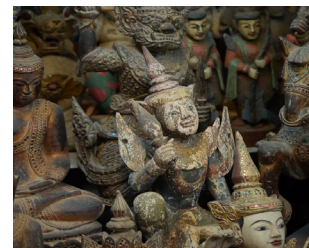


HISTORY OF BURMA



From a Multi-ethnic Perspective



Student's Book

The Curriculum Project

Educasia
Education in Context

ABOUT

US AND THIS BOOK

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This book was developed by Rosalie Metro in collaboration with the Curriculum Department staff.

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Section I: Monarchs and Kingdoms (2500 BC—1885 AD)

What do you already know about the history of Burma?

The history of Burma is made up of the stories of all the people from inside Burma's borders—Arakanese, Burman, Chin, Karen, Karenni, Kachin, Mon, Shan, and many smaller ethnic groups. If you are from Burma, this module is partly about you, too.

You will have a chance to learn more about your own history as well as the history of other people from Burma. You already know some things about the history of Burma. Remember: History is about important events, discoveries, developments and changes, and famous personalities.

group work

Brainstorm what you know about Burma's history and put it on a timeline. You may not know exact dates or names, but you can list whatever you remember.

Important Events

What important events do you know from Burma's history?

Discoveries, Developments and Changes

What discoveries, developments, and changes can you think of from Burma's history?

Famous Personalities

What famous personalities do you know from Burma's history?

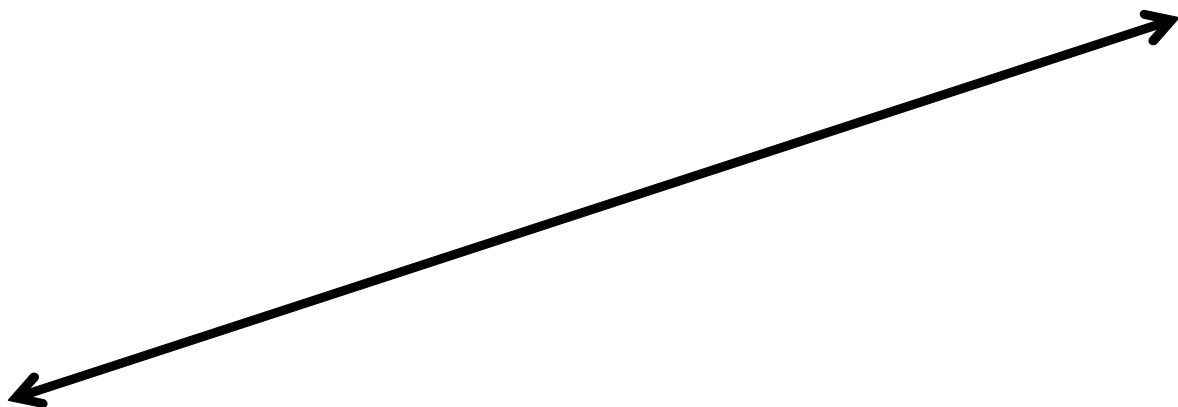
Ordinary People Like You

What are some of the most important and interesting events in your life?

Share your ideas with the class.

discussion

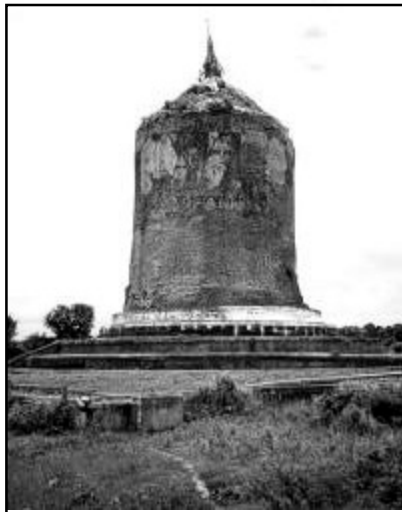
What are some events on the timeline that you would like to learn more about? Why?



History: Whose story?

The history of Burma has always been a *controversial* subject. Even in *ancient* times, the people in Burma presented different ideas about history in their legends, songs, and poems. People still disagree today.

One controversial topic is which group arrived in Burma first. Many groups have tried to *prove* they were in the area before anyone else. Many Karen say they arrived in Burma in 739 BC; historians think hill



The Pyu pagoda of Bawbawgyi

people have been living in Burma for thousands of years, but they do not know much about their past. The first *evidence* of a kingdom in Burma comes from the Pyu people, who had a city in the 1st century AD. Some Burmans say the Pyu are their ancestors and others say the

Burmans founded the old city of Tagaung even before the Pyu came. Some Shans say Tagaung was their city. The Arakanese are proud of their ancient kingdoms, and the Mon have lived in Southeast Asia for over two thousand years.

It is difficult to be sure about events that happened so long ago, so historians cannot figure out which group arrived in Burma first.

There are also different *perspectives* on historical personalities. To many Burmans, King Tabinshweti is a hero; but for Mons, he is an *oppressor*. Some Karens believe that Tabinshweti was Karen, and they call him Thanathusaw. Historians have tried to find out the ethnicities of people who lived long ago. But they tell us that although ancient people had different cultures and languages, they did not have such strong ideas about ethnicity as people do today; one person could be connected to several ethnic groups at once or at different times.

Another question is about past relationships between Burma's ethnic groups. Many Burmans say the ethnic groups got along well most of the time, and Burman kings united everyone. This idea makes it easier for them to explain why Burma should stay united today. But ethnic groups say they always fought against the Burmans and other large groups that tried to rule over them. This idea makes it easier for them to explain why they do not want to be part of the union of Burma. The truth is probably between the two ideas: people of different ethnic groups fought with each other sometimes and but also worked together sometimes.

It is difficult for historians to find answers to these questions, because the situation in Burma makes it hard to do *research*. When you study history, remember that it is OK to disagree; that's what historians do!

KEY WORDS

controversial: causing people to have different ideas or to have disagreements

ancient: very old; from a long time ago

prove: to show to be true

ancestors: people from your family who lived a long time ago; for example, your grandmother's grandmother.

evidence: something that gives information; a source; a clue

perspective: an idea you have because of your experiences and knowledge

oppressor: someone with power who does not let others be free

research: the process of looking for evidence

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Your _____ are your family members who lived long ago in _____ times.
2. Historians do _____ in order to find _____ that will give them information about things that happened long ago. Then, they can try to _____ their ideas about history are correct.
3. History is _____ because people have different ideas about it. People do not always have the same _____ on history, because they have had different experiences or have learned different information.

B. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. People have different ideas about the history of Burma.
- B. It's OK to disagree about what happened in Burma.
- C. History is a very difficult subject to study because of all the different ideas.
- D. Many groups think they were the first people in Burma.

C. Choose the best answer.

1. Most historians
 - A. agree about what happened in the history of Burma.
 - B. are sure that they know the truth about what happened in Burma.
 - C. are not sure what happened in Burma, and disagree sometimes.
 - D. can do research freely in Burma.
2. In the past, ethnic groups in Burma
 - A. sometimes fought and sometimes worked together.
 - B. always fought with each other.
 - C. never fought with each other.
 - D. did not have any contact with each other.
3. The first ethnic group to arrive in Burma
 - A. was definitely the Burmans.
 - B. was definitely the Pyu.
 - C. could have been any of several groups; historians are not sure.
 - D. was definitely the Karen.

group work

In small groups, brainstorm more topics that are controversial in the history of Burma. Write down the different perspectives on these topics. Then present the topics to the class and ask your classmates for their perspectives and ideas on these topics.

discussion

Discuss why people have different ideas about the history of Burma.

Myths and legends

Many groups in Burma have *myths* and *legends* about where their people came from. These stories are important for you to know so that you can understand the cultures of all people in Burma. Many of these myths were passed down from old people to young people as *oral history*. Today, you may not believe the events in these myths really happened, but the stories can help you to understand how ancient people thought about the world. Also, many of the *symbols* from the myths are still important to people; for instance, the golden sheldrake bird (*hintha* in Burmese) is still a symbol on the Mon flag. Here are some myths from a few different peoples of Burma.



A Mon legend says the Buddha flew over the place where Pegu is today. He looked down and saw two golden sheldrake birds. The female bird was standing on top of the male bird on a small rock. The Buddha said that one day a great city would be there. Today, this place is marked by the beautiful Hinthagone Pagoda.

A Shan legend says a giant bird called a *tilanka* carried a pregnant queen from her home, near where the Buddha was born, to a far away jungle.

There, she had a baby boy. When he grew up, the *thagyas* (spirits) gave him a magic harp. He used the harp's music to lead all the elephants in the jungle back to the place where the bird had picked up his mother. He became king, and he called the kingdom Muang Mao, because *mao* means “*dizzy*” and his mother had become dizzy when the bird lifted her up.

A Karen legend says the Karen people came across the Land of Flowing Sands and entered Burma. They called their new place *Kaw-Lah*, which means the Green Land. But their land was so beautiful they changed the name to *Kawthoolei*, which means a pleasant, plentiful, and peaceful country.



Sign at a border crossing between Thailand and Karen State

A Chin legend says that a long ago, the world became very dark. The darkness was called *Thimzing*. At this time, many *awful* things happened. Everything, even dry wood and stones, came to life, so people had nothing to make fires with. After this awful darkness ended, people came into the world again out of a hole in the earth called *Chhinlung*.

KEY WORDS

myths and legends: traditional stories about magical beings, ancestors, or heroes. These stories help people understand where they come from or how the world works.

symbol: something that has an important meaning for people; for example, the golden sheldrake bird is the symbol of the Mon nation.

oral history: a story about the past that is spoken rather than written down in a book.

dizzy: feeling like you are going to fall down

sands: soft dirt in the desert

plentiful: having enough of everything

awful: very bad

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. _____ and _____ are stories passed down from old people to young people. These stories are not always written down in books; sometimes they are spoken out loud as _____. These stories have _____ in them that help people understand the past and remember who they are today.
2. If you run around in a circle, you will get _____.
3. If you have _____ food, you will not feel hungry or _____.
4. The _____ of the desert are light brown.

B. Match the person, place or thing from the myth with the ethnic group:

- | | | |
|---|-------|----------|
| 1. <i>Muang Mao</i> , or dizzy land | _____ | A. Chin |
| 2. <i>Thimzing</i> , or great darkness | _____ | B. Shan |
| 3. <i>Hongsa</i> , or golden sheldrake bird | _____ | C. Karen |
| 4. <i>Kawthoolei</i> , or pleasant land | _____ | D. Mon |

C. Don't look back at page 5! These things appear in the legends.
What do the legends say about these things?

Mon: a female golden sheldrake bird

Shan: a magic harp

Karen: the Land of Flowing Sands

Chin: dry wood and stones

group work

Work in pairs. Tell your partner another myth or legend you know from your own culture or from a different culture. Then join with another pair. See if you picked the same stories. Share the stories with the class. How many different myths and legends does the class know?

discussion

- A. This text describes four legends from Mon, Shan, Karen and Chin people.
Do all Mon, Shan, Karen and Chin people believe these things really happened?
Why are these stories important?
- B. Discuss why myths and legends are important to people.

What life was like in ancient times

Kingdoms

The first humans probably *migrated* into the land we now call Burma from Central Asia in the 1st millennium BC. Since then, many different groups lived here; some set up cities in the lowlands, and others lived in smaller villages in the hills or mountains. Sometimes, powerful *monarchies* built large *empires* that reached China, India, and Thailand. These kingdoms did not have permanent borders like countries do today. Instead, they changed in size and shape depending on the power of the king. Because the king's power was strongest in the center and weakest at the edges, historians call these kingdoms *mandalas*. The king's power depended on other leaders in their land who gave them *tribute*; in return, the king was supposed to protect these smaller rulers. This system is called a *hierarchy*. The king was most powerful, the princes or chiefs were a little less powerful, and village heads in were even less powerful.

In ancient times in Southeast Asia, there was a lot of land but not many people. Leaders needed people to grow rice, build temples, serve in the army, and *expand* their palaces. So when leaders won battles away from home, they often brought back people from that area to work near their capital. As a result, different ethnic groups mixed and shared their knowledge of art, science, religion, and farming. People had strong connections to their land and to their cultures, but they also married people from other groups, formed alliances, and fought wars with people from other areas.

Ordinary people

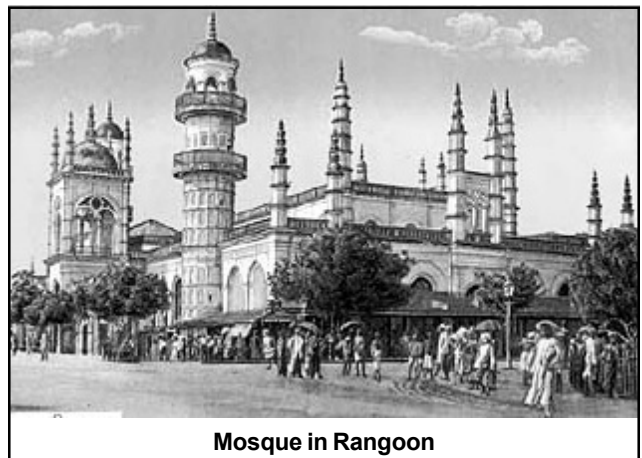
While kings fought wars and built palaces, most ordinary people in lowland areas grew rice and fished. Most people lived in small villages that had a chief or prince. If that chief paid tribute to a more powerful leader, the villagers might have to move to the capital, raise more crops to help pay the tribute, or fight in the king's army. People who lived in the mountains did not have so much contact with the kingdoms; they moved around more often.

Religion

Just like today, both good and bad things happened to people in ancient times. People tried to understand why events happened, how they could avoid bad things, and how they could find happiness. Religion helped them to do this. Several religions influenced Southeast Asia in ancient times: *animism*, *Hinduism*, *Mahayana Buddhism*, *Theravada Buddhism*, and *Islam*. Animism has been a part of Southeast Asian cultures for thousands of years and has mixed with all of the other religions that came later. Hinduism and Buddhism both came from India thousands of years ago. For the past thousand years, Theravada Buddhism has been most popular in Southeast Asia. Islam came in the 13th century and influenced western parts of what is now Burma. Later on, Christianity arrived by way of European and American missionaries. All of these religions have been important to different groups in Burma.



Mingaledezi Pagoda, Pagan,
built in the 13th century



Mosque in Rangoon

KEY WORDS

migrate: to move from one place to live in another place

monarchy: a political system where there is a king or powerful ruler who has all the power

empire: a large area that contains many small kingdoms ruled by one powerful person or group

tribute: a gift of money or other valuable things that a less powerful ruler gives to a more powerful ruler in exchange for protection

mandala: circular geometric designs that symbolize the universe, used in Buddhism and Hinduism

hierarchy: a political system where there is a powerful person at the top, a few less powerful people in the middle, and a lot of people with very little power on the bottom

expand: to make bigger

Hinduism: the beliefs and social practices that developed into the major religion of India; there are many gods, including Vishnu and Shiva. People who believe in Hinduism are called Hindus.

Buddhism: belief in the teachings of Buddha: desire causes suffering, but people can end the cycle of desire, suffering, and rebirth by meditating to reach enlightenment; people who believe in Buddhism are called Buddhists. *Mahayana Buddhism* is mostly practiced in China and Vietnam; *Theravada Buddhism* is mostly practiced in Southeast Asia

Animism: the belief that there are spirits, such as *nats*, in trees, rivers, and other natural objects; people who believe in animism are called animists

Islam: belief that there is one god, that people should submit to god, and that Muhammad was the greatest prophet; people who believe in Islam are called Muslims

Christianity: belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ, which say that there is one god; people who believe in Christianity are called Christians.

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. When large groups of people move from one place to another, they _____.
2. Village chiefs paid _____ to more powerful rulers.
3. Muhammad is the prophet of _____.
4. If a king had enough power, he could build a large _____.
5. In _____, people believe in nature spirits.
6. _____ is the religion in which people believe in Jesus Christ.
7. In _____, people try to reach enlightenment.
8. A _____ kingdom is one in where the ruler at the center is most powerful, and rulers in far away areas are less powerful.
9. Kings were at the top of the _____ in ancient Burma.
10. Empires _____ when kings were powerful.

group work

With your group, list a few things that each group of people did in early times:

Kings:

Princes and Chiefs:

Ordinary people:

Share your list with the class and make a list on the board.

discussion

How has life in Burma changed since ancient times? How has it stayed the same?

Ancient kingdoms

During the history of Burma, different groups and *civilizations* have come into contact and *influenced* each other. Below, you will learn about some important people, places, and events from the history of the region.

Smaller groups living in the mountains did not *establish* large empires or try to rule over other people, but they made homes in their own areas. The Karen, Karenni, Kachin, Chin, Nagas, Pa'o, Palaung, Padaung, Kuki, Akha, Wa and other groups all lived in the hills, but it is difficult to find historical evidence about the lives of any of these people long ago.

1st century AD

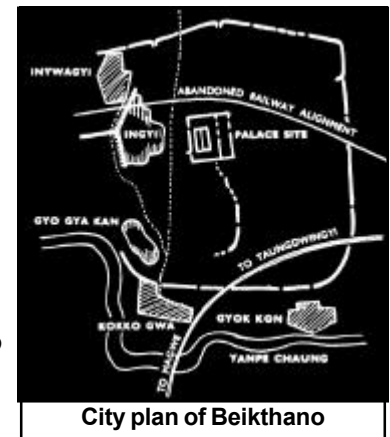
- Pyu people establish a city at Beikthano.

2nd century

- Mon people establish a city at Thaton connected to other trading centers in Southeast Asia.

3rd century

- Arakanese people establish a kingdom at Dhanyawadi; this city also became an important center of *trade* with India.



4th century

- Gupta empire in India (320-467) influences the *region*; Buddhism and Hinduism spread along land and sea trade routes.

5th century

- Pyu people establish cities at Halin and Thayetkhittaya; these kingdoms had relations with the Gupta empire in India.

6th century

- The power of the Arakanese people at Dhanyawadi declines.

7th century

- Pyu and Arakanese people have contact.

8th century

- Pyu people establish a city at Sriksetra, but their power *declines*; Burman power increases as more Burmans migrate down from Central Asia.

9th century

- The kingdom of Nanchao, in Southern China, expands its influence into Upper Burma.
- The Shan kingdom of Muang Mao becomes powerful.
- Mon people establish a kingdom at Pegu and Thaton called Ramanyadesa.
- Burman and Pyu people establish a kingdom at Pagan.

11th century

- Contact between Burmans and Mons: Around 1057, King Anawrhata of Pagan takes King Manuha of Thaton to Pagan. Theravada Buddhist monks, artists, and builders from Pegu build nearly 2,000 temples in Pagan. Burmans develop a written language based on Mon language.
- In 1084, King Kyansittha of Pagan takes power. He is influenced by Mon and Indian cultures. He promotes Theravada Buddhism and builds the famous Ananda temple.

12th century

- Burman and Mon civilization at Pagan is very strong.

13th century

- Around 1287, the Mongol empire expands south from China and weakens Pagan, strengthening Shan hands.
- Most Shan mini-states were under the suzerainty of Hsokhanfah (1311-64), King of Mao, whose power spread as far as Assam of India.
- Tai kingdoms at Sukothai and Lan-Na become powerful.
- A Mon-Shan king named Wareru, who has connections to Lan-Na and Sukothai, establishes a kingdom called Hongsawaddy at Pegu and Martaban.
- The Khmer people from the Angkor empire in what is now Cambodia expand into Mon and Tai areas.



King Anawrhata



Arakanese Kingdom of Mrauk-U

14th century

- Burman and Shan people establish a kingdom at Ava. Great literature in the Burmese language and beautiful religious art are created around this time.
- Shan princes become powerful in Northern Burma, and they *rebel* against the kings at Ava.

15th century

- Arakanese people establish a kingdom at Mrauk-U in 1433; it remains powerful until 1785. This kingdom was influenced by Indian and Bengali civilizations, and it had great art and *architecture*.
- Europeans first come to the region and trade with the Mon. They bring military and other technology.

16th century

- The Portuguese *colonize* parts of India and Malaysia, while the Dutch colonize Indonesia. English, French, and others trade in Southeast Asia.
- Burman people establish a kingdom at Toungoo.
- King Tabinshweti (1531-1550) and King Bayinnaung (1551-1581) of Toungoo try to expand their empire in all directions. They receive tribute from Mon, Shan, and Arakanese rulers and fight wars in what is now Thailand. Paying for these wars may have weakened the empire.
- A Portuguese man named Philip de Brito takes over the city of Syriam and tries to establish a city there; it does not last long.

18th century

- Burman people establish the Konbaung Dynasty which, at different times, has capitals at Shwebo, Ava, Amarapura, and Mandalay.
- King Alaungpaya (1752-1760) tries to bring Mons, Shans, Arakanese, and hill people into his empire.

19th century

- The Mons, Shans, Arakanese, and hill people rebel against Konbaung kings.
- The British fight wars with the Konbaung kings in 1824, 1852, and 1885. In 1885, the Konbaung monarchy ends and the British take over the area.

KEY WORDS

civilization: a large, organized society or group of people

influence: to affect or change something

establish: to set up or start

trade: taking things from one place to another to buy and sell them

region: area

decline: get smaller

rebel: to fight against the people in power

architecture: buildings

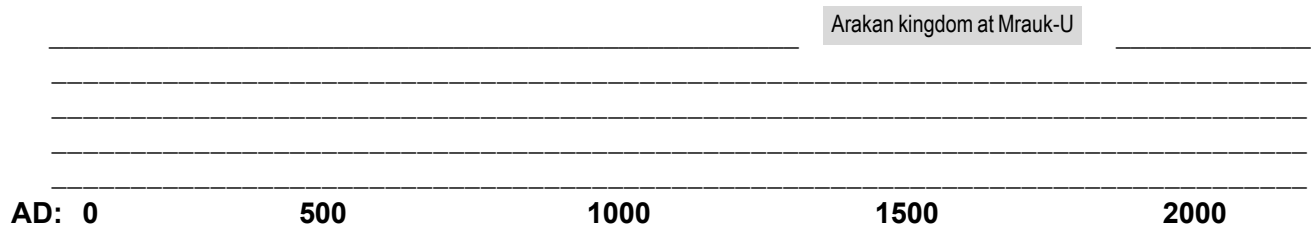
colonize: to take over control of another country in order to gain economic and political benefits.

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Different cultures _____ each other and shared their knowledge.
2. _____ between different areas brought new technology.
3. Empires _____ after they got too big.
4. The British _____ Burma.
5. Princes _____ against kings when they wanted more power for themselves.
6. The _____ of Southeast Asia had many kingdoms and _____.
7. The Mon _____ a kingdom called Ramanyadesa.
8. The _____ in Arakanese areas was beautiful; there were many large buildings.

B. Place the kingdoms you read about in the timeline below.



C. Match the ethnicities with kingdoms or cities.

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Pagan, Ava, Toungoo, Konbaung _____ | A. Mon |
| 2. Ramanyadesa, Hongsawaddy _____ | B. Shan |
| 3. Dhanyawadi, Mrauk-U _____ | C. Burman |
| 4. Muang Mao, Ava _____ | D. Pyu |
| 5. Beikthano, Halin, Sriksetra, Thayetkhittaya _____ | E. Arakanese |

- D.** On the map below, there are some of the kingdoms you learned about. Which number is which kingdom?



- a: Ramanyadesa
- b: Konbaung (Mandalay)
- c: Hongsawaddy
- d: Konbaung (Amarapura)
- e: Toungoo
- f: Halin
- g: Konbaung (Shwebo)
- h: Pagan
- i: Thayetkittaya

discussion

How did the different groups in Burma influence each other in good ways?
How did they influence each other in bad ways?

group work

- A.** In groups of four or five, look through the information on pages 9 and 10. Write questions about the information. Make sure you know the answers!
- B.** Have a group quiz competition. Don't look at the module! Ask your questions to other groups. Answer the questions from the other groups. At the end, add up how many questions you got correct.

homework

Make a timeline on a large piece of paper and write the events from pages 9 and 10 on it. Throughout this module, you will learn more about historical events. You can write these events on your timeline. Keep your timeline in a safe place, so you can use it again and again.

Section II: Colonialism (1885–1948)

What is colonialism?

In the 1500s, European countries began to colonize Asia, the Americas, Africa, and other parts of the world. European countries sent their own people to these lands to establish governments and rule over the local people who lived there. In Southeast Asia, the Portuguese arrived first and were followed by the Spanish, British, Dutch, French, and others. The British established an empire in India in the 17th century, and in the 19th century their empire included Burma. The British Empire was one of the largest in the world. It lasted into the 20th century.

Europeans colonized places for economic, political, social, and religious reasons. Governments and private companies wanted to use the *natural resources* and *raw materials* in these lands, and they wanted to use the local people as workers. By making money and gaining control of places all over the world, the colonizers tried to become more powerful politically. Furthermore, most Europeans believed that the people outside Europe were not *civilized* or perhaps not even fully human.

For this reason, they killed and *mistreated* many people in the countries they colonized. We know that many people who were colonized really had highly developed cultures. But some Europeans thought they could help local people by *modernizing* education, health, and political systems. Some local people welcomed this help, but others wanted to have control over their own areas. European *missionaries* also wanted to bring Christianity to local people. Some people *accepted* it, but others wanted to keep their own religions.

Colonialism had a strong influence on the world. It increased international trade, and it brought people, things, and ideas from different parts of the world into contact with each other. Most colonies became independent in the 18th, 19th, or 20th centuries. But the cultures of the colonists and of the people who were colonized mixed with each other, and we can still see some of the effects of colonialism today.

