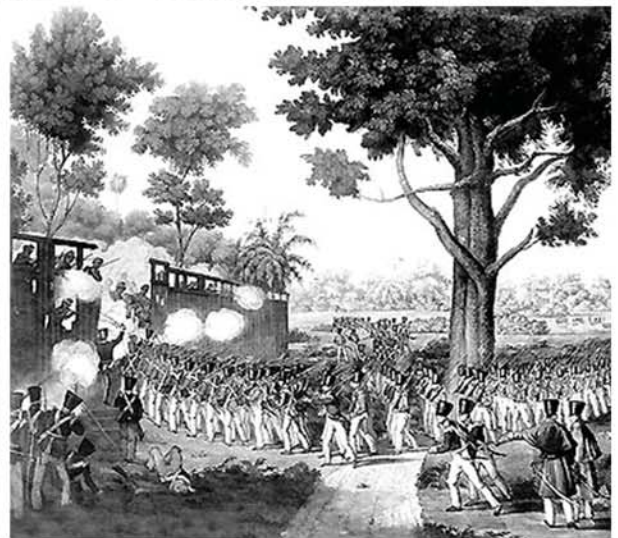


# KINGDOMS, COLONIALISM AND INDEPENDENCE

MYANMAR HISTORY UNTIL 1948

## STUDENT'S BOOK



**A social science module in simplified  
English for Myanmar adults**



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

## What do you already know about the history of Myanmar?

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

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

### group work

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

#### **Important Events**

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

#### **Discoveries, Developments and Changes**

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

#### **Famous Personalities**

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

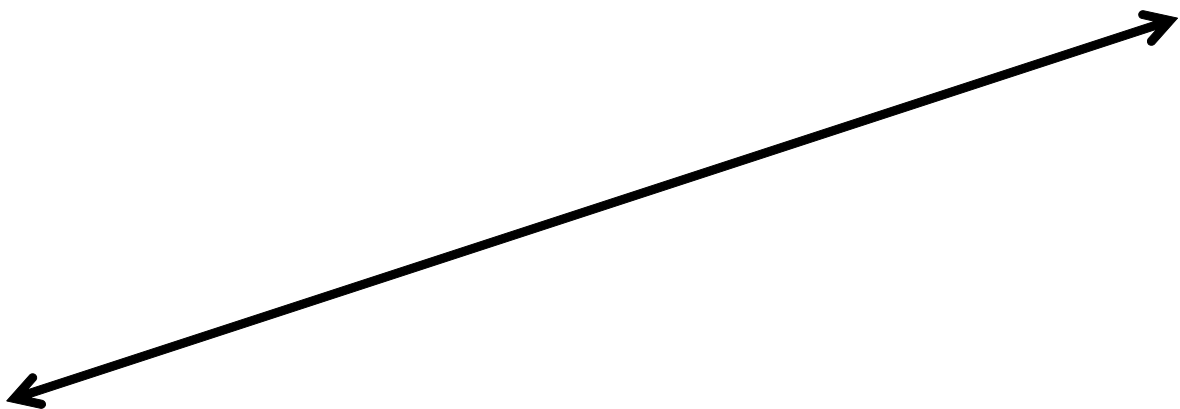
#### **Ordinary People Like You**

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

Share your ideas with the class.

### discussion

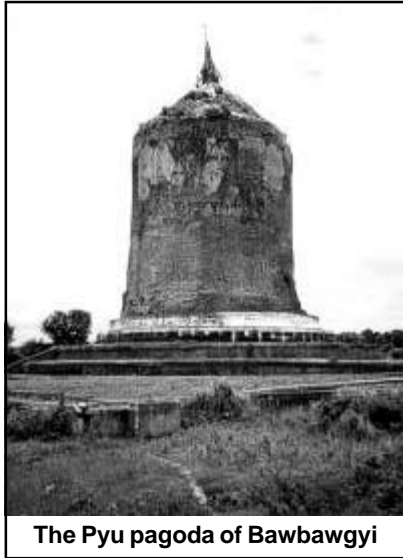
What are some events on the timeline that you would like to learn more about? Why?



## History: Whose story?

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

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



The Pyu pagoda of Bawbawgyi

historians think hill people have been living in Myanmar for thousands of years, but they do not know much about their past. The first *evidence* of a kingdom in Myanmar comes from the Pyu people, who had a city in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Some Burmans say the Pyu are their *ancestors* and others say the Burmans founded the old city of Tagaung even before the Pyu came. Some Shans say Tagaung was their city. The Rakhine are proud of their ancient kingdoms, and the Mon have lived in Southeast Asia for over two thousand years.

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

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

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

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

### KEY WORDS

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

*ancient*: very old; from a long time ago

*prove*: to show to be true

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

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

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

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

*research*: the process of looking for evidence

## exercises

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

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

B. What is the main idea of this text?

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

C. Choose the best answer.

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

## group work

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

## discussion

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

## Myths and legends

Many groups in Myanmar have *myths* and *legends* about where their people came from. These stories are important for you to know so that you can understand the cultures of all people in Myanmar.



Golden Sheldrake bird (**hintha** in Burmese) is still a symbol on the Mon flag. Here are some myths from a few different peoples of Myanmar.

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

Many of these myths were passed down from old people to young people as *oral history*. Today, you may not believe the events in these myths really happened, but the stories can help you to understand how ancient people thought about the world. Also, many of the *symbols* from the myths are still important to people; for instance, the

A Shan legend says a giant bird called a **tilanka** carried a pregnant queen from her home, near where the Buddha was born, to a far away jungle. There, she had a baby boy. When he grew up, the **thagyas** (spirits) gave him a magic harp. He used the harp's music to lead all the elephants in the jungle back to the place where the bird had picked up his mother. He became king, and he called the kingdom Muang Mao, because **mao** means “*dizzy*” and his mother had become dizzy when the bird lifted her up.

