การธำรงค์ไว้ซึ่งสหภาพพม่า: ศึกษาจากบทบาทของชนกลุ่มน้อย ในมุมมองของชนชาติไทยใหญ่ระหว่าง ค.ศ .1946-1962

นางสาวซามาร่า ยองเว

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา (สหสาขาวิชา)
บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ปีการศึกษา 2553

MAINTAINING THE UNION OF BURMA: THE ROLE OF THE ETHNIC NATIONALITIES IN A SHAN PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN 1946-1962

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Masters of Arts Program in Southeast Asian Studies

(Interdisciplinary Program)

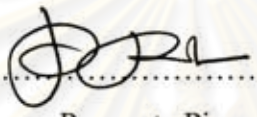
Graduate School

Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year 2010

Thesis Title	MAINTAINING THE UNION OF BURMA: THE ROLE OF THE ETHNIC NATIONALITIES IN A SHAN PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN 1946-1962
By	Miss Samara Yawnghwe
Field of Study	Southeast Asian Studies
Thesis Advisor	Miss Pornpimon Trichot

Accepted by the Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree



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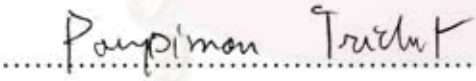

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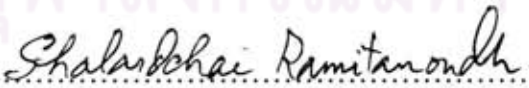

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ชามาร่า ยองเว: การธำรงค์ไว้ซึ่งสหภาพพม่า: ศึกษาจากบทบาทของชนกลุ่มน้อยในมุมมองของชนชาติไทยใหญ่ระหว่าง ค.ศ. 1946-1962. (MAINTAINING THE UNION OF BURMA: THE ROLE OF THE ETHNIC NATIONALITIES IN A SHAN PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN 1946-1962) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: นางสาวพรพิมล ตรีโชติ, 193 หน้า

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้มุ่งพิจารณาทบทวนการเมืองพม่าในช่วง ค.ศ. 1946-1962 จากมุมมองของชนกลุ่มน้อย โดยใช้มุมมองของชนชาติไทยใหญ่ที่มีต่อแนวโน้มของความเปลี่ยนแปลงในรัฐฉาน อาทิ ระบบสหพันธรัฐ การร่างรัฐธรรมนูญ และขบวนการสหพันธรัฐในช่วงต้นทศวรรษ 1960 ตลอดจนแนวคิดเรื่อง "ความเป็นอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกัน" ในชาติ ในฐานะที่เป็นปัจจัยหนึ่งในความล้มเหลวของ "สหภาพพม่า" ของช่วงสมัยนี้

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้ให้ทัศนะว่า ชาติที่ได้รับเอกราชใน ค.ศ. 1948 ไม่เหมือนกับหน่วยทางการเมืองที่เคยดำรงอยู่ในภูมิภาคนี้เลย ความชอบธรรมในการปกครองของรัฐบาลใหม่ในพม่าไม่ได้อยู่บนพื้นฐานของวิธีการสืบสันติวงศ์ของระบบกษัตริย์ อำนาจทางศีลธรรม หรืออานิสงส์แห่งสวรรค์ หากแต่อยู่ที่การยึดมั่นต่อหลักนิติรัฐและกรอบแห่งรัฐธรรมนูญ "ชาติ" ใหม่ ที่เกิดขึ้นนี้ เป็นสิ่งใหม่สำหรับทุกคน โดยที่ความซับซ้อนละเอียดอ่อนทางการเมืองการปกครองของอังกฤษ ที่แยกส่วนที่เป็นพม่าแท้ออกจากดินแดนที่อยู่รอบนอกนั้น มิได้มีการศึกษาพิจารณาอย่างเพียงพอ เมื่อครั้งที่ประชากรของดินแดน 2 ส่วนนี้เสนอที่จะร่วมกันจัดตั้งสหภาพขึ้น

การมีอุดมการณ์ทางการเมืองที่แตกต่างกันมีนัยสำคัญว่า ผู้นำจากส่วนต่างๆ ของประเทศใหม่นี้และตัวแทนของกลุ่มต่างๆ เกิดความไม่ลงรอยกันทางความคิดอย่างรุนแรงในเวลาต่อมา ในช่วงปีแรกๆ ภายหลังเอกราช ที่ยังอยู่ในระยะง่อนแง่นและมีการก่อการกบฏอย่างต่อเนื่อง รัฐบาลกลางที่ยังอ่อนแอในช่วงแรก อาศัยกำลังทหารเป็นหลักในการรักษาอำนาจควบคุมของรัฐ การเติบโตและขอบเขตการควบคุมซึ่งบางครั้งมีลักษณะกดขี่ของกองทัพ ได้นำไปสู่ความไม่พอใจในดินแดนที่เคยเป็นเขตรอบนอกหลายแห่ง

ด้วยการแก้ปัญหาความล้มเหลวของรัฐบาลกลางโดยใช้วิธีทางการเมืองดูจะไม่มีประสิทธิผล การต่อต้านด้วยกำลังอาวุธจึงขยายตัวออกไป รัฐบาลของรัฐต่างๆ ในสหภาพต้องต่อสู้กับทั้งพวกกบฏในดินแดนของตน และกองกำลังกองทัพพม่าที่ก้าวร้าวรุนแรง การที่กองทัพมีบทบาททางการเมืองมากขึ้นนำไปสู่การแพร่ขยายของความคิดที่ว่า ชนกลุ่มน้อย ในฐานะที่เป็นชนกลุ่มน้อย คือสิ่งเดียวกับการกบฏและการขาดความเป็นอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกัน

สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา ลายมือชื่อนิสิต Shana Yaungwe

ปีการศึกษา 2553 ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก Pornpimon Trichot

5287658020: MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORDS: ETHNIC MINORITIES/ INDEPENDENCE/ FRONTIER AREAS/ PANGLONG/ BURMA/ UNION

SAMARA YAWNGHWE: MAINTAINING THE UNION OF BURMA: THE ROLE OF THE ETHNIC NATIONALITIES IN A SHAN PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN 1946-1962. ADVISER: MISS PORNPIMON TRICHOT., 193 pp.

This thesis seeks to re-examine the period 1946-62 from the viewpoint of the ethnic nationalities, using a Shan perspective with an emphasis on trends in Shan State. Some examination is made of the drafting of the constitution, the federal system and the federal movement of the early 1960's. Finally, the idea of national 'unity' is reconsidered as a factor in the failure of the 'Union of Burma' of this period.

This paper ultimately contends that the nation which won independence in 1948 was unlike any political entity that had previously existed in the region. The legitimacy of the new government's rule was not based on hereditary kingship, ultimate moral authority or divine right, but supposedly on its adherence to the rule of law and constitutionality. This new 'nation' was new for all its members and the political complexities of British administration in maintaining a separate Burma proper and Frontier Areas were not adequately discussed or considered when the inhabitants of these two areas proposed to join to form a Union.

Different political ideologies meant that leaders from various parts of the new country and representatives of different groups sometimes disagreed strongly later on. During the precarious early years of independence and consistent revolt, the initially weak central government relied heavily on the military to assert state control. The growth and extent of the army's sometimes oppressive control led to discontent in many former border areas.

As political solutions to central government failure seemed ineffective, armed resistance grew. State governments had to contend with rebels in their own territories as well as aggressive Burma Army forces. The politicization of the military led to a diffusion of ideas that minority groups, by virtue of being minorities, were synonymous with rebellion and disunity.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies Student's Signature: .....

Academic Year: 2010 ..... Advisor's Signature: Pornpimon Trichot

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Pornpimon Trichot for being my thesis advisor and for all her suggestions, recommendations and for the books she lent me. I would also like to thank Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond and all my professors for the experience I acquired in the Southeast Asian Studies program. Further, I would like to thank all the members of my thesis examination committee for their comments and suggestions.

During the period of my thesis writing, Daw Than Than Myint lent me her personal copy of Rajshekhar's *Myanmar's Nationalist Movement (1906-1948) and India.* I am very grateful to her for it.

I appreciate the patience of Bianca Son, Matthew J. Walton, Sanda Simms, Professor Josef Silverstein, Harn Yawnghwe and U Aung for answering the wide variety of questions I asked them. Any misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the information I acquired from them is due to my own error.

I would also like to thank my uncle, Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, though he is no longer here to read my thanks. Reading his short, precise comments scribbled on the sides of a variety of articles about Burma inspired me to find the passion to keep reading and questioning.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, for all of their love and support.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Burma/Myanmar has long had significant inter-ethnic conflict. There were insurgencies all throughout the country during the pre-coup period (1948-1962) and these have continued since, aggravated by the policies undertaken by the military regime.

By examining the historical choices ethnic leaders were presented with during this period, the nature of the 'ethnic' problem may be revealed in a different light. The Constitution adopted in 1947 reveals some of the contradictions in thinking and policy which the government already had, before independence was granted. The federal system outlined in the constitution also reflects these contradictions. Instead of seeing the main problem of government as an 'ethnic' one, framing the question of what went wrong in Burma in terms of failure in merging political structures generates new insight into the matter.

The British conquest begun in 1824 and carried out until 1896 in 'Burma' (the Frontier Areas and Burma proper) imposed boundaries which had not previously been in existence, divided groups along ethnic lines, regardless of where their populations were located, and limited the amount of inter-regional exchange with restrictions on travel and trade. However, the British did not destroy a coherent Burmese nation or divide any particular unified political entity. The complexity of British administration in the area was precisely related to the lack of extensive formal control by any one party in the region, including the Burman ethnic group.

Ethnicity became a dividing point in the total area of 'Burma' but is perhaps misleading as the Shan, Chin and Kachin divisions created by the British all had mixed populations. Burma proper, also with a significant mixed population, was mostly politically unaware of the Frontier Areas and the two areas had limited contact. Separate forms of nationalism and ideas of identity appeared, with a Burman majority dominant in Burma proper. World War II brought into focus two different views on the nature of national identity and those leaders more interested in political pluralism began to pay attention to the Frontier Areas as it became necessary to cooperate to drive out the Japanese.

After the end of the war and the return of the British, both Burma proper and the Frontier Areas were unwilling to accept foreign rule and interference anymore. The main issue for the British now became whether or not these two areas would unite or if the British would maintain a presence in the Frontier Area. The Frontier Areas were happy to cooperate with one another but were doubtful that they would receive equal treatment once under the power of the majority Burman population. Through the expression of a pluralistic national unity, the AFPFL under Aung San was able to successfully negotiate with the Frontier Areas. The Panglong Agreement represented the aspirations of prominent Frontier Areas leaders to unite with Burma proper, if their own autonomy and rights were guaranteed. Without such a guarantee, they did not wish to unite. Aung San's sincerity in promising local autonomy sprang from his ability to conceive of a national identity that was not narrow. He did not engage in ethno-nationalism. By recognizing that the Frontier Areas not only were making serious demands, but had the right to make such demands, as equals, Aung San enabled cooperation to occur.

The creation of the Union of Burma in 1948 was neither a straightforward nor predictable political outcome of the negotiations between Britain and the various inhabitants of what is now known as the Union of Myanmar. Achieving independence required real effort toward establishing unity between various regions used to different methods of administration and rule. In terms of a shared national vision, such a thing was almost non-existent between areas as political development had evolved quite separately in Burma proper and the Frontier Areas Administration. For smaller ethnic groups in remote areas, any kind of external rule or idea of 'national' identity had actually been avoided until WWII brought soldiers to parts of the country where no outside power had ever before reached.

For this reason, when local political representatives of Burma proper and the Frontier Areas Administration (FAA) met and agreed to form a Union together, this was a unique occasion. The Panglong Agreement of 1947 is the only agreement of its kind in the history of the union. Key to explaining why the 'Union of Burma' was created at all is understanding what those who drafted and signed the agreement believed it promised them.

1.1 Rationale for research and hypothesis

This study is proposed in order to re-examine 1947-1962 from the specific viewpoint of the ethnic minorities in the Frontier Areas. To understand the problem more fully, it is necessary to re-frame the historical nature of inter ethnic co-operation and examine what was envisaged by whom when the federal system was proposed as a form of government for an independent Burma.

Examining the historical context also reveals that the nature of the 'federal state' was conceived of in two distinct ways. The 1947 Constitution embodies the discrepancies between the attempt at a confederation of independent 'national states' and a unitary state with a ruling central government. I hypothesize that federalism did not fail because it is an inherently flawed model for Burma/Myanmar but because there was a disagreement in understanding about what the 'Union' would really look like. Political reality was more complicated than it appeared on paper.

This research topic was chosen for a variety of reasons. Firstly, I have a strong personal interest in this topic. The former Shan saopha of Yawnghwe and first president of Burma, Sao Shwe Thaike was my paternal grandfather. Second, I have grown up with a first-hand view on elements of the development of Shan political identity through interactions with family members such as my grandmother Sao Hearn Hkam, uncle Chao Tzang Yawnghwe and father Harn Yawnghwe. This experience has taught me that there is rarely only one side to any story. Sometimes there are three or four. When all sides are put together, that is when a fuller picture may emerge.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research project has three main objectives:

1. To re-examine the history of Myanmar's independence period (1946-62) and analyze it from the viewpoint of the ethnic nationalities, in a Shan perspective.

2. To establish whether or not federalism was a viable political system for Myanmar and the different forms it could have taken.

3. To re-examine the role ethnicity played in preventing national unity and emphasize the political structure which meant the central government dominated the Union.

1.3 Scope of Research

1.3.1 Scope of Content

This research will be limited to a study of the historical period 1946-1962, with a specific emphasis on the years leading up to independence: 1946-1948. It is of particular interest to understand how the Union of Burma was created and what ethnic leadership envisaged by agreeing to form a Union.

1.3.2 Scope of Research Population

This research will focus on the area administered by the British under the term 'Frontier Areas Administration' since I lack the resources, specialist knowledge and time necessary to do a complete review of all the various areas and groups within 'Burma' which had historically been used to some form of autonomy. Particular focus will be on issues amongst the Shan, due to time and knowledge constraints.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This paper will try to explore foundational questions regarding what the 'Union of Burma' meant as a concept. The 'Union of Burma' was not physically constructed until 1948, and it was not until the 1950's that some measure of internal stability had been achieved. It is fair to say that indigenous elites were not thinking in 'national' terms, in the modern sense, around the time of the British annexation. The dominant forms of centralized organization still revolved around kingdom structures.
There are four major themes I will try to explore.

First, at what point does 'Burma' as a country emerge in the people's political thinking? How does it spread? What requires consideration is the effect of everything that happened world-wide between the late 1800's until the 1950's on the political consciousness of the inhabitants of the Union of Burma. Is it realistic to argue that the concept of 'Burma' as an independent country existed before the British annexation or not? If not, then did at least the perception of what independence is, or should be, exist long before the formation of the Union?
Perceptions of what independence constituted would have a strong, if indirect influence on how the nation was formed. What did independence mean in the Chin Hills? The Kachin Hills? Amongst the Kayah? Amongst the Shan? Did they fight for this idea? Who debated this idea?

Did independence mean something different amongst the people of the Frontier Areas Administration to what it meant to people in Burma proper? Also, whose independence? What was the role of local elites in framing this idea?

Second, the polarization of ethnicity needs to be examined. How did this come about? In pre-colonial times, the various peoples of this region mixed and intermingled. There was war and conflict, but was it always along ethnic lines or has this modern concept been re-read back into history?

It is certain that the British brought two huge structural changes to the region: first, they demarcated and enforced boundaries which had never previously existed. Second, they introduced a completely new political/administrative system across the region, adding a further level of complexity by running two different systems in Burma proper and the Frontier Areas Administration.

Two questions come to mind: How much did British policy affect interactions between groups of people in this region? How much did British policy affect the negotiations surrounding the creation of the Union?

The conditions surrounding the Panglong Conferences and Agreement and the drafting of the Constitution need to be re-examined.

Third, who were these 'Burmans' that the people of the Frontier Areas Administration were negotiating with? There was a great deal of diversity in political thinking and philosophy amongst the leading Burmese thinkers and politicians of that time. Aung San was one man out of many. What was it about Aung San that made him more similar to U Nu than Ne Win? What did all three have in common? What about the countless others whose names are less frequently mentioned but who participated in the process of forming the Union?

Finally, how had the political relationship between border areas and the center changed in the Union ten years after independence? The most contentious issue around the time of the coup was the constitutionally enshrined right of secession for the Shan and Kayah. Fear of secession was directly cited by the coup makers as a justification for seizing power.

Yet the secession clause was pivotal in convincing the minorities to sign the Panglong Agreement and join the Union. It was their built-in fail safe. Strangely, without the

inclusion of this clause, the Union could not have been formed in the first place. The Frontier Areas Administration would not have agreed to union, the British would have won a foothold in the region and would have been able to contest Burmese demands for independence. Cooperation and negotiation with the minorities was understood to be critical around the time of independence. How did that situation change in the preceding decade? The ideology of the coup-makers was the preservation of national unity. How was the concept of disunity and minority people formed? How did it develop? Amongst whom did it develop and during what period? There was plenty of time in the years after coup for those in power to cement a rationalization for equating disunity with minority people.

I am not proposing to adequately answer all of the questions raised above. It is merely hoped that these will be questions readers will ask themselves as they consider the various kinds of information currently available about Burma/Myanmar.

1.5 Research Methodology

I will be using the historical approach for my methodology, using documentary evidence to attempt to reconstruct events which specifically relate to the ethnic nationalities, with an emphasis on the years leading up to Independence since it was during this crucial time that the idea of a 'Union' of Burma was consolidated.

1.5.1 Specific procedures

There will be analysis of historical documents, notably the 1930's Round Table Conference papers, the 1947 Constitution and Panglong Agreement, as well as British colonial documents and reports accessed from the India Office Records of the British Library, and excerpts from the 1950 Burma Weekly Bulletin published by the Ministry of Information in Rangoon. I have also accessed colonial writing relating to the Shan, Kachin and Chin, and will also examine the biographies, memoirs, archived speeches or writings of relevant historical actors. I have also conducted limited interviews

1.5.2 Data collection

I have searched archives like the online Burma Library collection, read documents in the British Library in London, Chulalongkorn University library collections, as well as reviewing notes and documents left behind by Chao Tzang Yawnghwe which are in my family's possession in Montreal. I am currently also in contact with other scholars working on Burma/Myanmar.

1.5.3 Treatment of the Data

Once I have gathered sufficient data I will analyze it in accordance with the line of questioning laid out in the theoretical framework above. Ethnicity as a focus obscures the essentially political question of how to achieve unity amongst diverse groups of people. Examining historical actors as individuals interacting with one another, rather than as proponents of fixed ideas may provide us with fresh reflections on the period.

1.6 Research Terminology

Bamar/Burman – Terms used to refer to the majority ethnic group. The first term is from the Bamar language. The second term was popularly used by the British.

Daw – A Bamar word meaning 'Mrs.'

Duwa – Term for a Kachin chief

Gumlao/gumsa (Sometimes spelt Kumlaos/Kumshas by the British) – Indicating different political systems amongst the Kachin. Gumlao communities are generally referred to as chiefless (or non-hereditary chief) societies and gumsa as having hereditary chiefs.

Kayah/Karenni – Term for the group whom the British designated as 'Karenni', and lived in the autonomous Karenni states. This area is now referred to as 'Kayah State' in the Union of Myanmar.

Myanmar – There is some debate over the use of this term. It is used in the language of the Bamar ethnic group to designate 'Burma.' For instance, in the English copy of the 1947 constitution, the title of the country is 'Union of Burma' and in the Bamar language copy, the title of the country is 'Union of Myanmar.' So some people argue that the term Myanmar, to refer to all the people of Burma has the same connotations as the term the British used 'Burmese.' According to this argument, Myanmar has the further benefit of not being a colonial or English language word.

Where discord arises, however, is that some people in the Bamar ethnic group also use this word to specifically designate their ethnic group and not the entire population of Burma. Since this is apparently common practice, it is understandable how someone with a different ethnic heritage might not want to be referred to as being 'Myanmar.' Provide references.

Myosa – Term for a chief in the Saopha system, ranking lower than a Saopha. If the Saophas were considered kings or princes, then the Myosa was like a duke.

National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) – the government in exile formed by the NLD which won the 1990 multi-party elections. It was formed on December 18, 1990. Its prime minister in exile was Dr. Sein Win, cousin to Aung San Suu Kyi.

Saopha/Chaofa/Sawbwa – Term for Shan feudal rulers, alternately translated as kings/princes (literally 'lords of the sky'), or chiefs. The first two terms are approximations in English of the Shan word, the last term is the Bamar word used to refer to this ruler and also the word used by the British.

U – A Bamar word meaning 'Mr.'

1.7 Contribution of Research

This research may help explain why contemporary leadership amongst some of the ethnic groups are still interested in a federal system. This research may also be able to historically establish that national unity was initially created through political dialogue and exchange. The Union did not fail because of insurmountable, primordial ethnic differences, but because there was an imbalance in the country's political structure, with a high degree of inefficient centralization that did not reflect the political reality of the country and an undefined role for the army or any way to curtail its powers.

The historical period 1946-1962 is underrepresented from the minority point of view. Very little has been written in-depth about the Panglong Conferences (1946, 1947) and the Panglong Agreement (1947). Similarly, the Frontier Area Committee of Enquiry (1947) and the Regional Autonomy Enquiry (1948) are mentioned quite superficially in the literature. While these enquiries may have been biased and the conclusions they arrived at pre-ordained to create a unified Burma along Burma Proper government lines, they still are valuable for the actual recording of different points of view. They highlight people have historically always had an opinion, whether or not it has been listened to. Furthermore, with hindsight, some of the conclusions arrived at by ethnic leadership then still seem relevant today. Historical events are sometimes portrayed in a 'fait accompli' manner when in fact their outcomes were the result of careful planning, discussion and co-operation between various actors.

For example, the assertion that Aung San won the trust of many ethnic nationality leaders may gloss over the fact that ethnic leaders chose to accept certain consequences in deciding to trust Aung San. However, their trust was also based on legal guarantees. It is notable that the Shan, Kachin and Chin, who had all been given some degree of legal certainty through the Panglong Agreement, remained surprisingly loyal to the Union government, right up until the point where the agreement was breached in 1958, when Ne Win instituted the first coup, thereby circumventing the question of whether the Shan and Kayah (Karenni) would exercise their legal right to secede. The point of this example is to illustrate that given some legal certainty, significant leadership was able to maintain co-operation with the central government.

1.8 Limitations of this Study

Two limitations to this study are my lack of access to many primary documents that pertains to this period and time constraints. In relation to the first, there are certain documents that are unobtainable. In his 1988 article, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?" Chao Tzang Yawnghwe writes in footnote 26: "I am not aware that the records of the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly of 1947 have ever been published. It would be interesting to find out whether there was any hard bargaining and how and why the constitution was not a federal one, as was desired by all non-Burman leaders."[1] In November 2010, in a discussion with U Aung, U Nu's son, he remarked that there was no debate in parliament on the final draft of the constitution, as written solely by U Chan Htun. It was simply passed because the AFPFL had the majority.

Sao Shwe Thaike did not leave behind any journals or writings that are in the family's possessions. The records of parliamentary sessions from that specific period are, as far as I know, still unavailable. Publications like the Burma Weekly Bulletin, the Union Gazette and other archived news sources which recorded speeches and happenings of the period are available in the British Library, Library of Congress and the National Library of Australia but time constraints have not permitted me access all

[1] Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?" in *Independent Burma at Forty Years: Six Assessments* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1989), 90.

these materials and budget constraints do not permit me to order them in their entirety.

While I obtained documents from the British Library's Indian Archives, time constraints limited the amount of information I was able to obtain and so this paper represents a less than exhaustive search of all available materials.

Another limitation is that this study focuses in particular on the Shan point of view, since it is an area where my own knowledge is stronger and access to resources easier. Other viewpoints will also be portrayed when necessary, but a complete view of them will not be achieved. This limitation is necessary otherwise the work will be too heavy to handle for the given time frame.

A final limitation is my reliance on English-language resources, though I have attempted to rely on materials written by individuals from Burma.

1.9 Thesis Structure

This thesis has seven chapters in total. Their break-down is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic for research and provides an outline for the organization of the thesis including: A research rationale and hypothesis, research objectives and scope, conceptual framework of the thesis and research methodology, contribution made by the research to this field of study, research limitations and schedule and thesis structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and a discussion of Four Themes

This chapter examines the themes mentioned in the theoretical framework: notions of independence and 'nation' as present in pre-colonial Burma or not, the effects of British policy on political consciousness, the philosophy of various Burman politicians and its implications for the Frontier Areas and finally, the development of a discourse on minority people as sources of disunity.

With this base framework established I will then try in subsequent chapters to present a different picture of the period from 1946-1962.

Chapter 3: The Frontier Administration

This chapter will very briefly outline British administration in the Frontier Areas, so as to provide a context in which to understand the political inclination of local elites, the concerns of ordinary citizens and the nuanced relationships between local leaders and various British administrators in general.

Chapter 4: Negotiations for Independence (1946-1947)

This chapter will examine the state of affairs in Ministerial Burma and the Frontier Areas Administration after WWII up until the achievement of independence for the Union of Burma. It will explore how the Union was created and why the Union was created, from the viewpoint of the ethnic nationalities.

Chapter 5: Independence and the setbacks of internal turmoil in Shan State (1948-1957)

This chapter will examine the independence period until the first military takeover in 1958. It will examine the issues of 'ethnic' conflict, the growth of the military, and the heavily centralized structure of the Union government to propose that they played a significant role in discontent in Shan State, in addition to the problem of external invasion.

Chapter 6: The Army and the Federal Movement (1958-1962)

This chapter will examine the years leading up to the final military take-over in 1962, with a focus on the effects of Ne Win's caretaker government (1958-1960) in terms of extending military control, the rise and meaning of the so-called Federal Movement and the nature of insurgencies amongst Chin, Kachin and Shan.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the research, summarizes historical findings and attempts to present a coherent account of the development of political thought amongst minority people in the Frontier Areas and their subsequent role in the Union of Burma.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and a discussion of Four Themes

This chapter first examines a sampling of authors according to four simple criteria: Non-western authors, western authors and pro-military and non-pro-military scholars.

This is followed by an assessment of the following four themes, with reference to the authors previously discussed:

1. Notions of 'sovereignty' and 'nation' as present or not in pre-colonial Burma
2. The existence or non-existence of separate ethnic identities in pre-colonial times
3. The background of leading figures in Burma proper and their political thought
4. The discourse on minority people as sources of 'disunity' in the nation

These are huge themes which require extensive study, far beyond what is possible in this paper. However, they are all foundational to understanding the context of what occurred at independence in 1948 and after, so it is necessary to mention them, even if they can only be addressed here in a limited fashion.

2.1 Background on some of the non-'ethnically' Western authors cited in this text

Maung Htin Aung: (Also known as Dr. Htin Aung) He was from a Bamar family and held degrees from Cambridge and Oxford and was Rector of Rangoon University between 1946-1958. He wrote numerous books relating to the study of Burmese culture. He was U Tin Tut' s younger brother and great-great grandson of Maha Minhla Mindin Raza.[1]

Ma Mya Sein: Had an M.A. from Oxford University, hence the name "M.A. Mya Sein" or Ma Mya Sein. [2] U May Oung was Mya Sein's father, a Bamar barrister and scholar who founded the Burma Research Society in 1910, which remained a leading research publication until 1962. Mya Sein was the only representative for the women of British India at the 1930 League of Nations conference on women. During the

[1] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), Opening dedication, no page number.
[2] Kyaw Zwa Moe, "No Soft Touch", *Irrawaddy* (Oct. 2007, Vol. 15 No.10): 3. [Online] Source <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=8907&page=3>

Burma Roundtable Conference in London (1931-1932) she was a delegate who spoke about the traditional equality of women and men in Burma, drawing an unflattering comparison to the status of women in Britain. Regarding the voting process, she emphasized the need for equal voting rights for women in Burma and had the support of the rest of the Burmese delegation. A cause for confusion may be that on the list of names of delegates to the Round Table Conference, Mya Sein's name does not appear. The only Burmese woman listed is Miss May Oung. The explanation is that Miss May Oung is in fact Mya Sein, it was simply the name the British preferred to use, possibly to emphasize the connection between her and her scholarly father.[3]

Dr. Maung Maung (1925-1994): (Sometimes also referred to as U Maung Maung or simply Maung Maung, not to be confused with Brigadier Maung Maung) He was a Bamar who began his studies at Rangoon University, joined the British Burma Auxiliary Force and then the Burma National Army during WWII. In the 1950s he studied law in London and was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn. In 1956 he received his doctorate in international law from the University of Utrecht, Netherlands.[4]
He was Deputy Attorney-General in Ne Win's Caretaker Government (Nov. 1958-Feb. 1960). After the coup, he became a Judge on the Court of Final Appeal, Chief Justice and became Judicial Minister to the Revolutionary Council, later Chairman of the Council of People's Attorneys. He belonged to the Central Executive Committee of the BSPP (Burma Socialist Programme Party), helped draft the 1974 Constitution[5] and became President in 1988.[6] He died in 1994.

Maung Maung (1920-2009): (Sometimes referred to as U Maung Maung or Brigadier Maung Maung, not to be confused with Dr. Maung Maung) He was a Bamar born in 1920 and served as a brigadier in the Burma Army. He played a role in the events leading up to the establishment of the military caretaker government in

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[3] John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), Page 328; Josef Silverstein, "Introduction" in Ma Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma,* 1938 *(*Singapore: Printers and Converters (Pte) Ltd., reprint 1973), Pages vii-xvii.
[4] Aye Aye Win, "Obituary: Maung Maung", *The Independent* (Friday, 8 July 1994) [Online]. Source http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-maung-maung-1412395.html
[5] Seth Mydans, "MAN IN THE NEWS: U Maung Maung; Widely Traveled Leader for Rangoon" in *Special to the New York Times* (August 20, 1988) [Online]. Source http://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/20/world/man-in-the-news-u-maung-maung-widely-traveled-leader-for-rangoon.html
[6] U Maung Maung, "The Life of a patriot" in *Dr. Maung Maung: Gentleman, Scholar, Patriot,* Robert H. Taylor, editor (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008), Page.4.

1958 and after. He was an ambassador to Israel, Yugoslavia, Indonesia and Australia in the years after the coup. When he retired from the Burma Foreign Service he obtained his MA from the Australian National University.[7] He wrote the book *From Sangha to Laity: Nationalist Movements in Burma, 1920-40*, published in 1980 and *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*, published in 1989.[8]

Michael Aung-Thwin: His mother's family was Bamar and his father was Mon. However, according to remarks he makes in the preface to *The Mists Of Ramanna: The Legend That Was Lower Burma*, he notes that he did not know his father well.[9] His family was able to leave Burma. He graduated with his B.A. in 1969 from Doane College, Nebraska. He obtained his M.A. from the University of Illinois in 1971 and had completed his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, 1976. He is currently a Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii and according to his own academic profile, his specializations include: "History of Burma, myth and historiography of early Burma, the classical states of Southeast Asia."[10]

Chao Tzang Yawnghwe: (Also known as Eugene Thaike) His father was Sao Shwe Thaike, first president of Burma and Saopha of Yawnghwe. His mother was Sao Hearn Hkam, a founder of the Shan movement for independence. He graduated with a BA from Rangoon University and remained at the university as an English tutor until the 1962 coup when he went underground to join the Shan movement fighting against the military regime.[11]

In 1971 he co-founded the Shan State Army (SSA) with the goal of offering military resistance to the Burmese junta and establishing an independent Shan state. In 1976 he was purged from the SSA due to ideological conflict with other leaders and settled

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[7] U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948* (Edinburgh, Kiscadale Publications, 1989), Back cover.

[8] "Maung Maung, U, 1920-2009", Library Catalogue, National Library of Australia [Online]. Source http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Search/Home?lookfor=author:%22Maung%20Maung%2C%20U%2C%201920-2009%22&iknowwhatimean=1

[9] Michael Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Ramanna: The Legend That Was Lower Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), Page xi.

[10] Michael Aung-Thwin, Faculty Listing, University of Hawaii [Online]. Source http://www.hawaii.edu/cseas/faculty/aung-thwin.html

[11] Note, the author of this article places the date of his graduation in 1959. However, a copy of his MA thesis refers to the date of his BA as 1961. Supalak Ganjanakhundee, "Shan leader Chao Tzang passes away in Canada," *The Nation* (July 27, 2004) [Online]. Source http://asiaviews.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11758:featuresalias2092&catid=5:features&Itemid=27

in Chiang Mai, Thailand. After two assassination attempts on his life, he resettled his family in Canada in 1985.

He completed an MA in Political Science from the University of British Columbia in 1990[12] and obtained his PhD in Political Science from the University of British Columbia in 1997.[13]

He remained politically active throughout his life and at the time of his death in 2004 was a principal advisor to the Shan Democratic Union and the Ethnic National Council (A council of non-Bamar ethnic groups which advocate the need for political dialogue with the military junta).[14]

Bianca Son Suantak: (Also known as Mang Khan Cing) She is half German, half Zo (Chin), a daughter of Dr. Vum Son Suantak, who wrote *Zo History,* first published in 1986. [15] Her father was a respected leader amongst the Chin/Zo people.[16] She holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Maryland, an M.Sc. in Contemporary Asian Studies from the University of Amsterdam, and currently has a PhD in progress on the topic of 'Zo', at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS).

Lian H. Sakhong (Sometimes also called Salai Lian Hmung) He is a Chin scholar who was pursuing post-graduate studies at Rangoon University in the late 1980's and joined the student democracy movement of 1988. His political activities led to his arrest, interrogation and torture on three separate occasions during 1988-1990. He eventually fled Burma and completed his PhD at Uppsala University in 2000, writing

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[12] Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, "Ne Win's Tatmadaw Dictatorship", *UBC Retrospective Theses Digitization Project [http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/retro_theses/]* [Online]. Source https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/29886

[13] Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, "The politics of authoritarianism : the state and political soldiers in Burma, Indonesia, and Thailand", *UBC Retrospective Theses Digitization Project [http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/retro_theses/]* [Online]. Source https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/7312

[14] Supalak Ganjanakhundee, "Shan leader Chao Tzang passes away in Canada."