KEY WORDS

colonialism: the practice of taking over control of another country in order to gain economic and political benefits

natural resources: things in the environment, such as trees, water, and land

raw materials: things that come from the earth, such as cotton, wood, and gold

civilized: having a highly developed culture, usually involving cities

modernize: to change traditional things with the latest ideas and technology

mistreat: to do bad things to someone

missionaries: people who go out into the world to change other people's religion to their own

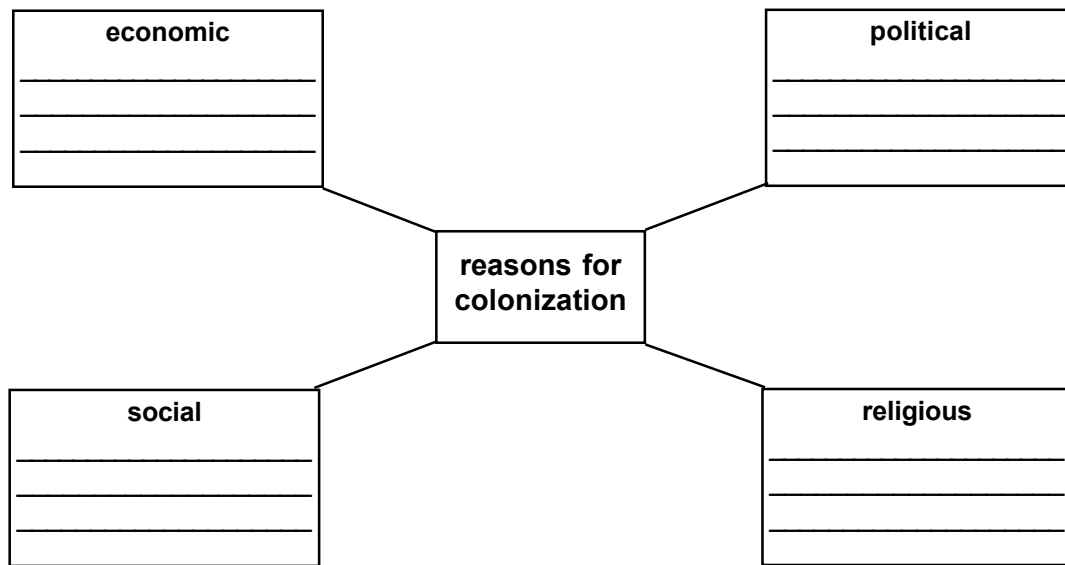
accept: to say yes to

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

Europeans began to colonize other countries in the 16th century. Some tried to _____ these countries because they believed that the local people were not _____. _____ tried to bring Christianity to people. The Europeans also used the land's _____ to get _____ to bring back to Europe. Sometimes the British _____ the local people, and the local people did not _____ them. _____ had economic, political, social, and religious effects.

B. Fill in the charts.



group work

Here is a map of the British Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. The colonies are colored in black. Using an atlas, write down the names of these colonies.

discussion

Discuss how colonialism affected the world.

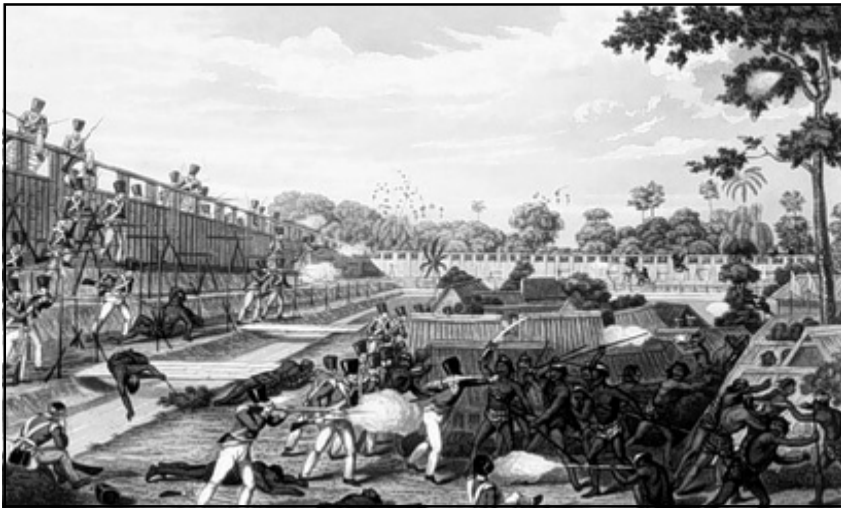
homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The Anglo-Burmese wars

The British colonists came to Burma through India. But they did not take over Burma all at once. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the British had conflicts with Burman kings of the Konbaung Dynasty about the border with India.

Meanwhile, Burman kings had their own problems. *Dacoits* sometimes attacked Burman *territory* in Arakan and then escaped over the border into British India. In 1824, the Burman King Bagyidaw sent some soldiers to chase some of these dacoits into Assam and



A 19th century British painting of the British army attacking the Burmese

Manipur. The Burmans thought that this land was theirs, but the British did not agree. The British got angry that the Burman king was sending soldiers into their territory. That was the beginning of the first of three wars between the British and the Burmese, which are called the “Anglo-Burmese” wars.

The British won the first Anglo-Burmese war. They *annexed* Assam and Manipur as well as Arakan and Tenasserim. Then, in 1852, there was another Anglo-Burmese war. The British won again, and this time they took over Lower Burma.

Finally, in 1885, there was a third and final Anglo-Burmese war. The British took over Mandalay, ended the Konbaung monarchy, and took King Thibaw and the royal family to live in India. In 1886 and 1887, there were *rebellions* against the British throughout the country. But the British defeated these rebellions and Burma became a part of the British Empire.

Why were the British able to win the wars against the Konbaung kings? Part of the reason is that the British had better weapons and more soldiers. Another reason is that the Konbaung kings had other

problems. There were fights within the royal family. And the kings were having problems keeping the empire under control, because different ethnic groups were rebelling. As a result, the king’s power was weak. Burman generals such as Maha Bandula fought hard against the

British, but they could not defeat the colonists.

Not all of the conflicts between the British and the Burmese were military. There were also conflicts between British and Burmese social and religious traditions. These differences made *negotiation* difficult. “The Shoe Question” is a good example of this problem. When the British first started coming to the Burmese palace in Mandalay, they did not want to take their shoes off when they came inside. The Burmese were very upset by this. But the British never took off their shoes when they went inside the palace or a temple; they thought this *custom* was very strange. The Burmese king felt the British were being *disrespectful*. Therefore, it was hard for the British and the Burmese to talk with each other to help them *avoid* war.

KEY WORDS

dacoit: a robber who travels with a group of other robbers in Burma or India

territory: land

annex: to take control of a piece of land

rebellion: a revolt or uprising; when people fight against the group that has power

negotiation: when people who disagree have a discussion to settle the problem

disrespectful: not showing respect; being rude

custom: something that most people in a certain culture do in order to be polite

avoid: stay away from

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the Key Words box.

1. First, the British _____ Arakan and Tenasserim.
2. The first Anglo-Burmese war started because the Burmese chased some _____ into territory the British had claimed.
3. The British were _____ of the Burmese _____ of taking off shoes when entering a building.
4. The British and Burmese had fights over _____ in Assam and Manipur.
5. The British and the Burmese tried _____ to solve their problems, but it did not work so they fought wars.
6. The Burmese had _____ against the British, but the British took control of Burma anyway.
7. Always try to _____ bad things.

B. Answer these questions in your own words:

1. What caused the first Anglo-Burmese war?
2. What happened to the Konbaung monarchy after the British colonized Burma?
3. What problems did the Konbaung kings have?
4. How could the British defeat the Konbaung kings?

C. What is the writer's opinion? Does the writer think these things? Write yes or no.

1. The British were right to colonize Burma, because the Burmans sent soldiers into British India.
2. The Konbaung kings were good rulers of Burma.
3. There were many difficulties between the British and the Burmans.

group work

Pretend it is the 1850s and the British have come to talk with the Burmese king. One person in your group is the Burmese king, others are British officials, and others are Burmese workers at the palace. Imagine the situation that would take place when the British refused to take off their shoes. What would the people say to each other? Write down or memorize a short dialogue and then perform it for the class.

discussion

The British and the Burmese had different perspectives on the Anglo-Burmese wars. Discuss what these different perspectives might have been.

homework

- A. Pretend you are a British official visiting the palace. Write a short letter about what happened to you there when you would not take off your shoes.
- B. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Colonial administration

Once the British had control of all the territory in modern Burma, they had to decide how to rule it. They knew that people in different regions had been



Drawing of King Mindon, who ruled from 1853-1878

rebelling against the Konbaung kings, and they were not exactly sure about the relationships between different groups of people. They thought that there was a basic difference between people who lived in the hills and people who lived in the *plains* and that it would be easier to keep these groups separate. In fact, there were many ethnic minority groups in the plains as well as in the hills—for instance, most Karens lived inside Burma

Proper—and the hill areas contained many different kinds of people. But in 1897, they divided the territory they had conquered into “Burma Proper,” also called “Ministerial Burma,” and the “Frontier Areas,” also called the “Excluded Areas.” The Frontier Areas included the Shan States, parts of the Kachin, Chin, Naga, and Arakan hills and covered about a third of the total land area. They ruled these two areas differently. In Burma Proper, the British used *direct rule* and took over the government. In order to save money, the British used *indirect rule* in the Frontier Areas. They let local leaders stay in power as long as those local leaders promised to be *loyal* to the British Empire.

In this way, the British tried to act in the same way that the Konbaung Kings had. Instead of asking for tribute, like the kings, the British asked for *taxes*. But even within the Frontier Areas, the British had different policies that changed over time. The Karenni areas were kept separate, as were the Chin Hills.

In order to set up their government, the British had to figure out which areas were in their territory and which were not. In ancient times, the boundaries between different mandala kingdoms had shifted over time. But the British established permanent boundaries between Burma and Thailand, China, and India. When they did that, they separated some ethnic groups and brought others together in one country. In the same way that they established permanent boundaries between countries, they also tried to establish permanent boundaries between ethnic groups. In ancient times, the boundaries between ethnic groups had sometimes changed when different groups took power. But the Europeans wrote down who was in which group and then kept the different groups separate from one another. This is called a “divide and rule” policy. The British thought they could rule Burma more easily if they separated the ethnic groups from one another, and they also felt that they were protecting the smaller, less powerful ethnic groups from the larger, more powerful ones. For instance, when they started the British Burma Army, they used almost all Karen, Kachin, Chin, and other minority ethnic groups as soldiers. They used these soldiers to fight Burman rebellions, which caused problems between these groups later on.

Over time, the Frontier Areas came to have a different situation than Burma Proper. Many people in the Frontier Areas felt that the British did not develop their areas enough or give them enough access to education. But the people in the Frontier Areas had more independence from the British because they still had their own leaders. The people in the two regions became more separate from each other. This division had important *consequences* later on. The British did not cause all of the problems between ethnic groups in Burma, but they did increase the divisions between them.

KEY WORDS

administration: the rule of a government

Burma Proper: the part of Burma that the British ruled directly during colonial times; this section included Lower and Upper Burma.

Frontier Areas: the part of Burma that the British ruled indirectly during colonial times; this section included the Shan States, Karen Areas, the Chin Hills, and some Kachin areas

plains: flat areas

direct rule: when a colonists take over the government of the colony

indirect rule: when colonists let local leaders stay in power and rule through them

loyal: describing someone who keeps their promises

taxes: the money that powerful people take from you when you buy or sell things, or just for living in a place

divide and rule policy: A way of ruling colonies that the British used where they kept different ethnic groups separate.

consequences: effects; things that happened later because of something else.

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The British used a _____ to keep the ethnic groups separate from each other.
2. When you buy something, you may have to pay _____ on it.
3. _____ included lands in the flat part of Burma; but outside of the _____, the British set up the _____ where hill people lived.
4. The British used _____ when they wanted more power over an area, and they used _____ when they wanted to let the local leaders stay in power.
5. The British may not have fully understood what the _____ of their actions in Burma would be in the future.
6. _____ people make very good friends, because you can depend on them when you need help.
7. The British colonial _____ decided to separate the hills from the plains.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. *The British changed the region by*
 - A. getting rid of old boundaries.
 - B. making permanent boundaries between Burma and other countries.
 - C. developing Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas equally.
 - D. encouraging ethnic groups to mix together.
2. *The British were similar to the Konbaung kings because they*
 - A. let some local leaders stay in power.
 - B. asked for taxes.
 - C. separated Burma Proper from the Frontier Areas.
 - D. ruled using British laws.
3. *"Divide and rule" is a policy that*
 - A. united all the ethnic groups.
 - B. divided the British from the Burmese.
 - C. kept different ethnic groups separated.
 - D. divided Burma from India.
4. *The British*
 - A. caused all of the problems between ethnic groups in Burma.
 - B. increased the divisions between ethnic groups in Burma.
 - C. ruled all of Burma in the same way.
 - D. did not do anything that affected relationships between ethnic groups in Burma.

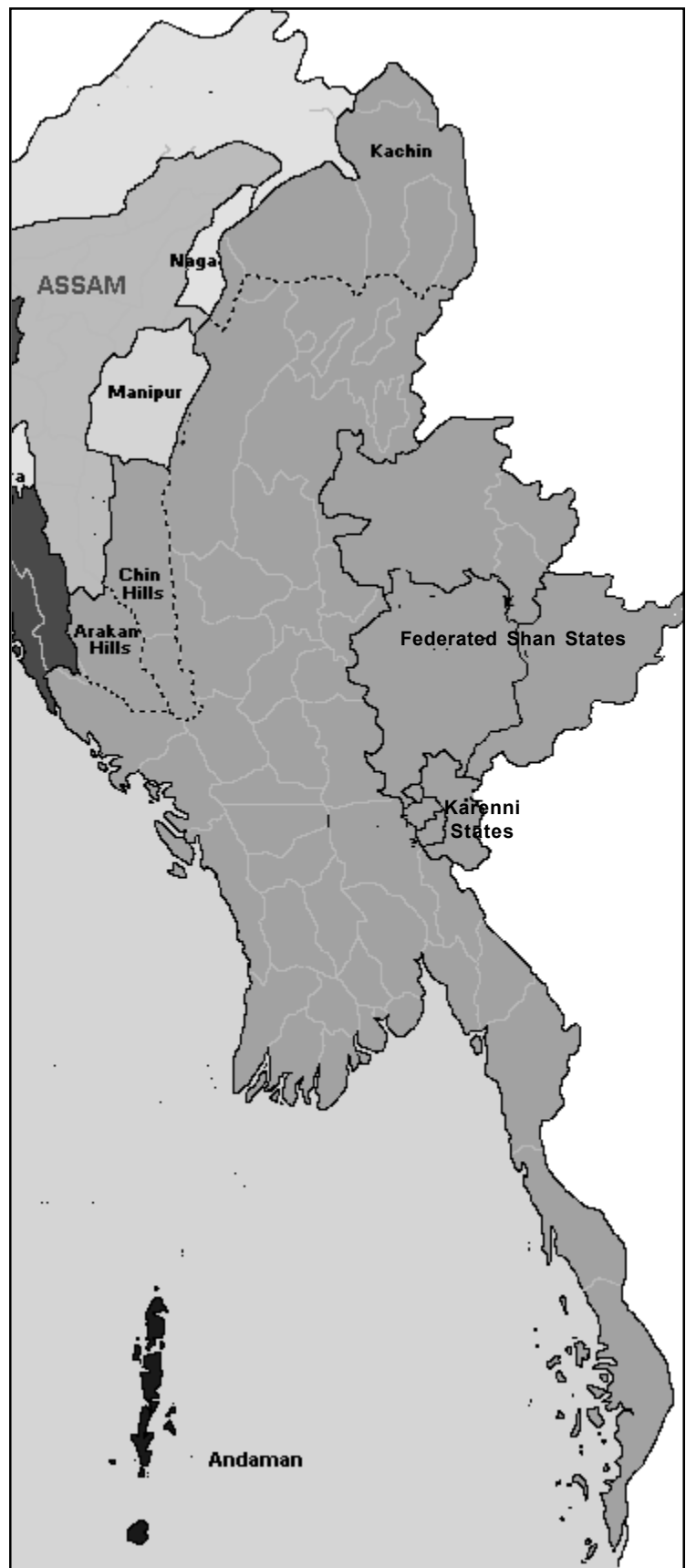
C. Where was your hometown or village in colonial Burma? Was it in Burma Proper or in the Frontier Areas? Draw a star on the map showing where your hometown or village is located today.

discussion

Discuss the long-term effects of the division into Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas. Do you think Burma would be different today if the British had ruled the land as one country from the beginning?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.



Effects of colonization

The British colonization of Burma had economic, political, social, and religious effects. Colonization changed the economy. The British introduced their own money, and they wanted everyone to use it. Farmers, who had grown rice and other crops to eat in ancient times, started growing rice to sell to the British. They needed the money from the sale of their crops to pay taxes to the British government. The British took raw materials such as teak, *petroleum*, tin, and gems back to England or sold it to others.

The British also created political changes in Burma. They ended the Konbaung monarchy. They also got rid of the *myothugyis*, the *hereditary* leaders who controlled several villages. Instead, they made the *thugyis*, or village headmen, in charge. Britain itself was a monarchy, so Burma came under the control of British queens and kings. Burma had a *governor*, and there was a *commissioner* and *viceroy* who ruled British India. There were also many other colonial officials who ran different departments. They ruled over Burma with British laws from the capital they established in Rangoon. Later on, in 1923, the British started a *diarchy*, so that the people in Burma could have some control over their government. But the British continued to make the important decisions. In 1935, the British passed the Burma Act, which established an Executive Council that had places for Burmans and other minorities as well as British leaders.

The British also changed social life in Burma. They modernized cities, so the city people had very different lives than the people who lived in the countryside. The British built hospitals and schools all over the country and especially in the cities. At these schools, they taught all about the good things the British empire had done for the people of Burma; they did not discuss any problems they might have caused. They built *infrastructure* and improved transportation by building roads and railways. For that reason, the people in the cities had access to technology, education, and health services. The Europeans also brought Chinese and Indians to the colonies to be workers or to help them rule over the local people.

Finally, colonization brought religious change. The British did not protect or promote Buddhism the way the Konbaung kings had. In the past, most people had been Buddhist or animist, but after the British came, missionaries *converted* some people to Christianity. The missionaries were most successful in converting animists who lived in the hills. Many Kachin, Chin, Karen and Karenni people became Christian. Indian and Chinese people also brought their own religions to Burma.

KEY WORDS

petroleum: oil or gasoline

hereditary: describing something that is passed down from parents to children in a family

governor: a person who governs or rules a certain area

commissioner: a person in charge of a government department

viceroy: a person who rules for the king or queen

diarchy: a system of government that has two parts: a more powerful colonial power and a less powerful local power

infrastructure: the things a society needs to work, such as a transportation system and a communication system.

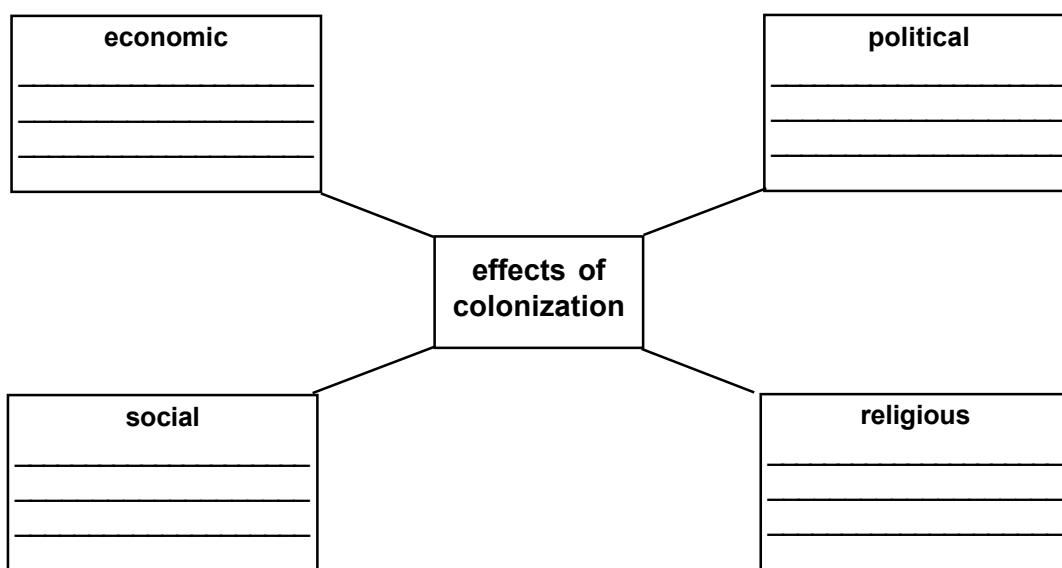
convert: to change someone from one religion to another

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The British built more _____ in the cities than they did in the Frontier Areas.
2. _____, _____ and _____ ruled Burma for the British monarchy.
3. Missionaries _____ many people who lived in the hills to Christianity.
4. The British made Burma a _____ in 1935, but they still did not give the Burmese much power.
5. _____ makes cars run.
6. If your parents give you things that their parents gave them, those things are _____.

B. Fill in the chart.



C. Answer these questions in your own words.

1. How did colonization change Burma's economy?
2. After colonization, what happened to the *thugvis*?
3. Who made political decisions in Burma after 1923?
4. What happened in Burma's cities after colonization?
5. What did the British teach in their schools?

group work

List some effects of colonization that you see as good and some that you see as bad. Share these lists with the class. Then discuss why you think they are good or bad.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Increasing ethnic diversity in Burma

One important effect of colonization was that *ethnic diversity* in Burma increased. First of all, there were the British and other Europeans who came to do business. Some of them *intermarried* or had children with Burmese people. The British also brought Indian clerks to work in government offices as *civil servants*. The British had trained these Indians before, and they knew them well, so they wanted to hire them instead of local Burmese people. Many Indians and Chinese also worked as farmers and as laborers on infrastructure projects such as buildings and roads. There had been



Hindu temple, Mandalay

some Chinese and Indians in Burma before colonization, but their population increased in the 19th century. Some became successful in trading and business. Some of these Chinese and Indian people learned Burmese, took on Burmese names, and became part of Burmese society. But they also kept some of their own traditions and languages.

This new ethnic diversity was hard for some Burmese people to accept. Some people felt that Burmese culture would be lost, and they did not like Indians because they saw them as friends of the British. At several different times in Burma's history, there have been conflicts between Burmese people and Chinese or Indians. For instance, during colonial times, many Indians became *landlords* or *moneylenders* in Burma. They were called *chettys*. Burmese who wanted to own their land got angry and sometimes attacked their landlords. After World War II, when the British left Burma, over 500,000 Indians fled back to India because they were being attacked by Burmese soldiers and citizens.

Thousands of them were killed. However, some stayed and made their living in Burma.

Some Chinese people also remained in Burma or came later on. Many became successful business people. Because they, like Indians, tended to have more money and power, some Burmese people have *resented* them and have had *riots* against them. These *communal* riots have happened during difficult economic times, when people were upset because they had to struggle to survive. In 1967, Chinese people were attacked because some of



Postcard of Chinese vegetable sellers in Rangoon (possibly from the 1930s)

them were selling rice for high prices and wearing "Mao Badges" that showed their loyalty to the Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung. In cases like this one, there were real problems that needed to be solved, but riots hurt or killed many innocent people without solving the problems. Moreover, not all Chinese and Indian people were rich and powerful.

Today, Burma has very difficult *citizenship* requirements; only people who can prove that they had ancestors in Burma before 1824 can be citizens. This policy shows that Burma does not welcome all people, and it reflects the conflicts that have happened between different ethnic and national groups in Burma.

KEY WORDS

ethnic diversity: a mixture of people from different ethnic backgrounds or countries

intermarry: when two people from different ethnic, national, or cultural groups marry each other

civil servant: a person who works for the government

citizenship: being part of a country legally

landlord: a person who owns land he or she does not live or work on and lets other people live on in exchange for money or goods

moneylender: a person who lends money to others; when they pay it back, they often have to pay more than they borrowed

(continued)

KEY WORDS (continued)

chettyar: an Indian moneylender in Burma

resent: to have bad feelings toward a person or a group

riot: when a crowd of people gets angry and threatens or hurts others

communal: between two or more communities, nationalities, ethnic groups, or religious groups

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Only people who can show that their families have lived in Burma since before 1824 can have _____.
2. The British brought Indians to Burma to work for the government as _____.
3. Burmese people _____ their Indian _____, who owned their land, and the _____, who lent them money. These Indians were called _____.
4. _____ increased in Burma in the 19th century.
5. Some groups _____, but others mostly married people from their own ethnic group.
6. Many people have been hurt and killed in _____ that happened because of _____ conflict.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. Indians who came to Burma became
 - A. workers.
 - B. landlords.
 - C. moneylenders.
 - D. all of the above.
2. Communal riots usually happened when
 - A. the Chinese and Indians did something really bad.
 - B. the British were in Burma.
 - C. there were difficult economic conditions and people were angry.
 - D. the Burmese people had more money and power.
3. Burmese people resented Chinese and Indian people because
 - A. these groups sometimes had more money and power, and because the Burmese did not want to lose their own culture.
 - B. the Chinese and Indians came to Burma illegally.
 - C. Chinese and Indian people never did anything to help Burmese society.
 - D. the Chinese and Indian people were all rich.

C. Do some research and write a paragraph about the causes of anti-Chinese and/or anti-Indian riots in Burma.

discussion

Discuss why some Burmese people had bad feelings toward Chinese and Indians during the colonial period and later. Do you think the citizenship law is fair? Why or why not?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Missionaries

Christian missionaries from America first came to lower Burma in the early 1800s, and more came after the first Anglo-Burmese war. The missionaries converted many Kachins, Karens, Karennis and Chins to Christianity. Missionaries came from several different *denominations*, including Baptist and Catholic.

Why did some people convert to Christianity while others did not? The Burmans and Mons, who had been Buddhist for centuries, were not very interested in Christianity. But many of the Karens were still animist. They had an ancient story about a white brother who would come with a great book of knowledge that would improve the situation of their people. When the missionaries came with the Bible, many Karens believed that the *prophecy* had come true. In many parts of the world, missionaries have been able to convert oppressed or *marginalized* people with their message of *salvation* and their promise of more social power.

One of the main things that missionaries did for the converts was to teach them to read and write. The missionaries felt it was important for Christians to be able to read the Bible. But many of the people did not have written languages, so the missionaries developed written languages for them. In 1834, missionaries developed a script for the Karen language. In 1890, the missionary Ola Hansen developed a script for the Kachin language. The missionaries also built hospitals and schools, which improved the situation for the converts.

Even though the missionaries were trying to do good things, their activities caused *tension* between the converts and other people in Burma. Some ethnic groups became divided by religion; the Christians had help from the missionaries, but the non-Christians may have had better relationships with other non-Christian Burmese people. Some Burmese believed strongly that everyone had the right to choose their own religion, but others wanted all the people in Burma to be Buddhist. The Christians in Burma often had close relationships with the British, and the Burmese who *opposed* the British sometimes resented the converts for joining with foreigners. As a result, some Burmese attacked and even killed Christians. Christians in Burma turned to the British and the foreign missionaries for protection. Many Christian Karens took the side of the British in the Anglo-Burmese wars and in World War II, and the Burmese tried to punish these Karens. When all of Burma came under the control of the British, many Karens were happy and hoped that the British would protect them from the Burmans. Religion is still a controversial issue in Burma, but many people today believe in *secularism* or the *separation of church and state*.



Ola Hansen with Kachin converts

KEY WORDS

denomination: kind of Christianity, such as Baptist, Catholic, or Protestant

prophecy: an old story about what will happen in the future; a prediction

marginalized: disadvantaged or mistreated

salvation: the promise that you will be saved from harm forever if you practice a certain religion

tension: uncertainty and uncomfortable relationships

oppose: to go against or say no to something

separation of church and state: the idea that the government should not support one particular religion and should protect all people's rights to practice the religion of their choice. This idea is also called *secularism*.