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

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

### KEY WORDS

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

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

*symbol*: something that has an important meaning for people; for example, the Golden Sheldrake bird is the symbol of the Mon nation

*dizzy*: feeling like you are going to fall down

*sand*: soft dirt found in the desert or on the beach

*plentiful*: having enough of everything

*awful*: very bad



## exercises

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

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

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

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. <i>Muang Mao</i> , or dizzy land ____         | A. Chin  |
| 2. <i>Thimzing</i> , or great darkness ____      | B. Shan  |
| 3. <i>Hongsa</i> , or Golden Sheldrake bird ____ | C. Kayin |
| 4. <i>Kawthoolei</i> , or pleasant land ____     | D. Mon   |

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

**Mon:** a female Golden Sheldrake bird

**Shan:** a magic harp

**Kayin:** the Land of Flowing Sands

**Chin:** dry wood and stones

## group work

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

## discussion

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



# What life was like in ancient times

## Kingdoms

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

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

## Ordinary people

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

## Religion

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



Mingaledezi Pagoda, Bagan,  
built in the 13th century



Mosque in Yangon

## KEY WORDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

*expand*: to make bigger

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

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

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

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

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

## exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

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

## group work

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

*Kings:*

*Princes and Chiefs:*

*Ordinary people:*

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

## discussion

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

## Ancient kingdoms

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

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

### 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

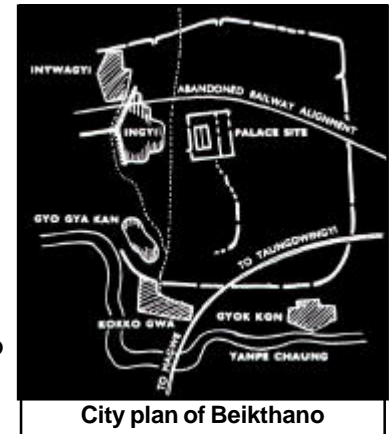
- Pyu people establish a city at Beikthano.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> century

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

### 3<sup>rd</sup> century

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



City plan of Beikthano

### 4<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 5<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 6<sup>th</sup> century

- The power of the Rakhine people at Dhanyawadi *declines*.

### 7<sup>th</sup> century

- Pyu and Rakhine people have contact.

### 8<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 9<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 11<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 12<sup>th</sup> century

- Burman and Mon civilization at Bagan is very strong.

### 13<sup>th</sup> century

- Around 1287, the Mongol empire expands south from China and weakens Bagan, strengthening Shan hands.
- Tai kingdoms at Sukothai and Lanna become powerful.
- A Mon-Shan king named Wareru, who has connections to Lanna and Sukothai, establishes a kingdom called Hongsawaddy at Bago and Martaban.
- The Khmer people from the Angkor empire in what is now Cambodia expand into Mon and Tai areas.



King Anawrhata



Rakhine Kingdom of Mrauk-U

### 14<sup>th</sup> century

- Burman and Shan people establish a kingdom at Ava. Great literature in the Burmese language and beautiful religious art are created around this time.
- Shan princes become powerful in Northern Myanmar, and they *rebel* against the kings at Ava.
- Most Shan mini-states come under the political control of Hsokkanfah (1311-64), Prince of Mao, whose power spreads as far as Assam in India.

### 15<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 16<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 18<sup>th</sup> century

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

### 19<sup>th</sup> century

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

## KEY WORDS

*civilization*: a large, organised society

*influence*: to affect or change something

*establish*: to set up or start

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

*region*: large area

*decline*: slow loss of power or control

*rebel*: to fight against the people in power

*architecture*: buildings

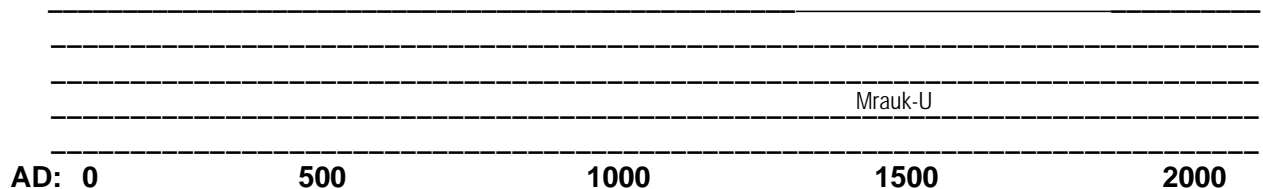
*colonise*: when one country takes control of another country in order to gain economic and political benefits

