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**COERCION AND CONTROL
IN COLONIAL BURMA:
THE BIRTH OF AN
INTELLIGENCE STATE**

Andrew Selth

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About this Publication

'Coercion and control in colonial Burma: The birth of an intelligence state'

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By the early twentieth century information collection and covert policing were well established as building blocks of colonial control.

Martin Thomas

"Intelligence Providers and the Fabric of the Late Colonial State".¹



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Preface

In 2019, I published a short historical survey of Myanmar's intelligence agencies, from their beginnings under General Ne Win's socialist regime (1962–88) to the fall of General Khin Nyunt as Chief of Intelligence (CI) in 2004.² The book ventured a little beyond that date, but its aim was mainly to update an earlier study of Myanmar's intelligence apparatus which had appeared in the journal *Intelligence and National Security* in 1998.³ The emphasis was on the then current state of affairs and contemporary developments. As such, the book did not look at the colonial antecedents of Myanmar's intelligence system, or go into very much detail about the socialist period. It was followed by several other pieces on this subject, in particular a research paper prepared for the Stimson Centre in Washington DC, and a chapter written for Bob de Graaf's edited book *Intelligence Communities and Cultures in Asia and the Middle East*.⁴ These and other projects permitted me to make some additional observations, for example about the survival of Myanmar's intelligence apparatus under the quasi-democratic government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which held office between 2016 and 2020.⁵

Given the military coup in Myanmar on 1 February 2021, and the country's rapid descent into a bitter and bloody civil war, a strong case can be made for the revision and expansion of the 2019 book. Accordingly, it has been decided to add two chapters. The first will be a chapter

that investigates the development of the state's coercive apparatus during the British colonial period, up to the outbreak of the Second World War in Asia (1824–1941). The intelligence systems that evolved under General Ne Win and later military regimes are in one sense *sui generis*, but it can be claimed that they have antecedents in the way that the British sought to watch closely over and control their new province and (after formal separation from India in 1937) their new colony. The other new chapter will look, as far as possible given the dearth of reliable information on the subject, at the way in which intelligence, and the junta's intelligence agencies, have been used since the 2021 *coup d'état*. While in their infancy, the opposition National Unity Government (NUG) has created at least two intelligence organisations of its own.⁶

The following research paper explores the early period. It surveys the development of both the police forces and the armed forces in British Burma (as it was then known), to set their intelligence collection priorities and activities into an institutional framework. It then looks at how their more specialised agencies were, and were not, used by the colonial administration to collect intelligence, forewarn of popular unrest and protect British interests. It is planned that this paper will form the basis of a short introductory chapter to the second edition of my 2019 book.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AILO	Air Intelligence Liaison Officer	IPI	Indian Political Intelligence (Department)
APB	Arakan Provincial Battalion	LDF	Local Defence Forces
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations	MI	Military Intelligence
BCS	Burma Civil Service	MI5	(UK) Security Service
BDA	Burma Defence Army	MI6	(UK) Secret Intelligence Service
BDB	Burma Defence Bureau	MIO	Military Intelligence Officer
BDF	Burma Defence Force	MIS	Military Intelligence Service
BFF	Burma Frontier Force	MP	Member of Parliament
BFS	Burma Frontier Service	MPF	Myanmar Police Force
BIA	Burma Independence Army	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
BMP	Burma Military Police	NCO	Non-commissioned officer
BP	Burma Police	NLD	National League for Democracy
BPS	Burma Police Service	NUG	National Unity Government
BSPP	Burma Socialist Programme Party	OR	Other ranks
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement	PDF	People's Defence Force
CI	Chief of Intelligence	PDT	People's Defence Teams
CIB	Criminal Investigation Branch	QMG	Quarter-Master General
CID	Criminal Investigation Department	RAF	Royal Air Force
CIO	Civil Intelligence Officer	RCP	Rangoon City Police
CRPH	Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw	RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
DC	District of Columbia	RN	Royal Navy
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence	RTP	Rangoon Town Police
DOI	Directorate of Operations and Intelligence	RVR	Rangoon Volunteer Rifles
EAO	Ethnic armed organisations	SAC	State Administration Council
EIC	East India Company	SAIS	School of Advanced International Studies
ERO	Ethnic revolutionary organisations	SB	Special Branch
GHQ	General Headquarters	SIB	Special Intelligence Bureau
GOC	General Officer Commanding	SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
GSO	General Staff Officer	SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
HQ	Headquarters	UK	United Kingdom
ICS	Indian Civil Service	UN	United Nations
IB	Intelligence Branch	US	United States
IIP	Indian Imperial Police	USDP	Union Solidarity Development Party



May 1824 amphibious assault by Company forces on Rangoon. (Wikimedia Commons)

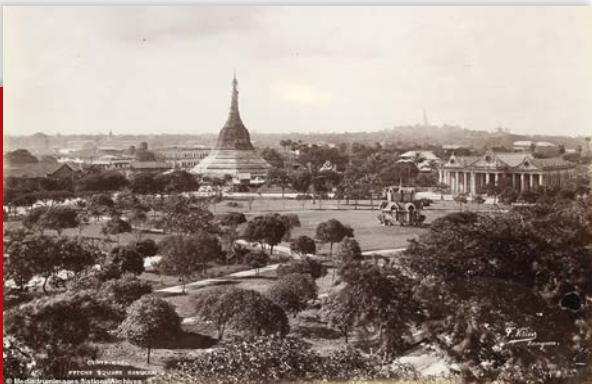
Protocols and politics

If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.

Confucius
*The Analects*⁷

Protocols

After Myanmar's armed forces crushed a nation-wide pro-democracy uprising in September 1988, the country's official name (in English) was changed from its post-1974 form, the "Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma", back to the "Union of Burma", which had been adopted when Myanmar regained its independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in January 1948. In July 1989, the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) changed the country's name once again, this time to the "Union of Myanmar", which had long been the vernacular version (in the literary register, at least). In the formal declaration of the country's independence, for example, it was called the Union of Burma in the English version and the Union of Myanmar (or "Myanma") in the Burmese version. In 2011, after formal promulgation of the 2008 national constitution, the country's official name was changed yet again, this time to the "Republic of the Union of Myanmar".



Rangoon from circa 1900— the largest city in Burma and a mix of British colonial architecture, modern high-rises and gilded Buddhist pagodas. (Adolphe Philip Klier| National Archives)

Also, in July 1989 a number of other place names were changed by the military government to conform more closely to their original pronunciation in the Burmese language. For example, Arakan State became Rakhine State and Tenasserim Division became Tanintharyi Division (later changed to Tanintharyi Region).⁸ The Mergui Archipelago became the Myeik Archipelago, the Irrawaddy River became the Ayeyarwady River and the Salween River became the Thanlwin River. The city of Rangoon became Yangon, Moulmein became Mawlamyine, Akyab reverted to Sittwe and Maymyo became Pyin Oo Lwin.⁹ The ethnolinguistic groups formerly known as the Burmans and the Karen are now called the Bamar and the Kayin.¹⁰ The people of Kayah State are widely known as Karenni (Red Karen), the state's name until it was changed by the Burmese government in 1952.¹¹

The new names were accepted by most countries, the United Nations (UN) and other major international organisations. A few governments, activist groups and

news media outlets, however, still cling to "Burma" as the name of the country, apparently as a protest against the former military regime's refusal to put the question of a name change to the people of Myanmar.¹² The old name was also believed to be the preference of then opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was held under house arrest by the military regime for periods totaling almost 15 years.¹³ Failure to acknowledge and use the new name has prompted complaints by successive Myanmar administrations, mainly to the United States (US) government, which even now uses "Burma" in official correspondence and Congressional documents.¹⁴ Questioned about the official name of the country soon after her party took office in 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi stated her continuing preference for the colonial-era term "Burma" but said that both names were now acceptable.¹⁵

After the UK dispatched troops to the royal capital of Mandalay and completed its three-stage conquest of Burma (as it was then called) in January 1886, Yangon (then known as Rangoon) was confirmed as the administrative capital of the country. It remains the commercial capital, but in November 2005 the ruling military council formally designated the newly-built city of Naypyidaw (or Nay Pyi Taw), 327 kilometres (203 miles) north of Yangon, as the seat of Myanmar's government.¹⁶ The terms "Rangoon regime", "Yangon regime", or in some cases simply "Rangoon" or "Yangon", have been used by some authors and commentators as shorthand terms for the central government, including the military government that was created in 1962 and re-invented in 1974, 1988 and 1997. The government after 2005 was sometimes referred to as the "Naypyidaw regime", or "Naypyidaw", to reflect the administrative change that took place that year.

Another common term is *Tatmadaw*. It is usually translated as "royal force", but the honorific *daw* no longer refers to the monarchy. Since 1948, the name has been the vernacular term for Myanmar's tri-service (army, navy and air force) armed forces. In recent years, it has gained wide currency in English-language and other publications on Myanmar.¹⁷ Sometimes, the *Tatmadaw* is referred to simply as "the army", reflecting that service arm's overwhelming size and influence, compared with the other two. While the term "Defence Services" usually refers only to the armed forces, it is sometimes used in a wider context to refer collectively to the armed forces, the Myanmar Police Force (MPF), the "people's militia" and sundry other state-endorsed paramilitary forces. On occasion, the Myanmar Fire Services Department and Myanmar Red Cross have also been included in this category. As the 2008 constitution decrees that "all the armed forces in the Union shall be under the command of the Defence Services", the formal title of the *Tatmadaw*'s most senior officer (in English) is Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.¹⁸

Over the years, some components of Myanmar's intelligence apparatus have changed their formal titles several times. The military intelligence organisation, for

example, has periodically been renamed, usually to coincide with structural changes in the armed forces. These adjustments have not always been known to, or recognised by, foreign observers. Also, Burmese language titles have been translated into English in different ways. The use of popular names has added another complication. For example, ever since 1948 the Tatmadaw's intelligence arm has been widely known as the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), or simply the "MI" ("em-eye"). Similarly, the Police Force's Intelligence Bureau, and later Special Intelligence Department (or, strictly translated, the "Information Police"), has long been known as Special Branch, or "SB". All this has meant that in the literature some agencies have been called by several different names, and not always accurately.

Since the 2021 coup, many activist groups and commentators have refused to call the new military regime by its adopted title, the State Administration Council (SAC), which on 1 August that year branded itself a "caretaker government". They refer simply to "the junta" or "the military regime". Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been denied any official status, being known as "the junta chief" or "Ma Ah La", the Burmese acronym for his name.¹⁹ The same critics have also objected to calling Myanmar's armed forces the Tatmadaw, on the grounds that they do not deserve the status and prestige that has historically been associated with that title. The opposition movement and its supporters prefer the description *sit-tat*, which in Burmese means "military", or "army".²⁰ This is despite the fact that "Tatmadaw" occurs in the official name of the opposition People's Defence Force (*Pyithu Kakweye Tatmadaw*, or PDF). Some governments, like that of the United States, avoid such diplomatic conundrums by simply referring in public to "the Burmese military".²¹

In this paper, all the formal titles are used, except when they specifically relate to periods, events or institutions before 1989. This includes those names adopted after the coup by the opposition movement, such as the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which in April 2021 created a shadow National Unity Government. This practice does not signify support for any particular party, faction or group. It simply reflects the reality of the current political scene in Myanmar in a way that makes the identification of various periods, groups and institutions easier for everyone.

All Burmese personal names are particular. Most people do not have surnames or forenames in the Western sense.²² Names may be one to four syllables long, and are usually chosen depending on the day of the week that a child is born (which is why many people in Myanmar share the same names). Sometimes, however, a child's name may derive from those of their parents, as is the case with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.²³ Also, among the majority Bamar ethnic group names are usually preceded by an honorific, such as "U", literally meaning "uncle", or

"Daw", meaning "aunt". "U" can also form a part of a man's name, as in U Tin U. The titles "Maung", "Ko" ("brother") and "Ma" ("sister"), usually given to young men and women, are also found in personal names, as in Maung Maung Aye, Ko Ko Gyi and Ma Ma Lay. To all such rules, however, there are exceptions. Some of Myanmar's ethnic minorities, like the Kachin, have family or clan names, which are placed before their given names, as in a case like Maran Brang Seng, where "Maran" is the name of a clan.²⁴ Other ethnic minorities, such as the Shan, Kachin, Karen and Chin, have their own systems of honorifics and naming conventions.

In Myanmar, names can be changed relatively easily, often without seeking official permission or requiring formal registration. This situation is further complicated by the frequent use of nicknames and other sobriquets as identifiers, such as "Myanaung" (the town) U Tin, "Tekkatho" (university) Phone Naing, or "Guardian" (the magazine) Sein Win. Pen-names, *noms-de guerre* and pseudonyms also have a long history in Myanmar.²⁵ For example, the birth name of General Ne Win, who effectively ruled the country from 1962 to 1988, was Shu Maung. Ne Win, which means "bright sun" in Burmese, was a *nom de guerre* he adopted in 1941 and retained after the Second World War, probably to hide his Chinese heritage.²⁶ Some Myanmar citizens were given or have adopted Western names, including those who attended Christian missionary schools in their youth. Others use only one part of their name for convenience, for example when travelling abroad or dealing with foreigners who are unfamiliar with the Burmese naming system. It is not uncommon for an obituary to list more than one name by which the deceased was known.

Finally, a word of warning about statistics is required. As any serious Myanmar-watcher would know, considerable care needs to be taken in citing any numbers.²⁷ Most statistics released by the military governments between 1962 and 2015 were either based on unreliable sources, or were deliberately distorted to convey a rosier picture than was actually the case. Even statistics published by reputable organisations like the World Bank or United Nations need careful handling, as they often rely on base data provided by the Myanmar government, which can rarely be independently verified. In British Burma, a major effort was made by the colonial government to produce accurate statistics, but police strengths and troop numbers were constantly shifting and changing, meaning that a definitive number is often difficult to identify. Even in more modern sources, different numbers are cited by different authors, leaving researchers scratching their heads and wondering where the truth lies.²⁸ In this paper, the most accurate figures available have been used, and relevant dates given, but inevitably there will still be discrepancies.

Politics

Although this research paper looks mainly at the British colonial period, it may also be helpful to sketch out recent political developments, and to note changes in the names of some key institutions and positions.

The armed forces effectively ruled Myanmar for half a century, since Ne Win's coup d'etat in March 1962, when he formed a Revolutionary Council.²⁹ From 1974 to 1988, the armed forces exercised power through an ostensibly elected "civilian" parliament called the *Pyitthu Hluttaw*, dominated by the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), the country's only legal political organisation. On taking back direct control of the country in September 1988, the armed forces created the State Law and Order Restoration Council, which ruled by decree. In November 1997, apparently on the advice of an American public relations firm, the regime changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), but continued to rule through executive fiat.³⁰ In May 2008, the SPDC held a constitutional referendum, with predictable results.³¹ The new constitution was promulgated the same year. This was followed by carefully managed elections on 7 November 2010. The resulting national parliament, consisting of 75 percent elected officials and 25 percent non-elected military officers, first met in January 2011. A new government was installed under President Thein Sein (a former general) in March that year.

Continuing this process, by-elections were staged on 1 April 2012 to fill 48 seats left vacant after recently-elected Members of Parliament (MP) had resigned to take up ministerial appointments, or had died. The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), which was re-registered for the elections in December 2011, claimed that fraud and rules violations were widespread, but the party still won 43 of the 45 seats available on the day. One successful candidate was the party's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been released from house arrest in November 2010.

On 8 November 2015, a new general election was held which, by most accounts, was reasonably free and fair.³² The NLD received about 65.6 percent of all votes cast, while the pro-military Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) received 27.5 percent. Under Myanmar's "first past the post" electoral system, this gave the NLD 79.4 percent of all the available seats.³³ It secured 255 in the 440-seat lower house (*Pyitthu Hluttaw* or House of Representatives), and 135 in the 224-seat upper house (*Amyotha Hluttaw* or House of Nationalities), a total of 390 of the 491 seats contested at the Union level.³⁴ The armed forces are automatically allocated 25 percent of the seats in both houses, but this gave the NLD a clear majority in the combined Union Assembly (*Pyidaungsu Hluttaw*). As a result, it was able to elect a new president in 2016 and pass a law creating the position of State Counsellor for

Aung San Suu Kyi (who under the 2008 constitution was unable to become president, as her two children were the citizens of foreign countries).³⁵

The national charter clearly stated that the president "takes precedence over all other persons" in Myanmar. However, even before the 2015 elections, Aung San Suu Kyi had made it clear that, if her party won office, she intended to be "above the president" and act as the country's de facto leader.³⁶ Consequently, under the NLD the president acted essentially as a ceremonial head of state. For practical purposes, Aung San Suu Kyi acted as head of the government, within the limits of the constitution, which ensured that considerable power was retained by the armed forces. Anomalous it may have been, but her new position was accepted by most other world leaders, as evidenced by her attendance at various meetings of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and (as State Counsellor) at the enthronement of the new Japanese emperor in October 2019.³⁷ Aung San Suu Kyi was also Myanmar's Minister for Foreign Affairs and, formally at least, attended some international meetings in this capacity.³⁸



The State Counsellor of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi meeting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the sidelines of the 14th ASEAN-India Summit, Lao PDR, 2016. (Wikimedia Commons)

Another general election was held in November 2020, with an estimated voter turnout of more than 70 percent. Despite "serious deficiencies in the legal framework" noted by neutral observers, voters were able "freely to express their wills".³⁹ The result was an even more emphatic victory for Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. The party won 258 seats (58.6%) in the *Pyitthu Hluttaw* and 136 seats (61.6%) in the *Amyotha Hluttaw*, or 83 percent of the total.⁴⁰ Having secured more than 322 of the 476 elected seats, the NLD was thus entitled to form a government and choose a new president. The USDP suffered dramatic losses all around the country, garnering only 33 seats in both

houses. The NLD also dominated the elections for the 14 state and region assemblies, which were held at the same time. These results promised that, barring unforeseen problems, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD would remain in office for another five years.⁴¹ Once again, they would govern in partnership with the armed forces which, under the 2008 constitution, were allocated three ministries (Defence, Home Affairs and Border Affairs), in addition to 25 percent of all seats in both national and provincial assemblies.

On 1 February 2021, however, almost exactly a decade after the SPDC permitted the transition to a “disciplined democracy”, those expectations were rudely dashed. Before the new parliament could meet that day, the commander-in-chief of the defence services, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, unexpectedly declared a one-year state of emergency and created a State Administration Council, made up of eight military officers and three civilians. They were later joined by six more civilians.⁴² The SAC immediately detained Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 50 other officials and activists. Many more arrests followed. A military spokesman stated that the Tatmadaw had been forced to seize power due to the NLD’s failure to acknowledge massive fraud in the November 2020 elections.⁴³ Few foreign observers (or Burmese) believed that that was the real reason for the coup but, despite widespread speculation in the news media and online, the reasons for the takeover remained unknown.⁴⁴ To the people of Myanmar, however, one thing was clear. Once again, the country had a brutal unelected military government, and faced an uncertain future.

Since February 2021, Myanmar has descended into a bitter civil war. On the one side is the junta, commanding the armed forces, the police force, the intelligence agencies and a number of ad hoc militia groups, such as the *Pyusawhti*. The latter is made up of former criminals, extreme Buddhist nationalists, unemployed youths and sundry other pro-military

elements.⁴⁵ USDP members, army veterans and the families of serving military personnel have also been called upon to join the fight against the opposition movement. Facing them is a diverse coalition of anti-junta and pro-democracy groups. It includes the members of a nation-wide Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and followers of the shadow National Unity Government. Several ethnic armed organisations (EAO) (now rebranded ethnic revolutionary organisations, or ERO) have joined with units of the People’s Defence Force to wage a guerrilla campaign against the junta. Supporting them are over four hundred township-based Local Defence Forces (LDF) and hundreds of so-called People’s Defence Teams (PDT).⁴⁶ The latter two categories seem to include most of the small resistance cells responsible for the “targeted killings” and bombings that have punctuated Myanmar life, mainly in urban areas, since 2021.

Indications are that the current political and military stalemate will continue for some time, possibly even years. The picture would of course change if there was a significant shift in the strategic environment, say if a major Tatmadaw combat unit mutinied, or if a foreign government broke ranks and provided the PDF with modern arms, like shoulder-fired missiles.⁴⁷ The NUG has also called for the imposition of a foreign-enforced no-fly zone over Myanmar to deny the junta the use of its air power.⁴⁸ However, at this stage, such scenarios remain hypothetical. The international community does not seem prepared directly to intervene. Also, neither side is in a mood to compromise. The junta has vowed to “annihilate” the opposition movement, which it describes as a terrorist organisation.⁴⁹ The NUG has formally declared a “defensive war” against the military regime and rejected any suggestion of a negotiated settlement.⁵⁰ As US Counsellor Derek Cholet said at the Shangri-la strategic dialogue in Singapore in June 2022, there is currently “no off-ramp”.⁵¹ For both sides, the goal is total victory, but such an outcome is likely to prove a chimera.⁵²



Scene upon the terrace of the Great Dagon Pagoda at Rangoon. Looking towards the north.
(Wikimedia Commons)

Introduction

Thus, what enables the wise sovereign and good general to strike and conquer, and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men, is foreknowledge.

Sun Tzu
*The Art of War*⁵³

It is often said that intelligence is the world's second oldest profession.⁵⁴ Whether or not that is true, Myanmar cannot lay claim to being among its earliest practitioners. In Asia, that title probably lies with the rulers of the Indian subcontinent, or perhaps the Chinese.⁵⁵ Myanmar historians can, however, point to the organised use of spies from a relatively early date. Old records refer to espionage or secret operations of some kind or another. For example, spies are mentioned in the *Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*.⁵⁶ The *Royal Orders of Burma* listed as essential for the kingdom people who could act as the "ears of the army (spy)".⁵⁷ In 1569, the Toungoo king Bayinnaung employed a spy to help capture the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya. Before the British began their three-part annexation of the country in 1824, the ruling Konbaung kings ensconced in the capital cities of Ava, Amarapura and Mandalay employed an extensive system of spies and informants to keep abreast of developments around the country and to protect themselves from political rivals.⁵⁸ For most of the 19th Century, this apparatus was consistently under-estimated by the British, in large part due to a lack of intelligence of their own about the country they were trying to conquer.⁵⁹

The Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885) developed "powerful and sophisticated internal espionage systems".⁶⁰ Most Burmese settlements and rural areas had officers designated as "royal listeners" whose job it was to keep the king and his senior courtiers well informed.⁶¹ The king appointed his own "news-writers". He also employed spies and informers who were able to travel up and down the country, carrying messages and reporting on developments.⁶² Spies were also sent abroad to gather information, mainly about Burma's neighbours, but also on European countries.⁶³ The British presence in India and Ceylon was the target of several missions.⁶⁴ As Thant Myint U has written;

*Secret agents included monks, nuns, court officials and members of the royal family, in particular women members. Masseurs were prized as spies, presumably because they often found themselves privy to indiscreet conversation.*⁶⁵

In addition, the social distinctions between ordinary peasants and the descendants of state military and labour groups helped to promote mutual surveillance, a practice reinforced by the authoritarian nature of the regime.⁶⁶ The Burmese also had a "surprisingly rich cartographic tradition" and there were numerous local maps that the Burmese kings and military officers could consult.⁶⁷ They also had access to some early European maps.

All these forms of information collection, collation and analysis were closely controlled by the king, princes and royal councillors in what one noted Myanmar watcher has called a "formal intelligence establishment".⁶⁸

Needless to say, the mere existence of such a structure did not guarantee accurate or balanced reports, and indeed some Burmese despatches which fell into British hands during the three Anglo-Burmese Wars were found to be self-serving, or in other ways misleading.⁶⁹ Fear of retribution often persuaded officials in the field to tell the king what he wanted to hear, not what was really happening. During the Third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, for example, King Thibaw was told that the Burmese had scored a major, if costly, triumph at Minhla on 17 November, when it had in fact been a decisive British victory.⁷⁰ Similar reports followed the fall of Myingyan on 25 November. It was also relevant that Burmese rulers were often distracted by local crises and the need to protect themselves from jealous rivals and interlopers. Intrigues at court could be quite troublesome and time-consuming. As a result, during the early days of contact between the two countries, "Burmese knowledge of the British was crude ... as crude, in fact as British knowledge of the Burmese".⁷¹



Court house at Tharrawaddy, in Burma (Myanmar) 1880. (Unknown photographer | British Library)

The British and Burmese were sparring with each other for years before war actually broke out, and this inevitably included the conduct of intelligence operations. The Burmese king sent spies "to the Tipu Sultan in Mysore, to the Marattas, to Nepal and to the imperial court in Delhi as well as to British Bengal".⁷² According to Maung Htin Aung, the East India Company (EIC) relied on spies to keep informed of developments in the Burmese capital. It also took advantage of other contacts with the Burmese to gather useful information. For example, when King Bagyidaw sent a diplomatic mission to Calcutta in 1830, the British escort was charged with carefully noting the details of the route taken in case it was needed for future military operations.⁷³ Not surprisingly, the Burmese court was convinced that they were surrounded by British spies. This helps explain Burmese suspicions of the Anglican missionary John Marks, resident in Mandalay, and the imprisonment during the First Anglo-Burmese War of foreigners like the merchant Henry Gouger and the American Baptist Adoniram Judson.⁷⁴ Gouger, for

example, was accused of having made maps of the country for the EIC and of running agents against the Burmese.⁷⁵

In fact, when the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out, the EIC authorities in Calcutta knew very little about Burma and the Burmese. Most of their files contained diplomatic correspondence, details of Burma's external trade or commentaries on Burmese culture. The lengthy reports prepared by Michael Syme, who led delegations to Ava in 1795 and 1802, for example, and by Hiram Cox, who acted as a British agent in Rangoon between 1796 and 1798, were useful, but still very limited.⁷⁶ They added little to knowledge of Burma outside the narrow fields that they were able to discuss with their contacts at court and in the marketplace. These tended to revolve around questions of external trade, local customs and court protocols. Their first-hand descriptions of the countryside were mostly confined to a few population centres and the views from a boat on the Irrawaddy River. Their visits yielded little information of real military value. Also, the British assumed that the Burmese were similar, in many respects, to the Indians, and expected that they would be able to exploit similar weaknesses in Burmese society. This proved to be a major miscalculation.

Even before the entire country was annexed, the colonial administration began to put in place an elaborate structure to help them get to know it, become better informed about local developments, and to respond to any challenges to British rule. Following the pattern established in India, they created a civil police force, one of the most critical duties of which was to collect intelligence for the authorities both in Rangoon and back in India. It was often on the basis of this reporting that the army and paramilitary Burma Military Police (BMP) were deployed to quell civil unrest. The BMP acted in effect as soldiers, but at a lower cost to the civil administration, of which they were considered an important part. After the fall of Mandalay and the so-called "pacification" of Upper Burma, the regular armed forces in the province were greatly reduced. The few battalions left in country were available to respond to crises beyond the capabilities of the police, which they did on at least four occasions, but generally speaking Burma was considered a strategic backwater and the armed forces were not given a high priority.⁷⁷

The survey that follows highlights two key aspects of British rule during the colonial period. The first is that the colonial authorities in India (of which Burma was a part until 1937) were keen to put in place from an early stage a comprehensive intelligence collection apparatus that could report on the attitudes and behaviour of their Burmese subjects. Through that structure, the colonial government hoped to be able to forestall, or respond quickly to, civil unrest and, particularly during the 1930s, growing nationalist sentiment and perceived external threats. The second key point made in this

paper is that Burma's colonial intelligence apparatus was always dominated by the police. The civil and military police forces in Burma were the essential elements in colonial control mechanisms, providing the means for both surveillance and response.

Notwithstanding the central role of the armed forces in the three Anglo-Burmese Wars, and the army's important part in crushing the 1930-32 Saya San rebellion, the army and military intelligence only ever played a minor role in maintaining law and order.⁷⁸

These findings throw a different light on the conventional view that "the primary role of the Army in Burma was internal security".⁷⁹ If so, it was not a role that the army was called upon to exercise very often. Most often it was the police which stepped in. Questions are also raised over the claim by a number of Western scholars that the military regime that first seized power in Burma ten years after Independence in 1948, and which in various forms has dominated national affairs ever since, owes a lot to the colonial administration's reliance on coercive force to maintain law and order, as it was then perceived. Mary Callahan, for example, has written that "the process by which Britain built a modern state in Burma enshrined violence as the currency of politics".⁸⁰ After surveying Burmese history before the Second World War, it could be argued instead that the most obvious continuity is not the use of coercive force, which has been common to authoritarian and totalitarian states the world over, but rather the reliance on intelligence to assist in the regime's control over the population.

