-54/myanmar-arts.html>

⁴⁶² Myanmar Travel, "Myanmar Arts," n.d., <http://myanmartravel.org/arts/>

⁴⁶³ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 344.

⁴⁶⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Yangon," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651821/Yangon?anchor=ref11585>

⁴⁶⁵ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 43–48.

operatic piece, which provides a morality lesson from historical legend. More modern pieces follow, showcasing the stars' singing and dancing talents in solo and group performances. The male star of the show does the most work, leading in all of the last pieces, with the intent of holding the audience's attention and keeping them awake from beginning to end.^{466, 467}

Music

Burma's ensemble style of music originates in ancient India, but it has developed a distinctly Burmese sound, displaying few qualities commonly associated with Indian music. Ensembles play at small events, such as the birth of a child, and large events, such as the cremation ceremony of a revered monk. Ensembles can differ drastically, ranging from subtle to dramatic. Subtle ensembles use harp and xylophone in nontheatrical, indoor settings. Dramatic ensembles use highly contrastive instruments, playing loud and spirited music at festivals associated with temple holidays.⁴⁶⁸



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Music group performing

The more raucous groups, such as the *hsaing* ensemble, are traditionally played at court. Many songs in fact come from the days of the Burmese kings and are derived from classical songs or folk tunes.⁴⁶⁹ The *hsaing* performance includes compositions of different styles, and pieces are interwoven to create an effect of many colors and contrasts. Unlike Thai music and dance, which is characterized by smooth transitions and gentle sounds, Burmese music is known for an energetic pace and sudden bursts of sound or movement. Thus, Burmese *hsaing* music and the dance associated with it, often seems jerky to those unfamiliar with disjunct forms, which is defined as music with more than one second of silence between notes.⁴⁷⁰ The leader of the *hsaing* is the drummer, who plays a set of 21 drums hanging in a circle. There are three additional melodic instruments: a double-reed *hneh* similar to an oboe, 21 bronze horizontal gongs, and a set of three vertical bronze gongs. Bells or bamboo clappers (*wa leq-hkouq*) are also often incorporated. Other distinctly Burmese instruments include the *saung gauq* (a boat-shaped harp with 13 strings), the *pa-lwe* (bamboo flute), and the *mi-guang* (crocodile lute).^{471, 472, 473}

⁴⁶⁶ Ward Keeler, "Contemporary Burmese Za' Pwè," 30 November 2003,

<http://asiasociety.org/arts/performing-arts/music/contemporary-burmese-za%E2%80%99pw%C3%A8>

⁴⁶⁷ Ward Keeler, "Burma," in *The Garland Handbook of Southeast Asian Music*, eds. Terry E. Miller and Sean Williams (New York: Routledge, 2008), 206.

⁴⁶⁸ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 347–348.

⁴⁶⁹ Robert Garfias, "Burmese **Hsaing** and Anyein," 25 June 2009, <http://asiasociety.org/arts/performing-arts/music/burmese-hsaing-and-anyein>

⁴⁷⁰ "Music and Performing Arts," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 636.

⁴⁷¹ "Music and Performing Arts," in *World and Its Peoples: Myanmar and Thailand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2007), 637.

⁴⁷² John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 348.

Dance

Burmese dance, like its music, has origins in other cultures yet is distinctly Burmese. Early dance forms were clearly influenced by India as evidenced in the angular positions of the hands and feet.⁴⁷⁴ Later dance styles are similar to those in Thailand because Burma conquered Thai kingdoms. This style, which emphasizes poses over movement, maintains the characteristic Indian angular positions while adding fast-paced athletic movements.^{475, 476} The *hsaing* ensemble accompanies a dance form that, like the music, uses contrasting and striking forms. The music and the dance work in synchronous, slow expressions interspersed with quick movements and grand leaps. The dance's basic movements are stylized imitations of the postures of daily life, but inspired touches of humor and sudden contrasts are also part of the performance.⁴⁷⁷



© Greg Walters
Dancers in Myanmar

Another form of dance, *Anyein*, is inspired by puppet theater, a popular form of entertainment. In *Anyein*, dancers mimic the postures of marionettes, using graceful movements of the head, arms, and upper torso. The dancer arches the body slightly and keeps the knees partially bent. Postures such as those of the hands and head are similar to other forms of Burmese dance which use stylized movements. However, *Anyein* exaggerates the movement of puppets, the dancer moving in small steps and sometimes skillfully kicking her train aside. *Anyein* is performed at the secular and religious festivals that play such a large role in Burmese life. Festivals are often gestures of good will and meant to provide an opportunity to repay the community for the hard work it has done during the year. At a smaller family festival, the *Anyein* troupe will often be the only entertainment. As in other artistic forms, the *Anyein* performance consists of contrasting yet complementary parts. The main performer dances and sings a gentle, graceful piece that is followed by slapstick and dialogue of the clowns (*Lu bye*). Formal singing and dancing are threaded with raucous comedic works.^{478, 479, 480}

⁴⁷³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Myanmar: Cultural Life," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/400119/Myanmar/52589/Cultural-life?anchor=ref995282>

⁴⁷⁴ Asian Traditional Theatre and Dance, "Burmese Dance," 2010, <http://www.xip.fi/atd/myanmar/burmese-dance.html>

⁴⁷⁵ All Myanmar Tours, "Burmese Dance, Myanmar," 2012, <http://www.allmyanmartours.com/myanmar-travel-guide/Burmese-Dance.html>

⁴⁷⁶ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 347.

⁴⁷⁷ Robert Garfias, "Burmese **Hsaing** and Anyein," 25 June 2009, <http://asiasociety.org/arts/performing-arts/music/burmese-hsaing-and-anyein>

⁴⁷⁸ Robert Garfias, "Burmese **Hsaing** and Anyein," 25 June 2009, <http://asiasociety.org/arts/performing-arts/music/burmese-hsaing-and-anyein>

⁴⁷⁹ All Myanmar Tours, "Burmese Dance, Myanmar," 2012, <http://www.allmyanmartours.com/myanmar-travel-guide/Burmese-Dance.html>

⁴⁸⁰ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 347.