## exercises

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

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

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



C. Match the ethnicities with kingdoms or cities.

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

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



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

#### discussion

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

#### group work

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

#### homework

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

## Section II: Colonialism (1885–1948)

### What is colonialism?

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

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

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

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

#### KEY WORDS

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

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

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

*civilised*: having a highly developed culture, usually involving cities

*mistreat*: to do bad things to someone

*modernise*: to change traditional things with the latest ideas and technology

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

*accept*: to say yes to

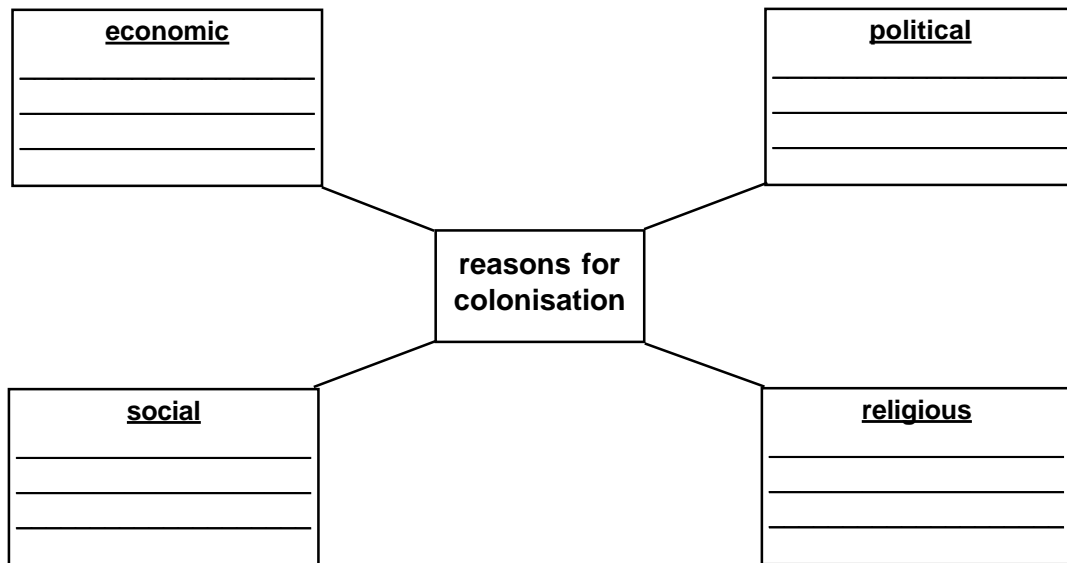
#### exercises

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

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



B. Fill in the charts.



#### group work

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



#### discussion

Discuss how colonialism affected the world.

#### homework

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

## The Anglo-Burmese wars

The British colonists came to Myanmar through India. But they did not take over Myanmar all at once. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the British had conflicts with Burman kings of the Konbaung Dynasty about the border with India. Meanwhile, Burman kings had their own problems. *Dacoits* sometimes attacked Burman *territory* in Rakhine and then escaped over the border into British India. In 1824, the Burman King Bagyidaw sent some soldiers to chase some of these dacoits into Assam and Manipur. The Burmans thought that this land was theirs, but the British did not agree. The British got angry that the Burman king was sending soldiers into their territory. That was the beginning of the first of three wars between the British and the Myanmar.

The British won the first of these wars. They *annexed* Assam and Manipur as well as Rakhine and Tenasserim. Then, in 1852, there was another war. The British won again, and this time they took over Lower Myanmar.

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

Why were the British able to win the wars against the Konbaung kings? Part of the reason is that the British had better weapons and more soldiers. Another reason is that the Konbaung kings had other problems. There were fights within the royal family. And the kings were having problems keeping the empire under control, because different ethnic groups were rebelling. As a result, the king's power was weak. Generals such as Maha Bandula fought hard

against the British, but they could not defeat the colonists.

Not all of the conflicts between the British and the Myanmar were military. There were also conflicts between British and Myanmar social and

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



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

### KEY WORDS

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

*territory*: land

*annex*: to take control of a piece of land

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

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

*disrespectful*: not showing respect; being impolite

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

*avoid*: stay away from

## exercises

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

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

B. Answer these questions in your own words:

1. What caused the first war between the British and the Myanmar?
2. What happened to the Konbaung monarchy after the British colonised Myanmar?
3. What problems did the Konbaung kings have?
4. Why were the British able to defeat the Konbaung kings?

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

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

## group work

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

## discussion

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

## homework

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

## Colonial administration

Once the British had control of all the territory in modern Myanmar, they had to decide how to rule it. They knew that people in different regions had been rebelling against the Konbaung kings, and they