Indeed, if anything, this research paper strengthens the claim that, rather than being a "police state", as it has often been described, Myanmar has long been an "intelligence state".⁸¹ For without powerful intelligence systems neither the British colonial government nor more recent military governments could have maintained their dominance over Burmese society. The collection and manipulation of intelligence on both the population and political activity was critical to their survival and longevity. Since 1948, military intelligence too (or at least intelligence operations conducted by military organisations) has also become central to the maintenance of these regimes, including the junta established after the 2021 coup. Yet this aspect of Burma's history has long been neglected by officials, scholars and other observers. To adapt an observation by the British diplomat Alexander Cadogan, for Myanmar, as for so many other countries, intelligence has long been the missing dimension of its history.⁸²

Given the nature of intelligence and the restrictions placed on its practitioners, reliable information about such matters in Myanmar is difficult to find. However, by drawing together scattered references to the subject in the open-source literature, seeing how they fit together and relate to contemporary developments, this paper aims to help fill that gap in the public record.



Burmese police guard at Mandalay in Burma (Myanmar) 1886.
(Willoughby Wallace Hooper | British Archives)

The development of Burma's police forces

One of the hardest tasks connected with the administration of a country by foreign rulers is the creation of a good police force.

Charles Crosthwaite
*The Pacification of Burma*⁸³

In 1952, Charles Jeffries, the UK's Deputy Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote that all British colonial police forces went through three stages of development:

*The first phase was one of more or less improvised arrangements for securing the basic essentials of law and order ... The second phase was the establishment of semi-military constabulary forces ... organised mainly with a view to the suppression of crimes of violence and mass outbreaks against the peace ... The third phase of police development in the Colonies is the modern trend towards the conversion of these semi-military constabularies into civilian police forces ... but still retaining certain continuing supplementary functions of a military character.*⁸⁴

Burma had regained its independence from Britain by the time this passage was written. Even so, viewed from the perspective of a senior official in London surveying nearly 150 years of colonial rule, it could be argued that the development of Burma's police forces broadly conformed to this pattern.

In several ways, however, Burma's experience of colonial policing was *sui generis*. Despite a strong tendency for British officials at the time to view Burma merely as an extension of India, and to try and transplant Indian administrative procedures and practices to that colony's most eastern province, Burma was always a separate country that required specific responses to a wide range of unique national circumstances. Jeffries' neat overview glosses over the development, in fits and starts, of an increasingly complex, multi-layered police structure that had to grapple with constant challenges to law and order, and to colonial rule itself. It never quite succeeded in overcoming either. Periodic attempts to cut the level of expenditure on Burma's police forces were almost always reversed later, as the consequent increase in violent crime and civil unrest demanded more resources.⁸⁵ All these changes in structure and manpower made the development of an efficient, centralised police force very difficult. Indeed, it can be claimed that in each of the three stages of police development identified by Jeffries, Burma proved to be an exception to the general rule.

Burma under Indian Administration (1824-1885)

The British conquered Burma in three stages. After the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26, the East India Company acquired the coastal divisions of Arakan and Tenasserim, and recovered Assam, which had been annexed by Burma's King Bagyidaw in 1816-19. Arakan was transferred to the government of Bengal while Tenasserim was placed under the direct control of the Governor General in Calcutta, a status it shared with the Straits Settlements. Assam reverted to British India. The Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852-53 saw the Burmese provinces of Pegu and Martaban added to the

EIC's possessions, giving the Honourable Company control over the whole of Lower Burma. In 1862, Arakan, Tenasserim (by then incorporating Martaban) and Pegu were formally constituted as British Burma, and designated a new province of British India. Each division was placed under a Commissioner responsible to the Chief Commissioner in Rangoon, who in turn answered to the Governor General in Calcutta.⁸⁶

In November 1885, after the Third Anglo-Burmese War, Mandalay fell to British arms. King Thibaw was deposed and exiled to India, where he died in 1916.⁸⁷ On 1 January 1886, Upper Burma was annexed to the British crown, effectively doubling the size of the province, which was formally declared a part of British India on 26 February. The new territory was divided into four divisions, Northern, Central, Eastern and Southern.⁸⁸ As Pegu had been subdivided in 1884, to form Pegu and Irrawaddy divisions, British Burma thus came to comprise eight Commissioners' divisions, headed by a Chief Commissioner with a growing secretariat in Rangoon. In Upper Burma there were 17 districts and in Lower Burma there were 20, each under a Deputy Commissioner. Burma was governed in this fashion until 1897, when the Chief Commissioner was replaced by a Lieutenant Governor, assisted by a non-elected Legislative Council.⁸⁹



King Thibaw and the royal family forced into exile by the colonial British, 1885. (Wikimedia Commons)

The first phase of British occupation, from 1824 to 1852, did not see the development of a significant

police presence in Burma. A number of ad hoc forces were created by various colonial officials but they usually failed to meet expectations. Outside of the main population centres, the day-to-day maintenance of law and order depended largely on the survival of the indigenous policing system.

The indigenous system varied from place to place, but usually consisted of a paid village constable known as a *gaung*, who maintained a basic level of law and order in collaboration with prominent local figures such as the chief taxpayer, or *kyedangyi*. The *gaung* were under the supervision of a hereditary village headman, or *thugyi*. Several *thugyi* were subordinate in turn to the township head, or *myo thugyi*, also a hereditary position. During this early period, the system worked reasonably well, as the *thugyi* and other local officials could rely on community and social pressures to help them maintain a basic level of law and order. However, as the colonial authorities began to manipulate this system for their own political and bureaucratic purposes, notably including revenue collection, it became increasingly fragile and sometimes broke down.⁹⁰ Also, British patronage of the local officials tended to undermine their authority, rather than strengthen it, due to continuing opposition to the British presence.

As Arakan was initially made a sub-division of the Bengal Presidency, the Indian police system was simply extended to cover the extra territory. Under this model, which seems to have both inspired and later been developed from the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the force was divided into two arms, one civil and the other military.⁹¹ The former, who were only lightly armed, were responsible for civil order and for the prevention and investigation of crime. The military police, on the other hand, had "no concern for the detection of crime".⁹² They were used largely as a mobile armed reserve capable of being deployed whenever there was an emergency, such as a serious breakdown of law and order. Detachments of military policemen were also used to strengthen civil police posts, where necessary, and to provide guards and armed escorts.

In 1826, two forces were created to perform these duties in Arakan. One was the Arakan Police Corps, later renamed the Arakan Provincial Battalion (APB), which was raised in Chittagong.⁹³ The other was the Mugh Levy, recruited from among the "Mughhs", as colonial officials then called Arakanese who were not natives of India.⁹⁴ Both forces were officered by British members of the Indian Army. The APB carried out civil police duties while the latter was employed as a military police force, mainly to respond to armed incursions by hostile "hill tribes".⁹⁵ In 1829, the APB was replaced by a locally-recruited force of civil policemen. In 1845, the Mugh Levy became the Arakan Local Battalion.⁹⁶ Both forces were based in Akyab (Sittwe), with personnel assigned to stations and outposts in the larger townships. Law and order in the rural areas, which were

rarely visited by British officers, remained the responsibility of local officials.

A Superintendent of Police was appointed to Tenasserim Division in 1827, but this position was largely symbolic. Moulmein, the main town and for a period the capital of British Burma, continued to be patrolled by night watchmen.⁹⁷ Later, a town police force was formed, consisting mainly of Indians. It was assisted after 1838 by a corps of locally recruited ethnic Mons, who acted as "a sort of military police" and guarded against the depredations of armed bandits, or *dacoits*.⁹⁸ Also, during the 1840s, a number of police posts were opened along the Salween (Thanlwin) River separating British territory from Burmese Martaban, and two small "gun boats" were introduced to help patrol local waterways. There was also a Convict Police, recruited from among prisoners to act as orderlies and overseers.⁹⁹ In the words of one British official, outside Moulmein and its immediate environs the police "were still organised on the primitive lines that had sufficed under the Burmese Government".¹⁰⁰

It was just as well that the indigenous system survived, as the EIC's new policing arrangements were not easily established. The Burmese resented foreign rule and were unfamiliar with the concepts and practices that were being introduced, many of which were based on British experiences in India. The legal system was impersonal and governed by increasingly complex rules. Traditional status and authority were rarely respected, and few colonial officials spoke Burmese.¹⁰¹ Also, in what was to become a familiar refrain, one British official based in Arakan later recorded that:

*In 1844 Captain Phayre, the district officer, stated that it required constant attention to keep the police from petty acts of annoyance and oppression. And in 1855 the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal noted that the police of Arakan were even more than usually inefficient.*¹⁰²

In 1847, the local police corps in Tenasserim was considered so unreliable by the British authorities that it was abolished and replaced with regular Indian troops.

Britain's annexation of Pegu and Martaban in 1853 saw the formation of several new police units to help maintain law and order, which was increasingly threatened by the breakdown of traditional social structures and the influx of foreigners seeking to exploit Burma's rich natural resources. In Pegu Division, for example, a paramilitary unit known as the Bassein Police Corps was formed by recruiting *dacoits* and former Burmese soldiers. It was later transformed into the Pegu Light Infantry, illustrating the fine line that existed between armed police and military units during this period. In addition, there were the usual village police, plus four battalions of locally-recruited district police and some prison guards. The authorities also maintained 47 small dispatch or guard boats, each

manned by about a dozen "river police", to help patrol the Irrawaddy River delta.¹⁰³

Martaban Division was absorbed into Tenasserim, but police strength there had to be more than double that of the other divisions in order to cope with the political unrest and high level of lawlessness that followed the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852–53. Even at this early stage, the resistance of local Burmese to the imposition of British rule and even cross-border raids by members of the Burmese army were usually labeled armed banditry or, in the local parlance, *dacoity*. They were not accorded any political status. Accordingly, they tended to be dealt with by the colonial authorities as criminal breaches of the law, rather than as a continuation of the hostilities which existed between the invading British forces and the embattled Kingdom of Ava, later Mandalay.¹⁰⁴

During this period, it became increasingly obvious that, in Burma as in India proper, there was a pressing need for more systematic policing arrangements. This requirement was underlined by the Indian Mutiny (or "Great Revolt") of 1857 which shattered British confidence in local institutions and local recruits. Also, the momentum behind a new approach to law and order was increased the following year by the transfer of control over India from the EIC to the British crown. In 1860, the former Governor General in India and now Viceroy, Lord Canning, ordered a comprehensive review of the colony's police forces, "which had long been regarded as inefficient, and below the general standard of British administration".¹⁰⁵ It was also an opportunity to regularise the many ad hoc and informal arrangements that were prevailing at the time, make certain economies and generally improve internal security. As part of this review, an inspection team was sent to Burma, consisting of Bengal Civil Servant Richard Temple and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Bruce of the Indian Army.¹⁰⁶

On its return to India, the Temple-Bruce team reported that Pegu was "prosperous, that the people are advancing, and that the administration is popular with all classes concerned".¹⁰⁷ Arakan too did not pose any major problems, in its opinion, but Tenasserim (including Martaban) was less settled. The team also noted that a large proportion of the police in Pegu and Martaban were stationed along the frontier with Ava. With these factors in mind, the team had considered all military and police units in the province and drawn up a "sketch estimate" for a "regular civil police". It recommended a force of 2,503 men for Pegu, plus a river police contingent of 26 dispatch boats with crews of between six and a dozen men each. Arakan was felt to need a "constabulary force" of 1,087 men with a contingent of river police, in the form of eight dispatch boats with crews.¹⁰⁸ For Tenasserim, the team recommended an establishment of 1,634 officers and men, plus a river police contingent of 15 dispatch boats with crews.

Lord Canning's review led in turn to the Indian Police Act (V of 1861), which created distinct provincial police services — in Burma's case, named the Burma Police (BP). The Act was applied to Pegu and Tenasserim divisions in 1862, and was extended to Arakan in 1864. The total strength of the BP at its inception was 6,109 men, but of this force about 1,200 were employed in guarding jails, treasuries and courts, and in strictly municipal duties.¹⁰⁹ Responsibility for the police was transferred from district officers (usually styled Deputy Commissioners) to an Inspector General of Police, based in Rangoon. There was also to be 12 Superintendents, one for each district. Five were allocated to Pegu Division, four to Tenasserim Division and three to Arakan Division. Each Superintendent was to be supported by Assistant Superintendents and Inspectors. Sub-Inspectors and Constables were to be subject to regular training and frequent inspection. Local paramilitary units such as the Arakan Local Battalion and Pegu Light Infantry were disbanded.¹¹⁰

By 1867, the colonial authorities could count 5,959 policemen in Lower Burma. However, 945 were village *gaung*. These local officials were not counted among the disciplined portion of the force, which remained quite small.¹¹¹ Only 56 of the latter were British Europeans. About 75 per cent of the total number were ethnic Burmans (*Bamar*) or were drawn from the country's other indigenous races, most notably Mons, Karens, Chins and Kachins.¹¹² The rest were Indian. With one exception, the senior officers were all British, and included several men seconded from the British and Indian armies.¹¹³ Almost all Inspectors and Head Constables were locals who had risen from the ranks. By 1881, the BP's strength had risen to 6,853 officers and men. In the 20 years since its formation, the cost of the force to the colonial government in India had doubled, which was a source of growing concern.¹¹⁴

One of the force's functions during this early period appears to have been to assist in provincial defence. Police posts were maintained at strategic locations along the frontier with the rump of the Burmese kingdom, where there was constant friction.¹¹⁵ According to Mya Sein, locals were considered "the only men fit for service on the frontier and in the interior", although it was the strong British view that few performed to a high standard.¹¹⁶ There were also continuing doubts about their loyalty to the British crown, a view strengthened by the hostile reaction of many local Burmese to the invasion of Upper Burma in 1885. On the grounds that Burma's sea ports and garrison towns were populated mainly by Indians, most of the policemen employed in those population centres were from the sub-continent. Rangoon had yet to experience the massive influx of Indians that followed the fall of the Burmese monarchy, but this rule also applied to the town, which in 1862 was formally proclaimed the provincial capital.¹¹⁷

During the 1850s and 1860s, Rangoon had been transformed from a small trading and fishing village hosting the revered Shwedagon Pagoda into a vibrant, modern secular town built on an ordered grid pattern.¹¹⁸ As the administrative and commercial centre of Lower Burma, it grew apace, particularly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. With increased urbanisation, however, came a new set of law and order problems.¹¹⁹ The town's small police contingent was poorly resourced and underpaid.¹²⁰ In 1867, a manual labourer could earn more in a day than a police constable. In the opinion of one British observer;

*The consequence was ... that the police was a kind of refuge for the destitute, and those who were too weak or idle for coolie work, or who, it is feared, maintained a secret understanding with thieves and dacoits, and added the wages of corruption to their small salaries.*¹²¹

The force was later expanded and its pay scales improved, but when a Municipal Committee assumed control of the town in 1874 there were still only 245 police officers and other ranks (OR) in the town, or one constable for every 670 people. The force was enlarged again in 1879, bringing its strength to 300 men, but it continued to struggle.¹²²

Policing after the fall of Mandalay (1886-1936)

After the fall of Mandalay and the imposition of colonial rule over the entire country, the British faced an exhausting, drawn-out counter-insurgency struggle against remnants of the Burmese army, insurgents and *dacoits*.¹²³ Indeed, while considered only a "police action" by the British government, it was the longest campaign fought by the British army during Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901).¹²⁴ The presence in Burma of up to 33,000 regular soldiers was insufficient to "pacify" the country. It was also considered too expensive to maintain them there for a lengthy period.¹²⁵ Accordingly, in February 1886 two military police levies, each of 561 officers and men, were raised from the Indian army. Later that year, a proposal was submitted to the Government of India for the enlistment of an additional 2,200 men, or two battalions, for service in Burma. "Out of this nucleus grew the military police force of the province".¹²⁶ Before the end of the year, the Government of India was asked to sanction another two levies of 561 men, and an additional 3000 men.¹²⁷

The four Military Police levies, each under a British officer seconded from the Indian Army, were well armed and used for purely military and paramilitary duties. The other units, called Military District Police, were answerable to District Superintendents of Police and given "humbler roles", such as prison guards and garrison police.¹²⁸ The distinction between the levies and the military district police was unsustainable, however, and in 1887 the two forces were amalgamated. A single force was established by the Upper Burma Military Police Regulation. It was superseded later the same year by the Burma Military Police Act, which formally created a paramilitary police force for Lower Burma and incorporated it with the Upper Burma force.¹²⁹ As civilians, all members of the BMP were subject to civil, not military, law. This applied even to the officers, who were usually seconded from the regular armed forces.

By 1888, the Burma Military Police consisted of 19 battalions, numbering 17,880 men in Upper Burma and another 1,000 men in Lower Burma.¹³⁰ The following year the BMP's strength reached a peak of about 19,000.¹³¹ Each BMP battalion was commanded by a British officer of Major or Lieutenant Colonel rank, assisted by one or two expatriates as Assistant Commandants.¹³² These officers were not appointed permanently, but were seconded from British or Indian army regiments for a fixed period (usually four years, extendable to five). As was the practice in the Indian Army, there was one Indian officer for every 40 men and one non-commissioned officer (NCO) for about 12 men. Their ranks also corresponded to those of the Indian Army, namely *Subedar* (equivalent to a Lieutenant), *Jemadar* (Second Lieutenant), *Havildar* (Sergeant), *Naik* (Corporal), *Lance-Naik* (Lance Corporal) and *Sepoy* (Private).

At first, nearly all members of the BMP were Indians, drawn mainly from the sub-continent's perceived "martial races", such as the Sikhs, Rajputs, Gurkhas, Garhwalis and Punjabis.¹³³ This policy derived in part from British military experience in India, but also reflected earlier problems encountered with recruits from southern India. According to one account, "It was found in the case of the Burma Military Police that the Hindustani ... proved himself not only a lamentable failure but a grave difficulty to the administration".¹³⁴ Later, however, BMP recruitment was expanded to include about 600 Karens and, after the so-called "pacification" of Burma's frontier areas by 1897, an increasing number of Kachins and Chins. These "highlanders" were seen by many who worked with them to be "closer" to Scots than to their Burmese neighbours.¹³⁵ They were considered to be tougher, more easily trained and more loyal than the "lowland" Bamar. A BMP company formed in the Southern Shan States included some ethnic Shans.

A later proposal that several BMP battalions be formed with half their recruits drawn directly from the local population was soon abandoned as unworkable. This was because of continuing Burmese resentment of foreign rule, the generally poor standard of applicants and, according to one British historian, "on account of the disinclination of Burmans at this period to accept discipline".¹³⁶ As late as the 1940s, Western observers believed that "The Burman traditionally has little adaptability for the disciplines of military life" and this accounted for their reluctance to enlist in the military police or the army.¹³⁷ One Karen battalion was eventually formed, but a riot in its ranks in 1899 led to its disbandment and the redistribution of its companies among other BMP battalions.¹³⁸

Due to the "disturbed" nature of the country around the time of the annexation of Upper Burma, the number of civil police in both parts of the province had increased to about 16,000 by 1891.¹³⁹ It remained predominantly Burman (Bamar) in its membership, with a smaller number of Anglo-Burmese, Karens and Indians.¹⁴⁰ As the security situation improved, this number was gradually reduced.

As the colonial authorities became more confident that they could exercise control over Burma, collect revenue and protect the growing number of British commercial enterprises, some military police units — equivalent to seven regiments — were transferred to the Indian Army as Madras Native Infantry.¹⁴¹ By 1898, only 12 battalions of BMP remained (ten in Upper Burma, two in Lower Burma), totaling 15,667 men.¹⁴² Each battalion had its headquarters in the principal town of a district. Small posts — manned by between 10 and 40 men — were established at strategic sites for the maintenance of law and order, but sufficient strength was retained at battalion headquarters (HQ) to provide a mobile column in case of emergencies. From about 1896, each BMP battalion had its own mounted infantry, transport animals, signalers and gunners.¹⁴³

The BMP were initially armed with .450 calibre Martini-Henry breech-loading carbines, which had been adopted as the standard small-arm for Britain's regular infantry in 1871. It had already proven its worth in numerous colonial conflicts — notably the war waged against the Zulus in southern Africa — and by 1885 more reliable ammunition was available.¹⁴⁴ After 1918, however, these weapons were upgraded to magazine loading .303 (inch) Lee Enfield rifles. Officers and sergeants carried side-arms, usually a .476 Enfield or after 1887 the more reliable .455 Webley revolver. Around the same time, BMP battalions were issued with small numbers of .303 calibre Lewis light machine guns. A few frontier units even had light artillery. These weapons were probably RML (rifled muzzle-loading) 2.5 inch mountain guns (Kipling's "screw guns", sometimes incorrectly called "7-pounders"), which could be broken down into four loads for transport by mules or, in extremis, men.¹⁴⁵

Contrary to popular belief, the BMP were not the only policemen in Burma who carried arms. By 1904, about one third of the civil BP force was provided with firearms, while the remainder was issued with a *dah* (machete or short sword), *lathi* (long wooden staff or stick, sometimes tipped with a metal cap) or a wooden truncheon or baton. The latter could be up to 90cms (nearly three feet) in length.¹⁴⁶ The firearms issued to the civil arm of the force were initially muzzle-loading smooth-bore muskets, but by the turn of the century an effort was being made to replace these weapons with (by then obsolete) breech-loaders such as .577 Snider rifles and Martini Henry carbines.¹⁴⁷ Some units were also issued with shotguns, mainly for riot control purposes. While never the best available, they were all better than the edged weapons (spears and dahs) and home-made firearms used by most dacoits.¹⁴⁸ Also, the factory-issue ammunition provided to the armed forces and police in Burma was superior in reliability and stopping power to the gunpowder made by some of the Burmese insurgents, using local ingredients.¹⁴⁹

For a number of years after its annexation, Upper Burma was administered separately from Lower Burma. This was in part because of the unsettled state of the new territory, but also because it was felt necessary to soften the impact of colonial rule, thus reducing the disruption to local life and, it was hoped, indigenous opposition. (As it happened, unrest broke out in Lower Burma in 1886. It proved to be a serious distraction from the military operations continuing in the north). For a period, there were thus two police commanders, one for Lower Burma and one for Upper Burma. In October 1888, however, the administration of police in both Upper and Lower Burma were formally combined under one officer of Inspector General rank, a process that was completed in 1891.¹⁵⁰ Two Deputy Inspector-Generals were also appointed, one to manage the civil police, the other the military police. A third Deputy Inspector-General position was later created to assist with logistics and supply issues.

The frontier areas were always an exception to the general pattern of policing. While efforts were made to impose an Indian style administration on central and southern Burma, this was not the case elsewhere. "In the vast hill tracts there was to be remarkably little interference with the rule of the traditional rulers and chiefs", who were permitted to administer civil, criminal and financial affairs with minimal intervention from the colonial administration.¹⁵¹ Usually, after a show of force and the removal of any potentially troublesome personalities, Rangoon relied on a small number of British Residents and their deputies to manage the colonial government's interests over an area constituting more than a third of the province. In 1922, a separate Burma Frontier Service (BFS) was created but it never grew beyond 40 members.¹⁵² Indirect rule managed by this select cadre of officials proved to be an economical way of governing the frontier areas. If there were any outbreaks of unrest, as still occurred

from time to time, particularly in the Kachin areas and Chin Hills, they were dealt with by the BMP.¹⁵³

Outbreaks of violence, however, were not confined to the frontier areas. Although the colonial administration had declared by 1891 that Burma was "perfectly tranquil", the country was never completely "pacified".¹⁵⁴ Gangs of guerrillas and dacoits still roamed around the countryside, looting and pillaging villages, but fading away at the approach of a British column. The authorities were often obliged to invoke the 1861 Police Act, under which they were empowered to assign an additional force of so-called Punitive Police to any district or area which was considered to be in "a dangerous or disturbed state, or in which the general conduct of the inhabitants points to the need of closer police supervision".¹⁵⁵ The cost of placing and maintaining these additional forces fell directly on the people of the affected district. The strength of a Punitive Police force and the length of its stay varied according to circumstances. It was typically 15-20 men for six months, but in a few cases was considerably longer.¹⁵⁶

If the 1861 Indian Police Act was a major milestone in the development of Burma's police forces, then the 1891 report of the Beames Committee in India was undoubtedly another. For, as a result of this report, an Indian Imperial Police (IIP) force was established to exercise executive control over the various provincial police forces.¹⁵⁷ This led in turn to an elaborate three-tier civil police structure in central and southern Burma, later extended to the whole province.



Burma Military Police, 1898.
(Stephen Luscombe | British Empire)

Prior to 1895, recruitment to the Imperial Service — a name which was not in fact used at the time — was almost entirely by nomination and a simple examination. Promotion from the lower ranks was rare, probably not more than two per cent.¹⁵⁸ After the creation of separate provincial police forces in 1861, the majority of

senior posts in Burma were held by Indian Army officers. By the 1880s, there was a much larger proportion of "nomination-wallahs", but they were of mixed quality. After the 1893 Beames reforms, entry to the IIP was by competitive examination in the UK, based on a syllabus similar to that used for entry into Sandhurst and Woolwich military academies as a cadet army officer.¹⁵⁹ Successful applicants were appointed by the Secretary of State for India and sent to their assigned provinces for training. They served a year on probation before being confirmed in their position. The IIP's Burma Section thus consisted of European British subjects holding the rank of Assistant District Superintendent, District Superintendent, Deputy Inspector-General and Inspector-General.¹⁶⁰

The number of IIP officers in Burma was always small. In 1898, for example, there was an Inspector General and three Deputy Inspector Generals, a District Superintendent for each of the 36 districts of Burma, and 59 Assistant Superintendents in charge of the more important sub-divisions. In 1922, when Eric Blair (who later adopted the pen-name George Orwell) was training as an Assistant Superintendent in Mandalay, there were only 90 IIP officers in the entire province.¹⁶¹ These officers effectively commanded the much larger provincial force. For its part, the BMP was controlled by fewer than 50 British officers. In 1901, there were 12 battalion commandants and 27 assistant commandants.¹⁶² In both cases, the expatriates were spread very thinly and obliged to rely heavily on the loyalty and capabilities of their subordinates. In this regard, they reflected the government of the province. According to the 1911 Census, for example, there were only 13,443 Europeans in the entire province, the population of which was estimated to be around 12,115,000.¹⁶³

The civil police consisted almost entirely of locally-enlisted men ranging in rank from Constable to Inspector. Officers were appointed by the colonial government. Europeans could hold the ranks of Head Constable or Inspector, but only with the special sanction of the Chief Commissioner or, after 1897, the Lieutenant Governor. Police administrative areas included the range (overseen by a Deputy Inspector General), the district (under a Superintendent, supported by one or more Assistant Superintendents), the sub-division (under an Assistant District Superintendent or Inspector), the township or circle (under an Inspector or Deputy Inspector), the police station and the outpost. The latter two were usually commanded by a Sergeant or Head Constable.¹⁶⁴ Stations and outposts usually had a number of beats, encompassing specific villages or tracts of land.

In administrative terms, most BP officers were grouped under the broad description of "district police". This category consisted mainly of foot police and their mounted counterparts, who were responsible for crime prevention and the day-to-day maintenance of the

peace. The creation of a separate excise department in 1902 in Rangoon relieved the police of the burden of managing excise duties. From time to time other terms were heard in Burma, such as "depot police", "port police", "river police" and "water police", but these appear to have been informal titles applied to officers on the basis of their specific duties at the time. Those in the Rangoon Police's River Division, for example, were usually referred to as "the Port Police".¹⁶⁵ There were, however, separate railway police and municipal police units.

Burma's first rail line opened in 1877 and ran between Rangoon and Prome. In 1884, another line was built between Rangoon and Toungoo. A Railway Police unit was established in the 1870s but, for reasons that are unclear, it was abolished in 1885.¹⁶⁶ The unit was reformed in 1890 under a specially selected Superintendent, as part of the BP's civil arm. It kept order on the country's trains and on railway premises, furnished sentries where appropriate, and assisted the district police in the investigation of crimes committed on railway property. It also regulated the transport of goods by rail.¹⁶⁷ Theoretically, a police officer or constable rode on every passenger train in Burma, but manpower shortages sometimes made this difficult. Members of the unit also monitored and reported on the movement of "suspicious characters".¹⁶⁸ The unit was reorganised in 1899, and its strength slightly reduced. Numbers later rose, however, and by 1903 it had 93 officers and NCOs, and 275 constables on its strength.¹⁶⁹

In 1899, the Rangoon Police Act created a separate Rangoon Town Police (RTP) force, consisting of 35 officers, 68 head constables and sergeants, and 750 constables.¹⁷⁰ Reflecting the special status of the provincial capital, the new force did not come under the control of the Inspector-General of Police but was managed by its own Police Commissioner, who answered to the Governor and was subject to the control of the municipal council. The force's senior officers, however, were usually seconded from the IIP. The RTP was initially divided into four geographical divisions (Western, Central, Eastern and River) and two administrative divisions. There was also a Motor Vehicles Department and a Hackney Carriage and Rickshaw Department. In 1905, a small mounted police unit was created, partly for ceremonial purposes but also to assist during times of civil unrest.¹⁷¹ Regular reports were made to the Commissioner of the Rangoon Police who was expected to know "everything which happened" in the city, the population of which by 1911 had reached nearly 300,000.¹⁷²

From 1891, the civil arm of the police also included the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) with its detection, intelligence, fingerprint and records functions, as well as the BP's various training schools. These are all discussed below.