Sports

Although soccer remains the most popular sport in the nation, traditional sports are also popular among men.⁴⁸¹ Martial arts have a long history with references going back to the 15th century. Kickboxing (*myanma let-hwei*) is similar in style to Thai kickboxing. Temporary venues are often set up rather than taking place at permanent sporting arenas. Before each bare-chested fighter enters the ring, he performs a ritual dance paying homage to Buddha and to Khun Cho and Khun Tha. The fighters try to strike their opponents on any part of the body, except the head. At the end of the match, the winner repeats the dance ritual.⁴⁸²

Another popular Burmese sport is *chinlon*, played only by men. This game is played with a rattan ball, using feet and knees and sometimes also head and arms, but not the hands. *Chinlon* has no scoring but people participate for exercise and to show off their athletic prowess. The object of the game is to keep the ball from hitting the ground, and participants stand in a circle about three feet apart from each other, using a combination of tricky and daring moves to accomplish this. Although *chinlon* can be played with any number of participants, six players make a good game.^{483, 484}



© jbeaulieu / flickr.com
Boys playing chinlon

⁴⁸¹ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 350.

⁴⁸² John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 350.

⁴⁸³ Myanmars, "Myanma Chinlon," 2012, <http://www.myanmars.net/myanmar-culture/myanmar-chinlon.htm>

⁴⁸⁴ John Allen, Allen John Smith, and Jamie Smith, *Myanmar (Burma)*, 11th ed. (China: Lonely Planet Publications Pty, Ltd, 2011), 350.

Chapter 4 Assessment

1. The largest ethnic group in Burma is the Bamar, or Burman.

True

The Bamars (also known as the Burman) are Burma's largest ethnic group and make up 68% of the population.

2. The Karens are the largest minority group in Burma.

False

The Shans constitute 9% of the population, the largest minority group in Burma. The Karens, making up about 7% of the population, are Burma's second-largest minority group.

3. Buddhism is the main religion in Burma.

True

Burma has no state religion, but 89% of the population are Theravada Buddhists. Of the remainder, about 4% are Christian, 4% are Muslim, 1% practice traditional animistic religions, and 2% adhere to other forms of religion including Hinduism.

4. The colors and patterns of the *longyi* provide clues to an individual's ethnic identity.

True

Longyi colors and patterns vary by ethnic group and may carry other symbolic meanings.

5. Most Burmese wear Western clothing.

False

Western clothing is becoming more popular in cities, but many Burmese still wear the traditional clothing. Among most groups, both men and women still prefer the traditional ankle-length garment known as *longyi*.

CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

Introduction

Burma sits in a strategic location between South, Southeast, and East Asia. The nation has increasingly gained importance on the world stage as its neighbors have gained economic and military strength. Burma's first civilian president, Thein Sein, has been open to cooperation and political reform, including the release of hundreds of political protestors. The president's powers and ability to make further reforms remain limited by the current constitution and by the military which remains the major power in the nation.⁴⁸⁵



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Obama with Thein Sein

Two of Burma's neighbors, China and India, have created closer diplomatic ties with the once reclusive nation. The United States and Europe have made diplomatic inroads although China remains Burma's primary ally and largest foreign investor. Burma continues its political and socioeconomic reforms efforts. Imports and exports have surged since 2004, and huge investments are being made in infrastructure.⁴⁸⁶ But despite optimistic promises, Burma faces serious challenges to successfully launch civilian rule and democracy.

U.S. – Burma Relations

The United States, one of Burma's most vocal critics, was the first nation to impose sanctions following the 1988 crackdown on democratic protestors and the junta's nullification of the 1990 elections. The United States withdrew its ambassador, leaving the Chargé d'Affaires the most senior representative until June 2012 when the United States returned an ambassador to Burma.^{487, 488} Since 2009, The United States has shifted its relations with Burma toward a cautious course of engagement. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton became the first U.S. Secretary of State to visit Burma in more than 50 years in December 2011.⁴⁸⁹ In May 2012, the United States suspended economic sanctions against Burma and encouraged investments in Burma by U.S. companies. But the arms embargo remains in effect. President Barack Obama welcomed long-time political prisoner and activist and newly elected member of Parliament, Aung San Suu Kyi, to Washington D.C. where she received the Congressional Gold Medal.⁴⁹⁰



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons
Clinton and Aung San Suu Kyi

⁴⁸⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁴⁸⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁴⁸⁷ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Burma," December 2007, <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/burma/88022.htm>

⁴⁸⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁴⁸⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁴⁹⁰ Jack Healy and Dan Adler, "Aung San Suu Kyi and the Power of Unity," CNN, 2 October 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/10/02/opinion/healey-adler-myanmar/index.html>

⁴⁹¹ In April, President Obama announced new steps in the normalization of relations between the two nations, and in November 2012, he visited Burma.^{492, 493} Although ties are warming, the United States is concerned about Burma's possible pursuit of a nuclear weapons program and the nature of its relations with North Korea.^{494, 495}

Relations with Neighboring Countries

Bangladesh

Burma has maintained diplomatic relations since formally recognizing Bangladesh as a sovereign nation in 1972. Relations, which have never been strong nor friendly, remain plagued by issues.⁴⁹⁶ One of these issues concerns the Rohingya refugees who have crossed into Bangladesh since 1978. In June 2012, Bangladesh turned away Rohingya Muslim refugees who were fleeing ethnic violence in Rakhine.^{497, 498} Today, about 29,000 Rohingya refugees are recognized by Bangladesh. Another 200,000 Burmese have crossed into Bangladesh, but they are not registered or recognized by Bangladeshi authorities.^{499, 500}



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Kutupalong Refugee Camp

Bilateral relations have been troubled on other fronts. The two nations finally resolved long-held disputes over their land and maritime borders in 2012.⁵⁰¹ Illegal trafficking and the cross-border movements of people and insurgents are continuing sore points.⁵⁰² Although the shared border is a safe-haven for terrorists, neither country has done much to counter the problem. There have been recent occasional armed clashes between Burmese insurgent groups and the Bangladeshi

⁴⁹¹ Associated Press, "Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi Received Congress's Highest Honor, the Congressional Gold Medal," *New York Daily News*, 19 September 2012, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/myanmar-suu-kyi-meet-obama-receive-congressional-medal-honor-article-1.1162880>

⁴⁹² Chloe Arensberg, "Unheard of Becomes Real as Obama Visits Burma," CBS News, 19 November 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57551647/unheard-of-becomes-real-as-obama-visits-burma/

⁴⁹³ Steven Lee Myers and Thomas Fuller, "U.S. Moves Toward Normalizing Relations with Myanmar," *New York Times*, 4 April 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/05/world/asia/myanmar-sanctions.html>

⁴⁹⁴ *USA Today*, "Myanmar Says It's Ready to Sign Nuclear Agreement," 21 November 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2012/11/21/myanmar-nuclear-agreement/1719285/>

⁴⁹⁵ Global Security Newswire, "Myanmar Rejects Alleged Atomic Cooperation with North Korea," 27 November 2012, <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/myanmar-rejects-alleged-atomic-cooperation-north-korea/>

⁴⁹⁶ Pranab Kumar Panday, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations: Smooth Sailing," East Asia Forum, 28 July 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/bangladesh-myanmar-relations-smooth-sailing/>

⁴⁹⁷ Pranab Kumar Panday, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations: Smooth Sailing," East Asia Forum, 28 July 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/bangladesh-myanmar-relations-smooth-sailing/>

⁴⁹⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, South Asia, "External Affairs, Bangladesh," 11 October 2012.