[15] A more detailed account of Dr. Vum Son and his achievements, written by his daughter, can be read here: Mang Khan Cing (Bianca Son), Biographies of Late Dr. Vumson Suantak PhD [Online], 31 October 2010. Source http://www.khawvaiphei.net/portal/index.php/component/content/29-announcement/images/resized/images/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=501:biographies-of-late-dr-vumson-suantak-phdby-mang-khan-cing-bianca-son&catid=115:memoirs-a-homage&Itemid=600

[16] "Chin People Around The World Mourn The Death of Dr. Vumson Suantak", *Chinland Guardian* (September 19, 2005) [Online]. Source http://www.chinlandguardian.com/news-2009/news-archived/456-chin-people-around-the-world-mourn-the-death-of-dr-vumson-suantak-.html

his thesis on "Religion and Politics among the Chin People in Burma." He has been the Chairman of Chin National Council and the Vice–Chairman of the Ethnic Nationalities Council (Union of Burma).[17]

Maran La Raw: (Sometimes also referred to as LaRaw Maran) A Kachin scholar, an ethnic Jinghpho from northern Burma who was pursuing graduate studies in anthropology at the University of Arizona in 1963. By 1974 he had become a professor of linguistics at the University of Indiana.[18]

2.1.1 Analysis of some of the authors described above

I have attempted to give detailed background information on these authors, including references to their formative experiences and places of study in an effort to help readers put these scholars in context as they read through this thesis. Unfortunately a detailed background on all my sources could not be completed. However, the extremely wide diversity in background displayed here explains to a large extent the diversity of opinion presented by these scholars, frequently contradictory. All history, it seems, is political and Burma is no exception.

Different versions of history can be used to discredit other scholarship, sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly. The inclusion, exclusion, emphasis or dismissal of the details of dates and events can lead scholars to present vastly different conclusions. At present, one extremely controversial subject is Mon history. In 2005, in his work *The Mists of Ramanna,* Michael Aung-Thwin quite fearlessly[19] argued that earlier Burma historians have been misled by the 'Mon Paradigm', the concept that the Mon of Lower Burma civilized Upper Burma and helped establish Burmese civilization.[20] He posits instead that it was the Bamar who civilized the Mon and that colonial officers and colonial scholars essentially invented the myth of Mon primacy and false reports of Bamar oppression of ethnic minorities.[21] The response to Aung-

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[17] Lian H. Sakhong, Author Profile. *In Defence of Identity: The Ethnic Nationalities' Struggle for Democracy, Human Rights and Federalism in Burma*. Orchid Books [Online]. Source http://www.orchidbooks.com/shop/isbn_book.php?isbn=9789745241336&bks=bs

[18] James A. Matisoff, "Verb Concatenation in Kachin", *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1974): 186. [Online] Source http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf4/matisoff1974verb.pdf

[19] Fearless in the sense that he has argued his case despite significant criticism, which in Burma circles sometimes translates into being called a military stooge, an opportunist, pro-military, anti-democracy and other politically-charged epithets.

[20] Michael A. Aung-Thwin, *The Mists Of Ramanna: The Legend That Was Lower Burma*, Page 321.

[21] Aung-Thwin, "The Mon Paradigm and the Myth of the 'Downtrodden Talaing,'" *The Mists Of Ramanna: The Legend That Was Lower Burma,* Pages 261-280; Aung-Thwin, "Colonial Officials and

Thwin's *Mists of Ramanna* has been mixed, with high praise from some corners and criticism from others.[22] His writing indirectly challenges an earlier work, *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma* by Ashley South, which attempts to explore Bamar assimilation of Mon ethnic identity.[23]

The case of Aung-Thwin could be seen as one in a long line of writing by Bamar scholars which directly and indirectly challenges the claims to political legitimacy of non-Bamar peoples in Burma and consciously or not, de-legitimizes the expressed grievances of these peoples by dismissing their cultural self-formulations as borrowings or re-workings of Bamar (both in pre-colonial and post-colonial times) or British practices (with reference to the post-colonial period), as if Bamar culture and civilization were an entity unto itself that had never borrowed anything from anywhere. While this is a standard practice of nationalists, it must be openly admitted as such.

It can sometimes seem like an ironic double standard in the context of history. Take for instance, a speech given in 1950 in New York by Burmese ambassador U So Nyun at the Herald Tribune Youth Forum. In this context, U So Nyun lectures his American audience against a solely-Western reading of democracy and makes the case for a hybridization of influences in Burmese democracy. He argues for an ancient understanding of democracy in Burma due to the influence of Buddhism, at its core a democratic religion, which has been adapted into the modern, Western system of the electoral ballot box, stating: "The points I wish to make are firstly, no country in the world has a monopoly of democracy, and, secondly, that each country interprets and fashions democracy in its own way."[24] Would Aung-Thwin criticize U So Nyun as a proponent of 'parochial universalism', that is, attempting to impose 'universal values'

Scholars: The Institutionalization of the Mon Paradigm,'" *The Mists Of Ramanna: The Legend That Was Lower Burma*, Pages 281-298.

[22] In favour of Aung-Thwin's argument: Victor Lieberman, Review article "Excising the 'Mon paradigm' from Burmese historiography," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38(2) (June 2007): 377.

Critical of Aung-Thwin's argument: Michael W. Charney, "Review of Michael Aung-Thwin, 'Mists of Ramanna: the legend that was lower Burma'," *H-net - Humanities & Social Sciences Online Reviews* [Online] 2006. Source https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/6130/1/Charney_on_Aung-Thwin_Mists.pdf

[23] Ashley South, *Mon Nationalism and Civil War in Burma: The Golden Sheldrake* (London: Routledgecurzon, 2000).

[24] U So Nyun, "Burmese Ambassador opens "Herald Tribune" Forum of Youth" in *Burma Weekly Bulletin* (Week Ending the 11th March, 1950): 4.

which are actually non-universal constructs imposed by Western hegemony?[25] U So Nyun argues against any superior Western reading of democracy by stating that the simple fact of some western influence has not denied the Burmese the attempt to create democracy in their own way.

Why then should the Chin or Mon be denied the capacity to intermingle Bamar culture with their own perceptions and systems for a hybridized cultural outlook? Why must the influence of the Bamar be read as an implication of Bamar superiority?

Another example is the lament by scholars such as Maung Htin Aung and Michael Aung-Thwin, amongst others, of the loss of the Bamar king and the totally destabilizing effect this had on society. Aung-Thwin carries the argument further, asserting that it was unfortunate in the aftermath of 1962 that army could not have re-installed the monarchy, seems momentarily sensible: "Burma could no longer have a monarchy, even a constitutional one (which may actually have been the best solution), for there was no longer a royal family, despite attempts by pretenders to suggest its continued existence."[26] While the argument that the loss of the Bamar king was socially and politically disturbing in Burma seems completely valid, it makes me deeply question why I have never read any account by a Bamar historian that the loss of the traditional leaders in the frontier areas had a similarly deleterious effect on the peoples there.

Rather, much has been made of the 'despotism' and 'corruption' of leaders like the Shan Saophas. In their case, the transition to democracy, away from feudalism in the Shan State was lauded as a victory of progress and modernity, as Bamar authors such as Dr. Maung Maung and Brigadier Maung Maung liked to point out. Why is there such blatant acceptance of a double standard? Why is 'democracy' simultaneously described as a tainted western concept and fiercely advocated, depending on the case? It is notable how often the military regime has described itself as democratic.

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[25] Michael Aung-Thwin, "Parochial Universalism, Democracy Jihad and the Orientalist Image of Burma: The New Evangelism," *Pacific Affairs* 74, No. 4 (Winter 2001-02):483-505.
For an alternative position which argues that Western scholarship need not be imperialistic and that liberal democracy does not need to depend on a Western tradition, see Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999): 3-17.

[26] Michael Aung-Thwin, "Burma's Myth of Independence" in *Independent Burma at Forty Years: Six Assessments*, Josef Silverstein, editor (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1989), Page 25.

Returning to the previous theme, however, that the inclusion or exclusion of events can lead to a different reading of a situation, Brigadier Maung Maung asserts in the foreword to his book *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948* that his account is a direct challenge to Hugh Tinker's seminal work *Burma: the Struggle for Independence 1944-48*, which Maung Maung claims contains an arbitrary assortment of documents.[27] Yet Maung Maung's account cannot be read without reference to the fact that he was implicated directly in Ne Win's army and belonged to the government forces of the military regime after the coup. His point of view is particular indeed.

2.1.2 A Brief overview of Burma studies scholarship

The fact of the inclusion or exclusion of information means that some comparisons between Bamar and non-Bamar Burmese authors can be made which are illuminating. First, there is a trend amongst the non-Bamar Burmese writers that while they offer their own criticisms of British colonial rule, they do not characterise the British as destructive agents with the same rhetoric used by the Bamar authors (An exception in this thesis is Mya Sein, whose text deals with pre-colonial administration in Burma and does not deal with colonial rule).

Second, the non-Bamar authors actively assert that some form of Burmanization was actively ongoing both during British rule and after. They characterize the process of cultural assimilation as 'Burmanization', while Bamar authors tend to characterize it as a 'natural' flow of influence. This difference in interpretation is crucial. To the non-Bamar authors, this is a source of grievance. To the Bamar authors, it is a normal process.

Western scholars today have the burden of having to contend with the possibility of being cast as continued cultural imperialists, and it is usual for them to vilify British colonialism, rather than identify anything positive about it.[28] Some general arguments are that British colonialism caused a break in Burma's pattern of self-development, that the British were inept and negligent and set up the conditions for the failure of the current state,[29] and at the most basic level, the foundation for

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[27] U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*, Page x.

[28] David I. Steinberg, *Burma's Road Toward Development: Growth and Ideology under Military Rule* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1981), Page 9.

Robert H. Taylor, "Freedom in Burma and Thailand: Inside or outside the State?," in *The Idea of Freedom in Asia and Africa*, Robert H. Taylor, editor (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002): 149.

Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2008), Page 27.

[29] Steinberg, *Burma's Road Toward Development*, Page 11.

most of these accusations focuses on the British failure to unify the different minority groups. However, Steinberg, who criticises the British colonial legacy also points out that democracy in Burma worked through three elections. Although messy and dysfunctional, elected parliamentarians of all ethnicities were still working together without stalemate when General Ne Win and the military took over in a caretaker capacity.[30]

It should be noted that scholars who wish to work inside Burma/Myanmar today cannot widely criticise the military regime without running the risk of being barred from future entry. Christina Fink, for example, is a scholar who is persona non-grata with the regime[31] because of her work with ethnic minorities.[32] Challenges to the military in scholarly works can lead scholars to be forced to study the state from outside, a distinct challenge. Those who are more 'flexible' in their assessments, however, run the risk of losing legitimacy in the outside world, being portrayed as allies of the military regime. Thus, scholars may or may not engage in subtle forms of self-censorship. Andrew Selth draws attention to another problem that surrounds some scholarship on Burma, particularly that the funding of area studies during the Cold War by US intelligence agencies undermined the legitimacy of the academy.[33]

It is interesting that Western scholars of the past, who were still part of the direct colonial experience, sometimes made statements that can be regarded today as both colonial in tone and yet insightful. Due to their links to the colonial past, nowadays the practical political assessments they made are presented simultaneously with measured moral outrage toward the colonial attitudes they held. An example of this is the re-examination of J.S. Furnivall by Julie Pham in the article "J. S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the 'Plural Society' in Burma." Pham first explains Furnivall's vision of the plural society. In his vision it was problematic because he defined it as:

Tin Maung Maung Than specifically identifies the colonial economy as the source of future problems:

Tin Maung Maung Than, *State Dominance in Myanmar: The Political Economy of Industrialization* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), Page 10.

[30] David I. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), Page 18.

[31] Tana Sherman, "Christina Fink '82: Crying out against living silence", *Andover, the magazine of Phillips Academy, Alumni Close-Up* [Online]. Source http://www.andover.edu/About/Newsroom/TheMagazine/AlumniProfiles/Pages/ChristinaFink.aspx

[32] Christina Fink, *Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

[33] Andrew Selth, "Modern Burma Studies: A Survey of the Field", *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (2010): 12.

> [...] a society in which different races only interacted for economic reasons, as in the marketplace, and became so atomised that they had lost the ability to form a common social will, thereby weakening the social demand necessary to organise activities to improve social welfare. The laissez faire forces introduced by colonialism were responsible for producing the plural society, by creating institutions that served the market economy instead of the community.[34]

Writing in 1931 and 1948, Furnivall critically assessed trends in Burma with regard to nationalism. Pham writes:

> To Furnivall, there were two kinds of Burmese nationalism: constructive and destructive. Furnivall recognised nationalism as the one indigenous force that could be exploited to reintegrate a plural society, and he encouraged Europeans to see that 'Nationalism in Burma is morally right, and economically sound and may be made economically attractive'. But Furnivall did not support the extreme kind of nationalism that would encourage Burmese to seize complete governance before they were ready for it; still lacking the appropriate 'wisdom', Burmese leaders would forfeit their place in the modern world by shutting out Britain completely. The British had the responsibility to ensure that the existing nationalist sentiment among the Burmese was used constructively lest it become one of the 'quasi-religious forces such as patriotism' that would prove insufficiently strong to counteract economic forces that continued to threaten the unity of Burmese society. For the Burmese to modernise and eventually become independent, not only were moderate nationalism and sound colonial administration both necessary, but they were also dependent on each other to succeed.[35]

Furnivall's analysis is prescient, despite its colonial overtones that Britain had the responsibility to guide Burma. If one can look past that, Furnivall's apprehension of the triumph of quasi-religious patriotism and destructive nationalism over moderate nationalism, which would destroy the unity of society and lead to a stunting of modernisation, was apt. Also noteworthy is his assessment that moderate nationalism and colonial administration were dependent on one another. This begs the question, had the British remained in power for another decade, as in Malaysia, would the situation in Burma be different today? To the non-colonial mind, it is an uncomfortable, yet intriguing proposition.

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[34] Julie Pham, "J. S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the 'Plural Society' in Burma", *Modern Asian Studies* 39, 2 (2005): 321.

[35] Ibid., Pages 323-324. Pham quotes from J. S. Furnivall, "Preface for European Readers" in *An Introduction to the Political Economy of Burma* (Rangoon, 1931), Page ix and J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: a comparative study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge 1948), Page 313.

2.2 Notions of 'sovereignty' and 'nation' as present or not in pre-colonial Burma

2.2.1 Pre-Colonial organization in the area later termed 'Burma'

It is far beyond the scope of this paper and my academic ability to write definitively about the organization of pre-colonial Burma during any of its historical periods. My only intention is to assert that 'Burma' was a non-unified political entity long prior to the British annexation. This is crucial – 'Burma' existed, yet not in a unified way.

There were several powerful royal Bamar dynasties which extended their territory through successful military campaigns under strong kings in various periods over the centuries and numerous histories have been written about them. [36] However, their absolute hold on power throughout all the regions they conquered is doubtful. Their capacity to govern these regions in the absence of continued military presence is similarly doubtful. The history of the Bamar kings is one of peaks and valleys, great conquest under powerful kings followed by decline under weaker successors. It is a history of conquest and re-conquest.

Daw Ma Mya Sein, writing in the 1930's about government organization in Burma prior to the British annexation, notes:

> The king was supreme head of the realm. In theory he was the absolute lord of the lives, properties and the personal services of his subjects, exercising in his own person all the normal attributes of sovereignty. [...] But in practice, he could not exercise any direct and continuous control over the more remote parts of the kingdom, and as we shall see, his powers were further limited by constitutional restraint which although never embodied in the form of law, had all the binding force of custom.[37]

Regarding local administration, she goes on to state:

> It is very difficult to gain, and much more difficult to give a clear picture of the local government of Burma before the advent of the English. All the institutions had grown up gradually, often there had been changes of function with no corresponding change of name and a new organization had been created under a new name to discharge functions that judging by the name alone one might have expected to find allocated to another body. The

[36] Various accounts of periods in Burmese history:
Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A personal history of Burma* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); David Steinberg, *Burma: A Socialist Nation of Southeast Asia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982). Michael Aung-Thwin, *Pagan: the origins of Modern Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

[37] Ma Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma* (Singapore: Printers and Converters (Pte) Ltd., reprint 1973), Page 16.

> normal and stable unit of administration was the Myo or Township, known sometimes by other names such as Taik, Daing, Taung etc. Each of these was governed by a local hereditary officer, the Myothugyi, also known as Taikthugyi, Taunghmu etc.[38]

In the introduction to *Recalling Local Pasts: Autonomous History in Southeast Asia*, Robert H. Taylor makes the case that the history of the southeast Asian region should more realistically be examined from a point of view which focuses on autonomous political units, rather than the viewpoint of the state, either in the sense of the modern nation state, or in terms of major kingdoms in the area.[39] In the same book, in the chapter 'Leading Port Cities in the Eastern Martaban Bay In the Context of Autonomous History', Sunait Chutintaranond states that during the Bamar period, from the time of the kings Tabinshwehti and Bayinnaung of the Toungoo dynasty, until the First Anglo-Burmese War: "...coastal Burma was never effectively united. Yet the history of coastal Burma of this period has been written in the context of Burmese dynastic history which assumes the kingdom was well united under the sovereignty of the Burmese king at the centre."[40] He goes on to state:

> ...the history of Burma written by colonial scholars was reconstructed in the context of dynastic history with a special emphasis given to the Burmese kings. The history of petty kings and provincial centres was ignored, marginalized, and on many occasions, simply incorporated in Burma history.[41]

In the same book, in the chapter titled 'Arakan's Ascent During the Mrauk U Period', Jacques P. Leider notes that "The model of centralization is particularly apt for the writing of national histories. The concept of centralization is thus ideologically tainted because it gives priority to major ethnic groups and predominant cultural practices."[42]

The general theme that the 'state' is an inappropriate measure of the history of this region is taken up at great length by James C. Scott in *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Scott states:

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[38] Ma Mya Sein goes on to explain the significant variety of meanings associated with the words 'myo' and 'taik' since they are not always used to refer to towns so one must be careful in one's reading. Ma Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, Page 31.

[39] Robert H. Taylor, "Introduction" in *Recalling Local Pasts: Autonomous History in Southeast Asia*, Sunait Chuntintaranond and Chris Baker, editors (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), Page 2.

[40] Sunait Chutintaranond, "Leading Port Cities in the Eastern Martaban Bay In the Context of Autonomous History" in *Recalling Local Pasts: Autonomous History in Southeast Asia*, Sunait Chuntintaranond and Chris Baker, editors, Page 11.

[41] Chutintaranond, "Leading Port Cities in the Eastern Martaban Bay In the Context of Autonomous History", Page 12.

[42] Jacques P. Leider, "Arakan's Ascent During the Mrauk U Period" in *Recalling Local Pasts: Autonomous History in Southeast Asia*, Sunait Chuntintaranond and Chris Baker, editors , Page 56.

> What blocks a clear view of the peoples of mainland Southeast Asia for most of their history is the states: classical, colonial, and independent. While a state-centric view of, say, the past fifty years might be justified, it represents a gross distortion of earlier periods. The earlier the period, the greater the distortion.[43]

There is excellent criticism of Scott's work and some of his conclusions to be made[44], but Scott's overall theory is illuminating and well worth consideration.

This is not to discount the influence of culture and civilization which grew and spread under the reign of Bamar kings, nor to discount the trauma caused by the British invasion and conquest during the 19th century. It is merely a request that history be slightly re-examined.

Maung Htin Aung, writing about the founding of Ava, states that Thadominbya "was determined to make it a worthy successor of Pagan, and his great dream was to unite the Burmese, the Mons, and the Shans into a single nation as they had been in the days of the Pagan kings."[45] This indicates that in his scholarly opinion, there were ideas of 'nation' in pre-colonial times, as early as the 14th century.

Writing of Bayinnaung, David Steinberg states:

> [...] he captured Ava in 1555, permanently destroying Shan power in Burma Proper. He went on to make himself suzerain over the Shan states, unifying the Burman empire for the second time in history. [...] The lack of an effective administrative system, rapacious behaviour, and nascent nationalism all prevented lengthy periods of peace within the kingdom. Peoples revolted in a welter of turmoil that seemed unceasing.[46]

There are a number of points here, first, was Shan power permanently destroyed in Burma proper? The Shan confederacy to support the Limbin prince in the late 1880's would imply that it was not. Second, if constant revolt and lack of an effective administration were factors during this time, how effective was this 'Burman empire', especially in its border regions? Maran La Raw raises the same question, with regard to the conquest of the mountain-dwelling Kachin:

> Mountain terrain generally made communication and transportation difficult. The Burmese kings had armies which conquered by sheer weight of numbers, not by specialization of units

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[43] James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), Page 32.
[44] Mandy Sadan, "Review of *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* by James C. Scott", *Reviews of History* No. 903 [Online] May 2010. Source http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/903
[45] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 84.
[46] Steinberg, *Burma: A Socialist Nation of Southeast Asia*, Page 21.

> and weapons. Is it likely then that these mountain populations would have been subdued and put under Burman suzerainty for any length of time?[47]

The general question is, however, how useful is it to make comparisons between an empire founded in the 11th century (Pagan), which apparently re-emerges in the 16th century (Toungoo) and finally again in the 18th century (Konbaung), to the entity that was to emerge after WWII, in terms of all being linked 'nations'? The historical, geo-political and social contexts were quite different and the meaning of the word 'nation' cannot be understood in the same way to relate all these periods.

Maung Htin Aung goes on to relate British interference in 'internal affairs':

> [...] British army and civilian officers, calling themselves merchants, penetrated the remoter regions of the kingdom [...] they not only acted as spies, prying into the internal affairs of the kingdom, but also engaged in subversive activities. For example, British army officers who were ostensibly exploring the possibility of extending their commercial sphere along the Salween valley were really spreading propaganda against Burmese rule and inciting the Karenni chiefs to rebel. They also wandered into the Shan states and indulged in secret negotiations with some Sawbwas, promising them military assistance should they decide to rebel against King Mindon.[48]

However, he does not provide any sources for this assessment, so it is difficult to analyse these contentions and to determine which Karenni chiefs and which Sawbwas and what the substance of these incitements to rebellion and secret negotiations was. It is clear that in his perspective, the British were at this time interfering where they should not.

The British were indeed acting in order to further their own political and economic agenda, for such is the nature of colonizers. However, had there been a very strong, pre-existing sense of 'national unity' in the modern sense through the frontier areas, British meddling would have been less than successful. The British succeeded precisely because relations between the centre of power and the more remote reaches of the Bamar kingdoms were historically in flux and dependent on military negotiation.

An account of how the British came into the Shan States is available from a Shan perspective, as recounted by Sao Saimong Mangrai in *The Shan States and the British Annexation*.

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[47] Maran La Raw, "Towards a Basis for Understanding the Minorities in Burma: The Kachin Example" in *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations Vol.I*, Peter Kunstadter, editor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), Page 140.
[48] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 239.

2.2.2 The British Division of Burma

Before discussing British policy in 'Burma', it is first necessary to describe what is meant by that term. From 1824-1886, the area known as 'Burma proper' (including the Arakan and Mon Kingdoms) was annexed during the three Anglo-Burman Wars. In the course of these wars, the British termed parts of the territory 'Upper' and 'Lower' Burma. Lower Burma consisted of the areas known as Pegu, Tenasserim and Arakan. In 1862, these three areas were combined into a single provincial entity known as 'British Burma' with its headquarters in Rangoon.[49] Lower Burma was united with Upper Burma upon the final British conquest in January 1886, and 'Burma' became a province of India, with centralized authority still located in Rangoon. The event was particularly significant for the Bamar, for when King Thibaw was sent into exile in India it signified the loss of their king and the end of the tradition of divine kingship, at the centre of social order.[50]

For the British conception of 'Burma', the following description from the Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1911 is informative. 'Burma' is a province east of the Bay of Bengal:

> covering a range of country extending from the Pakchan river in 9 deg. 55' north latitude to the Naga and Chingpaw, or Kachin hills, lying roughly between the 27th and 28th degrees of north latitude; and from the Bay of Bengal on the west to the Mekong river, the boundary of the dependent Shan States on the east, that is to say, roughly, between the 92nd and 100th degrees of east longitude [...] On the N. it is bounded by the dependent state of Manipur, by the Mishmi hills, and by portions of Chinese territory; on the E. by the Chinese Shan States, portions of the province of Yunnan, the French province of Indo-China, and the Siamese Shan, or Lao States and Siam; on the S. by the Siamese Malay States and the Bay of Bengal; and on the W. by the Bay of Bengal and Chittagong. The coast-line from Taknaf, the mouth of the Naaf, in the Akyab district on the north, to the estuary of the Pakchan at Maliwun on the south, is about 1200 m. The total area of the province is estimated at 238,738 sq.m., of which Burma proper occupies 168,573 sq.m., the Chin hills 10,250 sq.m., and the Shan States, which comprise the whole of the eastern portion of the province, some 59,915 sq.m.[51]

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[49] Rajshekhar, *Myanmar's Nationalist Movement (1906-1948) and India* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 2006), Page 14.

[50] Michael Aung-Thwin, "Burma's Myth of Independence" in *Independent Burma at Forty Years: Six Assessments*, Josef Silverstein, editor (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1989), Page 21.

[51] Introduction. "Burma" *Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition, Volume 4, Part 4 "Bulgaria" to "Calgary"* (London: Encylopaedia Britannica, 1911). [Online] 2007. Source http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19846/19846.txt

Areas which had been predominantly Shan, Kachin and Chin and had paid tribute to the Bamar kingdoms in various ways became feudatories of the British under the umbrella term 'Frontier Areas Administration'. They were organized by the British as: the Shan states, the Chin Hills and the Kachin Hills, and were largely allowed to remain autonomous. The Karenni States were recognized by the British as 'sovereign states', under political, not administrative, British rule. They had the same legal status as a province of India[52] but were not considered part of British India.

The British set up a variety of legal arrangements to govern each territory: The 1895 "Kachin Hills Regulation", 1896 "Chin Hills Regulation" (applied to what is present day Chin state in Myanmar and Mizoram, Nagaland, and parts of Manipur and Meghalaya states in India), the 1920 "1919 Act of Federated Shan States" and the 1937 "1935 Burma Act" (applied to the area of the pre-colonial Myanmar kingdom, including the former Mon and Arakan kingdoms and the delta region of Karen territory).[53]

While the Shan states and Burma proper had both been attached to British India since 1886, the two acts mentioned above embody the development of British policy which was to remain in place until World War II. The "1935 Burma Act" was particularly significant in that it separated Burma from India and made the Governor of Burma directly responsible to the Government of the United Kingdom.[54]

Despite the misleading names given to the geographic delimitations set by the British, census data indicates that the populations of Burma proper, the Shan states, Chin & Kachin Hills and Salween Division were not necessarily ethnically heterogeneous. According to census data from 1891, the population of Burma proper was 7, 722, 053, and rose to 10,490,624 in 1901, when the Shan states and Chin Hills were included in the census area. Accounting for an increase in population in Burma proper of 1,530,822 (19.8%) over a decade, this meant the assessed population of the Shan States and Chin hills was 1,237, 749.[55]

According to ethnicity, the British recorded the following statistics: "The chief races of Burma are Burmese (6,508,682), Arakanese (405,143), Karens (717,859),

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[52] India, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner. Chapter 1: Distribution and Movement of Population. *REPORT ON THE CENSUS OF INDIA, 1931*. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, India. [Online] 2008. Point 16. Source http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/old_report/Census_1931n.html

[53] Lian H. Sakhong, "Federalism, Constitution Making and State building in Burma", Page 11.

[54] Rajshekhar, *Myanmar's Nationalist Movement (1906-1948) and India*, Page 14.

[55] Population. "Burma" *Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition.*

Shans (787,087), Chins (179,292), Kachins (64,405) and Talaings (321,898); *but these totals do not include the Shan States and Chin hills.*"[56] [Emphasis added] These 'chief races' would later be known as the 'majority' ethnic groups.

A more complete census was held in 1931.[57] The population for 'Burma' was stated as 14, 667, 146. Four divisions were stated: 12, 856, 207 (Burman), 192, 665 (Chin), 111, 947 (Salween), 1, 506, 337 (Shan).[58] The breakdown of these divisions is not very clear since they are described as "administrative and racial rather than geographical".[59] The Burman division covers the plains districts of Burma proper (population 94% Bamar) but also includes:

> [...] the Mons of Pegu, the main bulk of the Karens, who appear also in the Salween and Shan divisions in smaller numbers, and a considerable share of the total number of Chins, Kachins and other indigenous races. It contains nearly all the Chinese other than Yunnanse, that is to say almost two thirds of the total, and practically all the other foreigner Indo-Burmese population.[60]

The Chin division only refers to Chins but also covers previously un-included areas on the border of Assam. The Salween division refers to the Karenni States, mostly Karen and Tai. The Shan division includes not only Shan but also: "a good many Karens and Bamars, almost all the Yunnanese (who make up more than a third of the total Chinese in Burma), almost the whole of the Palaung War branch of the Mon-Khmel[61] race, many Kachins".[62]

The relevance of these statistics should not be overstated. They represent British approximations of divisions they themselves had imposed. They are interesting in that they support the idea that the area as a whole had diverse and mixed populations but they are not very clear in explaining exactly how many people belonged to each group and where precisely they lived.

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[56] Population. "Burma" *Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th Edition.*
[57] Often cited as the last time a reliable census was made within the area since statistics generated afterwards by Ne Win's military government are considered to downplay the amount of ethnic heterogeneity in the country or to use questionable indicators to determine ethnicity. As a result, all current statistics regarding populations are broad estimates.
[58] India, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, *REPORT ON THE CENSUS OF INDIA*, 1931, Chapter. 1, Section III - Provincial distribution and variation, Point 16.
[59] India, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, *REPORT ON THE CENSUS OF INDIA*, 1931, Chapter. 1, Section III - Provincial distribution and variation, Point 16.
[60] India, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, *REPORT ON THE CENSUS OF INDIA*, 1931, Chapter. 1, Section III - Provincial distribution and variation, Point 16.
[61] This is probably a typographic error and should likely read 'Mon-Khmer'
[62] India, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, *REPORT ON THE CENSUS OF INDIA*, 1931, Chapter. 1, Section III - Provincial distribution and variation, Point 16.

The British established themselves through conquest, over time and significantly impacted the role of religion, social structure, government and the economy of the region. A notable initial change was the introduction of government schools and Christian missionary schools which replaced the monastic schools. Maung Htin Aung notes: "in the government schools Burmese kings were belittled, and in the mission schools Burmese religious beliefs were openly ridiculed."[63] Nationalists writing during the time of British colonial rule and after are therefore contending in their writing with the need to defend their history, culture and religion, given the overt and domineering prejudice instituted against it by the British.

As important as it was to reclaim Burmese history in the aftermath of colonialism, to establish a sense of identity and self not tainted by orientalist and colonial thinking, is it not possible to go too far in the opposite direction? For instance, how much validity can be given to the idea of a clear lineage of Bamar rule dating from Pagan until the British annexation? Since the interpretation of history and the formation of national identity are often closely tied, this is an interesting, if delicate topic. If one takes Maung Htin Aung's view, it is not a subject even open to debate:

> The territorial entity that became the Union of Burma in 1948 was identical with the traditional, old Burmese kingdom, which served as the core of successive Burmese empires. Even the Karenni states, which the British conquered and kept separated from British Burma, voluntarily returned to the Burmese fold.[64]

In direct contrast, Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, referring to the writing of Reinhard Bendix on pre-Western Indian kingship and systems of political authority as the foundational model for Southeast Asian kingdoms, states about Burma:

> [...] as elsewhere in the region, the concept of nationhood in the Western or modern sense did not exist in precolonial times. Loyalty to the center, as personified in the person of the king, was premised upon a tributary relationship based on the personal loyalty of vassal rulers, which fluctuated as kings came and went and as the distance from the "golden" royal city increased.[65]

With regards to perceptions of independence in the region, the matter is perhaps slightly clearer. There was significant opposition to the British annexation

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[63] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 240.
[64] Ibid., Page 311.
[65] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?" in *Independent Burma at Forty Years*, Page 83.

during the successive Anglo-Bamar wars and continuous dissatisfaction with colonial rule which entirely changed the people's way of life.[66] To write about the rise of nationalism in 'Burma proper' is also beyond the scope of this paper. Numerous books explain the effect British rule had on the local population and the rise of nationalist feeling.[67] What is significant, however, is that these books typically focus on developments in 'Burma proper', the territorial entity the British created by joining what they termed 'Upper Burma' and 'Lower Burma'.

There has been much less written about interactions with the colonizers and 'nationalist stirrings' in the various parts the Frontier Areas Administration. A point I would like to develop is that events and philosophies current in Burma proper were not necessarily shared in the Frontier Areas. Furthermore, even though local leaders in the Frontier Areas did not necessarily share the opinions of leaders indigenous to Burma proper, this also does not mean that they were blindly pro-British or anti-nationalist or anti-independence. Those leaders who were pro-British or trusted certain British officials (such as the relationship between H.N.C. Stevenson and some Chin leaders) had their reasons for doing so, namely that they felt their goals were more likely to be met by the British than the politicians of Burma proper.

2.3 The existence or non-existence of separate ethnic identities in pre-colonial times

Ethnicity is hotly contested in terms of being a marker for the legitimacy of demands by minority groups in Burma after independence. Aung San famously stated in a speech on May 23rd, 1947 that according to Stalin's definition of the nation, only the Shan States could "by stretching a point" be considered a national community and went on to argue the position of a nation versus the position of a 'national' minority.[68] This is why ethnicity is controversial, since it is not simply a reference to cultural identity but is intertwined with political power relations. Thus the real issue at stake is

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[66] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, 266; Rajshekhar, *Myanmar's Nationalist Movement (1906-1948) and India*, Pages 18-19.

[67] A few accounts of nationalist movements in Burma proper (The first two by Burmese and the second by an Indian author – this is not to indulge in an anti-western bias, but merely to present a few histories not written with a western point of view. This is also not to agree with all the views presented within these books):
Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*; U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*; Rajshekhar, *Myanmar's Nationalist Movement (1906-1948) and India*.

