

Myanmar (Burma): A reading guide

Andrew Selth

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Research Paper

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'Myanmar (Burma): A reading guide'

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About the Author

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Books by the Author

- 1986 *The Terrorist Threat to Diplomacy: An Australian Perspective*
- 1988 *Against Every Human Law: The Terrorist Threat to Diplomacy*
- 1996 *Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces Since 1988*
- 2002 *Burma's Armed Forces: Power Without Glory*
- 2012 *Burma (Myanmar) since the 1988 Uprising: A Select Bibliography*
- 2015 *Burma (Myanmar) since the 1988 Uprising: A Select Bibliography* (2nd edition)
- 2017 *Burma, Kipling and Western Music: The Riff from Mandalay*
- 2018 *Burma (Myanmar) since the 1988 Uprising: A Select Bibliography* (3rd edition)
- 2019 *Secrets and Power in Myanmar: Intelligence and the Fall of General Khin Nyunt*
- 2020 *Interpreting Myanmar: A Decade of Analysis*

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Wisdom is in the literature.

(Old Burmese proverb)

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 (c.500 BCE)

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 new military government 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".

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 Tanintharyi Region). 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 became Sittwe and Maymyo became Pyin Oo Lwin. The ethno-linguistic groups formerly known as the Burmans and the Karen are now called the Bamar and the Kayin.¹ The people of Kayah State are widely known as Karenni, the state's name until it was changed by the Burmese government in 1952.²

The new names were accepted by most countries, the United Nations and other major international organisations. A few governments, activist groups and news media outlets, however, still clung 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 change to the people of Myanmar.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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 December 1885, 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.⁶ The terms "Rangoon regime", "Yangon regime", or in some cases simply "Rangoon" or "Yangon", have often been used by 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 is 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 publications on Myanmar. 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, 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 is Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.⁷

Over the years, some components of Myanmar’s intelligence apparatus have changed their formal titles several times. The military intelligence organization, 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 recognized 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 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.⁸

In Myanmar, all personal names are particular. Most people do not have surnames or forenames.⁹ 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). Also, among the majority Bamar ethnic group names are usually preceded by an honorific, such as “U”, 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 cases like Maran Brang Seng, where “Maran” is the name of a clan.¹⁰ Other ethnic minorities, like the Shan, Kachin, Karen and Chin, have their own systems of honorifics.

In Myanmar, names can be changed relatively easily, often without seeking official permission or 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.¹¹ 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 war. 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. It is not uncommon for an obituary to list more than one name by which the deceased was known.

Politics

It may also be helpful to sketch out recent political developments, and to note the 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 in March 1962, when they formed a Revolutionary Council. From 1974 to 1988, they exercised power through an ostensibly elected “civilian” parliament (called the *Pyitthu Hluttaw*), dominated by the Burma Socialist Programme Party, the country’s only legal political organisation. On taking back direct control in September 1988, the armed forces created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), 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.¹² In May 2008, the SPDC held a constitutional referendum, with predictable results.¹³ This was followed by carefully managed elections on 7 November 2010. The resulting

national parliament, consisting of 75% elected officials and 25% non-elected military officers, first met in January 2011. A new government was installed under President Thein Sein 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 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.

On 8 November 2015, a new general election was held which, by most accounts, was reasonably free and fair.¹⁴ The NLD received about 65.6% of all votes cast, while the pro-military Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) received 27.5%. Under Myanmar's "first past the post" electoral system, this gave the NLD 79.4% of all the available seats.¹⁵ It secured 255 in the 440-seat lower house (*Pyithu 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.¹⁶ The armed forces are allocated 25% 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 is unable to become president, as her two children are the citizens of foreign countries).¹⁷

The national charter clearly states that the president "takes precedence over all other persons" in Myanmar. However, even before the elections, Aung San Suu Kyi had made it clear that she intended to be "above the president" and act as the country's *de facto* leader.¹⁸ 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 ensures that considerable power is retained by the armed forces. This position was accepted by most other world leaders, as evidenced by her attendance at various ASEAN meetings, and at the enthronement of the new Japanese emperor in October 2019. Aung San Suu Kyi was also Myanmar's Minister for Foreign Affairs and, formally at least, attended some international meetings in this capacity.¹⁹

Another general election was held in November 2020, with an estimated voter turnout of more than 70%. Despite "serious deficiencies in the legal framework" noted by neutral observers, voters were able "freely to express their will".²⁰ 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 *Pyithu Hluttaw* and 136 seats (61.6%) in the *Amyotha Hluttaw*, or 83% of the total.²¹ Having secured more than 322 of the 476 elected seats, the NLD was able 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 state and region assemblies, which were held at the same time. These results promised that, barring unforeseen eventualities, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD would remain in office for another five years.²² Once again, they would govern in partnership with the armed forces which, under the 2008 constitution, were allocated three ministries, in addition to 25% 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 armed forces unexpectedly declared a one-year state of emergency. They detained Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 50 other officials and activists. 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.²³ Few foreign observers believed that was the real reason but, despite widespread speculation in the news media and online, the reasons for the takeover remained unknown.²⁴ To the people of Myanmar, however, one thing was clear. Once again, the country had an unelected military government, and faced an uncertain future.

Introduction

I have always imagined paradise will be a kind of library.

Jorge Luis Borges,
Seven Nights (1980)

Following the dramatic events of 1988, when nation-wide pro-democracy demonstrations were crushed by the security forces, there was a remarkable resurgence of interest in Myanmar among foreign officials and scholars. A large number of important studies have since appeared, offering “a variety of perspectives that reveal particular and sometimes contested perceptions of the Burmese past, present and future”.²⁵ Also, over the past 30 years the struggle against military rule (in various forms) by both opposition political groups and the country's ethnic minorities has been the subject of hundreds of books, research papers and reports. New publications have been devoted to different aspects of Myanmar's economy, culture and society. Since 2016, the spotlight has fallen on the plight of the predominantly Muslim Rohingyas found in Myanmar's west. Close attention has been paid to Myanmar's defence policies and foreign relations, issues highlighted by the February 2021 military coup. There have also been important contributions to Myanmar studies in broader works covering subjects such as the involvement of armed forces in politics, the development problems of “failed” states, urban life in Southeast Asia and the re-emergence of Islam as a political force.²⁶

This increased level of official and academic interest has been matched by a much greater awareness of Myanmar among the general populations of Western and other countries, prompting the publication of numerous books designed for the mass market. These include travel guides, memoirs, collections of photographs, cookery books and novels. After a long hiatus, the Second World War's China-Burma-India (CBI) theatre has attracted renewed interest.²⁷ In 1998 alone, there were 44 books published on this subject.²⁸ Between the 1988 uprising and the election of a National League for Democracy (NLD) government in 2015, there was a flood of political tracts, usually produced by Burmese exiles and activist groups of different kinds. Many took as their starting point the extended house arrest of NLD leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Also, since 1988 think tanks like the International Crisis Group and United States Institute for Peace, and non-government organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have commissioned detailed analyses on specific issues, albeit from quite different perspectives.²⁹

In these circumstances, the need for an up-to-date bibliography or check-list of Myanmar-related publications produced in English and in hard copy since 1988 became more pressing.³⁰ The Griffith Asia Institute (GAI) responded in 2012 by publishing Andrew Selth's *Burma (Myanmar) Since the 1988 Uprising: A Select Bibliography*. It listed 921 titles. A second edition was released in 2015 and a third edition in 2018.³¹ A fourth edition, listing about 2409 individual works by more than 2000 authors, editors, photographers and translators, is currently in preparation. It is expected to be published later this year. Each edition of the bibliography has included a reading guide. It too has gone through a number of iterations.

In 2006, the Asia Bookroom in Canberra posted a list of books, monographs and other works about Myanmar, written in English, on its website.³² This was partly to advertise its wares, but also in the hope that such a list would help those intending to visit Myanmar for the first time, or who wished to familiarise themselves with particular aspects of the country before pursuing more in-depth studies. Over the next five years, as opportunity permitted, this list was updated and expanded, not only to reflect the much larger number of books and other monographs being published on Myanmar, but also to cater to the widening range of Myanmar-related subjects in which the bookshop's customers had expressed an interest. After 2012, successive versions of the list were published as appendices to the first three editions of the GAI's bibliography, with brief annotations to assist readers in their choices. An updated and expanded version of this reading guide was

prepared for the fourth edition. It has been extracted from the manuscript of the book and appears (with some minor changes) below.

The guide is not meant to be either authoritative or exhaustive, although an attempt has been made to cover all the main subject areas, in one way or another. Some shorter and more specialised studies have been included, but the essay focuses mainly on books and other publications that help provide a broad introduction to Myanmar and its people, and are likely to be readily available from good bookshops and libraries. Most can also be found on the websites of major on-line book suppliers. Anyone wishing to delve more deeply into any of the subjects touched upon below or who wants to pursue particular interests is encouraged to consult the more detailed and scholarly works listed in the GAI's bibliographies, and the burgeoning literature on Myanmar found in academic and professional journals. There are also a number of specialist websites which list additional sources.³³ The latter are often the best source of information on rapidly evolving issues, but they need to be approached with caution. The internet has become a platform for a great deal of inaccurate and tendentious material on contemporary Myanmar.

It is possible to find other lists of recommended books online. A few have been compiled by experienced Myanmar-watchers, and are useful in highlighting some key sources. However, as often required by their hosts, most of these lists tend to focus on more recent works and popular titles that are likely to appeal to the tourist and armchair traveller. Needless to say, all such lists, including this one, constitute personal choices and reflect the reading habits, experiences, professional backgrounds and, in a few cases, the commercial interests of those compiling them.³⁴ I must confess that I have included a few favourites in this essay, simply because I should like others to enjoy reading them as much as I did. It also includes a few forgotten works that deserve to be remembered. The guide broadly follows the structure of the GAI bibliographies, within a chronological framework, but there are a few variations where minor adjustments help the discussion to flow more easily. The paragraph looking at works on jade and gemstones, for example, follows the discussion on economic matters, not Myanmar's geography and geology.