The third level in this structure was the village or so-called "irregular" police force. It consisted largely of local officials, such as the *gaung* and *thugyi*, but by this stage they held their positions either under sections of the Village Act of 1887 or by special appointment. Attempts were made to use a new level of township officers, known as *myo-ok*, to administer local communities, and to enlist greater support from village elders (*lugyi*). These people were viewed as part of the internal administration of the village and as such were not counted among the members of the disciplined police force.¹⁷³ This system became increasingly ineffective, however, due in part to British unfamiliarity with Burmese customs and conditions, and the breakdown of traditional social structures, but also because of the declining authority of indigenous appointees in the face of the growing British presence.¹⁷⁴

The development of this system was accompanied by an increasingly complex set of rules and regulations governing police administration and conduct. As was British practice in many of its colonies, these rules and regulations were set out in a range of official publications. The first was issued in 1826, immediately after the first Anglo-Burmese War. This set of "Rules laid down by the Commissioners of Arakan for the guidance of their Assistants in the Police Department" eventually evolved into the *Burma Police Manual*, the first edition of which was issued in 1894.¹⁷⁵ The manual itself was divided into four parts. The first volume, which was only published in English, dealt with administration, crime and instructions for executive duties. The second volume dealt with the duties of subordinate police, and was published in both English and Burmese. The third volume dealt with the duties of the railway police. The fourth volume contained all the appendices to volume one.¹⁷⁶

Other manuals listed key laws and regulations, and covered specialised units like the CID and, later, Special Branch (SB).¹⁷⁷ The BP even had its own drill manual.¹⁷⁸

During this period, the size of the BP fluctuated greatly. In 1889, there were about 7,000 civil police in Upper Burma, with another 4,976 in Lower Burma.¹⁷⁹ By 1891, the total strength of the civil police in the province had risen to nearly 16,000.¹⁸⁰ In 1892, however, an effort was made to reduce these numbers due to mounting costs, which had more than doubled over the previous decade. Numbers vary depending on sources, but by 1898 the strength of the civil police had reportedly dropped to about 13,500, spread over some 600 police stations.¹⁸¹ By 1901, the force was 12,879 strong, meaning "there was in Burma proper one civil policeman to every 13 square miles and to every 718 of the population".¹⁸² By 1903, the number had risen again to 14,004, but the BP was still spread very thinly given the many demands being made upon it.¹⁸³ The Rangoon Town Police's strength hovered around 855 until 1906, when it reached 900.¹⁸⁴

The BMP's numbers during this period seem to have been more stable. From 14,702 in 1899, they rose to 15,113 the following year.¹⁸⁵ In 1902, an Indian Police Commission tentatively suggested the abolition of the military police which was widely recognised in Burma as "in reality a regular military force".¹⁸⁶ Even BMP officers themselves described the force as "a good deal less 'police' than 'military'".¹⁸⁷ Indeed, after the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the Burma Military Police formed two battalions of soldiers for overseas service, namely the 85th Burma Rifles and the Burma Mounted Rifles.¹⁸⁸ In the event, however, the colonial authorities in Calcutta decided against any reductions in BMP numbers in Burma and continued "to look to this branch of the police force for the maintenance of order in times of emergency".¹⁸⁹ It was seen to be more effective, and less costly, than stationing additional armed forces in the province.

The 1902 Indian Police Commission marked another important milestone in the development of the province's police forces. It was convened by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who wished to address "what he had long perceived to be the weakest link in the chain of the British Raj: the Indian Police".¹⁹⁰ The commissioners travelled widely and heard testimony from thousands of witnesses, including in Burma. Its report, published in 1905, was damning in its comments about the provincial forces, but shied away from impugning the integrity or capabilities of the British officers who commanded them. Importantly, the Commission recommended the creation of the rank of Deputy Superintendent for locally-recruited Inspectors. It was envisaged that they would work alongside the less experienced Assistant Superintendents, newly arrived from the UK. The commissioners also sought to streamline the colony's police forces and make them less expensive to run.¹⁹¹

In managing the Burma Police over the preceding 50 years or so, the colonial government in India had constantly sought to reduce costs, improve efficiency and ensure that administrative practices in Burma conformed as closely as possible to patterns and procedures in British India proper. The expense of policing Burma, in particular, was a constant source of concern to Calcutta. Indeed, according to one estimate, the unit cost of Burma's police force was three to four times greater than that of India proper, although this was not always the case.¹⁹² The creation and expansion of the BMP was itself prompted in large part by their relative cheapness, compared with regular troops. The high level of violent crime in Burma and the restless state of the population were recognised, at least in principle, but this did not protect the BP and BMP against the constant scrutiny of bureaucrats in Calcutta, supported in most cases by the higher levels of the colonial government in India.

In 1924, yet another committee was appointed to investigate the organisation of Burma's police forces.¹⁹³ It recommended pay rises for the civil police, better

training and improved accommodation, all seen as factors in the BP's poor reputation and low levels of recruitment. It was hoped this would reduce the level of corruption. It also reaffirmed the BMP's core roles, namely to preserve the peace in the frontier areas, act as an armed reserve in the event of emergencies, and to provide armed guards for the treasury. However, as a cost-cutting measure the committee recommended that the civil police replace the military police at all stations, other than at district headquarters and a specific number of other posts. Accordingly, in 1925 BMP detachments were withdrawn from 98 police stations around the country and the force's strength was reduced from 13 to 10 battalions. This brought its total strength down to less than 10,000 men.¹⁹⁴ This was justified in part by the perceived lack of any major security problems requiring paramilitary or military intervention.

Around the same time, 160 police stations and 94 out-stations were closed.¹⁹⁵ The number of head constables was reduced by 1,966 and of constables by 612. In 1920-21, the total strength of the civil police force had been approaching 16,000. By 1925-26 it was down to about 13,000.¹⁹⁶ Also, by 1929, the BMP had lost another battalion. That left six frontier battalions, the jurisdiction of which extended from the Burma-Assam border along the frontier with Tibet and Yunnan as far south as French Indochina. The battalions were based at Falam, Mogaung, Myitkyina, Bhamo, Lashio and Taunggyi. There was also a Rangoon Battalion (2,200 strong, with 1,450 distributed in 20 outposts) and a Mandalay Battalion (1,450 strong, with 1,000 distributed in 15 outposts). Mounted infantry were retained in both battalions for patrolling, rounding up dacoits, and for dealing with communal disturbances. A reserve battalion was based at Pyawbwe, in Yamethin District in central Burma.¹⁹⁷

The stated aim of all these cuts was to create "a smaller but better paid (and therefore more efficient) police force".¹⁹⁸ However, these reductions were made against the strong advice of officials in Burma, where the police continued to meet a number of serious challenges. The BP faced increasing pressures from crime, growing political and communal unrest and labour problems. Of particular concern was the high incidence of violent crimes in Burma, which quickly acquired a reputation for being a dangerous and lawless place.¹⁹⁹ For example, between 1871-75 and 1933-38 the rates of crime committed and reported to the police rose dramatically. Dacoity increased by 41 per cent and the rate of murder by 53 per cent.²⁰⁰ In 1922, when George Orwell joined the IIP, Burma "was infamous for having the highest crime rate in the Empire, and murder in particular was a widespread problem".²⁰¹ Despite a population of only 13 million people, three or four murders occurred in the province every day.²⁰² In 1935, the murder rate was said to be "little less than deplorable".²⁰³

Various explanations have been put forward to account for this phenomenon, but none are very convincing, least of all those with an underlying racial bias.²⁰⁴ As discussed eloquently by Ian Brown, some senior colonial officials believed that no amount of policing would improve the situation, which could be blamed in large part on the intractable nature of the Burmese, including a "lack of self-restraint and gusts of ungovernable passion for which the Burman is notorious".²⁰⁵ Even British colonial officers who were generally more sympathetic to the Burmese were inclined to comment on their apparent volatility and "wild outbursts of brutality".²⁰⁶ It was a reputation that the Burmese found very hard to shake. In 1942, for example, a research paper commissioned by the US Office of War Information, and written by the British anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer, claimed that the Burmese were inherently unstable and prone to violence.²⁰⁷

Another problem faced by colonial administrators was that service in the BP was never popular. Even when increased civil police numbers were sanctioned and pay rates improved, as occurred for example in 1868, 1879, 1882 and 1924, it was difficult to find suitable ethnic Burman (Bamar) recruits. Also, most who joined the force did not stay long. From 1875 until 1885, for example, about 30 per cent of the force was made up of trainees.²⁰⁸ Those who did remain were seen as incompetent, irresponsible and corrupt.²⁰⁹ The prevailing view among British observers was that;

*Although there were honourable exceptions, it was the general experience at this time that Burmans still did not adapt themselves well to police work.*²¹⁰

The BMP was able to attract recruits from among the ethnic minorities, notably Karens, Kachins and Chins, but until the 1920s the civil force was dominated by Indians (including Gurkhas). It was believed that they could "perform the duties which the Burmans seemed unable to fulfil".²¹¹ The BP's officers were overwhelmingly British — half were Europeans recruited direct from the UK — and proudly "Imperial".²¹²

For many years, the preponderance of Indians in the BP was considered by colonial officials to be "the key to the control of Burma".²¹³ In 1886, for example, when parts of Lower Burma rebelled against the overthrow of King Thibaw, many Burmese policemen were sympathetic toward the rebels, or for other reasons were reluctant to exercise the full force of their office. This prompted a greater emphasis on the recruitment of Indians, who were considered to be more loyal to the British crown and more likely to take action against Burmese agitators.²¹⁴ However, the reliance on foreign and minority ethnic personnel for the maintenance of law and order itself contributed to civil unrest, by inflaming Bamar nationalist sentiment.²¹⁵ It was not until 1923, and the granting of limited self-government to Burma, that a concerted effort was made to "Burmanise" the

province's police forces, albeit still largely under IIP officers recruited in the UK.²¹⁶

Yet another problem was that, generally speaking, the police in Burma suffered from a very poor reputation, among both the expatriate and local communities. As early as 1860, one Commissioner in Lower Burma had noted:

*The fact of a Burman becoming a policeman is prima facie evidence that he is an inferior man in his class; he must be more or less idle, thriftless, wanting in energy, and manly independence if he quit the illimitable field for private industry which the country offers to the humblest and poorest, for the prospects which the service of Government holds out to him.*²¹⁷

Chief Commissioner Charles Crosthwaite described the police in Lower Burma in 1887 as well deserving their reputation as "the worst and most costly in the world".²¹⁸ Fifteen years later, little had changed. The 1902 Indian Police Commission reflected the situation in Burma as much as in other provinces of British India, when it reported that:

*The [provincial] police force is far from efficient; it is defective in training and organisation; it is inadequately supervised; it is generally regarded as corrupt and oppressive; and it has utterly failed to secure the confidence and cordial cooperation of the people.*²¹⁹

There were many reasons given for this state of affairs, but singled out for particular mention was the routine employment of men who were "too often rough, ill-trained and under-paid" and given authority over others in "the general absence of any attention to the necessity for keeping the temper, being civil and respectful to the public".²²⁰ Several reforms were recommended, and some implemented, but in Burma at least such complaints continued to be heard.

To all these problems were added the unsettled state of the province. In addition to continuing high levels of civil crime, including a range of offences involving violence, the first three decades of the 20th Century saw a succession of strikes, rebellions, demonstrations, riots and rural disturbances in British Burma. Some, such as outbreaks of unrest in the western and northern frontier areas, could often be traced back to continuing unhappiness with British rule. Others, particularly those in central Burma, appear to have been inspired more by economic issues, while urban disturbances were largely the result of racial tensions and the rising tide of nationalist sentiment among the Burmese and Indian populations. An uprising in the Sagaing district in 1910 was led by a *minlaung*, or pretender to the Burmese throne, claiming supernatural powers, but feelings against the British were already running high.²²¹ Student strikes in 1920 and 1935 were widely

supported.²²² All these problems posed a continuing strain on the province's police forces and the resources of the British government in India.

In 1930, for example, there was an unprecedented series of violent confrontations in Rangoon sparked by clashes between Indian dockworkers and Burmese labourers. As the unrest spread, approximately 200 Indians were killed and more than 2,000 injured in what one British official at the time described as "a massacre".²²³ Order was only restored on the third day, when soldiers of the Rangoon military garrison were called out to help the police. Probably because the ringleaders (where they existed) could not be identified, "No-one was sent up for trial for murder or destruction of property", which made the authorities look weak and ineffective.²²⁴ The same year, there was a riot at Rangoon Jail, in which 34 convicts were killed and 60 or more wounded, mainly by members of the BMP. It too has been described as "a massacre".²²⁵ In 1931, anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon resulted in 12 dead and 88 wounded.²²⁶ In 1938, there was another wave of anti-Indian (and more particularly anti-Muslim) unrest. This time, the riots lasted a month, effectively paralyzing the province's economy. In Rangoon alone, 204 people were killed and about 1,000 were injured.²²⁷

The greatest test of the colonial regime's internal security apparatus, however, came in 1930-32, when a charismatic physician and former monk named Saya San inspired a series of violent outbreaks against British rule.²²⁸ This episode is still the subject of considerable controversy in academic and activist circles, due in part to the over-reliance of later commentators on the rather biased official record. Very briefly, Saya San claimed to possess supernatural powers, and to be an heir to the Burmese throne.²²⁹ He promised to rid the country of the British, restore the monarchy and revitalise the Buddhist religion. His message appealed to a large number of rural Burmese, mainly around Tharawaddy district north of Rangoon, where economic problems sparked by the global depression had been exacerbated by a number of new regulations imposed by the colonial government. The unrest quickly spread to surrounding districts, where there were a series of uprisings against a range of grievances. The colonial administration and security forces were taken largely by surprise.

Despite the relatively small numbers of rebels involved, the civil and military police forces were unable to cope, even with the help of local army units. As a result, some 3,640 additional soldiers and military police had to be deployed from India to assist.²³⁰ Saya San was captured in 1931 but, as Michael Adas has observed;

*It took the government, whose forces were equipped with airplanes, machine guns and other weapons of modern warfare, nearly two years to end a rebellion of several thousand Burmese agriculturalists who were armed mainly with dahs, obsolete firearms, and spears.*²³¹

Over 1680 rebels were killed in the rebellion, 1,389 were imprisoned and 126 (including Saya San) were executed.²³² Peace was eventually restored, but the use of "foreign" (i.e., Indian) troops and the harsh methods often employed by the police — including the public display of decapitated heads — left a lasting legacy of ill-feeling. The rebellion encouraged anti-British sentiment among young Burmese and Indian radicals, who were quick to describe it as a proto-nationalist uprising.²³³

The rebellion severely shook the confidence of the colonial administration. It also illustrated persistent weaknesses in the British position in Burma. This was not only its continuing reliance on the coercive apparatus of the state to maintain law and order — as it broadly defined the term — but also the difficulty of foreseeing potential challenges to British rule from different elements of the local population. Indeed, according to Parimal Ghosh, official ignorance of impending communal violence, attacks against police stations and even major outbreaks of violence does not seem to have been unusual.²³⁴ This was notwithstanding the efforts of district officers to monitor the popular mood, including through the widespread use of informers. It was also despite concerted attempts by the authorities in Burma over decades to develop an intelligence capability within the province's police forces, to keep the authorities in Rangoon and India informed.

At times, there were other issues to contend with. In 1923, for example, during the first session of the new Legislative Council, Nationalist Party MPs used the budget debate to attack the police system, which they claimed was too costly. They accused the colonial administration of paying senior police officers too much compared with the lower ranks, a practice they believed encouraged bribery and corruption. According to John Cady;

*The Criminal Investigation Department in particular was criticised for devoting too much attention to the suppression of political agitation while neglecting the basic work of crime detection.*²³⁵

Local MPs also complained about the fact that Burma paid India for the upkeep of the BMP. One Nationalist Party spokesman referred to "the exciting and exhilarating sport of police baiting".²³⁶ During the 1930s, any MPs so inclined had plenty of ammunition for their criticisms. While stemming from complex social, religious and economic problems, the unrest of that decade could all arouse nationalist sentiments.

The Burma Police after separation (1937-1941)

In 1923, following the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, responsibility for a wide range of official functions — but excluding defence and external relations — had been devolved to the Government of Burma. The province created a legislature of 103 members, 79 elected and the remainder nominated. Of the 79 elected members 58 were returned by general (i.e. Burmese) constituencies. The executive government passed from a Lieutenant Governor to a Governor-in-Council, but the incumbent remained subordinate to the British Viceroy in Delhi (which had become British India's seat of government in 1911). In 1937, in another major reform, Burma was formally separated from India and became a self-governing colony in its own right. It had a Senate, half of which was nominated by the Governor, and a House of Representatives. The latter comprised 92 members from territorial constituencies and 40 elected by community interests. The Governor in Rangoon now answered not to India but to the Secretary of State for Burma in London — although this office was held by whoever was Secretary of State for India at the time.²³⁷

These adjustments prompted a number of administrative changes in Burma. Members of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in the colony became members of the Burma Civil Service (BCS). The maintenance of law and order being a "transferred" subject, police matters were placed under the formal control of Burma's new Legislative Council. In addition, a new Burma Police Service (BPS) was created. The police were not allowed to vote, belong to political parties or otherwise participate in politics.²³⁸ Like its predecessor, the BPS was divided into civil and military arms. As before, the civil arm was further broken down into district police and village police, although the latter were of lesser importance. There were 356 permanent police stations and 47 smaller outposts.²³⁹ The BPS also included the CID, the Rangoon Town Police (now known as the Rangoon City Police, or RCP) and a 450-strong force of Railway Police.²⁴⁰ A Burma Police Training School had opened in Toungoo in 1906 but due to a lack of accommodation and unfavourable weather conditions it was moved to a custom built facility in Mandalay in 1909.²⁴¹ There was also a Detective Training School in Rangoon, which had opened in 1926.

In total, there were about 13,400 officers and men in the civil police, of whom nearly 71 per cent were natives of Burma (including Anglo-Burmese).²⁴² Most coastal towns and cantonment areas, however, were still policed by Indians. In the capital, only 26 per cent of the RCP were Burmese, with the remainder Indians. This closely reflected the composition of the city's population, which by 1941 was 56 per cent Indian and

only 32 per cent Burmese.²⁴³ (There were also small Chinese and European communities). Due to a gradual process of Burmanisation, by this stage more than half of the 40 officers at the District Superintendent level were Burmese.²⁴⁴ Nearly three quarters of the BPS's senior officers, however, were still British.

There was also, in Rangoon, "a small cadre of European police known as the Moghul Guard".²⁴⁵ The unit was reputedly named after the guard provided to the last emperor of India, Bahadur Shah II, who was exiled to Burma after the 1857 Indian Mutiny and died in Rangoon in 1862.²⁴⁶ According to a former member of the RCP, the name of the Moghul (or Mogul) Guard was also given to a special housing complex reserved for the RCP's officers and men. The usual inhabitants of these quarters were a small group — usually around 18 — of "European" Sergeants, commanded by an Inspector. Some were Anglo-Indian or Anglo-Burmese. It is not clear how these men were different from other members of the RCP, or why they were singled out for special attention, but they seem to have been used at times when loyalty and discipline were paramount concerns.²⁴⁷ They were sometimes employed on traffic control duties. They shared these living quarters with a mounted section of Sergeants and Constables.



Burmese people with soldiers of the BIA with their flag, 1942. (Wikimedia Commons)

At this time, there were no female police officers in Burma.²⁴⁸ As was the case in India proper, however, the increasing participation of women in political movements and street protests generated the need for female police officers to deal with them. As circumstances demanded, the wives of local policemen were recruited to form temporary units able to cope with the "special challenges" posed by female protesters.²⁴⁹ In 1923, for example, some female members of a radical nationalist organisation named *Bu athin*

attacked police while resisting arrest, and were subsequently imprisoned.²⁵⁰ In 1939, a unit was created at Insein by enlisting the wives of police officers from the Insein, Mayangon and Mingaladon checkpoints and police stations. A contemporary photograph shows a group of fourteen Burmese women in dark (probably blue, the colour of the RCP uniform) longyis with broad belts, wearing armbands over white shirts, and carrying *lathis*.²⁵¹

At Separation in 1937, there were nine battalions of Burma Military Police. Despite nationalist opposition to the move, six were immediately reconstituted as the Burma Frontier Force (BFF).²⁵² These battalions were stationed in the "Scheduled Areas" (also known as "Excluded Areas") around Burma's borders, which remained under the Governor's direct control. In these areas, the BFF inherited the former BMP bases at Falam, Myitkyina, Bhamo, Lashio and Taunggyi. They also took over or established a number of smaller posts on the borders with India, China and Thailand. The sixth BFF battalion, based at Pyawbwe, was used for training and as a reserve. These units consisted mainly of Indians and Gurkhas, but also had some Karens, Kachins and Chins. Few local Chinese were attracted to a career in the police, but a small number were recruited by the BFF for their linguistic skills, and posted to the Burma-China frontier.

In a significant change of approach, BFF units were administered by the Defence Department and came under the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Burma Army. Their composition, equipment, uniforms, pay and other conditions of service, however, remained almost the same as the BMP.²⁵³

The remaining three BMP battalions continued to exist as the Burma Military Police in "Ministerial Burma", namely those central and coastal areas that fell under the control of the new legislature. Two battalions were based in Rangoon, with the third at Mandalay. Of a total strength of 4,263 men, only 690 were Burmans.²⁵⁴ Responsible to the Inspector-General of the Burma Police Service, the BMP continued to serve as an armed strike force able to assist the local authorities in dealing with serious cases of dacoity, racial disturbances, riots, natural disasters and similar emergencies.²⁵⁵ Despite the recommendations of the 1924 police committee, quite a few small units were still attached to police stations around the country, to act as a deterrent against civil unrest and, if required, to boost their coercive power.²⁵⁶ The BMP also continued to provide armed treasury guards and guards for prison work camps in the rural districts.

Around this time, there were nearly 400 mounted constables in the force, mainly in the BMP and BFF.²⁵⁷ The Governor's bodyguard in Rangoon also kept horses for ceremonial occasions. The locally bred "Pegu" or "Shan" ponies were used as mounts by the BMP but, despite sterling service with the Burma (or "Burmah") Mounted Infantry during the Boer War, they came to be considered too small for official duties.²⁵⁸ Accordingly, a government horse stud farm and a remount depot were established at

Pyawbwe in 1920. There were initial concerns about the effects of the climate and local diseases, prompted by serious losses during the Third Anglo-Burmese War.²⁵⁹ However, horses were imported from abroad, notably Walers from Australia and chargers (mainly for the officers) from Europe.²⁶⁰ By the 1930s, however, horse numbers were being reduced as the BPS became increasingly mechanised — at least in central and southern Burma. The BFF continued to rely on Burmese ponies. It is also worthy of note that around this time some thought was being given to the introduction of police dogs to Burma, following their successful introduction by the Palestine Police in 1934.²⁶¹

Such innovations, however, first had to pass the inevitable budget test. For law and order continued to constitute a major strain on the colony's finances, and bureaucrats in the administration were constantly looking to make savings. In 1938-39, for example:

*Police expenditures accounted for 15.5 million rupees, jails for 3.4 million, education for 9.8 million, medical expenditures for 4.5 million, and pensions for 14.7 million. Thus, outlays for police and jails combined were double the outlays for education and four times those for health.*²⁶²

Yet, every time the government in India or, after 1937 in Burma, tried to reduce the costs of maintaining law and order, usually by cutting back on police numbers and closing police stations, there was an increase in crime or a fresh outbreak of civil unrest. This invariably necessitated a return to earlier high levels of spending to manage the resulting internal security problems.

Before Separation, Burma "had the reputation of being the 'Cinderella' province of India", rarely meriting the attention or resources given to other provinces. Also, it was seen as something of a backwater by ambitious police officers.²⁶³ This led to mixed views about the IIP and the Burma Police Service more generally. George Orwell's biographers — and a few contemporaries — have tended to speak highly of the IIP.²⁶⁴ For example, in his authorised account of Orwell's life Michael Shelden stated that;

*in terms of prestige, [the IIP] was the most respected of the specialized services in the several provinces of India, of which Burma was one. Its entrance standards were demanding, its reputation for integrity was high, and the pay was excellent.*²⁶⁵

D.J. Taylor has also claimed that "The Burma Police had an excellent reputation among the European community".²⁶⁶ Other descriptions, however, were much less flattering.

Some idea of the popular image of the colonial police can be gained from George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days*, which in many ways closely reflected his time as a member of the IIP between 1922 and 1927. Westfield, the District Police Superintendent, is portrayed as the

bored supervisor of "knock-need, bribe-taking cowards of policemen".²⁶⁷ This characterisation, while not as harsh as some others in the book, finds echoes in descriptions of Ronald Merrick, the sadistic Superintendent of Police in Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* novels, and Mr MacBryde, the arrogant and racist police officer in E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*.²⁶⁸ As David Campion has observed;

*The historian may be quick to dismiss these examples as flights of fancy with no basis in historical fact. However—the authors spent the earlier years of their lives in some sort of administrative capacity in India and their fictional characters were as much the product of keen observation as they were of literary flair.*²⁶⁹

In a letter dated 1946, Orwell wrote of his first novel that "much of it is simply reporting what I have seen".²⁷⁰

The eminent ICS officer Herbert White, writing of his experiences in Burma from 1878 to 1910, stated that:

*The officering of the civil police was one of even greater difficulty, the pay and prospects being far less attractive [than the civil service, army and so-called uncovenanted services]. Some officers were drafted from other Provinces. Many adventurous young gentlemen flocked to Mandalay, eager to take part in the settlement of the new Province. Of these some were appointed to be inspectors, some to be even head constables, with a prospect of obtaining gazetted rank in the course of time. Most of them did excellent work, fully justifying their selection. From time to time some were transferred to the Commission. The majority had a hard and disappointing life, waiting long for the realisation of their dreams.*²⁷¹

White summarised the situation by observing that "The story of the Burma Civil Police is one of hope deferred, and of weary plodding through many dismal years". He felt that it was greatly to the credit of its officers that they did so well "under such depressing conditions".²⁷²

Local recruits also had a poor reputation. From its earliest days, Burma's civil police force suffered from low educational standards, inadequate training, widespread corruption and a tendency for junior officers and constables to abuse their authority. The military police tended to be more disciplined but, for different reasons, they too were not well regarded by the Burmese. While many locals welcomed the security these forces provided, policemen were still seen as the mercenary hirelings of the "bull-faced and earth-swallowing English".²⁷³ Also, as the coercive arm of a foreign power, they enforced a tough and impersonal system of laws and regulations that were often poorly understood and received little sanction from Burmese tradition. As the Burmese journalist Taw Sein Ko wrote of local legal proceedings, in Asia;

*A man must be convicted out of his own mouth: circumstantial evidence, hair-splitting definitions, eye-witnesses, logical inferences etc., do not avail anything and are not necessary ... [In the colonial court] there is too much logic, too much hair-splitting, too much anxiety not to convict an innocent person and give him the benefit of the doubt, too great a reliance on precedence and rulings ...*²⁷⁴

As Ian Brown has rightly said, it is important not to "slip into crass stereotype" and to see the problem in terms of "a backward peasantry colliding with modernity".²⁷⁵ There were many cases when shrewd locals used the colonial legal system for their own ends. However, the problems were real, prompting a number of official enquiries over the years, but without any clear resolution.

When questioned by the 1902 Indian Police Commission, few Burmese communities sought the removal of police stations, which brought certain benefits. However, they made it clear that the colonial administration's alien laws were widely resented. Also, as the Riot Inquiry Committee concluded in 1938:

*No-one ... who, with an impartial eye, studies the position of the civil police in Burma and the conditions in which they work, can fail to be struck forcibly by ... the impenetrable barrier of prejudice, suspicion and mistrust which separates them from all classes of the people ... If there is one thing more than another which is responsible for the stubborn resistance of crime to all attempts to decrease its volume in Burma, it is, we think, the universal distrust of the police ... We have met throughout with ... abhorrence of the police and an almost universal prejudice even among respectable people against them.*²⁷⁶

In 1941, the report of an official Bribery and Corruption Enquiry Committee "stripped away much of the reputation of British colonial rule for superior standards of honesty and efficiency".²⁷⁷ It singled out the population's fear and hatred of the police as a major problem for the government.

Popular attitudes such as these fuelled nationalist sentiments which were exploited in turn by those seeking to overthrow the colonial administration, even to the point of aligning themselves with the Japanese militarists preparing to invade Burma. Well before then, however, such concerns had highlighted the need for the colonial administration to keep well informed about the popular mood. This placed a premium on accurate and timely intelligence. Given the police force's isolation from the community, however, and its myriad internal problems, some of its own making, the question needed to be asked whether the province's civil and military police could provide the flow of accurate and timely intelligence that was needed.