[68] Aung San, "Bogyoke Aung San's Address at the Convention Held at the Jubilee Hall, Rangoon on the 25rd May, 1947" in *Aung San's Political Legacy*, Josef Silverstein, editor (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1972), Page 96.

not one of a clash of cultures of 'minority problem.' It is a problem of power relations based on the concept of majority rule. The Bamar are and always will be the majority. The appeal of non-unitary federalism to the non-Bamar is the possibility of being separate but equal. In the unitary federal model, which was the practical case in Burma after independence, the 'autonomous' ethnic states were autonomous in name, yet unequal members of the Union, structurally subordinate to Burma proper.

In the historical context, an interesting note on the existence of separate notions of ethnicity comes from looking at the kinds of taxes which were paid under the Burmese kings, something that Ma Mya Sein covers in 'Taxation Under the Burmese Kings', Appendix II of *The Administration of Burma*. First, generally speaking, taxation in Upper Burma was already complex:

> [...] the District Officers at the time of the annexation found a very complicated revenue system which did not seem to have any definite principles underlying it. Various districts, towns and villages appeared to have different local customs, taxes and methods of collection.[69]

Later, in a discussion of various kinds of taxes, she relates: "Some places which were well known for a certain kind of fruit or product had to send presents to the Anaukwun who was in charge of all these annual presents. [...] Popa, the Shan States, Mindin, Myelat, had to send flowers."[70]

Regarding household and poll taxes, it seems to become clear that there was a separateness linked to ethnicity:

> Even before the thathameda was instituted by King Mindon as a regular tax, there was a household tax, 'taing', which was paid by the Athis; and a poll tax paid by non-Burmese, such as the Karens, Zabeins and the Ngwegoondaw and Shwegoondaw paid by the Shans. [...] The poll tax, paid by non-Burmans, was levied in money or in kind, e.g. 200 betel nuts from Kyaungbyu, Yaw and Mindat townships, five viss of beeswax per household in Ingabu township; paper paid by Kaungton Myosa; blanket or vegetable fibre by some Chin villages. [...] *The tribute of the Shans were paid in gold, silver, baw, iron, lead, thisse (wood oil), beeswax, elephant tusks and horses. They usually had their own chieftains through whom the tax was collected.* Next came the people who were called Ngwegoondaw and Shwegoondaw, who gave their dues in silver and gold. They were regimented together and could not leave their 'asu'; wherever they lived they had to pay their share of the tax. It seems probable that these people were conquered people who had to pay tributes rather than taxes.[71] [Emphasis added]

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[69] Ma Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, Page 166.
[70] Ibid., Page 168.
[71] Ibid., Page 169.

This is a fascinating passage to read as it seems to indicate that where one lived was intricately connected to the kind of tax one paid. Furthermore, it makes distinctions even within ethnic groups. A poll tax is apparently paid by non-Burmese people in Upper Burman, and then a kind of tribute of the 'Ngwegoondaw and Shwegoondaw' is paid by conquered peoples who are Shan and have to live together in a fixed area. However, and Ma Mya Sein makes the distinction, they were different from the people paying the tribute of the 'Shans', collected through their own chieftains. This level of complexity should not be glossed over. The Shans who paid tribute through their own chieftains (the Saophas) are not the same as the Shans who belonged to the category of conquered people.

To briefly mention more of the historical record, Ma Mya Sein writes of a 'Shan Period' from A.D. 1287-1531. This in no way means a period entirely dominated by the Shan, but rather indicates that a great mixture was ongoing:

> Upper Burma now became full of princelets, both Burmese and Shans, most of which acknowledging the Chinese suzerainty. Appeals were often made to China; but the overlordship was nominal and existed only when the princes took it on themselves to ask the aid of China.[72]

She goes on to mention relations with the Shan during the Toungoo Period from A.D. 1531-1752:

> Bayin Naung (A.D. 1551-81) pursued the same policy of external aggression and Burma touched the high water mark of reaction against the Shans. Ayuthia was taken though the complete subjugation of an organized country was beyond the task of Burma. The Shan States, however, were reduced in three campaigns. No attempt was made to reorganize the conquered districts, only a tribute and levies being exacted.[73]

Further passages relate to descendents of Bayinnaung and further campaigns to reduce the Shan States and put them under more effective control. The situation continues more or less until the Alaungpaya period (A.D. 1752-1885) when:

> An effective control of the Shan States was accomplished. Alaungpaya, then, resumed that anti-Siamese policy which had proved fatal to the previous dynasty; now it was not a reaction against Shan dominance but a more real and important necessity. In the subduing of rebels, the Burmese had ruthlessly massacred the conquered and had not taken enough prisoners to populate the devastated districts, so he invaded Siam to obtain manpower.[74]

In his essay "The Myth of the "Three Shan Brothers" and the Ava Period in Burmese History", Michael Aung-Thwin contends that ethnicity was not a main cause

[72] Ibid., *The Administration of Burma*, Page 6.
[73] Ibid., *The Administration of Burma*, Page 10.
[74] Ibid., *The Administration of Burma*, Page 13.

of conflict in pre-colonial Burma and that a dominant 'Shan period' in Ava is a myth spread through colonial historical reconstruction.[75] While he is a somewhat controversial figure for a number of the views propounded in his academic works[76], Aung-Thwin makes certain points in this particular essay that are important to consider. For instance:

> The invention of a mythical "Shan Period" has meant that all data found during this entire span of time, from the end of the Pagan Dynasty to the end of the Ava Dynasty in 1527, have been interpreted within the overriding analytical framework of ethnic *differences* and *hostility*, with several historiographic consequences. First, this mentality has encouraged the perception of an irrevocable, adversarial relationship between Shan and Burman at the national level too early and too neatly. Rather than the more complicated *modus vivendi* which persisted between the major ethnic groups for centuries – a far more accurate picture of the way traditional ethnic politics worked in precolonial Burma and probably the rest of Southeast Asia [...].[77]

The meaning of the term *modus vivendi* here is not explained. When considered, *modus vivendi* implies practical compromise, in the political context, based on short-term arrangements to deal with disputes. There is nothing static about it. While Aung-Thwin objects to a reading of hostility related to ethnic differences, the implicit understanding of *modus vivendi* is a form of disagreement in which the involved parties must find a solution. In this context, there was an endless process of political and military negotiation ongoing between the Shan kings and the Bamar kings as power was contested, and the *modus vivendi* would have to be endlessly adapted. Unless aggression or hostility between groups occurred, this would not have been the case. Further, Aung-Thwin uses the term 'major ethnic groups', when in fact concepts of majority and minority in relation to ethnicity are in the language of modern Western scholarship. They do not really apply to pre-colonial times at all.

It would indeed be grievous if the Ava period of history were used as some kind of proof positive that primordial ethnic differences will always hinder ethnic cooperation in Burma. However, in reading both Maung Htin Aung and Ma Mya Sein's histories (which both refer to a Shan period around the time of Ava and

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[75] Michael Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the "Three Shan Brothers" and the Ava Period in Burmese History ", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Nov., 1996): 898.

[76] Nicholas Farrelly, "Interview with Michael Aung-Thwin, Professor of Asian Studies, University of Hawaii", *New Mandala* [Online] (November 28th, 2007). Source http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2007/11/28/interview-with- professor-michael-aung-thwin/

[77] Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the "Three Shan Brothers" and the Ava Period in Burmese History", Page 897.

political intrigue and negotiation in different courts, Burman, Shan and Mon), neither account gives the impression that this is considered anything more than ancient history, without deep implications for the present. Furthermore, both their accounts give a complex rendering of history – it is not a simple 'Shan period', dominated by the Shan and 'dark' and 'barbarous' as Aung-Thwin states it is usually described by colonial period authors.[78] Maung Htin Aung actually writes that, "[t]he period of the Shan dynasty was an age of romance and chivalry. Kings and lords married many wives, and the queens took lovers and plotted intrigues against their husbands"[79], and goes on to recount various legends about beautiful Shan queens and other heroic figures, which he seems to enjoy. In any case, none of these accounts of ethnicity in pre-colonial times seem to imply that as a result, ethnicity had to be a polarizing element later. For Mya Sein, the noted motivation for aggression does not relate to ethnic hostility but instead, the need to gain manpower. David Steinberg gives a similar historical reading:

> Ethnicity did not guarantee a predetermined response to change. A Kachin under certain circumstances might act as a Shan, or a Mon as a Burman. Wars that were commonly regarded as ethnic may have had their origins in such economic causes as control over areas of surplus rice production and their populations or over highly strategic trade routes.[80]

However, the assertion can be made that there was a distinction made between ethnic groups paying tribute to the Burman king at the time of the British annexation and non-Burmese citizens in Upper Burma paying a poll tax and Burmese citizens who paid a household tax. Yet, this seems more a case of political organization than purely 'ethnic' division. Keeping this in mind, the role of the British needs to be further examined and will be dealt with more closely in the following chapter on the Frontier Areas Administration. Summarizing these arguments David Steinberg writes that ethnicity in Burma:

> should now be understood as a series of highly complex, evolving relationships that vary among and between ethnic peoples and are ever in a state of flux. Historically, these relationships were never stable with a single established pattern of response. In part, relations were dependent upon the particular groups interacting, their economic and political relations, the resources (military, economic, strategic) at their command, and their distance from the centers of political and military influence. [...] Since distances were great, administrative

[78] Ibid., Pages 883 and 893.
[79] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 97.
[80] Steinberg, *Burma: A Socialist Nation of Southeast Asia*, Page 47.

> capacity limited, and manpower requirements heavy, direct rule over peoples of marginal importance to the center was inappropriate as long as suzerainty was acknowledged.[81]

Ethnicity as existing in separate, delineated forms as it is sometimes interpreted today, should be understood to have no relation to the social dynamics in pre-colonial Burma. The ethnic identities which existed were distinct and yet they were also flexible and changeable, interacting with one another and influencing each other as a result.

The politicization of static ethnic identity in Burma today is tied to its relation with the struggle for political representation which the peoples of the Frontier Areas, divided into stratified ethnicities, underwent as they tried to avoid political domination by Burma proper in the independence period.

Rozanna Lilley, concluding the volume *Ethnic Groups across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia,* makes the case that "[j]ust as culture is not immediately given but constantly achieved through a process of negotiation between symbolic structures and historical circumstances, so ethnicity is constructed via a discourse of identity, legitimacy and historical origins."[82] It is useful to keep this in mind. Ethnic diversity only becomes a handicap when difference is used as an excuse for marginalization. Ethnicity, in and of itself, does not have to be interpreted as an engine of conflict. In 'Ethnic Politics and Regional Development in Myanmar: The need for New approaches,' Martin Smith quotes David Keen in stating that "Conflict generates ethnicity."[83] It is pertinent to remember that the advent of WWII and the internal strife of the post-independence period brought a lot of conflict to Burma.

2.3 The background of leading figures in Burma proper and their political thought

Who were the local elite in Burma proper during the colonial period and at the time of independence? It is important not to simply know Aung San's background, but the backgrounds of the people in society who surrounded him and had influence. Maung Htin Aung states:

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[81] Ibid., Page 47.
[82] Rozanna Lilley, "Afterword: "Ethnicity" and Anthropology" in *Ethnic Groups across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia,* Gehan Wijeyewardene, editor (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), Page 176.
[83] Martin T. Smith. "Ethnic Politics and Regional Development in Myanmar: The need for new approaches" in *Myanmar: beyond politics to societal imperatives*, Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Robert H. Taylor and Tin Maung Maung Than, editors (Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 2005), Page 61.

> There was a dearth of national leaders. The Burmese never had a hereditary nobility, and able princes and princesses had long ago lost their lives in the Myingun rebellion and in Theebaw's massacre of his kinsmen and kinswomen. [...] Sir Charles Crosthwaite had destroyed the natural leaders among villagers, namely the families of village headmen, and, as he had intended, the new headmen were mere officials at the bottom of the service scale and had neither the influence nor the power to act as leaders of their villages.[84]

Than Myint-U also echoes this image: "The destruction of the royal family and the nobility as a class apart helped to turn colonial imaginings of Burma as an egalitarian rural society into a living reality."[85]

However, both go on to immediately describe the new leaders who began to emerge. Thant Myint-U makes clear where they came from:

> Of course, there was a new Burmese-speaking elite, but this elite, throughout the British occupation, was numerically very small and dependent upon the colonial state. Many were men of the south, from Arakan and Pegu, but a sizeable number were descendants of the Ava officialdom.[86]

A little more opaquely, Maung Htin Aung writes that British appointed Burmese officials, who could not become leaders due to British restrictions on the top roles in government, earned good salaries and could thus: "prepare their sons for leadership by sending them not only to the best schools in Rangoon or to the University of Calcutta, but even to the Inns of Court in London."[87] He states that by 1910 there were a number of English-trained Burmese lawyers active in Rangoon and Mandalay, the sites of the British instituted highest courts. Having studied with the children of wealthy and noble English families, they were not in awe of the British officials and judges back in Burma. Maung Htin Aung relates the offensive practice of forcing all Burmese to remove their shoes upon entering the rooms of a British official (A British twist on having to remove their shoes in the presence of the Burmese king). These young Burmese barristers, on the contrary, did not and could not be made to, thus one angry official called them the "Burmese barristocracy."[88] Maung Htin Aung goes on to explain the role played by these men as emerging national leaders and credits them with using the Young Men's Temperance League of

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[84] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 269.
[85] Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Page 242.
[86] Ibid., Page 242.
[87] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 270.
[88] Ibid., Page 276.

Rangoon College as the foundation for the Young Men's Buddhist Association movement.[89]

Regarding dealings at less exalted levels, according to Thant Myint-U:

> The subordinate civil service positions were also filled, to an extent, by sons of old gentry families, though the extent of elite continuity differed from place to place. In some families, one son would attend an English language school and perhaps receive a clerical or police appointment, while other sons remained in their home towns and villages as the new headmen.[90]

Thant Myint-U goes on to qualify:

> the primary cleavage in the new Burma was not to be one of class but of ethnicity, between those seen as 'foreign' and those seen as 'native', and between the 'native races' themselves. The colonial census and legal codes divided people by religion, language and known caste categories. [...] Old court notions of 'Kachins', 'Shans', 'Karens' and others largely remained, and were reinforced or somewhat changed by emergent European theories of language, race and migration.[91]

All of this is important because it helps explain the background to the environs in which Aung San was operating. It was not by any means a political or power vacuum. A main difference with the leaders in Aung San's generation, compared with those who came before, was the common factor of having studied at Rangoon University, not abroad. Yet they were by no means a 'new elite' completely divorced from the past. Aung San described himself as "a scion of well-to-do rural gentry and a distinguished line of patriotic ancestors."[92]

It would be invaluable if compilations could be made of all the major speeches and writings made by various political figures of that time. For instance, there has been a recent publication by Robert H. Taylor of selected works by Dr. Maung Maung.[93] A controversial figure for his involvement in Ne Win's government after the coup,[94] that seems like a substantial reason for why people nowadays should have access to his written thoughts, so that he can be assessed. To put it mildly, he was one of the men who had a deep impact on policy and the legal system under Ne Win.

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[89] Ibid., Page 279.
[90] Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, Page 243.
[91] Ibid., Page 243.
[92] Aung San, *Burma's Challenge, 1946* in *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, Josef Silverstein, editor. (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1972), Page 40.
[93] Robert H. Taylor, *Dr. Maung Maung: Gentleman, Scholar, Patriot* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008).
[94] Taylor, *Dr. Maung Maung: Gentleman, Scholar, Patriot*, Page xiii
Burma desk, Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong, "Ne Win, Maung Maung and how to drive a legal system crazy in two short decades," in *article 2 (*Sept. 2008, Vol. 7, No. 3) [Online]. Source http://www.article2.org/mainfile.php/0703/321/

Josef Silverstein compiled *The Political Legacy of Aung San* which comprises 13 complete documents, unedited and verbatim, Aung San's speeches and his own publication: *Burma's Challenge*. The compilation provides a very useful look at the development of Aung San's thought.[95] However, what about the men who surrounded Aung San? Take for instance, the list of men in Aung San's cabinet who were assassinated with him:

1. Abdul Razak (Burmese-Indian politician), Minister of Education and National Planning, chairman of Burma Muslim Congress.
2. Thakin Mya (Burmese lawyer and politician), Minister of Home Affairs
3. Mahn Ba Khaing (Karen politician), Minister of Industry and chairman of Karen Youth Union.
4. Sao Sam Htun (Shan saopha of Mongpawn and politician), Minister of Hill Regions.
5. Ba Cho (Burmese newspaper publisher and politician), Minister of Information.
6.Ba Win (Burmese politician, Aung San's older brother), Minister of Trade.
7. Ohn Maung (Burmese politician), Deputy Minister of Transport.

Where is the extensive research into their political thought? What about U Tin Tut, Aung San's deputy and the Minister of Finance, who survived the July 19th attack only to be assassinated a few months later?[96]

What were the commonalities between Aung San's political thought and that of his brother-in-law, Thakin Than Tun, Chairman of the Communist Party of Burma, later leader of the White Flag Communists? What about an analysis of political thinking amongst the Thirty Comrades who trained in Japan? How strongly factionalised were the socialists, communists and nationalists amongst the comrades? Thakin Aung San, Thakin Mya and Thakin Shu Maung (later Ne Win) belonged to the socialist faction. Thakin Than Tun to the communist faction and Thakin Nu belonged to the nationalist faction.[97] Yet clearly, commitment to these individual ideologies did not preclude being able to work together at certain points in time.

In the succinct but considered analysis of Clive Christie: "although the guiding ideology of the nationalist leadership [in Burma] was not Marxist-Leninist in the

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[95] Josef Silverstein (ed.), *The Political Legacy of Aung San* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1972).
[96] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 308.
[97] Helen James, 'Thirty Comrades' in *Southeast Asia: a historical encyclopedia, from Angkor Wat to East Timor Vol.2*, Keat Gin Ooi, editor (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), Page 1329.

orthodox communist sense, it was deeply influenced by the general world-view and analytical outlook of Marxism and Leninism."[98] Christie goes on to note Aung San's explanation that leftists were "thoroughly ideologically confused" during WWII because:

> As socialists, they saw Japan as a mortal 'fascist' enemy to world socialism, even more of a danger than Western colonialism itself. As nationalists, they felt that the destruction of European power in Southeast Asia gave Japan the status of a liberator, whatever its ideological hue.[99]

It is important to consider where people ended up on the ideological spectrum, because that inevitably influenced their behaviour. At the time of independence, the communists had broken away from the AFPFL and "the general communist line was that Aung San and the AFPFL had betrayed the revolution, had replaced a mass struggle by an elite deal with Britain".[100] Meanwhile, the British characterized Aung San as an opportunist and political pragmatist "who used his radical rhetoric in order to keep up his mass support in Burma, but under whose aegis friendly British-Burmese relations could be maintained."[101] Silverstein makes the case that:

> [Aung San's] writings must be seen in their totality against the backdrop of his time if one is to [...] appreciate his genuine search for ideas that would help Burma find freedom and unity. If his sources were in conflict, so too were his ideas; but neither inhibited him from expressing what he thought and felt.[102]

Christie maintains that thorough analysis of Aung San's pronouncements from 1944-1947 suggests "a considerable degree of consistency in his political thinking."[103] Aung San's political thinking regarding national and minority rights will be examined in the chapters to come.

2.4 How minority peoples came to be regarded as a source of 'national' disunity

With the following words, on March 2, 1962, General Ne Win announced the beginning of military rule: "I have to inform you, citizens of the Union, that the armed

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[98] Clive Christie, *Ideology and Revolution In Southeast Asia 1900-1980: Political Ideas of the Anti-Colonial Era* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), Page 99.
[99] Ibid., Page 100.
[100] Ibid., Page 101.
[101] Ibid., Page 101.
[102] Silverstein, 'Introduction' in *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, Page 5.
[103] Christie, *Ideology and Revolution In Southeast Asia 1900-1980*, Page 101.

forces have taken over the responsibility and the task of keeping the country's safety, owing to the greatly deteriorating conditions in the Union."[104]

What were these greatly deteriorating conditions Ne Win was referring to? In his account, which uses this quote, Maung Maung gives us a clue in the preceding paragraph, describing the coup itself: "U Nu, some of his ministers, and *the leaders of the clamorous racial groups* were taken into custody" [Emphasis added].[105] According to Robert H. Taylor, the people arrested actually consisted of the President, Prime Minister Nu, five cabinet ministers, the Chief Justice and around thirty politicians and former saophas from Shan state and Kayah state.[106]

Michael Aung-Thwin remarks: "By most accounts, the immediate cause of the coup was *the threat, real or perceived*, that the Shan and Kayahs were ready to secede from the nation."[Emphasis added][107]

But what were these "clamorous racial groups" clamouring for? And why was there such a fear of succession that preventing such a threat, "real or perceived" could be used as justification for a military coup?

To Chao Tzang Yawnghwe the implication of Ne Win's remark was:

> that the Federal Movement, or the move to amend the 1948 constitution by the Shan—a move supported by all non-Burman leaders and state governments—was either a secessionist plot or was itself a threat to the stability and cohesion of the Burmese Union. Although it is now over twenty years since this accusation was leveled against the Shan princes (*chaofa*, or *sawbwa*) in particular, and other non-Burman leaders in general, no evidence has come to light to support this alleged "secessionist plot."[108]

In support of this assessment, Peter Lowe paraphrases correspondence between Richard Allen, British ambassador in Rangoon, and Frederick Warner, head of the South-East Asia Department of the Foreign Office: "At the end of March 1962, Allen told Warner that he was worried at the emerging trend: the army's takeover was evidently the consequence of Shan enthusiasm for federalism, which was unacceptable to Ne Win."[109]

According to Taylor, U Nu's policies were to blame for making the army nervous:

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[104] Maung Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), Page 292.
[105] Ibid., Page 292
[106] Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Burma* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1987), Page 291.
[107] Aung-Thwin, 'Burma's Myth of Independence' in *Independent Burma at Forty Years*, Page 24.
[108] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?" in *Independent Burma at Forty Years*, Page 81.
[109] Peter Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism: British Policy Towards South-East Asia, 1945-65* (Basingstoke, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Page 122.

> [...] the establishment of Buddhism as the state religion, the organization of administrations for new Mon and Arakan States, and the continuing negotiations with politicians from the Shan and Kayah States over increasing regional autonomy, raised the prospect to the army and to many others of increasing disunity in the state and of the possible loss of independence.[110]

In the next sentence, Taylor goes on to state that the examples of Laos and South Vietnam, undergoing civil war and foreign invasion, were uppermost in the minds of the coup leaders. But was it fair to make these assertions?

Interestingly, Maung Htin Aung, who chose to end his book on the history of Burma in the year of independence, 1948, offers this interesting opinion at the end of the book, in an interview with his editor:

> There were of course many controversial issues that divided the country. There was the question of a separate state for the Arakanese, and another for the Mons. The Arakanese had their own geographical unit, and an Arakanese state would not have broken up the Union. Nobody really believed that the Mons would have a separate state. For one thing, they lived scattered among the Burmese; for another, many of the so-called Mons now had Burmese blood in them. There was also the controversy over Buddhism's being made a state religion by U Nu. Actually, to a country where 85 per cent of the people were Buddhists, it did not greatly matter whether it was officially a Buddhist state or otherwise. *The real danger was in the possibility of fragmentation of the country. The ethnic groups feared for the safety of their own states if law and order should break down at the center when U Nu left office*; after all, the second Burmese empire under Nandabayin broke into pieces in similar circumstances.[111] [Emphasis added]

Writing in 1967, there was as yet no official line that Maung Htin Aung had to follow, in the way that Taylor's assessment implies. In Maung Htin Aung's opinion, the issue of the Arakan and Mon states was not really considered serious and neither was the Buddhism controversy. Instead, he offers a frank and insightful assessment: The ethnic groups were afraid of the breakdown of law and order in their own states. They were afraid too of the unchecked and abusive role of the army in their states, which they had no authority to challenge and curtail, though Maung Htin Aung neglects to mention this factor.

Maung Htin Aung's opinion is fascinating because, while it does not follow the same tired rationalizations as the Revolutionary Council, it still frames things in an ultra-Bamar way, as he makes a comparison between U Nu's potential departure and the break-up of the second Burmese empire. It is also fascinating because Maung

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[110] Taylor, *The State in Burma*, Page 291.
[111] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Pages 326-327.

Htin Aung was not a political radical and seems to have supported the coup, from his closing remarks about Ne Win (unless he was being subtly sarcastic, which is quite doubtful):

> Holding that the Union could be preserved only by the maintenance of traditional values, General Ne Win's aim was to define and follow the "Burmese way" in all aspects of life [...] He had been a man of the world, gay friendly, and fond of company, but overnight, to set an example to his officers and to the people, he became an austere recluse, whose only form of recreation was to play a round of golf by himself on a lonely course.[112]

Between the end of January and beginning of February 1964, Earl Mountbatten visited Burma and discussed with General Ne Win. Citing official sources, Peter Lowe writes that Earl Mountbatten had been advised by the British Foreign Office that the purpose of his visit was:

> 'to persuade Ne Win that it is too dangerous for him to rely solely on the army and that his natural allies are to be found in the better members of the democratic parties in Burma and even among some of the leaders of the minority peoples: The Shans, Karens and Kachins.'[113]

Yet, according to Lowe, Ne Win's response to Earl Mountbatten was that "As regards minorities, his coup was intended to save the Union and prevent disintegration."[114]

Taylor states that it was not until twelve years later, in 1974, that the Revolutionary Council claimed to have taken power "in the name of state reassertion"[115]. He cites an unpublished Revolutionary Council report stating that it:

> took responsibility for the condition of the state (naingngantaw), it began a transitional revolution with the intention of establishing a socialist society of affluence and without human exploitation, with a strong governing power, and the long term independence for the state.[116]

After seizing power, the military government had as much time as it wanted to frame rationalizations for its actions. Yet no matter how well-formed each government statement may be, the actual reality of Burma today puts the lie to every one.

In a clear description of how the state achieved total dominance, to paraphrase Taylor, by 1964 most of the economy had been nationalized, all political opposition was declared illegal, the Revolutionary Council had direct management of most educational and cultural organizations and it had formulated its own kind of political

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[112] Ibid., Page 328.
[113] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 125.
[114] Ibid., Page 125.
[115] Taylor, *The State in Burma*, Page 292.
[116] Ibid., Page 293.

party with its own ideology and ancillary mass organizations.[117] Yet state control went even further:

> the intention of the Revolutionary Council to intervene in aspects of society previously considered private was apparent. In a series of orders issued in March 1962 it was announced that horse racing would be banned in one year's time, that beauty contests and all government-sponsored music, song and dance competitions would be prohibited, and that gambling was to be banned in the Shan State.[118]

The Revolutionary Council also took over control of the universities on May 14, 1962 and dissolved the Buddha Sasana Council on May 17th. By August, the state had taken control of all publishing through a system of registered printers.[119]

What did all of this have to do with fears of secession and holding the Union together? If anything, the ban on gambling in Shan state would have contributed to further feelings of alienation there, since gambling was integrated into regularly held festivals and the taxes from it contributed to the revenues of Shan state.[120] Blaming the Shan and Kayah for secessionist intentions was a pretext to seize power by working on popular rumours and fears. The real goal of the coup was the total re-organization of Burma. Why? What kind of thinking motivated this behaviour?

Taylor notes:

> What most determined the style of the Revolutionary Council and has consequently become characteristic of the style of the state since 1962 is that a majority of its leading personnel have had their formative administrative and political experiences within the army. Thus, the army-style of command and planning has tended to become that of the state.[121]

Documenting the rise and spread of the army, and the thinking of the military elite, is crucial to understanding how perceptions of the ethnic minorities changed. During the WWII period and while independence was being negotiated with Britain, political cooperation across the board was necessary to achieve certain goals, such as driving out the Japanese and gaining independence.

While much has been made of the insurrections and internal conflict which marred the peace of the post-independence parliamentary period, the implication that this had for the growth and strengthening of the army needs to be highlighted. As a result of the insurrections and government operations to stamp them out, including

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[117] Ibid., Page 293.
[118] Ibid., Page 295.
[119] Ibid., Page 295.
[120] Sanda Simms, *The Moon Princess: Memories of the Shan States* (Bangkok: River Books, 2008), Page 100.
[121] Taylor, *The State in Burma*, Page 299.

cooperation from leaders in the former Frontier Areas Administration regions, the army was able to extend itself where it never had before, and this time with the legitimacy of working in the name of the 'official' government, which the leaders of those areas had pledged to support.

Thus, while they might disagree with the behaviour of the soldiers sent to those areas, local leaders still honoured their allegiance to the larger state. As the civilian state was weak, and leaned on the army, the dominance of military might in those areas grew. During the caretaker government period, Ne Win and his troops were credited with 'cleaning up' the country, removing petty local bosses. But while they removed these local bullies, they did not replace them with independent civilians. On the contrary, in the power vacuum, they further cemented their own position.

As the army grew in power, and its leaders considered their own position, the need to negotiate through lengthy legal and parliamentary means with dissatisfied minority peoples must have seemed to diminish in importance, especially after the sweeping powers gained during the period of the Caretaker government. This is the very simple reason why the minorities became linked to the concept of 'disunity': because they represented a source of opposition to the army.

Looking at the immediate organizational actions taken by the Revolutionary Council after the coup in regard to 'ethnic' matters, it becomes clear that total control was the Council's foremost goal:

> the Revolutionary Council's first act after the disbandment of the legislature was the abolition of the councils of the four states and one special division and their replacement with administrative staffs under central control. On April 30, the separate Mon and Arakan ministries were dissolved, thus ending the prospect of semi-autonomous states for those regions. An additional complication in the structure of the state was terminated on February 1, 1964, when the special border districts which had been established during the civil war were abolished. [...] In its published accounts of its actions in the months following the coup, the Revolutionary Council did not discuss these actions or provide a full explanation for them. [...] the re-organization of the territorial structure of the state was largely ignored while political means were used to try and persuade the population of the border areas that their cultural diversity and rights would be protected without the existence of nominally ethnic subordinate political organs.[122]

[122] Ibid., Page 301.

In political terms, 'ethnicity' was too volatile. Therefore, "[a]fter 1962 the state's leading personnel sought means to de-politicize ethnicity"[123], as if the fundamental issue the ethnic minorities had raised might be forgotten. Yet this issue was not about 'ethnic rights': It was a question regarding the make-up of the state of the Union which the ethnic minorities had helped create.

By framing the conflict as being one of misplaced ethnic self-conceptions, the military government de-legitimised the demands of the countrymen they claimed to want to serve and give equal rights to. Taylor states:

> The effect of the Revolutionary Council's policies was t*o eliminate ethnicity as a constitutional issue and replace it with more tractable ones such as regional development and cultural diversity*. During 1963, two further attempts were made to terminate ethnic politics and the federal question by replacing them with other issues. [...] General Ne Win outlined the Revolutionary Council's policies; these were quite simple and avoided any discussion of separate political institutions for ethnically defined categories. Rather, the basis of the policy would be equal rights and equal status for all minority group members within the state.[124] [Emphasis added]

By claiming that ethnic concerns were not constitutionally based, but could be answered by policies on regional development and cultural diversity, Ne Win's government was essentially stripping power from the claims of the people.

Taylor provides a kind of justification for the behaviour of the Revolutionary Council:

> Ethnic identities, when politicized into non-negotiable demands for administrative and policy autonomy, are normally unresolvable by short-term political means, and every state attempts to translate such demands into lesser ones of a negotiable and non-personal nature.[125]

While this can be said to be broadly true, not every state which attempts to deal with such demands is ruled by a military regime and willing to use force and repression to achieve its ends. To apply such a broad statement to the context of Burma in 1962 also does injustice to the actions of the 'ethnic' politicians and leaders who were trying to achieve a constitutional answer with U Nu in the very National Conference with the coup interrupted. They were not politicized 'ethnics' demanding total autonomy and nothing else. They were reasonable and reasoned individuals. It was the members of the military regime who could not be reasoned with. Chao Tzang offers this critical assessment:

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[123] Ibid., Page 301.
[124] Ibid., Page 301.
[125] Ibid., Page 301.

> the capture of the state by the military and the subsequent resurrection of "the dominance of the state," much lauded by Taylor [a reference to *The State in Burma*], has resulted in what could be called a soldier-welfare state resembling, in many ways, the medieval Burman state which was based upon the monarch's tight control over the bonded crown serfs, the *kywan-daw*, or the Ahmudan class, of the nucleus zone or core areas of the kingdom. The establishment of a highly autonomous and dominant state, Burman style, has resulted, over time, in the phenomenon of society's disengagement or withdrawal from the state [...][126]

Taylor goes on to cite the invitation by the Revolutionary Council in 1963 to all leaders of insurgent groups to meet and negotiate a solution to their demands:

> On July 11 not only ethnic insurgent leaders but leaders of the illegal Communist groups were invited to come to Rangoon for unconditional negotiations. This offer issued on April 1 was made only after a general amnesty for all prisoners other than rapists, murderers and certain politicians arrested at the time of the coup. Little success came from the negotiations, and barring agreement reached with one small Karen group in March 1964, all the insurgent groups returned to insurrection within a few months.[127]

Whether or not it is Taylor's intent, this seems to put a reasonable face on the Revolutionary Council, as if in some way, they tried to negotiate and failed. Yet what was the real substance of these negotiations? Chao Tzang was present for the preliminary talks, as one of three representatives of the then-existing Shan State Independence Army (SSIA), and describes the complexity of the situation in *The Shan of Burma: Memoirs of a Shan Exile*. Ultimately, he concludes:

> The talks, however, came to nothing as none of the rebel organizations were interested in joining the Burmese way to the Socialist Party --which was Rangoon's alternative to continuing with the war. The Burmese military made it clear that there would be no return to plurality in politics for a long time to come.
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> One very significant by-product of the peace talks of 1963, in the Shan State, was that it inspired thousands of young people (mostly from middle and high schools) to join whichever rebel band was nearest. The people as a whole and especially the rebels, being ill-informed and politically unsophisticated, became wildly optimistic and believed that victory was just round the corner.[128]

To finalize criticism of the argument that minority people are a source of disunity, and to highlight that it is the military's own agenda which is a hindrance to unity, Chao Tzang writes:

> The tragedy is that the military could have avoided the present mess if it had put into practice what it constructed on paper, i.e., if it had activated and given the 1974 constitution and the

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[126] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", Page 99.
[127] Taylor, *The State in Burma*, Page 303.
[128] Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma: Memoirs of a Shan Exile* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987), Page 17.

> Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) some substance and power. The BSPP could have developed into a vehicle wherein a moderate non-Burman leadership could have been created, which would eventually undercut the ethnic rebel leadership and, at the same time, legitimize a form of superordinate-subordinate relationship between the Burmans and the others.[129]

Those are not the remarks of a power-hungry, identity-obsessed, anti-unity ethnic person. There is an implicit recognition that Burmans are in the majority, that in a functioning Union, the central areas would have more political clout than the peripheral ones. Yet these admissions are made in conjunction with an appeal for a return to the rule of law: for constitutionality, not a reborn empire. In such a framework, constructive negotiation could occur.

Chao Tzang echoes Taylor's lament on the politicization of ethnicity, but he attributes the source of this trend not as deriving solely from unrealistic ethnic demands. Rather it is the result of the military regime's own behaviour, in this case in reference to its own creations, like the 1974 Constitution and the BSPP, that has led to "a politically polarized situation in the peripheral areas, [and...] the legitimization of both the politics of violence and the status of the rebel armies in the eyes of the various non-Burman populations."[130]

In *Complex Emergencies*, David Keen states: "An emphasis on (fractious) ethnicity has been part of an enduring ideology of empire: the myth of the 'civilizing mission', the imperial power as a pacifier who keeps the 'primitive tribes' from one another's throats".[131] The military regime classically exploits this emphasis. To counteract this mode of thinking, the behaviour and actions of various actors involved in forming the 1948 Union need to be separated and examined. How events are portrayed may strongly influence the perceptions people within the country have and therefore their political reactions. It is for this reason that the history of 1946-1962 needs to be re-examined from the point of view of the ethnic minorities.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In sum, this literature review and discussion of four major themes has attempted to highlight some of the major arguments propounded in Burma studies literature which relates to nationalism, the colonial legacy, independence and influences on nation-building in post-independence Burma. Of particular importance

[129] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?" Page 100.
[130] Ibid., Page 100.
[131] David Keen, *Complex Emergencies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), Page 6.

are the contentions of non-Bamar scholars, since they offer a challenging perspective to Bamar ideals of history and nation. One of the most destructive arguments held in certain forms of Bamar nationalism is the idea that the ethnic minorities are a source of danger to the 'Union' because of their difference, that they provoke disunity and discord and that a strong military centre is necessary to hold them in check, as in the days of the former Burmese empires. Mary Callahan argues that the army is not actually political but simply sees itself as having been at war continuously since independence with all the rebel and anti-state groups within Burma.[132] For Callahan this is infinitely more plausible than earlier scholars' suggestion of a naturally pathological Burmese identity. Yet this idea of being at war seems to stem from a reading of the history of both the far and recent past which seems particularly ill-conceived.

[132] Callahan, *Making Enemies*, Page xiv.

CHAPTER THREE
The Frontier Administration

This chapter begins by exploring the creation of the Frontier Areas, as well as exploring British motivations in their choice of indirect rule as a method of administration for these territories. Next, there are brief explanations of the large ethnic groupings “Chin”, “Kachin”, “Shan” and “Karenni” which the British associated with the areas they had taken. As well as using British sources to describe the colonial attitude, material from scholars who belong to those ethnic groups has been used, except in the case of the Karenni. Emphasis is placed on the Shan, with an examination of the Saopha system and the Shan position at the 1931 Round Table Conference Series in London. Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of World War II and some of its effects on the Frontier Areas.

3.1 The British Context: From 1886-1946

The Frontier Areas Administration (FAA) was established after the British had annexed Upper Burma and won several campaigns against various groups in the so-called ‘frontier areas.’ The establishment of the FAA was a long process, which varied depending on the region. It initially began around 1886 and was not fully established until 1892 amongst the Chin and Karenni, or until 1895 amongst the Kachin. Yet even though the FAA existed, the British did not have absolute control over it. The Wa were kept notably separate and as late as 1940, for instance, the Naga were not formally under any kind of administration.

The FAA referred to the amalgamation of various tracts of territory which the British had won control over. However, there was no amalgamation in any political sense. The only similarity between colonial dealings with these different areas was the use by the British and missionaries of the Bamar language. The areas were kept separate administratively and this was part of the substance of the Round Table Conference talks in London in the 1930’s. At the talks, representatives of Burma proper discussed their desire to politically amalgamate the Frontier Areas. The British were hesitant due to their insistence on the lack of political readiness of citizens of the Frontier Areas (also referred to as the ‘Backwards Tracts’ and the ‘Excluded Areas’). The British plan was for slow amalgamation, after a period of sufficient political education and preparation. In general, representatives of Burma proper were sceptical

and criticised the British for keeping the frontier areas people in a state of limited political education in order to maintain British control.

Only the Shan had representatives at the conference and yet through their presence we glimpse a perspective that belongs neither to Britain or Burma proper. The Shan Saophas present at the conference explain that they are unwilling to amalgamate and their argument is one based on a desire for political equality. Acknowledgement is made that they are not ready for immediate political change, that their people might find it difficult at the present time. However, the lack of political education is not their key argument for staying apart. They simply want to stay apart. There is an implicit recognition that, if they unite with Burma proper, they will not be political equals. Cooperation will not occur as a result of negotiation between equals, but will instead be based on compromises between a more dominant and a lesser power.

They ask for autonomy, not sub-status. Having no significant political clout, their demand for autonomy is not met, though their wish to remain apart is recorded. Furthermore, in the face of criticism of their feudal system, the main Saopha speaker mentions willingness for political reform that is internally motivated, coming from the people in their states. This is in direct contention to the claim by Maung Maung that in the Shan State in the 1930s, the Saophas prevented anyone from taking an interest in the nationalist movement in Burma proper with the threat of capital punishment.[1] It is notable that Maung Maung provides no citation for this claim.

It is helpful to think about this context further, that the state of mind of the Saopha was one of being caught between two powers, Britain and Burma proper. The experiences of WWII would bring this feeling home to much more of the population of the Frontier Areas, not just the political elite. Everywhere that the war touched brought the realization of a much bigger picture than had previously been grasped...the Frontier Areas could not remain so separate after all.

3.1.1. The British creation of the Frontier Areas Administration

For the history of the creation of the Frontier Areas from the British perspective, here is an official account from the “Burma, Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947, Report submitted to His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom and to the Government of Burma, June 1947”. The report describes several

[1] Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*, Page 274.

different major 'racial groups', where their populations are concentrated, and a brief account of initial British interactions with them.

Regarding the Shan states:

> It was traditional Burmese policy not to interfere with the internal administration of their feudatory states and Shan chieftains were left to rule their own states. Many young Shan princes and princesses were, however, brought up at the Burmese court, many Shan princesses became Burmese queens and Shan levies were from the period constantly present in the Burmese armies [...] Though the Shans preserve their own language, many Shans have learnt Burmese and in fact the two races share a common culture, and almost a common literature. The last king of Burma, Thibaw, was half Shan. After the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886 the British claimed suzerainty over the Burmese Shan States on the ground that the British had succeeded to the rights of the Burmese kings. Many of the Shan chieftains, however looked askance at the claim and rallied round a Burmese prince, the Limbin Mintha, in an attempt to resist the British, an attempt which they gave up when it proved hopeless.[2]

Regarding the Kachin:

> The Burmese were not interested in the internal administration of the Kachin and the suzerainty exercised did not mean much more than occasional presents or tribute from the Kachins and their occasional service in Burmese armies. In some cases Kachin Duwas of importance received appointment orders from the Burmese King. [...] The Kachins did not take easily to the idea of submitting to the British on annexation of Upper Burma in 1886 and several British expeditions had to be sent to the Kachin Hills, the Kachin resisting with considerable success. It was not until 1895 that the Kachin opposition could be broken and British administration introduced in the Kachin Hills by the Kachin Hill Tribes Regulation of that year. As the Kachins are not self-sufficient in their hills they have always been obliged to maintain contact with the plains population through Shan-Burmese villages in the foothills. Some Kachins know Burmese.[3]

Regarding the Chins:

> British troops were in action against the Northern Chins after the annexation of Upper Burma for a continued period of seven months or thereabouts among the foothills now passed by the Kalemyo-Fort White-Tiddim road [...]. The Chins resisted the advance of British troops fearlessly till they were subdued. It was not until 1892 that the northern people now inhabiting the Tiddim subdivision were totally disarmed. The central Chins did not offer any full-scale resistance. Further down in the south, the various tribes of the Haka subdivision resisted sternly the advance of the forces from the Gangaw Valley. There is a great deal of social

[2] "Burma, Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947, Report submitted to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and to the Government of Burma, June 1947," in *Democracy and Politics in Burma: A Collection of documents*, Marc Weller, editor (Manerplaw: Government Printing Office of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, 1993), Page. 31.
[3] Ibid., Page 32.

> intercourse between Chins and the Burmese and a considerable number of Chins speak Burmese.[4]

Regarding the Karen:

> The Karens of the Frontier Areas, apart from Karenni, are mostly found in the Salween District, in certain portions of the Southern Shan States and in the hill areas of the Toungoo District. The Karens in the Shan States naturally have close relations with the Shans, while the Karens of the Salween District live intermingled with the Shans and other races, which form the minority populations of this district. [...] The Salween District was ruled by a Chief Sgaw Saw Ku at the time of the British annexation of Tenasserim, who surrendered the district to the British authorities.[5]

Regarding the Karenni States [Kayah], the description is rather long and complex:

> Karenni, the home of the Red Karens, is made up of the State of Kantarawaddi, forming Eastern Karenni, and the States of Bawlake and Kyebogyi, forming Western Karenni. At some periods in the history of Burma the Chiefs of Karenni were feudatories of the Burmese Kings. Thus King Minkyinyo (1486-1531) received propitiatory tribute from the rulers of Karenni. Nevertheless no attempt was ever made by the Burmese kings to interfere with the States till 1845, when the Red Karens became aggressive and raided the neighbouring Shan States in pursuit of slaves. [...] In 1875 the independence of Western Karenni was guaranteed as follows, by an agreement between the British and Burmese Governments:-
>
> > "It is hereby agreed between the British and Burmese Governments that the State of Western Karenni shall remain separate and independent, and that no sovereignty or governing authority of any description shall be claimed or exercised over that State."
>
> [...] In 1892 the Chiefs of Western Karenni, of whom there were four at the time, nominally independent, were formally recognised as feudatories by the Government of India and were presented with sanads appointing them Myosas on terms similar to the Myosa of Kantarawadi [Eastern Karenni State]. These four states were later reduced to the present two by amalgamations.
>
> The three Karenni States have never been annexed to the British Crown and have the status of feudatory States. The Chiefs, under the sanads recognizing their appointment, are required, among other conditions, to pay an annual tribute and accept and act upon any advice given to them by the British political officer concerned.[6]

According to the British perspective, the Burmese had not been interested in the internal administration of the Shan, Kachin or Karenni and therefore the British continued a policy of non-interference. Regarding the Chin, it is noted that the Chin interacted with the Bamar, but there is no reference made to their internal affairs.

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[4] Ibid., Page 32.
[5] Ibid., Page 33.
[6] Ibid, Page 33.

Nothing specific is stated regarding the Karen in the Salween District. Finally, mention is made of Shan resistance to British annexation, based on a rejection of the claim of suzerainty of the Burmese kings, and fierce Kachin and Chin resistance to the British is noted. Regarding the Karen of the Salween District, no specifics are given, though the detail that Chief Sgaw Saw Ku surrendered to the British implies warfare of some kind. In this perspective, the claim of extensive, consistent Bamar rule over these areas is made doubtful. If that had been the case, the overthrow of King Thibaw would have had a politically demoralizing effect. Rather, a state of warfare and military engagement towards external forces seems to have been a more common practice.

The British account is interesting because it contrasts with the Bamar perspective offered by Maung Htin Aung, particularly in reference to King Thibaw. Maung Htin Aung, describing the exile of King Thibaw, writes: "Outside the city a loyal Sawbwa with a handful of personally chosen men waited to rescue his sovereign from the hands of the British, but the double ring of British soldiers around the king made it impossible for him to work out his plan."[7] By referring to the Shan Saopha as 'loyal' and calling Thibaw the Saopha's 'sovereign', Maung Htin Aung makes the implicit assertion that Thibaw was the legitimate overlord of the Shan. However, the fact that only a single Saopha with a handful of men was present perhaps refers to the reality that the Shan Saophas overall did not accept Thibaw's supposed sovereignty over them or hold any loyalty to him.

This is not to doubt the might and power of the Burmese kings at their apex. It is merely to underline that Thibaw was not a powerful Bamar king, and according to the historical record, any time that the power of the Bamar kings waned, the power of smaller kings, princes and chiefs waxed. In the pre-colonial period, only military might had ever historically joined all the various portions of 'Burma' together. This is a significant point, which must be kept in mind for further consideration.

3.1.2. Reconsidering British 'divide-and-rule'

The British have been credited with "divide and rule" – this is part of the anti-colonial rhetoric. Take for instance Maung Htin Aung's assertion that Lord Dufferin annexed all of Burma in order to destroy it: "with a view to further humiliate the Burmese people, [he] declared the whole country to be a mere province of the Indian

[7] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*, Page 264.

empire. He probably hoped that the Burmese would lose their separate racial identity under a flood of Indian immigrants."[8] Then couple this with the following assertion:

> Since 1885 the British had carefully followed a policy of divide and rule; they deliberately separated the hill peoples from the Burmese. This policy had the full support of the Christian missions, who had looked upon the Burmese as their opponents since 1826 [...]. Finding it almost impossible to convert the Burmese Buddhists to Christianity, they turned their attention to the hill peoples, with whom they had some success since those peoples were still primitive animists.[9]

This provides a very dark view of British intentions and actions. Yet it is hard to substantiate that it was indeed Lord Dufferin's intention to 'humiliate' all of Burma by making it a province of India, though this was undoubtedly a consequence. However, this view also underlines a typical view, shared by the British and the inhabitants of Burma proper, that the hill peoples were 'primitive'.

The British did "divide" and then "rule." However, it is hard to claim that it was an intentional policy of driving a wedge between peoples. With regard to a British explanation for their policy in these areas, here is an excerpt from the 1947 Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry:

> The strategic importance of the Frontier Areas as a buffer between an inland invader and the valleys of Burma proper prompted the British to extend their administration over these areas piecemeal, as necessity or opportunity arose in the years following 1886. Local advances continued in the far north as late as 1940, when the head-hunting Naga tribes were first brought under some sort of administration.
>
> From the late 19th century until the 1935 Government of Burma Act came into force in 1937 the form of administration in the Frontier Areas, other than the Shan States, did not materially change.[10]

Rather than accusing the British of divide and rule tactics, Chao Tzang Yawnghwe states:

> As regards the reason why the peripheries or "former vassals" were administered separately and ruled indirectly by the British, it can be argued that this was a divide-and-rule stratagem aimed at creating ethnic divisions where there were none before. However, it is more valid to ascribe this to the political situation at the time and to the dictates of colonial expediency. [11]

Bianca Son echoes this idea, citing the costliness of war. The three Anglo-Burman wars were incredibly expensive and the British Raj did not have the funds to occupy

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[8] "Burma, Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947, Report submitted to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and to the Government of Burma, June 1947", Page 266.
[9] Ibid., Page 280.
[10] "Burma, Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947, Report submitted to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and to the Government of Burma, June 1947", Page 34.
[11] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", Page 84.

all of Burma's highlands extensively. For this reason, political officers were sent to work with pre-existing native systems, giving local chiefs more authority but also receiving their taxes, and thereby achieving peaceful control.[12]

Maran La Raw similarly questions the usefulness of blaming colonial policy as the sole force behind the problem of 'national unity', stating:

> It is inherently futile to regard the agent (British colonialism) as the basis for an analysis of the problem. We must understand *what* happened: who did it is a relatively trivial matter. The argument for anti-colonialism has been pursued with such exaggerated proportion that it has served as a convenient distraction for many. But the result has been that we do not know enough about the minority elements in our own country to work out a basis for cooperation and eventual assimilation.[13]

Chao Tzang lists three key points to understanding British policy at the time[14]:
1. In the period of the final annexation, there was a lack of control in these areas by the Konbaung dynasty which is why, for instance, the plot to replace King Thibaw with the Limbin prince was formulated by the Shan.

Around the time of the annexation of Upper Burma, the Southern Shan States formed a confederacy. They planned to drive the British out of the Shan States and eventually all the way out of Burma, making the Limbin prince king of Burma. A notable Saopha was Sao Weng of Lawksawk, who actively fought the British and never surrendered, eventually becoming an exile in China, where he died in 1896. However, five Shan states did not support the prince: Laihka, Mong Kung, Kehsi Mansam, Mong Pan and Yawnghwe. They fought against the confederacy.[15]

Through warfare the British succeeded in getting the Saophas to recognize their over-lordship, except for Sao Weng who would not submit and fled to Kengtung until it too was subdued, thereafter going into exile in China. It was easier for the British to achieve control by a mixture of warfare and negotiation, rather than all out conquest. As such, most of the Saophas retained their power. Those who completely refused to submit, like Sao Weng, were replaced. The case of Sao Weng is indicative of the layered politics in the Shan states, for a granddaughter of the next Saopha of

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[12] See Appendix B, Section II
[13] Maran La Raw, "Towards a Basis for Understanding the Minorities in Burma: The Kachin Example", Page 130.
[14] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", Pages 84-85.
[15] Sao Htao, "SAO WENG (A Shan Patriot of LAWKSAWK)," *Shan State Magazine* Taunggyi (2000) [Online]. Source http://www.shanland.org/oldversion/index-224.htm

Lawksawk, Sao Hkun Suik who ruled from 1900-1943, presents a pro-British stance in her memoir:

> When the British advanced into Burma in 1886, the Sawbwas, not only willingly accepted the British administration, but some of them, like my grandfather who was then heir to the Sawbwaship, joined the British army to overthrow the last of the Burmese Kings.[16]

It is interesting that Adams claims the Saophas willingly accepted British rule, when in fact the Lawksawk Saopha prior to her grandfather did not and preferred exile over submission.

2. The peripheral areas were not easily accessible and had small populations, which made them difficult to exploit economically.

3. It was necessary to maintain peace and maintain stability in the border areas in order to fully develop and exploit Burma proper. The British also assumed the border with China meant easy access to trade there (a miscalculation). It was easier to make treaties than to carry out long, costly wars.

Yet whether or not it was intentional divide-and-rule, Silverstein contends that the immediate consequences of the British administration were in fact separatism:

> The British neither introduced Western democratic ideas and institutions in the Shan States nor did they make any serious attempt to modify the almost absolute character of the chief's authority. In 1922, when dyarchy was introduced in Burma proper and the people there began to experiment with parliamentary institutions, no such development took place in the Shan States. Instead, the British took steps to restrict the contacts between the Shan States and Burma proper. In political terms, they encouraged the States to federate; [13] this arrangement allowed the colonial rulers to deal with the chiefs on a collective basis and provided the chiefs with an institutional structure which made it possible for them to have greater contact with one another. In addition, the British allowed the chiefs to establish a federal fund which gave them greater autonomy and helped to separate their interests from those of the rest of Burma. In administrative terms, the British reorganized the civil service in Burma so that a separate administrative system was created to deal exclusively with the frontier areas. Both moves helped perpetuate the historic separatism between the two areas and feudatory rule in the Shan States. The only real contact between the two came through the institution of the Governor and the administrative system.[17]

However, Silverstein goes on to make one very interesting remark: "it must be noted that although the Shans dominated the peoples in the area both politically and

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[16] Nel Adams, *My Vanished World: The True Story of a Shan Princess* (Frodsham, Chesire: Horseshoe Publications, 2000), Page 10.

[17] Josef Silverstein, "Politics in the Shan State: The Question of Secession from the Union of Burma," *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 18, No. 1 (November 1958): 45.

numerically, they never assimilated the minorities; as a result, cultural pluralism existed throughout the Shan States."[18]

Maung Maung carries the argument further, presenting a Bamar-nationalist view of the colonial period in terms of a cultural colonial impact:

> The Frontier Service Officer and the missionary in their zeal to protect the tribesmen often not only prevented the natural diffusion of Burmese [Bamar] culture and influence into the areas from the towns through trading activities, but tended to spread adverse propaganda about the Burmese [Bamar][19]

This is in direct contrast to Chao Tzang, who notes that colonial authorities and missionaries attempted a kind of cultural Burmanization. He mentions in a note that although the missionaries later devised romanized scripts for the Kachin and Chin, missionary schools gave instruction in Burmese and English, *not* Shan, Karen, or Kachin. Further, the history of the Burmese kings and dynasties was taught in school[20]. He contends that: "The British and the missionaries did not in any way retard or object to the cultural assimilation of the non-Burman, nor did they encourage any form of cultural separatism or anti-Burman feelings."[21] Yet he does not deny that they left a colonial imprint.

The effect of British policy was very deep, but its consequences were possibly different than nationalist Bamar in Burma proper perceived it to be. In their conquest of the frontier areas, the British inserted themselves into an existing power dynamic – the system of centre and periphery. They established themselves in these remote areas firmly. In terms of authority, they replaced the presence of the Bamar kings and their method of rule was significantly different:

> Colonial rule increased the center's control over minorities. [...] the British pushed administration to the political frontiers. In so doing, they broke the traditional patterns of accommodation that existed among the groups of Burma, substituting a system under which all indigenous peoples reported, so to speak, to a foreigner.[22]

Yet because their control was complete, they were able to maintain a long peace in the frontier areas. In terms of economic development, the huge economic and agricultural changes that occurred in Burma proper because of British policy did not occur in the frontier areas, so this was not a source of friction. As the dominant power in the area,

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[18] Ibid., Page 46.
[19] Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*, Page 274.
[20] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", Page 85.
[21] Ibid., Page 86.
[22] Steinberg, *Burma*, Page 47.

the peoples there moulded their identities with relation to the British, as is the case in the centre-periphery power dynamic. Chao Tzang states that in the frontier areas:

> [...] two identities were activated but neither was Burman or Burmese. One identity among those who served in the military and police force, was similar to that of the Karen, i.e., as good and loyal servants of the Empire. Another identity was as a self-governing free people to whom the British appeared as benevolent protectors and impartial upholders of law, order, and justice. [...] Therefore, the non-Burman peoples and leaders naturally did not share the anticolonial sentiments of Burman nationalists, and they, moreover, did not feel confident in the ability of the Burmans to rule ably and justly.[23]

While this is a broad statement to be examined, considering it as a substantial possibility is crucial to understanding the position which Shan leaders took during official discussions like the Round Table Conference (27th November, 1931-12th January, 1932), which will be discussed further on. Chao Tzang states that it was WWII which challenged, or perhaps modified, these fairly unworried, pro-British self-conceptions:

> [...] the war not only shattered the myth of British superiority [...] but dramatically awakened the non-Burmans especially, for it brought the outside world to their doorsteps. It was a raw, direct, and violent impact unmediated by any third party as had previously been the case. There was extensive destruction, widespread dislocation, and a total disruption of life.[24]

He goes on to say that, beyond its particular impact on the frontier areas people, the war affected everyone:

> For all the people of Burma, the war turned the world upside down. It was a total psychological revolution which mobilized the Burman, the Karen, Karenni, Shan, Kachin, and so on. Ethnic identities and political aspirations were awakened and heightened. The impact of World War II on ethno-nationalist feelings in Burma, and the effects of the people's participation in violence on behalf of opposing powers, certainly cannot be underestimated, for these had direct bearing on subsequent relations between the Burman and non-Burman segments of Burma.[25]

Steinberg concludes:

> If the traditional ethnic relationships no longer had meaning after the colonial conquest, no new relationships had developed by World War II. The war not only brought about the destruction of the economy but also broke the pattern of forced minority isolation. [...][26]

[23] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", Pages 86-87.
[24] Ibid., Page 87.
[25] Ibid., Pages 87-88.
[26] Steinberg, *Burma*, Page 48.

While British colonial rule had a great impact across Burma, the strongest argument against a premeditated policy of deliberate divide-and-rule as a method of keeping the 'once united' peoples of Burma apart is the absence of any such indication in the declassified British documents and official reports from that period. No such evidence has been found.

The concept of the Shan Saophas having wanted to replace King Thibaw with the Limbin prince raises questions about Shan power at the time of the British annexation. It would have been a significant political move which would have seen the rise of Shan influence in the Burmese court if it had been successful. If the Shan Saophas were still confidently attempting this kind of political manoeuvring in the late 19th century, then they cannot be characterised as powerless leaders of subordinate vassal states. Their individual power was certainly less than the power of a strong Bamar king. Yet combined Shan power against a weak Bamar king was another matter altogether. To simply characterise the Shan-Bamar relationship as sub-ordinate/super-ordinate is misleading.

It is perhaps of interest that in 1978 Ne Win married a granddaughter of the Limbin prince, a woman called June Rose Bellamy. At the time, it was considered a legitimising move:

> Ne Win thought marriage to June Rose would be advantageous. 'All the locals would say it was a good thing because she had royal blood, and legitimised his regime,' Gutman said. June Rose agrees. 'I think – and people say it, which is why I can say it – I was a sort of lollipop for the people,' she says. 'Whatever average people say about me or my Anglo half, the family name is still very important in Burma, the royalty, the Limbin.'[27]

This brings into consideration the role that conceptions of 'traditional authority' still play in Burma today.

3.2 The Chin and the British

The British campaigns in the Chin Hills produced a few works such as *The Image of War or Service on the Chin Hills* by Surgeon-Captain A. G. E. Newland of the M.S., 2nd Burma Battalion and *The Chin Hills: A history of the people, British dealings with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country* by

[27] Hamish McDonald and Desmond O'Grady, "Between two worlds", *Griffith REVIEW* Edition 27: Food Chain (2010) [Online]. Source http://www.griffithreview.com/edition-27-food-chain/between-two-worlds

Bertram S. Carey, Assistant Commissioner Burma, and Political Officer in the Chin Hills, and H. N. Tuck, his extra Assistant Commissioner.

These works are interesting in that they provide a colonial perspective on these societies, revealing a mixture of some accommodation with regard to these 'primitive' peoples mixed with a colonial attitude of superiority. For instance, Carey's remarks regarding Chin religious beliefs:

> In dealing with Chins it is right to remember that his spirit is of supreme importance in his eyes and that his grove, or his rock, is as much feared by him as the pagoda is revered by the Buddhist. Therefore, if it is possible, the felling of trees in a sacred grove should be avoided. But care must be taken that the cupidity of the Chin is not pandered to, as it is no sin for him to lie, and he will claim any tree in the forest as dedicated to or inhabited by a spirit if he wants it for his own use.[28]

Regarding the position of chiefs, Carey offers this summary:

> The position of the Chin Chief in regard to the people is very similar to that of a feudal Baron. The Chief is lord of the soil and his freemen hold it as his tenants and pay him tithes whilst they in common with the slaves are bound to carry arms against all his enemies.[29]

Regarding British response to local resistance, Carey gives the following example: "The next day Lieutenant Foster and two officers whilst strolling outside the camp were fired at by a few Thetta men from ambush and Lieutenant Foster was shot dead. In consequence of this, the nearest village, Lamtok, was burnt."[30] In the footnote below this sentence, Carey provides the 'Official Report' on the incident, which records that two prisoners from the village were captured, all other inhabitants having fled, and were informed why the village had been burnt, then released, presumably to spread the British message.

A revealing paragraph regarding Carey's general attitude and impatience toward the Chin at this point is the following:

> Looking back now one is disposed to admit that it was probably wise to procure the surrender of the tribe in peace [He is referring to the Tashon tribe, of the central hills]. But for the three following years, whilst the Tashons were chafing under our rule and encouraging north and south to rebel against us, it seemed a pity that we had not attacked and utterly routed that army [...] The Chins would thus have learnt at the outset how small was the power of the Tashon tribe and how easily it was broken, and how futile was resistance.[31]

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[28] Bertram S. Carey and H. N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A history of the people, British dealings with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country* (Delhi: Cultural Publishing House, 1896, reprint 1983), Page 198.
[29] Ibid., Page 201.
[30] Ibid., Page 35.
[31] Ibid., Page 40.

Overall, the British saw themselves as having brought peace. As Carey notes, lack of cohesion amongst the various chiefs prevented an all out attack on the British but also gave rise to various feuds: "Patient negotiation and sympathetic treatment, however, carried us on the middle of November without serious disturbances [...] Our presence in the Southern hills had done much to stop the promiscuous bloodshed which was indulged in before our occupation."[32] By the end of 1894, Carey noted: "During the year no offences were committed by Chins against the telegraph wire, no shot was fired throughout the year in earnest, no raids were committed by our tribesmen across any of our borders, and no murders of our people committed in the hills."[33]

Yet what was the impression amongst the people in the Chin Hills of the British? In an anecdote about a fellow soldier, Newland provides a surprising insight:

> One officer had a huge dog, which shared his tent with him. At night loud snores, like strong, healthy human snoring, always proceeded from that tent; but the occupant always would have it that it was the dog that made the noise. But "we had our doubts," as the Chin Chiefs remarked when we told them that we had come into their country solely for their own good.[34]

Whether or not Newland intended to, the parallel he draws between the doubt of the soldiers towards the honesty of their comrade, and the doubt of the Chin Chiefs towards the honesty of the British, inclines us towards sympathy with the Chiefs. The British had most certainly not come to the hills to achieve anyone's 'good' except their own. Another passage, in which Newland reveals ultimate British callousness, is the following:

> Owing to the mountainous nature of the country, the transport of the columns consisted mainly of Indian hill coolies, supplemented, as occasion required, by Chins. *The Chin, when he can be obtained, is an excellent beast of burden.* He is quite at home in these hills, and thinks nothing of running up the steepest with eighty pounds or more slung on his back. They also carry their own food, thus giving the commissariat no trouble on that score.[35] [Emphasis added]

[32] Ibid., Pages 47-48.
[33] Ibid., Page 117.
[34] A.G.E. Newland, *The Image of War or Service on the Chin Hills* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co 1894). I was only able to access this work by downloading it as a document and the formatting was such that no page numbers were provided. This anecdote appears in the early pages under the small heading 'The Dog Snores' [Online]. Source http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/a-g-e-newland/the-image-of-war-or-service-on-the-chin-hills-hci.shtml
[35] Ibid., no page number available, this text appears on the early pages under the small heading 'Our Transport'.

This equation of a Chin man with an animal or commodity, since he can be 'obtained' is consistent with the point made by Bianca Son, that the British claimed a kind of ownership over the people in the hills.[36]

For a less colonial look at the Chin, (yet still, at times with a 'development'-oriented perspective) F. K. Lehman, writing in the early 1960's on fieldwork conducted in the late 1950's, attempted to analyse Chin society:

> The Chin social system shown is so largely molded in response to the problem of manipulating relationships with complex, nuclear, Burman society, that we shall propose setting up a special class to accommodate it. This class will be called a subnuclear society. It is distinct both from peasant society and from purely tribal society. To understand how Burman civilization affected Chin society it will be necessary first to distinguish the major Chin divisions, since these differ in social structure and culture, and to trace the history of the Chin, and to describe the nature of their contacts with the Burmans.[37]

He continues by noting that the moniker 'Chin' is not adequate in covering all of the people it was meant to describe by the British colonials:

> The term "Chin" is imprecise. It is a Burmese word (*khyang*), not a Chin word. [...] No single Chin word has explicit reference to all the peoples we customarily call Chin, but all – or nearly all of the peoples have a special word for themselves and those of their congeners with whom they are in regular contact. This word is almost always a variant form of a single root, which appears as zo, yo, ysou, shou and the like.[38]

With regard to Burman/Chin relations, he notes:

> The Chin are affected by Burman civilization because they have always had close relations with it. These relations included trading with Burmans and raiding Burman settlements. In some cases there were political relations of a kind described later in this paper. In order to understand these relations we must shortly enter into a brief, generalized, and frankly speculative discussion of Chin history.

Given the necessary constraints in this paper, not much more space can be devoted to further description. Yet it is worth noting that, unlike the British, who made definitive statements, Lehman comments on the speculative nature of a discussion of ancient Chin history.

In terms of early stirrings of nationalism or notions of independence, Lehman does not go so far as to make any claims. In reference to Chin acceptance of the

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[36] See Appendix B, Section II

[37] F. K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society: A tribal people of Burma adapted to a non-western civilization*, Illinois Studies in Anthropology No. 3 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), Pages 1-2.

[38] Ibid., Page 3.

changes wrought by the British, he mentions the Anglo-Chin war, which occurred after WWI:

> The last serious attempt to turn back the clock was the Anglo-Chin rebellion between 1918 and 1920 [...] a political movement by certain chiefs who saw in World War I an opportunity to throw off a foreign yoke so as to be able to resume internecine wars. There had as yet been little effective cultural contact at that time, and this was not a nativistic movement or a cultural rejection.[39]

In seems in his estimation, this war had little to do with an assertion of any kind of Chin nationalism or rejection of British culture, but was rather a power play amongst various chiefs.

3.3 The Kachin and the British

As in the Chin case, a former member of the Frontier Service of Burma wrote extensively about the Kachin, in this case W.J.S. Carrapiett's *The Kachin Tribes of Burma*. It was published in 1929 by the colonial government for the benefit of Officers of the Burma Frontier Service, so that they could acquaint themselves better with the area they were to be sent to. It contains statements on Kachin history, culture, customs, traditions and finally, advice to Junior Officers on how to deal with 'the natives' and the customary law of the Kachin, regarding typical administrative and legal problems likely to be encountered.