⁴⁹⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "2013 UNHCR Country Operations Profile—Bangladesh," 2013, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487546.html>

⁵⁰⁰ Global Security, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations," 18 May 2012, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/bangladesh/forrel-mm.htm>

⁵⁰¹ Pranab Kumar Panday, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations: Smooth Sailing," East Asia Forum, 28 July 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/bangladesh-myanmar-relations-smooth-sailing/>

⁵⁰² Moazzem Hossain, "Bangladesh-Burma Border Tense," BBC News, 17 November 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1028604.stm

military.^{503, 504} Neither country seems interested in establishing joint measures to address illegal activities, including smuggling of guns and drugs, along the border.⁵⁰⁵ Yet bilateral relations seem to be improving as both sides seek greater cooperation on issues of mutual interest including a joint commission for cooperation and a business council.^{506, 507}

China

Bilateral relations have been positive since 1988 despite Burma's international isolation that drew them together.⁵⁰⁸ China's interests are strategic and its agenda includes increasing energy imports, limiting narcotics and human trafficking, increasing economic cooperation, and offsetting western influence in the region.^{509, 510} China remains Burma's largest foreign investor.^{511, 512} It has supplied arms, military, and diplomatic support to the military junta over the years.^{513, 514, 515,}

⁵¹⁶ Still, Burma keeps China at arm's length. Moreover, if its future interests differ from China's as expected, Burma will avoid becoming a client state of China.⁵¹⁷



© immu / flickr.com
Burma China border

⁵⁰³ Foreign Affairs Insight and Reviews, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Bilateral Relation," 2012, <http://www.fairbd.net/Main.php?PageType=1&Id=26>

⁵⁰⁴ Pakistan Defence, "Armed Clash Between Burmese Insurgents and Bangladesh Army," 2 February 2009, <http://www.defence.pk/forums/world-affairs/21060-armed-clash-between-burmese-insurgents-bangladesh-army.html>

⁵⁰⁵ Foreign Affairs Insight and Reviews, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Bilateral Relation," 2012, <http://www.fairbd.net/Main.php?PageType=1&Id=26>

⁵⁰⁶ Global Security, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations," 18 May 2012, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/bangladesh/forrel-mm.htm>

⁵⁰⁷ Pranab Kumar Panday, "Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations: Smooth Sailing," East Asia Forum, 28 July 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/28/bangladesh-myanmar-relations-smooth-sailing/>

⁵⁰⁸ Toshihiro Kudo, "Chapter 6: Myanmar's Economic Relations with China: Who Benefits and Who Pays," in *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar*, eds. Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press, December 2008), http://epress.anu.edu.au/myanmar02/mobile_devices/ch06.html#d0e5023

⁵⁰⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵¹⁰ "Less Thunder Out of China," *The Economist*, 6 October 2012, 56, <http://www.economist.com/node/21564279>

⁵¹¹ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 310, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵¹² Reuters, "Insight: As Myanmar Opens, China Alliance Starts to Fray," 13 February 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/14/us-myanmar-china-idUSTRE81D03R20120214>

⁵¹³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵¹⁴ Graham Lees, "India and China Compete for Burma's Resources," *World Politics Review*, 21 August 2006, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=129>

⁵¹⁵ Bertil Linter, "Trade and Security Trump Democracy in Burma – Part I," YaleGlobal Online, 3 October 2007, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/trade-and-security-trump-democracy-burma-%E2%80%93-part-i>

⁵¹⁶ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 311, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵¹⁷ Marwell Harrington, "Conference Report: China-Myanmar Relations: The Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1(2012): 134, <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jsaa/article/download/516/514>

Burma's coastline offers listening posts for the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) to monitor naval and other military activities around the Indian Ocean and Andaman Sea.⁵¹⁸ These outposts are in close proximity to one of the world's most strategic waterways, the Strait of Malacca, which divides Malaysia from Indonesia. In the event of an embargo or war with the United States, Burma's energy exports would reduce China's dependence on tanker shipments through the Malacca Strait and South China Sea, which remain vulnerable to a U.S. naval blockade.⁵¹⁹

China's government remains dissatisfied with Burma's response to the growing drug trade that has created an addiction problem in China. Burma is the world's second-largest opium producer, after Afghanistan. Much of Burmese heroin is smuggled into China.⁵²⁰ The trafficking of Burmese women into China has further elevated domestic tensions.⁵²¹ But expanded trade links with Burma are part of Beijing's plan to raise the standard of living in China's border region.⁵²²

Since 2009, infrequent flare-ups of violence along the southwestern border with Burma have raised Chinese concerns about regional stability. Following the 2010 visit of Premier Wen Jiabao, China announced it would provide jet trainers to Burma. In 2011, new clashes broke out along the border between the Kachin Independence Army and the Burmese military. President Thein Sein increased his domestic popularity when he suspended construction of a controversial Chinese funded dam in Kachin State. In spite of tensions, however, both governments promise their close ties are unwavering.⁵²³

India

India and Burma have had inconsistent relations but, at the moment, their relations are positive. The two nations share a 1,643 km (1,021 mi) border and the strategic Bay of Bengal, including Andaman and Nicobar islands. Burmese ports provide India the shortest passage to India's northeastern states and a transit route to southern regions of China.