High Court Burma. (Wikimedia Commons)

Political and criminal intelligence

The expansion of knowledge was not so much a by-product of empire as a condition for it.

C.A. Bayly
*Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870.*²⁷⁸

Before the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824–26, the British civil and military authorities suffered from a chronic lack of intelligence about almost every aspect of Burma — its geography, its government, its armed forces and its people.²⁷⁹ It simply did not have the familiarity with the country that it enjoyed — up to a point, at least — in India. Few British officials had visited, let alone travelled through Burma, and even fewer spoke Burmese. Nor did they have many local allies. European commercial interests there were still in their infancy and Christian missionaries were very thin on the ground.²⁸⁰ For its planning and operations the EIC, and later the British government, were heavily reliant on a small number of expatriate residents and members of ethnic minorities, like the Arakanese and Karens, who were traditionally in conflict with the Burmese monarchy. It soon became apparent to the colonial authorities, however, that these paltry sources were not enough for them to realise their diverse ambitions in the country.²⁸¹ They needed more and better intelligence.

After the annexation of Pegu and Martaban in 1826, there were greater opportunities for British explorers and officials to add to the store of public knowledge about Burma. They could report on their travels and experiences, and even provide sketch maps on the places they visited. Yet, even then, there was a severe lack of information upon which the British colonial authorities could base their plans and decisions, whether they were strategic, political or economic. With this in mind, the Chief Commissioner in Rangoon began to develop other means to ensure a reliable flow of information. As was the case in India, the authorities turned to the province's nascent police forces. Through their regular contacts with the local population at district and village level, policemen were in a good position to develop a comprehensive body of knowledge on all aspects of Burmese society and to report any important developments to their higher authorities.

Indeed, these responsibilities were formally spelt out in the 1861 Indian Police Act. Section 23 of the Act stated:

*It shall be the duty of every police-officer ... to collect and communicate intelligence affecting the public peace.*²⁸²

In the same Act, the Inspector General of Police was given the power to "frame such orders and rules as he shall deem expedient relative to the ... collecting and communicating by them [police officers] of intelligence and information".²⁸³ Inevitably, the term "public peace" was given the widest possible interpretation and covered a wide range of offences, both criminal and political. At the same time, local village officials were required by law to inform the authorities of any disputes that were "likely to lead to any riot or serious affray" and to report to the colonial authorities the movements of any "suspicious characters", convicted criminals and "all bad characters".²⁸⁴ This saw an increasing flow of intelligence from the districts to the capital of British Burma.

In 1887, after the annexation of Upper Burma, Chief Commissioner Charles Crosthwaite described "real civil police duty" as "intelligence, detection and investigation", and blamed the lack of intelligence in Burma on the inadequate number of trained police.²⁸⁵ This, he was determined to change. By the end of the century, the civil Burma Police had recognised a "special duty" to gather intelligence, not just on criminal organisations and unlawful activity but also on local personalities and developments of broader political and security interest.²⁸⁶ In enumerating the duties of the new Rangoon Town Police, for example, the 1899 Rangoon Police Act enjoined officers to take all lawful measures for "collecting and communicating intelligence affecting, and otherwise preserving, the public peace".²⁸⁷ The importance of this particular duty can be gauged from the fact that it was listed first in the Act, even before those of "preventing the commission of offences and public nuisances" and "detecting and bringing offenders to justice".²⁸⁸

These provisions were supported by the *Burma Police Manual*, which stated that one of the major responsibilities of sub-divisional officers was to make certain that;

*The police of the subdivision are acquainted with the residence and movements of all bad characters, and that efficient and intelligent supervision is exercised over them as well as over conditionally released prisoners.*²⁸⁹

At the same time, the Railway Police were given responsibility for watching "the movements of suspicious persons and known bad characters travelling by rail and to communicate information concerning them to the district police".²⁹⁰ Volume three of the *Burma Police Manual* noted that "Officers of the Railway Police are in a position to collect useful information from what they overhear on trains".²⁹¹ If of any importance, the intelligence they collected was to be incorporated into a report submitted each week to the CID by the Superintendent of Railway Police.

In Burma, as in India and other British colonial dependencies, it became the accepted practice for the civil police force to act as "the eyes and ears of their Government".²⁹² Indeed, it was considered by some experienced observers that "the constant submission of accurate detailed information to Police Headquarters [by a police officer] is probably the most important of his many duties".²⁹³ For unless Police HQ was supplied with a constant flow of information from all districts it could not assess local security conditions and play its "vital part" in advising the government of situations that might call for its attention. Thus, it became routine for Constables to report the intelligence they gathered to Sub Inspectors who, after adding what value they could, passed it up the line to District Superintendents. They in turn sent it on to headquarters in Rangoon where, in theory at least, it was collated and assessed before being included in periodic intelligence reports.²⁹⁴

The creation of Special Branch

The actual mechanism at Burma Police HQ responsible for compiling and assessing incoming intelligence is unclear. An institutional capacity to do so appears to have been slow to develop, but the pace quickened after the creation of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch in the UK in 1883 and its enthusiastic adoption as a model by the British Indian government in 1887.²⁹⁵ In 1895, for example, a *Memorandum on the Formation of an Intelligence Department for Burma* stated that “as far back as 1878 a scheme was set on foot for the systematic collection of important secret intelligence throughout the empire”.²⁹⁶ In 1896, a Criminal Intelligence Branch (CIB) was formed within the headquarters of the Burma Police. It was specifically to obtain information about the movements of “suspicious strangers”, monitor domestic dissent and deal with “cases of a political nature”.²⁹⁷ It was placed under the control of a Superintendent who also oversaw the Railway Police and a new Criminal Investigation Department. It was popularly — and even at times in official documents — referred to as Burma’s “Special Intelligence Branch” or simply “Special Branch”.²⁹⁸

The actual organisation of the CID, and its relationship with the new SB are not easy to discern. Titles like “Bureau”, “Branch” and “Department” have been used rather loosely, not just by modern scholars but also by officials at the time. However, most observers accept that, despite being called a “Branch” almost from its inception, and therefore technically placed at the higher bureaucratic level, SB began life as a Bureau in the CID’s Crime Branch, and was only raised to full Branch status later, possibly around 1926.²⁹⁹ The Crime Branch was charged with managing major criminal investigations. The Intelligence Bureau (and later Branch) was made responsible for receiving, collating and disseminating information about “important and organised crime” across the entire province. Its role was set out in the *Criminal Investigation Department Manual*;

*It is the duty of the Intelligence Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department to assist the District Police in the investigation of all cases of a political nature, and to undertake themselves all such cases, when of sufficient importance.*³⁰⁰

Exactly the same wording appears in the second volume of the *Burma Police Manual*.³⁰¹ So that it could “work in intimate communication with the Criminal Investigation Department of the province”, the SB was from an early stage embedded in the CID.³⁰²

The CID also managed the BP’s fingerprint or criminal identification bureau, which had been established in Rangoon in 1898. This was only one year after the formal acceptance of fingerprint analysis as a tool by the Indian police and judicial systems.³⁰³ In 1899, Edward Henry, the Inspector-General of the Bengal

Police responsible for that system went to Rangoon to instruct local police in taking finger impressions and in their classification and registration. Later, selected officers in each district were shown how to take fingerprints. “The Bureau’s work was confined almost entirely to the identification of individuals under arrest and establishing ... whether they had any previous convictions.”³⁰⁴ It was rarely possible for the police to use finger prints found at the scene of a crime to identify the likely culprit. By the early 1940s, however, the CID’s Fingerprint Bureau had index cards on nearly 225,000 people with criminal histories.³⁰⁵

These developments also reflected the growing importance of scientific evidence in the Indian police and legal systems. The passage of the Indian Evidence Act in 1872 had given legal standing to medical and other experts. However, the latter part of the 19th Century saw “the evolution of the expert accompanied by the modernisation of the judicial system and an evolving confidence in an objective reality knowable by proper observation and analysis”.³⁰⁶ As forensic science became more sophisticated and more widely practiced, innovations in ballistics, photography, metallurgy and pathology were exported from the UK to India and Burma.³⁰⁷ The police and courts were no longer as dependent on oral evidence which, as Jonathan Saha has convincingly demonstrated, so often proved unreliable, and subject to manipulation by either the defendants or the judiciary – or both.³⁰⁸

All these developments enhanced the CID’s capabilities and effectiveness. Indeed, from an early date, Burma’s CID seems to have developed a reputation for its innovative and original approach to detection and intelligence gathering. For example, a Burmese police officer named U Ba is remembered as the inventor of a facial recognition system that assisted police officers to recognise and remember suspects. A book was later published about his WEN (“wrinkle, eye and nose”) facial identification system, which was reportedly copied and used by the police forces in India proper.³⁰⁹ Also, between 1890 and 1914, such was the prestige of the CID that two senior British police officers from Burma were employed by Siam’s King Chulalongkorn to establish a modern Criminal Investigation Branch (but confusingly called a “Detective Branch” or “Special Branch”) in Thailand.³¹⁰

The creation of the SB marked a major step forward in the development of the BP’s intelligence capabilities. While it had always been aware of the need to monitor popular sentiment, the creation of the Bureau/Branch saw a formal appreciation of the need not just for tactical intelligence, as regards dissidents and criminals, but also strategic-level intelligence and warning capabilities. As in other colonial possessions, the SB in British Burma began to compile dossiers on

"subversives", nationalists and others suspected of political crimes, an offence to which the colonial administration gave a very broad meaning.³¹¹ It also reported on political and social undercurrents in Burmese society, mainly through a *Weekly Secret Abstract*, (also known as the *Abstract of Police Intelligence*) which was circulated throughout the province and even to India. These reports were sometimes accompanied by "Confidential Supplements" on specific issues. In this regard, the services of locally recruited police officers, their familiarity with the language and intimate knowledge of the local scene, proved indispensable.³¹²

Another core function of the SB was to monitor Burma's news media for signs of social unrest. The Branch was charged with bringing to the attention of the Inspector-General of Police and, through him, other government officials, any news reports or editorials that might be considered seditious or which in other ways might have an impact on law and order (as defined by the colonial authorities).³¹³ In this task, they were assisted by the CID's Press Bureau and the department's Reporting Bureau (sometimes known as the Intelligence Branch Reporting Staff). CID officers attended most public meetings and noted the content of speeches and remarks by other attendees. The SB produced a weekly *Press Abstract* which was distributed to all relevant government departments. After the turn of the century, as nationalist agitation grew and there was growing political, economic and social unrest in the colony, the ability of the SB and CID to monitor and report on such developments came under increasing strain.

By 1901, the SB was well established, but it remained small. The initial plan was for it to have 23 staff members, but this was later reduced. It consisted of one European inspector, one native Indian inspector, one ethnic Burman (Bamar) inspector and one Bamar head constable, all based in Rangoon. There was also a Bamar inspector based in Mandalay, who reported to Rangoon. He covered not only political but also religious activities, Mandalay being considered a potential site of unrest among the Buddhist *sangha* (community of monks). As Rhys Thompson has written;

*While all SB detectives broadly investigated similar political issues and subversive groups, their work was often divided along ethnic lines, with Indians monitoring Indian suspects, Europeans monitoring European suspects and Burmans monitoring the local community.*³¹⁴

Local officers often struggled, it was felt, when acting outside their ethnic boundaries. The Branch was encouraged, however, to task and receive intelligence from other parts of the police forces. Theoretically, through the District Police it could even reach down to the village level and receive reports from local officials and other informants.

The system was not without its flaws. The flow of intelligence, for example, seems to have been only one way. During its tours of India's provinces, including Burma, the 1902 Police Commission was struck by the ignorance of most Superintendents about what was happening outside their own districts, and with the lack of communication between the police officers of different districts. The Commissioners believed that:

*Improved communications have changed the character of crime and the methods of criminals. Depredators migrate from one district to another, and carry on their operations in a systematic manner over large areas. It is essential that combined action on the part of police correspond to the organization of the crime ... There must be a proper system for securing regular information of the operations of organized crime, well-regulated intelligence from one district or province to another, combined action between the officers of different localities, and the capacity for systematized action from one centre.*³¹⁵

In its report, published in 1905, the Commission recommended the creation of Criminal Investigation Departments in every province of India, under a Deputy Inspector General. They could then exchange vital information. By 1907, this plan had more or less been implemented. As one observer noted, "This office within the police was the cornerstone of the surveillance and intelligence function of the government of India".³¹⁶

The role and responsibilities of the Special Branch were spelt out in the 1922 edition of the *Burma Police Manual*. The SB's main goals were described as "the collection and the communication of information relating to the social and political condition of the people, and all their aspirations, etc".³¹⁷ In 1924, in the *Report of the Police Enquiry Committee*, the SB was described as an agency that;

*receives from the districts and supplies to Government information about any unconstitutional agitation, about the movement of foreigners, about strikes which are likely to lead to a breach of the peace and other similar matters.*³¹⁸

Clearly, with its small staff the Branch could not perform all these duties itself, although on occasion it would become directly involved. Rather, it was heavily reliant on information being sent in to Police HQ from the districts and other sources, including civil servants posted outside the capital. Other police manuals made it clear that "cases of a political nature" were to be referred to CID, or in other words, to the SB.

By 1926, the CID's Crime Branch had clearly divided into two, one to look specifically at criminal intelligence and the other to look at political intelligence. The following

year, the CID moved into newly built premises at Insein, just outside Rangoon and near the capital's largest jail.³¹⁹ From contemporary records, it would appear that by this time it had mastered a wide range of modern scientific techniques to help solve crimes and to present evidence at criminal proceedings.³²⁰ All its in-house experts seem to have been Burmese or Indians. In the same year, it was decided to inaugurate a museum of instructive and interesting exhibits. With the help of district officers, it soon acquired a large and varied collection, based on the full gamut of local crimes from counterfeiting to murder. One popular exhibit was the hangman's noose used to execute Saya San in 1931. It was anticipated that, in time, the museum would form "a complete record of criminal activities in Burma".³²¹

Despite all these developments, and the extra resources begrudgingly provided by a cash-strapped colonial administration, the CID struggled to cope with the many demands being made upon it. During the turbulent 1930s, for example, Special Branch only had two units. The main SB unit was based in Rangoon, and was responsible for most of the country.³²² A smaller one was based at Akyab, on Burma's west coast.

The SB unit in Akyab seems to have been devoted almost entirely to monitoring the movement and activities of Bengali revolutionaries (dubbed "terrorists" by the colonial government), who between 1900 and 1947 posed a major problem for the British authorities.³²³ These revolutionaries were most active in India proper, but following a major crackdown on extremism in Bengal they "flocked to Burma".³²⁴ There they established branches of several radical political parties to pursue their campaign against the British colonial government. Also, small cells of revolutionaries were established in Rangoon, Mandalay and a few other centres, with the aim of acquiring funds, recruits and arms to send back to Bengal. At one stage, the CID suspected that they were even trying to produce counterfeit coins and banknotes. The Bengalis were watched carefully by the SB, not only because of the threat they posed to British India but also because they seemed interested in joining forces with local Burmese nationalist groups. Some British authorities even suspected them of involvement in the Saya San rebellion.³²⁵ Eleven Bengal revolutionaries were arrested in 1931 on a range of security-related charges.

Bengali revolutionaries were not the SB's only problems.³²⁶ In 1913, for example, there were other radical nationalist Indian cells in Burma.³²⁷ During World War I, the Germans hoped to use Indian revolutionaries

to subvert the British Raj's security forces in Burma, as a prelude to similar activity in India.³²⁸ There were even plans to foment a mutiny in the Indian-dominated BMP.³²⁹ In 1932, it was discovered that a group of self-styled Burmese revolutionaries plotted to kill the Governor on Convocation Day at the University of Rangoon, apparently because of his controversial views regarding Burma's status after the province's possible separation from India.³³⁰ Also, Mahatma Gandhi's campaigns against British rule in India prompted periodic concerns in Burma where there were large numbers of Indians, some of whom were politically active.³³¹ A visit to Burma by Gandhi in 1929 was closely monitored by SB, who reported on his activities and speeches in its *Weekly Secret Abstract*. Extracts were later reprinted in official Indian reports like the *Police Crime Gazette*.³³²

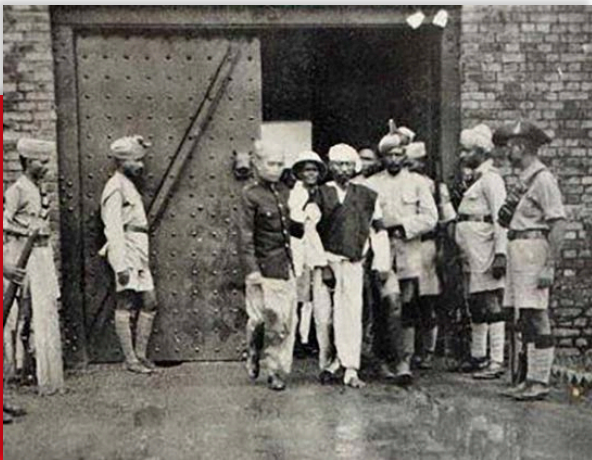
Needless to say, the small and hard-pressed Special Branch found it hard to cope, even when helped (as it was, on occasion) by the CID, mainly through the Press Bureau and Detective Branch.

Burma's intelligence apparatus was also coming under fire from another quarter. The final report of the Inquiry Committee set up to investigate serious riots in Burma in 1938 stated bluntly that the CID was "inefficient" and "out of touch".³³³ It had failed to issue timely warnings of unrest.³³⁴ The CID was considered "too rigid, too slow and self-centred to perform its task with full efficiency". The Committee recommended that "steps ought to be taken to overhaul this Department so as to bring it, and particularly its political branch, more into line with the necessities of the period of political and industrial confusion through which the country is passing" ("political branch" here clearly referring to Special Branch). The CID and SB were also enjoined to maintain the "closest and most intimate contact" with the government and other security services.³³⁵ A CID office in Mandalay was recommended to assist in these efforts. In its summary of conclusions, the Committee recommended "a complete overhaul" of the police system, "together with the intelligence system of the country".³³⁶

One astute foreign observer suggested at the time that "although the Criminal Investigation Department [including Special Branch] keeps close watch over subversive activities of every kind ... there is a distinct absence of a spy system" in the colony.³³⁷ This was quite a damning statement when it is remembered that, for more than 100 years, the colonial government had put considerable effort and resources into creating just such a system, embedded in the police force.

The fall of Special Branch

The 1930s were a very difficult time for the colonial authorities in Burma. The Saya San rebellion had demanded enormous resources, over an extended period. There was also increasing internal unrest as economic problems, racial tensions, religious differences and political agitation became more common and more serious. One District Superintendent of Police was reported as saying that the surveillance of criminals and potential criminals had become "the most important side of police work".³³⁸ After 1938, the BP claimed it had taken steps to improve "the collection, coordination and communication of intelligence matters", but it is not clear what these measures were, or if they went far enough.³³⁹ Despite the allocation of increased resources to strengthen the colony's intelligence apparatus, senior officials in both India and Burma had clearly lost confidence in the current system. They were no longer sure that, even with help from the rest of the CID, SB could provide the quality and quantity of intelligence that they felt they needed.



Saya San is led to the gallows in November 1931. (The Irrawaddy)

Accordingly, they started looking for different ways of managing the problem. There had already been one attempt at a new approach, and that was the creation of positions for two Civil Intelligence Officers (CIO) at the height of the Saya San Rebellion.

In 1931, the Burma Police created the position of Civil Intelligence Officer. In June, one CIO was appointed for Rangoon, and in September another was appointed for Mandalay. They fell under the Deputy Inspector General of Police for Railways and the CID, but were quite separate from the SB. Each CIO had a small staff consisting of several policemen, clerks and a stenographer. They were tasked with managing "the collection and coordination of intelligence in the rebel and disturbed districts".³⁴⁰ The CIOs submitted daily reports. Both CIOs were later praised for their contributions to the province's security, but in November 1931 the Mandalay CIO post was abolished. The Rangoon CIO's post followed in May 1932, also before the end of the uprising. It is not known why they were closed so early, but the fact that they duplicated many of the responsibilities of the SB cannot have escaped attention. In any case, while short-lived, the CIO arrangements seemed to reflect a view in senior circles in India and Burma that there was a pressing requirement for a more efficient and more centralised mechanism to collect, process and disseminate intelligence in Burma.

On 27 May 1933, following considerable deliberation at the highest levels of the colonial administration, the Burma Police created a "temporary" Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB), confusingly sometimes called a "Defence Bureau", led by the District Superintendent who had previously served as the Rangoon CIO. It began with eight officers but gradually expanded over the following year with new police officers added specifically to deal with the problems arising from the presence of Bengal revolutionaries in Burma. In 1936, the rank of the SIB Director was upgraded, as the agency took on additional responsibilities for arms trafficking and subversion. On 1 April 1937, when Burma formally separated from India, the SIB was "transferred to the Army and converted into the Burma Defence Bureau" (BDB).³⁴¹ It was "entirely divorced from the Criminal Investigation Department and controlled by the Governor through the Defence Secretary".³⁴² It was considered senior to the SB and CID. After a hiatus of many years, military intelligence (or at least intelligence managed by military officers) had once again become a major factor in Burma's security apparatus.



*The Storming of one of the principal Stockades on its inside on the 8th of July 1824.
(Wikimedia Commons)*

The Armed Forces in Burma

The country was a military backwater, and no ambitious soldier stayed there longer than he could help.

G.E. Harvey
*British Rule in Burma, 1824-1942*³⁴³

In the three wars that it waged against Burma during the 19th Century, Britain depended heavily on the Royal Navy (RN) to provide troop transport, give artillery support and to guarantee logistics. However, it was the soldiers on the ground who played the most critical role. Some of these men were drawn from British regiments based in India, but most came from so-called "native" infantry units recruited and trained in India. Both were also called upon to make up the permanent garrison that was established in Burma after its piecemeal annexation. However, the East India Company and, after 1858, the British colonial administration in Calcutta,

were determined to keep the costs of such deployments to a minimum.³⁴⁴ They looked in the first instance to raise local levies to maintain security and protect British interests, as they were cheaper to maintain than regular soldiers. They also placed increasing reliance on the province's nascent police forces to manage the areas falling under British control. Internal security was seen to be a more pressing issue than the defence of Burma from external threats, an attitude that also helped justify the withdrawal of regular troops deployed there as soon as practicable.

Conquest and consolidation (1824-1936)

It is not easy to determine precise numbers, but each of the three Anglo-Burmese Wars saw the dispatch of large expeditionary forces to Burma. The contingent that set off from India to fight in southern Burma in 1824, for example, consisted of around 13,000 soldiers, of whom about half were sepoys.³⁴⁵ This number did not include later reinforcements, nor the officers and men of the naval contingent, which consisted of 11 gunboats and 20 other major vessels.³⁴⁶ Another 10,000 or so men were sent under separate command to Arakan.³⁴⁷ One estimate of the total number of British and Indian personnel involved in the war was 40,000.³⁴⁸ During the Second Anglo-Burmese War, which culminated in the annexation of Lower Burma in 1853, the British deployed about 5,800 soldiers escorted by 19 steamships.³⁴⁹ One contemporary source has stated that the entire force totaled 8,037 men.³⁵⁰ In 1885, the Field Force put together for the advance on Mandalay consisted of about 11,850 men, including 77 guns and a Naval Brigade responsible for the maritime elements.³⁵¹ About two thirds of these troops were classified as "native" infantry.³⁵² Judged by the standards of the day, these were all large forces, deployed and supported at considerable cost.

Following the annexation of Upper Burma in January 1886, the army was heavily engaged in a drawn-out counter-insurgency campaign against remnants of the Burmese army, armed dacoits and other "lawless elements" who continued to challenge the imposition of British rule.³⁵³ At first, the Field Force used the tactic of sending flying columns to outbreaks of unrest, but this proved to be ineffective. In classic guerrilla fashion, by the time the troops arrived, the dacoits had melted away. Once the troops left, they returned. The British then opted for the establishment of semi-permanent posts in "disturbed" districts to "maintain military ascendancy".³⁵⁴ In addition, a number of expeditions were sent to frontier areas to quell warlike ethnic minorities (dubbed "hill tribes") which remained outside British control, or to show the flag and demand declarations of fealty from local rulers. Some of these

operations were major undertakings. The Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90, for example, involved about 3,600 officers and men, in two columns.³⁵⁵ Between 1889 and 1895 smaller expeditions were mounted against the Kachin, Chin, and Shans, each consisting of between 200 and 500 men.³⁵⁶



British forces launch an amphibious assault on Rangoon in May 1824. (National Army Museum)

All these operations required a great many men, most of whom had to come from India. By late 1886 there were about 35,000 soldiers in Upper Burma.³⁵⁷ However, the colonial administration in Calcutta took every opportunity to reduce the number of troops in the field and by the end of 1887 it had dropped to 20,971. They were divided into four brigades. Each had a small headquarters, at Mandalay, Shwebo, Meiktila and Myingyan respectively. Smaller independent commands were established at Bhamo and Chindwin. There was also a detached force at the ruby mines near Mogok. At the same time, the garrison of Lower Burma was formed into a separate force, consisting of 2,106 European soldiers and 4,088 "native" troops. This brought the total number of regular troops in Burma to around 27,165 officers and men.³⁵⁸

It has been persuasively argued by Michael Aung-Thwin that Upper Burma was never really "pacified".³⁵⁹ However, the security situation gradually improved and the civil administration consolidated Britain's hold over the entire country. Continuing resistance to foreign rule was simply classified as a criminal matter. Also, the organisation of the armed forces in Burma continued to change. In April 1888, the Burma Field Force was reclassified as a garrison. In May that year, Upper Burma was reorganised into three brigades and five separate commands. In April 1889, a Burma Military District Command was established with three districts, namely Mandalay, Myingyan and Rangoon. By 1891, the strength of the entire garrison had dropped to 18,763 officers and men.³⁶⁰ Yet Calcutta continued to seek cost savings. For example, by raising three new battalions locally, regular British and Indian units could be released, to return to India. In addition to Indians and Gurkhas, the majority of recruits in the new battalions were Chins, Karens and Shans. These units did not accept Bamar recruits but openings for them were available in a company of Sappers and Miners (engineers) raised in 1887, and affiliated with the Madras Corps.³⁶¹

The main reason for the dramatic reduction in the number of regular troops in Burma was that the BMP increasingly assumed their internal security functions. At the beginning of 1887, for example, 142 military posts were held by soldiers and 56 by police. By January the following year, the number of posts held by troops had been reduced to 84, with those held by the military police numbering 175.³⁶² By 1889, only 41 posts were manned by soldiers and 192 had been passed to the BMP.³⁶³ These posts were scattered throughout Upper Burma, from Katha in the north to Pyinmana in the south, and from Chindwin in the west to Meiktila in the east. The largest posts were at Mandalay, Chindwin and Minbu, each of which had over 1,000 BMP officers and men assigned.³⁶⁴ In 1888, the military police forces in Lower and Upper Burma were amalgamated, making command and control easier for the civil authorities and permitting further reductions in the numbers of regular soldiers stationed in the country.³⁶⁵ By the end of that year, the BMP had grown to 19,177 officers and men.³⁶⁶ By 1908, the number had come down to 16,350 officers and men, but the BMP and civil police still outnumbered the regular soldiers stationed in Burma.³⁶⁷

By 1900, the regular army in Burma had been reduced to one division, with its headquarters at Maymyo. The division was made up of two brigades, one based at Mandalay and the other at Rangoon. The Mandalay Brigade had its headquarters at Maymyo, and consisted of 2550 British infantry and 4,100 Indian infantry, a total of 6650 officers and men. The Brigade had detachments stationed at Maymyo, Mandalay (Fort Dufferin), Meiktila, Shwebo and Bhamo. The Rangoon Brigade was based in Rangoon, and also maintained a post at Thayetmyo. That Brigade consisted of 250 artillerymen, 1500 British infantry and 1700 Indian infantry, a total of 3,450 men, with 90 officers. Only about 200 soldiers were considered mounted infantry, that service arm being left largely to the BMP.³⁶⁸ (This was before three companies of mounted infantry were selected from British regiments in Burma and sent to South Africa, to fight in the Boer War as the Burmah Mounted Infantry.) In total, there were about 11,000 regular soldiers in Burma at the turn of the century, shared between two battalions of British infantry and four battalions of native infantry, most of whom came from India and Nepal. There was also a mountain gun battery and a company of Sappers and Miners.³⁶⁹

These units were supplemented by an Auxiliary Force made up of part-time militia units. Manned by civilian volunteers whose fathers were European, they provided local knowledge and a degree of continuity to the regular units, which were usually rotated back to Britain or India every two or three years.³⁷⁰ By 1900, the auxiliaries included the Rangoon Volunteer Rifles (RVR), the Rangoon Port Defence Volunteers, the Rangoon Volunteer Artillery, the Moulmein Volunteer Rifles, the Moulmein Volunteer Artillery, the Burma Railway Volunteers and the Akyab Volunteer Rifles.³⁷¹ There was also an Upper Burma Volunteers unit, which had small branches in Mandalay, Monywa, Minbu, Maymyo, Mogok and Myitkyina. The largest unit was the RVR, which was formed in 1877 and numbered 1,100 men. The smallest was the Moulmein Volunteer Artillery, with a complement of around 80.³⁷² The strengths of these units fluctuated as their members died, retired or were posted out of Burma. By the turn of the century, they totalled around 3,600 men, but by 1903, this number had dropped to 2,419.³⁷³ By the 1930s, the number was around 2,000, but recruitment rose again as the Second World War approached.³⁷⁴

Burma Defence Force (1937-1941)

After the province's formal separation from India in 1937, a new Burma Defence Force (BDF) was created as a small, independent military command, formed mainly by the transfer of units from the Indian Army.³⁷⁵ Two British regular battalions were retained, for the maintenance of internal security. One was based at Mingaladon, while the other was based at Maymyo. The 20th Burma Rifles was transferred from the Indian establishment, dropping the number 20 to become the Burma Rifles. Of its four battalions, one each was based at Mingaladon and Mandalay and two were based at Maymyo. Two Indian Army battalions left Burma but a mountain gun battery of the Royal Artillery and a field company of engineers remained in country. There were also small service and medical units. As noted above, six battalions of the BMP, composed mainly of Indians and Gurkhas, were reorganised into a new Burma Frontier Force, administered by the Defence Department under the General Officer Commanding, Burma Army.³⁷⁶ The country's volunteer and militia units were absorbed into the newly formed Burma Auxiliary Force and Burma Territorial Force.³⁷⁷ A Burma Army Signals Unit was authorised in early 1939 but had not reached full operational size before the outbreak of the Second World War.³⁷⁸

Following Separation, the army remained "an instrument for the maintenance of internal security rather than for defence against aggression".³⁷⁹ Despite gathering war clouds, and growing concerns about Japan's pan-Asia ambitions, little thought seems to have been given to Burma's defence against external attack. The view was taken in Delhi that, although Burma had 4,345 kilometres (2,700 miles) of external frontier, these border areas were characterised by very difficult terrain. Also, they were largely uninhabited. Indeed, so rugged and isolated were these areas that the neighbouring countries, China and Siam, "seldom troubled to maintain even police posts".³⁸⁰ Besides, it had long been the conventional wisdom in the UK and India that the north-south orientation of Burma's mountains and rivers were effective barriers to any army wanting to threaten India, which was deemed the greater strategic prize. To senior army officers like George White, Commander of the Upper Burma Field Force in 1886, Burma was "one vast military obstacle".³⁸¹ In any case, the more remote areas were policed by the new Frontier Force, which had a strong reputation for their knowledge of the country and local languages.³⁸²

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Burma had no navy to speak of, but relied on the Royal Navy for general protection. However, as John Christian has pointed out, the threat from that quarter was considered quite low. "There had been no naval action of consequence in the Indian Ocean for more than a century, other than encounters with German raiders

during the [First] World War".³⁸³ To the RN, Burma was strategically important mainly because it was a crucial staging point for air reinforcements from Europe, destined for Singapore and Malaya. Also, it marked the beginning of the Burma Road to China, along which vital supplies were being passed to the Nationalist Chinese (*Kuomintang*) forces under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who was already locked in a bitter war with the Japanese.³⁸⁴ When the Second World War broke out, the only vessels in Burma available for naval use were three tugs and buoy vessels from the Port of Rangoon, converted into auxiliary mine sweepers.