A brief description of Kachin character is proposed as such:

> The Kachin will be found to be different from the Burman in many ways. His chief characteristics are:- (1) Sturdy independence; (2) truthfulness; (3) revengefulness; (4) love of liberty; (5) cruel treachery; (6) incapacity for continuous work; (7) hospitality. The Burmese word *shiko* (to pay obeisance or respect) is not found in the Kachin vocabulary, and every Kachin considers himself to be as good as any other man. Thus when he meets, or calls on anyone, he expects to be treated on the same terms of equality as in his own highlands. This attitude must not be mistaken for disrespect: for even in Kachinland, there is a code of etiquette and manners. [...] Unsophisticated Kachins- those who have not been contaminated by the outside world – will be found to be eminently truthful. It is a well-defined code of honour never to deny an offence, or a fault.[40]

This 'tribute' to Kachin character, while demonstrating the persistent sense of superiority inherent in the colonial attitude also reveals the trend Bianca Son mentions in reference to the Chin – namely that the colonial powers tended to characterise the

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[39] Ibid., Page 208.
[40] W.J.S. Carrapiett, *The Kachin Tribes of Burma* (Rangoon: Supdt., Govt. Printing and Stationary, 1929), Page 4.

hill people as 'truthful' in contrast to the Burmans of Burma proper.[41] This may have been because during this period they now encountered less overall resistance to their presence in the frontier areas than in Burma proper, hence the reference to those Kachins who have not been "contaminated" by the outside world.

Later, in the section intended as advice to Junior Officers, Carrapiett provides an interesting glimpse at Kachin society:

> For the most part the Kachin Hills are split up into tracts, and in each tract is a Duwa or chief who is responsible for peace and order in the area under his jurisdiction – and for the collection of the yearly tribute. The tract consists of a number of villages, and in each village is an Akyo or headman who is subordinate to the Duwa, and, since these villages are situated at a great distance from that of the Duwa, represents him in local affairs of small import. The Akyi is usually helped by Salangs or elders, who, though not appointed by Government, are consulted both by the Duwa and by Government officers when occasion arises.[42]

Carrapiett notes another form of political organization amongst the Kachin, but dismisses it:

> More than half a century ago, a spirit of Republicanism manifested itself in the unadministered territory known as the Triangle and thence found its way to the west of the Mali kha. Certain tribesmen who found the yoke of the Duwa irksome and were impatient of control, declared themselves Kumlaos or rebels, threw off their hereditary connection with the Duwa, and settled themselves in solitary villages of their own. The British Government steadily set its face against this movement and has declined to recognize Kumlaos. Villages in properly constituted tracts under a Duwa are known as Kumshas. It will be found that there is still a tendency here and there to assert this spirit of independence, and officers should be on the alert to suppress it without delay. [...] Another insidious method is for two or three households to move from a main village to some distant and inaccessible hill top on the plea that they are cutting taungyas. Not having obtained anybody's permission they imagine after a year or two that they are independent and, in course of time, being to flout the Duwa's authority.[43]

In fact, the situation described by Carrapiett rather than being anomalous is consistent with a similar kind of behaviour in the Shan Saopha system. Since conceptions of land ownership were not similar in this region as in Europe, it was considered legitimate practice for subjects of a Saopha, or in this case, a Duwa, to flee to a more remote place, beyond the control of the feudal ruler. An abusive ruler was prone to losing subjects and therefore to becoming more vulnerable to attack from others, which could potentially limit the despotism of any one ruler.

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[41] See Appendix B, Section II.
[42] W.J.S. Carrapiett, *The Kachin Tribes of Burma*, Page 81.
[43] Ibid., Page 81.

By forcing individuals to remain under their particular Duwa, the British introduced a coercive element not previously available to the ruler. Carrapiett notes: "It will be found that in some subdivisions there have been no Duwas for years past. Here each village will be found under its own Akyi. The mistakes of past years cannot now be rectified, and this departure from established custom must continue."[44] In fact, these 'mistakes' was not such a departure from "established custom" as he thought.

Regarding Kachin/Burman relations at the time of the final annexation, Maran La Raw notes:

> The British tried to preserve the obvious political *status quo* and did not begin plans for the cultural and political integration of the Kachin into Burman civilization as soon as they had annexed Upper Burma. [...] When the British were annexing upper Burma, the Kachin had already risen en masses against the Burmese King. It took the British more than ten years after the fall of the Mandalay Empire to subdue the tribesmen (Woodman 1962:373-379), and the Kachins did not finally give up resistance against the British until 1935. It therefore becomes absurd to insist that the British colonial government should have begun immediate steps to assimilate the Kachin tribes in these circumstances.[45]

Providing a non-colonial analysis of the nature of 'Kachin', Maran La Raw exposes its complexity:

> Because language difference has often been cited as one principal criterion for intergroup dissimilarity, we will know look into the languages spoken in Kachin State. *Kachin* is a term covering seven linguistic groups, of which two members belong to branches distant from the others within the Tibeto-Burman family. [...] Falling within one political entity (Kachin State) are such diverse language groups that we have no less than forty minorities (linguistically defined) in a minority political state. But the complexities of definition have just begun. The Kachin speakers, in spite of their linguistic differences, all share notions of common ancestry, practice the same form of marriage system, have an almost homogenous customary law and social control system, use only Jingphaw for ritual purposes, and are largely polyglots, in the full sense of the term. *Genetically the languages are divergent; culturally and bilingually the groups of speakers converge*.[46] [Emphasis added]

Maran La Raw notes the Shan/Kachin relationship:

> Throughout the entire Kachin area, lowland agriculture, accompanied by varying degrees of bilingualism, has come from the Shan. The extent of the influence can be illustrated by the fact that in 1960, 15 percent of lowland agricultural land passed from Shan to Kachin hands in Bhamo District alone (author's fieldnotes 1958-1961, Bhamo). And, as Leach (1954:9) has

[44] W.J.S. Carrapiett, *The Kachin Tribes of Burma*, Page 82.
[45] Maran La Raw. "Towards a Basis for Understanding the Minorities in Burma: The Kachin Example", Page 129.
[46] Ibid., Page 133.

> pointed out, one of the two ideal models of political systems (the *gumsa*) between which the empirical Kachin societies oscillate has been derived from the Shan[47]

The relationship was an old one, seemingly stronger than the Burman/Kachin dynamic:

> Evidence of borrowing from the Shan in Kachin language and material culture is substantial, whereas borrowing from the Burmans is negligible. This sort of evidence means that we can discount some claims (e.g. Furnivall 1960:4) of direct Burman control of the Kachins which did not involve the Shan as well. For centuries there have been symbiotic relations between the Shan and the Kachin for food and for protection against other marauding feudatories. Thus we must understand something of the Shan in order to understand the Kachin. Likewise, the Shan must define himself in relation to the Kachin and the Burman.[48]

This is certainly a different framing of 'Kachin' and 'ethnicity' than that practised by the British. The conception of symbiosis, rather than hostile opposition allows for a constructive reading of 'ethnic' difference.

3.4 The Shan and the British

According to Chao Tzang, in the time period of the final British annexation:

> There was not even nominal Burman control in the Shan areas at that time. As a matter of fact, it was the British who brought the Shan principalities *retroactively* under Burman suzerainty in 1888-1890, by having the princes acknowledge their tributary subordination to Mandalay, as per the treaties signed with the Shan *Chaofa* at Muangyai, Muangnai, and Kentung.[49]

This lack of overall control is reported in J. George Scott's *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*: "The regular authority of the Burmese kings extended only over the Burmese-Shans, and thus ended at the last Burmese-Shan village, Maingna in the Waingmaw circle."[50]

The area known as Shan State today was a huge tract of land comprising some areas which were inaccessible and where Shan ruler-ship itself had never been extended. An extreme example of this is the Wa who lived above Kentung. When asked by the British Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry in 1947 how they wished to be administered, a representative replied "We have not thought about that because we are wild people" and furthermore, when pressed about the constitutional reforms his

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[47] Ibid., Page 135.
[48] Ibid., Pages 140-41.
[49] Yawnghwe, "The Burman Military: Holding the Country Together?", Page 85.
[50] J. George Scott and P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States in Five Volumes* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1900), Page 570.

people wanted he answered “None, only more opium.”[51] However, it should not be assumed that the Wa had no form of organization of their own. Cholthira Satyawadhna writes:

> Superficial investigation in the field may give the impression that all Wa villages were autonomous and recognised no one's authority but that of their own headman. In fact, the Wa really formed a series of village communities, but the most powerful chieftains, like Sung Ramang in the north and Ho Kha in the south of Wa state in Burma, and Si-meng, Lanchang, and Shangyuan of Wa territory in Yunnan, were said to rule over a number of villages and possibly looked upon the connection as a federation rather than a government. When there was a war crisis, the drums were beaten in a specific rhythm in order to ask for support from neighbouring alliances. Even in the present, my field investigation indicates that the Si-meng Wa of Yunnan, strongly support the rebellion of Wa state against the Burmese Government.[52]

It was not until the KMT invasion in the 1950’s that the Wa began to be forced to care about events outside their own domain, having previously ignored all other forms of political change in the region.[53] The Wa used various methods for avoiding external interference. Cholthira Satyawadhna notes that historically the Wa had had to resist threats from the Shan, Bamar, Chinese and eventually the British also, and that their fearsome reputation and head-hunting practices were in some way linked to a defense strategy. She references her own field studies and also cites Sir James George Scott, who had spent decades working in the Burma Commission, and wrote of the Wa in Shan State:

> The Wa country has been proclaimed "out of bounds," and British officers on the borders have been ordered to prevent any one, or at any rate any British subjects, from entering Wa territory. This is not so much because of a sincere regard for the well-being of such people, as because wanderers in the Wa hills are apt to disappear and not be heard of again.[54]

However, the Wa existed scattered throughout Siam, Burma and China in various groupings. Cholthira Satyawadhna even writes of self-described divisions amongst different groups of Wa:

> The Wa divided themselves into two categories in Chinese: the Siao Wa ("Lesser Wa") and the Ta Wa ("Greater Wa"). The Siao Wa in Lanchang believed themselves to be the civilised

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[51] Shelby Tucker, *Burma: The Curse of Independence* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), Page 19.
[52] Cholthira Satyawadhna, "A Comparative Study of Structure and Contradiction in the Austro-Asiatic System of the Thai-Yunnan Periphery", in Ethnic Groups across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia, Gehan Wijeyewardene, editor (Singapore: ISEAS, 1990), Page 97.
[53] Sai Kham Mong, *Kokang and Kachin in the Shan State (1945-1960)* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, 2005), Page 23.
[54] Sir James George Scott, "The Wa or Lawa: Head-Hunters", *Burma and Beyond* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1935), Page 291.

> Wa and usually called the Ta Wa "Lua", who, in their eyes, were uncivilised, that is, the Wa of Xi-meng in the central area of A-Wa San.[55]

Besides the Wa, Kachin, Chin, Naga, Palaung, Pa-O and Kokang peoples lived in areas bordering the Shan states or throughout certain areas of the Shan states, sometimes having so dense a population concentration that they effectively had their own states.[56] These various people were not under firm Shan control.

In areas heavily populated by Shans, however, the Saopha-system was an established form of local political organization, though the Saophas themselves were historically rivals who engaged in endless wars against one another.[57] In the lower southern Shan states, was a territory known as the 'Myelat' a "midland" area which at the time of British occupation comprised sixteen small states, and lay between Burma and the Shan states proper. In the Myelat dwelt the people described by Daw Mya Sein as the 'Ngwegoondaw' and 'Shwegoondaw' who had to pay the non-Burman poll tax to the Burmese kings in silver or gold. The name for a chief of the Myelat would be Ngwekunhmu, literally meaning, 'the silver tax collector'. The name for a chief of the people of Katha and some districts west of the Irawaddy was 'Shwehmu', literally, 'the gold tax collector'. In Scott's *Gazetteer of Upper Burma* it states that the Myelat did not seem to have recognised Burman authority until 1755.[58]

It has been maintained that the British did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Shan states and left them to govern themselves.[59] Sao Saimong Mangrai, a Shan historian, states that under the British "[p]eace came as never before and prosperity naturally followed. As far as could be seen the Shan were left almost severely alone in their old ways, habits and customs."[60] Nonetheless, the British brought changes to the administration of the Shan states which had lasting consequences. First, once the British had gotten the various Shan Saophas and rulers to sign the sanad in the 1880s-90s, they began to draw boundaries where there had never been boundaries, depending on what suited their interests.[61] Territory was redistributed: some of the

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[55] Cholthira Satyawadhna, "A Comparative Study of Structure and Contradiction in the Austro-Asiatic System of the Thai-Yunnan Periphery", Page 87.
[56] Tucker, *Burma,* Pages 17-22.
[57] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation* (Ithaca: Cornell University/Southeast Asia Program, 1965), Page 86.
[58] Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States in Five Volumes*, Page 528.
[59] Michael W. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Page 37; Donald M. Seekins, "Historical Setting," in *Burma: a country study*, Frederica M. Bunge, editor (Washington: The American University, 1983), Page 43.
[60] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, Page 299.
[61] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 77.

frontier chiefs gained territory, some lost their rights, and some had their land transferred to foreign powers and "finally even lost the right to choose their own suzerainty."[62]

In this arrangement, the Saophas and other Shan rulers were given full autonomy in internal matters, although they were, in the grand scheme of things, now subject to Burma Proper. The British Foreign Department's Notification 791E stated this change explicitly "the whole of Upper Burma, *including* the Shan States, [...] was declared to be part of British India"[63] [Emphasis added]. In the Upper Burma Laws Act of 1887, the Shan states were demarcated into north, south, the myelat and states under the supervision of the deputy commissioners of Myitkyina and Upper Chindwin districts.[64] Despite their 'full autonomy', the Saophas and Shan rulers had to obey the resident British officers, supervisors, superintendents, residents and commissioners, all of whom ranked higher than them in terms of access to the power centre, in this case Britain.[65]

The states were supervised by British political agents called 'Assistant Superintendents' who answered to the 'Superintendents' of the northern and southern Shan states. Each assistant superintendent was assigned one big state, or several smaller ones. The assistant superintendents advised the Saophas and their advice "was expected to be taken literally and seriously."[66]

During the 1920s, a significant change made to the administration of the Shan states was the introduction of federation. According to Sao Saimong Mangrai, federation was intended to make the British administration pay for itself. The states were officially divided in the following manner (some smaller areas were consolidated): Twenty-six Shan states plus 3 Karenni states comprised the southern Shan states and six Shan states comprised the northern Shan states.[67] The Federated Shan states were formed October 1st, 1922, the first structure of its kind amongst the Shan. The constitution for the federation was framed without consultation with the

[62] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State: From its Origins to 1962* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009), Page 151.
[63] Ibid., Page 167.
[64] Ibid., Page 167.
[65] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 78.
[66] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, Page 301.
[67] Ibid., Page 302.

Saophas, who simply had to accept it at a single meeting with Sir Reginald Craddock at Taunggyi.[68]

Taunggyi, located in Yawnghwe state, was the headquarters of the Superintendent and Political Officer of the Southern Shan States. At the beginning of the British occupation the town was considered a suitable location and civil headquarters were moved there in 1894. The town housed the Superintendent's Residency, the Assistant Superintendents quarters, the Forest Divisional Officer's quarters, the Executive Engineer's quarters, and the quarters of the Civil Surgeon, Hospital Assistant and Police Officers. In addition were the Court and offices of the Superintendent and Political Officer, the Treasury, jail, Public Works Department office, Durbar hall (for festivals), hospital, post office, telegraph office, circuit-house and the Public Works Dept. inspection bungalow.[69]

With the federation of the Shan states, a centralized budget was established for public works, medical administration, forestry, education, agriculture and the police. The states gave a part of their revenues to fund this budget (first 50 percent, later reduced to between 27-35 percent[70]), in addition to revenues collected from timber and mineral extraction, which had previously gone into provincial funds. The Saophas were joined into an Advisory Council of Chiefs which had no legislative powers and was consulted primarily in connection with the extension of 'Acts to the Shan states' decided by the local Governor or when the budget was being discussed.[71]

The Federated Shan states were treated as a sub-province of Burma Proper, with separate finances and a distinct administration. The President of the Advisory Council of Chiefs was also the Commissioner of the Federated Shan states as well as being an Agent of the Governor of Burma. The Commissioner was the head to whom the Superintendents reported[72], as well as being in charge of the Federated Shan states central budget.[73] Additionally, the powers of High Court for the Shan states, which had been under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-governor, were now transferred to the Commissioner.[74]

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[68] Memorandum of the Federated Shan States, issued September 1930, prior to the London Roundtable Conference. Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State,* Appendix 17, Page 537.
[69] Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States in Five Volumes,* Page 236.
[70] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma,* Page 79.
[71] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation,* Page 304.
[72] Ibid., Page 304.
[73] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma,* Page 79.
[74] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation,* Page 305.

In this manner, the autonomy of the Shan Saophas and rulers was gradually diminished. Yawnghwe states:

> [...] the Shan chaofa and rulers had only advisory roles in the federal government despite the fact that they had to contribute 50 per cent of their revenue to the central fund. Since they did not enjoy any executive or legislative power in the federation, their status was severely reduced from that of semi-sovereign rulers in the late 1880s, to that of poorly paid but elevated native tax-collectors in 1922.[75]

They were to collect taxes, maintain law and order and the courts, and could appoint their own officials and control their own subjects, but always under the direction of the superintendents.[76] Whether or not the Saophas then could have done anything to change the state of affairs in the 1880s is uncertain. However, as the years passed they began to recognize their true position within the British Empire and the British-legitimized dominance of the Burmans and Rangoon. The Saophas disliked federation, believing they had given up too much power, forced to act according to the sanad which made them subject to the superintendent and governor.[77] The Shan region was no longer classified as a political entity in its own right but was "an administrative appendage of a colonial set-up, no different from other tribal areas."[78] The Shan did try to change this state of affairs several times during the 1930s through discussion with the British in Burma and London, but to no avail.[79] Before continuing, however, it is worth explaining why the Saophas mattered at all and what exactly their role was within the Shan states.

3.4.1 Saopha- system

The Saopha-system was traditionally one of hereditary rule, though not feudal in the European sense. Though it usually descended from father to eldest son it might also go to uncles, younger sons or nephews. Shan society was not rigidly stratified and interactions between the ruler and the ruled were not overly formalized. The kinship system, where in-laws could be related to other in-laws, made the Saopha families so extensive that a great number of people could claim access to some degree.[80]

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[75] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 79.
[76] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 177.
[77] Ibid., Page 187.
[78] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 80.
[79] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 183.
[80] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 93.

The hereditary rights of the Saophas, however, did lie in something like the European concept of the 'divine right of kings.' The term Saopha means 'Lord of the Sky' and the power of the Saophas was unquestioned. Sai Aung Tun writes: "The *Saohpa* often used their powers firmly and effectively. The feudal administration pivoted around the *Saohpa* and for good or bad, they bore the responsibility for their people."[81]

There were three levels in the hierarchy: the Saopha, Myosa and Ngwe-kun-mu. Since the Saopha was a ruler of a state, the towns or villages under him would be ruled by the Myosas and Ngwe-kun-mu. The term Myosa means 'town-eater' and such a person had the authority to tax a town. The Ngwe-kun-mu was not particularly a ruler, but had authority to collect taxes for the governing Saopha. As in the Kachin case, some areas or groups broke away and so in the Shan states, some Myosas and Ngwe-kun-mu were independent: in these cases they collected taxes for themselves and did not remit them to anyone else. At the time of independence, there were 34 states. However, according to traditional methods of reckoning their rulers were not actually all Saophas, but the independent Myosas and Ngwe-kun-mu were elevated to the status of Saopha to establish equality. The creation of the 34th state 'Kokang', in 1947, is an interesting case of political negotiation within Shan State. Kokang, which had an overwhelmingly Chinese population, was a sub-state of Hsenwi state which had long desired to secede. The proceedings were overseen by Sao Hkun Hkio, counsellor for the Frontier Areas Administration.[82]

Shan peasants resembled 'freemen' in Europe. They owned small parcels of land and could move about freely. Slaves or serfs, people who could only live and work on the lord's land, did not exist as they did in Europe. In village and local matters, the peasants governed themselves with their own village headmen.[83] When peasants did not like the rules or taxes administered by their Saopha, they could resettle elsewhere, especially since Saophas were not landowners, in the sense that all the land did not belong to them.[84] Yawnghwe contends that the Saophas "were never

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[81] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 39.
[82] For a fuller explanation of the Kokang secession and access to reports written at the time, see the online archive at www.shanland.org. Sao Hkun Hkio, "Memorandum for the Executive Council. Subject: - Kokang State, 25 August 1947", *Secession of Kokang* [Online]. Source http://www.shanland.org/oldversion/index-227.htm
[83] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 82; Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 40.
[84] Unlike in Europe, where the concept of property was fundamental to the development of the capitalist system. In the Shan states, land boundaries only came into existence after the arrival of the British.

landlords in the individual ownership of land" though they did of course use the lands in the territory they ruled for their own purposes.[85] Sai Aung Tun takes the opposite point of view:

> All cultivable lands in Shan State were under the control of the Shan Chiefs, the saohpa, who were the sole owners of the land. The farmers who worked the land, strictly speaking, did not own the land as their private property. The land was given to them to cultivate: it was not hereditary property, nor was it transferable.[86]

Still, Sai Aung Tun goes on to note that "The *saohpa* took much care to see that all cultivable land remained firmly in the hands of the Shan farmers and peasants."[87]

Perhaps the difference in scholarly opinion relates to different conceptions of land ownership. That is, Yawnghwe is referring to land ownership as it is understood in the European sense of property rights. The Saophas never exerted that kind of formal control. However, had you asked the average Shan peasant who the land belonged to, he or she would likely have given the name of the Saopha of that region, which is the point Sai Aung Tun makes. Bixler provides the following comparison with India:

> Sawbwas have differed; some have been liberal and forward-looking, others far more autocratic. They should not be confused with the wealthy maharajahs of India. They have been instead more like prosperous (sometimes very prosperous) landed gentry in an area largely nonurban.[88]

Under the British, the Saophas still had more money than the average Shan farmer, since they could keep 10% of taxed revenue from their kingdoms. However, Saophas also had more customary obligations to pay for: monthly salaries for local judges, ministers, officers, clerks, policemen, guards, certain kinds of teachers, the maintenance of religious institutions and buildings, and the maintenance of local administration, jails and court-houses. A Saopha also had to support relatives, maintain his palaces, entertain state guests, be a patron of monasteries, monks, intelligent students and maintain local jobs by employing a personal retinue and staff.[89] Revenues and accounts were strictly monitored by the British Residents so during the British colonial period, tax abuse could not occur on a wide-scale, if at

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[85] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 93.
[86] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 44.
[87] Ibid., Page 44.
[88] Norma Bixler, *Burma: A profile*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1971), Page 135.
[89] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 83.

all.[90] The size of one's kingdom and the resources available in one's lands also determined how much revenue accrued to each individual Saopha.

3.5 The Karenni and the British

Explaining what Karenni means requires some definitions. The term Karenni is a composite of the Burmese words 'kayin' (Karen) and 'ni' (red). This is why the British sometimes referred to these people as the 'Red Karen.' In the 1947 constitution, the state was called Karenni state, after the British fashion. However, in the Constitutional Amendment Act, 1951, the name was changed to Kayah State, in reference to the Kayah, the largest ethnic group in the State.[91]

The information in this section relies on Jean-Marc Rastorfer's work: *On the Development of Kayan and Kayah National Identity: A study and updated bibliography.* It was first published in 1994 and republished in 2004 with a revised bibliography and new preface. It uses a wide variety of sources, historical and contemporary. My reliance on this source is due to my own time limitations regarding availability of sources and reading time. For those interested in further reading, Rastorfer provides an extensive bibliography and in his preface highly recommends Pascal Khoo Thwe's *From the Land of Green Ghosts*.

Rastorfer notes that the existence of independent Red Karen states was reported in 1784 by the catholic missionary Monsignor Mantegazza and that a map from the Surveyor Generals Office, Calcutta 1824 described a region east of Toungoo in the following way: "Extensive Hilly Tract Occupied by the Karen who in 1795 rejected the Authority of the King of Ava."[92] Rastorfer states that at an unknown date, but possibly in relation to the example of the Saopha of Mong Pai who proclaimed his autonomy while Ava was weak, "local leaders changed autonomous villages into feudal Sates."[93] Despite this, ties were maintained with the court of Ava and Rastorfer maintains that even though the Karenni had dealings with Lanna and Thailand, they were always drawn to "Shan and Myanmar [Bamar] realms"[94]

In terms of British interest, after the annexation of Lower Burma a British agent was established in Western Karenni, since the area was seen as an important

[90] Ibid., Page 82.
[91] Jean-Marc Rastorfer, *On the Development of Kayan and Kayah National Identity: A study and updated bibliography* (Bangkok: Southeast Asian Publishing House, 2004), Pages 2-3
[92] Ibid., Page 10.
[93] Ibid., Page 10.
[94] Ibid., Page 11, also see footnote 36.

"buffer state" on the northern frontier. If we recall Maung Htin Aung's assertion in Chapter 2 that the British "incited the Karenni chiefs to rebel", it is this context he is referring to. However, Maung Htin Aung's reading of the situation ignores the agency of the Karenni chiefs, who perhaps needed no incitement to rebel but were rather always looking for ways to remain independent of Ava, which the British enabled them to do. However, in the Karenni states, as in the Shan states, there was a significant degree of internal conflict between chiefs. Rastorfer describes the "primary function" of the Karenni States as "*defense* by attack". He explains that aggressive action served specific economic and political purposes related to the maintenance and protection of the state. In economic terms, raiding brought slaves and territories fought over had teak, since slaves and teak were the primary objects of trade between the Karenni and neighbouring countries. In political terms, the constant warfare and raiding reminded people locally of their need to have allegiance with particular princes to assure their own safety and kept people generally aware of the existence of the Karenni states. However, the states faced economic difficulties because they could not maintain steady trade as their rulers "were not powerful enough to maintain security in their own territories, and were unwilling to allow outsiders to pacify Karenni"; thus things remained politically precarious and it was rumoured in 1873 that the ruler of Western Karenni was planning to offer his allegiance to the British to avoid annexation by the Burmese.[95]

The 1875 British-Burmese agreement for the autonomy of Western Karenni came about in the following way:

> [...] when, after repeated raids by Karenni into protected Shan Principalities, King Mindon's troops entered the States, the British, well aware of the different points of view of the Western and Eastern Princes, objected. In 1875, they concluded with Ava a treaty whereby Western Karenni was recognised as independent, Karenni princes not being part of the agreement.[96]

This was the basis for Western Karenni becoming an autonomous zone after the British annexation of Upper Burma. With regards to how Eastern Karenni also became an autonomous region under the British, Rastorfer quotes British officer Lister in a report from 1920 entitled *Preliminary proposals for the future administration of the Shan States* stating that Eastern Karenni was left alone "merely [as] a consequence of the circumstances of the time, and a desire to assume no

[95] Ibid., Page 13.
[96] Ibid., Pages 13-14.

responsibility which could possibly be avoided".[97] Rastorfer also includes this quote from Governor Reginald Cradock (Lieutenant-Governor of Burma), writing in 1919:

> [...] though the ordinary inhabitants in these tracts are far too unsophisticated to appreciate points of law and constitution, yet the Karenni Chiefs themselves, from the very fact of their enjoying their forest without let or hindrance and receiving royalties from minerals, appreciate the distinction between them and the Shan States [...][98]

Thus it was unrestricted economic access to their own resources which reinforced independent self-conceptions to the Chiefs.

The role of missionaries in the Karenni states was significant. They, like the British government officials, were obsessed with ethnic categorization. Rastorfer writes:

> To organize the missionary fields the protestants decided to divide Southeast Asia according to ethnic or linguistic groups. At the very beginning it was quite important for those in charge of the Karen to verify the reports on the presence of related groups here and there around Toungoo. [...] It was natural for the missionaries both locally and at home to stress the *Karenness* of the inhabitant of the hills.[99]

Additionally, all church material in the Karenni states was provided in the sgaw Karen language; although at the time some senior missionaries in the area noted that sgaw Karen had some significant differences with the languages in Karenni. In an excerpt Rastorfer provides from a letter between missionaries in 1869, one notes the same patronizing, ethnically obsessed colonial tone as in British government documents: "All will tell you that the Red Karens are <u>the</u> superior race, & that they are more energetic, more civilized, & that by God's grace we are to expect more from them as disciples than from the other races."[100]

However, perhaps one of the strongest factors relating to the development and maintenance of a separate identity is simply the relative isolation of the area. Rastorfer, writing in 1994, stated that it was still difficult to reach and travel in Kayah State (notwithstanding the military government's travel restrictions, which change over the years) and that:

> Such extreme isolation certainly explains the great diversity of languages and dress, as well as the general perception of being Karenni. It was one of the reasons for the British not to intervene too much in the affairs of the States, which had lost much of their importance as

[97] Ibid., Page 14.
[98] Ibid., Page 16.
[99] Ibid., Page 18.
[100] Ibid., Page 19, footnote 60.

> buffers, had admittedly renounced the slave trade and internal wars, but had retained their state structures and apparatus.[101]

According to Rastorfer, the British desire to not expend resources in this region, yet still have influence over local leaders and officials led to their policy of having the sons of the Kayah princes educated with the Shan princes (at the Shan Chiefs school in Taunggyi) and ensuring the attendance of a Karenni delegation at significant festival events such as the Rangoon or Delhi Durbar.[102]

Before the federation of the Shan states in 1922, the British held talks at Taunggyi in 1920 to inform the Saophas. They also invited Karenni rulers, with the intention of suggesting they join the federation. However, the chiefs avoided taking any action. Rastorfer cites Sir Reginald Craddock: "The point taken by these Chiefs was that, however much they personally might be inclined to join the Federation, the people whom they represented would be unwilling to agree to such a step."[103] Accordingly, the Karenni states did not join the federation. This reflects the degree of agency afforded to the Karenni during the British period and their full willingness to exercise their own point of view.

In summary, Rastorfer offers the following description of Karenni self-perception:

> From a local point of view, since a large majority of the population speak karen languages, Kayah and Kayan never regarded themselves as a minority. This mosaic of ethnic population with Kayaw, Shan and various Karen sub-groups is reflected in a parallel political and religious complexity. A majority of Kayah are christian, while native animism is prevalent in remote regions and buddhism has a long tradition in the towns of former Kantarawaddy, where Shan and Burmese are concentrated.[104]

Regarding cultural influences:

> Although culturally close to the Karen, and speaking karen languages, the Karenni have integrated Shan concepts and in their [*] political ideas are much closer to the Shan States than to the traditional organization of Karen under headmen. In contrast to the Karen, however, they have no difficulty in drawing up a map of their State, although its borders sometimes vary a little.[105]
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> [*I have removed the word 'are' from this position in the sentence since it appears to by a typographical error by the author]

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[101] Ibid., Page 21.
[102] Ibid., Page 21.
[103] Ibid., Pages 21-22.
[104] Ibid., Page 4.
[105] Ibid., Page 4.

In terms of geographical area, at 11,731 sq. km Karenni/Kayah state is and has always been the smallest state in the Union.[106] Rastorfer cites the 1947 Constitution describing the make-up of the state:

> Article 7: "The territories that were heretofore known as the Karenni States, viz., Kantarawaddy, Bawlake and Kyebogi, shall form a constituent unit of the Union of Burma and be hereafter known as "the Karenni State" and article 182(1): "The territory heretofore known as Mongpai State in the Federated Shan States shall be acceded to the Karenni Sate if the majority of the people of the territory so desire."[107]

Since the territorial divisions which existed at the time of the British annexation remained intact up to independence, despite the political amalgamation of the three British-organized Karenni states into a single state at independence, this can explain the ability of the Karenni in the present day to draw maps of their state, since it has been a defined entity in Karenni social memory for a long time.

3.6 The Burma Round Table Conference: 27th November, 1931-12th January, 1932

On November 27, 1931, the first of a series of meetings was held in London to discuss constitutional reform in Burma, and whether or not Burma should be separated from India. There were three main points of view presented from within the country:

1. Burma should not be separated, but should remain in the Indian Federation.
2. Burma should be separated, with the assurance that its subsequent status would not be lower than that of India's under the new constitution. Also, if Burma disliked the new constitution offered by the British, it should be possible for Burma to rejoin the Indian Federation.
3. Burma should be separated, but if it did not like the new constitution, it should not seek re-entry into the Indian Federation but engage in mass protest to effect change.

This was called the Round Table Conference series and continued until January 12, 1932. The end result was a general agreement on a Constitution for a separate Burma, with a new organization of the parliament and legislature. These changes were implemented with the "1935 Burma Act" enacted in 1937.[108] What is often overlooked in discussion of this conference is that representatives of ethnic

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[106] Ibid., Page 3.
[107] Ibid., Page 2, footnote 4.
[108] Rajshekhar, *Myanmar's Nationalist Movements (1906-1948) and India*, Page 62.

leadership from the Frontier Areas Administration were also present and desirous of having a voice. For a list of the delegates who attended, see Appendix C.

Shan representatives tried to make the case for an independent Shan State but went unheard.[109] However, they were successful in communicating their unwillingness to be represented in the general Constitution for Burma [Burma proper] and the new Legislature, since they preferred to remain a distinct entity from Burma. During the proceedings of December 7th, 1931, the Saopha of Hsipaw explained their reasons for this:

> Our first reason is an historical one. A speaker of last week, Tharrawaddy U Pu, referred to the dynasty which the Burmans believe to have extended over a period of three thousand years, but which he admitted to be disputed. So long ago as 2,200 B.C. our people were referred to in written Chinese history as the great Mung Kingdom. At least, then, for four thousand years in our history, since officially recognised by the American historian, Dr. Dodd, is an unbroken one throughout, which as today, we have governed according to the customary laws and traditions which are still the basis of our present constitution.[110]

While scholars nowadays would likely find it is equally dubious to claim the existence of a four thousand year old unbroken Shan lineage as they would a three thousand year old unbroken Bamar lineage, the point of this paragraph is that the Saopha of Hsipaw is engaging in a kind of historical one-upmanship. Since the Bamar were using references to their ancient lineage as a reason for the legitimacy of their political claims, so the Shan also decided to use the same line of reasoning. At the time, these leaders had just as much cause to believe in a four thousand year Shan history as the Bamar leaders had reason to believe in a similarly ancient history. What is significant to note here is that these leaders saw themselves as being on an equal footing with the Bamar: as belonging to a distinct entity, not a subordinate territory.