© Stefan Munder
Burma exports agriculture to India

⁵¹⁸ Donovan C. Chau, "Leaning to All Sides," U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (July–September 2012), <http://www.soc.mil/swcs/swmag/archive/SW2503/SW2503LeaningToAllSides.html>

⁵¹⁹ Ryan Clark, and Sangeet Dalliwell, BurmaNet News, "Sino-Indian Competition for Burmese Oil and Natural Gas: Implications for India's External Relations," *Harvard International Review*, 30 July 2008, <http://www.burmanet.org/news/2008/09/05/harvard-international-review-sino-indian-competition-for-burmese-oil-and-natural-gas/>

⁵²⁰ Mark Magnier, "Myanmar, Laos See Large Increase in Opium Cultivation, U.N. Says," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/10/myanmar-laos-opium-production-increase-un.html

⁵²¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵²² Xuegang Zhang, "Beijing's Perspectives: Burma's Referendum and International Discordances," Jamestown Foundation, *China Brief*, 8, no. 8 (16 April 2008), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4853](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4853)

⁵²³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

Approximately 2.5 million ethnic Indians live in Burma.⁵²⁴ India's foreign policy towards Burma is firmly rooted in pragmatism.^{525, 526, 527, 528}

Bilateral trade has grown substantially. Burma imports semi-finished steel and pharmaceuticals from India and exports mostly agricultural products to India.^{529, 530, 531} India is actively funding a number of infrastructural projects, including upgrading roads and building new roads and railroads, to upgrade transportation links with Burma and provide itself trade access to other Southeast Asian nations. Other projects include cooperating on a hydroelectric project in the Chindwin River Valley, and supplying high speed data links.^{532, 533}

New Delhi is attempting to counter Beijing's influence by providing military aid to the Burmese government. India has sold tanks, light artillery, reconnaissance and patrol aircraft, and small arms, and provided military training to Burmese officers. Burmese troops deployed along the mutual border are partially supplied by the Indians.^{534, 535, 536, 537} Both governments are

⁵²⁴ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 300, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵²⁵ Burma Campaign UK, "Burma-India Relations: A Betrayal of Democracy and Human Rights," (briefing, March 2007), 1–3, http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/reports/India_Briefing.pdf

⁵²⁶ Marwell Harrington, "Conference Report: China-Myanmar Relations: The Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 137, <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jsaa/article/download/516/514>

⁵²⁷ C.S. Kuppuswamy, "India-Myanmar Relations—An Update," South Asia Analysis Group, 21 December 2012, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1099>

⁵²⁸ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 303–306, 319, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵²⁹ ASEAN India, "India-Myanmar Relations," July 2012, <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/myanmar-july-2012.pdf>

⁵³⁰ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 318, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵³¹ Rajiv Bhatia, "India-Myanmar Relations: A Critical Review," *Voices of India*, 2012, <http://voiceof.india.com/india-myanmar-relations-chat-with-ambassador-rajiv-bhatia/india-myanmar-relations-a-critical-review>

⁵³² ASEAN India, "India-Myanmar Relations," July 2012, <http://www.aseanindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/myanmar-july-2012.pdf>

⁵³³ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 317, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵³⁴ Syed Ali Mujtaba, "India-Burma Relations Gaining Momentum of its Own," *Global Politician*, 9 April 2008, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/24457-india-burma>

⁵³⁵ Thin Thin Aung, and Soe Myint, "Chapter Four: India-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*, Aung Zaw et. al (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 99–100, http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/upload/challenges_to_democratization_in_burma.pdf

⁵³⁶ Marwell Harrington, "Conference Report: China-Myanmar Relations: The Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2012): 137–138, <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jsaa/article/download/516/514>

concerned about smuggling and illegal narcotics trades and have agreed to share intelligence and security operations in the joint border region.^{538, 539}

Laos

Laos and Burma have enjoyed cordial relations since they established diplomatic ties in 1955. Since the 1990s, relations have become stronger, and the two countries are cooperating more on matters of mutual concern, including regional stability and disaster relief assistance.⁵⁴⁰ Recent talks revolved around issues of border security, including illegal trafficking of persons and narcotics. Talks aimed at strengthening tourism are ongoing.⁵⁴¹ Burma and Laos have agreed to build the first Mekong Friendship Bridge across the Mekong River. The bridge will provide a physical link between the two countries and is aimed at increasing bilateral trade.⁵⁴²

Thailand

Thailand and Burma have a long history of strained relations. Thailand tends to view Burma as an enemy although there is some sympathy for the plight of the Burmese people.⁵⁴³ The shared 2,500 km (1,554 mi) border has been a source of conflict, and the Thai army has been on full alert along sections of the border with Burma since 2001. Occasional artillery fire lands in Thai territory.^{544, 545, 546} Burmese military incursions into Thai territory while chasing ethnic militant groups angers the Thai government. Such incursions are more likely in the Shan State border area or along the border with Karen State. Pro-Burma ethnic Karen Buddhist troops, apparently under orders from the Burmese government, have invaded Thailand in attempts to destroy Karen



© arwcheek / flickr.com
Burma Thailand border crossing

⁵³⁷ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism," *Jindal Journal of International Affairs* 1, no. 1 (October 2011): 314, http://www.academia.edu/1032804/India-Myanmar_Relations_Triumph_of_Pragmatism

⁵³⁸ Rajiv Bhatia, "India-Myanmar Relations: A Critical Review," *Voices of India*, 2012, <http://voiceof.india.com/india-myanmar-relations-chat-with-ambassador-rajiv-bhatia/india-myanmar-relations-a-critical-review>

⁵³⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁴⁰ "Laos-Myanmar: A Relationship in Progress," *Vientiane Times*, 12 July 2012, <http://laovoices.com/laos-myanmar-a-relationship-in-progress/>

⁵⁴¹ "Lao PM's Myanmar Visit to Bring Bilateral Relations Closer," *People's Daily Online*, 21 June 2010, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90851/7032585.html>

⁵⁴² Asia News Network, "Laos, Burma Deepen Ties," *Vientiane Times*, 23 March 2012, <http://www.asianewsnet.net/home/news.php?id=28902>

⁵⁴³ Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Chapter 5: Thai-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*, Aung Zaw et al. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 118, http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/upload/challenges_to_democratization_in_burma.pdf

⁵⁴⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁴⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Thailand," 3 October 2012.

⁵⁴⁶ Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Chapter 5: Thai-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*, Aung Zaw et al. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 124–125, http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/upload/challenges_to_democratization_in_burma.pdf

Christian refugee camps.^{547, 548, 549} Negotiations are underway to close all refugee camps in Thailand which could result in the repatriation of the more than 150,000 Burmese.^{550, 551}

Thailand has been forced to contend with the effect of Burma's drug smuggling and human trafficking.^{552, 553, 554} The 28,000-man United Wa State Army, Burma's largest and richest non-state armed ethnic group, controls large areas in the country and runs contraband trafficking routes near Thailand's northern border. Although tensions have recently eased, this border area continues to pose a threat to regional security.⁵⁵⁵

Thailand is Burma's most significant Southeast Asian trading partner and the second largest investor in Burma.^{556, 557} The two countries signed an agreement creating the Dawei Special Economic Zone to strengthen bilateral ties. It is hoped that this economic zone will stabilize conditions along the border by increasing economic opportunities and jobs in the region. Although work permits for more than two million Burmese workers in Thailand were renewed, many illegal workers are threatened with repatriation to Burma sometime after December 2012. Issues surrounding the Thai-Burma Friendship Bridge and 20 other cross-border trading ports, which have been closed since 12 July 2010, persist.⁵⁵⁸

Burmese Military and Police

Military

The Burmese military forces consist of the Army, Air Defense Forces, and Navy. The Army (*tatmadaw*) is the largest of the military forces with an estimated troop strength of 300,000 to 350,000.⁵⁵⁹ The Army is expanding and reorganizing the size and scope of its operations. It is

⁵⁴⁷ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Thailand," 3 October 2012.