Drawing of King Mindon, who ruled from 1853-1878

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

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

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

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

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

## KEY WORDS

*administration*: the rule of a government

*plains*: flat areas

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

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

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

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

*loyal*: describing someone who keeps their promises

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

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

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

## exercises

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

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

### B. Choose the best answer.

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

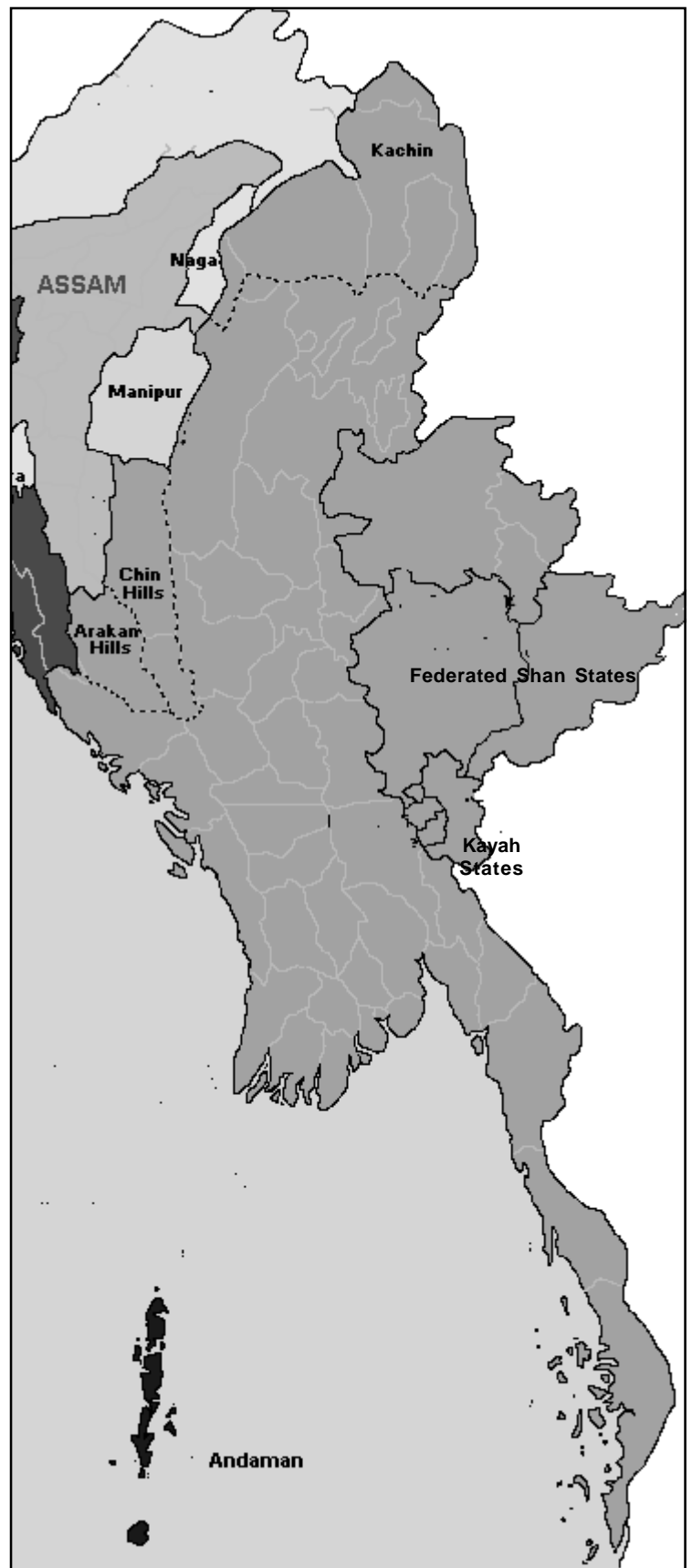
C. Where is your home town or village in colonial Myanmar? Was it in Burma Proper or in the Frontier Areas? Draw a star on the map showing where your home town or village is located today.

#### discussion

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

#### homework

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



## Effects of colonisation

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

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

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

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

### KEY WORDS

*petroleum*: the oil found in the ground which is used to make gasoline

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

*governor*: a person who governs or rules a certain area

*commissioner*: a person in charge of a government department

*viceroy*: a person who rules for the king or queen

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

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

*convert*: to change someone from one religion to another

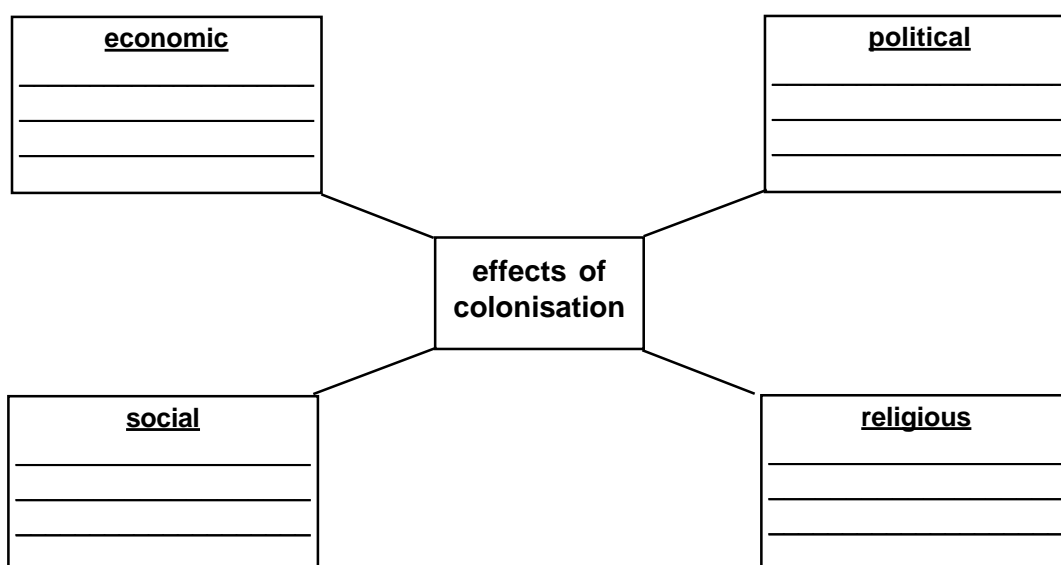


## exercises

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

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

B. Fill in the chart.



C. Answer these questions in your own words.

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

## group work

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

## homework

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

## Increasing ethnic diversity in Myanmar

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



some of their own traditions and languages.

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

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

Some Chinese people also remained in Myanmar or came later on. Many became successful business people. Because they, like Indians, tended to have more money and power, some Myanmar people have *resented* them and have had *riots* against them. These *communal* riots have happened during difficult economic times, when people were upset because they had to struggle to survive. In 1967, Chinese people were attacked because some of them were selling rice for high prices and wearing "Mao Badges" that showed their loyalty



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

to the Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung. In cases like this one, there were real problems that needed to be solved, but riots hurt or killed many innocent people without solving the problems. Moreover, not all Chinese and Indian people were rich and powerful.

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

### KEY WORDS

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

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

*civil servant*: a person who works for the government

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

*moneylender*: a person who lends money to others. The borrower pays back more than they borrow.