The Saopha of Hsipaw continued his defence of Shan custom, including the Saopha-system:

> Another speaker, U Su, referred slightingly to our present bourgeois system of government. From time immemorial, through the unbroken chain of the centuries, that system of government has made for the happiness of our people. In any way to change our ancient method of government in our individual States would not be for the good of our subjects, who have looked up to the Chiefs of their States as their unquestioned rulers and their wise and kindly advisers. That same speaker protested that he would not be able to remain indifferent if

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[109] Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 81.
[110] *Burma Round Table Conference: Proceedings of the Committee of the Whole Conference* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932), Page 1.

> the welfare of the masses of the Shan State was to be sacrificed for the maintenance of our present bourgeois system. The masses of the Shan States have never been more contented and more settled than they are today, and we have certainly not had within our country the troubles that have arisen in Burma. If any question arises as to the fitness of our system, I would refer to the remark made by the Burmese delegate, U Ba Si, who said that to raise any question of fitness was adding insult to injury. In our States we have no trouble in the collection of our revenues, and we have not had to resort to the use of force, as U Pu complained has been the case in his own country. In less prosperous times, and indeed only recently, the Chiefs have voluntarily remitted as much as one-third of the burden from the people's shoulders. This recent remission was granted by the Chiefs concerned in less than a month from the application of their people. Our people have certainly not had to wait over a period of years for relief.[111]

Here there are a number of points to consider. First, Burman political thinking at this time, as indeed in later times, used a mixture of socialist and Marxist thought. Capitalism and colonialism were linked and the oppression of the masses by elites a constant theme. Accordingly, the "feudal" system existent in the Shan States was classed along these lines as 'bourgeois' and attacked on principle. Amongst the Burman there was likely a difference of opinion between those more ideologically inclined and those more politically pragmatic. In this case, a politician like U Su freely attacks the Shan system and its leaders, while another, U Ba Si, remarks that it is insulting to do this. While the Saopha of Hsipaw paints a questionably glowing picture of the Saopha (perhaps understandable given the previous verbal attack), it is certain that the people had more immediate access to their leaders in the Shan States than did the average people in Burma proper and they could expect more rapid answers to their demands.

U Su had stated that the Shan States could not join Burma if they were not willing to accept all the same conditions as Burma. In response to this, the Hsipaw Saopha stated:

> It would be impossible for us voluntarily to do that, and we do not desire to do any act of thing that may tend to endanger or limit our authority over our people. To abolish our customary laws and to impose an utterly new code upon our people would be an insufferable hardship. Our people, unlike the Burmans, are not ready for a completely strange form of government with new laws and a fresh constitution. Where Burma is of opinion that she needs, and has gradually fitted herself for a more advanced type of government, our people prefer to lay any grievances they may have before their Chiefs, in accordance with their ancient custom. *There is no doubt the Shan States will attain also to other forms of government, but any suggestion*

[111] Ibid., Page 1.

> *as to reforms contemplated should come from within the States and not from without. The Chiefs have never been and are not unresponsive to the wishes of their own people.* It can be safely said that the Shans would resent the interference of Burma in their domestic affairs. We have our own scheme of reforms, a scheme that has had the sympathetic consideration of His Majesty's Government, a scheme upon which a special officer has investigated in the States and has reported thereon. A Committee of six Chiefs has been elected by the Council of Chiefs to deal with that report and to submit their further views upon the Special Commissioner's Report and recommendations. The Government has regarded that report and further submissions as confidential. It is impossible, therefore for us to discuss them.[112] [Emphasis added]

This is a fairly clear statement of affairs. The Saopha continues his justification of the Shan system against Burman criticism and references tradition as the source of legitimacy for this system. While this may be debateable, of particular note is his remark that the Shan States "will attain also to other forms of government", meaning that by that time already, the Saophas were considering political changes and reforms.

Previous to this discussion, a memorandum has been issued by the Shan States which was the cause of some confusion, since one of its paragraphs stated:

> The Shan States, however, would not object to a Federal form of Government with Burma in the future Constitution of Burma if the following points are recognised and allowed: *(a)* that there will be no interference with the affairs of the individual States; *(b)* that their ancient rights, customs, religions and privileges will remain unaltered unless and until modified by mutual consent; *(c)* that it will be more or less on the same lines as proposed in India between Indian States and British Government; and *(d)* that the hereditary rights of the Chiefs shall be acknowledged and safeguarded by British India. [113]

This was seen as being contrary to the statements made by the Saopha of Hsipaw against joining with Burma. However, the two are not really mutually contradictory. Tharrawaddy U Pu offered this interpretation:

> As far as we know at present, the Shan States are not being ruled by my friends the Sawbwajis. They claim to be rulers, but they are mere puppets in the hands of the official bureaucrats there. You have Burma government officials there, above them. [...] all the Chiefs want to rule the Shans themselves; they do not want any interference in their internal administration, either by the Government of Burma or by the servants of the Government of Burma.[114]

Tharrawaddy U Pu surmises further:

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[112] Ibid., Page 1.
[113] Ibid., Page 2.
[114] Ibid., Page 3.

> [...] All the Chiefs say, in paragraph 5, that failing that complete independence as regards their internal administration they would have no objection to federating with the Burmese' but even if he [meaning, a Chief] were to join a Federation of Burma he would not like Burma to interfere in the administration of his own States. This is what I take it to mean. The Chiefs want to rule themselves, with no interference by the Burma Government [...][115]

Mr. Haji offered this interpretation: "as I understand the position, the entrance of the Shan States into the future Burma constitution as a federal unit is dependent upon their conception of their status. Unless they are satisfied with regard to their future status they will not be in a position to make up their minds [...]".[116]

The position of the Saophas was in every case a desire for internal autonomy: they were willing to remain nominally under the British, but wanted independence. If that were not possible, they were not opposed to Federation, but wanted the Constitution of such a federation to guarantee their internal autonomy. In fact, there is a great deal of similarity between Shan demands at this time and Shan demands at the time of independence. Subsequent to the day's discussion, the Shan Saophas drafted a letter which they distributed to all the members of the committee. In it they fully state their mutual cohesion and reiterate their position clearly, rebutting many of the points raised by their fellow Burman delegates, including various assertions made by these delegates and attributed to them, for instance, U Chit Hlaing's assertion that they were subject to some coercive force and were unwilling to speak plainly in the committee. Here is an excerpt containing the main points:

> **Letter to the Chairman and Members of the Burma Round Table Conference, London 9th Dec. 1931**
>
> My Lords and Gentlemen,
>
> There appears to be a great measure of doubt and confusion as to the exact attitude of the Shan States towards Burma. A simple explanation will do much to clear the air of a misapprehension that has arisen through the misinterpretation of the clause on page 5 of last year's Memorandum.
>
> It should be understood first and foremost that all the delegated Chiefs and their Advisers are completely in agreement, not only between themselves but with their fellow Chiefs that deputed them to come over here and who still remain in agreement with the Memorandum of last year [cited previously, which stated willingness to join a federation if 4 points related to internal autonomy were constitutionally guaranteed]. In this connection it should be also be remarked that when the Sawbwa of Hsipaw stated he was not the writer of

[115] Ibid., Page 3.
[116] Ibid., Page 4.

> the Memorandum he did not for a moment mean he was not in agreement with it. He merely wished to infer that it was not his fault if the intention therein was not clearly set out.
>
> [...] The disputed clause on page 5 of the Memorandum should be explained.
>
> The Chiefs did not for one moment consider that the four points contained therein could be granted by the future Constitution of Burma. Granted those four points, then the Shan States have no objection to a close relationship with Burma, confined, however, to those matters which intimately concern the mutual welfare of the two separate countries—such as matters of defence, communication, customs, etc.
>
> In order to attain the four points upon which so much discussion has arisen, representation in the future Legislature of Burma is not necessary and cannot be helpful; and the Federated Shan States would much rather rely solely upon its relationship with His Majesty's Government through His Excellency the Governor of Burma than to have the double channel to which they have already objected (see para. 7, page 8). Upon this paragraph may we emphasise what we say there: "In the event of separation of Burma from India under a new Constitution, and *the claim of the Shan States to be treated independently of Burma being successful*"—surely this clearly means that we, at that time as now, desired to remain a separate entity.
>
> If further evidence from our original Memorandum be desired, how can the clause on page 5 be considered to be an overture to be included in the new Legislature of Burma in the face of our reiterated aim to attain to the status of an independent State under the Crown (page 2m clause 5; page 7, clauses 5 and 6)?
>
> In the Supplementary Memorandum of the Committee of Six Chiefs addressed to His Excellency the Governor of Burma (page 10, clause 14) the Chiefs have again stated their desire for a revision of their status. This could not possibly be acceded to by any new Constitution of Burma, however wide its powers may be.[117]

The letter is signed by Saw On Kya (Saopha of Hsipaw), Sao Shwe Thaike (Saopha of Yawnghwe), Sao Hom Hpa (Saopha of North Hsenwi), and Sao Kawng Tai (Kyemong of Kengtung).

With regards to the rest of the frontier areas, there was further discussion. They were referred to in the debate as the "Excluded Areas", at the suggestion of Mr. Isaac Foot who remarked that this name was preferable to the term "backward tracts" which was used in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report[118], and in fact, the 'excluded areas' does sound less derogatory.

U Ba Pe was against the total separation of the excluded areas and remarked that there was a great deal of difference between areas. For instance, he felt that parts of Myitkyina and Bhamo Districts were politically ready for new reforms, even

[117] Ibid., Appendix I, Page 298.
[118] Ibid., Page 105.

though the Arakan Hill Tracts, Chin Hills, Kachin Hills Tracts and the Pakokku might admittedly not be. However, he highlighted the fact that in the present system, the Burma proper Legislative Council did not even have the jurisdiction to raise questions about the excluded areas, which had detrimental consequences in his opinion:

> The exclusion of all the Excluded Areas from the work of the Legislative Council has the effect of making the Council unaware of the requirements of those places, on the one hand, and of making the people in those areas helpless and unable to express their grievances on the other.[119]

U Ba Pe went on to remark that the longer the Excluded areas remained separate, the longer they would remain undeveloped. In reply, Sir Oscar de Glanville quoted the findings of the Statutory Commission:

> The dictum of the Burma Government on the Chin and Kachin Hill Tracts applies we consider to all the administered excluded areas of Burma. These areas are all unfitted to participate in the Constitution on representative lines suitable for Burma proper. Their people are educationally backward and have evinced no desire to be linked with the Burmans, who in turn betray little interest in these Hill tracts. So far as our short experience of Burma goes we can confidently affirm the truth of these remarks.[120]

In his opinion, it would be irresponsible to give the government in Burma proper a say over the affairs of the excluded areas if they had no corresponding administrative responsibility to these areas. Since the British were not about to transfer administrative authority over these areas to the Burma Legislative Council, he felt further discussion on the subject would lead nowhere.

The discussion remains rather abstract until U Ba Pe reaches the real point of interest for Burma proper regarding the excluded areas: “Looking through the list of areas we see their value as forests, mines, and so on. If we have no say in that matter, the development will be done by the Governor without reference to the wishes of the country.”[121] This is the crux of the matter: the government in Burma proper did not wish to see British economic control of the specific resources of these excluded areas. They would have preferred such revenues to accrue to them. The point that is not raised, however, since there are no representatives from the excluded areas, is that the peoples of these regions would likely have expressed the same desire as the Shan States: control for themselves over their own territory and resources, not control given to the British or to Burma proper.

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[119] Ibid., Page 105.
[120] Ibid., Page 106.
[121] Ibid., Page 108.

Sir Oscar de Glanville raises this point indirectly, in his reply:

> My Lord, may I point out again what the Statutory Commission has said, which I believe, from my knowledge of Burma, to be perfectly true, that these people have evinced no desire to be linked with the Burmans; and until those people express the desire, I suggest they ought not to be linked with the Burmans. I understand the Burmese view is that they want to prepare them educationally, and so on, for democratic Government. When they arrive at that state they may still evince the same disinclination to be linked with Burma; and are we going to compel them to join Burma? [122]

Although stating this point suited the British position, since it meant their continued control over these areas and resources, Sir. O. de Glanville's remarks are extremely pertinent. During the time of the negotiations of independence from Burma, the question that he had raised over fifteen years earlier became a central one: would the British compel the excluded areas to join Burma?

However, the Burmese politicians raise a variety of points against this argument. U Ba Pe makes a financial argument: "We are asked to bear the expense for maintaining those areas; and then when it comes to the development of those areas the suggestion is that we should have no say in the matter. That appears to be rather one-sided."[123] Since Burma proper was expected to contribute funds to the administration of the Excluded areas, he argues that they ought to be able to dictate terms in return. U Maung Gyee makes a racial/nationalist argument:

> [...] the people who are living in these Excluded Areas are not different from the people of Burma. Take the case of the Chins. In appearance they are like the Burmans and most of them profess the Buddhist religion. *Once they come down to the plains they mix very well with the Burmese people*, [...] If you exclude them from the Burmese administration, then they will be isolated; they will be segregated; *they will be cut off entirely from the influence of the Burmese people*. [...] Some of these Excluded Areas are in the heart of the country. I believe they are all within the borders of Burma. *I do not see why slices of our country should be cut off* [...] I do not think, personally, that the Governor is in a better position to govern these tracts than Ministers responsible to the Legislature.[124] [Emphases added]

U Maung Gyee makes a huge generalization here by using the Chin as his example, since they were more culturally similar to the Burmese than other groups. However, he indicates a centrist point of view with his remark that once the Chin come down from the hills, they integrate well – that is, once they are removed from their own territory, they resemble Burmese. He also expresses the view that all of the excluded

[122] Ibid., Page 108.
[123] Ibid., Page 108.
[124] Ibid., Page 108.

areas 'belong' to Burma, even though, especially in the Chin Hill Tracts, some of those areas very arguably belonged to India. The excluded areas were very numerous and not at all similar in size or population and this makes some of U Maung Gyee's statements very broad in nature. Finally, and perhaps most compellingly, Mr. Ohn Ghine makes an argument for national unity:

> I feel very strongly that, from the beginning of the new Reforms, all the various races in Burma should be brought into the scheme generally. If they are left out I am afraid that will encourage a feeling on the part of these various races that they do not belong to the same nation. It might be difficult, later on, to effect the unification of the various races. I really see no reason why these tracts should be excluded from the policy and administration of the new government.[125]

This argument seems very prescient, all things considered, and is an appeal for forms of local self-government to be permitted across the whole country. The quality of this argument relates to the real effect not being included may have on the *frontier areas and the whole country*, in Mr. Ohn Ghine's opinion. Unlike the first two arguments, it does not make the case for what Burma proper can gain from having these areas under its jurisdiction.

In the *Report of the Committee of the Whole Conference*, signed Jan. 5th 1932 by Earl Peel, it is concluded under point 3 that the Shan States' "first objective was to preserve the separate entity of the Shan States Federation", though they sympathized with the aspirations of the Burmans. Meanwhile, point 4 acknowledged that the Shan States and Burma had many matters of common interest and that:

> In the event of Burma being separated from India, Burma will have additional responsibilities to undertake and new liabilities to meet; she will, however, gain new assets. The Federated Shan States, as part of the Burman polity, wish to bear their due share of such liabilities, provided that in return they receive their due share of the additional assets, *e.g.*, customs receipts, which may be expected to accrue as the result of the separation of Burma from India.[126]

With regard to the Excluded Areas, point 63 concluded that they would now be known officially as the "Excluded Areas" and no longer by the term "Backwards Tracts". With regard to the Government of India Act, it is understood that these areas include the Shan States, but it is noted that in this Committee Report, the Shan States have received separate attention for their case.[127] Points 64 and 65 refer to the

[125] Ibid., Page 108.
[126] Ibid., "Report," Page 278.
[127] Ibid., "Report," Page 289.

discussion about the fitness of the Excluded areas being included into general constitutional arrangements, ultimately stating that it was a matter which would require discussion between the Burma proper Legislature and the Governor of Burma, and noting that ultimately it was hoped by several delegates that eventually a Minister responsible to the Legislature would administer the Excluded Areas instead of the Governor.[128]

The ultimate consequences of this conference in the Frontier Areas are noted in the Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947:

> [...] Frontier peoples have been taken as those inhabiting the areas listed in both parts of the Second Schedule to the Government of Burma Act, 1935. These areas fall into two divisions, Part I administered by the Governor in his discretion and Part II administered by the Governor in his individual judgement. It was also decided that, although the three States of Karenni were not part of the Scheduled Areas and did not therefore necessarily come within the purview of the Committee, they should be invited to send representatives to express their views [...] The Scheduled Areas as defined in the 1935 Act cover 113, 000 square miles or about 47% of the total area of Burma, The population, however, is only 2, 400, 000 or 16% of the total.[129]

Terms like Scheduled Areas, Part I and Part II refer to distinctions relating to eventual British plans for integration and the introduction of voting based on the 1935 Burma Act. A detailed breakdown of the 'Frontier Areas' can be examined in Appendix A: Administrative Units in Scheduled Areas. It can generally be understood to be a huge terrain grouped together for British administrative purpose, which they were constantly trying to re-organize.

3.7 The Frontier Areas and World War II

This section comprises a very brief summary of Frontier Areas reactions to WWII, since it is an extensive topic. In Burma proper, there were entirely different movements taking place. I shall attempt to summarize events in Burma proper extremely briefly, since they have already been covered at great length and more adequately than I can hope to do here.

3.7.1. Events in Burma proper

In reference to Burma proper, there are a few things to keep in mind: First, the group Dobama Asiayone, to which Aung San belonged, was sought out by an

[128] Ibid., "Report," Page 290.
[129] "Burma, Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947, Report submitted to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and to the Government of Burma, June 1947", Page 27.

undercover Japanese agent named Colonel Suzuki, looking to weaken the British position in the area by closing the Burma Road.[130] Suzuki became close to Aung San and other members of the Dobama Asiayone and promised that early independence was possible (even though the actual official position by Japanese Southern Area Army Command was that independence would have to wait till after the war).[131]

Second, U Saw, the Burman premier at the time, was negotiating with Governor Dorman-Smith to obtain Dominion Status for Burma in exchange for Burmese cooperation in the war.[132] The slogan of U Saw's People's Party at the time was "Burma for the Burmans," which implies that the wishes of the non-Bamar ethnic leadership did not factor into his considerations.[133] At a meeting with Churchill in London, U Saw received a vague, conditional promise of eventual Dominion status. Similarly to the official Japanese position, it was said that details of further independence could not be discussed in wartime.[134] During the return voyage, stopping in Honolulu and Lisbon, U Saw and U Tin Tut made contact with Japanese officials. U Saw was subsequently arrested for treason by the British and detained in Egypt for the duration of the war.[135]

In the context of British inflexibility, it is very understandable why Bamar leaders in Burma proper were so desirous to expel the British with the aid of the Japanese. However, what is equally understandable is that the people in the Frontier Areas had a very different point of view, based on their own, separate experiences, and so were not in accord with the actions being taken in Burma proper. The events of WWII, as based on these conflicting points of view, would initially prove to be a source of tremendous division across the country. Later, the course of events provided the opportunity for a tremendous amount of cooperation across the country. In order to understand these trends, we must understand the different kinds of national visions being proposed in Burma proper:

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[130] Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45* (London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1985), Page 17; U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940-1948*, Page 26.

[131] Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*, Page 18; Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, *Total War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), Page 730.

[132] Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), Page 16.

[133] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 256.

[134] Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*, Page 18; Cady, *A History of Modern Burma,* Page 431.

[135] "Foreign News: U Saw's Bet," *Time* (January 26, 1942) [Online]. Source: http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,932302,00.html

Silverstein highlights that two points of view on the concept of the nation were articulated in Burma proper after the British had been driven out. On August 1, 1943, Dr. Ba Maw's government in Burma proper made a declaration of independence, exchanging British colonial rule for Japanese protection of their now 'sovereign' state. The declaration made a statement on national unity which was to become the slogan of the army and the current Tatmadaw: "one blood, one voice, one leader. [136] While Silverstein notes that this was a slight reflection of Europe's fascist 'master race' ideas, he contends that it also embodied the idea of bringing back together what had been separate, that is, the idea that Burma as a whole had once been a united area, but that British meddling had destroyed its unity.[137] Silverstein quotes the 1943 Declaration of Independence: "it was national disintegration which destroyed the Burmese people in the past and they are determined that this shall never happen again".[138] This concept was very strongly entrenched amongst many Bamar nationalists. Dr. Ba Maw not only wanted ethnic unity but political unity. He sought to establish full political control with a single party meant to be symbolic of the people's unity.[139]

As the Japanese occupiers engaged in repression and failed to fulfil promises of independence, discontent in Burma proper grew. Resistance was said to have been growing between 1942-43 among the Communists, People's Revolutionary Party (socialists), East Asiatic Youth League, Karens, Shans, Kachins, Chins, Arakanese and the Burma National Army (BNA). In early August 1944 the Communists under Thakin Than Tun met with Aung San as representative of the BNA and agreed to secretly form the Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO).[140] The AFO adopted a manifesto presented by Aung San which stated that its main objectives were to force the Japanese out and create a constitution to guarantee equality for all and safeguard the "economic, social, and political interests of minorities such as the Karen, Shan, Palaung, Taungtha, Chin Kachin, Chinese, and Indian."[141] Silverstein notes the "manifesto appealed for support of the indigenous peoples as members of separate

[136] Josef Silverstein, *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), Page 57.
[137] Ibid., Page 57.
[138] Ibid., Page 57.
[139] Ibid., Page 63.
[140] Ibid., Page 61.
[141] Ibid., Page 61.

ethnic, religious, and political groups and not as Burmese"[142], a tactic to ensure that the AFO received the greatest amount of support possible. As full resistance required the cooperation between different groups in Burma proper itself, as well as from the FAA, Bamar politicians began to consider the point of view of the minorities, which they had never had to do before.

Silverstein suggests that here was a concept of national unity quite different from that espoused by Dr. Ba Maw: it was admitted that the peoples of Burma were ethnically and socially different and that they had the right to preserve their individual characteristics, but also the right to join together to fight off a common enemy. Though the AFO was a single political unit, it "gave each unit within its organization the right and opportunity to retain its identity, leaders and ultimate goals."[143]

The AFO was also joined by the People's Revolutionary Party and one of the central Karen organizations in an unprecedented display of unity, and began a dialogue with allied forces.[144] The BNA left Rangoon on March 27, 1945, supposedly to fight the Allies, but was actually joined by AFO guerrillas to begin fighting against the Japanese.[145] In April, Aung San negotiated with British Field Marshal Slim to achieve British recognition of a Provisional Government of Burma set up by the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL)[146] in exchange for his military cooperation. Slim accepted Aung San's offer of military assistance but said that he could not make concrete political assurances recognizing a provisional government. The fate of any future Burmese government would rest on British promises of self-government made *after* the war.[147]

3.7.2. Japanese Policy and the Frontier Areas

The Japanese initially maintained the British-era division between Burma proper and the FAA for their own purposes, including territorial negotiations with Siam where Japan agreed to transfer parts of the Shan States (notably Kentung) to ensure Thai cooperation. The Kengtung and Mong Pan states were eventually transferred.[148]

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[142] Ibid., Page 61.
[143] Ibid., Page 63.
[144] Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, Page 13; Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45*, Page 579.

[145] Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, Page 14.

[146] The AFO became the AFPFL
[147] W. J. Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Cassell, 1962), Pages 425-426.

[148] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 54.

The Burma Independence Army (BIA) was kept out of the Shan states when it tried to enter in May 1942. Bamar nationalists disliked this state of affairs since they were also not allowed to have political activists enter the Frontier Areas to encourage cooperation with the Burma proper government. Instead, the Shan Saophas were ordered to Rangoon to swear an oath of allegiance and cooperation with the Japanese in December 1942. While the Saophas were still supposedly to have a measure of autonomy under the Japanese, they were not satisfied with being under any external control and did not cooperate well.[149] In the Kachin and Chin Hills, the Japanese were never able to exert formal control or successfully propagandize.

Yet by August 1943, the state of affairs had changed with regard to the Shan states. The Burma proper government announced freedom of travel and trade between the Shan states, Karenni states and Burma proper; imports would not be taxed and Burmese currency would be used everywhere.[150] The Japanese considered the Karenni States Burmese but kept this secret since they preferred to deal with them and the Shan States jointly. Ba Maw therefore had to create a special government board to manage the issue of absorbing Karenni and the Shan States into the new, 'independent' Burma. The final transfer took place on December 24th, 1943 as the result of a treaty signed by Japanese ambassador Renzo Sawada and Dr. Ba Maw[151] signed on September 25, 1943.[152] As a result of the transfer, all the Shan States were ceded to the Burmese government, except the two which had been given to Siam. Two Shan were made privy councillors in the Burmese government in January 1944. One was meant to represent the Saophas and one to represent the peoples of the states. This was the first time the Shan had any representation in the highest council of the government.[153]

Silverstein makes note of the two different Japanese strategies with regard to the frontier areas. After initially maintaining divisions between Burma proper and the Frontier Areas similar to those under the British, the Japanese significantly altered their position altered in 1943. Silverstein writes:

> In 1943, the Japanese halted their policy of separatism [...] It was reliably reported that by 1944, branches of the East Asia Youth League, the National Service Association, and the

[149] Ibid., Page 59.
[150] Ibid., Page 60.
[151] Rastorfer, *On the Development of Kayan and Kayah National Identity*, Page 22, also see footnotes 74 and 75.
[152] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 55.
[153] Ibid., Page 60.

> Indian Independence League were established in the Shan States. In addition, British intelligence reports told that Shans were being recruited into the nationalist army of the Burmese. Thus, the institutional change of linking the areas together resulted in a political change where the peoples of both areas were able to meet and work together. It was from this period that the political awakening of the peoples of the Shan States can be measured.[154]

Personal accounts written by members of some of the Saopha families from this period of the Japanese occupation indicate much less optimism and more fear than Silverstein indicates. Rather, these personal accounts paint a picture of uneasy accommodation in the Shan state and day-to-day uncertainty, including eventual efforts at resistance.[155]

In terms of resistance, the Karenni "formed one of the most active units of the anti-Japanese Force 136 during the WW2."[156] With regard to the Chin and Kachin, Maran La Raw notes: "[The Kachin] along with the Chin, were the only two Burma nationalities to organize resistance and never to give the Japanese suzerainty over them."[157] One major impact of the war was seemingly a notable 'ethnic' division in the armed forces. The Burmese Independence Army (BIA) which the Japanese helped form was predominantly Bamar. Matthew J. Walton, referencing Mary Callahan, notes "Since the Japanese occupation never effectively stretched into Chin, Kachin or Shan territory, these ethnicities were severely under-represented [in the BIA]."[158]

With regard to the cooperation which then took place to remove the Japanese from Burma, after Bamar nationalists grew disillusioned with what was effectively Japanese rule, it was a cooperative effort with a short-term goal, yet long-term consequences. Walton, citing Callahan, states that the Japanese were finally defeated by "networks of armed guerillas and soldiers fighting *against* the same enemy but fighting *for* very different visions of the future."[159]

3.8 Chapter Summary

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[154] Silverstein, "Politics in the Shan State: The Question of Secession from the Union of Burma," Page 46.
[155] For instance: Nel Adams, *My Vanished World*, Pages 81-108; Simms, *The Moon Princess*, Pages 130-153; Patricia Elliott, *The White Umbrella* (Bangkok: Post Books, 1999), Pages107-153.
[156] Rastorfer, *On the Development of Kayan and Kayah National Identity*, Page 23.
[157] Maran La Raw, "Towards a Basis for Understanding the Minorities in Burma: The Kachin Example", Page 143.
[158] Matthew J. Walton, "Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong," *Asian Survey* Vol. XLVII, No.6 (November/December 2008): 894.
[159] Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), Page 67.

In the frontier areas, British administrative policy was so diverse and haphazard precisely because there was no fixed form of over-arching administration in place from the time of Konbaung dynasty. Different areas were used to different and varied amounts of autonomy. The British installed a system of administration which maintained a mixture of local structures with a standard, British-style method of over-arching rule. The British used peaceful, indirect rule because they lacked funds for full war campaigns and the economic profitably of the frontier areas was generally limited, except for certain mineral deposits or other natural resources. In those cases, the British did extend their control, for example, as with the Karenni Mawchi mines.

With the establishment of their colonial administration, the British used over-simplified definitions of ethnicity and began to questionably categorize different racial-groups and sub-groups. These divisions were not as historically substantiated as the British chose to believe. The British also enforced political and economic separation between Burma proper and the Frontier Areas. However, it is arguable that they did not enforce cultural separatism, but rather attempted cultural Burmanization with an emphasis on the use of the Bamar language.

One essential factor which led to tension between the peoples of the frontier areas and Burma proper was their different attitudes towards the British. Due to the less overt British presence and interference in the Frontier Areas, the general attitude was not strongly anti-colonial at the outbreak of WWII. The war therefore greatly increased fierce conflict between the Frontier Areas and Burma proper as people from the two areas fought with one another during the Japanese invasion. Yet later, the desire to drive out the Japanese engendered significant cooperation, although the long-term purpose of this cooperation, beyond liberating Burma from Japanese control, was not discussed. The consequences of the war, in terms of affecting people's perceptions of one another as 'allies' or 'enemies' and the ethnic associations behind these terms, is undoubtedly significant. In political terms, the removal of the Japanese without a mutually agreed upon vision for the future, ensured that the post-war political landscape was complex as various groups jostled for political power and representation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Negotiations for Independence (1946-1947)

With the end of WWII there was a return to British rule and organization across Burma. The Karenni states were still bound to the British by treaty and the FAA were administered separately from Burma proper. Silverstein states that by May 1945 it became clear that the British were intending to use the White Paper policy to create a separate Karen state under the Frontier Areas Administration and a new federation of the Shan states with a similar plan for the Kachins, Chins and Nagas, all of which would be under British control.[1] Since this would have meant establishing a permanent British presence in the region and have undermined the cause of independence for Burma proper, the AFPFL could not accept this.

4.1 Renewed British policy

In Britain, Labour had come to power and the Conservatives were out. The new government was prepared to change its colonial policy in Burma and negotiated directly with Aung San and the AFPFL. The result was a contradictory policy in Burma which then-Governor Dorman-Smith himself was aware of. The British were ostensibly carrying out the White Paper plan for directed-independence in Burma while simultaneously undermining their position in Burma by granting the AFPFL large freedoms.[2]

Yawnghwe expresses the division as being in terms of British powers within Burma itself and those in power in London. Of the former group, Governor Dorman-Smith and the colonial bureaucracy were acting for slow independence and unification, along the lines of the 1931 Act, which would in turn confer Dominion Status upon Burma. Of the latter group, individuals like Lord Mountbatten had London's attention and were generally sympathetic to the AFPL's demand for immediate unification and independence.[3] This attitude was often motivated by political pragmatism underscored by the desire to avoid unnecessary conflict. The following excerpt from the debate in parliament on the Burma Independence Bill of 1947 is illustrative:

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[1] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Pages 86-87.
[2] Tucker, *Burma*, Page 117.
[3] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 97.

> Whether the Burmese are fit for self-government or not, the point is: Should we continue to govern Burma against the will of the politicians in Burma, against the whole national feeling of Burma which has demanded self-government? [4]

In February, 1946 Director of the Frontier Areas H.N.C. Stevenson was directed by the Governor of Burma (but without the knowledge or agreement of the Secretary of State) to a meeting on the future of Burma, to which the Shan Saophas and Karenni princes were invited and informed of British intentions. As Rastorfer writes, the British were interested in protecting private interests in the Mawchi Mines, for their own economic interest, which the Karenni States could do nothing to challenge. As 'independent territories, the British would not allow them to be annexed by Burma, but would not halt the process if they sought annexation by Burma proper.[5] The case presented to the Karenni was simple: alone, they could not stand against British interests and policy which would continue to exploit their resources for its own purposes. Only through agreeing to join with Burma proper could they be free, and only in negotiation for conditions as a requirement of agreeing to annexation could they hope to ensure any power of self-rule for themselves.

Against charges by Myanmar politicians that the British were trying to divide the Myanmars and minorities, H.N.C. Stevenson stated that during the war the Karen and hill peoples had held conferences to determine creating independent states separate from Burma but now the British were trying to restore harmony, the hill peoples had agreed to unite if the Burman would guarantee their well-being.[6] Having had a taste of liberty from British rule, however, neither the Frontier Areas, nor Burma proper, were quite as willing to submit to renewed British authority. Stevenson wanted the Shan states to revert to their pre-1922 Federated Shan states status, but the Saophas were disinclined to do so.[7] Stevenson was well aware of the complexity that lay ahead in navigating the future of the Frontier Areas. Appendix D provides a brief report he wrote, explaining all of the areas for discussion and decision about which he stated London was insufficiently informed. This includes the unknown future status of the Frontier Areas and Burma proper, the question of how to settle the Frontier Areas budget deficits, the future of the Part II Scheduled areas, Karen demands for a

[4] Labour MP Mr. Thomas Reid, *HC Deb 05 November 1947*, Vol. 443, Reference: cc1836-961, Page 30.
[5] Rastorfer, *On the Development of Kayan and Kayah National Identity*, Page 23, see footnote 80.
[6] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 86.
[7] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 546.

separate state, the future of the Karenni, whether small states in the Frontier Areas should be amalgamated, how to develop regional councils and finally the need for technical experts to work in the territory.[8]

The AFPFL began to work to win over the people of the Frontier Areas, against the British. After one visit by the AFPFL, on April 3, 1946, a United Karenni Independent States Council was established by U Bee Tu Re (who was killed in 1948); however, this ran against the Karenni-Padaung Council which had been established on Feb. 25.[9]

Rastorfer notes that U Bee Tu Re was posthumously described in conflicting ways: one Union Government publication from 1949 branded him an "impostor", a former Junior Civil Servant and "opportunist, who by virtue of the political influence he wielded over the White Karens resident in the States, hoped to oust the authority of the Sawbwas from the States [...]", however, he was considered a revolutionary hero in other quarters and still being lauded over twenty years later in Karenni publications.[10]

On May 26th 1946, the AFPFL Supreme Council passed a resolution that representatives of all the states should gather to discuss creating a Union of Burma to fight against the British, thereby showing the AFPFL's "determination to unite and speak for all the peoples of British Burma"[11] as well as making the first suggestion of a federal union and not a unitary state.[12] In essence, the AFPFL were taking the British suggestion of a federal model, which seemed to be attractive to the ethnic leadership, and simply removing the British from the equation.