⁵⁴⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁴⁹ Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Chapter 5: Thai-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*, Aung Zaw et al. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 124,

http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/upload/challenges_to_democratization_in_burma.pdf

⁵⁵⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁵¹ Steve Finch, "Burma's Forgotten Dilemma," *The Diplomat*, 21 September 2012,

<http://thediplomat.com/2012/09/21/burmas-forgotten-dilemma/>

⁵⁵² Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Chapter 5: Thai-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*, Aung Zaw et al. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 118,

http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/upload/challenges_to_democratization_in_burma.pdf

⁵⁵³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Thailand," 3 October 2012.

⁵⁵⁴ Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Chapter 5: Thai-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspectives on Multilateral and Bilateral Responses*, Aung Zaw et al. (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 125–126,

http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/upload/challenges_to_democratization_in_burma.pdf

⁵⁵⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁵⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "External Affairs, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁵⁷ Zin Linn, "Thailand-Burma Economic Relation Strengthens Ever More," *Asian Tribune*, 28 July 2012,

<http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2012/07/27/thailand-burma-economic-relation-strengthens-ever-more>

⁵⁵⁸ Zin Linn, "Thailand-Burma Economic Relation Strengthens Ever More," *Asian Tribune*, 28 July 2012,

<http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2012/07/27/thailand-burma-economic-relation-strengthens-ever-more>

⁵⁵⁹ Jane's World Armies, "Myanmar," 15 August 2012.

attempting to become an integrated force capable of more conventional, large-scale operations designed to protect the nation from more than 20 armed ethnic groups operating in Burma.”⁵⁶⁰,
⁵⁶¹ Equipment is largely outdated and the ability to defeat a committed opponent is questionable. Morale is low and many battalions are seriously undermanned, some with fewer than 200 troops. The Army lacks the confidence and backing of the civilian population.⁵⁶²

Children are recruited into the Burmese Army, which has the highest number of child soldiers in the world. Boys are routinely abducted from public places and forced to become soldiers.^{563, 564} The need to recruit minors as young as ten is the result of high desertion rates, a lack of willing volunteers, and the expansion of the armed forces.⁵⁶⁵ In 2012, the government agreed to a plan to stop recruiting children and to release those children already in service. While the plan has had some success, child soldiers and their recruitment are ongoing.^{566, 567}

Since 2009, Burma has expanded and strengthened its 23,000-troop Air Defense Force (*Tatmadaw Lay*). The Air Defense Force provides air defense and takes part in counter-insurgency battles. It has new equipment, including helicopters and jet-trainers, but suffers from a lack of experienced pilots and poor ground-to-air communication links. It also lacks rapid deployment capabilities.⁵⁶⁸



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Burmese soldiers

Burma’s Navy has approximately 13,000 troops. It is the least well-equipped of all military branches. Since 2005, both the scope of operations and capabilities have expanded. Ships and guns have been procured from both China and India, both of whom also provided military training. The Navy patrols some rivers assisting with counter-insurgency efforts. It has new responsibilities that include coastal patrols aimed at illegal fishing and protecting offshore drilling rigs.^{569, 570}

Police

The 93,000-person police force (MPF), under the direction of the Ministry of Home Affairs, was first created in 1995. In addition to regular police, four special divisions deal with political

⁵⁶⁰ David Fullbrook, “Burma’s Generals on A Buying Spree,” *Asia Sentinel*, 18 December 2006, http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=309&Itemid=31

⁵⁶¹ Jane’s World Armies, “Myanmar,” 15 August 2012.

⁵⁶² Jane’s World Armies, “Myanmar,” 15 August 2012.

⁵⁶³ Jo Becker, “Burma: Children at War,” *The New York Times*, 16 October 2002, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/16/opinion/16iht-edbecker_ed3.html

⁵⁶⁴ Alize Ahmed, “Dreadful Facts About Child Soldiers in Burma,” *AAJ News*, 28 June 2012, <http://www.aaj.tv/2012/06/dreadful-facts-about-child-soldiers-in-burma/>

⁵⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Burma: Children Bought and Sold by Army Recruiters,” 1 November 2007, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2007/10/30/burma-children-bought-and-sold-army-recruiters>

⁵⁶⁶ Jane’s World Armies, “Myanmar,” 15 August 2012.

⁵⁶⁷ Jo Becker, Human Rights Watch, “Child Soldiers: A Worldwide Scourge,” *Los Angeles Times*, 23 March 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/23/child-soldiers-worldwide-scourge>

⁵⁶⁸ Jane’s World Air Forces, World Air Forces, Myanmar,” 16 March 2012.

⁵⁶⁹ Jane’s World Navies, “World Navies, Myanmar,” 24 November 2012.

⁵⁷⁰ S.L. Collin Koh, “Political ‘New Dawn’ in Myanmar: Implications and Future Prospects for Myanmar Navy,” 24 June 2012, <http://www.scitechnol.com/2324-9315/2324-9315-1-e104.php>

crimes, drug-trafficking, railway safety and security, and oil field security. The nation's 10,000-member Border Guard unit is responsible for overseeing the movement of people and products across the border. The Myanmar Frontier Forces are deployed along international borders. These are mostly armed forces personnel, but they receive support from the regular police force.^{571, 572, 573}

The level of professionalism within the police is low. The most important qualification still appears to be government loyalty.⁵⁷⁴ Many senior police officers are former military, and the practice of bringing junior military officers into senior police positions maintains military control and limits police independence.^{575, 576}

Burma's police force is corrupt and abusive.^{577, 578} The police, along with security forces, have committed human rights violations against Rohingya Muslims in Arakan State. In the summer of 2012 during the ethnic conflict between Arakanese Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, security forces took part in abuses against Rohingya failing to protect the community and human rights.⁵⁷⁹ In December 2012, following a police crackdown on protesters at a copper mine, senior police officers were forced to formally apologize for using excessive force.^{580, 581}



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Burmese police

Issues Affecting Internal Security

Burma faces no serious threats to its security from external sources. Bilateral relations with neighbors, although sometimes strained, are based on clear pragmatism and focused on strategic interests.⁵⁸² There are, however, risks to the country from within. Burma has undergone a series of major reforms and a transition to civilian government. But the success

⁵⁷¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security and Foreign Forces, Myanmar," 10 July 2012.