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. There has been _____ between Christians and people of other religions in Burma that has caused different groups to resent each other.
2. If people believe in the idea of _____, then they feel that the government should not take the side of one religion; they support _____.
3. It is easiest for missionaries to convert _____ people who are suffering, who need protection, or who are looking for _____.
4. Baptist, Catholic, and Anglican are _____ of Christianity.
5. There was a Karen _____ that a white brother would come with a special book that would help the Karen people.
6. Some Burmese people _____ British rule.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. The missionaries
 - A. tried to cause bad feelings between Christians and non-Christians.
 - B. tried to help people but also caused tension.
 - C. resented the converts.
 - D. converted many Burmans.
2. The missionaries were most successful at converting people who
 - A. were completely happy with their situation already.
 - B. had heard of Christianity before.
 - C. were marginalized or had prophecies similar to Christian ideas.
 - D. did not want salvation.
3. The missionaries helped converts by
 - A. building hospitals and schools.
 - B. developing written languages.
 - C. protecting them.
 - D. all of the above.

C. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. More animists than Buddhists converted to Christianity.
2. Missionaries are less successful with oppressed people.
3. Many converts learned to read and write.
4. No ethnic groups had written languages in Burma until 1834.
5. Missionary activity sometimes created problems between different ethnic groups.
6. There are many problems in Burma between Buddhists, Muslims and Christians.

discussion

Discuss the separation of church and state. Is it a good idea? Why or why not?

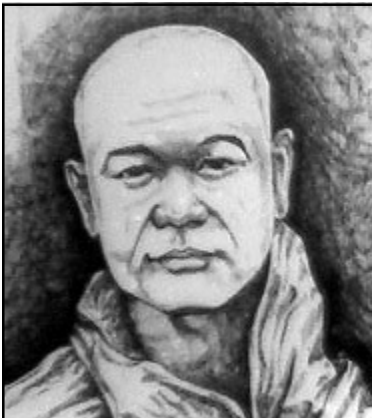
homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Anti-colonial activities

Not everyone liked the British rule as much as the Karens did. Many other groups were quite upset with the way that the British ruled the country. They wanted Burma to be one united country independent of the British; they supported Burmese *nationalism*.

First of all, many Buddhists felt that the British disrespected Buddhism. The British had gotten rid of the king and would not let anyone else become the religious leader of Burma. In 1906, some educated Burmese people formed the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) to promote Buddhist religion and culture. In 1916, the YMBA took on a political role because the British still would not take off their shoes when they went into a Buddhist temple. In 1920, the YMBA joined with other organizations to form the Greater Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA). The GCBA organized a strike of students who wanted separation from India and independence from Britain.



U Ottama

Leaders included U Chit Hlaing and U Ba Pe. U Ottama, an Arakanese monk, and U Wisara, also a monk, got involved in politics in order to protect Buddhism. The British arrested these monks and put them in prison.

U Wisara went on a *hunger strike* because he was not allowed to wear monk's robes in prison, and he eventually died. These monks *inspired* many Burmese people to oppose British rule.

Meanwhile, young people who had studied abroad were learning about new ideas such as *democracy* and *independence*. They brought these ideas back to Burma and started to organize themselves to oppose British rule. In particular, they wanted to run their own educational system. In the 1920s, students organized a *strike*. They had a *demonstration* at Shwedagon Pagoda, and the British opened Rangoon University and allowed National Schools, run by Burmese people, to open. At these schools, Burmese people learned about history in a very different way than the British taught it. Many who taught at and attended these schools felt that the British should not be in Burma at all.

Difficult economic conditions caused peasant rebellions. In the 1930s, there was a worldwide economic depression. Rice prices fell, and the peasants had a hard time paying their taxes. There was one tax called the *thatmeda* tax. Each person had to pay it even if he or she was very poor. Many peasants had to sell their land to Indian people who had lent them money. A former monk named Saya San started a rebellion that lasted from 1930 until 1932. Peasants attacked British offices, and the British responded violently. Many peasants were killed, and Saya San was hanged. But their struggle inspired many Burmese to oppose British rule as well, including the leaders Dr. Ba Maw and U Saw, who became involved in governing Burma.

KEY WORDS

nationalism: the feeling people have when they love their country or their ethnic group more than any other, and they want it to be independent and secure

democracy: a system of government in which people elect leaders to represent them

independence: having freedom from the control of others, especially other countries

hunger strike: when someone stops eating in order to show that they are upset about something that the government or another powerful group is doing

strike: when people stop working or going to school in order to show they are upset about something the government or another powerful group is doing

inspire: to get someone to do something by your own good example

demonstration: an event where people show their feelings about something the government or another powerful group is doing

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The Burmese in the YMBA wanted _____ from Britain.
2. _____ causes people to fight for their country.
3. During the colonial era, Burma was not a _____; it was ruled by the British monarchy.
4. Participating in a _____ by not working, or going to a _____ are both ways to let the government know about your ideas.
5. People who make good speeches can _____ others to do what they say.
6. Going on a _____ is not good for your health.

B. Are these statements *facts*, *opinions* or *hypotheses*?

1. Most people wanted Burma to be independent.
2. The YMBA supported Burmese independence.
3. The British should respect other cultures.
4. U Wisara was a very brave monk.
5. Burmese people learned their own history in National schools.
6. Some rebellions were caused by economic conditions.

C. Write a short explanation or description of each event, group, or person:

Saya San rebellion, U Ottoma, U Wisara, YMBA, GCBA, National Schools

group work

In groups, choose one of the events or people listed above. Compare your descriptions or explanations with your group. Then, together, write a short statement as if you are that person or a member of that group. What do you want from the British and why? Read your statements out loud to the class.

discussion

In response to the Burmese nationalists, the British made some changes in the way they ruled Burma. For instance, they opened Rangoon University and allowed National Schools to be started. But in other cases, they acted violently against people who fought against them. For instance, they attacked the members of the Saya San rebellion. If you were a British colonist in the 1920s or 1930s, how would you have reacted to Burmese nationalism? Why?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Burmese nationalism and the thakin movement

As you already learned, many young people in Burma were *nationalists* who opposed British rule. In the 1920s, some students who were not happy with British rule began calling themselves *thakin*, or master. Before, they had used this word for the British; but they decided that they wanted to be their own masters. Early in 1931, these *thakins* started a group called the *Dobama Asiayone* (DAA) or the “We Burmans Association.” Throughout Burma, students and young people joined this organization in order to oppose the British and *express* their feelings of nationalism.

This movement had many famous leaders. The DAA was started by Thakin Ba Thaung and Thakin Lay Maung. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, who became a respected teacher and political leader, was also important in the *movement*. Two leaders who later became very famous were also DAA members: Bogyoke Aung San and U Nu. In 1936, these two students were members of the Rangoon University Student Union (RUSU) who were *expelled* from Rangoon University for their political activities. Ko Nu had been *demanding* different school classes, and Ko Aung San had been running a newspaper that expressed anti-British *opinions*.

The other students held demonstrations in support of Ko Aung San and Ko Nu. More and more, these students began to want independence from Britain so they could make their own decisions about educational and political systems.

A few years later, the students joined with some industrial workers and peasants. Trade unions had formed in 1933, and oil field workers went on strike in 1938. The Burmese nationalist movement became stronger. In 1938, a Burmese student named Ko Aung Kyaw was killed during a peaceful demonstration against the British. His death made many Burmese people very angry, and they became more *determined* to fight against the British.

The Burmese nationalist movement grew, but it never really included all of the people who lived within Burma’s borders. Not all Burmese nationalists were ethnically Burman; the Mon leader U Chit Hlaing and the Arakanese leader U Ottoma both supported the cause of Burmese independence. But few people in the Frontier Areas wanted to become part of a Burmese nation. Not many felt much of a connection to Burma Proper. Many ethnic groups wanted their own nations, or they wanted the British to remain in power. They had their own nationalist movements that were separate from Burmese nationalism. For that reason, the Burmese nationalist movement did not include everyone in the country.

KEY WORDS

nationalist: a person who feels nationalism

thakin: “master” in Burmese. Burmese students called themselves and each other *thakin* to show they were just as good as the British.

Do-bama Asi-Ayone: a Burmese nationalist organization

express: to show

movement: a group of people or organizations that are all trying to reach one goal

expel: to make someone leave a school or organization

demand: to ask for strongly

opinion: your thoughts or feelings about something

determined: wanting to do something a lot and not giving up

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Burmese _____ started an organization called the _____ and began calling each other “_____” to show they were their own masters.
2. People in the Burmese nationalist _____ wanted to _____ the British from Burma; they were _____ to get independence.
3. If you want to _____ your feelings, you can write them down or tell your friends about them. They will be interested to know your _____.
4. The DAA _____ independence from the British.

B. Match the leader with the description.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. U Nu _____ | A. Member of the DAA who became an important teacher and political leader |
| 2. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing _____ | B. Member of RUSU and DAA who ran the student newspaper |
| 3. Bogoyoke Aung San _____ | C. Founders of the DAA |
| 4. Thakin Ba Thaung and Thakin Lay Maung _____ | D. Student who was killed by the British during a peaceful demonstration |
| 5. Ko Aung Gyaw _____ | E. Member of the RUSU and DAA who demanded different school classes |

C. Answer these questions in your own words:

1. Why did the nationalists use the name *thakin*?
2. Who were the first members of DAA?
3. Why were Aung San and U Nu expelled from university?
4. What ethnicity were the Burmese nationalists?
5. What did people in the Frontier Areas think of Burmese nationalism?

D. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. The Burmese nationalist movement got bigger and bigger during the 1930s.
- B. The Burmese nationalist movement had the support of some but not all people in Burma.
- C. The Burmese eventually got their independence from the British.
- D. Many people in the Frontier Areas wanted the British to stay.

discussion

Discuss what the Burmese nationalist movement could have done differently to reach out and include all the ethnic groups in Burma. Do you think this was possible in the 1930s?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Bogyoke Aung San

One of the most important leaders of the Burmese nationalist movement was Bogyoke Aung San. Many people consider him to be the “father” of Burma. He tried to convince the British to give Burma independence; and, eventually, with the help of many other people he succeeded.



On February 13, 1915, a boy named Maung Htein Lin was born in the village of Natmauk in Central Burma. He was called Aung San. People who knew him say that from the time he was a child, he was very honest and *direct*. He went to a monastery school, and then to a National School run by Burmese teachers. He was a clever student. He was especially interested in Burmese nationalism because he was *related* to Bo La Yaung, a leader who had resisted the British in the 19th century.

Ko Aung San entered Rangoon University in 1932, where he became involved in politics and in editing the RUSU magazine, *Oway*. He was a leader in the 1936 student strike, and he joined the DAA a few years later, as well as joining and starting many other political organizations. Many people came to respect him. In 1941, he went to Japan along with 29 other young nationalist leaders to receive military training. When he returned to Burma, he founded the Burma Independence Army (BIA). Thus, he became known as “Bogyoke” Aung San.

At first, he worked with the Japanese in order to gain independence for Burma, but then he tried to get both the Japanese and the British to leave Burma. He led negotiations with the British and with the ethnic groups to make Burma an independent, unified country. He was *assassinated* in 1947.

Aung San believed in making *compromises*. He was able to *negotiate* with the British as well as with ethnic leaders. People trusted him because of his honest character. Many people believe that Burma would have been very different if Aung San had lived.



Burma Independence Army

KEY WORDS

convince: to get people to agree with your ideas

eventually: not right away but later

direct: describing a person who says what he or she thinks

related: being from the same family or having the same ancestors

assassinate: to kill a political leader or other important person

compromise: a situation in which all people get some things they want and give up some things they want

negotiate: to discuss ideas with someone who does not agree with you in order to come to an agreement

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. People respected Bogyoke Aung San because he was good at making _____ and he could negotiate with all people.
2. Bogyoke Aung San was _____ in 1947.
3. He wanted to _____ the British to leave Burma.
4. He _____ with British and ethnic leaders so that Burma could get independence.
5. People who are _____ will tell you their opinions.
6. You are _____ to your grandmother, grandfather, and cousins.

B. Are these statements *facts* or *opinions*?

1. Aung San is also called Maung Htein Lin.
2. He was an honest child.
3. He was a clever student.
4. After he was involved in the 1936 strike, he joined the DAA.
5. He tried to convince the Japanese and British to support independence for Burma.
6. Burma would have been different if Aung San had lived.

C. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. Aung San had a family history of nationalism.
2. When he was a child, Aung San wasn't interested in politics.
3. Aung San went to many other countries before he went to Japan.
4. He wanted the Japanese to rule Burma.
5. He thought each ethnic group should have their own countries.
6. Aung San negotiated with British and ethnic group leaders.

D. Bogyoke Aung San is a famous leader throughout Burma. You may have already learned about him in school or at home. Make a list of things you learned about him. Compare it to what you just read. What new things did you learn? What do you know that is not written down here? What more would you like to learn about him? Share your answers with the class.

things you know	new information	things you want to know

discussion

Discuss why it is important for leaders to be able to make compromises.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Ethnic leaders in the colonial era

While General Aung San and the other Burman nationalists were trying to get independence from Britain, the leaders of many ethnic groups had different ideas. Many of them wanted to keep British protection and were not sure about what would happen if they were joined with an independent Burma; others wanted to get rid of the British and the Burmans and rule themselves; and some were willing to discuss joining a future union with Burma. Some ethnic groups were quite well organized but other groups did not have organized governments. The Shan were particularly well organized. In 1922, the Federated Shan States was formed by the British with the consensus of the Shan princes, led by the *sawbwa* Sao Shwe Thaik. Meanwhile, Kachin *duwas* such as Sinwa Nawng led their communities. U Chit Thaung and Nai Po Cho, led the Mons. They were concerned that their rights to speak their own languages were being taken away. The Arakanese were also concerned about language rights. Led by U Seinda, they demanded this and other rights. Leaders of the Karenni,



Painting of General Aung San with Duwa Sinwa Nawng and Sao Shwe Thaik

such as U Bee Tu Reh, wanted the Karennis to be independent. On the other hand, U Vamthu Mawng, a Chin leader, was willing to work with the Burmese nationalists, and he supported them during World War II. Karen leaders included Dr. San C. Po, Mahn Shwe Tun Kyaw, and Saw Ba U Gyi.



*San C. Po was born on October 4, 1870, near Bassein in Upper Burma. His family was Sgaw Karen and Christian. When he was a child, he went to a school run by American missionaries, and then he attended medical school in America. He returned to Burma in 1894, where he worked for the civil service and opened a medical clinic. Dr. San C. Po became very interested in the future of his Karen people. In 1915, he was appointed to Burma's Legislative Council. Then he became head of the Karen National Association (KNA) in 1925. At that time, Burman nationalists were asking Britain for self-rule. Dr. San C. Po felt that if the British left Burma, the Burmans would not treat the Karens fairly, because the two groups had had conflicts in the past. He opposed self-rule, and he wanted the Karens to have their own state if Burma became independent. He visited Britain to explain his concerns to the British, and he wrote a book called *Burma and the Karens*. In that book, he wrote, "The Burmese nation (by which is meant all the indigenous races of Burma) can never be strong...until the principal races of the country are satisfied and contented by having a fair share of the country and its administration." He wanted to share this idea with others, so he served in the House of Representatives. Karens, Burmans, and others respected him because he tried to reconcile problems through dialogue. On June 7, 1946, he died of an illness. People remember him as an important leader.*

KEY WORDS

meanwhile: at the same time

Sawbwa: traditional leader in Shan and other ethnic groups

Duwa: traditional Kachin leader

concerned: feeling that a bad thing might happen; worried

attend: to go to

appoint: to give someone a job

Legislative Council: a group of Burmese politicians who gave advice to the British rulers but could not make laws without British consent (between 1923 and 1937)

Karen National Association (KNA): an organization started in 1881 to protect the rights of Karen people

self-rule: the plan for Burma to become independent of Britain; also called “home rule”

indigenous: living in a place since a long time ago

principal: main

House of Representatives: a group of Burmese politicians who made some laws for Burma between 1937 and 1947; the British still had control over most decisions

reconcile: to unite and settle problems peacefully

dialogue: a discussion between people or groups who have different ideas

exercises

A. Fill in the blanks from the “KEY WORDS” box.

1. The _____ had more power to make laws than the _____.
2. Members of the _____ worked to oppose _____ so that the Karen people would not come under the control of the Burmans.
3. _____ is one way to _____ problems without fighting.
4. I will cook the rice; _____, you should cook the curry.
5. The Shan _____ formed a council, and the Kachin _____ discussed the future of their people.
6. If you are _____ about a problem, you can talk to your friends about it and maybe they will help you.
7. Many Burmese nationalists _____ Rangoon University.
8. If you are _____ chairperson of the council, then you will have an important job.
9. The _____ people of an area know it very well.
10. The _____ reason that Dr. San C. Po did not want self-rule was that he did not trust the Burmans.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. Dr. San C. Po did not want Burma to have self-rule because
 - a. he thought Burma should be independent from Britain.
 - b. he worried the Burmans wouldn't treat the Karens as equals.
 - c. he was a member of the House of Representatives.
 - d. he thought the Karens should rule all of Burma

2. Many people respect Dr. San C. Po because
 - a. he wanted to solve problems peacefully by discussing them.
 - b. he preferred armed struggle to non-violent action.
 - c. he never held any position in government.
 - d. he agreed with everything the Burmans said.

group work

Dr. San C. Po wrote, "The Burmese nation (by which is meant all the indigenous races of Burma) can never be strong...until the principal races of the country are satisfied and contented by having a fair share of the country and its administration." Work with your group to rephrase this sentence in your own words. Do you agree with this statement? Read your statements to the class and share your ideas.

discussion

How are Dr. San C. Po's ideas different from General Aung San's ideas?
How are they the same?

homework

- A. If you had been alive in the 1920s, would you have supported or opposed self-rule? Why or why not? Write a few sentences about this topic.
- B. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

review

- A. Choose eight of these people, places, things or events. Using information from the module and/or your own knowledge, write a few sentences about them.

The Pyu
Golden Sheldrake
Islam in Burma
Pagan
Mrauk-U
Konbaung dynasty
Anglo-Burmese wars
Burma Proper
Divide and rule policy
Myothugyis

Chinese in Burma
Kachin script
YMBA
U Ottama
Dobama Asiayone
Saya San rebellion
Thakins
Federal Council of Shan Cheifs
Duwa Sinwa Nawng

- B. Have a group quiz competition. In groups of four or five, look through the information in chapters 1 and 2 of this module. Write questions about the information. Make sure you know the answers! Ask your questions to other groups. Answer the questions from the other groups. At the end, add up how many questions you got correct. Which group had the most correct answers?
- C. If possible, talk with an older person in your community who remembers life under the British. First, work in pairs or groups. Decide what questions you would like to ask:

daily life? her/his opinions of the British? what has changed?

In pairs or groups, talk with her/him about life under the British.
Present his/her opinions, ideas and descriptions to the class.

Section III: World War II (1940—1945)

Overview of WWII

In the 1930s, Germany, Japan, and Italy began building new empires. Japan *invaded* China, Italy attacked Ethiopia, and Germany tried to expand into France and Czechoslovakia. The governments of Japan (led by Emperor Hirohito and Premier Tojo), Germany (led by Adolph Hitler), and Italy (led by Benito Mussolini) were all *fascist*. They formed an *alliance* called the *Axis powers*. At first, other countries in Europe followed a policy of *appeasement*. But finally, in 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France responded by declaring war on the Axis powers. Later, in 1941, the USA joined them. Then the Soviet Union and China joined as well. All together, they were called the *Allied powers*.

WWII was fought in three areas: Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Germans and Italians invaded Europe and Africa, and the Japanese invaded Asia. The Japanese *occupied* Southeast Asia, including Burma in 1941. Many people all around the world were killed and injured during the war. About 75 million people died in total and many *civilians* suffered economically and physically.

The German government committed a *genocide* called the Holocaust where they killed 6 million Jewish people and many other groups of people as well. The USA dropped an *atomic bomb* on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing over 100,000

people. WWII ended in 1945 when the Axis powers *surrendered* to the Allied powers. One important effect of WWII was that the world became divided into communist and democratic countries.



Cloud from the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki in 1945

KEY WORDS

invade: when the army of one country enters another

fascist: describing a system of government where the state controls all parts of society, and citizens have very little freedom.

appeasement: a policy in which countries try to avoid war even if other countries are doing bad things

alliance: an agreement between countries or groups that shows their support for each other;
allied means having an alliance

Axis powers: Germany, Japan, and Italy during the 1930s and 1940s

Allied powers: Britain, France, and the USA (and later Russia and nationalist China) during World War II

occupy: when an army enters another country and stays there

civilian: a person who is not in an army

genocide: the planned and systematic killing of a whole national, racial, political, or ethnic group

atomic bomb: a nuclear-powered bomb

surrender: to give up in a war

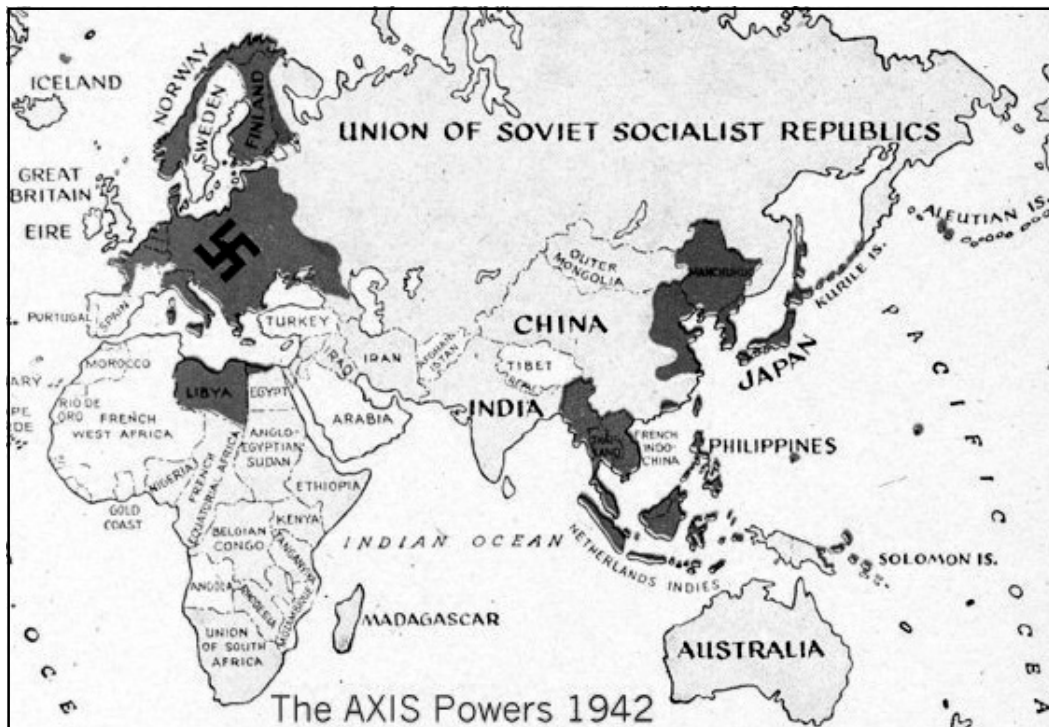
exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Germany, Italy, and Japan all had _____ governments.
2. Japan _____ and _____ Burma in 1941.
3. England and France stopped following a policy of _____ in 1939 when Germany attacked Poland.
4. Hitler committed _____ against Jewish _____.
5. The _____, including Britain, France, and the USA, made an _____ that said they would help each other in fighting against the _____.
6. Japan, Germany, and Italy _____ to the Allied powers in 1945.

group work

Look at the map below. It shows territory the Axis powers controlled in 1942.



Use an atlas to figure out which countries Germany, Italy, and Japan controlled.

discussion

Discuss why you think the Allies opposed fascist countries.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The 30 Comrades

On September 1, 1939, when World War II began, Burmese nationalists hoped the war would give them a chance to get independence from Britain. In November 1939, a part of the DAA, led by Thakin Mya and Aung San, organized an *underground* party to fight British rule. This party was called the Burma Revolutionary Party (BRP) or the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP).

But the PRP needed money and support from a foreign power in order to form an army. The Burmese *thakins* made contact with the Japanese. In August 1940, Japanese Colonel Keiji Suzuki went to Burma and met with the nationalist leaders Thakin Mya and Dr. Thein Maung. Together, they drew up the "Plan for Burma's Independence." The Japanese agreed to give military training to some young Burmese nationalists. The Japanese wanted to invade Burma



Ye Htut, Kyaw Zaw and Bohmu Aung, three of the 30 Comrades

and get rid of the British, and they knew it would be easier with the *thakins'* help. They wanted to close the Burma Road, which the British were using to

transport supplies. So they promised the *thakins* that they would help fight for Burma's independence.

In 1941, 30 Burmese nationalists went to the Japanese island of Hainan and got military and *administrative* training from Colonel Suzuki. The

training was useful, but the Burmese nationalists were not sure if they could trust the Japanese to give Burma independence. The 30 Comrades returned to Burma along with the Japanese army and occupied the country. These 30 men formed the Burma Independence Army (BIA—later called the Burma Defence Army (BDA), then the Burma National Army, or BNA, then the Local Burmese Forces, or LBF, and finally the Patriot



Aung San and some of the 30 comrades training in Japan

Burmese Forces or PBF. They promised their *loyalty* to the army, to Burma and to each other in a *thwe thauk* ceremony on December 31, 1941.

Many of the 30 Comrades stayed involved in politics and became important in Burma in the future. Bogoke Aung San, U Ne Win, Thakin Soe, Thakin Tun Ok, Bo Let Ya, Bo Set Kya, and Bo Zeya were all members. Most of them were very young at that time; their *average* age was 24. They did not all share the same political ideas, but they all thought that Burma would have a better situation without the British.

KEY WORDS

underground: not legal; secret

administrative: having to do with being in charge of an organization or government

loyalty: keeping a promise to stay together and work hard for a goal

thwe thauk ceremony: an event where people drink each other's blood mixed with alcohol and make a promise to each other

average: describing the number you get if you add up several numbers and then divide them by the number there were originally

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The Burmese nationalists started an _____ movement because they did not want the British to know what they were doing.
2. At the _____, the 30 Comrades promised each other to try to get independence from Britain.
3. The _____ of 5, 6, and 7 is 6.
4. If you promise your _____ to your organization, that means you will do whatever you can to work for it.
5. _____ training was just as important as military training, because the 30 Comrades needed to know how to run their country.

group work

- A. In small groups, imagine that you are Burmese nationalists in the late 1930s. Would you have joined the 30 Comrades? Do you think it was a good idea they got help from the Japanese? Why or why not? Make a list of the good and bad things about getting help from the Japanese. Discuss your answers with the class.
- B. Choose three of the thirty comrades. Research their backgrounds and lives. Use information your teacher gives you and also any other information you know or you can find out. Present your research to the class.