(continued)

### KEY WORDS (continued)

*chettyar*: an Indian moneylender in Myanmar

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

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

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

*citizenship*: being recognised as a citizen of a country

### exercises

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

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

B. Choose the best answer.

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

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

### discussion

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

### homework

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

## Missionaries

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

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

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

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



Ola Hansen with Kachin converts

### KEY WORDS

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

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

*marginalised*: disadvantaged or mistreated

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

*tension*: uncertainty and uncomfortable relationships

*oppose*: to go against or say no to something

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

## exercises

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

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

B. Choose the best answer.

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

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

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

## discussion

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

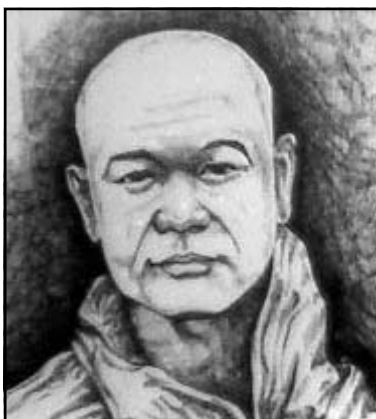
## homework

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

## Anti-colonial activities

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

First of all, many Buddhists felt that the British disrespected Buddhism. The British had gotten rid of the king and would not let anyone else become the religious leader of Myanmar. In 1906, some



U Ottama

educated Myanmar people formed the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) to promote Buddhist religion and culture. In 1916, the YMBA took on a political role because the British still would not take off their shoes when they

went into a Buddhist temple. In 1920, the YMBA joined with other organisations to form the Greater Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA). The GCBA organised a strike of students who wanted separation from India and independence from Britain. Leaders included U Chit Hlaing and U Ba Pe. U Ottama, a Rakhine monk, and U Wisara, also a monk, got involved in politics in order to protect Buddhism. The British arrested these monks and put them in prison.

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

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

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

### KEY WORDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## exercises

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

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

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

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

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

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

## group work

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

## discussion

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

## homework

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



## Myanmar nationalism and the Thakin movement

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

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

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

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

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

### KEY WORDS

*nationalist*: a person who feels nationalism

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

*Dobama Asiayone*: a Myanmar nationalist organisation

*express*: to show

*movement* a group of people or organisations that are all trying to reach one goal

*expel*: to make someone leave a school or organisation

*demand*: to ask for strongly

*opinion*: your thoughts or feelings about something

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

## exercises

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

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

B. Match the leader with the description.

1. U Nu \_\_\_\_\_
2. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing \_\_\_\_\_
3. Bogoyoke Aung San \_\_\_\_\_
4. Thakin Ba Thaung and Thakin Lay Maung \_\_\_\_\_
5. Ko Aung Gyaw \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Member of the DAA who became an important teacher and political leader
- B. Member of RUSU and DAA who ran the student newspaper
- C. Founders of the DAA
- D. Student who was killed by the British during a peaceful demonstration
- E. Member of the RUSU and DAA who demanded different school classes

C. Answer these questions in your own words:

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

D. What is the main idea of this text?

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

## discussion

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

## homework

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

## Bogyoke Aung San

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



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

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

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

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



**Burma Independence Army**

### KEY WORDS

*convince*: to get people to agree with your ideas

*eventually*: not now but later

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

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

*assassinate*: to kill a political leader or other important person

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

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

## exercises

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

things you know	new information	things you want to know

## discussion

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

## homework

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

## Ethnic leaders in the colonial era

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



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

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

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



## KEY WORDS

*Sawbwa*: traditional leader in Shan and other ethnic groups

*meanwhile*: at the same time

*Duwa*: traditional Kachin leader

*concerned*: feeling that a bad thing might happen; worried

*attend*: to go to

*appoint*: to give someone a job

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

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

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

*indigenous*: living in a place since a long time ago

*principal*: main

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

*reconcile*: to unite and settle problems peacefully

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

## exercises

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

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

B. Choose the best answer.

1. Dr. San C. Po did not want Myanmar to have self-rule because
  - a. he thought Myanmar should be independent from Britain.
  - b. he worried the Burmans wouldn't treat the Kayins as equals.
  - c. he was a member of the House of Representatives.
  - d. he thought the Kayins should rule all of Myanmar
2. Many people respect Dr. San C. Po because
  - a. he wanted to solve problems peacefully by discussing them.
  - b. he preferred armed struggle to non-violent action.
  - c. he never held any position in government
  - d. he agreed with everything the Burmans said.

### group work

Dr. San C. Po wrote, "*The Burmese nation (by which is meant all the indigenous races of Burma) can never be strong...until the principal races of the country are satisfied and contented by having a fair share of the country and its administration.*"

Work with your group to rephrase this sentence in your own words. Do you agree with this statement? Read your statements to the class and share your ideas.

### discussion

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

### homework

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

### review

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

The Pyu

Golden Sheldrake

Islam in Myanmar

Bagan

Mrauk-U

Konbaung dynasty

Anglo-Burmese wars

Burma Proper

divide and rule policy

myothugyis

Chinese in Myanmar

Kachin script

YMBA

U Ottama

Dobama Asiayone

Saya San rebellion

Thakins

Federal Council of Shan Cheifs

Duwa Sinwa Nawng

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

daily life?

her/his opinions of the British?

what has changed?