⁵⁷² INTERPOL, "Myanmar: Myanmar Police Force," 2013, <http://www.interpol.int/Member-countries/Asia-South-Pacific/Myanmar>

⁵⁷³ Andrew Selth, "Burma's Police Forces: Continuities and Contradictions" (regional outlook paper no. 32, 2011), 8, http://www.griffith.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/372761/Selth-Regional-Outlook-Paper-32.pdf

⁵⁷⁴ Andrew Selth, "Burma's Police: The Long Road to Reform," *The Interpreter*, 13 December 2012, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/12/13/Burmas-police-The-long-road-to-reform.aspx>

⁵⁷⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security and Foreign Forces, Myanmar," 10 July 2012.

⁵⁷⁶ INTERPOL, "Myanmar: Myanmar Police Force," 2013, <http://www.interpol.int/Member-countries/Asia-South-Pacific/Myanmar>

⁵⁷⁷ Aye Nai, "Corruption Charges Hit Police Chiefs," *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 25 January 2011, <http://www.dvb.no/news/corruption-charges-hit-police-chiefs/13894>

⁵⁷⁸ Andrew Selth, "Myanmar's Police Forces: Coercion, Continuity and Change," *Contemporary Southeast Asia Journal* 34, no 1 (April 2012): 64-70.

⁵⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Mass Arrests, Raids on Rohingya Muslims," 5 July 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/05/burma-mass-arrests-raids-rohingya-muslims>

⁵⁸⁰ Andrew Selth, "Burma's Police: The Long Road to Reform," *The Interpreter*, 13 December 2012, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/12/13/Burmas-police-The-long-road-to-reform.aspx>

⁵⁸¹ CNN, "Dozens Wounded as Myanmar Police Break Up Copper Mine Protests," 30 November 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/29/world/asia/myanmar-mine-protests/index.html>

⁵⁸² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

of these changes is far from assured. Based on Maplecroft's political risk index, the threat of instability in Burma is extreme.⁵⁸³ Among the most urgent risk is ethnic violence, which threatens to destabilize the region. The military has stepped up its violent campaign against the rebel Kachin Independence Army, leading many to wonder how deep-rooted political reforms really are.⁵⁸⁴ Organized crime and corruption, including both human and narco-trafficking represent another real challenge for the nation. Finally, Burma needs to create and maintain economic growth in order to meet social expectations of progress, as well as create stable conditions for political and economic growth.⁵⁸⁵

Armed Ethnic Groups

Ethnic minorities make up almost one-third of Burma's population and are concentrated largely in the border regions of Burma.

Approximately 20 of the nation's more than 130 ethnic groups have waged armed conflict with the government and armed forces for decades.^{586, 587, 588}

The most significant armed insurgent groups include the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Karenni Army (KA), the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA), and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA).^{589, 590, 591}

The most serious threat against the government comes from the KIA in Kachin State and northeast Shan State. Recent clashes between the military and the KIA have raised tensions and increased support for the group. The KIA formally aligned itself with numerous other groups forming the United Nationalities Federation Council whose members have pledged to defend each other against government aggression. Although any immediate, serious threat to the nation is unlikely, the group controls some territory along the Burma-China border and poses regional risks.^{592, 593}



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Karen warriors

In Shan State, the Wa tribe remains in control of much of the Golden Triangle opiate drug trade that is guarded by their own 20,000-strong Wa State Army. It is the largest and richest of the

⁵⁸³ Maplecroft, "Political Risk (Dynamic) Index 2012, 2012,

http://maplecroft.com/docs/serve/pr_2012_risk_map_poster_free/

⁵⁸⁴ Simon Roughneen, "Myanmar Launches Airstrikes on Kachin Rebels," *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 January 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2013/0102/Myanmar-launches-airstrikes-on-Kachin-rebels>

⁵⁸⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁸⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Burma: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 13 December 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

⁵⁸⁷ Hannah Beech, "A Closer Look at Burma's Ethnic Minorities," *Time*, 30 January 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1874981,00.html>

⁵⁸⁸ Ernest Z. Bower, Michael J. Green, and Christopher Johnson, "CSIS Myanmar Trip Report," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 10 September 2012, <http://csis.org/publication/csis-myanmar-trip-report>

⁵⁸⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Non-state Armed Groups, Myanmar," 10 January 2012.

⁵⁹⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁹¹ Hannah Beech, "In Burma, Another Round of Ethnic Unrest Threatens Fragile Reforms," *Time*, 26 October 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/10/26/in-burma-another-round-of-ethnic-unrest-threatens-fragile-reforms/>

⁵⁹² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁵⁹³ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Kachin Independence Army (KIA)," 7 September 2012.

ethnic insurgent groups operating in the country.^{594, 595} The UWSA's aggressive smuggling of illegal narcotics across its borders have elevated tensions with China and caused occasional border clashes between Thai and Burmese forces.⁵⁹⁶

The Burmese government has signed ceasefire agreements with a number of these groups including the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), the New Mon State Party (political party of the Mon National Liberation Army), the Chin National Army, and the Shan State Army-South (SSA).^{597, 598, 599, 600} Experts disagree about the extent to which these armed ethnic groups threaten the nation as a whole. Some suggest a marginal threat to the federal government, but continued unrest threatens the fragile economic reforms taking place throughout the nation. Others think failing to reach consensus with ethnic groups concedes too much power to the military in future conflicts since ethnic violence is protracted.^{601, 602, 603,}

604

Escalating Sectarian Violence

Historically, Buddhist monks have played a leadership role in the battle for social justice.⁶⁰⁵ As a result, the government maintains strict control of the monastic community (*sangha*) and requires monks to obtain permission before performing even traditional religious ceremonies.⁶⁰⁶ The monks have a tradition of resisting the repressive measures imposed by the government. During the 2007 Saffron Revolution, many monks were killed and several monasteries were destroyed.^{607, 608}



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Monks protest at mosque

⁵⁹⁴ Andrew Marshall and Anthony Davis, "Soldiers of Fortune," *Time*, 16 December 2002, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2056076,00.html>

⁵⁹⁵ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: United Wa State Army (UWSA)," 20 January 2012.