The Karenni had visited Rangoon to declare that they intended to stay independent of the British, Myanmars, Shans and Karens. When Burma proper, the Shans and Karens had achieved sovereignty, then they would consider federation.[13] Cady states the British and Myanmar had no real interest in the undeveloped Karenni states "except for the location of the profitable wolfram mines at Mawchi".[14]

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[8] Appendix D
[9] Rastorfer, *On the Development of Kayan and Kayah National Identity,* Page 24, see footnote 84
[10] Ibid., Page 24, also see footnote 83
[11] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 86.
[12] Ibid., Page 86.
[13] Ibid., Page 87.
[14] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma,* Page 545.

The summer of 1946, the delta Karens of Burma proper sent a delegation to London to ask for special protection or statehood.[15] Silverstein quotes prominent Bamar politician U Tin Tut stating that they ought not to have done so, as it was not up to the British:

> [...] the best protection for the minorities lies not in paper safeguards but in the regard and affection of the majority community and the growth of a true sense of national unity transcending all racial and religious barriers [...] the future of the Karens in Burma is one which in the end must be settled by agreement between the Burmese and the Karens.”[16]

While U Tin Tut had a point in that involving the British meant a probable setback to full autonomy, what guarantee did the Karen have without ‘paper safeguards’ that the majority community would treat them with regard and affection? They needed legal recognition of their claims, which the Burmans were never quite able to provide, and that is why they went to London in the first place.

There was overall a delicate balance of power. The British could not afford an outbreak of violence in Burma as WWII had left a proliferation of guns everywhere.[17] Martin Smith speculates that because the Karen and Frontier Areas never threatened the British with violence, unlike the AFPFL and Communist party of Burma (CPB), this led to their neglect.[18] Furthermore, Smith also notes an unfortunate practice had developed:

> Whereas AFPFL leaders were in near continuous consultation with British officials, minority leaders, still relying on the guarantees of the White Paper, were continuing to petition London and the FAA [Frontier Areas Administration] directly. As a result there were very real misconceptions developing over British policy in Burma.[19]

4.2 The first Panglong Conference, March 26, 1946

This conference was organized by Shan leaders and held in Shan state at Panglong, in order to discuss their position with other Frontier Area leaders, the Burmans and the British. The Shan took responsibility for providing a venue, facilities and covering expenses. The conference opened March 26, 1946 and was presided over by the Saopha of Tawng Peng. It was primarily meant as a meeting for the

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[15] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 86.
[16] Ibid., Page 86.
[17] Richard D. McKinzie, “Oral History Interview with John F. Cady” (Athens, Ohio: July 31, 1974), Pages 25-26.
[18] Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: University Press, 1999), Page 71.
[19] Ibid., Page 74.

Frontier Areas people to discuss their political options. For the minorities, it was attended by representatives from the Federated Shan States, Karen, Kachin, and Chin leadership from the Chin Hills, Kachin Hills, Salween districts and Karenni states. British interests were represented by Director of the Frontier Areas Administration, H.N.C. Stevenson, who also represented Governor Tin Tut, who could not attend. Political representatives from Burma proper were the ex-premier U Saw and his faction (in power before the Japanese occupation) and AFPFL representative U Nu and his faction, who had been invited by the Youth League.[20]

Minority leaders realized that having an independent Frontier Areas Administration would be difficult, mainly due to financial concerns. The Chins and Kachins typically had a deficit in their administration budget which the British-backed Burmese government had paid for in pre-war days. The Shan were willing to try to pay this deficit in a separate Frontier Areas Administration but were doubtful they actually could.[21] There was some talk of establishing a road from the Frontier Areas through a theoretical Karen state to the sea, since this trade access route would reduce the economic dependence of the Frontier Areas on Burma proper.[22] In general though, Director Stevenson gave no guarantees and U Saw challenged them on this point, stating that the British might not want to keep financing the Frontier Areas very long, in which case they could not survive financially. Stevenson writes: "I was tackled straightly about this and obviously could give no reply but that the matter 'was still under consideration by His Majesty's Government.' The Chins and Kachins asked if there was to be no tangible reward for their past loyalty and service."[23] On the other hand, U Saw proposed constitutional promises that the Frontier Areas could have local autonomy if they joined Burma proper, with no central government interference in their customs or religion. U Saw was especially conciliatory since U Nu had spoken before him at the conference and made anti-British and other statements which offended the minority leadership.[24]

The concrete results of the Panglong conference were certain British reforms. Administration of the frontier areas was to remain under the direct control of the Governor until the hill peoples themselves decided to join 'Burma proper.' The Head

[20] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 208.
[21] Ibid., Page 573.
[22] Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Page 74.
[23] Stevenson's Report on the Political Discussions at Pang Long. Included in Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Appendix 29, Page 573.
[24] Ibid., Page 573.

of the Frontier Areas administration was now to be in direct contact with the governor and residents. Finally, superintendents and assistant superintendents would now simply be 'residents' and 'assistant residents', meant to give support and advice but no longer superintend.[25]

According to Mr. Stevenson's secret report to his British superiors, the speeches by U Nu and U Saw varied greatly from one another. U Nu's speech was a direct attack on the British which insulted the Saophas, Chin and Kachin. U Saw's speech on the second day, however, was reconciliatory to the ethnic leaders, apologizing for the behaviour of Burmese soldiers in the Shan states during World War II. U Saw also promised that the Frontier Areas could have local autonomy and there would be no central government interference with their customs or religion. Stevenson notes: "He also made the first concrete constitutional proposals ever made to the Frontier peoples by a leading Burman."[26]

The ethnic groups, meanwhile, although they liked U Saw's proposals, essentially distrusted the promises he made them. They were fully aware of an attitude amongst many Burman politicians: "that [the Burman] ethnic group was superior to all by virtue of their intelligence, their past conquests and present level of achievements."[27] Stevenson's secret report notes:

> That was the crux of all the arguments against union. From every side came instances of broken promises and villainous behaviour during the Ba Maw regime. From every side […the possibility of the] day of union postponed until the people of the Frontier Areas had built […] a federal organization strong enough to ensure equitable treatment from Burma. In short the frontier peoples are still very afraid and uncertain about the future.[28]

In his own speech, Stevenson made the following crucial point:

> …unless the Burmese leaders and people alike change their opinion about the Hill people and the treatment to be accorded to them there can be no hope of forming a real Federated Burma. On the other hand, if the Burmese will realize the situation and try to amend their past faults, we see no reason why there cannot be a real united Federated State of Burma.[29]

The conclusion drawn by ethnic leaders at the end of the conference was that union with Burma Proper was not possible at present.

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[25] The governor's speech, delivered by Mr. H. N. C. Stevenson at Panglong. Included in Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Appendix 28, Page 566.
[26] Stevenson's Report on the Political Discussions at Pang Long. Included in Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Appendix 29, Page 572.
[27] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 88.
[28] Stevenson's Report on the Political Discussions at Pang Long. Included in Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Appendix 29, Page 573.
[29] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 211.

4.3 AFPFL activity in the Frontier Areas

It is interesting that while the Burmans accused the British of interfering in minority affairs, they never considered their own political actions in minority areas as interference. However, AFPFL activity in the Frontier Areas was sometimes considered a challenge to local autonomy.[30] For instance, the AFPFL's arm in Shan state was the Shan States People's Freedom Congress (SSPFC), which was resented by the Saophas, amongst others, as an external construct and not locally originating body.[31] Burman interest in the Shan states revolved around keeping the British out and having access to mining, timber and other resources located there. The Saophas were politically organized enough to know they could negotiate with the Myanmar on these points[32], but bodies like the SSPFC simply gave the AFPFL support without acquiring guarantees.

Another point of direct interference was to occur later, during the 1947 Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, when the testimony of Karen elders against union with Burma was contradicted later by a young Karen delegation with dubious claims to political legitimacy that had been influenced by the AFPFL to give contradictory testimony for their own personal reasons.[33]

4.4 The Aung San-Attlee Agreement

In January 1947, the agreement between Aung San and Prime Minister Attlee guaranteed the approval of the British government for Burma's independence, to be achieved as soon as possible. The agreement also finally made clear the British position with regard to what would happen to the Frontier Areas. According to Silverstein, it marked "a turning point in the legal and formal relations between Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas" because it laid down a framework for unification[34]. Clause (8) proposed the early unification of the Frontier Areas with Ministerial Burma. In order to achieve this aim, a Frontier Areas Commission of Enquiry (FACE) would be established to survey the wishes of non-Burmese ethnic

[30] Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Page 73.
[31] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 546.
[32] Ibid., Page 546.
[33] Ibid., Page 550.
[34] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 102.

groups, although this primary decision was made without consultation of any kind with any of the Frontier leaders.[35]

Certain British politicians had misgivings with regard to this when the agreement was debated later in parliament. Silverstein notes two members of the conservative party who inquired whether the Karen had been consulted at all (they had not).[36] In fact, the ethnic leaders had already taken steps to voice their position before the agreement was signed.

Three of the principle Shan statesmen of the time were Sao Shwe Thaike, Sao Sam Htun (sometimes spelt Sam Toon) and Sao Khun Kyi. During this period they attempted to establish inter-ethnic collaboration to determine a political solution to their collective concerns about Burman dominance. They brought together all the Shan Saophas, including Shan administrators, community leaders, tribal chiefs, leading Shan intellectuals and politicians and Chin and Kachin leaders, who met frequently to discuss the rapidly changing political situation.[37]

At the time of Aung San's meetings with Attlee in London, Sao Shwe Thaike, Sao Sam Htun and Sao Khun Kyi had already drafted and sent a cable to London stating that Aung-San did not represent the non-Burmese and therefore could not speak on their behalf.[38] This action was common knowledge in Burma and did not go unnoticed. Yawnghwe states that afterward, his father Sao Shwe Thaike who had been the one to physically send the cable, was "frequently branded as unpatriotic by Burmese politicians and the military force" for doing so.[39]

An outright accusation that it was British interference which affected internal unity in 'Burma' comes in U Maung Maung's biography of Ne Win, *Burma and General Ne Win* where it is stated that the Saophas, *influenced by the British*, believed they would have a better future if they remained in association with the British and that that is why they cabled London before the 1947 Aung-San Attlee Agreement was signed. Furthermore, U Maung Maung states that young Shan leaders like U Tin Aye, U Tun Myint and U Pe Khin corrected this misstep by organizing "mass meetings in the hills at which resolutions were passed pledging full support to the Bogyoke [Aung

[35] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 99.
[36] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 102.
[37] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 98.
[38] Ibid., Page 230
[39] Ibid., Page 144.

San]. These resolutions were cabled to London".[40] U Maung Maung obviously does not point out that as leaders of the SSPFC, the support of these Shan leaders for the AFPFL was a given, nor does he indicate the real amount of support the SSPFC had at this stage. The effect of the U Maung Maung account is of course to deny the Saophas any agency or closely examine their actions.

In any case, official policy was not influenced by the misgivings of the frontier areas. Silverstein notes:

> ...it seems clear that the British government assumed that the frontier peoples would accept some sort of immediate union with Burma Proper because the agreement included no alternatives should the two areas fail to unite. Moreover the whole episode has an air of urgency about it, suggesting that the leaders in Britain were determined to come to some sort of settlement even if it were necessary to work out the details later.[41]

Yawnghwe states that the British position had actually always been for amalgamation and that in the British view, the amalgamated area was then to receive Dominion Status.[42] In terms of broader colonial policy, and especially with reference to the much bigger problem of India, Britain did not consider the political concerns of a few ethnic leaders in a small portion of their empire to be pressing. The exception was a few British politicians with personal ties to the ethnic groups. Those British officials who went against larger British policy or consistently voiced doubts were considered a nuisance. During the debate on the actual Burmese bill of Independence, much of Conservative concern actually concentrates on the fact that Burma has rejected Dominion Status, rather than the feelings of the minority groups.[43]

Britain was first and foremost a colonial power, acting with its own interests in mind. The urgency Silverstein notes in the behaviour of the AFPFL and Aung San is understandable in the context of a former colonial population seeing a genuine opportunity to be free from their colonizer, without strings attached, and wanting to seize it, with *their* own interests in mind. It is also understandable that leaders in the Frontier Areas, noticing these more dominant powers and understanding their own place in the hierarchy of power, might seek to negotiate some place for themselves within the new structure.

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[40] Maung Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1969), Page 188.
[41] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 103.
[42] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 81.
[43] *HC Deb 05 November 1947*, Vol. 443, Reference: cc1836-961.

In response to the Aung San-Attlee agreement, the Shan State Executive Council (SSEC) was formed. It was composed of Saophas and representatives of the people and had executive, legislative and financial powers. Since the British had at no point provided any political solutions which actually addressed Shan concerns, claiming autonomy may has seemed the next sensible step. This was in essence what the AFPFL had done to the British, with quite successful results. Yawnghwe characterises this act as a "mini-revolution, an assertion by the Shan of their national identity and independence."[44] It was certainly a dramatic move since, had it been challenged, the outcome might have been war. The SSEC proposed a meeting with Aung San for the discussion of Burma's future, a second Panglong Conference.

Yawnghwe notes that historians like Steinberg and Trager have made the indirect argument that this 'politicking' on the part of the Saophas was detrimental to building a true sense of nationhood.[45] In history, it is impossible to say what would have happened. It is sometimes difficult enough to know what did happen. It is therefore vital to continue to look at the situation as a whole and to compare, for instance, the outcomes of the first and second Panglong Conferences. The reasons for the success of the second Panglong Agreement go a long way towards explaining what a true sense of nationhood actually entails: not the absence or suppression of dissent, but a forum where dissent can be expressed openly and listened to. Successful nationhood could actually be described as cooperation between different political entities. Whether the will to cooperate was present in the attitudes of the Shan leaders is what must be demonstrated.

It is notable that the Shan initiated both the first and second conferences, because the reality of the agency of the ethnic leaders is often overlooked. This kind of oversight glosses over the fact that so much of political success is actually the result of negotiation between concerned parties. The following excerpt by Donald M. Seekins is typical of this glossing:

> During and after the war Aung San had been diligent in forging links with minority leaders, including those of the Karens [...] In March [1946] the first Panglong Conference was held, attended by 34 Shan sawbwas and representatives of the Karens, Kachins, and Chins [...] The British favored integration of the border areas with Burma Proper following the January 27,

[44] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 99.
[45] Ibid., Page 98.

> 1947, agreement, and a second conference was held at Panglong between February 7 and 12, 1947.[46]

There is no indication given here that between Aung San and the British, the minority leaders had much of a role to play.

It should be noted that Aung San was an ardent socialist – that is, he believed that feudal structures had no place in the future. Yet despite his disagreement with feudal society, he acknowledged that it was up to the people who lived with it to decide for themselves. Silverstein cites Aung San, as quoted in an article from November 1946 in the *New Times Of Burma*, stating that the feudal administration in the Shan States was outdated but "he qualified this by saying it was a personal opinion and that the matter really depended on the Shans themselves."[47]

However, Aung San and his fellows in the AFPFL greatly disliked H.N.C. Stevenson, whom they believed was trying to thwart Burman emancipation. Aung San specifically felt that if it were not for Stevenson's incitement, the Shan States would not be against joining with Burma. This is evident in correspondence between the Governor of Burma Rance (who replaced Dorman-Smith) and the Secretary of State for Burma, Pethick-Lawrence. Appendix E contains a letter and telegram sent between them. In the letter, dated February 5th, 1947, Pethick-Lawrence writes:

> One could not but be struck by the attitude of the Delegates [the Burman delegates in London] towards Stevenson and the Frontier Areas Administration. They clearly felt that he was hostile to their ideas and ambition and they continued to make the point that with the Frontier Areas Administration in the background there was little, if any, prospect of the Frontier Areas, much as they might wish to come into Ministerial Burma, saying frankly that they proposed to do so.[48]

In the telegram from February 7th, 1947, the Governor of Burma Rance states:

> Aung San's belief that a conference at Panglong would serve no useful purpose was partly due I think to his knowledge of the contents of Shan Sawbwa's memorandum 16c of January 29th which has been forwarded to the Under Secretary of State by Frontier Areas with their letter No. 56 FA (a)47 of February 2nd. Aung San mentioned at Council that Sawbwas were against the union with Burma and implied that Stevenson was responsible for this policy. Aung San as you know has always been convinced that but for Frontier Service officers there would be no disagreement between Shan States and Ministerial Burma.[49]

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[46] Seekins, *Burma: a country study*, Page 44.
[47] Silverstein, "Introduction" in *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, Page 7.
[48] See Appendix E, Letter (2), point 2
[49] See Appendix E, Telegram (3), point 1

The Governor goes on to state that Aung San might be correct in his suspicion and goes on to provide as his evidence a memorandum from the Shan State Saopha's, dated November 14th 1946, which he had not previously seen.

In it, the Saophas state their unwillingness to remain in the Frontier Areas administration and demand their own system of administration and their own constitution. They also indicate that they are not against federation with Burma if they are given constitutionally guaranteed autonomy within the future Burma (they do not mind if this future Burma takes the form of a member of the British Commonwealth or as a completely sovereign state) and the right to secede should they so desire. Further, they want equal treatment with Burma should they join into federation with it, being granted the same rights as a sovereign state.[50] This set of demands is incredibly similar to their demands at the Round Table Conference in the 1930's.

However, a few days later on November 20th 1946, at a meeting held in Hsenwi, the Executive Committee of the federated Shan States resolved that they should, for the present time, remain in the Frontier Areas administration. Since Stevenson had been in the Shan States a few days before this second statement was issued, the Governor took this as substantiating evidence that he had influenced the change in position.[51]

It is hard to know what to make of all this and equally difficult to ascertain Stevenson's intentions. Stevenson appears to have received little support from his direct British superiors, since their goal was to successfully negotiate with Aung San and the AFPFL. Stevenson raised constant doubts about the feasibility of successfully joining the Frontier Areas with Burma proper, at the present time. It was alleged by some that he did this out of a desire to build 'his own empire', monopolizing the authority granted to him as Director of the Frontier Areas Administration.

However, Stevenson's defence of himself was that he was directly relating the opinions of the people in the Frontier Areas whom he worked with, because that was what they asked him to do. Appendix F comprises a letter from the Governor of Burma to the Secretary of State, dated January 22nd, 1947, enclosing Stevenson's request for retirement and leave, in which he explains his actions:

> I have merely interpreted my position as being, pending the formation of a Frontier Council to discuss matters with the Burmese, the mouthpiece of the people to H.E. the Governor and vice versa. In that role I have explained to Your Excellency and the Executive Council the wishes

[50] See Appendix E, Telegram (3), point 2
[51] See Appendix E, Telegram (3), point 3 and 4

> of the hill peoples and to the hill peoples the wishes of HMG, Your Excellency and the Executive Council. This much I had to do if I was to discharge HMG's expressed policy of teaching the hill peoples to run their own affairs so that at the earliest possible moment they would be able to join in some form of union with Burma.[52]

He wished to highlight that it was *not* their desire at present to join with Burma, except if they received considerable guarantees of autonomy. It is possible that, given his experience of the British administration and the intentions of Burma proper's politicians, Stevenson could foresee, or at least predict fairly well that even with guarantees, once the Frontier Areas agreed to join Burma proper, the chances of their maintaining autonomy would be very limited. Stevenson was intimately acquainted with a variety of people in the Frontier Areas and realistic about their political experience, which was limited.

He expresses frustration with the Burma Office in London:

> [...] it appears certain to me that Your Excellency also inclines to the view expressed by the Hon'ble U Aung San that I am too strongly "partisan" to be acceptable as an adviser on Frontier affairs.
>
> [...] though I was at great pains to explain that, in the absence of a Council through which they could express their opinions, the hill peoples had perforce to call upon their own administration to act as their mouthpiece, I left London with the very definite impression that the Burma Office had not changed its views to any notable extent.
>
> [...] even Mr. Walsh–Atkins was impressed, during his brief visit, with the simple faith of the hillmen that what they ask their officers to say for them will be accepted by higher authority without question. Mr. Walsh-Atkins was himself asked why he had been sent out to find what the hillmen wanted, since their desires had already been made known to the two Directors, FAA, to Sir John Walton, and to the then Governor, His Excellency Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith. Had these gentlemen, Mr. Walsh-Atkins was asked, not informed His Majesty's Government? And if so why this further exploration?

Stevenson's actions may perhaps indicate that he was not motivated by self-interest, nor stubbornly determined to hold onto power. Instead, he seems resigned to the poor opinion of him maintained by his British superiors and the AFPFL. He indicates acceptance of their desire for him to leave and states that he will do so, rather than jeopardize the possibility of successful negotiations:

> The fact to be faced is that I remain suspect as a "partisan" in spite of all that can be found in the files and in the records of my talks and speeches to demonstrate that I have never been other than what I proclaim myself to be, that is, a believer in and propounder of the unpopular (in the hills) theme of a United Burma, an ex-oficio spokesman who had tried for over-long to

[52] See Appendix F, Stevenson's letter

> secure a medium through which the hillmen can speak for themselves the unpleasant truths which have made some of my opinions so unpopular.
>
> What does matter is that, in the negotiations which are now approaching, no jarring of personalities should be allowed to endanger the vital issues at stake.
>
> In my opinion the suspicion which now appears to rest upon my word must aggravate a situation which is already delicate enough and in the circumstances I think it right that I should withdraw form the scene and so enable Your Excellency to choose another adviser in whom Your Excellency and the Executive Council, as well as the people of the Frontier Areas, can repose full confidence.[53]

The tone of the letter is perhaps bitter, but sounds mostly disappointed. It is understandable why Stevenson might have felt hurt by his superior's evident criticism of him and the dismissal by the Burma Office in London of the necessity of all the things he had been trying to say and work for over his long years as the Frontier Areas director.

It is interesting to note that, at least prior to Stevenson's departure, Aung San and the AFPFL were opposed to a Committee of Enquiry for the Frontier Areas to ascertain their wishes. They evidently felt this would be used by the British as a pretext to maintain control, rather than believing it would serve any purpose in recording the point of view of the people of the frontier areas themselves. Writing to the Secretary of State on January 23rd, 1947, the Governor wonders if Stevenson really is the reason for their opposition to such an enquiry:

> I agree that H.M.G. should press for committee of enquiry and regret that Delegation are showing opposition to this proposal. It is possible however that Stevenson's withdrawal from the scene may lessen Burmese fears in this respect if this is in fact the real reason for their opposition to a commission.[54]

4.5 The second Panglong Conference

The second Panglong Conference was not about the interests of Burma proper or Great Britain. Those interests had been made clear enough already in the January Aung San-Attlee Agreement: Clause 8 in the Agreement proposed that there would be unification of the Frontier Areas and Burma Proper although no leaders from the FAA had been consulted regarding this or had given their formal agreement to it.

As such, the second Panglong conference was meant as a forum for frontier areas leaders to express what they wanted and what they required in order to agree to

[53] See Appendix F, Stevenson's letter
[54] See Appendix E, Telegram (1), point 2

union with Burma. With this in mind, the Panglong Agreement is clear in stating these demands and the fact that Aung San signed it indicated to the Shan, Chin and Kachin leaders that it was not unreasonable to have made these demands. The Second Panglong Conference was signed by Aung San, representing the Executive Council of the Governor of Burma, Saophas and representatives of Shan State, the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills. It should be noted that the Karen participated in a limited way as observers and not signatories, even though the Karen were the majority in the Salween Division of the Frontier Areas.[55]

The Karen question was considered complex because Karen populations were scattered throughout the Salween Division, Karenni states and parts of Burma proper. The Karen question could therefore not be solved only through negotiation with parts of the Frontier Areas. There were also no Mon or Arakanese representatives at the conference, as both the areas of their ethnic concentration were already considered part of Burma proper, as a result of British policy.

The agreement which was reached was that the Shans, Kachins and Chins would immediately cooperate with the Interim Burmese Government to achieve independence from Britain, with the promise that the hill peoples would be able to administer themselves in the manner they saw fit, without internal interference from Myanmar. Furthermore (in response to a question from Sao Shwe Thaike), the Shan would be allowed to have their own constitution or accept the present constitution but request alterations, and there would be no interference in their internal affairs.[56] Finally, the ethnic leaders agreed amongst themselves to establish the Supreme Council of the United Hill Peoples (SCOUHP) which would have six Shan representatives (3 Saopha, 3 non-Saopha), six 6 Kachin representatives and six Chin representatives.

When the Panglong Agreement is discussed in the literature surrounding independence, it is almost always attributed as one of Aung San's successes. Once again, subtle indicators of the Burman concept of Burma as a coherent entity before the arrival of the British creep in. Take for instance Angelene Naw's biography of Aung San, *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence* where she states:

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[55] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 545.
[56] See article 5 of the Panglong Agreement. Included in Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Appendix A, p. 295; Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 100;

> Because of the Panglong Agreement, Aung San is today remembered as the founding father of the Union of Burma, and as the only leader in modern Burmese history to forge a peaceful and voluntary unity among the different ethnic groups. At Panglong, the various ethnicities, which had been living apart for several decades under varying types of British administration, agreed to work together for the good of the country as a whole.[57]

This is somewhat misleading. In the post-WWII period, the ethnic groups in the Frontier Areas were not in conflict with one another and quite willing to peacefully and voluntarily cooperate together, as was made clear at the first Panglong Conference. Even the Karen considered being made a state-member of the Frontier Areas as the British suggested.[58] The issue was union with Burma proper due to understandable fear of the political clout which would be wielded by the Bamar majority.

Naw's phrase "the various ethnicities which had been living apart for several decades...agreed to work together for the good of the country as a whole" makes two assumptions, one of which Naw later contradicts herself. First, it assumes that the various ethnicities had been living together prior to the British arrival. Second, it assumes that the ethnicities agreed on an already established idea of a 'country as a whole' and were working together to help it. It might be more accurate to say that the ethnicities were working towards the creation of a modern nation, which was to come into being for the first time in the history of the region. In terms of the first assumption, Naw later states:

> The Excluded Areas [Frontier Areas], comprising over two-fifths of the area of present day Burma and 15 percent of the country's total population, were inhabited by ethnic minorities, many of who had little or no contact with ethnic Burmans.[59]

This is accurate. Portions of the Frontier Areas were so remote that even the majority groups within the Frontier areas had limited contact with the people who lived there, a prime example being the Wa in the Shan states. This was the case long before the British imposed travel restrictions between Burma proper and the Frontier Areas. Naw goes on to state that "because of a preoccupation with political in-fighting and a general ignorance about non-Myanmar ethnic groups prior to WWII, few Myanmar political leaders gave thought to cooperation with the minority peoples."[60] Again, this

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[57] Angelene Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2001), Page193.
[58] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 86.
[59] Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence*, Page 194.
[60] Ibid., Page 195.

is accurate. It was due to the necessity of cooperation to drive out the Japanese and diverge from the policy of Ba Maw's government that the AFO sought out ethnic cooperation. Had such cooperation been the norm, this war-time cooperation would not have been so momentous.

The Panglong Agreement for the cooperation of the Shan, Chin and Kachin with the government of Burma proper, had 9 clauses[61]:

1) A representative of the Hill peoples, chosen by the Burmese Governor on the recommendation of SCOUHP will be made Counsellor to the Governor to deal with the Frontier Areas.

2) The Counsellor is made a member of the Governor's Executive Council without a portfolio. By constitutional convention, the Frontier Areas are brought under the authority of the Executive Council with regard to Defense and External Affairs and the executive authority of the Counsellor in the Frontier Areas is also guaranteed.

3) The Counsellor will be aided by 2 Deputy Counsellors to represent the ethnic groups the Counsellor did not belong to. The Deputy Counsellors deal with the affairs of their respective, and the Counsellor the remainder of the Frontier Areas, but they follow a principle of joint responsibility.

4) The Counsellor will be the only representative of the Frontier Areas on the Executive Council but the Deputy Counsellors are permitted to attend meetings related to the Frontier Areas.

5) The Executive Council will not operate to diminish any of the autonomy in internal administration currently enjoyed in the Frontier Areas, and full autonomy in internal administration is accepted in principle.

6) The Constituent Assembly will have to agree to the creation of a separate Kachin State with a Unified Burma, but steps will be taken towards achieving this end by consulting the Counsellor and Deputy Counsellors with regard to the administration of the Myitkyina and Bhamo Districts.

7) Frontier Areas citizens are guaranteed the fundamental rights and privileges enjoyed in democratic countries.

8) The arrangements of this Agreement do not affect the financial autonomy of the Federated Shan States.

[61] Panglong Agreement. Included in Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State,* Appendix A, Page 295.

9) The arrangements of this Agreement do not affect the financial assistance the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills receive from the revenues of Burma proper. The Executive Council, Frontier Areas Counsellor and Deputies will examine ways to adapt the Kachin and Chin Hills financial arrangements towards those between Burma proper and the Shan States.

With reference to clauses 8) and 9), Silverstein explains that the Frontier Areas had all formerly been dependent on the Burma government for financial assistance. As a result of this dependence, they had virtually no say in how much aid they received or how it was actually administered. But in the Shan states, the situation was different because a federal fund had been created in 1922. The fund was maintained by contributions from the states and the Burma government, in addition to revenues from the mineral and forest resources of the states. By 1937, the fund was sufficiently successful so that contributions from the Burma government to it were no longer noted as 'gifts' but were instead "a carefully calculated allotment due the states in consideration of revenue accruing to the central government from taxation of commercial activity in their territories."[62] As the financial contribution from the central government was no longer 'aid' in the case of the Shan states, they had more autonomy in the disposal of it. This increased autonomy in financial administration was the rationale behind the desire of the other Frontier Area leaders to adopt a similar system.

The conference and Agreement were a success because the Shan, Chin, Kachin leaders and Aung San were able to feel that both sides had gotten what they wanted. For Aung San and the AFPFL, the way to total sovereignty was no clear. For the Shan, Chins and Kachins, the agreement appeared to establish a legal framework for autonomy and equality which they believed would be the basis for union with Burma Proper. They were not willing to unite without the guarantees embodied in the Agreement. There is still a lack of materials pertaining to the substance of all the discussion which occurred at the conference. It is likely that it was not entirely smooth going. In discussion with U Aung (U Nu's son), he related to me that the Saophas were against agreeing to union and in fact, dragged their feet. It was younger Shan representatives who pushed for them to sign an agreement. Finally, as the ultimate concession, it was said that the right to secede would be included in the

[62] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 105.

constitution. Given this guarantee, the Saophas at last agreed to sign.[63] U Aung also raised the point that Aung San was the only Bamar to have signed the agreement. Aung San was certainly not the only AFPFL member or Bamar person at the conference. Whether or not this was simply the convention, one signature per representative, I do not know. It serves as a reminder, however, that Aung San was perhaps somewhat isolated amongst other politicians in his acceptance of a pluralist national vision.

Naw cites British official Arthur Bottomley stating that Aung San was sincere in his desire to grant the Frontier Areas internal autonomy and financial assistance and noted that this was unlikely to have been the case with any other Burmese politician or party. Of course, if Aung San had not been sincere, there would have been no agreement. The Frontier Areas were not willing to join in any union with Burma proper without guarantees of internal autonomy. That was the entire point of holding the conference, to see if Frontier Areas demands could be met. Aung San needed the Frontier Areas as much as they needed him. According to Naw, Bottomley felt that the failure of the conference would have been dire, for "not only would it have resulted in local political troubles, it would have also endangered the Aung San-Attlee Agreement".[64]

The Panglong Agreement allowed Aung San to present himself to the British as a legitimate power, a leader who could negotiate with minority leadership.[65] According to Naw, the Agreement was "the basis for the formation of the Union of Burma."[66]

After Independence, February 12th was declared 'Union Day' and made a national holiday, in recognition of the significance of Panglong.

The Frontier Areas people helped Aung San and the Burmans achieve what they wanted, total independence from Britain and the removal of all British influence in the area. That is why they have clung for so long to the Panglong Agreement and the oft-quoted 'spirit of unity' it was supposed to embody, because their assistance in achieving Myanmar aims was given on the assurance that their own aims would be met and that they would be treated with equality. The Agreement "established the

[63] Interview U Aung, son of U Nu, October 11, 2010.
[64] Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence*, Page 203.
[65] Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Page 78.
[66] Naw, *Aung San and the Struggle for Burmese Independence*, Page 204.

principle of equality between the peoples of the two areas."[67] Lian H. Sakhong states that it was an effort by its signatories to hasten their own attainment of freedom, "not to integrate their societies and lands into Myanmar Buddhist society and the Burman Kingdom [...] for them, the basic concept of independence was independence without integration".[68]

The Frontier Areas wanted self-government and equal treatment for themselves just as much as the Bamar wanted those things from Great Britain. The national unity the Frontier Areas agreed to help create was the pluralistic type supported by Aung San and the AFPFL of that time, not the unitary type once advocated by Ba Maw. The unitary federalism entrenched in the later constitution would make local autonomy quite impossible and keep decision-making power with the central government. Inconsistencies between the idealized substance of the Panglong Agreement and 1947 Constitution would cause lasting headaches.[69]

4.6 Events after the Panglong Agreement and setbacks to cooperation

On March 18, 1947 the Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry (FACE) held its first meeting in Yangon. The purpose of FACE was to determine the wishes of the frontier areas people. The members of the committee were[70]:

Chairman:

1. Lieutenant Colonel D.R. Rees Williams M.P.

Myanmar members:

2. U Tin Tut, member without portfolio of the Executive Council
3. Thakin Nu, AFPFL vice-president
4. U Khin Maung Gale, APFPL
5. Saw Myint Thein, Karen Youths' Organization (he replaced U Kyaw Nyein, who resigned)

Frontier Areas members:

6. Saopha of Mong Pawn (Shan), counsellor to His Excellency the governor of the Frontier Areas, member of the Executive Council
7. Sima Sinwa Nawng (Kachin), deputy counsellor

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[67] Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 108.
[68] Sakhong, "Federalism, Constitution Making and State building in Burma" in *Designing Federalism in Burma*, Page 20.
[69] Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Page 79.
[70] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 228.