In this research paper, the name "Myanmar" has been used in preference to "Burma", except in cases where use of the old name seemed more appropriate. This has mainly been in references to the country before 1988, some formal titles, and direct quotations. Publications have been cited exactly as they have appeared in print. Hence, the country is referred to both as "Burma" and "Myanmar". Similarly, the former national capital has been shown as both "Rangoon" and "Yangon" (the new name adopted in 1989), depending on the choice of the authors and the publishers. The descriptor "Burmese" has been retained both as an adjective and to describe the dominant language of the country.³⁵ The people are sometimes also known as "Myanmars". Although it raises its ugly head from time to time, including in public remarks by the Australian Prime Minister, it is generally accepted that there is no such word as "Myanmarese".³⁶ The vexed question of names is also discussed in the preceding note on "Protocols and Politics".

Authors, editors, photographers and translators are listed under the names given on their books. Unless provided, no attempt has been made to identify pseudonyms, although these have long been common in the field of Myanmar studies.³⁷ Similarly, Burmese names are cited as they are given on the publications in question, although in some cases hyphens have been removed, for consistency. While strictly speaking this is not correct usage, it is hoped that this will help avoid any confusion arising from the fact that Burmese do not usually have first names and surnames, and many use honorifics or other identifiers as an integral part of their name. Thus, for example, Daw Than Han, Maung Aung Myoe and Ma Thanegi are cited as if the titles "Daw", "Maung" and "Ma" are part of their actual name.³⁸ The same principle has been applied to names like "Tekkatho" (University) Sein Ti, "Theippan" (Science) Maung Wa and "Pagan" U Khin Maung Gyi. Where first names are clearly given, however, as in Margaret Aung Thwin, Frankie Tun Tin or Ardeth Maung Thawngghmung, they have been recognized and listed as such.

Brisbane
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The reading guide

Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all.

Henry David Thoreau,
A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849)

Over the past 30 years or so, a large number of “coffee table” books about Myanmar have appeared, as foreigners have enjoyed greater access to the country and the market for such works has grown. Many contain technically proficient but rather clichéd photographs of the country’s spectacular scenery and colourful population. One work notable for its distinguished contributors, however, is *Myanmar: Land of the Spirit*.³⁹ Also worth looking at is John Falconer, et al, *7 Days in Myanmar: A Portrait of Burma by 30 Great Photographers*.⁴⁰ David Lazar’s *Myanmar: A Luminous Journey* provides a sensitive portrayal of the country and its people by a young Australian photographer.⁴¹ A more specialised, but lavishly illustrated, volume describing sites in Myanmar that are not well known is Ma Thanegi and Barry Broman, *Myanmar Architecture: Cities of Gold*.⁴² For some stunning black and white photographs, accompanied by an insightful commentary, see Nic Dunlop’s *Brave New Burma*.⁴³ For an unusual but revealing glimpse of contemporary Rangoon, *Still Lives from a Vanishing City* by Elizabeth Rush is strongly recommended.⁴⁴ A more comprehensive tour of the city, with photos of places off the beaten tourist track, is given in P.J. Heijmans, *Relics of Rangoon*.⁴⁵

There are also a few books for sale that reproduce old photographs of Myanmar. Most were taken during the British colonial period and are well worth a look, not just out of historical interest but also for their artistic flair and technical proficiency. Three books in this category that stand out are *Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860*; Noel Singer’s *Burmah: A Photographic Journey, 1855-1925*; and *Burma: Frontier Photographs 1918-1935*, edited by Elizabeth Dell.⁴⁶ In this regard, it is also worth noting that the Myanmar Photo Archive has recently produced four publications that preserve and present to modern audiences a range of images taken by Burmese photographers late last century.⁴⁷ They are designed both to inform and amuse.

After being ignored, or shunned, by the tourist industry for decades, foreign interest in Myanmar exploded after 2011 and there is now a wide range of travel guides available. Caroline Courtauld’s *Myanmar: Burma in Style: An Illustrated History and Guide* provides an easy introduction.⁴⁸ This should be read with her album *The Irrawaddy: Burma’s Kingly Stream*.⁴⁹ The most informative and practical work in English is probably still Simon Richmond, et al, *Myanmar (Burma)*, in the ubiquitous Lonely Planet series.⁵⁰ However, the *Myanmar (Burma)* Insight Guide is easier to read and has more colour illustrations.⁵¹ Other travellers swear by Gavin Thomas, Stuart Butler and Tom Deas, *The Rough Guide to Myanmar (Burma)*.⁵² A different approach is taken in Morgan Edwardson, *To Myanmar With Love: A Travel Guide for the Connoisseur*.⁵³ It is organised by themes rather than by destinations. Although it is now showing its age, a useful reference book for those wishing to look up some basic facts and figures is the revised version of Donald Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)*.⁵⁴

Win Pe’s *Dos and Don’ts in Myanmar* provides foreign visitors with a simple guide to the customs and culture of the Burmese people.⁵⁵ A more recent publication in this genre is Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock! Myanmar: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette*.⁵⁶ Inevitably, perhaps, both books tend to dwell on the social practices of the Burman, or *Bamar*, ethnic majority of central Myanmar. Although now rather dated, one expatriate businessman’s view is given in H.C.M. Sim, *Myanmar On My Mind: A Guide to Living and Doing Business in Myanmar*.⁵⁷ More recent is Michael O’Kane, *Doing Business in Myanmar*, but it needs to be remembered that the commercial scene (not to mention the political environment) is constantly evolving and can change unexpectedly.⁵⁸ The latest offering in this broad genre is Hana Bui, *When Global Meets Local: How Expatriates*

Can Succeed in Myanmar. It is notable for the fact that it is based on a survey of over 100 expatriates in Myanmar and 50 local professionals.⁵⁹

Having four tones and a unique script, Burmese is a notoriously difficult language to learn, but the Lonely Planet's *Burmese Phrasebook and Dictionary* has been compiled by three experts and can help those wishing to acquire some basic words and phrases.⁶⁰ A much more comprehensive and professional approach was taken by the noted British linguist John Okell in his four volume work *Burmese (Myanmar)*. In more than 1200 pages of text and 34 cassette tapes, it not only covers the spoken language but also looks at the script and literary style.⁶¹ For anyone wanting to pursue this subject further, Mary Callahan has an interesting chapter on "Language Policy in Modern Burma", in M.E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds), *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*.⁶² It is worth comparing this work with Kyaw Yin Hlaing, "The Politics of Language Policy in Myanmar: Imagining Togetherness, Practising Difference", in Lee Hock Guan and Leo Suryadinata (eds), *Language, Nation and Development in Southeast Asia*.⁶³

About two thirds of Myanmar's population still live in rural towns and villages, but the country is facing the challenges of rapid and largely unplanned urbanisation. A first-time visitor to the country would benefit from reading E.C. Cangi, *Faded Splendour, Golden Past: Urban Images of Burma*.⁶⁴ It gives short histories of the former capitals of Rangoon (Yangon), Mandalay and Pagan. Old Yangon is succinctly described by Sarah Rooney in *30 Heritage Buildings of Yangon: Inside the City that Captured Time*.⁶⁵ It also serves as a guide to anyone wishing to explore Yangon's wonderful but sadly neglected colonial architecture, a subject also covered by Virginia Henderson and Tim Webster in *Yangon Echoes: Inside Heritage Homes*.⁶⁶ Bob Percival's *Walking the Streets of Yangon: The people, stories & hidden treasures of downtown cosmopolitan Yangon (Rangoon)* helps those wishing to see city life close up.⁶⁷ A good introduction to Mandalay is Dhida Saraya, *Mandalay: The Capital City, The Centre of the Universe*.⁶⁸ For Pagan, Donald Stadtner's *Ancient Pagan: Buddhist Plain of Merit*, is highly recommended.⁶⁹ Also of interest is Uta Gartner, "Nay Pyi Taw - The Reality and Myths of Capitals in Myanmar", in Volker Grabowsky (ed), *Southeast Asian Historiography: Unravelling the Myths*.⁷⁰

Michael Charney offers a concise and accessible introduction to Myanmar's recent past in *A History of Modern Burma*.⁷¹ Another historical overview worth reading is Thant Myint U, *The Making of Modern Burma*.⁷² The same author examines the past 20 years more closely in his most recent major work, *The Hidden History of Burma*.⁷³ Despite a few surprising lapses, Richard Cockett provides a very readable survey of the modern period in *Blood, Dreams and Gold: The Changing Face of Burma*.⁷⁴ A different approach was taken by Michael Aung Thwin and Matrii Aung Thwin in *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times*.⁷⁵ In a bold and at times provocative study, they emphasize local sources and fresh interpretations of historical trends and events. For the earlier historical period, one of the best introductions is the chapter about the formation of Myanmar in the first volume of Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800-1830*.⁷⁶ Also worth consulting on Myanmar's early days is Michael Aung Thwin, author of *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma and Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma*.⁷⁷ Jame Dibiasio's unusually chatty book *Who Killed the King of Bagan?* can perhaps best be described as "fictionalised history".⁷⁸

The writings of early European visitors to Myanmar are a rich source of material, able to both inform and amuse. In 2004, the *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* helpfully reproduced extracts from the works of several explorers, traders and missionaries who recorded their experiences and views of the country between the 13th and 19th centuries.⁷⁹ Most of these early contacts were summarised by Daniel Hall in *Europe and Burma*.⁸⁰ The Dutch experience in the 17th century has been examined by Wil Dijk.⁸¹ While a little repetitive at times, Arash Khazeni's description of Indo-Persian encounters with Myanmar offers a different perspective.⁸² For anyone wishing to investigate early British interventions in Myanmar, comprehensive reports were produced by several envoys to the Burmese court. Foremost among them were Michael Symes (who was sent on missions in 1795 and 1802), John Crawfurd (in 1827) and Henry Yule (in 1855).⁸³ They described Myanmar as they saw it at the time, but of equal interest to modern readers are their reactions to the new and unusual phenomena they encountered. Another important work on Britain's early dealings with Myanmar is *The Pacification of Burma* by Charles Crosthwaite, the Chief Commissioner of the new province between 1887 and 1890.⁸⁴