Nor did Burma have an air force to speak of. For air protection Burma relied on Royal Air Force (RAF) assets based in Singapore, but these were completely inadequate to the task. In 1941, there were only 158 RAF aircraft scattered over 26 airfields in Singapore and Malaya, consisting mostly of Brewster Buffalo fighters, Short Singapore flying boats and Bristol Blenheim light bombers.³⁸⁵ As war approached, two squadrons of Vickers Vildebeest torpedo bombers, some Lockheed Hudsons and Consolidated Catalina flying boats arrived from Europe. However, none were rated very highly as combat aircraft. The Buffalos, for example, had been sent to Singapore because they were considered unsuited to the air war in Europe. There was, however, the First American Volunteer Group (the "Flying Tigers") in southern China, equipped with modern Curtis P-40 Warhawk fighters.³⁸⁶ The defence of Burma was not their primary role, but they depended on supplies reaching them along the Burma Road. For ground-based anti-aircraft defence the colony relied on its poorly armed territorial and auxiliary forces.³⁸⁷

In 1940, a volunteer air unit and a naval volunteer reserve force were organised, but by then it was too little too late for them to make much of a contribution to the defence of Burma.³⁸⁸

When Burma became a colony in its own right in 1937, the new government faced another problem, namely that "the army still remained non-Burmese, entirely distinct from the people". Ethnic Burmans, or *Bamar*, who constituted around 67 percent of the population, had long been considered unsuited for service in the armed forces. Not only were they not trusted, a feeling strengthened by nationalist agitation and occasional outbreaks of civil violence, but they were also deemed unable or unwilling to accept military discipline. One officer described them as "devoid of military instinct".³⁸⁹ Less charitable observers described them as shiftless and lazy.³⁹⁰ Even after the Second World War, the British historian G.E. Harvey could write that "It is the accepted view that the Burman will never be a soldier".³⁹¹ A few attempts had been made to recruit Bamar, for example for the company of Sappers and Miners, which acquitted itself well in Mesopotamia during the First World War. Also, between 1916 and

1927 four battalions of Burma Rifles were recruited, but they were made up largely of Karens and other ethnic minorities like Chins and Kachins. Between 1927 and 1937 ethnic Bamar were deliberately excluded from all regular army units (although the BMP accepted 700).

After 1937, a drive was launched to recruit Bamar into the ranks of the BDF, but progress was slow. A military or military police career was still seen as suspect by many locals, particularly if they were sympathetic to the growing ranks of the Burmese nationalist movement. The British security forces in Burma, both police and army, were seen as the tools of an oppressive and exploitative foreign regime. By December 1941, when the Japanese launched their invasion of Burma, the BDF consisted of one company of Sappers and Miners, ten rifle battalions and four territorial battalions. In the regular battalions, only one in 12 officers was an ethnic Bamar, with the remainder all British. One in five men in the ranks was a Bamar, with the remainder made up mainly of Karens, or other ethnic minorities such as Chins and Kachins. There were also some Indians and Gurkhas.³⁹² By way of contrast, after Japan invaded Burma, thousands of young Burmese joined the pro-Japanese Burma Independence Army (BIA), led by Aung San. By June 1942, the BIA numbered at least 10,000, and possibly even 50,000, men.³⁹³

Few historians would argue with the claim that, from the end of the 19th Century onwards, the armed forces in Burma had been reduced in numbers almost to the size of a token force. There were no perceived external threats, warranting a larger garrison. Indeed, as Robert Taylor, Mary Callahan and others have observed, "the function of Indian and British army units [in Burma] was primarily internal security".³⁹⁴ They were held in reserve, however, and only called out "in aid of the Civil Power" at times of severe public disorder. This occurred at least four times. Elements of the Rangoon garrison were called out in 1930 to help quell serious riots in the capital. In 1930-32, some 8,100 troops from Burma Military District were deployed to help the police put down the Saya San rebellion. Even that was not enough, necessitating the temporary transfer of more than 3,640 additional regular Indian Army troops from India. The third case was the 1938 riots, when some 450 soldiers were called out to assist the police restore order in Rangoon.³⁹⁵ Also, in 1939, soldiers from the local garrison assisted in restoring the peace after street demonstrations in Mandalay.³⁹⁶

A number of conclusions can be drawn from these observations. The first is that, following the "pacification" period, the army was greatly reduced in size, to the extent that it was easily out-numbered by the civil police and BMP. The second is that the BMP was trained, equipped and deployed almost as a military force, in that sense usurping the role of the army in maintaining internal security. The third relates to the claim that "armed force played a significant role in the governance of colonial Burma"³⁹⁷ That may have been

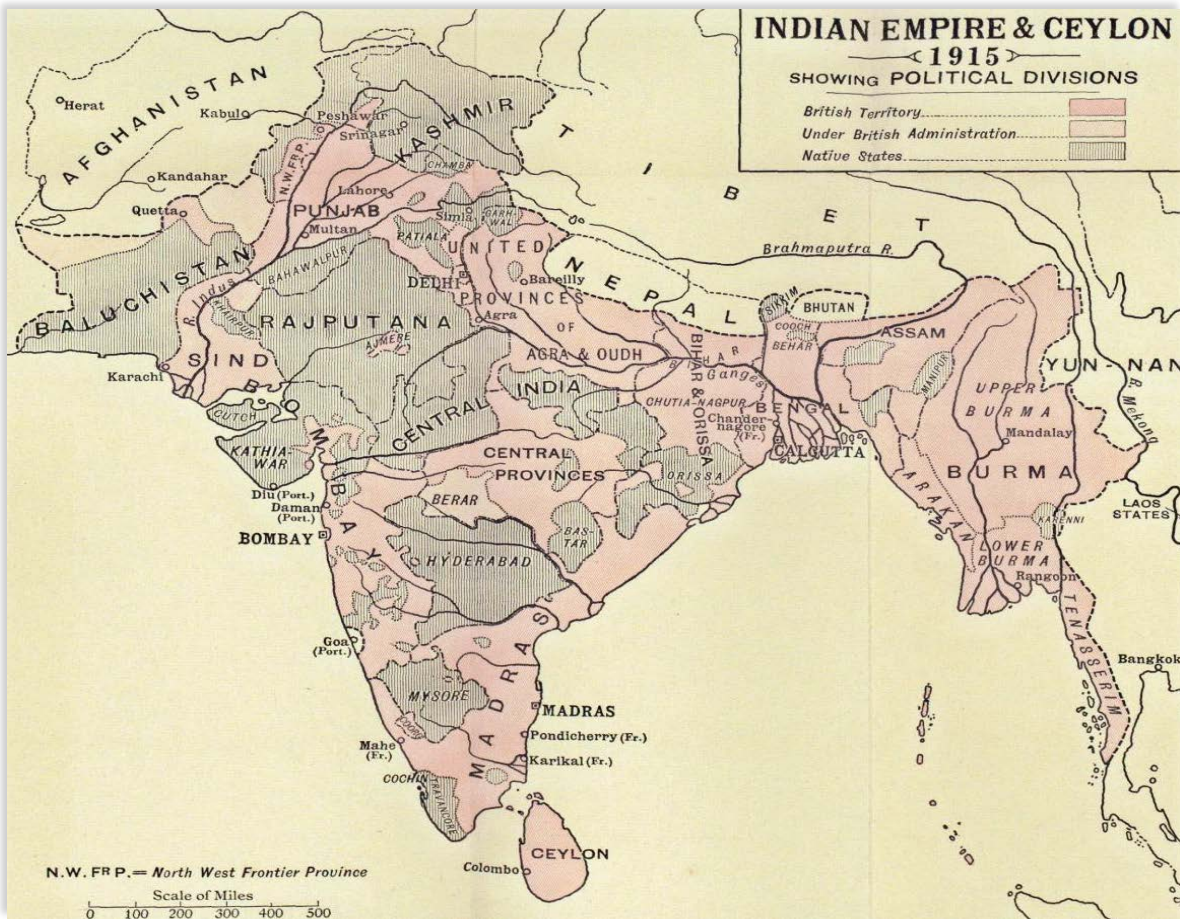
true, but in considering that comment it needs to be kept in mind that, after the 1890s, almost all armed force used in Burma was conducted by the police forces, and not by the army. The army was rarely called out, usually in small numbers, and only when the civil police and BMP were unable to contain the unrest themselves.

If these conclusions are accepted, then questions must also be raised about Mary Callahan's statement that;

*The political and combat roles played by units of the British Indian Army in the early years after the 1885-86 war institutionalised an unequal relationship between military and civil authorities – in favour of military authority – that would greatly influence the development of future military and civil institutions in Burma.*³⁹⁸

In fact, it could be claimed that, during the later colonial period, it was the police and not the armed forces which were best placed to establish a position of influence with the civil authorities. There were many more policemen than soldiers in the province, the police had their headquarters in Burma while the army did not, the police leadership answered to the Burmese government, which the army did not, and the police were the first to be called out in an emergency, not the army. It is also relevant that senior police officers were usually stationed in country for lengthy periods. Until 1937, the small army garrison was controlled by GOC India, from Calcutta and then Delhi, and army units were rotated through Burma from Britain and India every two or three years.

All that said, after the Saya San rebellion the armed forces seemed to enjoy the confidence of the colonial administration much more than the police forces. Despite its extensive intelligence apparatus, supported by an elaborate structure of orders, rules and regulations, the Burma Police had clearly failed to foresee Saya San's dramatic impact on the rural population in and around Tharrawaddy. Accordingly, it failed to forewarn the government of the potential for a serious outbreak of violence, and its spread to neighbouring districts. Albeit with the help of the BP and BMP, it was the armed forces which eventually put the uprising down. This seems to have prompted the colonial administration to give greater thought to the creation of a new and independent agency to centralise and coordinate all intelligence activity in the province. In a major break from past practice, it was also decided to put the new agency under the control of the armed forces. The role of military intelligence, or at least intelligence managed by the armed forces, seemed at last to have been recognised.



Indian Empire and Ceylon in 1915. (Wikimedia Commons)

Military intelligence

Little was known of the country. Two or three British officers had gone on missions to Ava, and one of them, Captain Symes, had set down his experiences in a book. A few merchants had also made their way for a short distance up the coast, or up one branch or another of the Irrawaddy, and had seen a few narrow belts of land from the water; but beyond that nothing was known of the geography of Burma.

J.W. Fortescue
*A History of the British Army*³⁹⁹

All armies utilised scouts, guides and skirmishers, but it took a long time for the British armed forces, including those in India, to recognise the need for a dedicated military intelligence organisation at staff level. The general feeling seemed to be that "The gathering of knowledge by clandestine means was repulsive to the feelings of an English Gentleman".⁴⁰⁰ It was not until the unmitigated disaster of the Crimean War (1853–56) had fully sunk in that the British High Command gave serious thought to the establishment of such an office. In 1855, a Topographical and Statistical Department was created in the War Office in London, but after the Crimean War ended it was starved of manpower and resources. For a period, it was seen simply as a means to produce survey maps. In 1871, however, it was expanded and divided, with a newly formed Statistical Branch made responsible for the collection of intelligence on foreign countries. One of three sections in the Branch was allocated India, among other countries, but most UK-based intelligence consumers soon came to the conclusion that the most reliable reporting on the sub-continent, including Burma, came from the Political and Secret Department of the India Office, which had been established in 1858.⁴⁰¹

Eventually, in 1873, an Intelligence Branch was formed within the Adjutant General's Department of the War Office. It consisted of five sections, one covering topographical matters, and the other four dividing the world between them. One country section covered the UK and its colonies, including India.⁴⁰²

*So it was, that two hundred and thirteen years after the accepted birth of the regular British Army, Intelligence was recognised as a separate branch of the Staff, in its own right, and having a function in peacetime.*⁴⁰³

Military intelligence in India

Broadly speaking, the British Indian Army (after 1858 commonly referred to as the Indian Army) took its cue from London, but the need for a permanent intelligence capability had long been recognised. Such was the nature of military operations in the India theatre (including Burma) that "scouts" and "spies" were a common feature of the fighting. However, they were usually managed at the tactical and operational levels.⁴⁰⁸ For example, a Corps of Guides had been formed in 1852 which, according to a contemporary report, was "calculated to be of the utmost assistance in the Quarter-Master General's Department as intelligencers, and most especially in the escort of reconnoitring officers".⁴⁰⁹ The QMG's Department in India was responsible for collecting and producing military intelligence for operations, but it lacked staff support and, during quiet periods, the task was often

In 1877, the Branch was transferred to the Quarter-Master General's (QMG) Department and reorganised into seven sections. There was an administrative section and a topographical section, with the remainder responsible for various geographical areas. Ten years later, the Branch was transferred back to the Adjutant General's Department where it was felt its product could be linked more easily to operational requirements. It was later upgraded to a division, under a Director of Military Intelligence (DMI), at Lieutenant General level. In addition to its six country sections, it now included a Mobilization Section. In 1896, the Division underwent yet another reorganisation, this time expanding to eight sections, six of which were country sections.⁴⁰⁴

According to Brian Parritt, once it had become established, the Intelligence Branch (later Division) emerged as perhaps "the most important department in the War Office".⁴⁰⁵ It not only printed maps and produced assessments of foreign military forces, but in the absence of any better suited unit at staff level it was asked to advise on a wide range of matters raised by other parts of the army. These included the plans for war games, the value of certain new munitions, requirements for fortifications and arrangements for the mobilisation of the armed forces to defend Britain against an external attack. It became, in one sense, the intellectual repository of the War Office. On the formation of the General Staff in 1904 the Intelligence Division became one of its directorates, renamed the Directorate of Military Intelligence.⁴⁰⁶ A Naval Intelligence Department had been formed in 1887 and, as the Naval Intelligence Division, became part of the Admiralty War Staff in 1912. In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, an Army Intelligence Corps was formed.⁴⁰⁷

neglected. There was little recognition at the Command level of the need for a specific organisation that could devote itself to the provision of timely and practical intelligence on places of military interest in India and surrounding territories, like Burma, Nepal and, in particular, Afghanistan.

Prompted in part by developments in the War Office, that situation gradually changed. In 1868, a staff officer at Indian Army Headquarters in Simla was appointed Head of Intelligence, and charged with collecting and compiling intelligence relevant to military operations. The first product he and his small staff produced was a comprehensive gazetteer of central Asia, in five volumes. In 1874, two officers were tasked to compile a compendium of routes within and beyond the Indian frontier. The result was a six-volume study, produced in

1877-78, showing land routes in Asia.⁴¹⁰ These works were impressive in their own way, but were based largely on open-source material found in books and official reports, and suffered badly from a lack of detailed information. In particular, they often failed to provide first-hand descriptions of the terrain and the hazards likely to be encountered, the nature and attitudes of the local inhabitants and the political implications of operations in the places examined. Large areas under study remained unmapped.

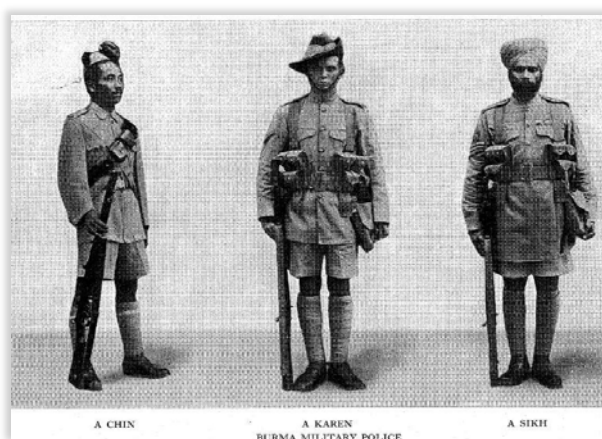
The set of route books produced in 1877-78 appear to have been commissioned by the then QMG, the far-sighted Colonel (later Field Marshall Earl) Frederick Roberts, who "championed the creation and development of an Indian Intelligence Branch".⁴¹¹ Roberts greatly feared an attack against India from Russia, and argued strongly for the recruitment of reliable intelligence sources beyond India's borders. Roberts argued for the posting of British agents abroad who could observe developments and report back to Army HQ. He felt that if the Intelligence Branch, then being considered by the GOC India was going to be really useful, "it is most desirable explorers should have access to the countries adjoining India". After 1914, the Russian threat was replaced by one from Germany. The Kaiser felt that "If India could be wrested from Britain's grasp, then the rest of her ramshackle empire, largely held together by bluster and bluff would quickly collapse".⁴¹² This prompted another wave of intrepid British officials determined to become players in the "Great Game" to India's northwest and in Central Asia.⁴¹³

When Roberts recommended the development of "extended knowledge of adjacent countries", he appears also to have had Burma in mind, despite its status as a province of British India.⁴¹⁴ As he later wrote, it was his view that "Affairs in Burma had been going from bad to worse from the time King Thibaw came to the throne in 1878".⁴¹⁵

Two other developments helped draw attention to the need for a better and more centralised intelligence capability. The first was the publication of two articles in the *Proceedings of the United Services Institute of India*, calling for the creation of an Indian intelligence unit capable of "collecting, digesting and systematically recording, in a readily accessible form, whatever has been observed by political officers, missionaries, sportsmen, or soldiers".⁴¹⁶ The second was the submission in 1876, by the Assistant Military Secretary to the Government of India, Captain Edwin Collen, of a memo recommending the formation of an Intelligence Branch in the Quarter-Master General's Department, based on the model of the one established in London. The memo was well received, including by the QMG, Colonel Roberts. However, more information was sought about the London model. Accordingly, in 1877, Collen was seconded to the Intelligence Division

(as it then was) in London. He remained there for a year, after which he prepared a lengthy report.⁴¹⁷ The end result was the creation in 1878 of the Indian Army's Intelligence Branch (IB), in the Quarter-Master-General's Department.⁴¹⁸

The IB centralised all Indian Army intelligence operations in Simla.⁴¹⁹ As a result, the Branch came to play an important role in strategic thinking about Asia, in part due to its publications, but also through its extensive correspondence with British diplomatic missions and military commands throughout the region. The Branch even extended its field of operations beyond India and surrounding countries to places like China.⁴²⁰ In 1902, the Branch had compiled no less than 23 "military books" to support possible future operations along the northwest frontier and in Afghanistan.⁴²¹ More were being prepared. In 1906, the Branch separated from the Quartermaster-General's Department and was placed in the Military Operations Directorate of the Division of the Chief of Staff.⁴²² At that point, it was renamed the Intelligence, Mobilisation and Strategic Branch. Around this time, a small Burma Intelligence Office appears to have been formed within the Branch. Also, during his tenure as QMG, Colonel Roberts had established a reference library at HQ in Simla. By 1901 it contained over 5000 volumes. There were more than 1000 dictionaries and grammars of at least two dozen Asian and African languages.



Portraits of Chin, Karen and Sikh military police. (GMIC)

One notable feature of the IB (and its successors) in India was that its product not only included gazetteers, strategic-level reports and studies of foreign armies, but also material that was of more direct interest to officers conducting operations. This blurring of the lines between strategic and operational – even at times tactical – intelligence helped to bring the intelligence staff at Army HQ closer to their customers in the field. As one scholar has noted, "Compared to the Foreign Intelligence Section in London, a substantially larger proportion of Simla's products were prepared specifically for use during field operations".⁴²³ This had

direct benefits for the HQ, as officers in the field were conscious of the IB's needs and often reported back to Simla on intelligence of wider interest. For example, a small intelligence unit established in Northwest Frontier Province in 1904, known as the "nucleus Intelligence Corps at Peshawar", was able to report on developments in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Russian Turkestan. Also, the quality and relevance of the product at all levels was improved by the transfer of officers back and forth between Simla and tactical intelligence assignments.

Until the Second World War, the only formally sanctioned military intelligence officers in India (which until 1937 included Burma) were Battalion Intelligence Officers and staff officers attached to Army HQ.⁴²⁴ At Simla, intelligence was the responsibility of the renamed Directorate of Operations and Intelligence (DOI), under a Brigadier.⁴²⁵ The total staff consisted of 22 officers; a Deputy Director, one General Staff Officer (GSO) level one (usually a lieutenant colonel) seven GSO2s (majors), eleven GSO3s (captains), one attached officer and two interpreters.⁴²⁶ It was usually the case that more than half of these men were involved in operational planning, with the rump left to handle intelligence matters. With the possible exception of Burma Command, there were no designated intelligence staff officers in Command, District or Brigade HQs, although personnel could be assigned such duties as Attaches, if required. At the battalion level, intelligence work was usually undertaken by the most junior staff officer, supported by an Intelligence

Section of about six other ranks under a Sergeant or Havildar.⁴²⁷

In addition, a number of army officers were attached to the RAF in India as Air Intelligence Liaison Officers (AILO), or seconded to the police forces as Military Intelligence Officers (MIO).⁴²⁸ Not all of them could claim specialist intelligence skills. There was no Intelligence School or centralised intelligence academy until an Indian Intelligence School was opened in Karachi in 1941. Before then, each Command ran a number of Command Intelligence Courses of about two weeks duration. The syllabus was theoretically broad – indeed, a common complaint was that it tried to squeeze too much into too short a time – but the real object was to earmark officers for AILO or MIO positions, rather than to train them specifically to fill Army Intelligence posts. Also, as Anthony Mains has pointed out, "It was difficult to get officers to volunteer for these courses as Intelligence was considered a backwater, and absence from regimental duty was held to have an adverse effect on the officer's career".⁴²⁹

The Indian Army's first Director of Military Intelligence was appointed in 1941, when the DOI was split into two separate Divisions. The DMI was a Major-General (two stars in the NATO system). Even then, serious problems remained, the result in part of a lack of trained personnel both in the field and on the staff. According to Mains, in 1942 "We knew more about what was happening in Tokyo and Berlin than in Rangoon".⁴³⁰ This reflected a problem of long standing.