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



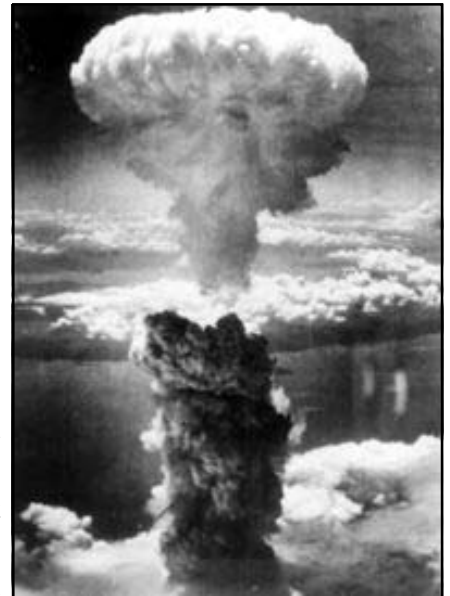
## Section III: World War II (1940—1945)

### Overview of WWII

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

WWII was fought in three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. The Germans and Italians invaded Europe and Africa, and the Japanese invaded parts of Asia. The Japanese *occupied* parts of Southeast Asia, including Myanmar in 1941. People all around the world were killed and injured during the war, about 75 million died in total and many *civilians* suffered economically and physically.

The German government committed a *genocide* called the Holocaust when they killed 6 million Jewish people and many other groups of people as well. The USA dropped an *atomic bomb* on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing over 100,000 people. WWII ended in 1945 when the *Axis powers* *surrendered* to the Allied powers. One important effect of WWII was the world became divided into communist and democratic countries.



Cloud from the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki in 1945

#### KEY WORDS

*invade*: when the army of one country enters another

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

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

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

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

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

*occupy*: when an army enters another country and stays there

*civilian*: a person who is not in an army

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

*atomic bomb*: a nuclear-powered bomb

*surrender*: to give up in a war

## exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

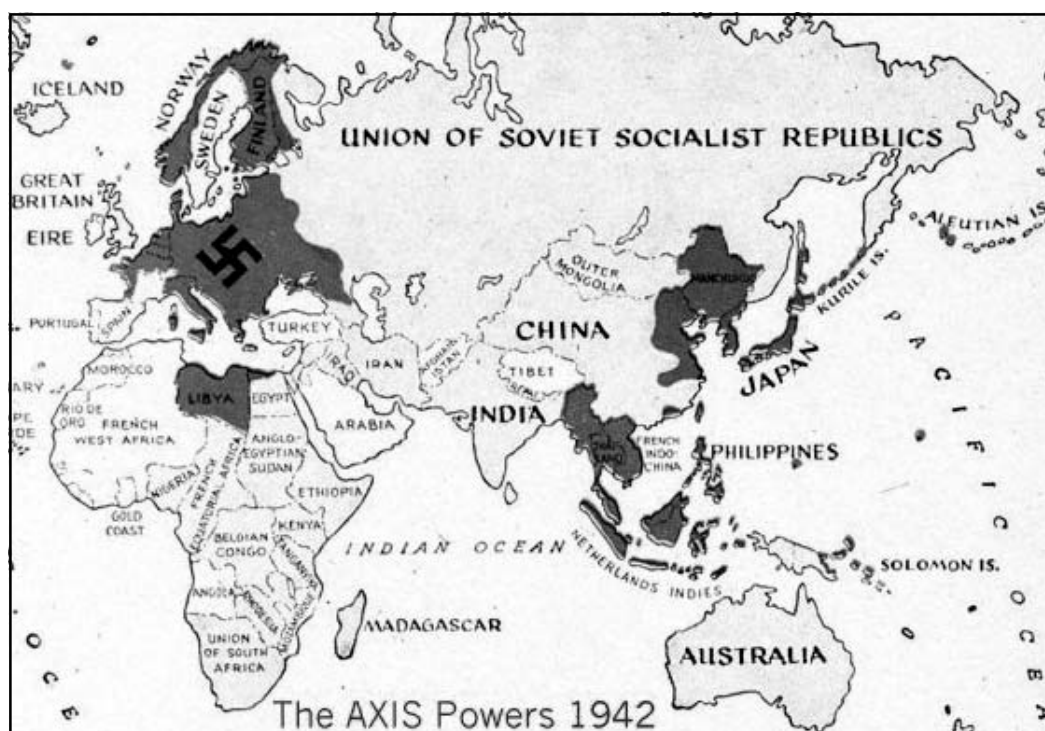
1. Germany, Italy, and Japan all had \_\_\_\_\_ governments.
2. Japan \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Myanmar in 1941.
3. England and France stopped following a policy of \_\_\_\_\_ in 1939 when Germany attacked Poland.
4. Hitler committed \_\_\_\_\_ against Jewish \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_, including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

## discussion

Discuss why you think the Allies opposed fascist countries.

## homework

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



What areas were controlled by Germany? What areas were controlled by Italy? What areas were controlled by Japan? Research this.

## homework

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

## The 30 Comrades

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

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



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

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

transport supplies. So they promised the thakins that they would help fight for Myanmar's independence. In 1941, 30 Myanmar nationalists went to the Japanese island of Hainan and got military and *administrative* training from Colonel Suzuki. The

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



Aung San and some of the 30 comrades training in Japan

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

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

### KEY WORDS

*underground*: not legal; secret

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

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

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

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

## exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

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

## group work

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

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

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

## homework

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

## Japanese occupation

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



**Hugh Seagram, who fought with the Kayin**

fought along with him.

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

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

Instead, they set up a *puppet government* led by Thakin Tun Ok and then by Dr. Ba Maw. On August 1, 1943, they announced Myanmar’s independence. Bogyoke Aung San Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Mya, and Thakin Nu accepted positions in the new government. They did not believe the Japanese wanted Myanmar to have real independence, so they secretly planned *resistance* against the Japanese. But the people of Myanmar did not know they were secretly planning this resistance, so some lost trust in the thakins and the BIA and started to resist the Japanese on their own. In August 1944, Bogyoke Aung San and others formed the Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO, later called the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League, or AFPFL). The AFO formed an alliance with Thakin Soe and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). Both groups



**Drawing of a burning village by a Japanese soldier**

formed an alliance with the British at a conference in Kandy, India, in 1945. The British Force 136, which provided support to underground resistance to the fascists, supported them. In March 1945, fighting between the BIA and the Japanese began; March 27 is remembered as Resistance Day. They fought until the Japanese surrendered on August 14, 1945.