While a little hard to find, a local account of Myanmar's resistance to conquest and colonial occupation can be found in Ni Ni Myint, *Burma's Struggle Against British Imperialism (1885-1895)*.⁸⁵ The same broad theme is

picked up in Maung Maung's more detailed treatment of the subject, titled *Burmese Nationalist Movements, 1940-1948*.⁸⁶ Another local perspective on the nationalist struggle and its aftermath can be found in Tekkatho Sein Tin, *Thakin Ba Sein and Burma's Struggle for Independence*.⁸⁷ For developments during the 1930s, when Burma's nationalist movement really began to take shape and become organised, the standard text is Khin Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)*.⁸⁸ It is complemented well by Aye Kyaw, *The Voice of Young Burma*, published by Cornell University's Southeast Asia Program.⁸⁹ Also useful in this context is *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence* by Angeline Naw.⁹⁰ An unapologetically sympathetic look at this subject is Paul Webb, *The Peacock's Children: The Struggle for Freedom in Burma, 1885 – Present*.⁹¹

A book which looks at Burmese history from a different viewpoint is Gerry Abbott (ed), *Inroads Into Burma: A Travellers' Anthology*.⁹² It contains extracts from the writings of more than 40 foreign observers of Myanmar from the 15th to the 20th centuries. Also very useful in this regard is Helen Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes: Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century*.⁹³ One notable Western visitor to Myanmar during the 1890s was V.C.S. (Scott) O'Connor, who vividly recorded his impressions in *The Silken East: A Record of Life and Travel in Burma*.⁹⁴ Another British visitor with an interesting worldview was George Bird, who wrote his comprehensive book *Wanderings in Burma* "for those who have occasion to visit the country".⁹⁵ For a lighter survey of Myanmar during much the same period, see Mrs Ernest Hart, *Picturesque Burma: Past and Present*.⁹⁶ Another intrepid female traveller was Geraldine Mitton, who wrote an entertaining account of *A Bachelor Girl in Burma*.⁹⁷ An interesting sidelight on life in colonial Myanmar is provided by the chapter on Maymyo (now known as Pyin Oo Lwin) in Barbara Cossette, *The Great Hill Stations of Asia*.⁹⁸

Rudyard Kipling spent only three days in Myanmar, in 1889. He never visited Mandalay, the city with which he is most often associated, through his "Barrack Room Ballad" of that name.⁹⁹ Even so, there is a large body of literature and music which trades on his imagined knowledge of the country. (There are bars named after him in tourist hotels in Rangoon and Mandalay). Those wishing to learn more about Kipling's links to Myanmar might start by reading his own account of the 1889 visit, in *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel*, or by consulting Andrew Lycett (ed), *Kipling Abroad: Traffics and Discoveries: From Burma to Brazil*.¹⁰⁰ In 1981, a discussion of "Kipling's Burma" appeared in *The Kipling Journal*, which is another useful source.¹⁰¹ In 1984, the journal *Asian Affairs* published an entertaining literary and historical review, also titled "Kipling's Burma".¹⁰² On the ballad itself, its many musical settings and continuing connections to Myanmar in literature, art and the movies, see Andrew Selth, *Kipling, "Mandalay" and Burma in the Popular Imagination*, published by the City University of Hong Kong's Southeast Asia Research Centre.¹⁰³ The role of Kipling's ballad and Western music in shaping popular perceptions of colonial Myanmar was examined in Selth's *Burma, Kipling and Western Music: The Riff From Mandalay*.¹⁰⁴

There are many fascinating memoirs of the colonial period (1824-1948), written by civil servants, soldiers, missionaries and travellers. A good example is H.T. White, *A Civil Servant in Burma*.¹⁰⁵ Also very enjoyable are the works of Maurice Collis, who was in Myanmar from 1912 to 1934. Among other books, Collis wrote *Trials in Burma*, *Lords of the Sunset* and *Into Hidden Burma*.¹⁰⁶ One of the most entertaining and elegantly written memoirs available is Leslie Glass, *The Changing of Kings: Memories of Burma, 1934-1949*.¹⁰⁷ A rare Thai perspective is offered in Damrong Rajanubhab, *Journey Through Burma in 1936*.¹⁰⁸ An unusual take on this period is Carol Boshier's *Mapping Cultural Nationalism: The Scholars of the Burma Research Society, 1910-1935*.¹⁰⁹ Two other books in this category that offer personal views of Myanmar in the early 20th century are David Donnison, *Last of the Guardians: A story of Burma, Britain and a family* and C.H. Campagnac, *The Autobiography of a Wanderer in England and Burma*.¹¹⁰ For an engaging biography of the British forester J.H. Williams, author of *Elephant Bill* and other well-known works, see V.C. Croke, *Elephant Company*.¹¹¹

One aspect of the European experience in colonial Myanmar that was paid considerable attention by British and American publishers during the 19th and early 20th centuries, but has been largely neglected since, is the role of Christian missionaries. Myanmar history buffs are still waiting for a comprehensive and erudite overview of their activities, but anyone interested in this subject could start with two early works, *Christian Missions in Burma* by W.C.B. Purser and *An Outline of the History of the Catholic Burmese Mission* by Paul Bigandet.¹¹² More modern, albeit specialised, studies include Michael Leigh's *Conflict, Politics and Proselytism: Methodist Missionaries in colonial and postcolonial Upper Burma, 1887-1966* and J.G. Duesing (ed), *Adoniram Judson: A Bicentennial Appreciation of the Pioneer American Missionary*.¹¹³ The dramatic impact of Christian teachings

on the Karen ethnic minority is discussed in J.R. Case, *An Unpredictable Gospel: American Evangelicals and World Christianity, 1812-1920*.¹¹⁴ It is not easy to find a copy, but Wim Vervest gives a detailed account of the American Baptist Chin mission and a pioneering missionary family in *The Lost Dictionary*.¹¹⁵

After a period of neglect, several comprehensive and readable studies of Myanmar during the Second World War have appeared in recent years, including Jon Latimer, *Burma: The Forgotten War* and Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster Into Triumph, 1942-45*.¹¹⁶ Julian Thompson has published a valuable collection of interviews with veterans.¹¹⁷ The standard reference work, however, remains Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War, 1941-45*.¹¹⁸ For a first-hand account of the Burma campaign by its most celebrated participant, a reader cannot go past William Slim's epic *Defeat Into Victory*.¹¹⁹ Another outstanding memoir, this time from a foot soldier's point of view, is George MacDonald Fraser's *Quartered Safe Out Here: A Recollection of the War in Burma*.¹²⁰ Two newer books which look at specific aspects of the war, and are well worth reading, are Philip Davies, *Lost Warriors* and Richard Duckett, *The Special Operations Executive in Burma*.¹²¹ An overview of the air war can be found in Michael Pearson, *The Burma Air Campaign*.¹²² Andrew Boyd provides a good introduction to naval operations in the period leading up to the Japanese invasion in *The Royal Navy in Eastern Waters*.¹²³

Still of interest, despite their age, are two works which describe Japan's relations with the Burmese nationalist movement led by Aung San in the period leading up to the war. One is Izumiya Tatsuro, *The Minami Organ*, first published in 1967.¹²⁴ The other is Won Z. Yoon, *Japan's Scheme for the Liberation of Burma*.¹²⁵ Both draw heavily on Japanese documents and the memories of Japanese personnel. The Japanese experience during the war is captured well by John Nunneley and Kazuo Tamayama in *Tales by Japanese Soldiers of the Burma Campaign, 1942-1945*.¹²⁶ Another Japanese view is offered by *Victory Into Defeat*, which has been translated into English by a group of Burmese scholars.¹²⁷ Although it was published more than 50 years ago, still of interest is Yuji Aida, *Prisoner of the British: A Japanese Soldier's Experiences in Burma*.¹²⁸ Anyone wishing to pursue this aspect of the war can also consult T.R. Sareen, *Japanese Prisoners of War in India, 1942-46*.¹²⁹ For a compelling fictional look at the war, and the basis of an award-winning 1956 film, see Michio Takeyama's *Harp of Burma*.¹³⁰

Myanmar's own perspectives on the war have been captured in a number of interesting and readable books. For example, the country's president during the conflict gives his view of events in Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946*.¹³¹ This account complements two classics in this category, namely Khin Myo Chit, *Three Years Under the Japs* and U Nu, *Burma Under the Japanese*.¹³² Another account of this period is found in Robert Taylor's translation of Thein Pe Myint's book *Wartime Traveller*, which was published under the title *Marxism and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945*.¹³³ Also worth tracking down and reading, if possible, are English translations of two other Burmese books about the war. One is Theippan Maung Wa (U Sein Tin), *Wartime in Burma: A Diary, January to June 1942*.¹³⁴ The other is Kyaw Ma Ma Lay, *A Man Like Him: Portrait of the Burmese Journalist, Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung*.¹³⁵ Both works help correct the rather distorted picture painted by conventional histories, which tend to focus on the Allied campaign and tense US-British relations during this period.¹³⁶

Dozens of books have been published about the infamous Burma-Thai railway. Most memoirs, however, have been written by former Allied prisoners of war (POW) based in Thailand, and do not refer specifically to conditions working on the line in Myanmar. Two notable exceptions, giving perspectives from both sides, are Rowley Richards, *A Doctor's War* and Kazuo Tamayama, *Railwaymen in the War: Tales by Japanese Railway Soldiers in Burma and Thailand 1941-47*.¹³⁷ An insight into the lives of the Allied prisoners is also given in S.A. Eldredge, *Captive Audiences / Captive Performers: Music and Theatre as Strategies for Survival on the Thailand-Burma Railway, 1942-1945*.¹³⁸ The dreadful plight of the thousands of Asian (including Burmese) labourers conscripted by the Japanese to work on the railway is spelt out in volume four of a monumental six-volume study by Paul Kratoska entitled *The Thailand-Burma Railway, 1942-1946: Documents and Selected Writings*.¹³⁹ This subject is also covered in an edited study of Asian labourers under the Japanese.¹⁴⁰ For a description of life as an Allied POW in Rangoon's Central Gaol, a good start is Lionel Hudson, *The Rats of Rangoon*.¹⁴¹