Military intelligence and Burma

After 1824, military operations against Burma placed a premium on reliable intelligence about the kingdom and its inhabitants, but the EIC and army planning staffs started from a very low base. As already noted, large areas of the country had never been visited by Europeans. British knowledge of many parts was "generally of a very vague description, and frequently none at all".⁴³¹ There were few, if any, reliable maps. These problems soon became painfully obvious to those actually engaged in the fighting. It is little wonder that, for these and other reasons, the First Anglo-Burmese War should be described by one authority as "the worst-managed war in British military history".⁴³²

During that war, the invading British forces had little to no idea of who or what they might encounter after landing in Burma.⁴³³ As one contemporary commentator wrote, Britain was "almost totally unacquainted with the character and resources of the country into which our arms were to be carried".⁴³⁴ An officer who participated in the war later wrote in his memoirs that operations

were severely hampered by a lack of even the most basic intelligence. He noted that;

*Neither rumour nor intelligence of what was passing within his [the enemy's] posts ever reached us. Beyond the invisible line which circumscribed our position, all was mystery or vague conjecture.*⁴³⁵

Estimates of enemy troop strengths were guesses based mainly on rumours.⁴³⁶ In reviewing the conflict afterwards, the Indian Army's Intelligence Branch would state;

*It should be noted that so great was the ignorance at that time of the features and climate of Burma, that it was anticipated that access to the capital of the Empire from Rangoon would be a task of the easiest description. This hope, however, was doomed to speedy disappointment.*⁴³⁷

In writing about the same war, the Governor of Madras, Thomas Munro, referred to "our ignorance of the

country and of the enemy", compared to British knowledge of India and the Indians.⁴³⁸ This "imperfect knowledge of the nation" hindered decision-making at both the political and military levels, making the conflict the most "expensive and harassing war" in which the British had engaged in India to that date.⁴³⁹

In the years that followed, the British worked hard to correct this deficit. For example, after the negotiation of a trade agreement in 1862 permitting British merchants to travel freely throughout Burma, agents were sent on "spy missions" as far north as Bhamo and as far east as Karenni.⁴⁴⁰ Their role was to gather information relevant to possible future military operations and to gauge the political mood of the local populations. Maung Htin Aung has claimed that;

*There was a British spy ring in the country then, and although British records would suggest that its headquarters was in the office of the commissioner of Arakan, obviously the operations were directed by [Henry] Burney himself.*⁴⁴¹

At the time, Burney was the Resident British Envoy to King Bagyidaw's court in Ava. Maung Htin Aung has also written that, following the negotiation of another trade treaty in 1867, a second wave of British army and civilian officers, "calling themselves merchants, penetrated the remoter regions of the kingdom, and, although their interest was alleged to be the opening of new trade routes, they not only acted as spies, prying into the internal affairs of the kingdom, but also engaged in subversive activities".⁴⁴²

Be that as it may, during the Second Anglo-Burmese War the British still suffered greatly from a lack of reliable intelligence. Burma was still characterised as "a distant and comparatively unknown land".⁴⁴³ The officer commanding the British Field Force, Henry Godwin, complained that his forces were sent to Burma in 1852, despite his knowing nothing of "the numbers and disposition of the Burmese".⁴⁴⁴ Friendly European officials and merchants in places like Rangoon and Mandalay could help by providing the invaders with some information about the Burmese dispositions, but further afield there were still large gaps in the invaders' knowledge of the defending forces. An attack against Bassein, for example, had to be made "without a pilot, up an unknown river".⁴⁴⁵ As General Godwin stated after taking Pegu and preparing to march against Prome, he was "totally ignorant of the plans and movement of the enemy".⁴⁴⁶ Even after Lower Burma was annexed by the British in 1853, it was still unclear just how big it was and how many people lived there. As noted by Henry Yule around that time, "Of large tracts we have still no accurate description".⁴⁴⁷

By the time of the Third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, the important role of intelligence was better understood.⁴⁴⁸ Also, the British were in a stronger position, both as regards their knowledge of the country

and the kind of opposition they might face on the road to Mandalay. More foreigners spoke Burmese and were familiar with the country. Thanks to earlier visits and even a few guided tours of the capital city and its environs, the army had a reasonably good idea what fortifications they were likely to face. They could plan accordingly. Also, some Indians, Armenians and other foreigners resident in Myanmar were willing to assist by passing on their knowledge of the country and its inhabitants. A few foreigners resident in Mandalay even had spies in the royal palace.⁴⁴⁹ As the British Resident had been withdrawn in 1879, their intelligence was invaluable.⁴⁵⁰ Other local sources included traders and missionaries, but the scope of their knowledge was often limited. All this led to a degree of over-confidence. The *Rangoon Gazette*, for example, ventured to suggest that it would only take 400 men and less than a fortnight to overthrow the Burmese king.⁴⁵¹

In fact, it only took three weeks, but many more men were required to extend British control over Upper Burma, which covered an area of 363,000 square kilometres (140,000 square miles) and had a population then of about four million people. Vast areas of the country remained unknown. After the fall of Mandalay, the newly-appointed British Commissioner was obliged to administer districts, the boundaries of which were deliberately left vague "until more accurate knowledge enabled them to be defined. At first there were no maps whatever".⁴⁵² Punitive expeditions mounted against ethnic minority communities north of the old capital rarely had accurate or detailed maps to guide them. They usually included an intelligence officer or surveyor, however, resulting in their "own quota of new geographical information", which in due course was passed back to Simla.⁴⁵³ Occasionally, an expedition was mounted for the express purpose of garnering information about the country and its inhabitants, and "to facilitate the general administration of the British provinces".⁴⁵⁴

Charles Crosthwaite, appointed Chief Commissioner of Upper Burma after the fall of Mandalay, summed up the situation thus;

*The Deputy Commissioners have no hold on their districts, and through the absence of a civil police they get no intelligence and no touch with the people. Hence our military parties sometimes go wandering about blindly, unable to get any information.*⁴⁵⁵

He was anticipating by half a century the observation by the British General Geoffrey Bourne that good intelligence was "the key to success in dealing with bandits or with full-scale rebellion".⁴⁵⁶ By contrast, the insurgents were on their own home ground and had excellent sources. Speaking of one prominent rebel leader, Crosthwaite lamented that "His intelligence department was perfect".⁴⁵⁷

With one notable exception, the British received little information and no aid from ethnic Bamar during their early encounters with the kingdom. This was put down in part to the tendency for villagers to confine their attentions to their immediate locality but there was also a general reluctance to assist a foreign army. This attitude was also enforced, sometimes harshly, by the local authorities. As the British advanced, Burmese society "fell back and reformed itself against the invader, jealously guarding the tiniest morsel of information by terror and a conspiracy of silence".⁴⁵⁸ Non-Bamar civilians were a source of some assistance, notably Arakanese and Karens, whose communities had suffered at the hands of the Konbaung kings in the past. However, it was difficult for the British to penetrate Burmese society, which was "a sharp contrast to the porousness of Indian information systems".⁴⁵⁹ The British were also hampered by their lack of fluent Burmese language speakers. For example, in 1826 they had to rely on the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson to help finalise the peace negotiations and later to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Burmese king.⁴⁶⁰

One notable exception to this general rule was an Anglo-Indian named George Gibson. According to Krishna Saxena;

*His interest in geographical and commercial pursuits had caused him to explore almost every part of the Burmese dominion and conquests. He was frequently employed by Ba-gyi-daw and his grandfather in compiling maps of different portions of the empire from the charts and descriptive accounts drawn up by the King's subjects ... He was intimately acquainted with the language, customs and manners of the Burmese people, the nature and resources of its government, and the character and disposition of its King and principal ministers.*⁴⁶¹

Gibson was a member of the Burmese delegation to Cochin China in 1822, in the course of which he was forced to stop over in Penang. While he was there, he was interviewed at length by Henry Burney, then Military Secretary to the Governor of Penang, who managed to obtain a great deal of information of geographical and political interest. On the basis of this interview, Burney wrote a detailed report and drew a map of Burma, "revealing novel detail on the eastern and south-eastern approaches".⁴⁶²

The intelligence fruits of all these campaigns, expeditions and interviews were usually passed on to the IB in Simla, which incorporated them into their data bases. Detailed histories of the three wars in Burma and subsequent peace-keeping operations were written by staff officers for future reference and wider dissemination.⁴⁶³ Also, by the 1890s more sophisticated and comprehensive reports were being produced for use in the field. Priority was given to those areas of

Burma which were still considered "unsettled", and thus potentially requiring the attention of the army or BMP. Also, between 1894 and 1904, the knowledge gained through British operations against the Burmese and sundry ethnic minorities were translated into a series of detailed reports on Upper Burma. Some of the works produced by the IB were quite large and cumbersome, such as Major A.B. Fenton's 1195-page compendium *Routes in Upper Burma*.⁴⁶⁴ After feedback was received from the IB's customers, smaller, more manageable pocket editions of route books were prepared that could be carried by officers on the march.

Fenton's 1894 compilation of route reports provides a good example of the nature and quality of the Intelligence Branch's work around the turn of the century. The volume contains a preface which begins:

*Eight years having elapsed since the occupation of Upper Burma, it has been considered desirable to collate the large mass of route material that has been collecting in the Burma Intelligence Office during that period into book form, both to prevent the loss of material already collected and to ensure proper correction up to date, from time to time, as opportunity offers.*⁴⁶⁵

Some of the routes were described on the basis of information provided by British civil servants in the course of pursuing their normal duties, but the majority appear to be the result of specific journeys made by intelligence officers attached to military or police units. Some routes were described on the basis of "native information" received. Most entries were quite detailed and included descriptions of available roads and bridges, the terrain along the route, river crossings, the availability of water and forage for animals, the attitudes of local inhabitants and other matters of potential interest to a soldier.

Between 1907 and 1911, the IB in Simla published six volumes (and two supplements) titled *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*. The work was first compiled by Colonel W.H. Paget in 1873 as a "Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes", with the intention of providing a guide to British commanders and policy makers "as might have future dealings with these turbulent neighbours".⁴⁶⁶ It was revised in 1884 by A.H. Mason of the Royal Engineers, hence its colloquial name "Paget and Mason" thereafter. In 1907, work was begun to comprehensively update and expand the series, to include the various operations undertaken over the intervening thirty years. Each volume dealt with a distinct geographical division. Volume Five of the set dealt exclusively with Burma. It not only covered the three Anglo-Burmese Wars, but also included chapters on the pacification campaign after the fall of Mandalay, and separate chapters on the main "hill tribes" encountered during operations, namely the Chins, Kachins and Shans. The volume also

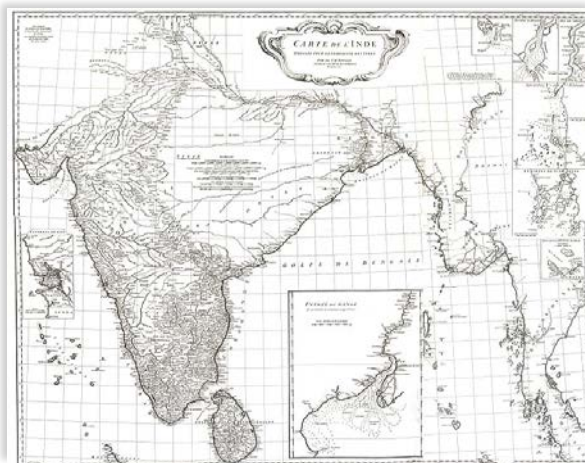
provided a folding sketch map at a scale of one inch to 32 miles, "to illustrate the 1st 2nd & 3rd Burmese Wars".⁴⁶⁷

Details are scarce, but it appears that around the 1880s an "Intelligence Branch" was formed in the Quarter-Master General's Department of Burma Military District, based in Rangoon. It seems to have served as an extension of the IB in Simla. During the 1890s, for example, the Rangoon Branch was responsible for the production of a monthly *Diary of Events of Military Interest in Burma*. It also published accounts of travellers and explorers such as the 1893 *Report on the Kaukkwe Police Column Operations during the Cold Season of 1892-93* and the 1894 *Report of the Intelligence Officer, Kamaing Column, on the country around Indawgyi Lake*.⁴⁶⁸ Another publication was *Report on a Reconnaissance in the Southern Shan States, 1894-95*.⁴⁶⁹ Yet another report produced by the Rangoon Branch was G.H.H. Couchman's *Report of the Intelligence Officer on Tour with the Superintendent, Northern Shan States, 1895-96*.⁴⁷⁰ Copies of such reports, together with route information extracted from them, were distributed within Burma, as well as being sent to Simla for use in IB publications. Some publications appear also to have been sent to the India Office in London, the War Office and private institutions like the Royal Geographical Society.⁴⁷¹

Individual route books were first issued by the Intelligence Branch in Simla in 1903. They divided the colony into four parts, and covered northern, north-eastern, western and southern Burma. The last also included the Shan States. These route books anticipated similar volumes prepared for use during the Second World War, mainly by intelligence officers attached to Southeast Asia Command in Delhi (and after 1944 in Kandy, Ceylon) and General Headquarters India, based in Delhi. Particular routes and sectors were identified by letters of the alphabet. For example, *Routes in Burma: Routes C* described roads and tracks in the Bhamo-Myitkyina districts. *Routes in Burma: Routes D* covered the Northern Shan States and the Wa States, while *Routes in Burma: Routes E* covered routes in the Southern Shan States and Karenni areas, and so on.⁴⁷² A separate guide published by General HQ India, simply titled *Trans-Frontier Routes*, described all the roads, tracks and paths that crossed the India-Burma frontier between Rima in Arunachal Pradesh and Chittagong in (then) Bengal.⁴⁷³

Route reports were usually accompanied by maps, either compiled by others, or put together *ab initio* by members of the IB. However, the lack of accurate maps remained a major concern. During the 19th Century, a major effort had been made to map India using trigonometrical measurements, but Burma largely remained *terra incognita*.⁴⁷⁴ For example, a "map of the Burman empire", made for the East India Company before the First Anglo-Burmese War, left much to be

desired.⁴⁷⁵ It relied heavily on a map produced in 1752 by the French geographer Jean Baptiste d'Anville and the survey made by a Bengal engineer, Thomas Wood, who had accompanied Michael Symes on his first diplomatic mission to Ava in 1795.⁴⁷⁶ As Symes himself wrote, before Wood's survey, the interior of Burma was "in inexplicable obscurity".⁴⁷⁷ However, a lesson had been learned. When another diplomatic mission was sent to Ava in 1854 it comprised artists, photographers, scientists and other personnel, accompanied by at least 440 soldiers and a private escort of cavalry.⁴⁷⁸



Map of India, Sri Lanka, Burma: Drawn for the Compagnie des Indes, 1752. (Wikimedia Commons)

Even then, most maps of Burma were characterised by "utter blanks".⁴⁷⁹ The Anglo-Burmese Wars themselves added little to cartographic knowledge, as much of the fighting took place along river banks and sea shores, and apart from operations up the Irrawaddy River there was little need to venture too deeply into the interior. The ignorance these missions highlighted, however, did prompt several surveys of Burma's frontiers. Also, after the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Burmese War further excursions into Upper Burma enabled colonial geographers and cartographers to add considerable detail to their data bases. British soldiers and surveyors fanned out across the newly-acquired territory gathering intelligence and making surveys, the results of which were incorporated into maps for commercial and military use.⁴⁸⁰ The main aims of the Bladen expedition in 1868, for example, were not only to "explore the old trade routes between South-Western China and Burma, via Bhamo" but also to report back to the Government of India on the "physical condition of the routes".⁴⁸¹ In 1879, a Burmese national was trained as a pundit and sent north on a quest to find the source of the Irrawaddy River.⁴⁸²

Despite all these efforts, by 1905 it could still be said that "the condition of almost all the existing maps was absolutely insufficient for military purposes".⁴⁸³ Solving this problem, however, suddenly became a high priority. As described by G.F. Heaney;

*With the arrival in India [in 1902] as Commander-in-Chief of Lord Kitchener, who had been in his early years a survey officer, it was realised that something drastic must be done to meet the demands of the country for modern maps.*⁴⁸⁴

In 1905, an expert committee recommended a massive project to map all of India and Burma, in colour, at a scale of one inch to the mile (1: 63,360). So large was the project that responsibility was devolved to the provinces, which were required to conduct the necessary surveys under the overall control of the Survey of India in Dehra Dun. "At the close of the rains each year in the autumn topographical survey parties took the field all over India and Burma".⁴⁸⁵ "Vertical air photography", of the kind used in forest surveys in Burma during the 1920s, were utilised in areas of difficult terrain.⁴⁸⁶ Begun in 1907, the project continued right up to the outbreak of the Second World War, eventually producing more than 250 highly detailed maps of Burma. Many were updated with US help during the war, using modern aerial photographic techniques.⁴⁸⁷

It is worth noting too that, from an early stage, a major effort was made to produce detailed gazetteers on all the provinces of India. While Burma was not accorded as high a priority as those on the subcontinent, a two-volume *British Burma Gazetteer* was produced in 1879–80.⁴⁸⁸ In 1881, the first edition of William Hunter's monumental *Imperial Gazetteer of India* appeared. Naturally, it contained a lengthy section on British Burma.⁴⁸⁹ In following years, a number of private accounts were published, such as James Butler's *Gazetteer of the Mergui District* and Malcolm Lloyd's *Gazetteer of the District of Rangoon*.⁴⁹⁰ The turn of the

century saw the publication of James G. Scott's comprehensive five-volume *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*.⁴⁹¹ This was followed by a series of 26 district gazetteers of Burma, published by the colonial government between 1907 and 1934. Volume A of each gazetteer gave a general account of the district, its history, natural resources, administration and so on, while Volume B (which was updated periodically, usually after a census) gave the relevant statistics.⁴⁹²

The quality of all these reports varied, but they served as comprehensive introductions to Burma's main administrative districts, for the use of civil and military personnel alike.⁴⁹³

Once the new province of Burma had been established, the pacification effort was deemed successful, and relations with the main ethnic communities settled (after a fashion), the need for a specific military intelligence capability to support operations in Burma diminished. The civil police and BMP tended to take the lead in security matters, including responses to outbreaks of civil unrest. In this regard, the police could rely on the intelligence that their own officers had collected in the course of their duties, supplemented by the local knowledge acquired by district officers, missionaries and foreign residents. Not only was this the usual practice in British colonies around the world, but a precedent had been established in India, where a comprehensive police network provided the colonial administration with regular reports on the state of the country and the external threats it felt it faced. The one exception to this rule was the Saya San rebellion in 1930–32, which prompted not only major military action in Burma but also the creation of a new, independent military intelligence agency.

The Burma Defence Bureau

Until the end of the First World War, Burma was described as "the most placid province in India" and its people were regarded as politically apathetic.⁴⁹⁴ This made the impact of the Saya San rebellion on the colonial administration even more severe, prompting it to consider "a drastic reform of security measures for dealing with dissent in Burma".⁴⁹⁵ Edmund Clipson has written that;

*Following the rebellion major efforts were made to construct a centralised intelligence bureau that reached throughout the country to provide reports on the activity of indigenous Burmans to Burma's colonial overseers, the colonial governor in Burma, the viceroy in India, their undersecretaries and counterparts in the India Office.*⁴⁹⁶

In fact, such a structure already existed, in the shape of the Burma Police's Special Branch. It is misleading to say that the colony's intelligence gathering apparatus "came to fruition only after the suppression of the Saya San rebellion".⁴⁹⁷ In 1932, there was clearly a need to develop a better system, with a greater capacity to foresee major outbreaks of civil unrest, but other factors also need to be considered. An equally pressing concern for the colonial government at the time was the impending separation of Burma from India, and a perceived increase in external threats, some of which might require high-level, and possibly military, attention.

As early as 1931, the creation of a central intelligence bureau in Burma had been mooted, but rejected "on account of financial stringency".⁴⁹⁸ Needless to say, the

Saya San rebellion encouraged another look at this issue, one senior army officer at the time suggesting that an intelligence "machine" be created to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of the Burmese population.⁴⁹⁹ The "machine" envisaged seemed in many ways to mirror the police apparatus that already existed, but with two key differences. First, it was expected that intelligence collectors and analysts would be more responsive to intelligence consumers, at all levels. Second, the new intelligence "machine" was to be protected against any oversight by Burmese officials, including the Burmese ministers appointed under the limited arrangements for self-government implemented in 1923, following the Montagu-Chelmsford diarchal reforms. This requirement was "for purposes of political camouflage".⁵⁰⁰ After all, the Bamar themselves were seen as part of the new threat matrix drawn up by the administration.

The colonial government's concern for an improved intelligence system did not just stem from communal unrest of the kind seen in 1930-32, although the fear of similar outbreaks remained for some years. Other possible threats included terrorism, subversion and the activities of external agents. Following the Russian revolution, for example, there were fears of Bolshevik agitation and during the First World War there had been attempts by German agents to destabilise India, through Burma.⁵⁰¹ Indian nationalists and Bengali revolutionaries were also a subject of keen intelligence interest, as was "the pan-Asiatic Japanese movement". In the 1930s, for example, the British Security Service (MI5), and presumably Special Branch, were worried about Japanese "photographic intelligence gathering" in Burma.⁵⁰² Increasingly, the activities of Burmese nationalists, and their possible external links, were of concern and the subject of attention from the CID and Special Branch. Burmese nationalists like the Thakins were active since the early 1930s and were in touch with both Indian communists and Japanese agents.⁵⁰³ Threats sometimes came from unexpected quarters. In 1915, for example, there were reports of a Chinese man trying to tempt then exiled Burmese prince Mingoon Min in Saigon into fomenting a rebellion in Burma and Bengal.⁵⁰⁴

Clipsion has claimed that during the 1930s, "the entire police administration was being integrated into the intelligence system". This is a little puzzling, as in Burma at that time the police system effectively was the intelligence system, hosting almost all its key components. Local military intelligence capabilities were very modest and, under the guidance of Army HQ in Simla, focussed on broader issues, like the Burma-China frontier.⁵⁰⁵ That said, there does seem to have been an effort to provide greater guidance and resources to the police intelligence apparatus in Burma. As already noted, the CID was expanded and instructed to give a higher priority to compiling personal data. Even so, the perceived need for a completely new

organisation to collect, analyse and produce intelligence was felt strongly at senior levels. The police system was deemed to have failed to provide this service, and many of its Bamar informants were deemed unreliable. This led to the creation of a Burma Defence Bureau in January 1937, to begin operations when Burma separated from India that April.

The BDB's roots lay in the Special Intelligence Bureau of the CID, created in 1933, but in bureaucratic terms it was entirely independent from the Burma Police. Its remit was very wide, the new Bureau being envisaged as:

*a permanent organisation whose duty it would be to obtain and coordinate information as to the activities of those societies which had been responsible for the [Saya San] rebellion and any new societies which might be formed for similar and subversive purposes.*⁵⁰⁶

Its creation was discussed with the Director of the (civilian) Intelligence Bureau in Delhi, which worked closely with the Burma Police's CID. The new body was to answer to the Governor, through the Defence Secretary. Its formal establishment was small. It was to be headed by a Police Superintendent, "who will rank as a Deputy Inspector-General if a Civil Police Officer, or as a GSO1 [lieutenant colonel] if a military officer".⁵⁰⁷ He would be supported by a Deputy Director at District Superintendent of Police level, or at GSO2 level (i.e. a major), if selected from the armed forces, plus four clerical staff and seven investigating staff. The CID itself would remain a separate organisation, but focused much more closely on criminal intelligence.

The BDB was intended to be an all-source intelligence assessment agency. It was charged with collecting, collating and analysing reports received from its own agents and from the wider intelligence community, including the CID, SB, the Intelligence Branch at Defence HQ and friendly agencies overseas. Information was to be collected on;

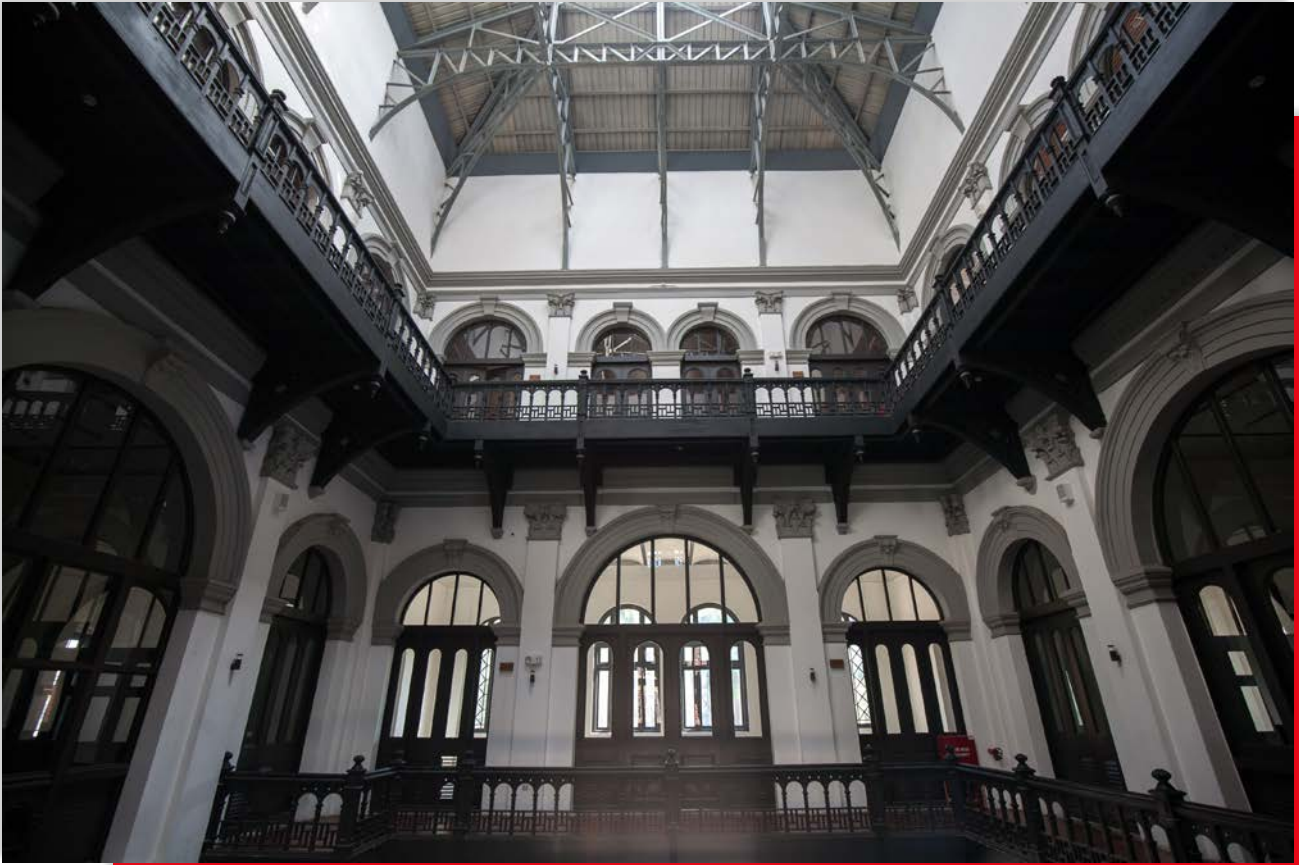
*all subversive movements such as Communism, Terrorism, Civil Disobedience, the Thakins and other Anti-Government youth movements, the pan-Asiatic Japanese movement and indeed all movements the object of which may be to overthrow or embarrass the Government established in Burma.*⁵⁰⁸

The BDB was required to produce a monthly intelligence assessment report "on all aspects of the life of the people as they affect the peace and order of the whole province".⁵⁰⁹ Its responsibilities, however, went beyond intelligence assessment and reporting. It was also the BDB's responsibility to provide early warning to the Governor when it might be necessary for him to invoke his special powers to contain subversive

activity.⁵¹⁰ It was also required to keep the General Officer Commanding Burma similarly informed.

Even before its inception, the Burma Defence Bureau was being viewed by some senior officials in the colonial administration as “the Burma link in the chain of Imperial Intelligence Organisations”.⁵¹¹ There is no evidence readily available to show that serious attempts were made to forge such a connection, but theoretically this plan allied the BDB with other British intelligence organisations around the world. They included MI5, with its stable of out-posted Defence Security Officers, and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) which ran agents outside Britain. It is not clear how the BDB planned to reconcile contacts with those organisations with its primary responsibilities to the Defence establishment in India and the UK. However, there had already been frequent contacts between MI5 and the civilian Delhi Intelligence Bureau, mainly through the London-based Indian Political Intelligence (IPI) Department on issues relating to Burma, dating back to the First World War.⁵¹² This doubtless continued after Separation in 1937. Such connections became more important as global tensions increased.

It was intended that the BDB would be reviewed after three years, and a decision made on its future, but the Second World War intervened and such plans had to be abandoned. The fate of the BDB is not clear but it would appear that after the British retreat from Burma in 1942 it joined the exiled Burmese government in Simla, where it became the Burma Intelligence Bureau. As such, it followed developments in Burma closely, and worked with the government in exile's Information Office to produce publications for use by military and civil personnel engaged in the fight to win Burma back from the Japanese. These included a number of handbooks, including *The Engineer Officers Hand Book on Burma*, and a two-volume guide titled *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*.⁵¹³ These publications, some of which included maps, were designed to introduce Burma to those with no prior knowledge of the country. In many ways, however, the Bureau became increasingly irrelevant as the primary burden for gathering and assessing intelligence fell on Southeast Asia Command and the Fourteenth Army.



Secretariat, home and administrative seat of British Burma in downtown Yangon. (Shutterstock)

Conclusion

In times of travail, Britain's tendency was to rely more, not less, on spies. Her entire empire history urged her to do so.

John Le Carre
*The Honourable Schoolboy*⁵¹⁴

CONCLUSION

In his seminal 1987 study *The State in Burma*, Robert Taylor stated:

*The security of the colonial state rested primarily on the army, although by the close of the British period the government had developed more complex instruments of social and political control by the police, including an intelligence capacity which allowed it to monitor the plans of anti-state and anti-British movements and individuals.*⁵¹⁵

This is a neat summary of the situation. However, Taylor later quotes an official document that said "the primary role of the Army in Burma" was "Internal Security". Also, Michael Aung-Thwin has stated that the British presided over "a coercive unity enforced by military power".⁵¹⁶ Mary Callahan comes to much the same conclusion, writing that "the skinny state was filled out with the coercive muscles of British and Indian army units".⁵¹⁷ In one sense, they are all correct, but such statements beg for elaboration of the army's changing role in Burma between 1886 and 1941, its ability to perform that role, or not, and the equally important, if not arguably more important, role played by Burma's police forces. Indeed, it is possible to argue, as Daw Mya Sein has done, that "The police department has always been and will always be one of the most important branches of the administration in [colonial] Burma".⁵¹⁸

Following the conquest of Upper Burma in 1885 and the final annexation of the entire country in 1886, there was a pacification campaign that lasted about ten years. This necessitated not only the retention of the troops sent to take Mandalay, but their supplementation with additional military forces. "Pacification" proved to be far more challenging and manpower intensive than the invasion. However, in an effort to reduce the number of regular soldiers in the province, the Burma Military Police was formed. It was not long before it carried most of the burden of the pacification program, thus freeing military units to be recalled to India. The number of regular soldiers in Burma was reduced to the point that, by 1938, there was a total of only 4,713 British soldiers plus 358 officers in the country, plus 5,922 Indian or Burmese soldiers. By that stage, the Burma Military Police numbered 4,294 men, and the Frontier Force (formed mainly by re-badging BMP personnel) 10,073 men.⁵¹⁹ If the civil Burma Police are added, these three forces easily outnumbered the Burma Defence Force formed in 1937. They were also more widely distributed around the country and carried a greater responsibility for the colony's internal security, from day to day.

As already described, the Indian Army gave a low priority to military intelligence on Burma almost up until the outbreak of the Second World War. The first two Anglo-Burmese Wars between 1824 and 1888 were fought largely in ignorance of the terrain or the enemy that the British were up against. The situation had

improved by the time of the Third Anglo-Burmese War. As the British forces established a stronger hold on the country, efforts were made to compile comprehensive and accurate route books and maps that could assist in future operations, but the process was slow and large gaps remained. It took the Saya San uprising in the 1930s, and the need to deploy additional troops from India, to spur the colonial authorities in India and Burma to authorise the creation of a military intelligence bureau in Burma. However, even that was staffed largely by police officers and depended heavily on intelligence from police stations around the country. It had barely begun to function effectively before the Second World War broke out.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this state of affairs.