Thakin Aung San (*Bo Teza*)
Thakin Hla Myaing (*Bo Yan Aung*)
Thakin Hla Pe (*Bo Let Ya*)
Thakin Aye Maung (*Bo Moe*)
Thakin Ba Gyan (*Bo La Yaung*)
Thakin Tun Shein (*Bo Yan Naing*)
Thakin Saw Lwin (*Bo Min Gaung*)
Thakin Than Tin (*Bo Mya Din*)
Thakin Shwe (*Bo Kyaw Zaw*)
Thakin Soe (*Bo Myint Aung*)
Thakin Tun Shwe (*Bo Lin Lon*)
Ko Aung Thein (*Bo Ye Htut*)
Ko Tin Aye (*Bo Phone Myint*)
Thakin Aung Than (*Bo Setkya*)
Thakin Than Tin

Thakin Hla Maung (*Bo Zeya*)
Thakin San Mya (*Bo Tauk Htein*)
Thakin Khin Maung Oo (*Bo Taya*)
Ko Saung (*Bo Htein Win*)
Thakin Shu Maung (*Bo Ne Win*)
Thakin Tun Khin (*Bo Myint Swe*)
Thakin Ngwe (*Bo Saw Aung*)
Thakin Thit (*Bo Saw Naung*)
Thakin Kyaw Sein (*Bo Moe Nyo*)
Thakin San Hlaing (*Bohmu Aung*)
Thakin Tun Lwin (*Bo Bala*)
Thakin Maung Maung (*Bo Nyana*)
Thakin Tun Oke
Thakin Hla (*Bo Min Yaung*)
Thakin Than Nyunt (*Bo Zin Yaw*)

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Japanese occupation

The Japanese army invaded Burma on December 11, 1941, and they occupied the country until 1945. At first, many Burmese people welcomed the Japanese because they thought the Japanese would help them win their independence. But the Japanese *committed* many *atrocities* against Burmese civilians: they *raped* women, and they *tortured* people who opposed them. The Burmese people also suffered from poverty. The British had practiced a “*scorched earth*” *policy* when they *retreated*, and a lot of land and property had been *destroyed*. Their situation did not improve when the Japanese came, and the war made life dangerous. Furthermore, the *Kuomintang* (KMT) army of nationalist China operated in Kachin State in



Hugh Seagram, who fought with the Karen

Northern Burma, and committed many atrocities there. Some Karens, Kachins, Nagas, and Chins remained loyal to the British throughout the Japanese occupation. They wanted the British to stay in Burma. A few British officers, including Major Hugh Seagram, stayed behind to fight the Japanese when the British left Burma. The Karens fought along with him.

The Japanese did not give Burma real independence as they had promised to the *thakins*.

Instead, they set up a *puppet government* led by Thakin Tun Ok and then by Dr. Ba Maw. On August 1, 1943, they announced Burma’s independence. Bogyoke Aung San Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Mya, and Thakin Nu accepted positions in the new government. They did not believe the Japanese wanted Burma to have real independence, so they secretly planned *resistance* against the Japanese. But the people of Burma did not know they were secretly planning this resistance, so some lost trust in the *thakins* and the BIA and started to resist the

Japanese on their own. In August 1944, Bogyoke Aung San and others formed the Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO, later called the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom



Drawing of a burning village by a Japanese soldier

League, or AFPFL). The AFO formed an alliance with Thakin Soe and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). Both groups formed an alliance with the British at a conference in Kandy, India, in 1945. The British Force 136, which provided support to underground resistance to the fascists, supported them. In March 1945, fighting between the BIA and the Japanese began; March 27 is remembered as Resistance Day. They fought until the Japanese surrendered on August 14, 1945.

KEY WORDS

commit: to do

atrocities: bad things such as torture, rape, and murder that armies or governments commit against civilians or prisoners

rape: to force a person to have sex

torture: to do painful things to a prisoner, usually to get information from them

Kuomintang: the Chinese nationalist army who fought against Chinese communists

scorched earth policy: when a retreating army burns land so the advancing army will not be able to get food from the land

retreat: when an army runs away from another army

destroy: to ruin something totally

puppet government: a government that is made to look independent, but is really controlled by an outside power

resistance: fighting against an occupying army or government

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The Chinese nationalist army was called the _____.
2. The Japanese soldiers committed terrible _____ such as _____ and _____ against Burmese civilians.
3. The British followed a _____, so it was difficult for farmers to grow food for themselves during the war.
4. The Japanese let the Burmese nationalists set up a _____, but it did not really have any power.
5. When armies _____, sometimes they _____ everything so that the army that is coming will have a difficult time.
6. The BIA started _____ against the Japanese in 1945.
7. If you _____ a crime, you might have to go to prison.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. The Burmese people welcomed the Japanese at first because
 - a. they thought the Japanese would commit atrocities.
 - b. they thought the Japanese would help them get independence from Britain.
 - c. they wanted fight against the Burmese nationalists.
 - d. the Japanese were very kind to them.
2. The Japanese
 - a. never gave Burma independence.
 - b. gave Burma real independence.
 - c. wanted Burma to remain under British control.
 - d. said Burma was independent, but did not give the Burmese political power.
3. The BIA started resisting the Japanese because
 - a. the leaders realized the Japanese did not really want to give Burma independence.
 - b. the Kempetai was not committing enough atrocities.
 - c. the BIA was not as strong as it had been before.
 - d. all of the above.
4. Some ethnic minority people fought against the Japanese from the beginning of the occupation because
 - a. they wanted Burma to get independence.
 - b. they were loyal to the British.
 - c. they trusted the BIA.
 - d. they wanted to participate in the puppet government.

discussion

Discuss the BIA's decision to rebel against the Japanese in 1945. Why do you think they chose this time? Do you think they should have rebelled earlier? Later? Why?

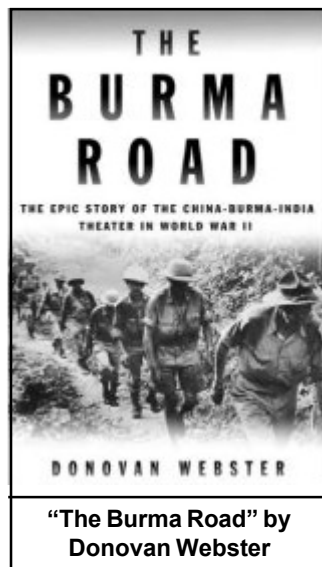
homework

- A. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.
- B. Ask some older people you know if they remember the Japanese occupation. What do they remember about it? Write down their stories and share them with your classmates.

The Burma Road

One main reason that Burma was so important to the Allies and to the Axis powers during World War II was because of the Burma Road. The Burma Road was a 1,130 km road that connected Kunming in Southern China to Lashio in Shan State. It had been built by about 200,000 Chinese workers in 1937 and 1938. Because the road went through jungles and mountains, it was very difficult to build. At that time, Japan had invaded China and the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang army used the road to bring military supplies into China. The supplies had been shipped into Rangoon and *transported* by railroad to Lashio. When World War II began, this road became important to the Allies because Japan had closed all of China's port cities and the Burma Road was the Kuomintang's main source of military supplies for fighting Japan.

When the Japanese invaded Burma in late 1941, they wanted to *sabotage* the Burma Road. The Japanese intelligence unit *Minami Kikan* operated on the Thai side of the border to close this road. In this way, the Japanese cut off the Chinese nationalists' source of weapons.



An American General named "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell led a group of American, English, Indian, and Burmese soldiers and civilians that tried to re-open the road. In December, 1942, he and his group began cutting a road through the jungle from Ledo, India, to Myitkyina. It was very difficult work, but they finished it in 1944. An American author imagined what it must have been like:

"The jungle was everywhere. Its vines grabbed their ankles as they walked. Its steamy heat sapped their strength. And every time they reached the summit of yet another six-thousand-foot mountain, they could only stare across the quilted green rain forest below and let their gazes lift slowly to the horizon. Ahead of them, looming in the distance, they could finally see the next hogback ridge between them and safety. They would, of course, have to climb over that one, too."

- Donovan Webster, *The Burma Road: The Epic Story of the China-Burma-India Theater in World War II*

The Ledo Road (later called the Stilwell Road) was important to the British in establishing control over Burma again. The Burma Road became famous in Europe and America, and many Americans see General Stillwell as a hero. Today, neither the Burma Road nor the Stilwell Road are used.



US army trucks on the Ledo Road

KEY WORDS

sabotage: to destroy something that is important to someone else, especially in a war

Minami Kikan: Japanese intelligence unit

transport: to bring things from one place to another

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. If you don't want someone's plan to succeed, you can try to _____ it.
2. The _____ collected information about what was happening inside Burma during WWII.
3. The Burma Road was an important way to _____ supplies.

group work

A. Draw the Burma Road and the Ledo road on the map.



B. You read one author's idea about what it might have been like for "Vinegar" Joe Stillwell and the others to make the road. What kind of experiences do you think they had? In small groups, continue where the author left off. Write a few more sentences to continue the story. Read them to the class.

discussion

Many Americans do not know much about Burma, but they have probably heard of the Burma Road. Why is this? Do you think knowing this story would help them understand Burma? Why or why not?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Problems between the Burmese Independence Army (BIA) and ethnic minorities during World War II

During World War II, the BIA occupied Burma along with the Japanese Kempeitai. The BIA started out small, but it gathered *recruits* as it went through Burma. Bogyoke Aung San also started People's Volunteer Organizations (PVOs), local military groups that helped the BIA. By the time the BIA reached Rangoon, it had 10,000 *troops*. Most of these soldiers were Burman. Throughout World War II, relations between the BIA and ethnic minorities were *strained*.



Japanese troops enter Rangoon with the BIA

Some ethnic minority groups worked with the BIA, including Arakanese led by U Seinda and Chins led by U Vamthu Mawng. But mostly, relations were not good. The group that suffered the most casualties were Indians, who the BIA attacked because they were seen as loyal

to the British. Muslims in Arakan State were also attacked. These conflicts caused some ethnic minority people not to trust the BIA and Burmans in general.

This situation caused problems between the BIA and the ethnic minorities who were loyal to the British. *In particular*, there were problems between

BIA troops and the Karen. In March 1942, there was a violent conflict in Myaungmya district. At this time, many Karen troops who had been serving in the British army were returning home with their weapons. The BIA soldiers who were invading this area needed guns for their new recruits. At first, the Karens gave up their weapons to the BIA, but after they did, their villages were attacked and *looted* by *gangs* with many weapons. The Karens were sure that the people who attacked their villages must have been BIA soldiers, so they stopped giving up their weapons and prepared to resist the BIA. Then the *communal violence* began. It got worse because criminals were released from prison and formed gangs. In one of these fights, a Japanese colonel who was friends with Colonel Suzuki was killed. Colonel Suzuki ordered two Karen villages to be destroyed and all the villagers killed, even though they had nothing to do with the death of his friend. Karens tried to get *revenge* by attacking Burmese villages. A few weeks later, some *thakins* led a *mob* that killed Saw Pe Tha, a former minister in Burma's government. Fighting continued. Both Karens and Burmans lost their lives and property. Thousands of people died and hundreds of villages were destroyed.



Postage stamps issued by the BIA

KEY WORDS

recruit: a person who joins the army (*noun*) or to ask people to join the army (*verb*)

troops: soldiers

loot: when a group of people steal valuable things

gang: a group of people who work together threaten or attack others

in particular: especially; this expression tells you someone is going to give an example

communal violence: violence that happens between members of different ethnic, religious, or racial groups

revenge: when you want someone to suffer because they made you suffer

mob: a group of angry people who do violent things without thinking about them first

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. During World War II, _____ happened between Burmans and Karens.
2. A _____ of thakins killed Saw Pe Tha.
3. The BIA gathered _____ as they traveled through the country.
4. Some Karen villages were _____ by armed _____.
5. If someone does something bad to you, you might want to get _____.
6. BIA _____ needed more weapons.
7. There were problems between the BIA and ethnic minorities in several places in Burma, but _____ in Karen areas.

B. This photograph was taken during World War Two. It has some Kachin villagers with US Army soldiers. What do you think is happening?



group work

In 1946, during the Karen Goodwill Mission to London, Saw Tha Din, who was a leader of the Karen National Association (KNA), asked,

“How could anyone expect the Karen people to trust the Burmans after what happened during the war—the murder and slaughter of so many Karen people and the robbing of so many Karen villages? After this, how could anyone seriously expect us to trust any Burman government in Rangoon?”

How would you answer his question? Given that these atrocities happened during the war, what would Burmans have to do to win the trust of Karens and other ethnic minorities? With your group, brainstorm a list of positive actions that Burman people could take to build trust with the ethnic minority people. Share your list with the class and then discuss the solutions you found. Are any of them likely to happen?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Section IV: The Struggle for Independence (1945—1948)

The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League and Aung San's negotiations with Clement Attlee

After World War II ended, the British reoccupied Burma. This situation was *frustrating* to many Burmese nationalists, because they had not *achieved* their aim of an independent Burma; the country's political situation was similar to the way it had been before the war. Bogyoke Aung San and the AFPFL began to work to get independence from Britain once again.

During the last few months of World War II, the British had issued a "White Paper," or statement of their policy, about Burma. It said that Burma should remain under the control of Britain for two to three years before becoming a *dominion* of Britain. It also said that the Frontier Areas should not have to join Burma Proper unless and until the people who lived there wanted to. The Burmese nationalists were not happy with the White Paper Policy. They wanted total independence from Britain right away, and they wanted the Frontier Areas to join with Burma Proper. They organized a general strike in 1946 to demand independence.

British officials had different ideas about what should happen to Burma. Lord Mountbatten, who had led the reoccupation of Burma, was sure that Burma would become independent eventually. He wanted to negotiate the *transfer of power* to the Burmese with Aung San and the AFPFL. But other British officials, such as the Governor General of Burma, Reginald Dorman-Smith, was not sure if Britain should negotiate with Aung San or with other Burmese leaders who had sided with the Japanese during the war. In 1946, the British replaced Dorman-Smith with Hugo Rance, who was willing to work with Aung San and the AFPFL.

Within the Burmese nationalist movement, there was a power struggle going on. Aung San left the military and decided to enter politics because he wanted to lead the country. But *rival* politicians wanted to be in charge. Thakin Tun Ok, another politician, tried to *discredit* Aung San by saying he should be charged with murder for actions he took during the war. Meanwhile, communists such as Thakin Than Tun and Thakin Thein Pe tried to discredit Aung San as well. In November 1946, the AFPFL expelled the CPB members for this reason.

Finally, in January 1947, the British were ready to negotiate with the Burmese nationalists. Aung San and a delegation of other Burmese leaders went to

Britain to meet with the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee. On January 27, 1947, they



Clement Attlee and Aung San in London

signed the Aung San-Attlee Agreement, which stated that Burma would get independence within one year, and that Burma Proper would work to unite with the Frontier Areas. This agreement was important, but not everyone supported it. Delegation members Thakin Ba Sein and U Saw refused to accept it, and leaders from the Frontier Areas sent *urgent* messages to the British telling them they did not agree to anything yet and wanted to speak for themselves.

KEY WORDS

frustrating: causing the feeling that you face many difficulties and your work might not be successful

achieve: to reach a goal

dominion: a country that is not independent but has a strong relationship with another, more powerful country that protects it and makes important decisions

transfer of power: when an old government gives power to the new government

discredit: to make someone look bad

urgent: important to do before time runs out

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. If you want to _____ someone, you can say something bad about that person.
2. Some ethnic minority leaders wanted Burma to become a _____ of Britain.
3. The question of ethnic minority rights was _____ to the ethnic minorities, but not as much to the Burmese nationalists.
4. Not getting what you want can be _____.
5. If you want to _____ your aims, you must work hard.
6. The _____ was not easy to negotiate because not all British officials wanted to work with the AFPFL.

group work

On December 30, 1946, before the AFPFL delegation arrived in London, the Executive Committee Council of the Federated Shan States sent a telegram from Lashio to Britain.

“We understand from the Honble [Honorable] U Aung San that the Burmese Mission visiting London will ask for control of the Frontier Areas. If this is the case we wish to state *emphatically* that neither the Honble U Aung San nor any of his colleagues has any *mandate* to speak on behalf of the Frontier Areas. Whether and when the Frontier Areas will *amalgamate* with Burma is a matter for the people of the Frontier Areas alone to decide. We are at present *deliberating* on this subject with leaders of other areas and we will make our views known to HMG and to the Burmese people through our properly constituted councils. If matters concerning the Frontier Areas are to be settled during the visit of the Burmese Mission we insist on the right to send our representative *simultaneously*. Please inform us on this point immediately to enable us to make our plans.”

KEY WORDS

emphatically: strongly

mandate: the right to do something for someone else

amalgamate: join with

deliberate: to discuss different possibilities

simultaneously: at the same time

The British never replied to the telegram, so no Shan or other ethnic minority peoples were present during the negotiations of the Aung San-Attlee agreement. How do you think the agreement might have been different if the Shan or other ethnic minority peoples had attended the meetings? List some additional points that the Agreement might have included. Or, write a response to the telegram from the British. How do you think they would have replied to the Shan leaders at that time?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The Panglong Agreement

While Burmese nationalists were trying to get independence, leaders in the Frontier Areas were trying to protect their rights of *self-determination*. In 1946, Shan *sawbwas* organized a conference at Panglong, in Shan State. There, they met with Kachin, Karen, and Chin leaders to discuss their plans for the future. At this conference, the Kachin leaders explained under what conditions they would consider joining a union with Burma Proper:

“For the hill peoples the *safeguarding* of their *hereditary* rights, customs, and religions are the most important factors. When the Burmese leaders are ready to see this is done and can prove that they *genuinely* regard the hill peoples as real brothers equal in every respect to themselves shall we be ready to consider the question of our entry into close relations with Burma as a free dominion.”

Aung San knew that many ethnic minority people did not want to become part of an independent Burma. In December 1946, he toured the Frontier Areas trying to win the support of the leaders there. Many of these leaders trusted him. The Kachin *duwa* Sinwa Nawng, Chin leader U Vamthu Mawng, and Pa’o *sawbwa* Sao Khun Kyi acted as *intermediaries* between their own people and the Burmese nationalists.

Other leaders were not sure about joining the union. From February 7-12, 1947, leaders gathered at Panglong to discuss these issues. Burman, Shan, Kachin, and Chin leaders participated in the conference, and Karen leaders attended as observers. However, leaders of the Mon, Arakanese, Karenni, and other minorities were not invited. At this conference, Aung San tried to

reassure the leaders that joining the union would be good for their people. He made two statements that became famous: “If Burma receives one kyat, you will also get one kyat,” and that Burma without the Frontier Areas was “like curry without salt.” Some ethnic leaders, such as the Shan *sawbwa* Sao Shwe Thaik, trusted Aung San



Delegates to the Panglong Conference

and worked hard to create unity. On February 12, which is now celebrated as Union Day, the leaders signed the Panglong Agreement. The agreement made several important promises to the people of the Frontier Areas. It stated that “Full *autonomy* in internal administration for the Frontier Areas is accepted in *principle*,” and that “citizens of the Frontier Areas shall enjoy the rights and privileges which are practiced as *fundamental* in democratic countries.”

KEY WORDS

self-determination: when a community makes its own decisions about what to do without outsiders

safeguard: to protect

hereditary: passed down from ancestors

genuinely: really and truly

intermediary: someone who goes back and forth between two groups that have disagreements in order to improve communication

reassure: to make someone feel comfortable and promise that nothing bad will happen

autonomy: independence

principle: idea

fundamental: basic

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Some ethnic minority groups wanted _____ and _____ from Burma Proper so that they could make decisions about their own areas.
2. _____ helped negotiations by talking to several groups at the Panglong Conference.
3. In the Panglong Agreement, autonomy was accepted for the Frontier Areas in _____, but it was not clear what the reality would be.
4. The Panglong Agreement promised all people _____ rights.
5. The Kachins wanted to _____ their culture so that their _____ religion and beliefs would not be lost.
6. The leaders from the Frontier Areas were not sure if the AFPFL _____ viewed them as equals.
7. If someone is upset, you can _____ him or her that everything will be OK.

B. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. Kachin, Karen, Chin and Shan leaders met in Panglong before the Panglong Conference.
2. Kachin leaders wanted Burmans to treat them equally.
3. Aung San wanted all ethnic groups to be part of an independent Burma.
4. U Vanthu Maung didn't trust Aung San.
5. Karen leaders attended the Panglong Conference but did not participate.
6. Mon, Arakanese and Karenni people didn't want to attend the Panglong Conference.
7. The Panglong Agreement was signed on the first Union Day.
8. The Panglong Agreement promised autonomy to Frontier Area people.

group work

The Panglong Agreement made important promises to the people of the Frontier Areas, but these promises were not very clear. In your groups, define "full autonomy in internal administration" and "the rights and privileges which are practiced as fundamental in democratic countries." What do you think the leaders meant when they used these words? List specific rights and privileges. Share your answers with the class.

homework

- A. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.
- B. Write a paragraph on the subject, "Is the Panglong Agreement still important today? Why or why not?"

The British role in negotiating Burmese independence with ethnic minority people

The British played an important role in negotiating with ethnic minority people at the time Burma was getting independence. By the late 1940s, many British politicians and officials knew they could not keep control of Burma. The forces of nationalism were too strong. As a result, the British changed their *approach* to the question of the ethnic nationality people. The British had had close relationships with many of the ethnic minority people before and during the war. Many ethnic nationality leaders believed the British would help them become nations independent of Burma, perhaps as dominions of Britain. But most British leaders did not feel this plan was *realistic*. The British were *recovering* from World War II, so they had economic and political problems of their own; they needed to leave Burma altogether. Moreover, the British were trying to leave their other colonies at that time. Also, they were trying to resolve the question of whether India and Pakistan would separate. This issue *overshadowed* Burma's problems.



On January 2, 1947, Governor General Hugo Rance sent a message to another British official, Lord Pethick-Lawrence: “We should start with the *premise* that there is only one Burma and that the part known as Burma Proper and that known as the Frontier Areas are *merely* parts of the whole. They have been one in the past and they must remain one in the future so that our *ultimate* aim is always a united Burma in the shortest possible time.”

Despite this position, the British agreed they would try to find out what the people who lived in the Frontier Areas really wanted. They started the Frontier Areas Commission of Enquiry (FACE). This Commission traveled through the Frontier Areas during March and April of 1947, meeting with leaders from about fifty groups and asking them what they wanted for the future. They got many different answers. Some leaders were not prepared to answer questions about their political future. Moreover, people within ethnic minority communities had different opinions on these topics; sometimes leaders who did not represent the majority opinion in their communities got to *testify*. For these reasons, the British had a difficult time using the FACE *testimonies* to form a policy. In the end, the British decided not to take action on behalf of the minority people, but instead to let the AFPFL negotiate with them. As a result, some ethnic minority groups felt *abandoned* by the British.

KEY WORDS

approach: way of dealing with an issue

realistic: possible and practical

recover: to fix the things that went wrong during a bad time

overshadow: to seem more important than

premise: idea

merely: only

ultimate: final, in the end

testify: to make a statement

testimony: statement

abandoned: left behind

principle: idea

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Britain's _____ goal in the late 1940s was to have Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas become one country.
2. The British did not think it was _____ for ethnic minority groups to get their own states.
3. The British changed their _____ about Burma's unity in the late 1940s.
4. Ethnic leaders _____ in front of the FACE. Their _____ were about their plans for the future.
5. After World War II, the British were _____ from the problems they had during the war.
6. For the British, problems in India _____ problems in Burma.
7. The British decided to say that the Frontier Areas were not independent, but were _____ a part of Burma.
8. What is your _____ to the problems in Burma?
9. Most parents would never _____ their children.

B. What is the main point of this text?

- A. The British didn't care about ethnic minority people in Burma and didn't try to help them.
- B. The British wanted to help ethnic minority people, but they had their own problems in Britain.
- C. The British tried to help ethnic minority people get what they wanted, but ethnic minority people were not united.
- D. The British tried to help ethnic minority people get what they wanted, but it was quite difficult for many reasons.

C. Answer these questions in your own words:

1. When did the British decide to leave Burma?
2. What was happening in Britain after World War II?
3. What was Hugo Rance's opinion on independence for ethnic minority groups?
4. What did the British do to find out what Frontier Area people wanted?
5. What problems did they face getting this information?

group work

List the good and bad points about the British role in negotiating with ethnic minority people around independence. Share your lists with the class.

discussion

Discuss how you would have acted similarly or differently if you had been in the position of the British in 1947.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

1947 constitution

In September 1947, Burma's *Constituent Assembly* met for a *Constitutional Convention*. *Delegates* from Burman, Shan, Kachin, Arakanese, Mon, and Karen planned and wrote Burma's first constitution. The constitution divided power between Burma Proper and the ethnic states under a system of *federalism*. The Shan states were joined together as one and were given the right to *secede* after ten years. The Karen states got the same right. The constitution was *adopted* on September 24, 1947.

The constitution was written in a hurry, because the Constituent Assembly was worried that the British would change their mind about giving Burma independence and would try to take power again. Many of the ethnic minority leaders were not *satisfied* with it, but they were told they would be able to change it later on.

One main problem with the constitution was that it was *inconsistent*; some ethnic groups, such as the Karen and the Shan, got their own states along with the right of secession, while others, such as the Chin, did not get their own state or political powers. The minorities did not all get equal rights because some

ethnic leaders were more powerful than others, and because the British administration had set a *precedent* for unequal treatment by ruling some areas differently than others. The constitution also did not solve several important issues: the situation of the Karens, Mons, and Arakanese was not *settled*. The Karens were promised an area of their own, but it was not decided where or how large it would be. They wanted a state with a city on the sea, such as Moulmein, so they could trade and have better economic conditions. Because these questions were not resolved, many ethnic leaders began preparing for armed struggle.

The question of religion also caused problems. Some Buddhists, including U Nu, wanted to make Buddhism the state religion, but leaders of different religions, as well as Bogyoke Aung San, did not want to have a state religion. In the end, they compromised and included this clause in the constitution:

1. The State *recognizes* the special position of Buddhism as the faith *professed* by the great majority of the citizens of the Union.
2. The State also recognizes Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and forms of animism as some of the religions existing in the Union...."