Post-war developments in Myanmar, and events after the country regained its independence from Britain in 1948, are covered by the rather idiosyncratic memoirs of U Nu, the country's first democratically elected prime minister, in *U Nu – Saturday's Son*.¹⁴² Michael Leigh also discusses the "post-war mess" in *The Collapse of British Rule in Burma*.¹⁴³ Kin Oung offers a personal view on the vexed question *Who Killed Aung San?*¹⁴⁴ For a more scholarly account of the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Myanmar's independence hero in 1947, see Robert Taylor's article "Politics in Late Colonial Burma: The Case of U Saw", in the journal *Modern Asian Studies*.¹⁴⁵ Ba U, who was Myanmar's president from 1952 to 1957, wrote one of the first autobiographies to be written by a senior Burmese figure, in *My Burma*. It was described at the time as "intimate, detailed, introspective, honest, generally humorous", and for that is of considerable interest, but it contains little discussion of public issues.¹⁴⁶ The best study of the Burmese armed forces' early development and their critical political role is Mary Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*.¹⁴⁷ A Burmese soldier's memories of this early period are recorded in *Burma's Son*.¹⁴⁸

In 1983 and 1984, Hugh Tinker edited two massive volumes of official documents on colonial Myanmar's constitutional relations with Britain, titled *Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944–1948*.¹⁴⁹ It is hardly the kind of work that one sits down and reads from cover to cover, but it contains an excellent introduction and a useful chronology of events. It is also well worth dipping into the documents themselves, for candid and sometimes surprising revelations about particular personalities and developments in the immediate post-war period. Ernst Schumacher's revolutionary study *Small Is Beautiful* made numerous references to Myanmar which, following a visit there in 1955, he felt represented a decentralised, human-scale society that was to be emulated.¹⁵⁰ Lucian Pye's 1962 study *Politics, Personality, and Nation Building*, on the thorny issue of Myanmar's national "identity", still manages to stir controversy but is worth a glance, at least.¹⁵¹ On the same subject, see also Andrew Selth, "Geoffrey Gorer and the Study of Burma's 'Personality'", in *The Journal of Burma Studies*.¹⁵² Also worth reading on the post-independence era is Thant Myint U, *The River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma*.¹⁵³

The period from General Ne Win's military coup d'état in 1962 to the 1988 pro-democracy uprising has been examined in several books, of widely varying quality. One essential text is Robert Taylor's *General Ne Win: A Political Biography*.¹⁵⁴ Also helpful in this regard is Taylor's ground-breaking study *The State in Myanmar*.¹⁵⁵ A rare look inside military circles is provided by Kyi Win Sein in *Me and the Generals of the Revolutionary Council*.¹⁵⁶ Two classic American studies covering the socialist period are Josef Silverstein, *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* and David Steinberg, *Burma's Road Toward Development: Growth and Ideology Under Military Rule*.¹⁵⁷ Another very useful source of information, statistics and insights on the Ne Win era is Yoshihiro Nakanishi, *Strong Soldiers, Failed Revolution: The State and Military in Burma, 1962–88*.¹⁵⁸ Two sweeping yet detailed studies of modern Myanmar, describing the armed forces' seizure of power in 1962 and its dire consequences for the country, are Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* and Bertil Lintner, *Burma In Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*.¹⁵⁹ Both are essential reading.

There is no definitive history of the nation-wide pro-democracy uprising which wracked Burma in 1988. The best known account, written shortly after the events described and based largely on interviews with eye-witnesses, is Bertil Lintner, *Outrage: Burma's Struggle for Democracy*.¹⁶⁰ A radically different version of events is given by one of the country's presidents at the time, in Maung Maung, *The 1988 Uprising in Burma*, published by Yale University in 1999.¹⁶¹ These two accounts and one other are usefully compared in Hans-Bernd Zollner, "Behind the Smoke of 'Myth' and 'Counter-Myth': Contours of What Happened in Burma in 1988", in Volker Grabowsky (ed), *Southeast Asian Historiography*.¹⁶² Also relevant in this regard are two moving prison memoirs, Ma Thanegi's *Nor Iron Bars A Cage*, and Ma Thida's *Prisoner of Conscience: My Steps Through Insein*.¹⁶³ On political prisoners more generally, there are some excellent studies by international organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, but for a more personal perspective see for example *The Darkness We See: Torture in Burma's Interrogation Centres and Prisons*, published in 2005 by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma).¹⁶⁴

On the contemporary period more generally, a first time visitor to Myanmar could profitably begin by browsing through David Steinberg's essential primer, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*.¹⁶⁵ Another possible starting point is Donald Seekins, *The Disorder in Order: The Army-State in Burma since 1962*, which surveys in straightforward terms the development of the military regime up to the turn of the century.¹⁶⁶ The

story is picked up by Hans-Bernd Zollner in *The Beast and the Beauty: The History of the Conflict between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, 1988–2011, Set in a Global Context*.¹⁶⁷ At a different level, Ian Holliday's *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar* provides a description of Myanmar's problems to that date, and thoughtfully canvasses a range of possible solutions.¹⁶⁸ The military government's point of view is given in Hla Min, *Political Situation of Myanmar and Its Role in the Region*.¹⁶⁹ For many years, successive editions of this work summarised the regime's policies and responses to its critics.

The advent of President Thein Sein's "reformist" quasi-civilian government in 2011 prompted a flood of new publications, both inside and outside the country. The election of Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy in 2015 was the trigger for another wave of histories, analyses and commentaries.

Over the past decade a host of authors has written about such matters as Myanmar's governance, economic growth, internal security, civil society and human rights, from particular points of view. Not all the works produced can be described as accurate or objective. However, a newcomer to the field can get a good overview of the country's many daunting challenges by dipping into edited collections of papers written by acknowledged experts, such as D.I. Steinberg (ed), *Myanmar: The Dynamics of an Evolving Polity*.¹⁷⁰ The 2018 *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Myanmar* is another comprehensive reference, although inevitably it has been overtaken by events.¹⁷¹ The Australian National University's biennial Myanmar Update conferences have yielded several works which discuss contemporary problems. A good example is *Debating Democratization in Myanmar*, published in 2014.¹⁷² Andrew Selth's *Interpreting Myanmar*, a collection of 97 articles posted on the Lowy Institute's *Interpreter* blog between 2008 and 2019, covers a wide range of current issues.¹⁷³ For informative and insightful pieces on several subjects of enduring interest, see also Pavin Chachavalpongpun and others, *Unraveling Myanmar's Transition*.¹⁷⁴

Prisoner of conscience, Nobel Peace Prize winner and (until February 2021) de facto prime minister of Myanmar Aung San Suu Kyi is named as the author of several books. These include *Freedom From Fear*, *Letters from Burma*, and *The Voice of Hope*.¹⁷⁵ She has also written two short biographies of her father, Aung San.¹⁷⁶ Some speeches and informal comments to her followers have been collected by Hans-Bernd Zollner and published as *Talks Over the Gate: Aung San Suu Kyi's Dialogues with the People, 1995 and 1996*.¹⁷⁷ Aung San Suu Kyi's official policy positions, assumed also to represent her personal views, were presented to the public in the 43rd Singapore Lecture, given in 2018 under the title *Democratic Transition in Myanmar: Challenges and the Way Forward*.¹⁷⁸ Important as contributions to the public record, but not for the faint-hearted, are the four weighty volumes of documents, speeches and interviews published in 2020 by Alan Clements and Fergus Harlow, under the title *Burma's Voices of Freedom*.¹⁷⁹ They include the transcripts of a number of interviews with Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been the subject of several biographies. These include *The Daughter*, by Hans-Bernd Zollner and Rodion Ebbighausen, *Perfect Hostage: A Life of Aung San Suu Kyi* by Justin Wintle, and *The Lady and the Peacock: The Life of Aung San Suu Kyi* by Peter Popham.¹⁸⁰ Another contribution to this genre is *The Lady: Aung San Suu Kyi: Nobel Laureate and Burma's Prisoner* by Barbara Victor, based on "exclusive interviews" arranged with the help of Myanmar's intelligence services. Most of these books are easy to read, but few take a critical approach to their main subject. Indeed, to a greater or lesser extent, all fail rigorously to interrogate the available evidence regarding Aung San Suu Kyi's character and performance, both as a human rights icon and as a practicing politician.¹⁸¹ Myths and rumours are often interpreted as facts. As Kyaw Yin Hlaing pointed out in an excellent review article in 2007, for many years readers faced a choice between excessively sympathetic accounts of Aung San Suu Kyi's life and work, and diatribes against her by supporters of the military regime, among others.¹⁸²

Until her reputation collapsed in 2016, at least in the eyes of the international community, the most critical work about the Nobel Peace laureate was Bertil Lintner, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's Struggle for Democracy*.¹⁸³ In 2017, her dramatic fall from grace was examined in Andrew Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi and the Politics of Personality*.¹⁸⁴ Even before then, Shwe Lu Maung had dared to ask the question *Is Suu Kyi a Racist?*¹⁸⁵ He looked at the Rohingya clearances, the Kachin war and the dominance of the ethnic Bamar in Myanmar's politics, economy and society. The world is still waiting for a comprehensive and objective analysis of Aung San Suu Kyi's political thinking and place in modern Burmese politics, but a start has been made by Michal Lubina in

The Moral Democracy: The Political Thought of Aung San Suu Kyi and his later study *A Political Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi*.¹⁸⁶ In the meantime, she continues to mesmerize her followers and remains a highly marketable commodity. This is perhaps best demonstrated by a collection of fashion photographs and quotations titled *Images of Mother Loved by the People*.¹⁸⁷ Even Aung San Suu Kyi's former cook has published a memoir about his two decades working for her.¹⁸⁸ Since the February 2021 coup, her public defence of the atrocities perpetrated against the Rohingyas has faded into the background.¹⁸⁹

Myanmar is connected to a number of other notable individuals who have been the subject of biographies and autobiographies. Several of these works have already been mentioned, but others worth reading include Ronald Lewin's biography of William Slim, which is still considered one of the best works about that remarkable soldier.¹⁹⁰ Trevor Royle's controversial biography of the eccentric general Orde Wingate, founder of the Chindits, is also worth the time.¹⁹¹ Another book set in the Second World War is Stephen Brookes' compelling account of his trek from Myanmar to India in 1942, *Through the Jungle of Death: A Boy's Escape from Wartime Burma*.¹⁹² Bilal Raschid's book, *The Invisible Patriot*, is noteworthy not only for the account of his own life but also for the observations about his father, the Muslim nationalist and politician U Raschid.¹⁹³ As Benedict Rogers admits, his biography *Than Shwe* draws heavily on "rumour and reported anecdote", but it is the only study to date of Myanmar's military leader from 1992 to 2011.¹⁹⁴ There are also some fascinating memoirs by European and Burmese women caught up in Myanmar's wartime and post-Independence struggles, including *Twilight Over Burma* by Inge Sargent and *A Journey in Time* by Wai Wai Myaing.¹⁹⁵