⁵⁹⁶ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: United Wa State Army (UWSA)," 20 January 2012.

⁵⁹⁷ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)," 23 January 2012.

⁵⁹⁸ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA)," 6 March 2012.

⁵⁹⁹ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Chin National Army (CAN)," 20 December 2012.

⁶⁰⁰ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Groups-Asia-Active, Myanmar: Shan State Army-South (SSA)," 26 November 2012.

⁶⁰¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Non-state Armed Groups, Myanmar," 10 January 2012.

⁶⁰² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁶⁰³ Hannah Beech, "In Burma, Another Round of Ethnic Unrest Threatens Fragile Reforms," *Time*, 26 October 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/10/26/in-burma-another-round-of-ethnic-unrest-threatens-fragile-reforms/>

⁶⁰⁴ Jayshree Bajoria, "Understanding Myanmar," Council on Foreign Relations, 10 July 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/understanding-myanmar/p14385>

⁶⁰⁵ Bruce Matthews, "Chapter Two: The Legacy of Tradition and Authority in Myanmar," in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia*, ed. Ian Harris (New York: Continuum Press, 1999), 26–53.

⁶⁰⁶ Min Zin, "Burmese Buddhism's Impact on Social Change: The Fatalism of Samsara and Monastic Resistance," in *Rethinking Karma: the Dharma of Social Justice*, ed. Jonathan S. Watts (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2009).

⁶⁰⁷ BBC News, "Saffron Revolution," n.d., <http://www.oxfordburmaalliance.org/saffron-revolution.html>

In recent days, however, the monks appear to have been squarely in the middle of sectarian violence directed against Muslims in western Burma. The historic divisions between the two groups stems from Buddhist claims that the Muslims are foreigners bent on spreading their faith and seizing the Burmese territory.⁶⁰⁹ Some worry that the escalating conflict could spiral into a religious war threatening the road to democracy. The violence, once focused on the Rohingya Muslims, has now spread to other groups who peacefully coexisted in the nation until now.^{610, 611}

Crime and Corruption

Organized crime, including transnational crime, is everywhere in Burma.^{612, 613} Insurgent groups traffic narcotics, Chinese gangs operate in the northern regions, and human trafficking is a significant problem. The military and police are involved in these criminal activities, making it difficult to end or curtail them.^{614, 615, 616} Burma is the second-largest illegal drug producers in the world producing nearly 80% of all opium in Southeast Asia. New synthetic methamphetamines are gaining in popularity.^{617, 618}

Corruption is rampant throughout Burma which ranks 172nd out of 176 countries on the 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index.⁶¹⁹ Even the nation's president has expressed public criticism of his own government which suffers, like much of the rest of the country, from rampant corruption. The new anticorruption reforms are about to take effect although the specifics have not yet been announced.⁶²⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma, "Saffron Revolution," 2007, <http://www.altsean.org/Research/Saffron%20Revolution/SRHome.php>

⁶⁰⁹ Sin Thet Maw, "In Myanmar, Muslim Survivors Recall Buddhist Assault that Forced Mass Exodus," 29 December 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/12/29/in-myanmar-muslim-survivors-recall-buddhist-assault-that-forced-mass-exodus/>

⁶¹⁰ Francis Wade, "Burma: Escalating Violence Signals Religious War," *The Guardian*, 9 November 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/09/burma-ethnic-tensions-escalate>

⁶¹¹ Thomas Fuller, "Crisis in Myanmar Over Buddhist-Muslim Clash," *New York Times*, 10 June 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/world/asia/state-of-emergency-declared-in-western-myanmar.html?_r=0

⁶¹² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

⁶¹³ Liana Sun Wyler, "Burma and Transnational Crime" (report, Congressional Research Service, 27 April 2009), 1–2.

⁶¹⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Southeast Asia, "Security, Myanmar," 11 July 2012.

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⁶¹⁷ Zarina Othman, "Myanmar, Illicit Drug Trafficking and Security Implications," *Akademika* 65 (July 2004): 35–36, <http://www.ukm.my/penerbit/akademika/ACROBATAKADEMIKA65/akademika65%5B02%5D.pdf>

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⁶¹⁹ Transparency International, "Corruption by Country/Territory," 2012, <http://www.transparency.org/country#MMR>

⁶²⁰ Aye Aye Win, "Myanmar Leader Voices Concern About Corruption," *ABC News*, 26 December 2012, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/myanmar-president-calls-corruption-fight-18064858#.UOWnfYbiuQ>

The Poverty-Insecurity-Drug Nexus

The highest drug production takes place in the poorest, most insecure areas outside of strong state control. Burma's goal of eradicating drug production was postponed until 2019, but the land dedicated to poppy growing increased by 17% in 2012.^{621,622,623} Many reasons explain this rise: opium commands a price 20 times that of rice; farmers cannot grow enough food to feed their families so drug traffickers loan seeds and supply food to farmers before they grow poppy. Loans create a cycle of debt that perpetuates poppy growing.⁶²⁴ Furthermore, the lack of alternative development strategies in Shan State, which borders China and produces 91% of the poppy crop, has fueled the trade, as has persistent ethnic conflict.⁶²⁵ Likewise, China consumes half of the heroin produced, and represents a growing demand.⁶²⁶ Ceasefires with 16 different armed groups in the late 80s, early 90s, allowed the government to create revenue by granting impunity to drug traffickers. Profiting from drugs has taken several forms: money-laundering in state-owned banks, government contracts with legitimate businesses owned by drug traffickers, and protection for drug convoys across the border.⁶²⁷ Critics of UNODC reports claim that a tight relationship exists today between the government, ethnic armies, and drug traffickers because the alliance strengthens government power and generates revenues of 40% of exports.^{628,629} In a report by SHAN, President Thein Sein's ruling party has seven officials linked to the drug trade, despite his goal of eradicating drugs.⁶³⁰ In recent peace deals with ethnic groups, drugs were not discussed, which is surprising, given that the most insecure areas produce the greatest amount of poppy in Burma.^{631, 632}



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Opium pipes for sale

⁶²¹ MSN, "Myanmar Delays 'Drugs-Free' Target Amid Narcotics Boom," 6 May 2013,

<http://news.xin.msn.com/en/regional/myanmar-delays-drugs-free-target-amid-narcotics-boom-2>

⁶²² Daniel Pye and Lawi Weng, "Ethnic Armies' Role in Burma Drug Trade Off Table at Six-Nation Talks," *The Irrawaddy*, 7 May 2013.