KEY WORDS

Constituent Assembly: a group of leaders who are supposed to represent all groups in Burma

Constitutional Convention: a meeting where a constitution is written

delegate: a person who represents and speaks for his or her community

federalism: a political system in which there is a central government coordinating states that rule themselves; the power between the central government and the states is supposed to be balanced

secede: to leave the union and become an independent state

adopt: to accept and approve

satisfied: happy, content

inconsistent: not following one principle but using many different standards

precedent: an example of how something was done before that will be repeated in the future

settle: to make a decision about

recognize: to say something exists

profess: to say you believe in something

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. _____ from various groups participated in writing the Constitution.
2. Not all of the delegates were _____ with the 1947 Constitution, because they felt it did not _____ important issues.
3. The State _____ that people in Burma _____ belief in all different religions.
4. The British administration set a _____ for treating different groups in the Frontier Areas under different rules.
5. The Constitution promised the Shan and Karenni states the right to _____ after ten years.
6. The Constitution was _____ because it did not treat all groups equally.
7. Leaders from many communities made up the _____.
8. At the _____, leaders wrote the 1947 Constitution.
9. The main idea of the Constitution was _____.

B. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. Chin people did not want to participate in the Constitutional convention.
2. Karenni and Shan states were allowed to stop being part of Burma after 10 years.
3. The constitution gave equal rights to all states.
4. Karen people got a state that included Moulmein.
5. U Nu did not want a civil war in Burma.
6. Bogyoke Aung San did not want Buddhism as the state religion.

C. Are these statements *facts* or *opinions*?

1. Kachin people participated in the Constitution Convention.
2. The ethnic minority leaders were told they would be able to change the Constitution later.
3. If Karen people had a city on the sea, they would get better economic conditions.
4. The ethnic leaders had to prepare for armed struggle, because many questions were not resolved.
5. The Constitutional Convention compromised on the idea of a state religion.
6. This compromise was unfair to Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and animists.

group work

In small groups, list the strengths and weaknesses of the 1947 Constitution. Next to each weakness, write a possible solution. Share your ideas with the class.

discussion

Discuss the quotation about religion from the Constitution. Was including those statements a good solution to the problem? Why or why not?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The assassination of Aung San and his cabinet

On July 17, 1947, several men with guns entered a meeting of the Executive Council. They shot and killed Bogyoke Aung San and eight other people: Thakin Mya, Deedok Ba Choe, Mahn Ba Khaing, Sao Sam Htun, Abdul Razak, U Ba Win, U Ohn Maung, and Ko Htwe. This event was a disaster for the country, because most of these men were important politicians. In particular, many people felt that it would be difficult for Burma to succeed as an independent country without the leadership of Bogyoke Aung San. He was only 32 years old, but he was trusted by more people than any other leader at that time. Many international leaders sent messages of *condolence* to Burma for the loss of their leaders. July 17 is celebrated as Martyr's Day to *commemorate* the lives of the people who died on that day.

U Saw, a rival politician, was charged with organizing the *assassination*. Apparently, U Saw had thought that the British would choose him to replace Bogyoke Aung San. He was wrong. U Saw was *executed* later that year. Some people think that other people or organizations were involved with the assassination as well.

After the assassination, U Nu replaced Aung San as head of Executive Council. He had not really wanted to have that position, but he agreed to do it. In October 1947, he traveled to Britain to negotiate the final details of independence with British PM Clement Attlee. The Nu-Attlee Agreement stated that Burma should become an independent republic in January 1948.

KEY WORDS

condolence: a message of sorrow for something bad that happened

assassinate: to kill an important leader

commemorate: to remember an important event on a certain day of the year

execute: to kill a person for a crime

martyr: a person who dies for an important cause

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. People think of Bogyoke Aung San as a _____ because he died struggling for Burma's independence.
2. U Saw was _____ for _____ Bogyoke Aung San.
3. International leaders sent their _____ because they were sorry for the people of Burma.
4. July 19th _____ the people who died on that day.

group work

Many people say that the future of Burma would have been different if Bogyoke Aung San had lived. What do you think? In groups, give a brief description of how Burma's situation would be today if he had lived. Or, you can decide that the situation would not have been any different. Share your thoughts with the class and discuss your ideas.

homework

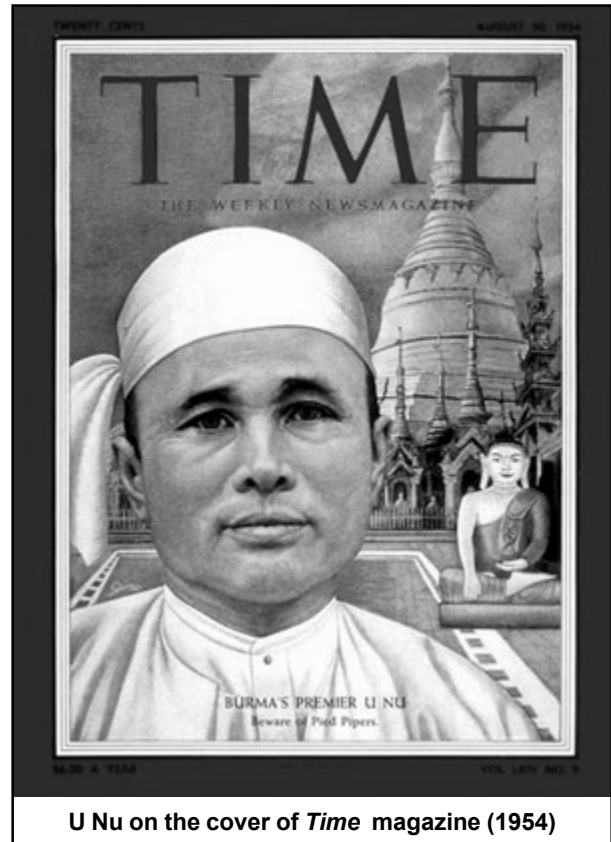
Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Section V: The Parliamentary System (1948—1962)

Independence for Burma: U Nu's vision

Burma became independent at the *auspicious* time of 4:20 am on January 4, 1948. U Nu became the first prime minister and the Shan *sawbwa* Sao Shwe Thaik the first president. On Independence Day, U Nu made a speech. In one part of it, he said:

“Protected by the sea and by mighty mountain ranges, we in Burma had pursued our own way of life till the all-pervading West intruded on our history, but on this auspicious day, on which we regain our independence, we need harbor no resentment...we have gained in knowledge of the world and have had time and opportunity to align our civilization and our way of life to what the world demands though we have been careful not to lose in that process our national individuality and the principle we hold dear. Perhaps the main disadvantage of our loss of independence was that the natural process by which the several races of Burma were integrating into a nation was retarded and, until recently, we were divided administratively from our brethren of the Frontier Areas...There is no room for disunity or discord—racial, communal, political, or personal—and I now call upon the citizens of the Union of Burma to unite and to labor without regard to self and in the interest of the country to which we all belong.”



U Nu on the cover of *Time* magazine (1954)

KEY WORDS

auspicious: special; bringing good luck in the future

pursue: to follow

all-pervading: everywhere

intrude: come in uninvited; interrupt

align: to line up with

integrate: to join together and mix

retard: to slow down

brethren: brothers

discord: fighting

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. U Nu thought the influence of the West was _____ because it had effects on every part of Burmese society.
2. U Nu said that if there was _____ among different groups in Burma, the Union might not succeed.
3. U Nu said the different ethnic groups of Burma had been _____ into a union until the British had _____ and changed things.
4. U Nu called people in the Frontier Areas _____ because he wanted to show he cared about them.
5. U Nu wanted Burmese culture to _____ with its government.
6. He thought the British “divide and rule” policy had _____ the integration of the races of Burma.
7. January 4 was chosen as Burma’s independence day because it was an _____ date.
8. U Nu thought Burmese people should _____ their own way of life again instead of following the British.

B. What is the most accurate summary of U Nu's speech?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>A. The West is responsible for creating all the problems in Burma. Now that the British are gone, there is no discord in Burma.</p> <p>B. Burma was previously more united, but the British created divisions between ethnic groups. All people in Burma should unite.</p> | <p>C. On independence day, all people from different ethnic groups should unite and help build a strong country.</p> <p>D. Burma has many different ethnic groups. All of these groups are part of Burma, including the Frontier Areas.</p> |
|---|---|

group work

A. In small groups, rewrite U Nu's speech in your own words so that you can understand it better. Read your version to the class.

B. Answer the following questions:

- What is the Burmese “way of life” that U Nu is describing? Is it the way of life of all the people in Burma?
- Do you think the races of Burma were integrating before the British came? Do you agree that the British administrative policies prevented different ethnic groups from mixing together?
- What does U Nu mean when he says that there is “no room for discord”? Does that mean no room for disagreement and discussion, or only no room for violence?
- What is the political message U Nu is trying to give to his listeners? Is he talking to certain people in particular?

discussion

Discuss your responses to the questions above and state whether or not you agree with U Nu's description of Burma's history and with his vision for the independent country.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The parliamentary system

Burma's new, independent government was based on the British parliamentary system. The voters elected members of parliament. The parliament was a *bicameral legislature* divided into two houses: The Chamber of Deputies (250 members) and the Chamber of Nationalities (125 members). The Chamber of Nationalities had representatives from ethnic minority and class groups, but there were more Burmans than ethnic minorities in both houses. The Chamber of Deputies was more powerful because it *nominated* the Prime Minister. The two houses met together to elect the president, who was the leader of the country for a five-year term. They also *appointed* judges to the courts, approved *amendments* to the constitution, passed laws, and made decisions about war, peace, and foreign relations. An Economic and Social board advised the president on economic and social issues.

The country was divided into Burma Proper and five states: Karen, Kachin, Kayah (Karenni), Shan, and the Chin Special Division. Burma Proper was ruled directly by the Parliament, but the other states had their own *head of state* and state councils to make laws for their own areas. But the President could agree or not agree to the laws that the states made, and the Prime Minister appointed the heads of state for each state or division. The Cabinet members ruled over Ministries for issues such as Health, Education, and Foreign Relations. The Cabinet also included Ministries for each state, which were led by the head of state for every state. So the people who had the most power in this system were the Prime Minister and his *Cabinet*. The government was based on the idea of federalism, but the states did not have a lot of power or autonomy.

KEY WORDS

bicameral: divided into two houses

legislature: part of the government that makes laws

amendment: an additional statement that is added to a constitution or other law

nominate: to suggest someone to take a position

appoint: to give someone a position

Cabinet: the leaders of government departments or ministries

head of state: the person who is in charge of the state or country

exercises

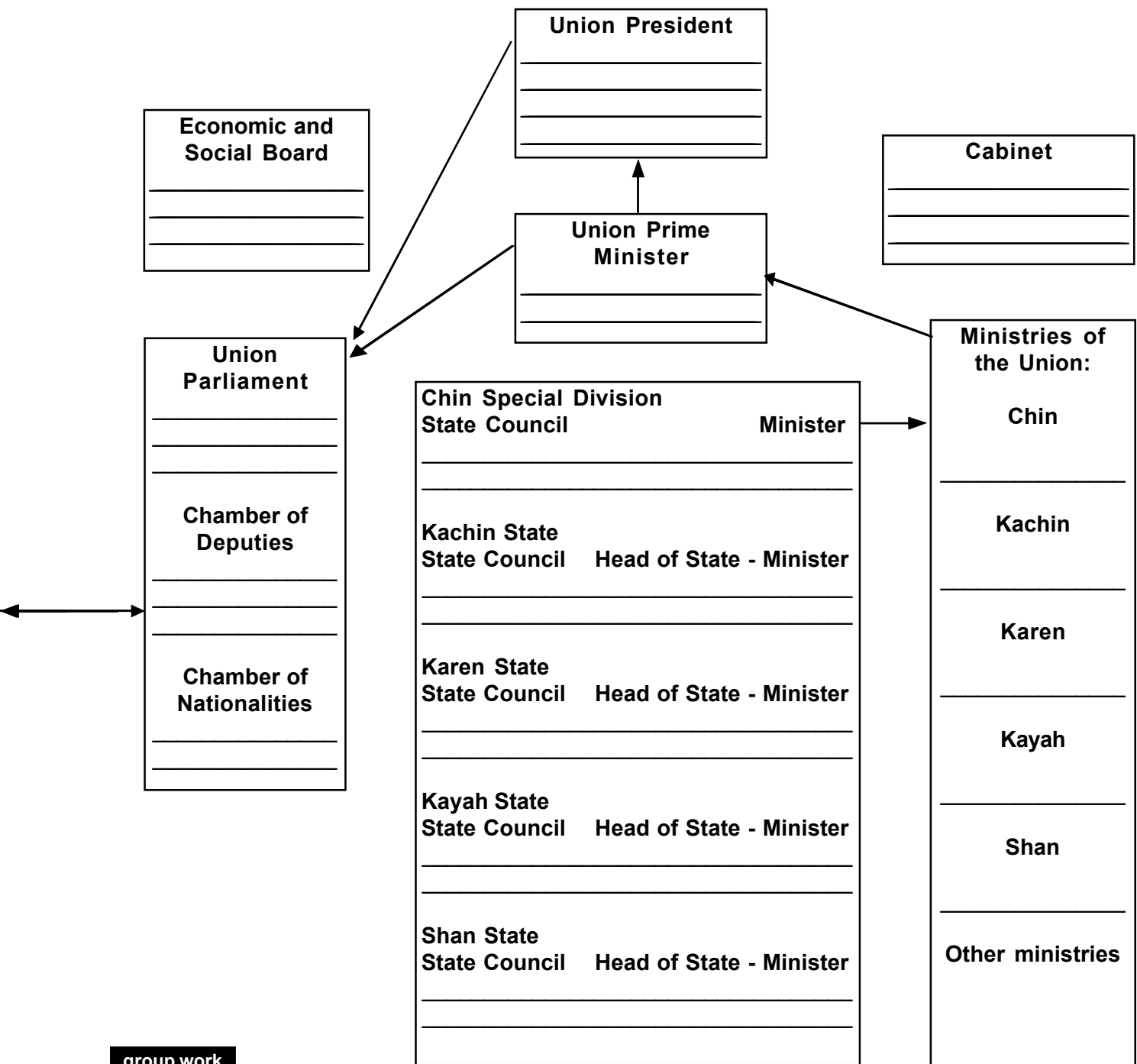
A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The Prime Minister was _____ and not elected.
2. Thailand's _____ is the King.
3. _____ to the constitution must be approved by both the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Nationalities.
4. The school Committee's duty is to _____ new teachers.
5. _____ members are in charge of ministries.

B. Answer these questions in your own words.

1. Was this system fair to ethnic minority groups?
2. What were the duties of the Chamber of Deputies?
3. Who chose the heads of state?

- C. List some powers, jobs, or characteristics for each person or part of the government in the parliamentary system.



group work

In small groups, quiz each other on the charts you filled in above. For instance, ask each other, "What does the Chamber of Nationalities do?" Refer to your chart to see if their answer is right or wrong. Help each other to make sure everyone has the correct answers.

discussion

Discuss whether the Parliamentary system fits the definition of "federalism."

Communist rebellion

Many of the leaders of the Burmese independence movement were influenced by *leftist* ideas of *communism* and *socialism*. They studied the ideas of Karl Marx, a German philosopher who wrote about communism, of the Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung, and of the Russian leader Vladimir Lenin, who practiced these ideas. Leftist ideas became important to Burmese leaders in 1937, when Thakin Nu started the “Naga Ni” or “Red Dragon” book club. At that time, the leaders were trying out many different political ideas. Burmese nationalists liked communism, because they thought the British system of *capitalism* caused *exploitation*. In August 1939, six leaders (Thakins Aung San, Ba Hein, Hla Pe (Bo Let Ya), Ba Tin, and Dr. Nath) gathered for the first meeting of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). Thakins Than Tun and Thein Pe joined later. The CPB was influenced by the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Over time, disagreements developed between the communists, who wanted a *revolution*, and the socialists, such as U Nu and Aung San, who wanted a stable, peaceful government. The CPB split with the AFPFL in 1947, because they felt that Aung San and the other leaders were *favoring* socialism and compromising with the British too much. The CPB split into two factions, Red Flag and White Flag in 1946. The smaller Red Flag *faction* led by Thakin Soe started an armed struggle at that time. U Nu tried to promote unity between all leftists, but failed. In March 1948, just after Burma became independent, the White Flag faction started their armed struggle. At that time, the White Flag CPB was led by Thakins Than Tun, Ba Tin, and Thein Pe. They decided to work toward a communist revolution by armed struggle and *guerilla warfare*. By August 1948, the PVOs as well as some sections of the army and military police had joined with the CPB. The CPB also made alliances with ethnic armed struggle groups, such as the National Democratic United Front (NDUF), and with students who opposed the government. The CPB was strongest in Northeastern Burma and in Arakan State.

By the mid-1950s, U Nu’s government had made military and political successes that had weakened the CPB. So in 1955, the CPB agreed to participate in peace talks organized by the political leader Thakin Kodaw Hmaing. Some CPB commanders and units started surrendering to the government and giving up armed struggle. In 1964, the CPB changed its *strategy*

again and aligned itself with Mao Tse-Tung’s Communist Party in China. They tried to work with *rural* people to bring about the revolution. Then, in the late 1960s, China had a “Cultural Revolution,” in which leaders who had different ideas about communism were killed. The CPB had its own Cultural Revolution as well and important leaders were *purged* from the party. The CPB supported itself by taxing trade, especially in opium, that went on in the territory it controlled. In the 1980s, the Chinese government stopped aiding the CPB, and it got weaker. The CPB’s rebellion went on until 1989, when it split into several different factions led by ethnic groups. These groups, including the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Kokang Chinese armies, became involved in the drug trade with the military regime.

Although the CPB’s long rebellion against the government hurt and killed many people, many of the people who joined were trying to help the country. As one former communist leader, U Aung Zeya, said, “There was only one way to sacrifice for the people, and the way was to become a communist.” Many *idealistic* young people joined the communists, especially after the military regime took power, because they wanted to do something good for the country.



Thakin Ba Thein Tin with Chairman Mao of China

KEY WORDS

leftist: describing political and economic systems in which working people, rather than government officials or rich people, have power

socialism: a political and economic system in which the government is responsible for making sure that no one is too rich or too poor

communism: a political and economic system in which everyone has the same amount of resources and workers own what they make

capitalism: a “free market” economic system in which businesses and business people have a lot of freedom; the government does not have a strong role in controlling the economy, so some

people can be very rich, while others are very poor

rural: in the country and not in the city

revolution: a violent event in which the poor people in society take over from the rich people

exploitation: unfair treatment of poor people by rich people

favor: prefer or like better

faction: a group that splits away from a larger group

strategy: way of doing something

purge: to get rid of unwanted leaders who have outdated ideas, usually by killing them

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. People who believe in _____ want to cause a _____ that will let poor people rule society.
2. Socialists and communists are both _____ even though they have different ideas.
3. Some people think that _____ leads to _____ or the bad treatment of poor people by rich people.
4. The CPB split into two _____, the Red Flag and the White Flag.
5. During the Cultural Revolution, some CPB leaders were _____.
6. _____ people are usually farmers.
7. Young people are often _____ because they are full of energy and believe they can do good things in the world.
8. What kind of fruit do you _____? I like papayas.
9. The CPB used several different _____ for fighting against the government.

group work

In small groups, discuss U Aung Zeya's statement. If you were an idealistic young person in the 1960s or 1970s, would you have joined the CPB? Why or why not? Share your thoughts with the class.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Ethnic revolutions and insurgency in the parliamentary era

Not only the communists were unhappy with the AFPFL government. As Burma prepared for independence, many ethnic leaders were not satisfied with the Constitution or the political system. Between 1947 and 1949, groups of Karens, Mons, and Arakanese all started armed struggles; they said they had no choice except to begin insurgencies. Some units of the Burmese army containing ethnic minority groups joined with these groups. As a result, during Burma's first few years of independence, the central government in Rangoon did not control all of the territory in the country. Different armed struggle groups established areas from which they attacked the Burmese army. They supported their struggle by taxing trade that went through their areas. The situation was *chaotic*, and it was often hard to know who was in what group or what their reasons for fighting were, but it was clear there was *hostility* between different ethnic, political, and religious groups. By 1952, the Burmese army, the Union Military Police loyal to the government, and local army units called Sitwudans controlled most of the country, but the *insurgents* continued to be active throughout the Parliamentary era.

Mon

Mon leaders became upset in 1947 that Mons had not secured more seats in the Constituent Assembly. They thought the elections were flawed. In August 1947, they organized the Mon Freedom League (MFL—later Mon United Front and then the Mon People's Front, MPF) with Nai Shwe Kyin as the first chairman. The MFL allied with the KNU and with Mon Po Cho's United Mon Association. They formed Mon National Defence Organizations (MNDOs), local military units that worked against the Burmese government troops. Later, in 1958, after the MPF surrendered, Nai Shwe Kyin formed the New Mon State Party (NMSP).



NMSP flag

Arakanese

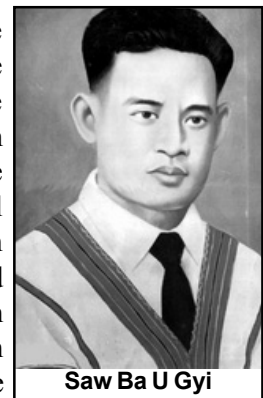
Before Burma got independence, some Arakanese nationalists, such as Sir Paw Tun, supported the British; others, such as U Aung Zan Wai and the Arakanese National Congress (ANC), supported the AFPFL.

Muslim Arakanese had also joined this organization. In 1945, U Seinda broke away from the ANC to form the Arakan People's Liberation Party (APLP), which started armed struggle; he was later put in prison. When the CPB was expelled from the AFPFL in 1946, some Arakanese joined the communists. These groups attempted to join together as the Arakan Leftist Unity Front and organized campaigns against the British, who were in power at that time. Meanwhile, some Muslims wanted to organize a Muslim state in Northern Arakan where they had a majority. This issue caused tension between Arakanese Buddhists and Muslims and split the nationalist movement.

Karen

The Karens were mainly concerned about the boundaries of Karen State. In February 1947, the Karen National Union (KNU) had formed. Later that year, the KNU organized local military branches called the Karen National Defence Organizations (KNDOs). In February 1948, the KNU's chairman, Saw Ba U Gyi, contacted U Nu to ask that Karen state include territory in the Irrawaddy delta where many Karens lived. KNU supporters demonstrated for this cause, carrying signs with the KNU *slogans*: "Give the Karen State at once—Independence; For the Burmese one kyat and the Karen one kyat—equality; We do not want communal strife—National Unity; We do not want civil war—Peace." But the AFPFL and KNU could not agree on the boundaries of Karen State.

On September 1, 1948, KNDOs led by Saw Sankey took control of Thaton and Moulemein for a few days. The Mon National Defence Organization (MNDO) and the Mon United Front helped out. They also received support from British colonial ex-officials. Sitwudans began attacking the KNU headquarters as well as Karen areas throughout the country. The Chief of the Army, the Karen General Smith Dun, tried to arrange negotiations between U Nu and Saw Ba U Gyi, but the violence made it too difficult. The KNU officially declared the beginning of its revolution on January 31, 1949, at Insein. The Karen insurgency is still continuing. In 1995, some Karen Buddhists broke away and formed the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), which allied with the Burmese government.



Saw Ba U Gyi

KEY WORDS

chaotic: not orderly or organized; confusing

hostility: anger and violence

insurgent: describing a person or a group of people who are trying to overthrow a central government by armed struggle

slogan: a small group of words that give a message

insurgency: a movement that is trying to overthrow a central government by armed struggle

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The situation in Burma in the early 1950s was very _____.
2. There was _____ between different ethnic groups.
3. The Arakanese _____ was led by U Seinda.
4. _____ groups made money by taxing trade.
5. Many people shout _____ when they are at demonstrations.

B. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. The communists were unhappy with the AFPFL government.
2. Some people felt that they had no choice but armed struggle.
3. After independence, the government controlled all of Burma.
4. The Mon Freedom League surrendered in 1947.
5. The Arakanese People's Liberation Party wanted an independent Arakan State.
6. Some former British colonial officials supported the KNDO.

group work

In small groups, make a list of the similarities and differences between the different ethnic groups' nationalist movements. What demands, perspectives, and strategies did they have in common? Share your lists with the class.

discussion

Many ethnic insurgent groups said they had no choice except to start armed struggle. Discuss this statement. Do you think it is true? Did they have other choices? What else could they have done?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Development during the parliamentary era

By 1952, the government had gained control over the armed struggle groups to start working to develop the country. However, there were many challenges. Battles between armed struggle groups and government forces had left the country in bad condition. People had been *displaced* from their homes and there was a lot of crime because people were poor and it was easy to get guns. It was difficult to fix these problems because the British and Indian civil servants who had run the government during the colonial era were mostly gone. Few Burmese people had the training to fill their places.

Despite these problems, the parliamentary government started many economic and social development projects in the 1950s. International trade was increased. Burma began *exporting* rice and *importing* other things the country needed, so the overall economic situation improved. Burma became one of the richest countries in Southeast Asia. The government also organized education, infrastructure, and transportation projects, mostly in central Burma. Free public schools and reading rooms were opened in rural areas. *Land reform* programs *redistributed* land to peasants. The government gave villages money to



Paddy farmers

build roads. These projects helped people, but they were not always totally successful. The government did not always *adapt* the projects to fit local needs.

Better economic and social conditions led to stronger *civil society*. People discussed politics freely, and there were independent newspapers. Unions of peasants, workers, women, and youth formed or became stronger. These groups began participating in the political process and sharing their opinions. Sometimes they made alliances with other groups or formed united fronts. Literature and art also *flourished*. Cities became centers of *intellectual* life.

However, there were social tensions. Development was greater in central Burma than in the ethnic states, and this inequality upset ethnic minorities. They felt they needed greater control over their areas to promote development. There were also religious conflicts. Bogyoke Aung San had promised that the nation would be secular, but U Nu wanted to promote Buddhism. He sponsored meditation programs, organized activities for monks, and even a rest for a month to meditate. Eventually, he had Parliament pass a law making



Downtown Rangoon

Buddhism the state religion. His action angered many non-Buddhist minority groups. Burma might have seemed stable and rich to outsiders, but there were many tensions.

KEY WORDS

displace: to cause people to leave the place where they live

export: to send products out of the country to sell them

import: to bring in products from other countries to buy them

land reform: when the government takes land from rich landlords and gives it to poor farmers

redistribute: to take things away from richer people and give them to poorer people

adapt: to change something so that it fits the situation

civil society: social connections people have to each other because they want to, not because the government is making them do something

flourish: to grow in a healthy way

intellectual: related to people who study and think about society and other important issues

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The parliamentary government _____ land so poor farmers could own their fields.
2. Burma _____ rice and _____ things from other countries.
3. War _____ many people, who had to leave their homes because of fighting.
4. _____, including associations of women, peasants, and workers, _____ during the Parliamentary era.
5. Government programs tried to help people, but they did not always _____ their programs to the people's situations.
6. _____ people like to read books and talk about them with other people.
7. _____ can help poor farmers get control of the land they farm.