For insights into daily life in Myanmar under the generals, particularly after the 1988 uprising, the best source is probably Christina Fink, *Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule*.¹⁹⁶ If a copy can be found, it is also worth dipping into Maggie Lemere and Zoe West (eds), *Nowhere to Be Home: Narratives from Survivors of Burma's Military Regime*.¹⁹⁷ Similar themes are pursued in *Burmese Lives: Ordinary Life Stories under the Burmese Regime*, edited by Wen-Chin Chang and Eric Tagliacozzo.¹⁹⁸ For a unique local perspective, see Zoya Phan and Damien Lewis, *Little Daughter: A Memoir of Survival in Burma and the West*.¹⁹⁹ Everyday life in modern Myanmar is also the subject of Matthew Mullen's interesting and thoughtful book *Pathways That Changed Myanmar*.²⁰⁰ Phil Thornton provides a trenchant but entertaining account of life on the Myanmar-Thailand border in *Restless Souls*.²⁰¹ A first-rate description of Myanmar under military rule by a well-informed foreign observer is Emma Larkin, *Secret Histories: Finding George Orwell in a Burmese Teashop*.²⁰² Equally informative and readable is Larkin's later book *Everything is Broken: The Untold Story of Disaster Under Burma's Military Rule*.²⁰³

One notable aspect of the struggle for democracy and human rights in Myanmar since 1988 is the extent to which activists from both Myanmar and foreign countries have used modern communications technology and information-sharing techniques to promote their causes. This has included the publication of a large number of English-language reports, booklets, briefings and pamphlets. Most were posted online, through readily identifiable websites. However, many were also published in hard copy, albeit often in small print runs meant for select audiences. Anyone wishing to become familiar with the scope and content of such publications could start by looking at the reports released over the past 30 years by organisations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Fortify Rights. Although they are a little harder to find, a range of other works were issued by ethnic minority organisations such as the Karen Human Rights Group, and specific interest groups, including the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma). A selection of reports by these organisations has been listed in the GAI's bibliographies.

Access to the Internet in Burma has long been the subject of close interest by human rights campaigners. A useful introduction to the subject, with a section on the implications for Myanmar, is Shanthi Kalathil and T.C. Boas, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule*.²⁰⁴ A more focused study was *Internet Filtering in Burma in 2006-2007: A Country Study*, initially published by the Open Net Initiative in 2007 and updated in 2012.²⁰⁵ In 2014, Reporters Without Borders issued a report entitled *Enemies of the Internet*, which included a section critical of the situation in Myanmar.²⁰⁶ Also relevant is "The State of Internet Censorship in Myanmar" by the Open Observatory of Network Interference.²⁰⁷ Censorship was also a major theme of Carolyn Wakeman and San San Tin, in *No Time for Dreams*.²⁰⁸ On the news media and communications in Myanmar more generally, a good start are the works of Lisa Brooten, including "'Media as our Mirror': Indigenous Media in Burma (Myanmar)", in Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (eds), *Global*

Indigenous Media: Cultures, Poetics and Politics.²⁰⁹ Brooten also co-edited *Myanmar Media in Transition*, which provided an excellent overview of the country's media landscape before the February 2021 coup.²¹⁰

For an illuminating overview of legal issues in Myanmar, and the way they have been approached by Western (and other) scholars over the years, see Melissa Crouch, "Rediscovering 'Law' in Myanmar: A Review of Scholarship on the Legal System in Myanmar", in the *Pacific Rim Law and Policy Review*.²¹¹ Andrew Huxley offers a different kind of introduction to these issues in "Precolonial Burmese Law: Conical Hat and Shoulder Bag", in the International Institute of Asian Studies *Newsletter*, available online.²¹² For a collection of papers relating to contemporary legal questions, it is hard to go past Melissa Crouch and Tim Lindsey (eds), *Law, Society and Transition in Myanmar*.²¹³ Although it is aimed more at specialists, also recommended is Nick Cheesman, *Opposing the Rule of Law: How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order*.²¹⁴ Myanmar's 2008 constitution and its impact, at least until February 2021, is expertly discussed by Melissa Crouch in *The Constitution of Myanmar: A Contextual Analysis*.²¹⁵ Also useful in this regard is Andrew Harding (ed), *Constitutionalism and Legal Change in Myanmar*.²¹⁶ Both should be read in conjunction with the *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar*.²¹⁷ For an amusing and educational treatment of Burmese legal issues, see Norval Morris, *The Brothel Boy and Other Parables of the Law*.²¹⁸

Perhaps reflecting the breadth and complexity of Myanmar's economic problems, and their changing character over the decades, there are few books or reports that offer a comprehensive overview of these issues for non-specialists. However, a good historical introduction is Ian Brown, *A Colonial Economy in Crisis*.²¹⁹ This helps put into context Michael Adas' seminal 1974 study *The Burma Delta*.²²⁰ A later publication that was written with the general reader in mind is the Open Society's *Opportunities and Pitfalls: Preparing for Burma's Economic Transition*.²²¹ There is also a useful overview of developments since 1988 in Koichi Fujita, Fumihara Mieno and Ikuko Okamoto (eds), *The Economic Transition in Myanmar After 1988: Market Economy versus State Control*.²²² Lex Rieffel's USIP report about Myanmar's economy on the eve of the 2010 elections provides a snapshot of that period.²²³ While now almost 20 years out of date, Teruko Saito and Lee Kin Kiong's *Statistics on the Burmese Economy* is still a valuable reference tool.²²⁴ On the evolution of Myanmar's financial system, the best source is Sean Turnell, *Fiery Dragons: Banks, Moneylenders and Microfinance in Burma*.²²⁵

Should anyone wish to explore these subjects more deeply, a good start would be P.J. Perry, *Myanmar (Burma) since 1962: the Failure of Development*, published in 2007.²²⁶ More comprehensive and up to date is Ian Brown, *Burma's Economy in the Twentieth Century*.²²⁷ However, that too was being left behind by developments under the first NLD government. Konosuke Odaka takes the story forward to 2016 in *The Myanmar Economy: Its Past, Present and Prospects*.²²⁸ Also worth consulting for its astute observations on Myanmar's economy and a number of related subjects is Melissa Crouch (ed), *The Business of Transition: Law Reform, Development and Economics in Myanmar*.²²⁹ It remains to be seen what eventuates, but following the February 2021 coup economic sanctions appear once again to be on the table. Lee Jones made an important contribution to this vexed debate in *Societies Under Siege: Exploring How International Economic Sanctions (Do Not) Work*.²³⁰ Also important in this regard is the extended article "Feeling Good or Doing Good" by Thihan Myo Nyun.²³¹ US sanctions in place before the coup were summarized by Michael Martin in *US Restrictions on Relations with Burma*.²³²

Given their place in Myanmar's history and economy, it is worth mentioning a few works on the country's jade and gemstone industries. An easy introduction to the former is an article by Richard Hughes and others on the *Lotus* website, but it is also worth reading S.K. Samuel's more specialised *Imperial Jade of Burma and Mutton-Fat Jade of India*.²³³ The iniquities of Myanmar's modern jade mining industry are spelt out in *Jade: Myanmar's "Big State Secret"*, a 2015 report by Global Witness.²³⁴ On gemstones, a good start is Joseph Kessel's classic *Mogok*, about Myanmar's famous ruby mining district in 1960.²³⁵ There are also a few interesting White Lotus reprints about the area.²³⁶ Another work of note is Richard Hughes' edited version of *The Book of Ruby and Sapphire*, written in the 1930s by J.F. Halford-Watkins, who lived in Mogok for over 20 years.²³⁷ More up to date is an article on Mogok written by Robert Kane and Robert Kammerling for the journal *Gems and Gemology*.²³⁸ A colourful (in all senses of the word) description of Myanmar's gems and gem trade is *Burma Gems* by Vladislav Yavorsky.²³⁹ Carol Clark provides an overview of the ruby trade in *Seeing Red*.²⁴⁰

While brief, an excellent introduction to Myanmar's ethnic minorities and their troubled relationships with the central government is Martin Smith, *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma*.²⁴¹ Smith is also a contributor to a sumptuous photographic survey by R.K. Diran, titled *The Vanishing Tribes of Burma*.²⁴² Another worthwhile study is Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*.²⁴³ A more personal perspective on ethnic issues can be gained from Pascal Khoo Thwe, *From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey*.²⁴⁴ Although it was written 30 years ago, Jonathan Falla's *True Love and Bartholomew: Rebels on the Burmese Border* is still worth reading for its eloquent description of the plight of the Karens along the Myanmar–Thai border.²⁴⁵ An important counter-weight to this book is Ardeth Maung Thawngmung, *The "Other" Karen in Myanmar: Ethnic Minorities and the Struggle without Arms*.²⁴⁶ While a rather weighty tome, in several respects, Mandy Sadan's *Being and Becoming Kachin* is a comprehensive and scholarly study of the Kachin peoples.²⁴⁷ Sadan has also edited an excellent study of the Kachins and the 1994–2011 ceasefire.²⁴⁸

On other ethnic minorities, Chao Tzang Yawngnhe's memoirs offer a personal perspective on the complexities of Shan history and politics.²⁴⁹ Ashley South has written incisively about Mon nationalism and its modern manifestations.²⁵⁰ On the Wa, Bertil Lintner demonstrates rare access and knowledge in a research monograph and a book.²⁵¹ Often overlooked in discussions of Myanmar's ethnic groups are the long-established, if still not entirely accepted, Indian and Chinese communities. While now dated, useful background to the former is provided by N.R. Chakravati in *The Indian Minority in Burma*.²⁵² Its more recent circumstances are discussed by Renaud Egretteau in "Burmese Indians in Contemporary Burma: Heritage, influence and perceptions since 1988", published in the journal *Asian Ethnicity*.²⁵³ A couple of good histories of Myanmar's Chinese community have been published over the past few years, including Jade Roberts, *Mapping Chinese Rangoon: Place and Nation Among the Sino-Burmese*.²⁵⁴ On a more idiosyncratic note, Hillel Halkin's *Across the Sabbath River* describes his investigation of the claim that one of Israel's "lost tribes" can be found on the Myanmar–India border.²⁵⁵

Thanks to the 2016–17 pogroms in Rakhine State, there are now a large number of books and reports which claim to answer the many questions surrounding the ethnic minority known as the Rohingyas. Some are not worth reading, and several others need to be treated with caution. For the background to current tensions, see Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma*.²⁵⁶ Another good introduction is Jacques Leider, "Competing Identities and the Hybridized History of Rohingyas", in Renaud Egretteau and François Robinne (eds), *Myanmar in Transition: Studies in Political and Social Metamorphoses*.²⁵⁷ Leider also published an article on Rohingya identity in the *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Asian History*.²⁵⁸ Also recommended is Derek Tonkin's well-researched and well-argued chapter in Ashley South and Marie Lall (eds), *Citizenship in Myanmar*.²⁵⁹ Nick Cheesman has edited a collection of thoughtful articles on Muslims and communal violence in Myanmar.²⁶⁰ Carlos Galache's history of the "Rohingya tragedy" provides newcomers with easy introduction to a complex subject.²⁶¹ The role of Myanmar's security forces in the latest Rohingya crisis was examined by Andrew Selth in a 2018 USIP Peaceworks report.²⁶²

On all these matters, as on so many other issues to do with Myanmar, it is always worth reading the reports issued periodically by the International Crisis Group.²⁶³ Another good source is the reports occasionally published by the US Congressional Research Service.