### KEY WORDS

*commit*: to do

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

*rape*: to force a person to have sex

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

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

*retreat*: when an army runs away from another army

*destroy*: to ruin something totally

*Kuomintang*: the Chinese nationalist army who fought against Chinese communists

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

*resistance*: fighting against an occupying army or government

## exercises

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

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

B. Choose the best answer.

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

## discussion

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

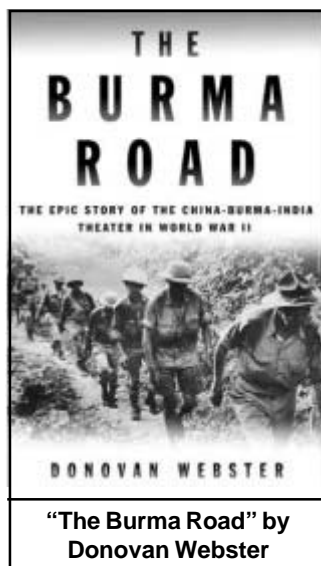
## homework

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

## The Burma Road

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

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

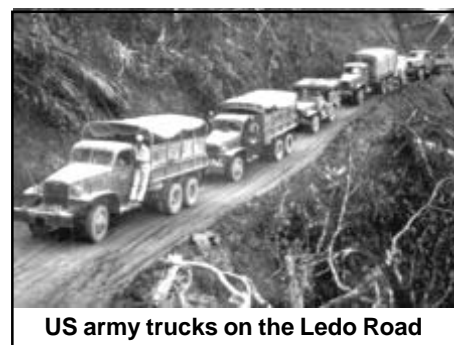


An American General named "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell led a group of American, English, Indian, and Myanmar soldiers and civilians that tried to re-open the road. In December, 1942, he and his group began cutting a road through the jungle from Ledo, India, to Myitkyina. It was very difficult work, but they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

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

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

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



### KEY WORDS

*transport*: to bring things from one place to another

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

*Minami Kikan*: Japanese intelligence unit

## exercises

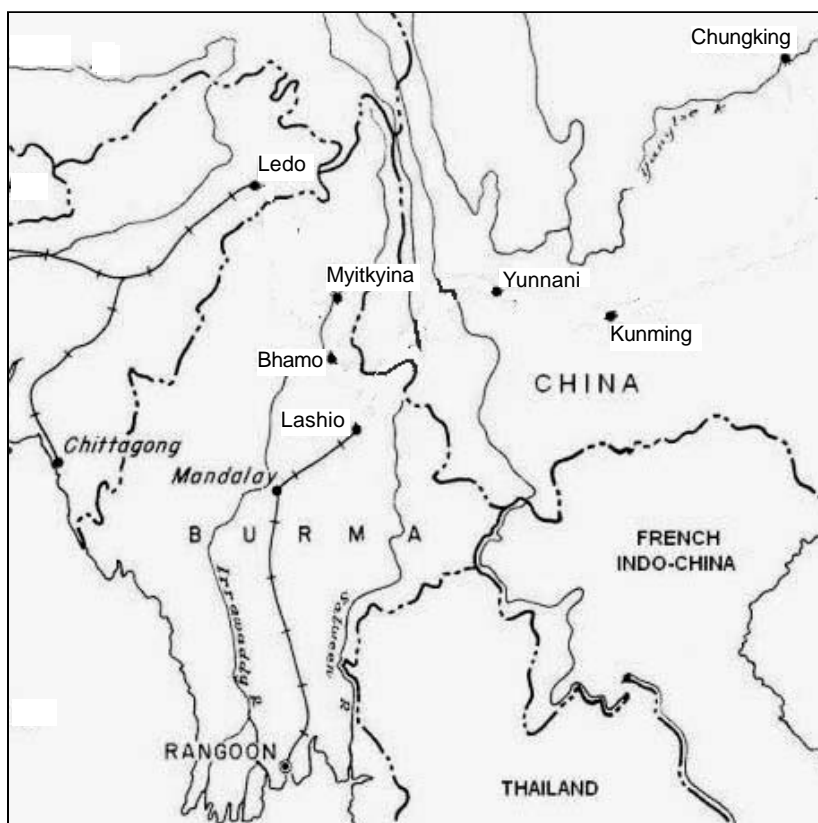
A. Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

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

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

## group work

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



## discussion

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

## homework

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



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

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



Japanese troops enter Yangon with the BIA

worked with the BIA, including Rakhine led by U Seinda and Chins led by U V a m t h u Mawng. But mostly, relations were not good. The group that suffered the most casualties were Indians, who the BIA a t t a c k e d because they were seen as

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

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

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



Postage stamps issued by the BIA

### KEY WORDS

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

*troops*: soldiers

*strained*: stressed

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

*loot*: when a group of people steal valuable things

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

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

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

## exercises

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

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

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



## group work

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

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

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

## homework

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, in January 1947, the British were ready to negotiate with the Myanmar nationalists. Aung San and a delegation of other Myanmar leaders went to Britain to meet with the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee.