B. Complete the cause and effect chart.

cause	effect
	There was a lot of crime.
	Many problems were difficult to fix.
Burma exported rice, and imported other goods.	
Economic and social conditions improved.	
	Ethnic minority groups were unhappy.
Buddhism became the state religion.	

group work

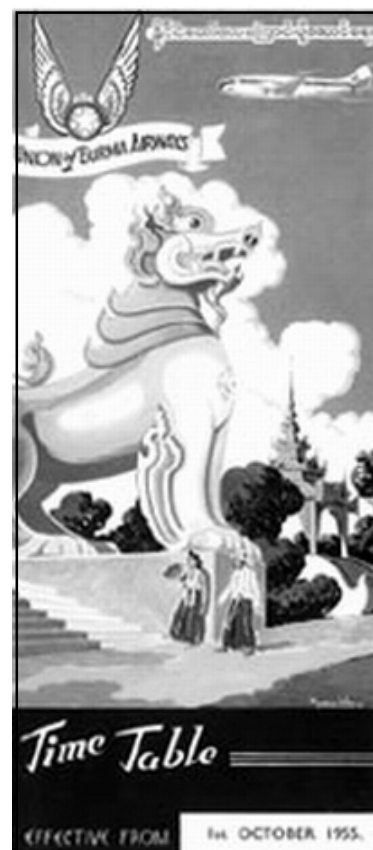
- A. Divide into three groups. Imagine you are foreign visitors to Burma in the 1950s. Each group should "visit" a different area—one group should visit cities, another rural areas, the other areas where insurgents were fighting. Discuss with your group what you would probably see in the area you visited. Brainstorm a list.
- B. On your own, write a short letter home describing what you see. Share your letters with the class. Then discuss the differences between the letters from different areas. How was life different in different parts of Burma in the Parliamentary Era? Was development the same in every place?

discussion

On the left is a timetable cover for Burma Airways from 1955. What sort of image do Burma Airways want? What do they want people to think about Burma?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.



Burma's foreign relations during the parliamentary era

Burma's location in Southeast Asia between China and India and its relationships with countries all around the world shaped its *foreign relations*. After World War II, *ideological* and military conflicts arose between capitalist and communist countries. These conflicts are called the Cold War. Most communist countries were allied with the Soviet Union or China, and most capitalist countries were allied with the USA. However, some countries, like Burma, chose to be *non-aligned*. Throughout the 1950s, Burma tried to build good political and economic relationships with many other countries, including Israel and Japan.

China is one of Burma's largest and most *influential* neighbors. China became communist after World War II, but soldiers left over from the nationalist Kuomintang Army (KMT) fled into Northern Burma. These KMT troops carried out military actions across the border. Sometimes they allied with Burmese insurgent groups and sometimes they fought against them. The KMT troops did not treat local people well. The KMT fought with the CPB, which was being supported by the Chinese Communist Party. In the



KMT base in Burma (1950s)

1950s, the Burmese government sent troops into Shan State to fight the KMT. They succeeded in pushing most of them back over the border, but they *alienated* local people in the process. Because the Burma Army did not leave after the defeat of the KMT, many Shan felt they were an army of occupation. Also in the

1950s, China began producing maps that showed large sections of Northern Burma as part of Chinese territory. The border dispute was not resolved until 1960. Today, China maintains a good business relationship with Burma. People move back and forth over the border often.

Burma's relationship with India also changed over time. Because Britain once ruled Burma and India together, the countries have something in common. The two countries had good relations in the 1950s. However, there have been conflicts over refugees and borders. Although there have been Muslims in Arakan State for hundreds of years, Arakanese and Burmese have not always welcomed them. A group of Muslims called the Rohingyas have been the targets of angry mobs at several different points in history, and they have fled into India and later into Bangladesh. In 1978, about 200,000 Muslims fled into Bangladesh, *fleeing* the abuse of the Burmese army. There are still Burmese refugees in India now.

Today, Burma has strong relationships with China, Japan, Thailand, and other countries in Southeast Asia. Burma's relationships with the USA or European countries have also improved in recent years.



The King of Thailand with U Nu

KEY WORDS

foreign relations: a country's relationships with other countries

ideological: based on ideas

non-aligned: not allied with capitalist or communist countries during the Cold War; neutral

influential: powerful; having an important influence on something or someone

alienate: to make people dislike you

flee: to run away from something bad

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Burma chose to be _____ during the Cold War.
2. When soldiers use violence, they often _____ civilians.
3. The Cold War was an _____ disagreement that caused military conflicts.
4. Large countries that surround Burma have been _____ in Burma's history because they have more power than Burma does.
5. Burma's _____ with China were not always good, because there was fighting between communists, the Burmese army, and the KMT.
6. If someone is running after you with a gun, you should _____.

group work

The lead countries for the non-aligned movement (NAM) in the 1950s and 1960s were India, Yugoslavia, Indonesia, Egypt, Ghana, Pakistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka. Other countries involved with NAM during this time were: China, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Nepal, Thailand, Japan, Philippines, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen, Libya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Algeria, Tunis, Morocco, and Cuba.

- A. On the world map, draw a star where the lead NAM countries are located. Draw a plus to show the other NAM countries on the map. Use an atlas to help you find these countries.



- B. What are some characteristics of Non-aligned Movement members? What do they have in common? Make a list of points.
- C. Your group represents Burma, China, India, the Soviet Union, or the USA. Pretend that you are all leaders at a meeting in the 1950s. What would the leaders say to each other? Write a short statement and read it to the class.

discussion

Discuss how Burma's relations with China and India are the same or different now than they were in the Parliamentary Era.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The caretaker government

In 1957, the situation of the country was becoming unstable again. The insurgencies were strong, and people fleeing from the areas of fighting had become *squatters* outside Rangoon. Public services were not working well. The Army was having changes in leadership, because several important commanders and former 30 Comrades (Bo Yan Aung, Bo Ye Htut, and Bo Zeya) joined the CPB. Bo Ne Win took control of the army. Meanwhile, the AFPFL was having problems. In May 1958, it split into two factions, the Clean and the Stable. U Nu led the Clean faction, but the Stable faction had the support of the army. On September 26, U Nu announced he had invited Bo Ne Win to take over the government to *restore* law and order to the country. He promised there would be an election within six months. Bo Ne Win formed the military-dominated “Caretaker Government” the following month. Later, U Nu *admitted* he had found out that a *military coup* was about to happen, so he turned over power to the army to avoid conflict.

The Caretaker Government, led by Bo Ne Win and Bo Aung Gyi, stayed in power until 1960. At first, many people were pleased; they thought the new government might help solve the country’s problems. Bo Ne Win did settle the border *dispute* with China. During this time, the Shan and Karenni *sawbwas* gave up power and let people elect their own representatives. He also resettled the squatters in *satellite towns*. But the way he accomplished these things worried some people. He was not sensitive to the squatters’ needs when he moved them. When journalists criticized him, he *censored* them. *Martial law* allowed the army to take over civilian jobs and occupy much more of the country. In 1960, elections were held and U Nu’s Clean faction won, so he took power again.



General Ne Win

KEY WORDS

squatter: a person who lives in a place illegally because they have lost their own place to stay

admit: to say something that you had said before was not true

restore: to bring back

military coup: when the army takes over a country without people asking them to

dispute: disagreement or conflict

satellite town: a small town set up outside of a larger city

censor: to say a person can’t write or talk about something

martial law: laws used in emergency situations, when the army makes decisions about everything

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Bo Ne Win made the _____ settle in _____ outside Rangoon because they did not have any other place to live.
2. During the Caretaker Government, you would be _____ if you wrote anything bad about the army.
3. _____ is supposed to _____ law and order, but it can take away people’s freedoms.
4. U Nu said that he gave up control of the government because he was afraid that there was going to be a _____.
5. There were _____ between the Clean and Stable factions of the AFPFL.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. U Nu let Bo Ne Win take power because
 - A. he thought Ne Win would do a good job of leading the country.
 - B. he was tired of being Prime Minister.
 - C. he wanted to avoid violence.
 - D. he wanted to make the Clean faction stronger.
2. The Caretaker Government
 - A. relocated the squatters.
 - B. solved the border problem with China.
 - C. censored newspapers.
 - D. All of the above.
3. People liked the Caretaker government at first because
 - A. they were tired of chaos.
 - B. they thought U Nu was the best leader.
 - C. they did not want to be censored.
 - D. they wanted the military to run society forever.

C. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. Squatters were living in the areas of fighting.
2. The AFPFL split into two factions.
3. The Stable and Clean factions disagreed about communism.
4. The Mon Freedom League surrendered in 1947.
5. U Nu knew a military coup was planned.
6. The Caretaker government was in power for five years.
7. The Shan and Karenni Sawbwas were happy to give up power.
8. Ne Win censored journalists who said bad things about him.

discussion

Discuss "martial law." In what circumstances do you think martial law is necessary? Was it necessary in 1958? Why or why not?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Ethnic revolutions and insurgency from the late 1950s onward

About ten years after independence, several ethnic nationality groups felt that the government of Burma had not fulfilled the promises in the Panglong Agreement or the Constitution. The actions of the Caretaker Government increased tensions. Several groups started armed struggles in the late 1950s and early 1960s, while other groups worked peacefully for political change. Many of the insurgent movements supported themselves by taxing cross-border and trade in their areas, especially in valuable or illegal things such as gems or opium. The largest groups were the Karen National Union (KNU), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Shan State Army (SSA), and Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).

From the early 1960s, the army fought the insurgents by using *Ka Kwe Ye* units, local groups led by local leaders. Some of these units, such as the ones led by Lo-Hsing Han and Khun Sa, became powerful on their own, and became involved in the drug trade.



Ka Kwe Ya unit



SSA soldiers

Shan

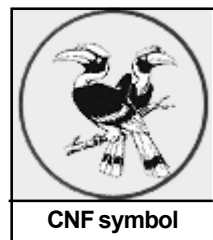
In 1958, Sao Noi set up the Noom Suk Harn (Young Brave Warriors) in order to get autonomy and improve the situation in Shan State. In 1960, Shan students who were part of the NSH broke away to form the Shan State Independence Army (SSIA). The Shan State Army (SSA) was formed in 1964. In the past, the Shan insurgency was led by *sawbwas* and their families but leadership has changed over the years.

Lahu

In 1973, the SSA helped to set up the Lahu National United Party/Lahu State Army (LNUP/LSA), which was led by Payah Pu Kyaung Long and then Payah Char Ui. Payah Char Ui formed a new organization, the Lahu National Organization/Army (LNO/A) in 1985.

Chin

In 1961, the Chin leader Son Ka Pao set up the Chin Independence Army (CIA) in order to fight for Chin independence. When he was arrested in 1963, Lian Mang took over leadership. It later changed its name to the Zomi National Armed Force (ZNAF). The force was not able to control much territory in Chin state. Later on, in the 1980s, Chins took up arms again as part of the Chin National Army (CNA). This army then split into smaller groups.



CNF symbol

Pa'O

In 1948, U Hla Pe set up a Pa'O army for national liberation. Then, in 1958, he set up the United Pa-O National Organization (UPNO), a legal organization that remained above ground until 1972. The Pa'O wanted self-determination within Shan State. Meanwhile, the Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO—later the Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organization, SSNLO). After it accepted the leadership of the CPB in 1973, U Hla Pe joined with Hkun Ye Naung and formed the Pa-O National Organization/Army (PNO/A).

Kachin

In 1949, military leader Naw Seng had set up the Pawngyawng National Defence Force (PNDF) to fight for Kachin independence. He and his fighters operated in Shan State and then went into exile in China. Then, on February 5, 1961, they formed the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). Lahtaw Zau Seng was the first chairman. Their goals were to build national unity, resist aggression, achieve autonomy, promote development, and restore peace. The KIO fought the Burmese army as well as the CPB. Maran Brang Seng became chairman.



KIA Checkpoint (Kachin State)

Palaung

Palaung leader Sao Hso Lane founded the Palaung National Front (PNF) in 1963. It worked with the Shan armies and then Kachin armies, and changed its name several times.

Rohingya

Rohingya leaders first rebelled against the government in the late 1940s. Then, in 1963, the military regime outlawed legal Rohingya parties. The armed struggle group Rohingya Independence Force (RIF), led by Mohammed Jafar Habib, formed in response. Later, leaders including Mohammed Yunus and Nurul Islam broke away and formed other Rohingya organizations.



Young Wa people studying at a CPB school (1970s)

Wa

Wa soldiers resisted the government during the 60s. In 1969, *sawbwa* Mahasang formed the Wa National Organization/Army (WNO/A), which worked with the Shan and the CBP. Later, the United Wa State Party/Army (UWSP/A) was formed.

Kuki

The Kuki national Organization/Army (KNO/A) was set up in 1987 with help from the KIO. It was led by Hanglen and it wanted liberation for the Kuki people, especially within Chin State.

Padaung

In 1964, Bo Pyan set up the Kayan New Land Party (KNLP). Padaung people were suffering at that time because there were difficult economic conditions. The KNLP had support from Karenni rebels, and it later became communist.

Karenni

Violence broke out in Karenni state in August 1948. On August 9, 1948, Karenni leader U Bee Tu Reh was captured by a Union Military Police (UMP) unit and then killed. This event caused fighting between Karennis who supported the AFPFL government and those who did not. The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), which was founded in 1957 by U Taw Plo, remembers this date in 1948 as the beginning of the nationalist movement. The Karenni State Nationalities People's Liberation Force (KNPLF), a communist group, broke away later in 1978.



KNPLF troops on parade

Muslims

Burmese Muslims who are not Rohingyas have set up several groups. Mohammed Ali Tanggon set up the Ommat Liberation Front (OLF) in the mid-1970s. The Muslim Liberation Organization of Burma (MLOB) and All Burma Muslim Union (ABMU) were formed in 1988.

Burman

U Nu founded the Parliamentary Democracy Party (PDP), along with a military wing in 1969 after he got out of prison. Bo Let Ya and other former military and political leaders held leadership positions. The PDP was allied with Karen and Mon groups. It later changed its name to the People's Patriotic Party (PPP), which lasted until Bo Let Ya's death in 1978.

National Democratic Front (NDF)

Many of these groups formed alliances with each other. The alliances formed and disbanded often. One of the largest and longest-lived is the NDF. Arakanese, Karen, Karenni, Lahu, Palaung, Pa-O, Kachin, Mon, Shan, and Wa groups are part of this alliance, which started in 1976.

exercises

Match the leader with the organization he founded.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Lahtaw Zau Seng ____ | A. KNPP |
| 2. Bo Pyan ____ | B. KIO |
| 3. Payah Pu Kyaung Long ____ | C. Noom Suk Harn |
| 4. Mohammed Ali Tanggon ____ | D. WNO/A |
| 5. Mahasang ____ | E. OLF |
| 6. Son Ka Pao ____ | F. PDP |
| 7. U Hla Pe ____ | G. KNO/A |
| 8. Sao Noi ____ | H. RIF |
| 9. U Nu ____ | I. KNLP |
| 10. Mohammed Jafar Habib ____ | J. LNUP/LSA |
| 11. Hanglen ____ | K. CIA |
| 12. U Taw Plo ____ | L. UPNO |
| 13. Sao Hso Lane ____ | M. PNF |

group work

In groups, list some of the good and bad things about armed struggle. Then discuss whether the good or bad things are more important. If you were a leader of an ethnic group in the late 1950s, would you have started an armed struggle? Why or why not?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

review

Work in groups of four or five. Do the texts around the room activity.

Section VI: The Military Dictatorship (1962—2011)

Bo Ne Win's coup, the Revolutionary Council, and the beginning of the military dictatorship

While some groups pursued armed struggle to oppose the government, others tried to get federalism in a legal way. In early 1962, a group of leaders from Burman and non-Burman groups organized a conference with U Nu. These leaders wanted *reforms* that would give more power to the ethnic states. They made a plan to change the constitution and the laws in order to get these rights.

Meanwhile, army officers led by Bo Ne Win and Bo Aung Gyi *plotted* a military coup. Early in the morning on March 2, 1962, the military took over the government and imprisoned U Nu, the Shan leaders, and many other politicians. The coup plotters said the reason they had taken over was they were afraid U Nu was about to give in to the demands for federalism. Bo Ne Win said, "Federalism is impossible; it will destroy the Union." He said the parliamentary system had not worked well and the army would fix the country's problems.

Bo Ne Win set up a seventeen-member Revolutionary Council (RC) that ruled the country and created many changes in Burmese society. The RC also formed a political party called the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), but only people connected to the military could join. The RC was more *authoritarian* than the parliamentary government had been. They made *strict* rules for university students,

and schools came under the control of the RC. They also changed the *curriculum* and taught only Burmese in place of ethnic minority languages. Newspapers and other *publications* came under the control of the military rulers, so it was not easy to voice opposition to the new regime. State-owned newspapers published *propaganda* that tried to convince people the insurgents were very bad and the army was only trying to protect the country from them. Because it was difficult to get any other information, many people in Burma proper believed what the newspapers said. The military regime also made foreigners leave the country, prevented Burmese people from traveling abroad, and in general made Burma an *isolationist* state.

For most of the next thirty years, Bo Ne Win continued to have a strong influence on the country. His personality affected the country a lot. He had started out as a postal clerk, but had joined the 30 Comrades and become a powerful military leader. When he was young, he was known for liking beautiful women and expensive cars. He was very *superstitious*, and he consulted *astrologers* and *fortune-tellers* all the time. They told him what to do and when to do it. For instance, they told him to change the rules so that cars had to be driven on the right side of the road instead of the left. Policies like this caused many people to question his skills as a leader.

KEY WORDS

reform: to change something to make it better

plot: to plan something secretly

authoritarian: describing a kind of government that makes decisions without asking the opinion of ordinary people

strict: not flexible; making people follow rules exactly all the time

isolationist: describing a country that does not want to have any relationship with other countries

curriculum: what people learn in school

publish: to print a book, newspaper, or magazine

publication: a book, newspaper, or magazine; something that is printed

propaganda: information that gives only one side of a situation

superstitious: believing in signs from nature or from supernatural sources and believing you can avoid bad things by doing certain things

astrologer: someone who studies stars and planets to figure out what will happen in the future

fortune-teller: someone who tells you what they think will happen to you in the future

exercises

A. Fill the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The RC would only _____ newspapers and magazines that did not criticize them.
2. Bo Ne Win asked _____ to tell him what would happen in the future.
3. _____ look at the stars when a baby is born and say what kind of life the baby will have.
4. The RC was more _____ than the Parliamentary government; they made _____ rules about everything.
5. Bo Ne Win did not want federalist _____, because he thought federalism was bad for the country.
6. The RC censored all _____ that people read in Burma.
7. _____ people believe they can prevent bad things from happening to them if they do what fortune tellers say.
8. The parliamentary government had made good relationships with many countries, but the RC was _____.
9. The RC wanted the _____ in schools to say good things about the army.
10. Bo Ne Win _____ the coup in secret with other army officers.

B. How did things change for these people after the 1962 coup?

1. ethnic groups?
2. the media in Burma?
3. political activists?
4. students?

C. Look at the last paragraph of this text. What is the main idea of this paragraph?

- A. Although Ne Win started life as a postal clerk, he became very powerful in Burma.
- B. Although Ne Win had a strange personality, he was a strong and powerful leader.
- C. Although many people thought Ne Win was not a good leader, he was influential for a long time.
- D. Although the country suffered a lot, Ne Win continued to be leader of Burma for thirty years.

group work

In early 1962, some leaders from Shan state wanted to discuss federalism with U Nu. They wanted reforms that would give more power to ethnic states. What reforms do you think they wanted? Make a list.

discussion

Discuss Bo Ne Win's statement, "Federalism...will destroy the union." Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The Burmese Way to Socialism

The Revolutionary Council changed the economy *drastically*. They introduced a policy called “The Burmese Way to Socialism,” which was more socialist than the Parliamentary system had been. The Burmese Way to Socialism combined Marxism with Buddhist ideology. On paper, this policy sounded like it would help people. The RC wrote that their economic and social policies would create “a new society for all, economically secure and *morally* better, to live in peace and *prosperity*.”

This policy aimed to develop Burma from within instead of using outside support. The regime did not want to trade with other countries until 1989 when the economy got very bad. Then, the rulers asked for *foreign investment* and introduced *market reforms*, but in the 1960s and 1970s, they did not do business with outsiders.

In the 1960s, the Revolutionary Council *nationalized* banks, industries, and large stores. The people who had previously owned these businesses—mostly Indians and Chinese people—lost their money. Many of these people left the country when they lost even more money in 1964 when some *currency* notes were *demonetized*. The Revolutionary Council said they wanted ethnic Burmese people to have the money and run the businesses instead of “foreigners.” Men from the military were chosen to run the businesses. They did not have much experience in this role, so most of them could not do a very good job. For this reason and many other reasons, the economy was not efficient.

The Revolutionary Council also changed agriculture. They started a land reform program that



The army supervising rice distribution

redistributed land to farmers who had not owned their land before. But they also forced the farmers to sell their crops to the government at low prices. Many farmers lost their *motivation*. Rice production decreased, and rice exports fell. The people inside Burma could not get enough rice or other goods they needed, so they got things on the *black market*. People started trading more opium, gems, teak, and other goods across the borders. Because it was difficult to survive, *corruption* was a problem and many people had to pay *bribes* in order to get the things they needed.

The RC also started Security and Administrative Councils (SACs), local groups of civil servants, army commanders, and police. The SACs allowed the military to have a strong role in local affairs. Ethnic states lost some of the independence they had previously had. The military became more important in planning and carrying out economic and social policies.

KEY WORDS

conference: a meeting

drastically: very much

prosperity: richness

morally: relating to what is right and wrong

nationalize: to take business away from business people and give them to the state

demonetize: when the government says that some money—for instance, 100 kyat notes—is not worth anything any more

currency: money

motivation: reason for doing something

black market: illegal trade in things that are valuable or hard to get

market reforms: changes in economic policy that make a socialist country more capitalist

foreign investment: when one country does business inside another

corruption: when officials do not follow the law, but try to get extra money from people

bribe: money that you give an official illegally so that they will do something for you

exercises

A. Fill the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. During the late 1960s, many people bought rice on the _____ because it was very expensive in stores.
2. _____ became more common in Burma after the military coup; police officers, teachers, and military men all took _____.
3. The RC _____ 100 kyat notes in 1964.
4. The military regime did not want _____ in the 1960s because they wanted Burma to succeed economically on its own.
5. The Burmese Way to Socialism was supposed to increase _____ and improve the country _____.
6. Previously, Chinese and Indian business people owned their businesses, but after the military coup, these businesses were _____ so that Burmese people owned them.
7. The standard of living fell _____ in the late 1960s.
8. People need _____ to work hard; they need a reason for what they are doing.
9. _____ were introduced in the late 1980s to make the economy more capitalist.
10. The kyat is the Burmese _____.

B. Complete the cause and effect chart.

cause	effect
The RC nationalized banks and businesses.	
	Many Indians and Chinese people left Burma.
	They did not run these businesses efficiently.
	Farmers lost their motivation.
People couldn't buy the things they needed.	
It became more difficult to survive.	

group work

The military regime changed the economy in several ways. On your own, reread the passage above and notice the changes they made. List them. Then, in small groups, discuss them. Which changes do you think were a good idea? A bad idea? Why? Share your ideas with the class.

discussion

Discuss the kind of economic system you would choose for Burma. Should it be socialist, capitalist, communist, or a mixture? Why?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

The 1974 constitution and the Burmese Socialist Programme Party era

By 1972, it seemed like there were changes happening within the military regime. Bo Ne Win and others resigned from the military so that the government could be called civilian. He also led the development of a new constitution. A *referendum* was held in 1974, and the results strongly favored adopting the new constitution. But many people suspect that the voting system was not fair.

The new constitution made promoting socialism the goal of the state, and it changed the

structure of the government in Burma. It established two new ethnic states, Arakan State and Mon State, and divided Burma Proper into seven divisions. But it took away the powers that the states had to make their own decisions. Under the 1974 constitution, decisions were made at the national level, then

carried out by state/division, township, and village/ward leaders. There was still a parliamentary system, with a *unicameral* legislature called the People's Assembly under the Prime Minister. The members of the People's Assembly were not elected. They made decisions about important issues such as war and

peace. The Council of State and the Council of Ministers were the *executive* branch of government. The Council of State ruled over councils of judges, attorneys, and "people's *inspectors*"—people who were supposed to make sure what happened was good for the people. The chairman of the Council of State was the President. The Council of State ran the People's Assembly, and it could declare a state of emergency. The Council of Ministers was made up of ministers from different government departments,

boards, and corporations. They ran the government and elected the Prime Minister from among themselves. They also had to maintain the *rule of law*.

None of the rulers were elected by the people. In fact, a small *elite* of military leaders controlled the country. They ran the Burmese Socialist



Tatmadaw (1974)

Programme Party (BSPP), the only legal political party. Starting in 1974, all civil servants had to become members of the BSPP. Party members also had access to more resources than people who did not join the party. Burma officially became a *one-party system* and the 1974 Constitution was cancelled in 1988.

KEY WORDS

referendum: when the government suggests an idea and the people can vote on whether or not they agree

structure: the system or the way something is set up

unicameral: in one group or "house"

executive: the part of government that makes people follow the laws

inspector: a person who finds information

rule of law: the way society is when the government makes sure that people follow laws

one-party system: a political system in which only one political party is legal

elite: a group of people who have power and money

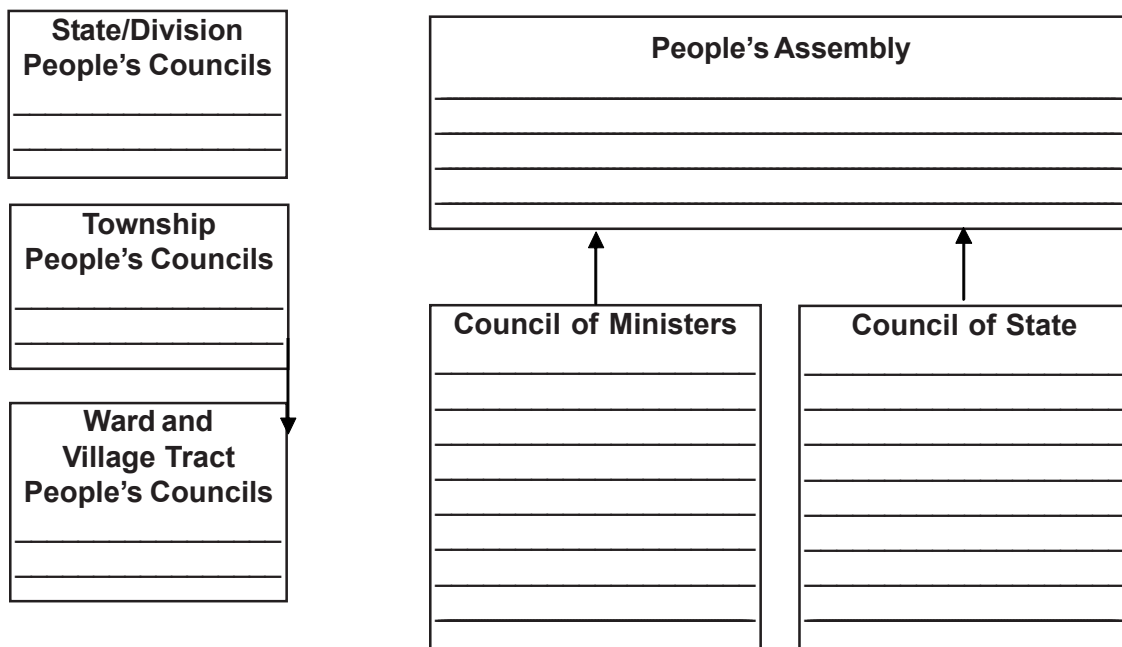
exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Unlike the legislature in the parliamentary era, the legislature under the 1974 constitution was _____; it had only one house.
2. Because only the BSPP was legal, Burma was a _____.
3. The people who ran the country were not farmers or peasants; they were an _____.
4. A _____ is supposed to find out if people support the government's plan.
5. If there is a lot of crime and the government cannot control it, then there is not the _____.
6. An _____ tries to learn the truth about a situation.
7. The _____ branch of government is led by the President and Prime Minister.
8. The _____ of the 1974 constitution gave power to the BSPP.