There are no major works that specifically examine Myanmar's security environment, the study of which, as David Mathieson has pointed out, suffers from some major gaps.²⁶⁴ The subject was introduced in 2001 by Andrew Selth in *Burma: A Strategic Perspective*.²⁶⁵ Thant Myint U surveys Myanmar's current geostrategic significance in *Where China Meets India*.²⁶⁶ Selth also provided a detailed analysis of the Tatmadaw since 1988 in *Burma's Armed Forces: Power Without Glory*.²⁶⁷ For a similar, but later Burmese treatment of this subject, see Maung Aung Myoe, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces Since 1948*.²⁶⁸ A well-informed study of Myanmar's defence expenditure and the Tatmadaw's commercial interests can be found in *Praetorians, Profiteers or Professionals?* by Michael Montesano and others.²⁶⁹ Very little has been written in English about Myanmar's national police force, but for the colonial period a good start is Lalita Hingkanonta Hanwong, *Policing in Colonial Burma*.²⁷⁰ For an excellent study of some wider issues, see Kim Jolliffe, *Democratising Myanmar's Security Sector*.²⁷¹ The challenges faced by those writing about Myanmar's security forces are discussed in Andrew Selth's article "Knowns and Unknowns: Measuring Myanmar's Military Capabilities", in the journal *Contemporary Southeast Asia*.²⁷²

Despite being the subject of a great deal of comment and speculation over the years, Myanmar's intelligence agencies are even more opaque. There are few serious studies on this subject, but some works are helpful in understanding key capabilities, events and personalities. One is Des Ball's detailed study of Myanmar's signals intelligence operations, titled *Burma's Military Secrets*.²⁷³ Others include Andrew Selth's chapter on Myanmar in Bob de Graaff (ed), *Intelligence Communities and Cultures in Asia and the Middle East*.²⁷⁴ The most recent major work in this genre is *Secrets and Power in Myanmar: Intelligence and the Fall of Khin Nyunt*, also by Selth.²⁷⁵ This study reprises and takes the story forward from an academic article he published in 1998 under the title "Burma's Intelligence Apparatus".²⁷⁶ Also, Rhys Thompson has looked closely at the history of the Myanmar Police Force's Special Branch, which functions as an integral part of the intelligence community.²⁷⁷ All these works attempt to provide objective, evidence-based analyses, free of the moralising and political bias that often characterises discussions of intelligence issues, particularly by members of the activist community.

The difficulty of obtaining accurate data about Myanmar's strategic environment, security forces and defence policies has not deterred some commentators from repeating inaccurate, and at times quite outlandish, rumours on these subjects. Such cases famously include claims that in 1948 the departing British armed forces left behind up to 20 Spitfire fighter aircraft, buried in crates around the country. There was also a period around 2006 when some journalists and other observers asserted that China had established military bases in Myanmar, radically changing the strategic outlook of the entire Indo-Pacific region. Also, from about 2000 to around 2015, various exile and activist groups argued that Myanmar's military regime was developing, or had even developed, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Despite the lack of any hard evidence, such claims were given a prominence in the news media that they did not deserve. For correctives to such flights of fancy, see for example Andy Brockman and Tracy Spaight, *The Buried Spitfires of Burma*, Andrew Selth's *Chinese Military Bases in Burma: The Explosion of a Myth* and the chapter on Myanmar in the International Institute for Strategic Studies' 2009 strategic dossier, *Preventing Nuclear Dangers*.²⁷⁸

There are surprisingly few major studies of Myanmar's international relations. A good summary of the situation up to 2006 is Jurgen Haacke, *Myanmar's Foreign Policy: Domestic influences and international implications*.²⁷⁹ A more recent overview is provided by Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding the Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State*.²⁸⁰ On regional connections, a good start is Stephen McCarthy's chapter on Myanmar and ASEAN in Lowell Dittmer (ed), *Burma or Myanmar?: The Struggle for National Identity*.²⁸¹ Myanmar's relationship with the European Union was briefly examined in 2020.²⁸² On bilateral relationships, see for example D.I. Steinberg and Hongwei Fan, *Modern China-Myanmar Relations: Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence*, Renaud Egreteau's *Wooing the Generals: India's New Burma Policy* and D.M. Seekins, *Burma and Japan Since 1940: From 'Co-Prosperity' to 'Quiet Dialogue'*.²⁸³ Myanmar's relationship with the US was comprehensively covered by Kenton Clymer in *A Delicate Relationship: The United States and Burma/Myanmar Since 1945*.²⁸⁴ There is no detailed study of Myanmar's controversial relationship with North Korea, but Andray Abrahamian compares and contrasts the two countries in *North Korea and Myanmar: Divergent Paths*.²⁸⁵

The face of insurgency in Myanmar is changing so quickly that anything recommended here would soon be out of date. That said, a useful introduction is Paul Keenan, *By Force of Arms: Armed Ethnic Groups in Burma*.²⁸⁶ Another dated but more nuanced overview is Martin Smith, "Ethnic Conflicts in Burma: From separatism to federalism", in A.T.H. Tan (ed), *A Handbook on Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia*.²⁸⁷ See also the Asia Foundation's valuable survey *The Contested Areas of Myanmar: Subnational Conflict, Aid, and Development*.²⁸⁸ The reconciliation process and related peace negotiations are also constantly shifting. It is now out of date, but Zaw Oo and Win Min, *Assessing Burma's Ceasefire Accords*, is worth a quick look.²⁸⁹ The same can be said for Kyaw Yin Hlaing (ed), *Prisms on the Golden Pagoda: Perspectives on National Reconciliation in Myanmar*.²⁹⁰ An overview by a close observer is Min Zaw Oo, *Understanding Myanmar's Peace Process: Ceasefire Agreements*.²⁹¹ A rare personal perspective is provided by Aung Naing Oo in *Lessons Learned from Myanmar's Peace Process*.²⁹² There are a number of good book chapters on this subject, among them Ashley South's "Update on the Peace Process", in Mikael Gravers and Flemming Ytzen (eds), *Burma/Myanmar - Where Now?*²⁹³ On more recent developments, see Bertil Lintner, *Why Burma's Peace Efforts Have Failed to End Its Internal Wars*.²⁹⁴ The advent of a new military regime will doubtless leave many of these works behind.

Myanmar is the world's second largest producer of opium, after Afghanistan. It is also a major exporter of methamphetamines. The origins of the drug trade in the Golden Triangle (of northern Myanmar, Thailand and Laos) are described in Alfred McCoy's ground-breaking study, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*.²⁹⁵ This account is complemented well by Richard Gibson and Wenhua Chen in *The Secret Army: Chiang Kai-shek and the Drug Warlords of the Golden Triangle*.²⁹⁶ The issue is also examined, albeit from quite different viewpoints, in *A Failing Grade: Burma's Drug Eradication Efforts* and Martin Jelsma, et.al., *Trouble in the Triangle: Opium and Conflict in Burma*.²⁹⁷ The methamphetamine problem is explored in Bertil Lintner and Michael Black, *Merchants of Madness: The Methamphetamine Explosion in the Golden Triangle*.²⁹⁸ For recent discussions of these and related issues, see Tom Kramer, *The Current State of Counternarcotics Policy and Drug Reform Debates in Myanmar* and Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Myanmar Maneuvers: How to Break Political-Criminal Alliances in Contexts of Transition*.²⁹⁹ The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has posted a range of useful publications relating to Myanmar on its website.

Books by foreigners describing their experiences and emotions in Myanmar are proliferating as more people visit the country. Some of these works are better than others. Indeed, as David Scott Mathieson has noted in characteristic fashion, Myanmar has produced "a minor canon of self-promotional reportage".³⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly, given their mixed quality, many of these books are self-published. However, there have been some travelogues published over the past century that must be considered essential reading.