The first is that, once a measure of control had been established over the new province, the British colonial authorities in India and Burma consciously reduced the number of troops in country and increasingly relied on the police for internal security. The armed forces were called out when civil unrest exceeded the capacities of the police forces, as in the case of the Saya San rebellion, but the army increasingly came to be, in reality, responsible mainly for defence against possible external threats. Until the 1930s, the perceived absence of any such threats meant that Burma's military capabilities were allowed to wither on the vine. The corollary of this situation was that the colonial regime, both before and after the creation of a Burma Defence Bureau in 1937, looked to the police forces first to provide it with intelligence from around the country. Even after the BDB became more established, there was considerable overlap in responsibilities, as both military and police agencies sought to identify and track the movement and activities of nationalists, communists and other threats to the peace.

It has also been claimed that the authoritarian colonial regime instituted by the British, and exercised through the police and, in extremis, the armed forces, facilitated authoritarianism in independent Burma.⁵²⁰ That has been suggested, for example, by Mary Callahan, who has written;

*One of the 'residues of the colonial state' that shaped the nature of postcolonial state-society relations is the prominent role of the military – vis a vis other institutions – in controlling individual and social behaviour.*⁵²¹

Yet such an argument is difficult to make when one considers the dominant role of the police and the relative weakness of the armed forces in colonial affairs. Besides, the authoritarian nature of the Konbaung kings and the brutal rule of the Japanese during the Second World War should also be taken into account. General Ne Win did not need to draw on British colonial examples to institute his own harsh regime, even if he

CONCLUSION

continued to utilise colonial-era laws to justify his draconian policies. Indeed, it could be argued equally strongly that, despite certain superficial similarities, after 1948 successive Burmese governments found their own ways to exercise authoritarian rule.

One thing that the British and subsequent Burmese military regimes did have in common, however, at least after the 1962 coup, was a reliance on the country's intelligence agencies to keep a close watch on the population and to help the government exercise strict



Rangoon Harbour, 1937. (Wikimedia Commons)

controls over its behaviour. As already noted, in the case of the British it was the police which played the greatest role in that regard, with its wide reporting responsibilities and centralised assessment agencies. This remained the case even after the formation of the BDB under Defence control in 1937. The intelligence it received came in large part from police officers scattered around the country, plus the CID and SB. This was in direct contrast to the situation after independence in 1948. Under Ne Win and later military regimes, it was the Military Intelligence Service and its successors, assisted by the police and other organs of government that provided intelligence to the military government.

It is with this in mind that a strong claim can be made for Burma during the colonial period to be called an intelligence state. For it was on the basis of intelligence, in the form of raw police reports and assessments made in Rangoon, that the government learned about developments around the country. Intelligence also informed its decisions whether or not to call out the police or armed forces to restore what the administration considered threats to the peace. In other words, intelligence preceded armed force, whether it was exercised by the police or, on a few occasions, the army. The central role of the colony's intelligence apparatus, underpinning the government, has largely been ignored in past histories of the colonial period. As Alexander Cadogan said, it is the forgotten dimension that needs to be included in any future consideration of that era.

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- 6 One is under the Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration, the other is under the Minister for Defence. Personal communication, Canberra, March 2023.
- 7 *The Analects of Confucius*, translated by Arthur Waley (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), pp.171-72.
- 8 In 2010, following promulgation of the new national constitution, Myanmar's seven administrative "divisions" became "regions".
- 9 In Burmese, Sittwe means "the place where the war meets" and was so named by King Bodawpaya after he defeated the Arakanese army there in 1784 and subsequently annexed the Arakan kingdom. The settlement was renamed Akyab by the British during the First Anglo-Burmese War, after the ancient pagoda Ahkyaib-daw, on the outskirts of the town, where the British troops were camped. Since then, the names Sittwe and Akyab have been used interchangeably. Both still appear on European and American maps of the area, although Sittwe is now the city's official name.
- 10 "Writing Systems: Romanization, Government of the Union of Myanmar Notification 5/89", Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Berlin, 27 August 2002, Doc. E/CONF.94/INF75, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/docs/8th-uncsgn-docs/inf/8th_UNCSGN_econf.94_INF.75.pdf
- 11 See "Karenni and Kayah: The Nature of Burma's Ethnic Problem over Two Names and the Path to Resolution", *Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives*, 5 February 2014, at <http://peacebuilding.asia/burmas-ethnic-problem-over-two-names-and-the-path-to-resolution/>
- 12 Andrew Selth and Adam Gallagher, "What's In a Name: Burma or Myanmar?", *The Olive Branch*, 21 June 2018, at <https://www.usip.org/blog/2018/06/whats-name-burma-or-myanmar>
- 13 Aung San Suu Kyi's incarceration occurred, with a number of breaks, between July 1989 and November 2010. She was detained again in February 2021 and remains under arrest. See "Burma: A Chronology of Aung San Suu Kyi's Detention", *Human Rights Watch*, 13 November 2010, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/13/burma-chronology-aung-san-suu-kyis-detention>
- 14 During his visit in 2012, US President Barack Obama called the country Myanmar, but the following year the US Embassy in Yangon issued a press release which referred to the country as "Burma". See "Myanmar rebukes US for calling it 'Burma'", *Reuters*, 26 January 2013, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-usa-idINDEE90P01R20130126>
- 15 Andrew Selth, "More name games in Burma/Myanmar", *The Interpreter*, 10 August 2016, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/more-name-games-burmamyanmar>
- 16 Occasionally, it is stated that Naypyidaw is 367 kilometres north of Yangon, but that calculation is based on the distance by road between the two cities.
- 17 See, for example, Andrew Selth, *Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces since 1988*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No.113 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1996).
- 18 *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (Naypyidaw: Ministry of Information, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008), chapter 7, clause 338.
- 19 See, for example, "Myanmar Junta Prepares for Name Change as End of Emergency Rule Looms", *The Irrawaddy*, 3 January 2023, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-prepares-for-name-change-as-end-of-emergency-rule-looms.html>. See also "The Master of the Myanmar Junta's 'Skyful of Lies'", *The Irrawaddy*, 14 June 2022, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/the-master-of-the-myanmar-juntas-skyful-of-lies.html>. It is no coincidence that "Ma Ah La" can also be translated as "mother-fucker".

- 20 See, for example, Desmond, "Please Don't Call Myanmar Military Tatmadaw", *The Irrawaddy*, 25 May 2022, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/please-dont-call-myanmar-military-tatmadaw.html>; and Aung Kaung Myat, "Sit-tat or Tatmadaw? Debates on what to call the most powerful institution in Myanmar", *Tea Circle*, 3 October 2022, at <https://teacircleoxford.com/politics/sit-tat-or-tatmadaw-debates-on-what-to-call-the-most-powerful-institution-in-burma/>
- 21 See, for example, "Burma Unified Through Rigorous Military Accountability Act of 2022", (BURMA Act: HR 5497), 6 April 2022, *Congress.Gov*, at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5497/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr5497%22%2C%22hr5497%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=2>
- 22 D.I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.xix-xx.
- 23 In her case, "Aung San" comes from her father, independence hero Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947. "Suu" is said to come from her paternal grandmother and "Kyi" reportedly derives from her mother's name, Khin Kyi. Past military regimes have sought to reduce Aung San Suu Kyi's claim to historical credentials by simply referring to her as "Suu Kyi" or "Ma Suu Kyi". To many of her followers, she was "Daw Suu" (Auntie Suu) or "Amay Suu" (Mother Suu).
- 24 "A Note on Burmese Names", in Thant Myint U, *The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2020), p.xii.
- 25 See Andrew Selth, "Burma and the politics of names", *The Interpreter*, 12 July 2010, at <https://archive.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/burma-and-politics-names>
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- 28 One scholar who has looked closely at fluctuating police numbers during the colonial period is Lalita Hingkanonta Hanwong, *Policing in Colonial Burma* (Chiang Mai: Centre for ASEAN Studies, Chiang Mai University, 2015).
- 29 This is not to overlook the 16 months between October 1958 and April 1960 that Ne Win and the armed forces ruled Burma under a "caretaker government".
- 30 D.S. Mathieson, "The Burma Road to Nowhere: The Failure of the Developmental State in Myanmar", *Policy, Organisation and Society*, Vol.17, No.1, 1999, p.108. See also "A SLORC By Any Other Name", *Washington Post*, 6 March 1998, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1998/03/06/a-slorc-by-any-other-name/84bdf222-1eb8-417c-97ee-032cd9535e91/>
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- 32 *Observing Myanmar's 2015 General Elections: Final Report* (Atlanta: Carter Centre, 2016), at https://www.uec.gov.mm/show_data_content.php?name=209.pdf&type=law&code=x&sno=8455&token=9ce69a1b8f9f0effbfefeb662cab5728f5fbc183e9b61b04b06fc97ff71e62c7fc70510d5cc03e2cd38726c2d47dab9e8471cc95b390758055fbf40fa6f6be6e0cd
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- 100 J.S. Furnivall, "The Fashioning of Leviathan: The Beginnings of British Rule in Burma", *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Vol.29, No.1, April 1939, reprinted as an Occasional Paper by the Department of Anthropology, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, p.56.
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- 105 Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India* (London: John Murray, 1882), p.177.
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- 107 *East India (British Burma): Return to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons, dated 19 June 1865, for "Copy of the Report upon the Income and Expenditure of British Burmah, by R. Temple Esq., and Lieutenant Colonel H. Bruce, 1860"* (London: India Office, 22 June 1865), p.7.
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- 111 Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.86.
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- 113 H.T. White, *A Civil Servant in Burma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), pp.5-6.
- 114 Lewis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.127.
- 115 Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, pp.82-3.
- 116 Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, p.86. See also White, *A Civil Servant in Burma*, pp.78-9.
- 117 In 1872, 16 per cent of the city's population was Indian. By 1881, it had risen to 40 per cent. Tin Maung Maung Than, "Some Aspects of Indians in Rangoon", in K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (eds), *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983), p.586.
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- 122 Pearn, *A History of Rangoon*, pp.238-9.
- 123 Crosthwaite, 1968, *The Pacification of Burma*, p. 14. Despite its legal definition, the term "dacoit" came to be used loosely by the British to describe remnants of the Burmese army, patriotic resistance fighters and common outlaws. See Ni Ni Myint, 1983, *Burma's Struggle Against British Imperialism (1885-1895)*; and Ian Heath, 2003, *Armies of the Nineteenth Century: Asia*, pp. 40-1.
- 124 Andrew Selth, "Foreigners, Fighting and Phaleristics: Military Medals in British Burma", *Tea Circle*, 23 December 2019, at <https://teacircleoxford.com/essay/foreigners-fighting-and-phaleristics-military-medals-in-british-burma/>

- 125 S.C.F. Peile, "Police", in Arnold Wright, H.A. Cartwright and O. Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2015, reprinted from 1910), p.252.
- 126 Lowis et al, 1908, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series: Burma, p. 129.
- 127 Crosthwaite, 1968, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp. 15-6. Lieutenant Colonel Peile, an Inspector General of Police, gives other figures, probably reflecting differences between sanctioned and recruited numbers of personnel. See Peile, 2015, 'Police', p. 246.
- 128 Young, 1928, "The Burma Military Police", p. 379.
- 129 *An Act for the Regulation of Military Police in Burma* (Act No. XV of 1887).
- 130 Lowis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.129. See also James Dunn, "The Burma Military Police", *Crown Imperial*, No.85, Winter 1996, p.23; "Sketches of the Burmese Military Police", *The Illustrated News of the World*, 17 May 1890, p.471; and "The Military Police of Burmah", *The Illustrated News of the World*, 5 July 1890, p.20.
- 131 Young, "The Burma Military Police", p.380.
- 132 Before their amalgamation, the officers of the Upper Burma battalions were termed Commandant and Assistant Commandant. The corresponding officers of the Lower Burma battalions were called Adjutant and Assistant Adjutant.
- 133 See, for example, Pradeep Barua, "Inventing Race: The British and India's Martial Races", *The Historian*, Vol.58, No.1, Autumn 1995, pp.107-16.
- 134 Cited in T.R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p.116.
- 135 A. Lethbridge, "The Burma Military Police on the North-East Frontier", *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.19, No.3, 1932, p.442.
- 136 Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, p.200. See also Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp.128-32.
- 137 J.L. Christian, "Burma: Strategic and Political", *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol.11, No.3, 9 February 1942, p.42.
- 138 Peile, "Police", p.247.
- 139 Lowis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.127.
- 140 Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, p.208.
- 141 Initially, however, they were stationed in Burma. Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.130. See also Dunn, "The Burma Military Police", p.23.
- 142 John Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule — And Before* (Elibron Classics, Westminster, 2005), Vol.1, p.234.
- 143 Young, "The Burma Military Police", p.386.
- 144 At Rorke's Drift in 1879, for example, the men of the 2nd Battalion, 24th Regiment of Foot, were armed with Martini Henry rifles, but they had problems with the ammunition, particularly when their weapons became overheated through repeated firing. It may be of interest to note that the British officer who was Second-in-Command at that action, Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead, served in Burma from 1886-1888.
- 145 Peile, 'Police', p.252. These guns were romanticised by Rudyard Kipling in his 1890 ballad "Screw Guns", which refers inter alia to campaigns against the Naga and Lushai peoples of eastern India and western Burma. See *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), pp.403-4.
- 146 Alleyne Ireland, *The Province of Burma: A Report Prepared on behalf of the University of Chicago* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1907), Vol.1, p.208. See, for example, Ian Brown, "South East Asia: Reform and the Colonial Prison", in Frank Dikotter and Ian Brown (eds), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.243.
- 147 Michael Barthorp and Pierre Turner, *The British Army on Campaign 4, 1882-1902* (Oxford: Osprey, 1999).
- 148 Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, p.205. For about 50 years after the 1857 Indian Mutiny, the Indian Army and provincial police forces were kept one weapon generation behind the British army, for security reasons.
- 149 Gunpowder could be made by treating bat droppings, which are rich in nitrates, and adding naturally-occurring sulphur and charcoal. This process is described in Jonathan Falla, *True Love and Bartholomew: Rebels on the Burmese Border* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.113-14.
- 150 Confusingly, both commanders seem to have carried the title of Inspector General of Police. Peile, "Police", p.247.
- 151 Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books, 1999), pp.41-2.
- 152 J.F. Bowerman, "The Frontier Areas of Burma", *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol.95, No. 4732, 6 December 1946, p.46. See also *The Quarterly Civil List for Burma, No.CCLXXXIV* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1941), pp.28-31.
- 153 Martin Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma: Development, Democracy and Human Rights* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 1994), pp.22-5.
- 154 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.340. It has been argued that this process only really ended with the military coup in 1962. See Michael Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order without Meaning", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.16, No.2, September 1985, pp.245-61.
- 155 Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol.1, p.218.
- 156 This practice derived from Ireland, the origin of much of the basis of police administration in British India and Burma. See, for example, Galen Broeker, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812-36* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp.230-31 and pp.241-42.
- 157 Anandswarup Gupta, *The Police in British India, 1861-1947* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1979), pp.139-40.

- 158 J.C. Curry, *The Indian Police* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), p.54.
- 159 It was originally proposed that recruitment into the IIP should be through a competitive examination in the UK, "from the same classes from which officers of the ICS and the British and native armies were selected or from candidates who failed to pass into the ICS, Woolwich or Sandhurst and volunteered for the Police". Gupta, *The Police in British India*, pp.139-40. See also D.A. Campion, "Authority, accountability and representation: the United Provinces police and the dilemmas of the colonial policeman in British India, 1902-39", *Historical Research*, Vol.76, No.192, May 2003, p.219.
- 160 Martin Wynne (ed), *On Honourable Terms: The Memoirs of Some Indian Police Officers, 1915-1948* (Putney: BACSA, 1985), p.9.
- 161 Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), p.87. Henceforth, in this paper Eric Blair will be referred to as George Orwell.
- 162 Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule — And Before*, Vol.1, p.234.
- 163 *Census of India, 1911, Volume IX: Burma, Part 1 – Report* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1912), p.83.
- 164 Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol.1, p.200.
- 165 Bill Tydd, *Peacock Dreams* (London: BACSA, 1986), pp.89-90. Tydd served in both the BMP and RTP between 1929 and 1942.
- 166 At first, the railway's primary purpose in Burma was military. It was only after the 1885 war, and the annexation of Upper Burma, that it began to be seen as a way of promoting commerce. See Josef Silverstein, "Politics and Railroads in Burma and India: A Problem of Historical Interpretation", *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Vol.45, No.1, June 1962, pp.79-89. Also of interest is David Baillargeon, "'On the Road to Mandalay': The Development of Railways in British Burma, 1870-1900", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol.48, No.4, 2020, pp.654-78.
- 167 *The Burma Police Manual, Vol. 3, Containing Orders and Rules made for the Railway Police with the Sanction of Government* (Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, Rangoon, 1940), pp.1-6.
- 168 Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol.1, p.200.
- 169 Lewis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.130.
- 170 Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, p.202. In some sources the RTP is simply called the Rangoon Police. See also *The Rangoon Police Act, 1899 (Act IV of 1899)* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma 1909).
- 171 *Report of the Indian Police Commission*, p.70.
- 172 Maurice Collis, *Trials in Burma* (London: Faber and Faber, 1953), p.34 and p.165. See also *Census of India, 1911, Volume IX*, p.21.
- 173 Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, p.201. See also Donnison, *Public Administration in Burma*, pp.31-2.
- 174 Ma Kyan, "Village Administration in Upper Burma During 1886-87", *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Vol.52, No.2, December 1969, pp.67-80.
- 175 Hall, "Early Days in the Police in Arakan", pp.211-22.
- 176 Around this time, the BP's cap badge consisted of a crown surrounded by the words "Burma Police". Above the crown was the date 1887, the year the military police were formally created. To the right of the crown was 1885, the year all of Burma became a British colony. To the left of the crown was 1889, the year the police forces of Upper and Lower Burma were amalgamated. At the bottom of the crown was 1891, the year the BMP and civil police were separated and established as distinct entities. Author's collection.
- 177 See, for example, *The Criminal Investigation Department Manual* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1931) and *The Abridged Law Manual for Sub-Inspectors of Police Burma* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1926).
- 178 *Drill Manual for the Use of Burma Police* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1922).
- 179 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.130; and Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, p.129.
- 180 Lewis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.127.
- 181 Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule — And Before*, Vol.1, p.234. See also *Tables for the Transliteration of Burmese into English* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1907), pp.159-76.
- 182 Lewis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.128.
- 183 Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol.1, p.497. It is interesting to compare the figures in Ireland's Appendix J with those in Table XI, in Lewis et al, *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.156. See also Hanwong, *Policing in Colonial Burma*, pp.13-22.
- 184 Pearn, *A History of Rangoon*, p.271.
- 185 Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol.1, p.200, p.221, p.227 and p.498.
- 186 J.G. Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information* (London: Daniel O'Connor, 1921), p.161.
- 187 Charles Drage, *Chindwin to Criccieth: The Life of Col. Godfrey Drage* (Caenarvon: Gwenlyn Evans, 1956), p.36.
- 188 Young, "The Burma Military Police", p.388. See also Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.313-5.
- 189 Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, p.204.
- 190 Campion, "Authority, accountability and representation", p.218.
- 191 *Report of the Indian Police Commission and Resolution of the Government of India* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905).

- 192 T.D. Roberts et al, *Area Handbook for Burma* (Washington DC: American University, 1968), p.323. In 1860, the cost of running the police force in Burma was less than five other provinces, namely Bengal, Bombay, Madras, the Punjab, North West Province and Oudh. See K.S. Dhillon, *Defenders of the Establishment: Ruler-Supportive Police Forces of South Asia* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1998), pp.104-5.
- 193 *Report on the Burma Police Enquiry Committee 1924* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1924).
- 194 Young, "The Burma Military Police", pp.388-9.
- 195 Dunn, "The Burma Military Police", p.24; and James Lunt, *Imperial Sunset: Frontier Soldiering in the 20th Century* (Macdonald, London, 1981), p.351. The *Report on the Administration of Burma for the Year 1924-25* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1926), p.16 states that 156 police stations and 95 out-stations were closed.
- 196 Ian Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol.50, No.6, 2022, p.1086.
- 197 Young, "The Burma Military Police", p.388-9.
- 198 Cited in Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", p.1086.
- 199 Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, pp.13-141.
- 200 G.E. Harvey, *British Rule in Burma, 1824-1942* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), p.40.
- 201 Sheldon, *Orwell*, p.82. See also J.L. Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader* (Bombay: Thacker, 1945), p.158.
- 202 Harcourt Butler, "Burma and Its Problems", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.10, No.4, July 1932, p.650.
- 203 Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", p.1070.
- 204 For different explanations of this phenomenon, one by an anthropologist and the other by a senior army officer, see M.E. Spiro, "Social Change and Functional Analysis: A Study in Burmese Psychocultural History", *Ethos*, Vol.1, No.3, Autumn 1973, pp.263-297; and C.W. Gwynn, *Imperial Policing* (London: Macmillan, 1939), pp.299-300. See also J.A. Nilsson, *The Administration of British Burma, 1852-1885*, thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of London, January 1970, pp.247-8.
- 205 Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", pp.1082-87.
- 206 See, for example, Maurice Maybury, *Heaven-Born in Burma: The Daily Round* (Castle Cary: Folio Hadspen, 1984), p.85; and Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information*, p.77.
- 207 Geoffrey Gorer, *Burmese Personality* (New York: Institute of Intercultural Relations, 1943). See also Andrew Selth, "Geoffrey Gorer and the Study of Burma's 'Personality'", *The Journal of Burma Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, 2021, pp.29-68.
- 208 J.A. Nilsson, "The Development of Police Administration in Lower Burma, 1852-1885", *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, Vol.10, Nos.1&2, June 1975, p.58.
- 209 For an insight into the culture of the civil police during the 1920s, by a former member of the BMP, see H.R. Robinson, *A Modern De Quincy: An Autobiography* (London: George Harrap, 1942).
- 210 Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, p.200. See also Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information*, p.162.
- 211 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.53. One reason for the relative popularity of a career in the military police force, compared with the civil arm, may have been the former's more generous pay structure. See Joseph Dautremer, *Burma Under British Rule*, trans J.G. Scott (London: Fisher Unwin, 1913), p.179. See also, Smith Dun, *Memoirs of the Four Foot Colonel*, Southeast Asia Program, Data Paper No.113 (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1980), p.23.
- 212 Orwell later claimed to be an exception to this rule, but at the time he was seen to share the views of his contemporaries. See Maung Htin Aung, "Orwell of the Burma Police", *Asian Affairs*, Vol.4, No.2, 1973, pp.181-86; and John Newsinger, "'Pox Britannica': Orwell and the empire", *Race and Class*, Vol.38, No.2, 1996, pp.33-49.
- 213 R.J. Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904-1924* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p.258. However, the preponderance of Indians in the military police force was seen by others as a weakness in the British system that could be exploited. See, for example, T.G. Fraser, "Germany and Indian Revolution, 1914-18", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.12, No.2, April 1977, pp.255-72.
- 214 Ironically, when Lord Louis Mountbatten visited Burma with the Prince of Wales in 1922, he found Burma to be "many times more loyal than India". See Philip Ziegler (ed), *The Diaries of Lord Louis Mountbatten: 1920-1922, Tours with the Prince of Wales* (London: Collins, 1987), p.235.
- 215 A.D. Moscotti, *British Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Burma, 1917-1937* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974), p.37.
- 216 After considerable agitation, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 were extended to Burma in 1923, providing for a limited level of self-government. Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, pp.2-3.
- 217 Cited in Nilsson, "The Development of Police Administration in Lower Burma, 1852-1885", p.57.
- 218 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.25.
- 219 *Report of the Indian Police Commission*, p.150.
- 220 *Report of the Indian Police Commission*, pp.14-15.
- 221 S.R. Ashton, "A Rebellion in Burma: The Sagaing Uprising of 1910", *The British Library Journal*, Vol.15, No.1, Spring 1989, pp.71-89.
- 222 See, for example, Josef Silverstein and Julian Wohl, "University Students and Politics in Burma", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.37, No.1, Spring 1964, pp.50-65.
- 223 Collis, *Trials in Burma*, pp.143-49.
- 224 N.R. Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma: The Rise and Decline of an Immigrant Community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.133.

- 225 Two warders were killed and seven wounded. See James Warren, "The Rangoon Jail Riot of 1930 and the Prison Administration of British Burma", *Southeast Asia Research*, Vol.10, No.1, March 2002, p.10.
- 226 Yi Li, *Chinese in Colonial Burma: A Migrant Community in a Multi-Ethnic State* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.206.
- 227 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1939).
- 228 For two different interpretations of the Saya San rebellion, see R.L. Solomon, "Saya San and the Burmese Rebellion", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.3, No.3, 1969, pp.209-23; and Matrii Aung-Thwin, "Genealogy of a Rebellion Narrative: Law, Ethnology and Culture in Colonial Burma", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.34, No.3 October 2003, pp.393-419.
- 229 See, for example, Matrii Aung-Thwin, *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).
- 230 These figures vary considerably, depending on the source. See, for example, M.P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.30; Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, p.316; and Gwynn, *Imperial Policing*, p.300.
- 231 Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852-1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), p.192. See also, Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.34-9.
- 232 Edmund Clipson, "For Purposes of Political Camouflage: Intelligence Gathering in Colonial Burma, 1933-35", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol.40, No.4, p.644.
- 233 One Western scholar has described the Saya San rebellion as "an authentic expression of traditional Burmese nationalism". See D.E. Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p.107.
- 234 Parimal Ghosh, *Brave Men of the Hills: Resistance and Rebellion in Burma, 1825-1932* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), pp.152-3.
- 235 Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, p.248.
- 236 Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, p.248.
- 237 A.J. Farrington (ed), *Delineating British Burma: British Confidential and Official Print, 1826-1949*, at http://www.idc.nl/pdf/461_guide_DelineatingBurma.pdf
- 238 J.L. Christian, *Modern Burma: A Survey of Political and Economic Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), p.160.
- 239 *Burma Facts and Figures*, Burma Pamphlets No.9 (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1946), p.41. For a list of police stations in Burma at this time, grouped into districts and subdivisions, see Ganga Singh (comp), *Burma Parliamentary Companion* (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1940), pp.25-28. See also *Burma Police Training School Manual* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1939).
- 240 Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, pp.161-2.
- 241 Thu Nandar, *Police Training School: A Tool for Colonial Administration*, thesis submitted to the University of Mandalay in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, May 1996, p.41.
- 242 McEnery states that of the 13,400 in the civil police, 11,720 were Burmans and 1,200 were Indians. J.H. McEnery, *Epilogue in Burma, 1945-48: The Military Dimension of British Withdrawal* (Tunbridge Wells: Spellmount, 1990), p.14.
- 243 Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, p.102. See also Tin Maung Maung Than, "Some Aspects of Indians in Rangoon", p.586 and p.588.
- 244 Christian, *Modern Burma*, p.160.
- 245 Christian, *Modern Burma*, p.162.
- 246 Tydd, *Peacock Dreams*, p.117. See also Andrew Selth, "Nationalism is not Rationalism", in Andrew Selth, *Interpreting Myanmar: A Decade of Analysis* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2020), pp.57-9.
- 247 See, for example, Collis, *Trials in Burma*, p.104 and pp.151-2.
- 248 Chloe Owings, *Women Police: A Study of the Development and Status of the Women Police Movement* (Montclair: Patterson Smith, 1969), p.92.
- 249 Ministry of Home Affairs, "Rangoon Police", *Burma*, Vol.10, No.1, January 1961, p.47. See also Mangai Natarajan, "Towards Equality: A Report on Women Policing in India", *Journal of Women and Criminal Justice*, Vol.8, No.2, 1996, p.3.
- 250 This incident occurred when the *bu-athin* nationalist organisations were outlawed in 1923. See Jessica Harriden, *The Authority of Influence: Women and Power in Burmese History* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012), p.124; and Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, pp.251-4.
- 251 *Thuriya*, 4 July 1940. I am indebted to Nick Cheesman for pointing out this photograph to me.
- 252 Nationalists in Burma's Legislative Council refused to pass the bill establishing the BFF, demanding instead the complete Burmanisation of the force. For the first and only time, the Governor exercised his powers under the 1935 Government of Burma Act and overrode their objections.
- 253 Christian, *Modern Burma*, p.161.
- 254 *Burma Handbook* (Simla: Government of Burma, 1944), p.104. See also McEnery, *Epilogue in Burma*, p.14.
- 255 Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, p.162. For a personal account of BMP operations around this time, see Tydd, *Peacock Dreams*; and Lethbridge, "The Burma Military Police on the North-East Frontier", pp.434-46.
- 256 See, for example, A.J. Page, *Burma Gazetteer: Pegu District* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1917, reprinted 1963), p.111.
- 257 H.F.E. Childers, "Pony Breeding in Burma", *The Burma Police Journal*, Vol.1, No.4, January 1939, pp.457-64.