On January 27, 1947, they signed the Aung San-Attlee



Clement Attlee and Aung San in London

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

#### KEY WORDS

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

*achieve*: to reach a goal

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

*transfer of power*: when a current government gives power to a new government

*rival*: a person who opposes another or is in competition with another

*discredit*: to make someone look bad

*urgent*: important to do very soon

## exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

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

## group work

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

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

### KEY WORDS

*emphatically*: strongly

*mandate*: the right to do something for someone else

*amalgamate*: join with

*deliberate*: to discuss different possibilities

*simultaneously*: at the same time

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

## homework

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

## The Panglong Agreement

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

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

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

Other leaders were not sure about joining the union. From February 7-12, 1947, leaders gathered at Panglong to discuss these issues. Burman, Shan, Kachin, and Chin leaders participated in the conference, and Kayin leaders attended as observers. However, leaders of the Mon, Rakhine, Kayah, and other minorities were not invited. At this conference, Aung San tried to *reassure* the leaders that joining the union would be good for their people. He made

two statements that became famous: “If Burma receives one kyat, you will also get one kyat,” and that Myanmar without the Frontier Areas was “like curry without salt.” Some ethnic leaders, such as the Shan sawbwa Sao Shwe Thaik, trusted Aung San and



Delegates to the Panglong Conference

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

### KEY WORDS

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

*safeguard*: to protect

*hereditary*: passed down from ancestors

*genuinely*: really and truly

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

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

*autonomy*: independence

*principle*: idea

*fundamental*: basic

## exercises

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

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

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

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

## group work

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

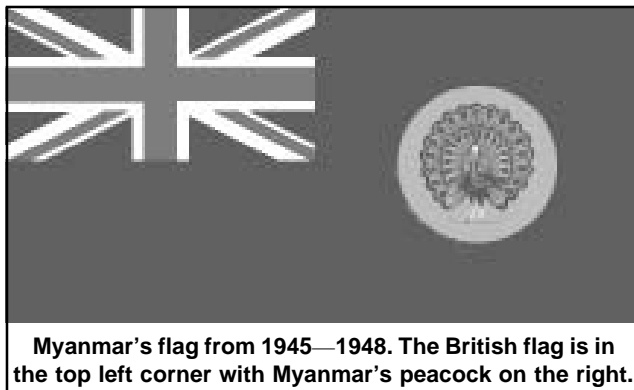
## homework

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

B. Write a paragraph on the subject, "Is the Panglong Agreement still important today? Why or why not?"

## The British role in negotiating Myanmar independence with ethnic minority people

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



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

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

### KEY WORDS

*approach*: way of dealing with an issue

*realistic*: possible and practical

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

*overshadow*: to seem more important than

*premise*: idea

*merely*: only

*ultimate*: final, in the end

*testify*: to make a statement

*testimony*: statement

*abandoned*: left behind

## exercises

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

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

B. What is the main point of this text?

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

C. Answer these questions in your own words:

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

## group work

List good and bad roles that the British played in negotiating with ethnic minority people around independence. Share your lists with the class.

## discussion

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

## homework

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



## 1947 constitution

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

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

One main problem with the constitution was that it was *inconsistent*; some ethnic groups, such as the Kayah and the Shan, got their own states along with the right of secession, while others, such as the Chin, did not get their own state or political powers. The minorities did not all get equal rights because some ethnic leaders were more powerful than others, and because the British administration had set a *precedent* for unequal treatment by ruling some areas differently than others.

The constitution also did not solve several important issues: the situation of the Kayins, Mons, and Rakhine was not *settled*. The Kayins were promised an area of their own, but it was not decided where or how large it would be. They wanted a state with a city on the sea, such as Mawlamyine, so they could trade and have better economic conditions. Because these questions were not resolved, many ethnic leaders began preparing for armed struggle. The question of religion also caused problems. Some Buddhists, including U Nu, wanted to make Buddhism the state religion, but leaders of different religions, as well as Bogyoke Aung San, did not want to have a state religion. In the end, they compromised and included this clause in the constitution:

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

### KEY WORDS

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

*Constitutional Convention*: a meeting where a constitution is written

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

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

*secede*: to leave a union and become an independent state

*adopt*: to accept and approve

*satisfied*: happy, content

*inconsistent*: not following one principle but using many different standards

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

*settle*: to make a decision about

*recognise*: to say something exists

*profess*: to say you believe in something

## exercises

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

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

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

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

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

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

## group work

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

## discussion

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

## homework

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

## The assassination of Aung San and his cabinet

On July 19, 1947, several men with guns entered a meeting of the Executive Council. They shot and killed Bogyoke Aung San and eight other people: Thakin Mya, Deedok Ba Choe, Mahn Ba Khaing, Sao Sam Htun, Abdul Razak, U Ba Win, U Ohn Maung, and Ko Htwe. This event was a disaster for the country, because most of these men were important politicians. In particular, many people felt that it would be difficult for Myanmar to succeed as an independent country without the leadership of Bogyoke Aung San. He was only 32 years old, but he was trusted by more people than any other leader at that time. Many international leaders sent messages of *condolence* to Myanmar for the loss of their leaders. July 19 is celebrated as *Martyr's Day* to *commemorate* the lives of the people who died on that day.

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

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

### KEY WORDS

*assassinate*: to kill an important leader

*condolence*: a message of sorrow for something bad that happened

*martyr*: a person who dies for an important cause

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

*execute*: to kill a person for a crime

### exercises

Fill in the gaps from the KEY WORDS box.

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

### group work

Many people say that the future of Myanmar would have been different if Bogyoke Aung San had lived. What do you think? In groups, give a brief description of how Myanmar's situation would be today if he had lived. Share your thoughts with the class and discuss your ideas.

### homework

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