One early visitor was Somerset Maugham, who gave his impressions of Myanmar in 1923 in *The Gentleman in the Parlour*.³⁰¹ A later but equally celebrated effort was by Norman Lewis, who described his 1951 visit there in *Golden Earth*.³⁰² Another notable work in this genre is Bertil Lintner's *Land of Jade*, about his extraordinary journey across Myanmar from India to Thailand in 1987.³⁰³ In a similar vein is Shelby Tucker, *Among Insurgents*.³⁰⁴ Not quite as adventurous, but no less entertaining, is Andrew Marshall, *The Trouser People*.³⁰⁵ A Western-style travel book by a contemporary Burmese writer is Ma Thanegi, *The Native Tourist: A Holiday Pilgrimage in Myanmar*.³⁰⁶ As already noted, memoirs by tourists and temporary residents are often eminently forgettable, but there are some notable exceptions. Pico Iyer makes astute and often amusing observations about Myanmar during the Ne Win era in *Video Night in Kathmandu*.³⁰⁷ Rory MacLean's *Under the Dragon* is worth reading, as is Timothy Syrota's *Welcome to Burma*.³⁰⁸ David Eimer's book *A Savage Dreamland: Journeys in Burma* rates as one of the better modern contributions to this genre.³⁰⁹ As an aside, it is interesting to compare Paul Theroux's impressions of Myanmar, as brilliantly recorded in *The Great Railway Bazaar* in 1975, with those in his *Ghost Train to the Eastern Star*, written more than 30 years later.³¹⁰

The best known description in English of classical Burmese culture and customs is J.G. Scott, *The Burman: His Life and Notions*, first published under the pseudonym "Shway Yoe" in 1882.³¹¹ Another standard work, still useful for its description of traditional Burmese life, is Mi Mi Khaing, *Burmese Family*.³¹² A more recent book that appeals on several levels is Dawn Rooney, *The Thiri Rama: Finding Ramayana in Myanmar*.³¹³ There have been a number of scholarly works written about the place of women in Burmese society, but the best introduction probably remains Mi Mi Khaing, *The World of Burmese Women*.³¹⁴ Broader and more modern treatments of gender issues include Jessica Harriden, *The Authority of Influence: Women and Power in Burmese History* and Tharapi Than, *Women in Modern Burma*.³¹⁵ An unusual but interesting study of social mores is Georg Noack, *Local Traditions, Global Modernities: Dress, Identity and the Creation of Public Self-Images in Contemporary Urban Myanmar*.³¹⁶ Burmese society is rapidly changing, however, particularly in the cities, as David Steinberg warned in his 2014 article for *Yale Global Online*, "Tread with Caution in Highly Sensitive Burma".³¹⁷

There are few major studies of Myanmar's performing arts in the English language. The subject is briefly introduced in Noel Singer, *Burmese Dance and Theatre*.³¹⁸ A more recent production worth consulting is Daniel Ehrlich's photographic tribute to the world of traditional theatre and folk festivals, titled *Backstage Mandalay: The Netherworld of Burmese Performing Arts*.³¹⁹ Gavin Douglas provides an erudite introduction to traditional Burmese music in his chapter "Myanmar (Burma)", in John Shepherd, et al (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Popular Music of the World*.³²⁰ Modern Western-style music in Myanmar is examined in Heather Maclachlan, *Burma's Pop Music Industry: Creators, Distributors, Censors*.³²¹ Myanmar's traditional puppet theatre has attracted considerable interest over the years. There are more recent books on the subject, but Ma Thanegi's work *The Illusion of Life* provides an eminently readable introduction.³²² In 2016, David Eimer wrote a useful overview

of the Burmese film industry in the *South China Morning Post's* magazine.³²³ In 2020, the industry celebrated its 100th anniversary, prompting several interesting articles in the local news media.³²⁴

It is not possible to visit Myanmar without being struck by the central role Buddhism plays in daily life. A good introduction to this subject is still Htin Aung, *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*.³²⁵ A more scholarly work is Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society*.³²⁶ Also worth consulting, mainly for its insights into the clash of cultures and religious traditions, is Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma*.³²⁷ Its findings are relevant to modern Myanmar, as the country embraces the worlds of international capitalism and global mass culture. For Buddhism's role in modern Burmese politics, see Matthew Walton and Susan Hayward, *Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar*.³²⁸ Walton followed this work with a scholarly study of *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*.³²⁹ To consider religious extremism in Myanmar in a wider context, see Peter Lehr's study *Militant Buddhism*.³³⁰ On religious monuments, it is hard to go past Donald Stadtner's invaluable survey *Sacred Sites of Burma: Myth and Folklore in an Evolving Spiritual Realm*.³³¹ For the historical and religious significance of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, a good start is Elizabeth Moore, Hansjorg Mayer and U Win Pe, *Shwedagon: Golden Pagoda of Myanmar*.³³²

For those wishing to learn about other faiths in Myanmar, Islam's position was summarised by Curtis Lambrecht in "Burma (Myanmar)", in Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (eds), *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook*.³³³ However, that chapter needs to be read in conjunction with more up-to-date works that examine Myanmar's Muslim communities and the "Rohingya question", such as John Holt's recent collection of interviews.³³⁴ Ruth Cernea's *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* covers the decline of the local Jewish community from its heyday under the British colonial administration.³³⁵ In addition to those works about Christianity already cited, a revealing description of missionary life in Upper Burma before the Second World War can be found in Anne Carter, *Bewitched by Burma: A Unique Insight Into Burma's Complex Past*.³³⁶ A fascinating account of the adventures of a missionary family in northern Myanmar following the country's independence is Eugene Morse, *Exodus to a Hidden Valley*.³³⁷ No survey of religious beliefs in Myanmar would be complete without mention of the nats, as briefly and simply described in *Nats: Spirits of Fortune and Fear*, by Ma Thanegi and Barry Broman.³³⁸

Despite being written over 50 years ago, Ernest Shattock's memoir *An Experiment in Mindfulness* is still of interest as an autobiographical account by a Westerner studying Buddhist meditation in a Burmese monastery.³³⁹ Another book in this vein is Sande Pulley, *A Yankee in the Yellow Robe: An American Buddhist Monk's Role in East-West Cultural Interchange*.³⁴⁰ In the same vein, and equally enjoyable to read, is Marie Byles' book *Journey Into Burmese Silence*.³⁴¹ The *satipatthana vipassana* method practised by Shattock, Pulley and Byles is explained by one of Myanmar's most eminent practitioners in Mahasi Sayadaw, *The Fundamentals of Insight: Discourse on Meditation Practice*.³⁴² The historical roots of this school, and its place in modern Burmese history, are examined in Erik Braun, *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw*.³⁴³ The role of meditation in secular, as well as religious, life in the country is discussed by Ingrid Jordt in her well-researched book *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power*.³⁴⁴ *Living Buddhist Masters* by Jack Kornfield includes chapters on several distinguished Burmese meditation teachers (although few if any are still living).³⁴⁵

Kyi May Kaung wrote in 2007 that "Burma has become a favourite choice of novelists looking for an exotic locale with a hint of danger". That was true, but Myanmar figured in fictional works long before then.³⁴⁶ Some were by Burmese authors. Ma Ma Lay's *Not Out of Hate*, for example, is a classic.³⁴⁷ Patricia Milne's translations of Thein Pe Myint's *Selected Short Stories* are a delight to read.³⁴⁸ More recent offerings are Ludu U Hla, *The Caged Ones*, Wendy Law-Yone, *The Road to Wanting* and Nu Nu Yi, *Smile as They Bow*.³⁴⁹ There are others but, as Kyi May Kaung also pointed out, some very good Burmese novels have not been translated into English (or any other language). That has left the field largely to foreign authors, but their output has been very mixed. Some novels written in recent years are simply not worth reading, including several that take the 2016-17 Rohingya crisis as their central theme.³⁵⁰ However, there are some works of fiction about the country written by foreigners that repay the time spent reading them.

It is now a little outdated but, for a concise guide to Myanmar as portrayed in popular English literature, a good beginning is the chapter by Anna Allott in Alastair Dingwall (ed), *Traveller's Literary Companion to Southeast Asia*.³⁵¹ This survey covers some books which have already been mentioned, but it prompts a closer look at a few classic novels. These include F. Tennyson Jesse, *The Lacquer Lady*, Maurice Collis, *She Was a Queen*, George Orwell, *Burmese Days* and H.E. Bates, *The Purple Plain*.³⁵² Other well-received novels about Myanmar include Karel Van Loon's *The Invisible Ones*, Karen Connelly's *The Lizard Cage*, Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*.³⁵³ An important recent contribution to this field is Lucas Stewart and Alfred Birnbaum (eds), *Hidden Words, Hidden Worlds: Contemporary Short Stories from Myanmar*, published by the British Council.³⁵⁴ The best collection of Burmese folk tales is Gerry Abbott and Khin Thant Han, *The Folk-tales of Burma: An Introduction*.³⁵⁵ Myanmar's modern literary scene is described in Ellen Wiles, *Saffron Shadows and Salvaged Scripts*.³⁵⁶

Over the years, Myanmar does not seem to have been of much interest to foreign playwrights and poets, either as a setting or as a subject in its own right. However, that does not mean that there are no published works of interest. One celebrated example is *For Love of the King: A Burmese Masque*, published in 1922.³⁵⁷ Ostensibly a lost work by Oscar Wilde, it was in fact written by an eccentric Irish woman named Mabel Cosgrove. A more recent play was *The Lady of Burma* by Richard Shannon, which capitalised on the global appeal of then opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.³⁵⁸ The thought-provoking *Eastern Star*, published in 2018 by Guy Slater, also enjoyed a measure of critical success on the British stage.³⁵⁹ Rudyard Kipling of course wrote several poems that referred to Myanmar, notably "Mandalay".³⁶⁰ Other collections of poetry with a Myanmar connection range from the truly dreadful to a number that deserve more sympathetic consideration. An example of the former is *Fluttering Leaves* by the self-proclaimed Buddhist Archbishop of Latvia, Friedrich V. Lustig.³⁶¹ An example of the latter is *When at Nights I Try to Sleep* by Maung Myint Thein.³⁶² Two other charming works by Myint Thein are *Burmese Proverbs Explained in Verse* and *Burmese Folk-Songs*.³⁶³ Highly recommended is *Burma Storybook* by Petr Lom and others, which showcased the work of several contemporary Burmese poets, both on film and in print.³⁶⁴

One interesting development in publishing circles over the past 30 years has been the increasing popularity of lavishly illustrated graphic novels. About two dozen have been set in Myanmar. Most take an historical approach, such as *Burma Banshees* by Romain Hugault and Yann, and *Mandalay* by Philippe Thirault.³⁶⁵ A number, however, like *Burmese Moons* by Sophie Ansell and Sam Garcia, have focused on more recent developments.³⁶⁶ Aung San Suu Kyi has been the subject of several graphic novels, such as Chantal Van den Heuvel and Michel Pierret's rather reverential 2013 work *Aung San Suu Kyi: The Lady of Rangoon*.³⁶⁷ Most of these works were initially published in French, but English language versions of many are now available, including Guy Delisle's charming *Burma Chronicles*.³⁶⁸ The field was surveyed by Andrew Selth in the *Nikkei Asian Review* in April 2018.³⁶⁹ For those interested in looking at Myanmar through the eyes of its cartoonists, two works are recommended. The first is Harn Lay's *Defiant Humour: The Best of Harn Lay's Political Cartoons from The Irrawaddy*.³⁷⁰ The second is Lisa Brooten's chapter on Burmese political cartoons in John Lent, *Southeast Asian Cartoon Art*.³⁷¹