B. Fill in the chart below with the information you learned in this lesson. What are the jobs of each part of government?

Arakan State	Chin State	Kachin State	Kayah State	Mon State	Shan State	
Irrawaddy Division	Magwe Division	Mandalay Division	Pegu Division	Rangoon Division	Sagaing Division	Tenassarim Division



group work

Compare the 1974 constitution to the 1947 constitution and the parliamentary system. Make a list of similarities and differences and share them with the class.

discussion

Discuss which was better, the 1947 constitution or the 1974 constitution.

homework

- A. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.
- B. Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the 1947 constitution and the 1974 constitution.

Resistance to the military regime from students, workers, and monks

Many people were unhappy with the BSPP, the Burmese Way to Socialism, and the other policies of the military regime. Students, monks, and *urban* workers led resistance movements during the 1960s and 1970s.

The first important student demonstration happened soon after the military coup. In response to stricter rules, Rangoon University students organized a demonstration on July 7. Soldiers killed over a hundred students and blew up the Student Union building. The 50th anniversary of the founding of Rangoon University in 1970 was another chance for the students to show their opposition to the regime. Students gave out anti-government *pamphlets*, and the regime responded by closing universities for a month.

Students were also attacked when they tried to commemorate Burmese leaders. In December 1974, U Thant, a well-respected Burmese diplomat who had served as Secretary General of the UN, died in the USA. His body was flown back to Burma to be buried, but U Ne Win did not want him to have a fancy funeral. He was buried in a regular *cemetery* without any special *ceremony*. Thousands of Burmese people came to put flowers on his *grave*. On December 5, students came and got U Thant's body and brought it to the place where the old student union building had been at Rangoon University to bury him *properly*.



Many people came and gave money to pay for this project. Soldiers came and killed some students and arrested thousands of others. Universities were closed again. Similar events happened in 1976, on the 100th

anniversary of Thakin Kodaw Hmaing's birth. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing had been a famous writer, nationalist leader, and a supporter of peace talks between the regime and the insurgents. The students who commemorated his birth were punished and imprisoned. They did not have better luck when they tried to organize a demonstration on July 7, 1977 (7-7-77).

Workers also tried to oppose the regime. In 1974, factory workers in Rangoon went on strike. They did not think that they were being paid enough, and they did not have enough rice to eat. Soldiers fired into the crowd of demonstrators, killing some people. They imprisoned others and closed universities again. In 1975, students and workers joined together for a demonstration, but the soldiers *suppressed* them.

The regime also suppressed monks. In 1962, the Revolutionary Council made a law that required monks to *register* at government offices. The monks had never been required to participate in government before, so they protested. Soldiers broke up their demonstration violently. The regime started registering monks in 1965 in order to control them more strongly. They closed monasteries where monks resisted.

There were several reasons why these demonstrations were not successful in bringing change. First, the military regime had several strategies for fighting these opposition movements. Military Intelligence watched everyone very carefully, so people could not speak freely. They found the leaders of students and other groups and put them in prison. They also made professors responsible for reporting their students' behavior, and they changed the education system so that students had fewer chances to organize. Second, the people who opposed the BSPP did not usually have clear demands; they focused on one event rather than on changing the system as a whole. Even if they could all agree that they wanted a change from the BSPP system, they could not agree on what a new government should be like. Finally, resistance to the regime was not successful because the majority of people in Burma were focused on surviving the difficult economic conditions rather than on changing the system.

KEY WORDS

urban: from the city

anniversary: the day of the year that something happened in the past

pamphlet: a piece of paper with information on it

cemetery: a place where many people are buried

grave: an area where a person is buried; sometimes there is a stone or a small building there

properly: in the right way

suppress: to stop people from doing something they want to do

register: to go to a government office and give information about yourself

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. There are many _____ in the _____; that is where people are buried after they die.
2. _____ are much shorter than books, but they sometimes have interesting ideas in them.
3. Whenever the people demonstrated, the army _____ them.
4. People from _____ areas may not know about life in the mountains.
5. Always do your homework _____ and you will not have to fix mistakes later!
6. The _____ of your birth is called your birthday.
7. Sometimes you have to _____ if you want the government to let you do something.

B. Choose the best answer.

1. The first demonstrations after the military coup in 1962 were organized by
 - A. urban workers
 - B. soldiers
 - C. monks
 - D. students
2. The biggest problem with the opposition groups during the 1960s and 1970s was that
 - A. they did not organize demonstrations.
 - B. they did not have one strong message.
 - C. they suppressed the army.
 - D. they tried to bury U Thant in a special cemetery.
3. Most people in Burma did not demonstrate against the military government because
 - A. they liked the military government
 - B. they were struggling for survival
 - C. they were not interested in politics
 - D. they did not like the students
4. The military regime's strategies for weakening the opposition movement included
 - A. making it difficult for people to organize against them
 - B. imprisoning leaders
 - C. watching everyone carefully
 - D. all of the above.

discussion

Discuss the strategies that the military regime and the opposition movement used in the 1960s and 1970s. Do both groups still use the same strategies today? What should each group do differently?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

1988 pro-democracy protests

By the late 1980s, Burma was facing an *economic crisis*. In September 1987, U Ne Win ordered certain currency notes to be demonetized. Many people lost their savings, and people started to *panic*. There were *shortages* of rice in several areas of the country. Conditions were so bad that the United Nations called Burma a “Least Developed Country.”

During 1988, there were a *series* of protests against the military regime. The first was in March 1988. The police had killed a student named Maung Phone Maw, who had been in a small fight. Students gathered to protest against his killing and against conditions in general. The military killed about a hundred demonstrators and imprisoned many others. Tensions continued, and in July, U Ne Win *resigned* from the government. But still, there were demonstrations around



Demonstrators

the country in July and August, especially in Rangoon, Mandalay, Toungoo, Sittwe, Pakkokku, and Myitkyina. The protestors included workers as well as students; most of them were peaceful. They demanded *multi-party democracy* and an end to the military regime. There was an especially large demonstration on the auspicious date of August 8, 1988 (8-8-88). Soldiers and riot police, some commanded by Sein Lwin, “The Butcher of Rangoon,” killed thousands of these unarmed demonstrators. The regime also used several other strategies against the pro-democracy movement. They released criminals from prison to cause disorder, and they tried to divide the students from the other demonstrators. There was a lot of chaos, and it was unclear what would happen next. Different leaders made different demands, and there was no national leadership. People could not easily get information about what was happening. U Nu set up a parallel government, but not everyone agreed with him. Despite the chaos, on August 22, a general strike began. For a few weeks, it seemed that the military regime would *collapse*. But on September 18, Bogyoke Saw Maung carried out a

military coup. He arrested many of the leaders of the pro-democracy movement, declared martial law, and started the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

Several student organizations and leaders became important in 1988. The All Burma



Monks demonstrating

Federation of Students’ Unions (ABFSU) and the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS) were two of the most powerful student groups. Min Ko Naing, a leader of the ABFSU, made inspiring speeches. Ko Moe Thee Zun, who later joined the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), was also an important leader. Many other student leaders also organized protests and made speeches. Some ethnic minority people did participate in the demonstrations, but ethnic nationality organizations and the CPB did not participate. Although the protestors did not succeed in overthrowing the military regime, they did build organizations, get more people involved in the movement, and raise people’s hope for a different kind of government. Also, other countries started disliking the military regime. Eventually, the SLORC changed their name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar, partly so other countries would think they had changed.



Student demonstrator shot by soldiers

KEY WORDS

economic crisis: a situation where the economy is so bad that the society cannot function normally

panic: fear, excitement, and uncertainty

shortage: when there is not enough of something

series: a group of related events that happen over time

collapse: to fall down or lose power

resign: to give up your position

multi-party democracy: a system of government where people elect leaders from many political parties

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. The military regime is not a _____; people do not elect leaders.
2. Even after U Ne Win _____, he continued to be involved in the government.
3. The _____ was caused by demonetization and other government policies.
4. When there is a _____ of something, everyone wants it more.
5. When people feel _____, it can be dangerous because they might do things they would not usually do.
6. There were a _____ of problems between the military and the civilians during 1988; the protesters demonstrated more than once.
7. If a house is not built well, then it might _____.

B. Answer these questions in your own words:

1. What caused the economic crisis in 1987?
2. What caused the first protests in 1988?
3. Did Ne Win's resignation stop the demonstrations?
4. What did the demonstrators want?
5. Why was Sein Lwin called "the Butcher of Rangoon"?
6. How did the government stop the general strike?
7. What positive effects came out of the 1988 uprising?

group work

- A. In small groups, discuss what else you know about the 1988 protests. Do you know anyone who participated? What stories did you hear? Share the stories with your group and then with the class.
- B. What are the similarities between the 1988 uprising and previous unrest in 1974 and 1962?

discussion

Ethnic minority organizations and the CPB did not participate in the 1988 demonstrations. Why do you think they didn't join? Do you think the outcome would be different if they had participated?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

During the 1988 pro-democracy protests, another important leader emerged. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Bogyoke Aung San, became a leader in August. She made a speech to over half a million people on August 26 at Shwedagon Pagoda. She told the people to seek democracy peacefully, and she called for an interim government and multi-party elections. She quickly became a very popular leader, both because of her connection to General Aung San and because of her inspiring words and strong character.



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with NLD members and supporters



Speaking to the public outside her house in Rangoon with NLD youth members

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was not planning to enter politics when she came to visit Burma in 1988. She had been born in Burma in 1945, but she had lived abroad for most of her life. Her father was assassinated when she was two years old. When she was a teenager, her family moved to India, and then she went to university in England. She married a British *academic* and had two sons. At the time of the 1988 protests, she was in Burma taking care of her mother, who was sick. But the events of 1988 convinced her to take a leadership position. In her speech at the Shwedagon Pagoda, she explained why:

“...the present crisis is the concern of the entire nation. I could not as my father’s daughter remain indifferent to all that was going on. This national crisis could in fact be called the second struggle for national independence.”

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has stayed in Burma since 1988. From 1990 until 1994, 1999 until 2001, and 2003 until 2010, she was under *house arrest*. In 1991, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, she continues to lead the National League for Democracy and serves as State Counsellor as well as Foreign Minister in the Myanmar government.

KEY WORDS

emerge: to come out or appear

seek: to look for and try to get

interim: not permanent but only for a short time in between two other governments

academic: a person who studies and teaches at a university

concern: problem

indifferent: not caring

house arrest: when the police do not let you leave your house, but you do not have to go to prison

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi thought politics was everyone's _____ because no one should be _____ to the problems that were happening in the country.
2. _____ write books and share ideas with each other.
3. Leaders often _____ in times of crisis and come out to help people.
4. _____ is not as bad as prison but not as good as freedom.
5. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called for an _____ government to rule until there could be elections.

B. Are these statements true, false or not stated in the text? Write *T*, *F* or *NS*.

1. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called for multi-party elections.
2. She wanted a peaceful change to democracy.
3. When she was a child, she wanted to be a politician.
4. In 1988, her mother wanted her to enter politics.
5. She felt that because of her father, she had a duty to get involved.
6. She doesn't mind being under house arrest as it helps bring democracy to Burma.
7. From 1994—1999 she was released from house arrest.
8. The Nobel Peace prize made her famous throughout the world.

group work

Discuss the quote from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's speech. What do you think she meant when she called the 1988 protests a "second struggle for independence"? What does it have in common with the struggle for independence in 1948? What are the differences between these two struggles? List them and share your lists with the class. Discuss your answers.

discussion

What do you think the writer of this module thinks of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi? Which phrases does she use to express her opinions? Have you heard different opinions of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi? What are they? Who do you agree with?

homework

- A. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.
- B. Write a paragraph about the "second struggle for independence."

1990 Elections

After the September 18 coup, Bo Saw Maung announced there would be multi-party elections and hundreds of political parties formed. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi joined with the politicians U Tin Oo and U Aung Gyi (who later left the party) to form the National League for Democracy (NLD). People loyal to the army and to the BSPP formed the National Unity Party (NUP).

The SLORC *assumed* the NUP would win the election. They thought voters would be divided among the many pro-democracy parties that had formed. They also arrested popular leaders and limited the new parties' ability to *campaign*. Finally, the SLORC assumed the NUP would win the elections, because they believed they had the support of many people.

The SLORC did not realize at first how popular the NLD was becoming. The NLD brought different groups together—students, intellectuals, former military men, and ethnic minority people. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi campaigned throughout the country, just as her father had done. To show her respect for ethnic minority people, she often wore their traditional clothing. In her speeches, she explained what was wrong with the military regime by discussing democracy and Buddhist ideas.

When the SLORC realized Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was a powerful leader, they tried to convince people she would not be a good leader because she was married to a foreigner. They also ordered soldiers to assassinate her in April 1989, but the soldiers did not obey. In July, she and U Tin Oo were put under house arrest. About 6,000 other political and student leaders were taken to prison throughout the year, including Min Ko Naing.

The election was held in May 1990. Although there were some reports of intimidation at the polls, most people agree the election was fair. Out of 485 seats in Parliament, the NLD won 392. The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) won 23 seats, and the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) won 11 seats. The NUP won only 10 seats.

The SLORC had not expected this result. They *delayed* the transfer of power. People protested;



Voters in the 1990 elections

monks even stopped accepting *alms* from the military for several months. Finally, it became clear that the SLORC did not plan to *honor* the results of the election.

Even though the winners of the election did not have the chance to form a government, several important things happened as a result of the elections. The NLD gained *legitimacy* in the international community, especially after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize. The pro-democracy movement was more organized than before, and a new *generation* of Burmese people were inspired to seek political change.

KEY WORDS

assume: to think something without having strong reasons for thinking it

campaign: to travel around trying to convince people to vote for you or your party in an election

delay: to wait to do something

alms: the food and gifts that people give to Buddhist monks

honor: to respect or follow

legitimacy: respect of the people and legal status

generation: a group of people who were born around the same time

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. You should not _____ anything until you are sure that it is really true.
2. Monks get their food by asking for _____ from Buddhists.
3. The _____ of Burmese students who grew up during the 1980s saw the 1988 demonstrations.
4. It is difficult to _____ if you are under house arrest, but U Tin Oo and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won the election anyway.
5. If you _____ doing something you have to do, you will still have to do it tomorrow.
6. The military regime has not _____ the wishes of the people who voted in the 1990 election.
7. Some people think the military regime does not have _____, because they were not elected.

B. Answer these questions in your own words:

1. Why did the SLORC think the NUP would win the election?
2. Why was the NLD so popular?
3. What did Daw Aung San Suu Kyi do to win the support of ethnic minority groups?
4. How did the SLORC try to stop her from winning the election?
5. What were the election results?
6. What did SLORC do after the election?
7. What positive effects came out of the 1990 election?

C. Look at the final paragraph of the text. There is a main idea and three supporting points. What are they?

Main idea:

Supporting point 1:

Supporting point 2:

Supporting point 3:

group work

Discuss whether or not the results of the 1990 elections should have remained valid in later elections. Should the NLD have been allowed (automatically) to take power because their win in the 1990 elections was ignored? Discuss your ideas with the class.

homework

A. Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

B. Write a letter using your own ideas about how to deal with the 1990 election results. You can either write to the military regime, the NLD or a newspaper, suggesting a way to move forward.

Post-1988 resistance and inter-ethnic cooperation/conflict

During and after 1988, many students and activists involved in the pro-democracy movement fled toward the borders with India, China, and Thailand. Some of these people joined with ethnic nationality organizations, others formed independent organizations, and others went directly into other countries. Students formed a variety of different groups, including the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), an *umbrella organization* of students that formed an army.

Relationships between the pro-democracy students and the ethnic minorities were not always easy. Many ethnic nationality leaders did not think the students would make good fighters and some did not want to trust Burmans. The students who had lived in cities were not used to life in the jungle. The students, on the other hand, had heard reports from the state-owned newspapers about how bad the ethnic minority insurgent groups and communists were. They had been taught that Burmans were better than ethnic minorities. Each group had to *overcome* their *prejudices* if they wanted to help each other. Conflicts and *misunderstandings* happened.



DAB at Manerplaw (1989)

Despite these challenges, different groups did manage to work together. In 1988, the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) was formed in the Karen area. The NDF, the ABSDF, and many smaller groups joined to oppose the military regime. Over time, many of the students came to be good soldiers. They worked with the KNU and other groups to establish a base at Manerplaw. This base was a symbol of the *cooperation* between pro-democracy activists and ethnic minority groups. Even after Manerplaw fell in 1994, cooperation continued. In 1997, ethnic minority leaders met to sign an agreement asking for *tripartite dialogue*. They wrote, "We agree also to join hands with the pro-democracy forces led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and act unitedly and simultaneously for the achievement of rights of the nationalities as well as democratic rights."

The military regime did not like this cooperation, because it is easier for them to stay in power if the opposition is not united. They have tried to stop groups from working together. Because of their actions and because the opposition movement is divided by ethnic, religious, social, economic, strategy, and personal differences, it has been difficult for the opposition groups to unite.

KEY WORDS

umbrella organization: an organization that brings together the members of many different groups working towards common goals

overcome: to look past something that does not really matter, so you can see what does matter

prejudice: bad feelings or thoughts you have toward people even before you meet them, because of what ethnic, social, religious group they belong to

misunderstanding: when you think someone is saying something they do not mean to say

cooperation: working together towards a common goal; joining hands

tripartite dialogue: talks among three groups; in this case, the military, pro-democracy forces, and ethnic groups

exercises

A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. When people do not speak the same language, they will have many _____.
2. We all have _____ about people who are different from us, but if we think carefully about our feelings, we might change our minds.
3. For several years, ethnic groups and pro-democracy groups have been asking for _____ with the military regime.
4. An _____ can unite groups that are working for the same reasons.
5. If people can _____ their disagreements, then they will be able to focus on their common goals.
6. _____ with other groups is not easy, but it is more likely to succeed than fighting with other groups.

B. Which summary matches which paragraph?

A. The opposition groups overcame their differences and formed umbrella organizations, agreeing to work towards democracy.

Paragraph number: _____

B. Cooperation among opposition groups is difficult, partly because the government tries to prevent cooperation, and partly because the opposition groups have many differences.

Paragraph number: _____

C. There were difficulties among all the groups, as many people had prejudices about other groups.

Paragraph number: _____

D. Following the democracy uprising, many students went to Burma's borders and joined opposition movements.

Paragraph number: _____

C. Are these statements *facts* or *opinions*?

1. The students would not make good fighters.
2. State-owned newspapers said that communists were bad.
3. There have been conflicts and misunderstandings among different groups.
4. Many students became good soldiers.
5. In 1997, ethnic minority leaders signed an agreement asking for tripartite dialogue.
6. It is difficult for opposition groups to unite.

group work

In small groups, list times you know about when ethnic nationality groups have collaborated with each other or with pro-democracy groups. Then list times when they have not cooperated. Share your lists with the class. Discuss the situations. Why do you think cooperation has been possible at some times and not at others?

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Ceasefire agreements

One of the ways the military regime has tried to weaken the opposition movement is by making peace with them. In the 1990s, many insurgent groups started making *ceasefire agreements* with the SPDC. There were several reasons for this change. First, many rebel armies had lost a lot of the territory they had formerly controlled. The armed struggle movement was weaker than it had been before. Thailand, whose government used to *tacitly* support the rebels, was *withdrawing* its support. Finally, the army's violent strategies had made people tired of resisting. Many groups felt that they had no choice but to make a ceasefire agreement.

By 2002, fifteen groups (including the KIO, NMSP, SSNPLO, KNLP, PSLP, KNPP, UWSA, and part of the SSA) had made these agreements (the one with the KNPP broke down). Some of these fifteen groups had been important rebel armies in the past, and others were smaller armies that were involved in drug trafficking and did not have clear political goals. Most ceasefire groups got to keep control over the "liberated areas" they controlled at the time of the agreements. They could keep their weapons and keep troops in some of the areas they controlled. The ceasefire groups also got more control of education, culture, and religion. In some cases, they also got economic rights they had not had before. However, the SPDC refused to discuss political issues; the ceasefire agreements were only military.

These ceasefires have been controversial. Some people feel they were a good idea, because they stopped most of the fighting and allowed more economic and social development. Others feel they were a bad idea, because they weakened the opposition movement and did not produce real political gains. Many ethnic groups and communities were divided over whether to make a ceasefire, and these divisions remained after the ceasefires were signed.

As a result, some groups broke away and kept doing armed struggle. Some people who had fled to Thailand were forced to return to the ceasefire areas,



**Pa-O National Organization delegates
in ceasefire discussions**

and even though fighting there had stopped their lives were still difficult.

The ceasefire agreements caused divisions in the opposition movement as a whole. Groups that made ceasefires had to withdraw from alliances with other



**General Bo Mya from the KNU in ceasefire discussions
with former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt (2004).**

insurgent groups, and the groups that remained in armed struggle felt abandoned. There was a growing feeling that the opposition forces fighting the military regime were getting weaker.

Case Studies

Read below to find out what KIO and NSMP leaders said about why they made ceasefire agreements.

Kachin Independence Organization

The KIO made a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC on February 24, 1994. They released a statement in which they explained why.

“At present, a new *mood* is *sweeping* the different nationalities of Burma...since 1988 the situation has been changing fast. Burma has entered its third major period of political *transition* since independence; more and more parties and ethnic groups are coming together to try to settle these urgent questions through dialogue and negotiation...After the *bitter* experience of *bloodshed* and conflict of the past four decades, the KIO strongly believes one ethnic group cannot be separated from another in the pursuit of justice and equality. The KIO, therefore, *pledges* to continue to cooperate fully with other groups and organizations committed to peace and democracy in Myanmar.”



Kachin representatives meeting with General Than Shwe

New Mon State Party

The NMSP made a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC on July 13, 1995. They released a statement in which they explained why:

“It is almost half a century that the Mon resistance movement has gone through for freedom enjoying full rights of self-determination...Though armed resistance has borne some fruits in their favor, painful *sacrifices* in lives and property had also been paid by them. The *trend* of world events in the past few years have changed and gathered *momentum* in such a way that political problems are solved by peaceful negotiation rather than by armed conflict. The NMSP also believes that political problems could successfully be solved by political means through dialogue.”

KEY WORDS

ceasefire agreement: an agreement that says that two groups will not fight anymore

withdraw: to take away

mood: a feeling

pledge: promise

sweep: to spread quickly and to many places

transition: change between one situation and another

bitter: painful and sad

bloodshed: violence in which people are injured or killed

sacrifice: something you give up in exchange for something else

trend: the way things have started to be, and the way they will be in the future

momentum: movement that goes faster and faster over time

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. If you are in a bad _____, you might cry or get angry with your friends.
2. There is a _____ away from armed struggle in Burma.
3. The _____ period between military rule and democracy in Burma might be difficult.
4. _____ made by the KIO and NMSP tried to end the _____ that had been happening in Kachin and Mon areas.
5. Sometimes you need to make a _____ in order to get the things you want.
6. _____ conflicts can gain _____ quickly and _____ across a nation so they are everywhere and involve all people.
7. If the people _____ their support for the politicians, the party will fail.

group work

- A. Summarize the reasons the KIO and NMSP gave for making ceasefire agreements.
- B. Are these reasons similar or different?
- C. What do you think they meant by "a trend in world events" and "a new mood"?
- D. Does your group think these reasons for the ceasefire agreements are good ones? Why or why not?
- E. This cartoon was published in a Kachin magazine in 2005.
 - *simsa law* means 'ceasefire'
 - *hyke la mi law* means 'help me!'

What is the message of this cartoon? Who are the people in the cartoon?



discussion

In 2004, the KNU began to negotiate with the SPDC for a possible ceasefire. Do you think this was a good idea or bad idea? Explain why.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Refugees and exiles on Burma's borders

During the political changes in the 1980s and 1990s, many groups in ethnic nationality areas came under pressure from the Burmese army. The army burned villages and killed the people in them. Fighting caused many people to become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Some of these people hid in the jungle and moved around to escape from the soldiers. Others made long, difficult journeys to cross the borders into Thailand, India, and China. In some areas, *refugee* camps were established.

Some refugee camps were established in Bangladesh. Many Rohingya refugees live there. Some Burmese activists escaped to India. Other refugees from Burma fled to Thailand. Karen, Karenni, Mon, Shan, and other groups settled in refugee camps. By 1984, there were almost 10,000 refugees in Thailand. This number grew over the years. By 2006, there were over 200,000. The people who enter these camps can get help from international organizations and are safer than they have been at home. However, many people in the camps want to return home as soon as it is safe. Camp life is very restricted—refugees cannot easily leave the camp, and there are few opportunities to find work.

Not everyone who left Burma fits the United Nation's definition of a refugee. People who leave their home country illegally for other reasons are called *illegal immigrants*. People who came to get jobs are called *economic migrants*. These people work, legally or illegally, mostly in jobs local people do not want to do. Some political activists chose not to become refugees because they did not feel that they were fleeing; they had chosen to join the opposition movement. They sometimes call themselves *exiles*. Some tried to get *asylum* status in *third countries*.

Burma's neighbors have had policies toward refugees and exiles that have changed over time. In the 1980s, Thailand was more welcoming to refugees.