⁶²³ BBC News, "Un Report: Opium Cultivation Rising in Burma," 31 October 2012,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20150683>

⁶²⁴ Australian Broadcasting News (ABC), "Insurgencies Prompting Growth in Myanmar Drug Trade: UN," 8 May

2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-08/an-myanmar-drug-production-on-the-rise/4677096>

⁶²⁵ UNODC, "UNODC Myanmar: Working to End Shan State Dependence on Opium Poppy," 21 May 2012,

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⁶²⁶ BBC World Service, UNODC, "Opium Poppy Survey Report-2012," 31 October 2012,

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⁶²⁷ Patrick Meehan, "Drugs, Insurgency and State-Building in Burma: Why the Drugs Trade is Central to Burma's Changing Political Order," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 42, no. 3 (October 2011): 391–396.

⁶²⁸ Phil Thornton, "Myanmar's Rising Drug Trade," *Shan Herald*, 13 February 2012,

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⁶³⁰ Charlie Campbell, "Obstacles Ahead in Burma's Opium War," *Time*, 19 March 2013,

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⁶³¹ Daniel Pye & Lawi Weng, "Ethnic Armies' Role in Burma Drug Trade Off Table at Six-Nation Talks," *Irrawaddy*, 7 May 2013.

⁶³² BBC News, "Un Report: Opium Cultivation Rising in Burma," 31 October 2012,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20150683>

Outlook

Burma has undergone rapid and impressive changes since the 1990s. The transition to a nominally civilian government and the adoption of a new constitution have brought much hope and promise to the nation. The Burmese government is reaching out to other nations as it attempts to end its years of isolation. In 2014, Burma will chair the ASEAN conference. The country is trying to reduce its dependence on China.⁶³³

The government faces a number of serious challenges to maintain its path toward liberalization and democracy. It has made some progress on dealing with armed ethnic groups and controlling the rise of sectarian violence of Buddhists against Muslims that escalated in the second half of 2012.^{634, 635, 636} The normalization of relations with other nations, including the United States, is likely to continue as the government shows concrete progress on reforms.⁶³⁷ The economic future for the country looks bright but depends on making the process of doing business more transparent and less corrupt.⁶³⁸ The world looks with cautious optimism at Burma which, at the moment, seems committed to opening up and becoming a more active member of the world community.^{639, 640}



© christopher / flickr.com
Dreams of Myanmar

⁶³³ Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, *Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2012–2013* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012), 68–76.

⁶³⁴ Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, *Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2012–2013* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012), 68–76.

⁶³⁵ Francis Wade, “Burma: Escalating Violence Signals Religious War,” *The Guardian*, 9 November 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/09/burma-ethnic-tensions-escalate>

⁶³⁶ BBC News, “Burma Rakhine Clashes Death Toll at 56--State Officials,” 25 October 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20083287>

⁶³⁷ Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, *Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2012–2013* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012), 68–76.

⁶³⁸ CNBC, “Myanmar’s Outlook is Bright but Challenges Remain,” 26 August 2012, <http://video.cnbc.com/gallery/?video=3000111348>

⁶³⁹ Mark Tran, “Burma Poised to Emerge from the Global Economic Wilderness,” *Global Development*, 26 October 2012,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/oct/26/burma-emerge-global-economic-wilderness>

⁶⁴⁰ Nicholas Farrelly, “Countries at the Crossroads: Burma,” *Freedom House*, 2012, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/countries-crossroads/2012/burma>

Chapter 5 Assessment

1. The United States has removed all sanctions previously in place against the Burmese government.

False

In May 2012, the United States announced plans to suspend economic sanctions against Burma and encouraged investments in Burma by U.S. companies. The arms embargo, however, remains in effect.

2. In order to maintain the large number of troops in the Burmese military, boys as young as ten years old can be recruited.

True

The Burmese Army has the highest number of child soldiers in the world. Boys as young as 10 are routinely abducted from public places and forced to become soldiers.

3. Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Burma are among the strongest in the region.

False

Relations between Bangladesh and Burma have never been strong nor friendly. They remain plagued by issues including illegal trafficking, cross-border smuggling, and Rohingya refugees.

4. The Wa State Army is the richest of the armed ethnic groups in Burma and controls much of the Golden Triangle.

True

In Shan State, the Wa tribe remains in control of much of the Golden Triangle opiate drug trade that is guarded by their own 20,000-strong Wa State Army. It is the largest and richest of the ethnic insurgent groups operating in the country.

5. Thailand lags only behind China as a major investor in Burma.

True

China is Burma's largest investor particularly in the energy sector. Thailand is Burma's most significant Southeast Asian trading partner and second largest investor.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. About 15% of the nation's land is arable.
True / False
2. Mandalay, Burma's second largest city, is primarily ethnic Mon.
True / False
3. Deforestation is a major problem throughout the nation.
True / False
4. Burma has few energy resources.
True / False
5. As a developing country, Burma has few environmental problems.
True / False
6. Settlements and farming in the central plain of Burma began about 11,000 years ago.
True / False
7. Various ethnic groups in the more remote regions of Burma were allowed a certain amount of self-rule during the colonial era.
True / False
8. The first Prime Minister of the independent Union of Burma was Aung San.
True / False
9. Following independence, several ethnic groups waged war against the new nation.
True / False
10. Following the elections in 2010, the military no longer wields significant power in Burma.
True / False
11. Burma's industrial sector is growing rapidly providing a major new source of jobs.
True / False
12. Burma's most valuable export is natural gas.
True / False
13. Unemployment is a major contributor to poverty in Burma.
True / False
14. Almost one third of the Burmese population live below the poverty line.
True / False

15. Most of Burma's foreign direct investment comes from a small handful of countries.
True / False
16. Traditionally, a daughter is seen as a financial liability because the family will have to supply a dowry for her when she marries.
True / False
17. Burmese women enjoy greater equality and higher status than other women in the region.
True / False
18. The Chin ethnic group is predominantly Christian.
True / False
19. Males from the Shan, Chin, and Kayah groups do not wear the sarong-like garment known as the *longyi*.
True / False
20. Every ethnic group in Burma traces its kinship through both the mother and the father.
True / False
21. India provides military support to the Burmese government.
True / False
22. Burma faces both internal and external threats to its national security.
True / False
23. Corruption remains a serious problem in Burma.
True / False
24. Sectarian violence represents only a small risk to Burma's stability.
True / False
25. Burma's Navy is the best-equipped arm of its military.
True / False

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfC0aJwZjFI>