There are not many children's books in English with a specific Myanmar theme, but the number is growing. It is possible to see how the genre has developed over the past 150 years by dipping into it at different stages. A typical early work is G.A. Henty's jingoistic adventure novel *On The Irrawaddy: A Story of the First Burmese War*.³⁷² A later contribution (also set in the colonial period) was W.O. Stevens, *Drummer Boy of Burma*.³⁷³ Between the 1930s and 1950s, "Captain" W.E. Johns set seven of his "Biggles" juvenile adventure stories in Myanmar.³⁷⁴ Some 20 years later, the Asia Society in the US helped to publish a more culturally sensitive story by P.W. Garland and Maryjane Dunstan titled *Orange-Robed Boy*.³⁷⁵ It was illustrated by the noted Burmese artist Paw Oo Thet. One children's book that can usually be found in Western bookshops these days is Jean Merrill's retelling of a Burmese folk tale in *Shan's Lucky Knife*.³⁷⁶ A more recent multilingual effort is Dedie King and Judith Inglese, *I See the Sun in Myanmar (Burma)*.³⁷⁷ There have also been several books for children about Aung San Suu Kyi, including a graphic novel entitled *The Caged Bird*, referring to a song about the Nobel laureate by the Irish rock band U2.³⁷⁸

The most impressive English language survey of Burmese arts and crafts is Sylvia Fraser-Lu, *Burmese Crafts, Past and Present*.³⁷⁹ By the same author is *Splendour in Wood: The Buddhist Monasteries of Burma*.³⁸⁰ Fraser-

Lu also collaborated with Donald Stadtner to edit the impressive *Buddhist Art of Myanmar*.³⁸¹ For more specialised studies, see Andrew Ranard, *Burmese Painting: A Linear and Lateral History*, Elizabeth Dell and Sandra Dudley (eds), *Textiles from Burma*, and Than Htun, *Lacquerware Journeys: The Untold Story of Burmese Lacquer*.³⁸² There is a chapter on Myanmar in Mick Shippen, *The Traditional Ceramics of South East Asia* and the country is covered in Anne Richter, *The Jewelry of Southeast Asia*.³⁸³ Myanmar also features in M.A. Stanislaw, *Kalagas: The Wall Hangings of Southeast Asia*.³⁸⁴ Often, however, the best sources of learned and well-illustrated articles on Myanmar's arts and crafts are magazines like the bi-monthly *Arts of Asia*, produced in Hong Kong. See, for example, the articles "Collecting Burmese Textiles" by Thweep Rittinaphakorn, "Survivors from a Burmese Palace" by Noel Singer and "Burmese Silver from the Colonial Period" by Wynyard Wilkinson and others.³⁸⁵

For those with an interest in Myanmar's increasingly threatened flora and fauna, a readable introduction (to the former, at least,) is Charles Lyte, *Frank Kingdon-Ward: The Last of the Great Plant Hunters*.³⁸⁶ Also worth buying is E.C. Nelson's delightful *Shadow Among Splendours: Lady Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe's adventures among the flowers of Burma, 1897-1921*.³⁸⁷ Another beautifully presented book on this subject is Dudley Clayton, *Charles Parish – Plant Hunter and Botanical Artist in Burma*.³⁸⁸ A much-loved book about Burmese elephants, written by a real "jungle wallah", is J.H. Williams, *Bandoola*.³⁸⁹ For ornithologists, nothing can beat B.E. Smythies' monumental work *The Birds of Burma*, but a more convenient reference for travellers is Kyaw Nyunt Lwin and Khin Ma Ma Thwin, *Birds of Myanmar*.³⁹⁰ Two books which are both informative and entertaining are Alan Rabinowitz, *Beyond the Last Village: A Journey of Discovery in Asia's Forbidden Wilderness* and W.J. Kress, *The Weeping Goldsmith: Discoveries in the Secret Land of Myanmar*.³⁹¹ A more scholarly treatment of Burma's environmental problems can be found in Adam Simpson, *Energy, Governance and Security in Thailand and Myanmar (Burma): A Critical Approach to Environmental Politics in the South*.³⁹²

Once upon a time, few people knew anything about Myanmar's culinary traditions which, if not dismissed out of hand, tended to be overwhelmed by those of its better-known neighbours, India, China and Thailand. However, there are now a growing number of books about Myanmar's cuisine, containing a wide variety of recipes, old and new. A good introduction is Bridget and Stephen Anderson's beautifully presented *Burma: Food, Family and Conflict*, which sets particular dishes in their historical, cultural and social contexts.³⁹³ Another rich source of inspiration, highlighting regional variations, is Bryan Koh's hefty tome, *0451 Mornings Are For Mont Hin Gar: Burmese Food Stories*.³⁹⁴ If that is not available, an alternative source is Mohana Gill, *Myanmar: Cuisine, Culture and Customs*.³⁹⁵ For the novice chef, Ma Thanegi has provided an excellent description of the most common (and popular) dishes in *An Introduction to Myanmar Cuisine*.³⁹⁶ There is also a chapter on Myanmar in Charmaine Solomon's classic (and frequently updated) work, *The Complete Asian Cookbook*.³⁹⁷

For the non-specialist stamp collector, a simple introduction to Burmese philately is Min Sun Min, *Stamps of Burma: A Historical Record Through 1988*.³⁹⁸ A much more comprehensive guide to the subject is Edward Proud, *The Postal History of Burma*.³⁹⁹ A truly monumental work designed for the specialist, but also of interest to the generalist, is James Song's study of the postage stamps produced during the British colonial period.⁴⁰⁰ If copies can be found, an informative and entertaining source of information for Myanmar philatelists is *The Burma Fantail*, the newsletter and journal of the UK-based Burma (Myanmar) Philatelic Study Circle. In 2005, under its editor Richard Warren, it replaced *The Burma Peacock*, which ran to 77 issues, produced in Canada from 1979 to 2000.⁴⁰¹ Although now over 30 years old, the best and most detailed guide to Burmese numismatics is M. Robinson and L.A. Shaw, *The Coins and Banknotes of Burma*.⁴⁰² A more recent but specialised work is Than Htun (Dedaye), *Auspicious Symbols and Ancient Coins of Myanmar*.⁴⁰³ Also helpful in this regard are two online sources, *The Banknote Book: Burma* and *The Banknote Book: Myanmar*, by Owen W. Linzmayer.⁴⁰⁴

Another way of looking at Myanmar is from the outside, through books written by former colonials, migrants, expatriates and exiles. One work that springs to mind in that regard is the Britain-Burma Society's delightful collection *Lines from a Shining Land*, which records the anecdotes and memories of 33 former residents between 1910 and 1980.⁴⁰⁵ Also worth reading in this regard are Sue Arnold, *A Burmese Legacy* and Wendy Law-Yone, *Golden Parasol*.⁴⁰⁶ Harriet O'Brien, whose father was the British ambassador to Myanmar from 1974 to 1978, skilfully blends history and personal recollections of the country in *Forgotten Land: A Rediscovery of Burma*.⁴⁰⁷ Constance Allmark has written three books about her life in Myanmar and continuing

links to the country after she took up residence in Australia in 1964.⁴⁰⁸ Another Burmese to migrate to Australia was Sao Khemawadee Mangrai, who later published *Burma My Mother – And Why I Had to Leave*.⁴⁰⁹ A more recent contribution to this genre is Alex Wagner's *Futureface*, about an American woman's quest to trace her Burmese roots and learn what it means to be of mixed race.⁴¹⁰ In a different vein, Michael Spurlock's *All Saints* tells the uplifting story of how a group of Karen refugees saved a small Christian community in the US.⁴¹¹

Myanmar's place in popular Western culture has long been neglected, but this situation is gradually changing. In 2020, the subject was comprehensively surveyed in Andrew Selth's research paper for the Griffith Asia Institute, *Making Myanmar: Colonial Burma and Popular Western Culture*.⁴¹² For a more specialised discussion of Myanmar in pulp fiction magazines, see Selth's "Colonial-era pulp fiction portrays 'technicolor' Myanmar".⁴¹³ For an examination of Myanmar's depiction in comic books, see the same author's "Burma and the Comics", a two-part article posted on the Australian National University's *New Mandala* blog.⁴¹⁴ The subject of Myanmar and matchbox labels was briefly examined in "Colonial Burma, history and phillumeny", also found on *New Mandala*.⁴¹⁵ Similarly, a look at Myanmar's place in the world of cigarette and trade cards can be found in Andrew Selth, "Colonial Burma, as seen through collectible cards", published in the *Nikkei Asian Review* in May 2016.⁴¹⁶ For a description of Myanmar, as seen through old postcards, a good start is Noel Singer's *Burmah: A Photographic Journey, 1855–1925*.⁴¹⁷ Also of interest is Edith Mirante's "Escapist Entertainment: Hollywood Movies of Burma", published in *The Irrawaddy*, and Selth's article, "Burma, Hollywood and the Politics of Entertainment", in the journal *Continuum*.⁴¹⁸

Finally, to take a step backwards, Myanmar studies have expanded dramatically since the 1988 pro-democracy uprising thrust the country into the world's headlines and sparked a surge in popular interest. As noted in the introduction and prefaces to the Griffith Asia Institute's select bibliography, the flow of new and reprinted works since then has gathered momentum. For a survey of these trends, a reader is referred initially to Andrew Selth's article, "Modern Burma Studies: A Survey of the Field".⁴¹⁹ The same author followed up this work with two occasional papers on aspects of Myanmar-watching, both published by the GAI.⁴²⁰ They should be read in conjunction with the wonderful collection of articles edited by Matrii Aung Thwin in a special 2008 issue of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* on the theme "Communities of Interpretation and the Construction of Modern Myanmar".⁴²¹ There are also a number of articles and blogs written by academics, postgraduate students and journalists that give a flavour of what it has been like to research, observe and write about Burma over the past 40 years.⁴²² One recent piece of interest in this regard is Reshmi Banerjee's interview with Li Yi about the latter's book on the Chinese migrant community in colonial Burma.⁴²³

At a personal level, such works help round out the picture for newcomers to the field and give a sense of what it has been like for scholars and others to produce the works cited in this research paper

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