Rohingya refugees on the Burma/Bangladesh border

But during the 1990s, the Thai government changed its approach. In 2004, the Thai government talked about trying to *repatriate* some refugees and later allowed *UNHCR* to *resettle* them in third countries. The Thai government has also changed its policies toward exiles who are politically active. Sometimes



Chin refugees and exiled democracy activists demonstrating in New Delhi, India

Thailand has *unofficially* allowed political groups to set up offices, but these offices are sometimes *raided* and their members arrested. Some members of these groups and some camp-based refugees are trying to resettle to third countries. And finally, Thailand has also changed its policy toward economic migrants. Thai officials have allowed them to stay at some times but have tried to send them back to Burma at other times. These changing policies have political, economic, and social reasons. Furthermore, many Thai people feel that



Karenni refugee camp 1 on the Thai/Burma border

Burmese refugees bring drugs, crime, and health problems. It is not clear how these policies will change in the future.

KEY WORDS

Internally Displaced Person: a person who leaves his or her village or home place because of fighting but stays inside his or her country

refugee: The United Nations defines “refugee” as someone “fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution.” That means a person has good reasons for thinking he or she will be attacked at home.

illegal immigrant: a person who comes into another country illegally without proper visas and travel documents

economic migrant: a person who goes to work outside his or her country to get better economic opportunities

exile: a person forced to live outside of his or her home country

asylum status: a situation where someone can go live in a third country because he or she was attacked for their political or personal beliefs at home

third country: a country that people can go to after staying in their “second country” (where they went right after leaving home)

repatriate: to return people to where they came from

unofficially: illegally but with the OK of people in power

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the UN organization responsible for refugee issues.

resettle: to go to a third country

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Many _____ from Burma work on farms and in clothing factories in Thailand.
2. If you get _____ in the USA, you can stay there safely.
3. _____ sometimes decide to cross the border into Thailand and become _____ if the fighting is bad enough.
4. Burmese _____ who have left Burma live in _____ such as England, Japan, Australia, and the USA.
5. The law says _____ cannot stay in the country, but many live here _____ and officials do not bother them.
6. Burmese people who come to work in Thailand are sometimes _____ back to Burma.

group work

In small groups, make a list of the choices people have when they have to leave their home. How do they make a decision about whether to become an IDP, refugee, exile, illegal immigrant, or economic migrant? What is the safest choice? Discuss your answers with the class.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Human rights abuses

Throughout the history of Burma, there have been *human rights abuses* by people in power. Since the military regime took power in 1962, soldiers have committed many of these abuses, but other armed groups have too. Most of these abuses have happened in rural areas and ethnic minority areas, although there have also been plenty in cities as well. It is often difficult to document what has happened, but human rights organizations and *survivors* have tried to spread information about them.

In the 1960s, the military regime started using the “Four Cuts” strategy to fight insurgent groups. They knew that many of the insurgent groups got their support from rural villagers, so they tried to end this support by cutting off the insurgents’ access to food, money, intelligence, and recruits. In order to do this, the army has *relocated* villagers, attacked villages, and killed people they suspected of giving aid to the insurgents.



Karen villagers watching as government troops burn down their homes.

People in government-controlled areas have also faced human rights abuses. Two of the most common have been forced *portering* and *minesweeping*. Many people have been injured and killed doing this work. Besides forcing people to do military work, the SPDC also used *forced labor*. They required people to work on development projects such as roads and buildings. People were not paid for this work, even though it takes them away from their work on farms.

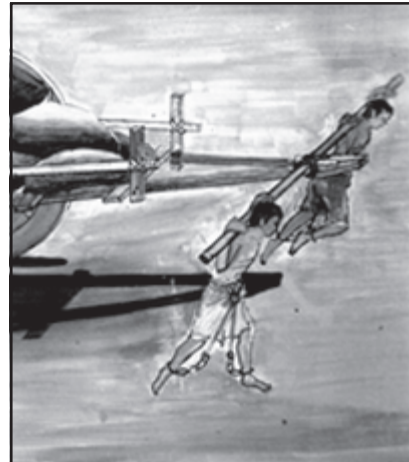
People in prison have also faced human rights abuses as well. Political prisoners have been *interrogated* under *bad conditions*, tortured, denied *livable* conditions and sometimes killed whilst in prison. They have often been held without charges or held beyond their sentences.

Women are particularly *vulnerable* to human rights abuses. They have often been left to care for children alone after their husbands or male relatives have been injured, taken away, or killed. Moreover, many women have been raped. The Shan Women’s Activist Network (SWAN) and the Karen Women’s Organization are two organizations who have documented rape of ethnic minority women used as a weapon of war.

Children and elderly people also suffer from human rights abuses. Boys younger than fifteen often join the army as “child soldiers.” They have to do work that even adults would find difficult to do. And elderly people who are not strong enough to defend themselves also suffer.

Human trafficking is also a problem. Business people transport Burmese people to Thailand, China, and other countries. The traffickers say that there will be good jobs there, but when the Burmese people arrive, they often find out that the jobs are not very good at all. Sometimes they are not paid fairly. Women and children are sometimes forced into *prostitution* by traffickers.

Local and international rights organizations have *documented* these cases and hope to bring the people responsible to justice.



Tharawaddy Prison (painted by a former political prisoner)



Writer and journalist U Win Tin was in prison from 1989-2008

KEY WORDS

human rights: the rights that all people should have; the United Nation described these rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948

abuse: bad treatment that go against people's rights

survivor: someone who lives through a difficult event

relocate: to move people from one place to another

portering: when civilians are forced to carry the military's supplies

minesweeping: when people have to walk across fields that have been planted with landmines

forced labor: when people are forced to do work when they don't want to and without being paid

interrogate: to ask a prisoner questions

livable: OK for living in

vulnerable: easy to attack

human trafficking: when people are taken across borders illegally to work

prostitution: when people have sex in exchange for money

exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. If soldiers do not want to carry their things, they make civilians do _____ for them.
2. _____ is common in Burma; many buildings and other projects have been built using it.
3. Even though everyone is supposed to have _____, governments do not always respect these rights.
4. Soldiers have committed terrible _____ against the people; but the soldiers are also suffering, especially if they are very young.
5. Everyone should have _____ conditions, including food, water, and a place to live.
6. Many people are injured while _____, because landmines blow up and hurt them.
7. _____ is a problem because people are moved across borders and sometimes end up in _____.
8. Prisoners often suffer when they are _____ by police.
9. If we _____ human rights abuses, then people all over the world will know what is happening.
10. _____ people, such as women, children, and elderly people, can have problems surviving in difficult circumstances.
11. When people are _____ by soldiers, they have to leave behind their homes.
12. _____ of human rights abuses sometimes tell their stories to reach out to others who have had similar experiences.

discussion

Discuss how you think the international community should have reacted to the human rights abuses committed by the military and other groups in Burma.

homework

Add the events you learned about in this lesson to your timeline.

Section VII: The Recent Changes (2007—Present)

Protest and Disaster

The Saffron Revolution

On August 15, 2007, the military government decided to remove fuel *subsidies*, which caused the price of gasoline to increase suddenly. Great economic *hardship* resulted, and people protested the government's action. Some also called for a transition to democracy. Buddhist monks who sympathized with the poor also became involved in these protests. On September 5, monks in Pakkoku demonstrated peacefully by chanting the *metta sutta* in the streets.

The authorities who broke up this demonstration injured several monks. In response, a group called the All Burma Monks' Alliance formed. They demanded that the government apologize, reduce fuel prices, release Aung San Suu Kyi

and other political prisoners, and begin a dialogue with their political opponents.

On September 22, thousands of monks marched in Yangon and Mandalay, supported by civilians. On September 26, the military regime began a *crackdown*. A number of people were killed, and many more were injured. Hundreds were arrested, and many monks went into exile. The pro-democracy movement and their international supporters called these events the "Saffron Revolution," because of the *saffron* color of the monks' robes. Some people don't think it should be called a revolution, because the government was not overthrown. However, the demonstrations may have weakened the military regime's legitimacy and increased interest in Burma in the international community.

Cyclone Nargis

On May 2, 2008, *cyclone* Nargis hit Myanmar's Irrawaddy delta region. Over two million people were affected and some estimates for the number of people killed are as high as 138,000. Most people had little warning that the storm was coming, and they did not receive aid soon afterward. The international community offered *humanitarian assistance*, but the military regime did not give foreign aid workers permission to enter the country right away. However, people

from all over the country organized relief efforts, bringing donations of food and clothing.

After this *natural disaster*, communities faced the challenge of rebuilding. Over 700,000 homes had been damaged or destroyed, and most of the *livestock* in the area had died. For some people, the cyclone showed that the government was unable or unwilling to help its citizens. The UN criticized the government for being slow to act.

KEY WORDS

Subsidies: money paid by the government to keep the price of a product low

Hardship: difficulty, suffering

Metta sutta: The Buddha's words on compassion and lovingkindness for all beings

Crackdown: when the authorities take harsh actions to stop people from doing something they don't like

Saffron: a reddish orange color

Cyclone: a strong storm or hurricane

Humanitarian assistance: food, water, shelter, and supplies for people affected by disaster or war

Natural disaster: an event such as a cyclone, flood, or earthquake that causes destruction and death

Livestock: animals used for work or food, for example, water buffalo

exercises

A. Fill the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. Monks wearing _____ robes chanted the _____ in their demonstration.
2. A _____ is an example of a _____ involving rain and wind.
3. _____ kept fuel prices low, but removing them caused economic _____.
4. The UN offers _____ to people who have lost their homes and _____.
5. Protestors feared a violent _____ by the military.

B. Match the cause with its effect.

Cause	Effect
The government removed fuel subsidies	The UN criticized Burma's government
Cyclone Nargis hit the Irrawaddy Delta	The government cracked down on the protests
Thousands of monks marched in the streets	Over 100,000 estimated deaths
Burma's government didn't allow international aid workers to enter the country	Monks began a peaceful protest

group work

Looking back on the Saffron Revolution and Cyclone Nargis, do you think these incidents *did* or *did not* influence the military's decisions? Work with your group to come up with three pieces of evidence you could use to support your argument.

homework

- A. Were you in Burma at the time of the Saffron Revolution or Cyclone Nargis? If so, what were your feelings or experiences at that time? If not, interview someone else about their experience of these events. Write your thoughts or findings in a reflective essay.
- B. Add the events you learned to your timeline.

The 2010 Elections

In 2003, the military regime announced its seven-step “Roadmap to Democracy.” As part of this process, the government wrote a new constitution and scheduled a *referendum* in 2008. The government reported that 94% of voters approved the Constitution, but opposition groups and the international community claimed that people had been pressured to vote yes. Pro-democracy groups were upset that the Constitution guaranteed one quarter of Parliamentary seats to the military, and prohibited anyone with a foreign relative (including Aung San Suu Kyi, who’s husband was British) from serving as President. Also, the referendum was held right around the time of



Cyclone Nargis, so voting was delayed or canceled in some areas.

The next step in the Roadmap to Democracy was to hold a general election in 2010. Some opposition political parties, including the NLD, felt that the election would not be fair, and they decided to *boycott* it. Other parties chose to take part in the election. The National Democratic Front (NDF), split off from the NLD in order to participate.

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP), both of which were closely tied to the former military government, won about 75% of the vote. The NDF and various ethnic nationality parties won the rest. Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest in the run-up to the election, and she was released several days after the vote was held.

The UN criticized the government for refusing to allow her to participate, and said that the election was not “free and fair.”

The international community and the opposition also criticized the new government because it still had so many ties to the former military regime. For instance, Thein Sein, who had served as Prime Minister in the SPDC, *resigned* from the army and became president.

KEY WORDS

Referendum: when people are asked to vote yes or no on a single issue (in this case approving or rejecting the Constitution)

Boycott: to refuse to participate as a form of protest

Resign: to officially leave a job or organization

exercises

Are these statements facts or opinions?

1. The government reported that 94% of voters approved the 2008 Constitution.
2. The election was not “free and fair.”
3. The regime should have released Aung San Suu Kyi before the 2010 election.
4. The new government had many ties to the former military regime.
5. Thein Sein was not a good choice for president.

group work

List 3 pieces of evidence to support the claim that the elections were not “free and fair.”

For each of these pieces of evidence, give a counter-argument or a different piece of evidence that the new government might have used to show that the elections were “free and fair.”

Then discuss with your group: Were the elections “free and fair”? Why or why not?
Share your ideas with the class.

homework

A. Conduct additional research on the “Roadmap to Democracy.” Why was it started? What is effective? Or was it too little too late? In pairs, prepare a presentation on your findings and share your opinion on the effectiveness of the “Roadmap” in bringing about positive change.

B. Add the events you learned to your timeline.

Political Developments since the 2010 Elections

By 2012, the NLD had re-registered as a party and decided to run for the *vacant* seats in Parliament in the upcoming election. The NLD won 60% of the vote, and gained 5 seats in Parliament (including one for Aung San Suu Kyi).

Some people saw the 2012 election and other changes as signs that the *transition* to democracy was a success. Hundreds of political prisoners were released, and the government suspended construction of the Myitsone dam in response to protests. As a result of these factors, the EU and the US lifted some economic *sanctions* against Burma, and international investment and *foreign aid* increased.

However, not everyone was satisfied. There was ongoing violence and political *repression*, and most people were still extremely poor. Critics both in Burma and abroad claimed that the transition to democracy was incomplete.

In 2015, general elections were held again. The NLD won a landslide victory, and U Htin Kyaw was chosen from among their members as president.



KEY WORDS

Vacant: empty

Transition: a change from one system to another, for instance, from dictatorship to democracy

Sanctions: when a country or countries does not trade with or cooperate with another country. Sanctions are often put in place to protest human rights violations.

Foreign aid: Money or goods given by a richer country to a poorer country

Repression: keeping people under control without giving them freedoms

exercises

A. Fill the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

1. _____ restrict the amount of money coming in from abroad, but _____ increases it.
2. Arresting people for their political beliefs is an example of _____.
3. If a seat is _____, you may sit there.
4. Any country that has made the _____ to democracy has faced many challenges in the process.

group work

Make a list of what changed between 2010 and 2015.

Make a list of what stayed the same between 2010 and 2015.

Discuss with your group: Which is more important in your life and community - the things that have changed or the things that have remained the same? Share your ideas with the class.

homework

A. Add the events you learned to your timeline.

B. Spend some time learning about the international community's reactions to the changes that took place in Myanmar between 2010 and 2015. Are the reactions all positive? Make a list of your findings.

Ongoing Conflicts and New Challenges

Throughout the transition to democracy, civil war has continued and new conflicts have broken out. According to the 2008 Constitution, all insurgent groups were supposed to be brought under the control of the army. In 2009, the government began to meet with these groups in order to convince them to join a *Border Guard Force* (BGF). The BGF would be under control of the military and would help to provide security on the country's borders. Several Kachin insurgent groups, as well as the DKBA and parts of the SSA agreed to become part of the BGF. Other groups, such as the UWSA, the KIO, and the NMSP refused to participate.

Civil war has continued to cause hardship for people living in ethnic nationality areas. In 2011, ceasefires with the KIO and SSA-S broke down. Between 2010 and 2012, 50,000 refugees fled to Thailand. In 2015, fighting between a Kokang insurgent group and the army caused thousands of refugees to flee to China. Also in 2015, the KNU signed a ceasefire with the government.

In addition to ongoing civil war, there have been *communal conflicts* in Burma. In particular, there

has been violence between Buddhists and Muslims. Some Buddhists think that Burma should be a Buddhist country, and that Muslims have recently arrived in or do not belong in Burma. In 2012, there were conflicts in Arakan State and other parts of the country. A group of Muslims who call themselves the Rohingya have been affected by the violence, and many of them have had to flee the country. The UN and international human rights organizations criticized the government for failing to protect Muslims from *persecution*. However, some people think this criticism is unfair and believe that other countries should not become involved.

In 2015, the Parliament passed the Interfaith Marriage Law, which states that Buddhist women who intend to marry men of another religion must register with the authorities, and can only marry if there are no objections. This law was supported by a group of Buddhists called the 969 Movement, which is led by a monk named U Wirathu. However, a group of *civil society organizations* focused on women's rights and religious tolerance opposed the law.

KEY WORDS

Border Guard Force: a part of the Burmese military made up of former insurgent groups, who are supposed to help defend the country's borders

Communal conflict: violence between members of different religious or ethnic groups

Persecution: unfair treatment, usually based on someone's ethnicity or religion

969: A Buddhist nationalist movement opposed to the spread of Islam

Civil society organizations: groups of people who work together on common goals independent of government and businesses

Tolerance: accepting people regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.

exercises

An inference is an idea that is not directly stated in the text, but that you can guess by “reading between the lines.”

1. What inference could you make based on paragraph 2?
 - a. The government has solved the problems that caused insurgent groups to rebel.
 - b. The KIO and SSA-S are satisfied with the progress the government has made.
 - c. The government has not yet succeeded in addressing the causes of civil war.
 - d. Relations with China have been good during this time period.
2. What inference could you make based on paragraph 3?
 - a. People both within and outside Burma disagree about the causes of communal conflict.
 - b. All Buddhists in Burma agree with the 969 movement.
 - c. Most Burmese people think the UN should solve communal conflicts.
 - d. There are no Muslims in Burma.

discussion

1. What do you think the insurgent groups should do? Continue their struggle? Join the BGF? Sign ceasefires? Or something else? Why?
2. Do you agree with the Interfaith Marriage Law? Why or why not?

homework

- A. Write a letter to the Parliament explaining whether you believe the Interfaith Marriage Law is a good idea or not. Explain why and give reasoning.
- B. Add the events you learned to your timeline.

Protests since the 2010 elections

Since the 2010 elections, there have been protests on a variety of topics. In 2006, the Burmese government had signed a deal with China to construct a *hydroelectric* power plant in Kachin State. This project, called the Myitsone dam, would have supplied power to China's Yunnan Province. However, some Kachin organizations feared that the dam would harm the environment and displace local people. Other civil society organizations and leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, spoke out against the dam. In 2011, President Thein Sein announced that construction of the dam would be halted "to respect the will of the people." Some people thought his action was a sign that the new government would be more *responsive* to protesters.

However, the government acted differently in 2012, when people in Sagaing Division demonstrated at the Letpadaung copper mine. The protesters said that the mine damaged the environment, and that many people had been displaced from their homes. Human rights organizations say that government forces used a poisonous gas to break up a peaceful protest. The government asked Aung San Suu Kyi, who



was by then a member of Parliament, to organize an *investigation* into the protesters' claims. She and her committee decided that the government had not done anything wrong, and that the mine should stay open.

Protests broke out once again in 2014, this time in response to the National Education Law passed by Parliament. Some university students did not agree with the government's attempt at education reform. They wanted more *decentralization* and updates to the *curriculum* and exams. They also wanted the right to form unions and to study in ethnic languages. To bring attention to their demands, they attempted to march from Mandalay to Yangon. Police tried to block their way in Letpadan. People were injured, and more than one hundred protesters were arrested.

KEY WORDS

Hydroelectric: using water to generate electric power, for instance, by damming a river

Responsive: reacting quickly and positively

Investigation: an attempt to find out the facts of what happened and why

Decentralization: to give power to local authorities (in this case, universities) instead of the central government

Curriculum: the plan for what students study in school

exercises

Match the protests with their locations, causes, and effects.

location	cause	effect
Lepadaung	Hydroelectric power plant	An investigation decides the government was right
Letpadan	Copper mine	Government stops the project
Myitsone	National Education Law	100 protesters were arrested

discussion

1. Minister for Education Daw Khin San Yi responded to the student protesters by inviting the students to discuss the National Education Law, but she also said that “parents cannot always give their children everything they ask for.” What do you think she meant? What would you have said if you were in her position?
2. Why do you think Aung San Suu Kyi reacted differently to the Myitsone dam and Letpadaung copper mine protests?

homework

Homework: Add the events you learned to your timeline.

Refugees: resettle, return, or stay?

As of 2016, there are still over 100,000 refugees living in camps on the Thai-Burma border. Most of them are Karen or Karenni. There are also refugees in neighboring countries including Malaysia, China, and Bangladesh. New refugees have been fleeing because of communal conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists, and violence in the Kokang and Shan areas. However, not all of these people are officially recognized as refugees. For instance, there are over a million people who have been displaced from Shan state living and working in Thailand who do not have refugee status.

There are three main possibilities for the future of these people: to resettle in a third country, to return to their homes, or to stay where they are.

Resettlement

Many people have already resettled in third countries. For instance, the US accepted more than 70,000 refugees from Burma between 2005 and 2014. Australia and the EU have also accepted thousands of people. Refugees have many reasons for choosing to resettle. Here are some quotations that show why:

“Life for our children will be much improved in the US. In the camp they cannot progress beyond Grade 10 in school, and they cannot go to university in Thailand,” —Thein Than Aye, a teacher and pastor in Mae Ra Ma Luang camp
“Our parents have recently applied for the US and the children don’t want to separate from their grandparents,” —Aung Mya Khe, 39, Mae

la Oon camp

<<http://www.unhcr.org/52e90f8f6.html>>

Resettlement has also caused some difficulties for the people who are left behind in the camps. As George, of the Karen Refugee Committee, explained in 2011, “When resettlement started, because of the *brain drain*, we have had difficulties with the health sector, education sector and camp management sector. Most of the young people who have capacity or skills left their camps for resettlement. The rest are unskilled and old people.” <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/94047/myanmar-thailand-refugee-camps-cope-brain-drain>>

Return

If refugees think it is safe enough, they may return to their homes. In 2014, Thailand announced that they had reached a *repatriation* agreement with Burma. However, the UNHCR said in 2016 that conditions were not appropriate for people to return.

Stay

Refugees could also remain in the camps where they currently live. However, it is not clear how long the UNHCR and Thailand will continue to support these people. International organizations and foreign countries are contributing less money for food and other necessities. Since 2010, the UNHCR has reduced the *rations* of rice and other foods that each adult receives.

KEY WORDS

Brain drain: when people with the most skills leave for better opportunities

Repatriation: when refugees are returned to the countries they came from

Rations: food or other items given to people for their survival

exercises

Are these statements true or false?

1. The UNHCR said it was safe for refugees to return to Burma.
2. There are still over 100,000 refugees in camps in Thailand.
3. The UNHCR has increased the rations of rice for refugees.
4. The US, the EU, and Australia have all accepted refugees from Burma.
5. All people who fled from Burma have official refugee status.

group work

1. Break into three groups. Each group will take on the role of refugees who have decided to a. resettle, b. return, and c. stay. Discuss your reasons for making this decision with your group, then try to convince the other groups to join you.

homework

Add the events you learned to your timeline.

Current issues

Over the past few months, you have learned about the history of Burma. Now it is your turn to research some current issues. You will have a chance to choose a topic that interests you and follow the development of this issue over time.

group work

In small groups, brainstorm current issues related to Burma—they can be about health, education, international relations, security, or other topics. Share your lists with the class.

discussion

Discuss these issues and why they are important today. Try to make connections between the past, present, and future.

homework

Choose one of the issues you discussed in class today, or another issue you thought of, and do some research on this topic. Present your research to the class.

Timeline review

exercises

Take out the timelines you have made during this unit. Compare them to the timelines you made on the first day. On your own, list some new things you learned, things you did not know about before. What important events, discoveries, developments and changes, or famous personalities did you learn about? What did you learn about your own life? What are some of the most important and interesting events in your life? What was most surprising? What did you already know about? Is there any topic where you have different information than you read in this unit? What do you think are the most important events of the past century?

group work

In groups, discuss your answers to the questions above.

review

Now it is your turn to be a historian and write a short history book. Look over the timeline you made and pick the events you think are most important. If you want, you can choose a specific theme for your book, such as the history of one ethnic group, one area, or one event. Make a book out of folded paper, and write a short history of the topic you have chosen. Share your books with the class.

Burma's future

You have been studying the past of Burma, but the past, present and future are all connected. Some historians try to predict the future by studying the past. It is not easy, but it is a good way to test your understanding of historical developments.

exercises

Extend your timeline another fifty years. Think carefully about what has happened in the past. Add five events you think will happen in the future and place them on your timeline. They should be things that could really happen.

Now, add five events that you *want* to happen in the future—these can be things you are hoping for, but that might or might not happen.

group work

Share the events you put on your timelines in small groups. Take notes on the similarities and differences between them, and then share them with the class. Make two large timelines, one of events that your class thinks will happen, and another of events you hope will happen.

discussion

Discuss what actions you could take so the realistic timeline will look more like the second timeline. What can you do to change the future of Burma?

review

- A. Look at these photographs and pictures. What is happening in each picture? Work in groups. Identify the people, places or events in each photo.
- B. In groups, choose three of the pictures. Find out as much information as possible about the people, places or events in your photos. Make a poster about your three pictures, with as much background information as you can think of.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



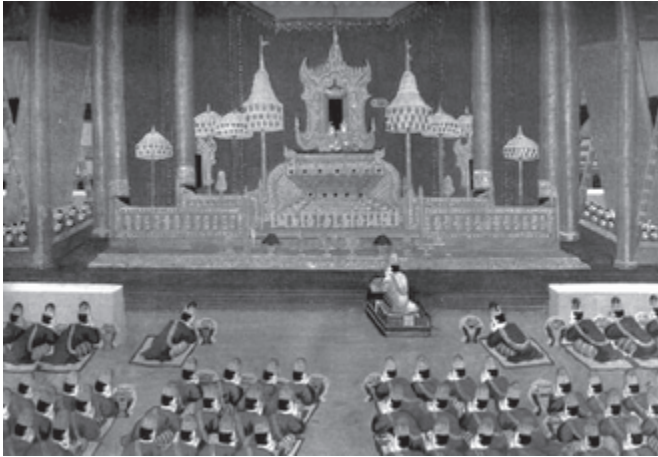
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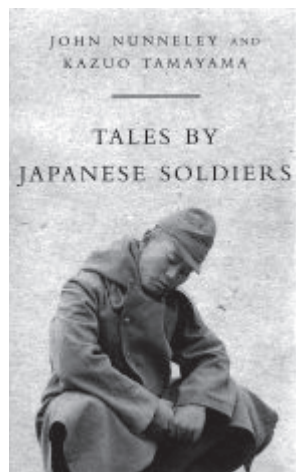
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20.



21.



22.



23.



HISTORY OF BURMA



Student's Book

The History of Burma is designed for Myanmar adult learners interested in varied perspectives of the country's past, present and future. The book provides a chronological listing of major events from 2500 BC to the present as well as developments/changes and personalities who have helped shaped the country. Additionally, the closing section encourages students to apply knowledge gained throughout the book in analyzing current affairs and making predictions about future trends.

The book contains:

- Core readings broken down by time period (and sometimes grouped thematically)
- Key words and definitions
- Exercises, questions for group work or discussion, and homework

The rich diversity of Burma brings with it a range of viewpoints that are shaped by different religions, ethnicities and political beliefs. This book aims to provide a history of Burma that is inclusive and appreciative of these differences. Thus, instead of being taught to absorb information, the questions and exercises of History of Burma push students to consider the multiple perspectives of controversial issues and make connections between the country's complex past and their own lives/communities.



Website: www.thabyay.org

Email: educasia@thabyay.org

info@curriculumproject.org