- 258 These horses rarely grew beyond 13 hands. In 1900, three Mounted Infantry companies were raised in Rangoon from the British regiments stationed in Burma, and sent to the Boer War. Their "little Burmese ponies" were universally admired for their strength and endurance. See G. Tylden, "Mounted Infantry and the Burma Pony", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol.46, No.188, Winter 1968, pp.243-4.
- 259 Colonel Heyland, "Notes on Cavalry Employed in Upper Burma from October 1886 to October 1887", *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Vol.2, No.1, Spring 2004, pp.29-38.
- 260 White, *A Civil Servant in Burma*, p.77. The term "Waler" was coined in Calcutta in 1846 to describe horses imported from New South Wales as remounts, hacks and racehorses, but was later expanded to cover all horses from Australia. A.T. Yarwood, *Walers: Australian Horses Abroad* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1989), p.15.
- 261 W, Marsh, "Police Dogs for Burma", *The Burma Police Journal*, Vol.1, No.4, January 1939, pp.415-37.
- 262 Louis J. Walinsky, *Economic Development in Burma 1951-1960* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), p.52.
- 263 Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *The Unknown Orwell* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p.155. See also Bernard Crick, *Orwell: A Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p.141. See also A.J.S. White, *The Burma of 'AJ'* (Putney: BACSA, 1991), p.57 and p.87.
- 264 See, for example, White, *The Burma of 'AJ'*, p.87; and E.C.V. Foucar, *I Lived in Burma*, (London: Dennis Dobson, 1956), pp.206-7.
- 265 Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography*, p.80.
- 266 D.J. Taylor, *Orwell: The Life* (New York: John Macrae, 2003), p.67.
- 267 George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (London: Folio Society, 2001), p.22.
- 268 Paul Scott, *The Raj Quartet* (Heinemann, London, 1965-1975) and E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (London: Edward Arnold, 1924).
- 269 Campion, "Authority, accountability and representation", pp.221-2.
- 270 Cited by Emma Larkin, "Introduction", in George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (London: Penguin, 2009). p.x.
- 271 White, *A Civil Servant in Burma*, p.158. The 'uncovenanted civil services' encompassed the large number of (usually locally recruited) public servants who were not members of the more prestigious (and "covenanted") Indian Civil Service (ICS), later the Burma Civil Service (BCS). See J.H. Rose (ed), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: Volume 2, The Growth of the New Empire, 1783-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p.361.
- 272 White, *A Civil Servant in Burma*, p.158.
- 273 This description was attributed to the exiled Burmese king Thibaw and cited in C.L. Keeton, *King Thebaw and the Ecological Rape of Burma* (Delhi: Manohar, 1974), p.380.
- 274 Taw Sein Ko, "Increase of Crime in Burma II", in *Burmese Sketches* (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1920), Vol.2, pp.114-19.
- 275 Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", p.1079.
- 276 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, pp.226-7.
- 277 Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, pp.409-12. See also *Report of the Bribery and Corruption Enquiry Committee, 1940* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1941); and Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p.173.
- 278 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p.56.
- 279 See, for example, Henry Yule, "On the Geography of Burma and its Tributary States, in Illustration of a New Map of Those Regions", *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol.27, 1857, pp.54-108.
- 280 Catholic missionaries first arrived in Burma in the 16th Century, but made little impact on the staunchly Buddhist population. The first Protestant missionary arrived in 1813, but had no greater success.
- 281 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, pp.113-28. See also John Butler, *With the Madras European Regiment in Burma: The Experiences of an Officer of the Honourable East India Company's Army during the First Anglo-Burmese War, 1824-1826* (N.p.: Leonaur, 2007), p.11.
- 282 *The India Police Act, 1861* (V of 1861), 22 March 1861, at http://mha.nic.in/pdfs/police_act_1861.pdf
- 283 *The India Police Act, 1861*.
- 284 *The Burma District Cesses and Rural Police Act, 1880, (Act II of 1880)*, 24 January 1880, section 14.
- 285 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.35.
- 286 Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, Vol.1, p.199.
- 287 *The Rangoon Police Act, 1899 (Act 4 of 1899)*, p.5.
- 288 *The Rangoon Police Act, 1899 (Act 4 of 1899)*, p.5.
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- 290 *The Burma Police Manual*, Vol. 3, p.6.
- 291 *The Burma Police Manual*, Vol. 3, p.69.
- 292 Dogari, "Security in Colonial Policing", *The Police Journal*, Vol.22, No.3, July-September 1949, p.231.
- 293 Dogari, "Security in Colonial Policing", pp.231-2.
- 294 Curry, *The Indian Police*, p.92. It was presumably with this in mind that John Sutherland described George Orwell as "A competent spy in a policeman's uniform". See John Newsinger, *Hope Lies in the Proles: George Orwell and the Left* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), p.112.
- 295 Poplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, pp.26-7.
- 296 Cited in Rhys Thompson, "Securing the Colony: The Burma Police Special Branch (1896-1942)", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.35, No.1, 2020, p.37.
- 297 *The Criminal Investigation Department Manual, Part I* (Central Press, Rangoon, 1925, reprinted 1964), p.7; and *Report of the Indian Police Commission 1902-3*. See also Griffiths, *To Guard My People*, pp.342-352; and Michael Silvestri, "The Thrill of 'Simply Dressing Up': The Indian Police, Disguise, and Intelligence Work in Colonial India", *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Vol.2, No.2, Fall 2001.

- 298 This name harked back to the formation of a Special Irish Branch in the Metropolitan Police Force (in London) in 1883. It became the Special Branch in 1885. See Rupert Allason, *The Branch: A History of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1883-1983* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1983), p.8.
- 299 The *Criminal Investigation Department Manual*, first published in 1925 and reissued (apparently without major revision) in 1929, states that the Deputy Inspector General of Police for Railways and Criminal Investigation was responsible for the Crime Branch, the Crime Classification and the Photographic Bureau, the Finger Print Bureau, the Intelligence Bureau, the Reporting Bureau, the Press Bureau and the Detective Training School. *The Criminal Investigation Department Manual, Part1*, p.9
- 300 *The Criminal Investigation Department Manual, Part1*, p.9. Elsewhere in the same book the SB is referred to as the "Intelligence Bureau".
- 301 *The Burma Police Manual, Volume Two* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1940), p.106.
- 302 *Report of the Indian Police Commission*, p.71.
- 303 Personal communication from Rangoon, January 2011. Fingerprint analysis was in fact first developed in India. See Chandak Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj: How fingerprinting was born in colonial India* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p.139.
- 304 Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", p.1085.
- 305 Christian, *Modern Burma*, p.160.
- 306 Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.120.
- 307 For a discussion of these and other contacts, see for example Georgina Sinclair and C.A. Williams, "'Home and Away': The Cross-Fertilisation between 'Colonial' and 'British' Policing, 1921-85", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol.35, No.2, June 2007, pp.221-38.
- 308 Jonathan Saha, *Law, Disorder and the Colonial State: Corruption in Burma, c.1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
- 309 Personal communication from Rangoon, January 2011.
- 310 Beginning in the late 1880s, King Chulalongkorn embarked on a radical reform of his administration. This entailed the large-scale employment of European personnel. The government took care to ensure that, as far as possible, each ministry and department contained only one nationality among its foreign employees. The British were given the police force, and the Ministry of Finance. See Samson Lim, "The Development of the Police Detective Unit in Siam during the King Chulalongkorn's Reign to the End of 1932", pp.79-81, at <http://dllibrary.spu.ac.th:8080/dspace/bitstream/123456789/1798/7/07.pdf>.
- 311 David Killingray, "The Maintenance of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa", *African Affairs*, Vol.85, No.340, July 1986, p.426.
- 312 See, for example, Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.53.
- 313 *The Criminal Investigation Department Manual, Part1*, p.4.
- 314 Thompson, "Securing the Colony", p.41.
- 315 *Report of the Indian Police Commission*, p.117.
- 316 Campion, "Authority, accountability and representation", p.225.
- 317 Cited in Thompson, "Securing the Colony", p.42.
- 318 *Report of the Burma Police Inquiry Committee 1924*, p.6.
- 319 Insein Prison was built in 1887, to a circular panopticon design, mainly to relieve overcrowding at Rangoon's Central Gaol.
- 320 R.M. Ghosal, "Science and Detection in Burma", *The Burma Police Journal*, Vol.2, 1929, pp.619-35. See also Hla Baw, "Science and Crime Detection", *The Burma Police Journal*, Vol.1, No.4, January 1939, pp.441-8.
- 321 W.W. Robertson, "A Burmese Police Museum", *The Burma Police Journal*, Vol.10, No.1, January-March 1937, pp.125-6.
- 322 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, p.261. See also James McAndrew, *From Combat to Karaoke: Burmese Military Intelligence, 1948-2006*, thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence, National Defence Intelligence College, Washington DC, 2007, pp.21-22.
- 323 See, for example, Michael Silvestri, "'The Sinn Fein of India': Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal", *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol.39, No.4, October 2000, pp.454-486; and Wynne, *On Honourable Terms*, p.121.
- 324 Susmita Mukherji, "The Bengal Revolutionaries in Burma, 1923-1933", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 2000-2001*, Vol.61, No.2, p.1104.
- 325 Dahlia Battacharya, "Bengali Diaspora in Burma: Dynamics of Political Interactions (1885-1948)", *Karatoya: University of North Bengal Journal of History*, Vol.4, March 2011, pp.67-82.
- 326 A flavour of the CID's activities in Rangoon during the 1930s can be gained from Collis, *Trials in Burma*, p.94, p.106 and p.122.
- 327 Robert Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p.224.
- 328 Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, p.178.
- 329 Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, p.228 and 258.
- 330 The Governor, Sir Charles Innes, was believed by Burmese nationalists to be actively opposing demands that Burma be treated the same as India. See Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, pp.326-7.
- 331 White describes the use of a primitive word substitution code by the administration, in telegrams warning district officers of potential Indian nationalist unrest. White, *The Burma of 'AJ'*, p.80.
- 332 "Burma Tour", 1929, at <https://cultural.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/VOL-III-PART-II/1929.pdf>

- 333 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, pp.260-1.
- 334 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, p.260-1.
- 335 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, p.261.
- 336 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, p.304-6.
- 337 Christian, *Modern Burma*, p.163. Christian was a missionary and teacher in Burma from 1933 to 1935, when he returned to the US and wrote two books about the colony. During the Second World War he was a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army Intelligence Corps, and served in India and Burma.
- 338 Ian Brown, "Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma", p.1085.
- 339 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*.
- 340 Cited in Thompson, "Securing the Colony", p.9.
- 341 Thompson, "Securing the Colony", p.10.
- 342 Cited in "Constructing an Intelligence State", Clipson, p.293.
- 343 Harvey, *British Rule in Burma*, p.41.
- 344 Following the Indian Rebellion (or Mutiny) of 1857, the British government passed the Government of India Act (1858) which dissolved the East India Company and transferred its ruling powers to the Crown.
- 345 Stewart cites the figure of 8,500 men. See A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Pagoda War: Lord Dufferin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Ava, 1885-6* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p.35. Doveton speaks of 10,000 men. F.B. Doveton, *Reminiscences of the Burmese War in 1824-5-6* (London: Elibron Classics, 2005, first published 1852), p.89. A sepoy was an Indian soldier recruited by, and serving under, the European colonial powers. They were known as "native sepoys" until 1885, when the term "native" was dropped.
- 346 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, Compiled in the Intelligence Branch, Division of the Chief of the Staff, Army Headquarters, India* (Simla: Government Monotype Press, 1907), Vol.5, pp.18-19.
- 347 Smart, *Burma Gazetteer, Akyab District*, Vol.A, p.28. See also Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.14.
- 348 Ian Herson, *The Savage Empire: Forgotten Wars of the 19th Century* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), p.43.
- 349 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, p.83.
- 350 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.137.
- 351 H.M. Vibart, *The Life of Sir Harry N.D. Prendergast* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1914), pp.214-7. Stewart cites the figure 10,000. Stewart, *The Pagoda War*, p.78. Lord Roberts, then Commander in Chief of the Army in India, states that the field force was "nearly 10,000 men". Lord Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty-One Years in India, from Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1897), Vol.2, p.400.
- 352 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, p.142.
- 353 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, pp.356ff.
- 354 Ian F. Beckett, "The Campaign of the Lost Footsteps: The Pacification of Burma, 1885-95", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol.30, Nos.4-5, 2019, p.1002.
- 355 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, pp.315ff.
- 356 Beckett, "The Campaign of the Lost Footsteps", pp.994-1019.
- 357 B.R. Pearn (ed), *Military Operations in Burma, 1890-1892: Letters from Lieutenant J.K. Watson, K.R.R.C.*, Cornell Data Paper No.64 (Ithaca: Cornell University, February 1967), p. vii. See also Michael Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order without Meaning", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.16, No.2, September 1985, p.250. Becket claims that between 1886 and 1887 the number of regular troops in Burma rose to about 11,844, of whom 3,029 were British. See Beckett, "The Campaign of the Lost Footsteps", p.1002. The discrepancy may be due to confusion between regular troops and members of the BMP.
- 358 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, pp.290-91.
- 359 Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma", pp.245-61.
- 360 *History of the Third Burmese War 1890-91: The Winter Campaign of 1891, compiled under the orders of the Quarter Master General in India, in the Intelligence Branch by Captain J.H. Parsons* (Simla: Government Central Printing Office, 1893), p.6. Beckett claims there were 16,080 soldiers in Burma at the time. Beckett, "The Campaign of the Lost Footsteps", p.1007.
- 361 E.W.C. Sandes, *The Indian Sappers and Miners* (Chatham: The Institution of Royal Engineers, 1948), p.312.
- 362 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.129.
- 363 Thu Nandar, *Police Training School*, p.16.
- 364 Wright, Cartwright and Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma*, p.247.
- 365 Wright, Cartwright and Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma*, p.252.
- 366 Wright, Cartwright and Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma*, p.247.
- 367 Wright, Cartwright and Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma*, p.252.
- 368 About 1,142 BMP officers were mounted. See Wright, Cartwright and Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma*, p.246 and 252.
- 369 Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p.178. Christian states that in 1935 there were only 5,374 troops in the entire province, of whom 1807 were Europeans and 3517 were Indians. These troops were in addition to 12,000 officers and men of the BMP and Frontier Force. Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, p.313.
- 370 Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p.182. See also C.P. Mills, *A Strange War: Burma, India and Afghanistan, 1914-1919* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988) p.31.
- 371 The Rangoon Port Defence Volunteers included a unit called the Rangoon Naval Volunteers. *Report on the Administration of Burma during 1891-92* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1892), p.52

- 372 Wright, Cartwright and Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma*, p.258.
- 373 *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.1, p.126.
- 374 Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, p.314.
- 375 Steve Rothwell, *The Burma Campaign*, at <http://www.rothwell.force9.co.uk/burmaweb/BurmaArmy.htm>
- 376 Bowerman, "The Frontier Areas of Burma", p.47.
- 377 The Auxiliary Force was mainly made up of Europeans and Anglo-Burmese. The Territorials were mainly Burmese. There was also an officer training corps at Rangoon University.
- 378 Steve Rothwell, "The Burma Army 1937-43", *The Burma Campaign*, at <http://www.rothwell.force9.co.uk/burmaweb/BurmaArmy.htm>
- 379 Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p.183.
- 380 Harvey, *British Rule in Burma*, p.40.
- 381 Cited in Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, p.313.
- 382 Hugh Stephenson, "Some Problems of a Separated Burma", *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.25, No.3, 1938, p.412.
- 383 Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, p.314.
- 384 Andrew Boyd, *The Royal Navy in Eastern Waters: Linchpin of Victory 1935-1942* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), pp.144-6.
- 385 "The Calm: 1918-1939", Royal Air Force Museum, at <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/never-forgotten-the-raf-in-the-far-east/the-calm-1918-1939/>
- 386 In December 1941, the First American Volunteer Group helped defend Rangoon from Japanese attack. It is claimed that they shot down 50 Japanese aircraft, for a loss of 10 of their own. Daniel Ford, *Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and his American Volunteers, 1941-1942* (New York: Harper, 2007), pp.108ff.
- 387 Oskar Spate describes training on 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns in Singapore and on his return to Burma being assigned to one of only four 40 mm Bofors guns at Mingaladon Airport. Oskar Spate, *On the Margins of History: From the Punjab to Fiji* (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University, 1991), p.14.
- 388 See, for example, Myoma Lwin, *The Navy I Love* (Singapore: Partridge, 2016).
- 389 Sandes, *The Indian Sappers and Miners*, p.314.
- 390 Stephenson, "Some Problems of a Separated Burma", p.415. See also A.A. Mains, "Intelligence in India, 1930-47", *Journal of the Society for Army Intelligence Research*, Vol.79, 2001, p.80; and White, *A Civil Servant in Burma*, p.78-9.
- 391 Harvey, *British Rule in Burma*, p.40.
- 392 Harvey, *British Rule in Burma*, p.42.
- 393 Callahan, *Making Enemies*, p.53.
- 394 Callahan, "State Formation in the Shadow of the Raj", p.39.
- 395 *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee*, p.36.
- 396 Thu Nandar, *Police Training School*, pp.82-3. See also Hingkanonta, *Policing in Colonial Burma*, pp.167-8; and *Report of the Mandalay Incident Enquiry Committee* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1940).
- 397 Callahan, "State Formation in the Shadow of the Raj", p.39, p.522.
- 398 Callahan, "State Formation in the Shadow of the Raj", p.39, p.517.
- 399 J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London: Macmillan, 1923), Vol.11 (1815-1838), pp.271-2.
- 400 Cited in Peter Gudgin, *Military Intelligence: The British Story* (London: Arms and Armour, 1989), p.22. The quotation was taken from the official history of the Crimean War.
- 401 This department was established in 1858. It inherited the records of the EIC's powerful Secret Committee, which operated from 1784 to 1858, when the British government took direct control of India. See, for example, C.H. Philips, "The Secret Committee of the East India Company", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, Vol.10, No.2, 1940, pp.299-315.
- 402 Gudgin, *Military Intelligence*, p.28.
- 403 B.A.H. Parritt, *The Intelligencers: The History of British Military Intelligence up to 1914* (Ashford: Intelligence Corps Association, 1983), p.96.
- 404 Gudgin, *Military Intelligence*, pp.26-34. A Lieutenant General holds three stars in the NATO system.
- 405 Parritt, *The Intelligencers*, p.98.
- 406 Stephen Wade, *Spies in the Empire: Victorian Military Intelligence* (London: Anthem Press, 2007), p.87. See also. A. Mains, *Field Security: Very Ordinary Intelligence* (Chippenham: Picton Publishing, 1992), p.v.
- 407 Anthony Clayton, *Forearmed: A History of the Intelligence Corps* (London: Brassey's, 1993), pp.14ff.
- 408 See, for example, Smart, *Burma Gazetteer, Akyab District*, Vol.A, p.30. Smart refers to "spies belonging to the Quartermaster-General's Department" in 1825.
- 409 Cited in Parritt, *The Intelligencers*, p.61. The Guides were "meant to make maps for military purposes and to provide intelligence". See Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p.328.
- 410 James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.66.
- 411 Johnson, *Spying for Empire*, p.26.
- 412 Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- 413 See, for example, F.M. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent* (London: Folio Society, 2003); and L.V.S. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 1922).
- 414 Johnson, *Spying for Empire*, p.127.
- 415 Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India*, Vol.2, p.399.
- 416 Cited in Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, p.68.

- 417 E.E.H. Collen, *Report on the Intelligence Branch, Quarter-master General's Department, Horse Guards* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1878). See also Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, pp.69-70.
- 418 Curiously, William Beaver states that the IB was created in 1874. He seems to have taken the assignment of two officers to compile route books as the genesis of the IB. William Beaver, *Under Every Leaf: How Britain Played the Greater Game from Afghanistan to Africa* (London: Biteback, 2012), p.50.
- 419 Confusingly, there was also a civilian Intelligence Bureau under a Director in the Home Department of the government in Delhi. See, for example, Milan Hauner, "The Last Great Game", *Middle East Journal*, Vol.38, No.1, Winter 1984, pp.72-84.
- 420 Around 1906, in cooperation with the War Office in London, the Branch established an intelligence unit in north China. It also trained officers in the Chinese language. See, for example, *Military Report on Yunnan, Parts I and II, Compiled in the Intelligence Branch, Quarter-Master General's Department, Simla, by Captain L.D. Fraser* (Simla: Government Central Printing Office, 1902).
- 421 Britain had already fought two wars in Afghanistan, from 1838-42 and 1878-80. The Northwest Frontier became a province of British India in 1901. Thomas G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organization* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1984), p.168.
- 422 Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, p.71.
- 423 Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence*, p.168.
- 424 Much of this paragraph is drawn from Mains, "Intelligence in India, 1930-47", pp.63-82.
- 425 A Brigadier has one star in the NATO system.
- 426 Mains, "Intelligence in India, 1930-47", p.63.
- 427 Havildar was the equivalent of a sergeant for Indian soldiers.
- 428 Most MIOs were army officers who had attended a Command Intelligence Course and been seconded to the Civil Police. They were given the police rank of Additional Superintendent, but were not in charge of a district. They carried out liaison between the army and the police. Some also acted as "field agents" of the (civilian) Intelligence Bureau in Delhi.
- 429 Mains, "Intelligence in India, 1930-47", pp.64-5. See also Mains, *Field Security*, p.2.
- 430 Taylor, *The State in Burma*, p.73.
- 431 J.T. Walker, "Expeditions Among the Kachin Tribes on the North-east Frontier of Upper Burma", *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol.14, No.3, March 1892, pp.161-72.
- 432 D.G.E. Hall, *Europe and Burma: A Study of European Relations with Burma to the Annexation of Thibaw's Kingdom 1886* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p.113.
- 433 After the war, the War Office stated that 5.25% of British soldiers died in battle, while 67.5% died from disease. See G.D. Shanks, "Malaria Determined Military Outcome in Burma (Myanmar) Across Three Centuries", Short Communication, *JMVH*, Vol.29, No.4, 2021, at <https://jmvh.org/article/malaria-determined-military-outcomes-in-burma-myanmar-across-three-centuries/>
- 434 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.12.
- 435 J. Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War, detailing the operations of Major-General Archibald Campbell's Army from its landing at Rangoon in May 1824 to the conclusion of peace at Yandabo in February 1826* (London: John Murray, 1827), p.16.
- 436 Doveton, *Reminiscences of the Burmese War in 1824-5-6*, p.37, p.272 and p.293.
- 437 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, p.16.
- 438 Cited in John Bradshaw, *Sir Thomas Munro and the British Settlement of the Madras Presidency* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p.197.
- 439 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.12. See also Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p.114.
- 440 Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, p.221. See also D.G.E. Hall, *Henry Burmese: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.265.
- 441 Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, p.221.
- 442 Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, p.239. See also Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: The Cresset Press, 1962), pp.177-82.
- 443 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.iv.
- 444 Henry Godwin, *Burmah: Letters and Papers Written in 1852-53 by Major General Henry Godwin, late Commanding in Burmah, Arracan and Tenasserim* (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2004, reprint of 1854 edition), p.5.
- 445 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.142.
- 446 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.281.
- 447 Yule, "On the Geography of Burma and Its Tributary States", p.56.
- 448 Colonel Charles. E. Callwell's classic study *Small Wars* (which devotes a full chapter to the need for comprehensive, accurate and timely intelligence) was not published until 1896, but it was preceded by a widely read essay in the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* (Vol.31, No.139, 1887) titled "Lessons to be Learnt from the Campaigns in which British Forces have been Employed Since the Year 1865". See C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), pp.43-56.
- 449 Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma*, p.290.

- 450 One such person was Giuseppe Andreino, the Mandalay representative of the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, who revealed the existence of a secret treaty between the Burmese court and the French government. See Anthony Webster, "Business and Empire: A Reassessment of the British Conquest of Burma in 1885", *The Historical Journal*, Vol.43, No.4, December 2000, pp.1003-25.
- 451 Terence R. Blackburn, *The Defeat of Mandalay: The Third Anglo-Burmese War* (Delhi: APH Publishing, 2010), p.9.
- 452 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp.8-9. A map of "Burmah and the Surrounding Countries", produced for commercial sale by James Wyld (London) in 1886 shows areas of northern Burma blank, except for the notation "Wild Tribes Unexplored". Map in author's collection.
- 453 Walker, "Expeditions Among the Kachin Tribes on the North-east Frontier of Upper Burma", p.161.
- 454 Walker, "Expeditions Among the Kachin Tribes on the North-east Frontier of Upper Burma", pp.161-172.
- 455 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, pp.35-6.
- 456 Cited in Keith Jeffery, "Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency Operations: Some Reflections on the British Experience", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.2, No.1, 1987, p. 118. General Bourne led the British Military Mission to Burma in 1948.
- 457 Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma*, p.108.
- 458 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p.115.
- 459 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p.100.
- 460 Judson was also employed as an interpreter on the diplomatic mission made by Crawford in 1827. Helen James, "Adoniram Judson and the Creation of a Missionary Discourse in Pre-Colonial Burma", *The Journal of Burma Studies*, Vol.7, 2002, p.17-18.p.17. See also Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava in the Year 1827*, pp.236-7.
- 461 Krishna Saxena, "Causes Leading to the Deputation of a Burmese Political Mission to the Court of Cochin-China (1822-1824) and Its Results", *Bulletin d'Ecole Francais d'Extreme Orient*, Vol.45, No.2, 1952, p.577.
- 462 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p.119. For this, Burney was paid 450 dollars by the Penang Government.
- 463 See, for example, *History of the Third Burmese War (1888-89) Period 4: The Winter Campaign of 1888-89 and Subsequent Operations up to December 3rd 1889, Compiled under the orders of the Quarter Master General in India, in the Intelligence Branch by Major N. Newnham Davis* (Simla: Government Central Printing Office, 1893).
- 464 A.B. Fenton, *Routes in Upper Burma, including the Chin Hills and Shan Hills, to which are added a number of routes leading from Lower Burma and Siam into those districts* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1894).
- 465 Fenton, *Routes in Upper Burma*, p.v.
- 466 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, compiled in the Intelligence Branch, Division of the Chief of Staff, Army Headquarters, India, Vol.1, Tribes North of the Kabul River* (Simla: Government Monotype Press, 1907), p.v.
- 467 *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, Vol.5, Burma*, rear pocket. The series has been described as the most important single source on Raj-based military frontier operations carried out before the First World War.
- 468 E.F. Cooke-Hurle, *Report on the Kawkwe Police Column Operations during the Cold Season of 1892-93: Together with appendix, including routes, sketches etc* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1893); and G.G. Lang, *Report of the Intelligence Officer, Kamaing Column, on the country around Indawgyi Lake* (Rangoon: Government Press, 1894).
- 469 *Report on a Reconnaissance in the Southern Shan States, 1894-95* (Rangoon: Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1897).
- 470 G.H.H. Couchman, *Report of the Intelligence Officer on Tour with the Superintendent, Northern Shan States, 1895-96* (Rangoon: Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1896).
- 471 H.R. Mill, "Geographical Literature of the Month: Additions to the Library", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.9, No.2, February 1897, p.236.
- 472 Most of these route books were prepared by the Inter-Services Topographical Department (formed in 1940) and staff at General Headquarters, India, based on earlier IB publications.
- 473 *Trans-Frontier Routes: India-Burma* (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1944)
- 474 John Keay, *The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India was Mapped and Everest was Named* (London: HarperCollins, 2000).
- 475 Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping the Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p.233.
- 476 Clements R. Markham, *A Memoir on the Indian Surveys* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.83.
- 477 Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava, sent by the Governor of India in the year 1795* (London: Bulmer and Co., 1800), p.x.
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- 508 These aims were spelt out in a confidential pamphlet titled *Internal and Frontier Intelligence*, and distributed to BSB staff. See Clipson, *Constructing an Intelligence State*, pp.284-91.
- 509 Clipson, *Constructing an Intelligence State*, p.128-9.
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- 512 During the inter-war years MI5 maintained contact with the British intelligence authorities in India, the Delhi-based Intelligence Bureau, through a small London-based group known as the Indian Political Intelligence Department. IPI was officially part of the India Office, but worked closely with MI5. A key concern was Indian communists and terrorists in Britain, and their links to people in India and Burma. See *The Security Service 1908-1945: The Official History* (London: Public Record Office, 1999), p.384. See also Calder Walton, *Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire* (London: Harper Press, 2013), p.16-17.
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- 515 Taylor, *The State in Burma*, p.99. See also Callahan, "State Formation in the Shadow of the Raj", pp.513-536.
- 516 Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma", p.246.
- 517 Callahan, "State Formation in the Shadow of the Raj", p.39.
- 518 Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, p.81.
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