8. U Vum Ko Hau (Chin), deputy counsellor

9. Saw Sankey, Karen National Union

Additional members:

10. M.B.J. Ledwidge, Burma Office, secretary

11. U Tun Pe, joint secretary

12. Major Shan Lone, assistant secretary

The committee's findings are the subject of some debate, since they propose that union between the frontier areas and Burma proper should occur immediately, although the actual views recorded in their interviews indicate a wide variety and disparity in the various peoples' responses to this question. Also, there has been some debate over how representative those interviewed really were. For instance, Maran La Raw notes that the Kachin witnesses interviewed by FACE "were almost unanimously in favor of joining [an independent Union of Burma]"[71] but explains the make-up of those interviewed. The first group of witnesses were military personnel, who by virtue of their profession had more travel experience and knowledge than the average Kachin person. The second group comprised professional people: school teachers, clerical workers, Christian missionaries, some frontier chiefs. All of these people, Maran La Raw states, had been trained in Christian mission schools:

> All but one of the witnesses were products of the Bhamo missionary schools. These were the people who decided that the fate of the Kachins should be with the rest of Burma. Thus it is correct to say that the real beginning of active Burmanization of the Kachin came with the Western Christian missionaries. It is also true that Burmese was accepted as a kind of national language by these educated Kachin. At the time of the Second World War there were only about twenty-five Kachin who had some command of the English language, and among these were three college graduates, the first and only Kachin to be so educated until then.[72]

This is a very notable point to consider, since of course, it is in direct contrast to Burman nationalist claims about the divisiveness of the British and Christian missionaries. The raises the issue of how acceptance of national language and territorial integration might be interpreted. To the people of the Frontier Areas, such actions were seen as necessary cooperation for participatory behaviour; they were not, however, indicators of a desire to be subjugated. Unfortunately space constraints require a very limited treatment of the FACE report. However, for those interested in

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[71] Maran La Raw, "Towards a Basis for Understanding the Minorities in Burma: The Kachin Example" in *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations Vol. I,* Page 141.

[72] Ibid., Pages 141-142.

a more detailed account, Sai Aung Tun provides extensive excerpts in *History of the Shan State*, starting on page 228 and extending until page 281.

On April 21, 1947, the Shan State Council was established. It was comprised of 66 members, half of which were Saophas and half of which were popularly nominated representatives. The people's representatives were nominated by government officials and the Shan elite but elected on a popular basis. [73] The Council was to have legislative, executive and financial powers. An executive committee of four Saophas and four people's representatives would be selected from the council to head the council and all departments in Shan state. The Shan state government would carry out all the resolutions of the council.[74]

With regard to the position of the Karenni, during the time of the debates in the Constituent Assembly on the future of Burma, they were internally divided. Some had wanted to remain an independent British protectorate, some wanted to remain independent and negotiate with Burma as one State to another, while maintaining friendly ties with Britain (this was the position advocated by those interviewed by the FACE); the faction which won control advocated joining the Union of Burma, if the right to secede after 10 years was guaranteed.[75]

On July 19th, 1947, Aung San and his cabinet were attacked while in session. Aung San and seven ministers died as a result. The assassinations were a major setback to the success of independence in Burma, for Burmans and non-Burmans alike. For Shan politics, the impact of the assassination was threefold. First, the loss of Aung San was devastating. Aung San was a politician who had sufficient power to get things done. If he gave his word, he had the ability to keep it. This made negotiation with him a productive process. Furthermore, he was a key politician who stressed the equality of all races within Burma, which was not the view of all politicians at the time.[76] The Shan statesman Sao Sam Htun was a member of Burma's interim cabinet and was shot with Aung San on July 19th. He did not die immediately but succumbed after being taken to the hospital. This was particularly unfortunate for the Shan since he was meant to be the head of state for the Shan State Council.[77] It could be said that this made the assassination twice as politically devastating.

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[73] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 327.
[74] Ibid., Page 327.
[75] Rastorfer, *On the development of Kayah and Kayan National Identity*, Page 25.
[76] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 100.
[77] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 328.

Second, though SCOUHP could have been a united Shan, Chin and Kachin political force to negotiate with the Burmese power centre, it was never consolidated, and never referenced after independence. The reason for this was that its key organizers were Sao Sam Htun, Sao Khun Kyi and Sao Shwe Thaike. Sao Sam Htun died with Aung San in 1947. In 1948, Sao Khun Kyi died of a stroke and Sao Shwe Thaike was designated the first President of the Union, a position which prohibited him from taking an active role in politics in Shan State. [78] Efforts were being made to revive SCOUHP by the Shan Government in 1961, but the coup of March 1962 interrupted this process.[79]

Third, at the time of the assassination, the constitution had not been reviewed or adopted. This was crucial because the constitution which was eventually adopted had serious flaws in terms of addressing the concerns of the ethnic leaders and complementing the Panglong Agreement. It is difficult to know what sort of constitution would have emerged had Aung San and his cabinet been alive to finish work on it, but the constitution which did emerge reveals a very different structure for Burma than the one the ethnic leaders might have imagined. This was particularly disappointing given some of Aung San's stated thoughts on the subject:

> Now when we build our new Burma shall we build it as a Union [federation] or a Unitary State? In my opinion, it will not be feasible to set up a Unitary State. We must set up a Union with properly regulated provisions as should be made to safeguard the rights of National Minorities. We must take care that 'United we stand' not 'United we fall.'[80]

4.7 The 1947 Constitution

Time was a key element in how the constitution was drafted. Practically speaking, from the period of the assassination, July 19th until September 1947 when the constitution was supposed to be presented in the British Parliament, there was not sufficient time to explain and debate every detail. The draft constitution was put before the Constituent Assembly on July 31, 1947, less than two weeks after Aung San's death, and approved by the British Parliament on September 24 of the same year.[81]

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[78] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma,* Pages 187 and 224.
[79] Ibid., Page 100.
[80] Statement made during a speech at a League Convention, May 23, 1947. Shelby Tucker, *Burma*, Page 152.
[81] Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 70.

Even when Aung San had been alive, the Constituent Assembly had been working within the time-frame of 2-3 months for the completion of the constitution. A further hitch was that, in comparison to the leaders from the Frontier Areas, the Burmese elite had the advantages of understanding constitutional matters, being experienced politicians and having received British training and education as civil servants and legal experts.[82] During the National Conference to discuss the Federal Principle, the third speaker for the Federal Principle, U Htun Myint, stated the following:

> We, who participated in the work of the Constituent Assembly [during the drafting of the constitution] as representatives from the Shan State, had absolutely no political experience at the time. I also admit, with complete honesty, that we knew absolutely nothing about matters of legislation.[83]

This is not to portray the Frontier areas leaders as having been incapable of self-representation, only to underline that they were not as expert as their Burman counterparts with regard to complex legal and political matters. While the Saopha representatives had had more access to education than the non-Saopha representatives, there was still quite a large gap. Norma Bixler states that in exchange for the tribute the Shan paid the British, the Saophas of the larger states were able to send their sons to be educated in England.[84] While this is true in part, this was a development which occurred later in the Shan states. Sao Shwe Thaike was educated at the Shan Chiefs School in Taunggyi, which the British had set up for the sons of Saophas, but never studied abroad. His first experiences abroad occurred when he fought as a soldier for the British in Mesopotamia during World War I. Later, some of his eldest children were sent to study in England.[85] While the younger generations in Saopha families may have had access to British education, the Saophas of Sao Shwe Thaike's generation had not for the most part, while the non-Saophas had received even less formal training. As Sao Saimong Mangrai states:

> ...if the British had insisted on higher academic accomplishments by the Shan leadership, the Shan States would have been less under-developed than they were when independence found them in union with Burma proper.[86]

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[82] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 111.
[83] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 454.
[84] Bixler, *Burma: A profile*, Page 135.
[85] For example, Sao Sanda who has described her in experience in *The Moon Princess*, 2008.
[86] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, Page 300.

John Cady describes the Shan Saophas as "politically sophisticated" in comparison with other Frontier Areas leaders and representatives, and capable of recognizing Burman political manoeuvring.[87] This view has some merit, or else the Shan would never have instigated the Panglong Conferences or sought a forum for negotiation. However, political savvy and formal training in constitutional law are two separate things.

The constitution which was adopted was colonial in nature: it designed a system of government that was not a union of equal states, but in which Burma Proper represented the 'mother state' with subordinate satellite states. Seekins quotes one of its authors describing the Constitution as "in theory federal, [...] in practice unitary."[88] Power rested with the government of Burma Proper. Although the states could legislate local affairs, state laws could be nullified by the Union government (which Yawnghwe stresses was dominantly Burmese).[89] In any case, states legislatures were actually composed of members of the union legislature from their respective states, not separately elected. Governors of the states were chosen by the Union prime minister, in consultation with state legislatures, and would be ministers in the Union cabinet.[90] Furthermore, matters related to natural resources (forests, minerals, oil) were under Union jurisdiction.

In terms of actual state representation in the Upper House of Parliament, Burma Proper had 53 representative members. The five component states had only a collective 72 representative members between them. Additionally, the Upper House (Chamber of Nationalities) did not actually have the power to initiate a financial bill or veto any bills passed by the Lower House or Chamber of Deputies.[91]

Some of the British themselves, during the debate on the Burma Independence Bill, expressed concern regarding the Constitution, as the following excerpt by Brigadier Peto highlights:

> The Prime Minister today said that there was quite adequate safeguard for minorities. If one reads the Constitution, it gives certain rules for citizenship in Section n, which are completely negatived in the following paragraph. This says that citizenship can be taken away by order of the Burmese Government if and when they think fit. Section n says: Nothing contained in Section 11 shall derogate from the power of the Parliament to make such laws as it thinks fit

[87] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 639.
[88] Seekins, *Burma*, Page 46.
[89] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 111.
[90] Seekins, *Burma*, Page 46.
[91] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 111.

> in respect of citizenship…or for the termination of the citizenship of any existing classes. How that can be considered compatible with safeguarding the interests of minorities, I fail to see. [92]

If the Constitution was so obviously flawed, why did the ethnic leaders accept it? There are a variety of factors which influenced their acceptance of the constitution, all of which ironically involved the desire to behave in the spirit of cooperation and not cause undue trouble. U Htun Myint recalled that during the early drafting stages in the Constituent Assembly, while Aung San was still alive, the constitutional adviser U Chan Htun presented a series of provisions of the draft constitution, to which Aung San responded that there wasn't time do go into such details and that "a proposal containing broad principles will suffice."[93] U Htun Myint went on to explain that General Aung San felt that once independence had been gained, changes and adjustments to the constitution could be made "in accordance with the circumstances and the time."[94]

However, even while Aung San was alive, there were significant changes made to proposals for the structure of the nation which the Constitution would define. Take for instance, Aung San's Fourteen Points, a resolution moved by Aung San in the Constituent Assembly on May 23, 1947.[95] Point 2 lists the territories that will make up Burma:

> 2. In the Constitution to be drawn up by the Constituent Assembly the said independent sovereign republic of Burma shall be a Union comprising:
>
> A. Such territories that were heretofore within British Burma and known as:
>
> (i) "Ministerial Burma,"
>
> (ii) The Homalin Subdivision,
>
> (iii) Singkaling Hkamti,
>
> (iv) Thaungdut,
>
> (v) The Somra Tract,
>
> (vi) The Naga Hills,
>
> (vii) The Salween District,
>
> (viii) The Kanpetlet subdivision, and
>
> (ix) The Arakan Hill Tracts.
>
> B. The Federated Shan States (including Kokang and Mongpai);
>
> C. The Karenni States;
>
> D. The Kachin Hills; and

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[92] Brigadier Peto, *HC Deb 05 November 1947*, Vol. 443, Reference: cc1836-961, Page 55.
[93] Sai Aung Tun, *The History of the Shan State*, Page 455.
[94] Ibid., Page 455.
[95] Aung San, Document X - The Fourteen Points, in *The Political Legacy of Aung-San*, Pages 35-37.

E. The Chin Hills District (excluding the Kampetlet Subdivision).

Point 3 describes the powers of these separate territories:

3. (1) Such of the territories mentioned in B, C, D and E as possessing all or some of the following characteristics, namely:

(i) a defined geographical area with a character of its own,

(ii) unity of language different from the Burmese,

(iii) unity of culture,

(iv) community of historical traditions,

(v) community of economic interests and a measure of economic self-sufficiency,

(vi) a fairly large population, and

(vii) the desire to maintain its distinct identity as a separate unit,

shall possess the status of "the Union State", "Autonomous State" or the "National Area" as may be determined by the Constituent Assembly and thereafter according to the law of the Constitution and exercise all such powers and functions as may be vested in or assigned to them.

(2) Such powers and functions as shall be determined by mutual agreement after negotiation to be made by a committee appointed by this convention; the agreement arrived at by negotiation on the part of the said committee shall be subject to ratification by the Executive Committee of the A.F.P.F.L.

Point 4 describes the powers of the Union Legislature:

4. The Central Legislature (hereinafter referred to as "the Union Legislature") shall have jurisdiction throughout the Union. In relation to all matters not coming within the classes of subjects assigned exclusively to the legislatures of "the Union State," "Autonomous State" or "National Area" and notwithstanding anything in the constitution, the legislative authority of the Union Legislature shall extend to all matters coming within the classes of subjects hereinafter enumerated:

(1) Union subjects.

(2) Inter-state matters.

(3) Residual matters.

(4) All matters relating to economic development on national scale.

(5) All matters relating to the territories other than "the Union State," "Autonomous State" or "National Area."

The tone of this resolution is for the creation of a Union which seems strongly federal in nature, that is, the Shan States, Karenni States, Kachin Hills and Chin Hills are all designated separate entities with their own powers.

Silverstein provides an article appearing in the *New Times of Burma* on May 24, 1947, summarizing Aung San's concluding speech at the AFPFL convention the

day previous, when the resolution of the fourteen points was passed. The following is an excerpt:

> [...] The Burmese leader [Aung San] explained that the AFPFL had had to examine the forms of government employed by the USA, Great Britain, and the Soviet union, and made a composite of all these forms, thus constructing a new type of democratic government that best suited the Burmese. He added the proposed new form of government had been drawn from Yugoslavia.
>
> Un Aung San said that the new form of government had been based on the economic factor, vital to Burma, and had been carried out on a long-term policy. Time alone would prove whether or not the form chosen was the best, U Aung San declared, adding that no constitution was perfect.
>
> Touching on national problems, U Aung San said that the position of nationalities had been viewed liberally with the object of avoiding future communal misunderstandings. [...] U Aung San stated that Burma was hoping to achieve unity amongst all her nationals which in time, he hoped, would lead to the complete unity of all South East Asia countries. But, he added, there were elements both at home and abroad working against this ideal. [...] They were endeavouring to disrupt the unity of the majority people by the use of religion and of the minorities by urging them to strive for executive positions.[96]

This passage is perhaps most notable for its final paragraph, which draws a link to 'divisive elements' externally and internally. There is also a suggestion that minorities may be susceptible to foreign influence. This denotes that the concept later espoused by the military, that the minorities exist as a source of disunity, already had its roots in political thinking prior to independence, though in a less extreme form.

Aung San's subsequent 7 Points resolution, moved in the Constituent Assembly on June 16th, 1947, indicated quite a different proposed structure for the Union. This is the full text of the resolution[97]:

> "Whereas the representatives of the people of Burma, including the Frontier Areas and the States of Karenni, are hereby assembled in accordance with the will of the people for the purpose of framing a constitution,
>
> IT IS RESOLVED
>
> 1. that the constitution shall be that of an independent sovereign republic to be known as 'The Union of Burma'; and
>
> 2. that the Union shall comprise units as shall be specified by the constitution and the units so specified shall exercise such autonomy as shall be defined in the constitution; and

[96] Aung San, Document XI – Summary and Quotations from Aung San's Concluding Speech to AFPFL Convention, May 23, 1947, in *The Political Legacy of Aung-San*, Page 38.
[97] Aung San, Document XII – Bogyoke's Seven Points, in *The Political Legacy of Aung-San*, Page 39.

> 3. that all powers and authority of the sovereign independent Republic of Burma, its constituent parts and organs of government shall be derived from the people; and
> 4. that the constitution shall guarantee and secure to all the peoples of the Union justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law freedom of thought, expression, belief, worship, subject to law and public morality; and
> 5. that the constitution shall provide adequate safeguards for minorities; and
> 6. that the integrity of the territory of the independent sovereign Republic of Burma and its sovereign rights on land, sea and air shall be maintained according to justice and international law; and
> 7. that this historic land of Burma shall attain to its rightful honoured place in the world, make its full and willing contribution to the advancement and welfare of mankind and affirm its devotion to the ideal of peace and friendly co-operation amongst nations founded on international justice and morality."

Apart from points 2 and 5, there is no reference to the minorities or constituent states of the proposed Union. Further, these points are extremely vague, in comparison to the outline described in the Fourteen Points. In the Editor's note on this document, Silverstein writes:

> This is the resolution offered by Aung San to the members of the Constituent Assembly as the basis for drawing up a new constitution for the nation. [...] There is no clear explanation as to why he abandoned his idea of a federation of states, autonomous states and national territories and proposed only that a federation of states be created.[98]

With regard to the reactions of leaders from the former frontier areas, Silverstein, citing the *New Times of Burma*, June 17, 1947 writes:

> In the debate following the presentation of the resolution the leaders of the larger minority groups expressed their approval. The Sawbwa of Yaunghwe, speaking for the Shan chiefs, said it "brought equality to all indigenous races of Burma without discrimination." Mahn Ba Kaing, a Karen member of the governor's executive council, supported it in behalf of his people. Sima Duwa Sinwa Nawng, speaking for the Kachins, approved the resolutions and added that "if after freedom is obtained and then the freedom of the Kachins were impaired, then we Kachins will fight the Burmese and appoint our own king if necessary."[99]

While this indicates that they were in agreement, at least momentarily, it does not inform us as to the exact nature of their thoughts, although Sima Duwa Sinwa Nawng's statement that the Kachin can always fight later if need be indicates perhaps slight uncertainty, at least on his part. In general, however, since the ethnic leaders respected Aung San, it seems they took him at his word. U Htun Myint further stated:

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[98] Editor's note, Document XII – Bogyoke's Seven Points in *The Political Legacy of Aung-San*, Page 39.
[99] Silverstein, 'Introduction' in *The Political Legacy of Aung San*, Page 9.

> Some Shan State representatives[100] at the time, fearing such an outcome as we are now facing, wanted to engage the services of a foreign constitutional expert. We fought against the proposal because we felt that such an action would be taken to mean that we were suspicious of the motive of the AFPFL.[101]

The constitutional expert the Shan representatives wished to engage was a foreign barrister called Mr. Dawood. Instead, due to the protests of the other Shan representatives, they selected a Burmese lawyer called U Myint Thein to be their legal adviser.[102] Interestingly, U Maung Maung, made President by General Ne Win and noted for his favourable written portrayals of Ne Win,[103] recounted in *Burmese Political Movements* that upon receiving the post of Chief Justice of Burma, U Myint Thein, whom the Shan Saophas had retained to defend their rights under the constitution, was able to demonstrate to U Nu, the Burman Prime Minister, how to "circumvent the Constitution which he had helped to create, and pass the budget by Presidential Ordinance, instead of going through the Parliament."[104] It is difficult to know what to make of this account, since an unfavourable representation of U Myint Thein and U Nu would not have been contrary to the accepted military viewpoint, since neither of them co-operated with the military junta after the 1962 coup and were in fact both arrested by Ne Win's revolutionary government.[105] However, the tone of U Maung Maung's account seems to indicate that he viewed U Myint Thein's behaviour in this matter favourably. Whatever the meaning of this anecdote, it is perhaps evidence that, when it came to constitutional matters, the ethnic leaders were at a disadvantage compared to the Burmese politicians.

After Aung San's death, when it came to be time to review and approve the Constitution, Yawnghwe states that the Shan accepted it despite its inequalities and their own feelings "out of respect for the late Aung San who had worked so hard for independence and unity among the different ethnic groups" and because they were told it was an "interim constitution" which could always be changed after

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[100] That is, the Saopha representatives.
[101] Sai Aung Tun, *The History of the Shan State*, Page 455.
[102] Ibid., footnote 57, Page 620.
[103] Tucker, *Burma*, Page 72.
[104] U. Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements, 1940-1948*, endnote 344, Page 366.
[105] "Obiturary: U Myint Thein". *The Times* (6 October 1994) [Online]. Source http://www.burmalibrary.org/reg.burma/archives/199410/msg00018.html

independence.[106] The Shan perspective was that it was the 'spirit' and not the 'letter' of the constitution which mattered.[107]

Unfortunately, the first 2-4 years after independence involved such immediate internal struggle in Burma that constitutional matters were not given primary importance. The Communist uprising and the PVO rebellion meant that U Nu's government had to deal with a direct armed threat to the maintenance of the Union.

4.8 Chapter Summary

At the conclusion of WWII, neither the Frontier Areas nor Burma proper wanted to be ruled by the Britain empire any longer. However, the frontier areas people also did not want to be subjected to Bamar rule. The post-war leaders of Burma proper (the AFPFL) felt that the two areas should be joined, sooner rather than later. Meanwhile, British colonial officials advocated the opposite view and thus there was debate on the future of colonial policy in Burma by the new government in London. The British ultimately demanded guarantees of a desire to be united by the peoples of both areas before they would agree to grant full independence.

In exchange for guaranteed agreement on internal sovereignty, as embodied in the Panglong agreement, the Kachin, Chin and Shan accepted union with Burma proper. In the aftermath of this agreement, all the excluded areas were joined to Burma proper, regardless of a lack of written agreements or demands to the contrary, notable examples being the Karenni and the Karen.

The writing of the independence constitution demonstrated the complexity of the issue of union, and the lack of a shared single, national vision. The cabinet assassination, limited time frame allotted by the British for drafting a constitution and the AFPFL parliamentary majority resulted in the adoption of a significantly flawed constitution.

[106] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 111.
[107] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 456.

CHAPTER FIVE

Independence and the setbacks of internal turmoil in Shan State (1948-1957)

Before the first military 'caretaker government' which took power in the fall of 1958, Burma experienced a decade of democratic, parliamentary rule. Yet this period was also rife with conflict across the country, which gave rise to one singularly important political preoccupation: maintaining the 'unity' of the Union. This concern was offered by the military as a justification for its seizure of power in 1962 and was, at the time, largely accepted. This chapter will briefly explore some of the conflicts in the Shan State and the repercussions they had on perceptions of Shan State as a source of 'disunity' and danger to the Union.

5.1 The Union at Independence

Independence in Burma was achieved on January 4, 1948. The following is an excerpt from the Independence Day address made by Burma's first president, the Shan statesman Sao Shwe Thaike:

> Today is for us not only a day of freedom but also a day of reunion. For a long time, the principal races of Burma, the Kachins and the Chins have tended to look upon themselves as separate national units. Of late, a nobler vision, the vision of a Union of Burma, has moved our hearts, and we stand united to-day as one nation determined to work in unity and concord for the advancement of Burma's interests [...] It is unity which has brought our struggle for independence to this early fruition and may unity continue to be the watchword for every member of the Sovereign Independent Republic to be henceforth known as the Union of Burma [1]

The address indicates a vision of national unity that apparently does not comprise separate national units, but peoples belonging to one nation, working together towards common goals. This was indeed a new vision for Burma, one which had not yet been made into a reality, and so would soon be sorely tested.

Yet there is an interesting use of terms in Sao Shwe Thaike's speech. He refers to a 'Union' of Burma and 'one nation' simultaneously, claiming that the union is not a joining of 'separate national units' but a 'nobler vision' of a Union. This leads to the question: What exactly was the Union? Or were leaders at the time also only discovering that themselves? David Steinberg writes: "Although a "Union of Burma"

[1] Sao Shwe Thaike, "First Presidential Address, January 4, 1948," *The Irrawaddy* [Online]. Source (http://www.irrawaddy.org/ind/01.php)

as a state as titularly created, a union of people as a nation was not."[2] This is a valid point. The Union of Burma existed as a state, yet what this meant in terms of a national vision for the people had not been established.

A further example of this atypical understanding of what 'Union' was, comes from an excerpt from Sao Shwe Thaike's message in 1950 to the Kachin on the second anniversary of independence, the creation of Kachin State:

> I send my cordial greetings to the people of the Kachin Autonomous State on the occasion of the second anniversary of the inauguration of their independence. The races of the Kachin State possess the essential qualities that go in the making of a progressive people. One such quality is that of national solidarity. In this respect, the Kachin people have achieved understanding and harmony among themselves and with the other races in the union while under their great leader, the Hon'ble Sima Duwa Sinwa Nawng, they have shown what a free and united people can do for themselves and for their friends. In the firm belief that Independence and Union are one and inseparable, they played during the year an important part in effectively counteracting the separationist tendencies that threatened to impede the orderly progress of the Union.[3]

This speech contains another unusual use of terms. For instance, Kachin State is referred to as Kachin Autonomous State while its leaders are praised for behaving in a manner that prevented separation, and helped to maintain the Union. From this perspective, being an 'autonomous state' is not seen as being at odds with belonging to, and being an effective part of the Union. Then, reference is made to the different races of Kachin state itself, who are congratulated for having national solidarity in working together amongst themselves within their state, and also with other races in the Union. Thus, the existence of different 'races' is also not seen as being at odds with having national solidarity.

The opening speech made by the Burmese ambassador to the USA, U So Nyun at the 1950 Herald Tribune Forum of Youth contains further references to a different kind of political system apparently in existence in Burma:

> [...] in our system of Government we have sought a very happy compromise between the American federal type and the British unitary type of Government. This of course does not mean that democracy is something new to us, and is of exotic growth. The bulk of our people profess Buddhism which is a truly democratic religion and plays a very important part in the daily life of our people [...] But I must frankly admit that democracy as practised today in

[2] David Steinberg, "Constitutional and political bases of minority insurrections in Burma" in *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S., editors (Singapore: Regional Strategic Studies Programme, 1984), Page 49.
[3] Sao Shwe Thaike, "President's Message to Kachins on their Independence Anniversary" in *Burma Weekly Bulletin* (Week Ending the 14th January, 1950): 5.

> Burma and other parts of the East – the democracy of the ballot box – is of modern origin and growth. [...] The points I wish to make are firstly, that no country in the world has a monopoly of democracy, and, secondly, that each country interprets and fashions democracy in its own way.[4]

The ambassador goes on to state that the ideological conflict of the Cold War is not one which Burma empathizes with:

> [...] you have been taught to divide the world into two hostile camps, which are mutually exclusive and which are collectively exhaustive. Most of you have never been taught that there is a middle path, and that there is a third point of view. We in Burma – and I am sure that this is true of many countries in the East – do not believe either in a capitalistic heaven or a communistic paradise. [...] A great wave of national consciousness swept and is still sweeping over the whole of Asia today, and the world is witnessing almost the last phase of the battle against colonialism in the East. Colonialism did not stand merely for territorial aggrandisement, but also for economic exploitation and social and racial humiliation, and you cannot now blame those nations of the East which have recently regained their political independence for being nervous, suspicious, distrustful and hesitant in their relationships with the Western world [...] the smaller nations of the East are sick and tired of war, whether they are wars fought for us or wars fought against us.[5]

He then makes the following parallel between religion and politics, in defence of neutrality: "Small nations of the East like ours have therefore to resign ourselves to the philosophic thought which is the basis of the teachings of our Lord Buddha – 'By thine own diligence shall ye work out thine own salvation.' "[6]

It is apparent from these speeches that there were certain ideals being pursued by a portion of the leadership, whether or not they was ultimately realistic. It should be remembered that all of the above statements were being made as the main civil war which had broken out at independence thanks to the Communist uprisings was drawing to a close.

Perhaps before the KMT invasion and covert CIA activities in Shan State, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and events in Cambodia and Laos occurred, the need to have citizens who adhered to one national identity did not seem as pressing, and the possibility of having autonomous states within a functioning Union 'nation' did not seem so implausible. Perhaps the need for 'one nation', in a homogenous sense, only

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[4] U So Nyun, "Burmese Ambassador opens "Herald Tribune" Forum of Youth" in *Burma Weekly Bulletin* (Week Ending the 11th March, 1950): 4.
[5] Ibid., Pages 4-5.
[6] Ibid., Page 6.

became more of a political concern as subsequent events pointed to great external threat.

5.1.1 Civil War: 1948-1950

Immediately following the granting of independence, there were two distinct communist uprisings: the Red Flag (under Thakin Soe) and White Flag (under Thakin Than Tun) communist movements respectively. The civil war thus began in March, 1948.[7] Simultaneously, the AFPFL's own militia, the People's Volunteer Organization (PVO) which Aung San had helped found, rebelled and began to sympathise with the communists. Next there was a mutiny by the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Burma Rifles as well as two uprisings in Arakan, one led by a Muslim Mujahid and one by the monk U Sein Da. There was also an armed insurrection in 1949 by the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO), as well as mutiny by some units of the Kachin Rifles sympathetic to the Karen cause. In Shan state, a rebel group of Kachin mutineers led by war hero Captain Naw Seng, Karen rebels and their Pa-O allies, captured various towns in the north of Shan State.[8]

The commander of the army, Smith Dun, remained loyal to the Union government, although he was Karen. He encouraged his fellow Karen to remain loyal also, but not with total success. In the official British estimation, Lowe writes their conclusion that "while Smith Dun was well intentioned, he lacked the ability to handle the demanding situation." Additionally, "his authority had been undermined by his deputy, General Ne Win, who was concentrating on building his own power base through securing the appointment of officers loyal to him."[9] On February 1, 1949, General Smith Dun was sent on "indefinite leave" and General Ne Win took over the armed forces. The next day, the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) was declared an "unlawful association" and Ahlone, an area of Rangoon where many Karen nationals lived was sent on fire. A reporter, U Thaung, who later became editor of the *Mirror Daily* newspaper, recalls the event in his memoir *A Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma*:

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[7] Robert H. Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma* (Ithaca: Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1973), Page 7.
[8] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 102.
[9] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 100.

> Fire engines were prevented from reaching there. Karen nationals rushing out of their burning homes were shot down. I arrived there as soon as permission was granted. Dead bodies were everywhere in the streets. Many of them were children and young girls.[10]

On the British side, they were waiting to see what would happen with the communist rebellion. If the communists seized power in Rangoon, they were willing to support a separatist Karen state. However, if U Nu's government managed to hold on, the British would continue to support it and not the Karen cause.[11]

During this period the Shan leaders remained loyal to U Nu's government. At a time when government troops were turning rebel as fast as they were recruited, the cooperation of Shan, Chin and Kachin leaders was essential in terms of providing both money and soldiers to the central government. Both the earlier rebels and later, the KMT General Li Mi, attempted to gain Saopha support for their causes. In each instance, the Saophas declined.[12] Yawnghwe states that if the Saophas had joined the rebels (which could have been a possibility since many were sympathetic to the Karen cause), the Kachin and Karenni would have agreed to join.[13]

As it was, the Saophas consciously chose not to rebel during the civil war. Yawnghwe gives four reasons for their loyalty to the central government: First, it was evident that rebel victory could undermine the government position so much that the White Flag Communists would be able to seize power in Shan State. Second, the Saophas, Kachin and Chin leaders trusted Prime Minister U Nu, but had no basis of trust with the White Flag Communists. Thirdly, the Saophas, Kachin and Chin felt that the constitution, though not what they had imagined, provided a basis for some rights with regard to their internal affairs. Once peace and stability were restored, the constitution could be reworked. Finally, the Saophas were by nature conservative and traditional. They were not attracted by the prospect of revolution which the communists promised and were conditioned by their exposure to the British to respect constitutional authority. At that point neither U Nu nor the AFPFL had violated the constitution, so the ethnic leaders felt they should abide by their given word as well.[14]

Not only did the ethnic leaders choose not to rebel, they gave active assistance to U Nu's government. Chin, Kachin and Shan recruits joined the Burma Army and

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[10] U Thaung, *A Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1995), Page 15.
[11] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 101.
[12] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 102; Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 19.
[13] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 102.
[14] Ibid., Page 105.

the Union Military police. Using their personal revenues and state treasuries, the Saophas raised levies of additional soldiers.[15] It was hoped that the levies would fight in Shan state itself, but the Burmese did not approve this,[16] perhaps out of fear that they would mutiny as had the government's former recruits.

In the end, U Nu's government did not fall. Lowe states that it survived the rebellions because the Karen did not advance on Rangoon at the moment when they could have taken it and because Smith Dun had continued to support U Nu.[17] Taylor states that the army's success was due to its superior weapons and discipline, although the rebels were more numerous, they never co-ordinated their activities due to their different goals and ideologies.[18] In any case, by the summer of 1950, generous amnesty offers were being made to the various insurgents to encourage them to give up arms. From this point on the government in Rangoon was more or less safe. In central areas, law and order could be kept. There was a great difference between the conflict during the period 1948-1950 and the conflict in subsequent years due to the actions of various insurgent groups fighting for autonomy. The main source of real danger to central government power during the civil war years was based on internal actors. The communists had actually wanted to overthrow the government.

5.2 The Pa-O in Shan State

Before moving forward to discuss foreign interference in Burma, it is important to first mention the case of the Pa-O in Shan State, since they led several rebellions themselves. The conflict they generated was internal to Shan State. The Pa-O did not represent a threat to central government power and the main rebel aim was never to overthrow the Rangoon government.[19] The role of the Pa-O rebellions must be considered in the context of Shan State politics, as a reaction against the Shan Saophas.

Henri-André Aye states that the Pa-O co-existed peacefully with the Shan under British rule and never voiced a desire for autonomy during that period. In his estimation, it was the KNDO (Karen National Defense Organization) appeal to the

[15] Ibid., Page 105.
[16] Ibid., footnote 20, Page 146.
[17] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 102.
[18] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 9.
[19] Russ Christensen and Sann Kyaw, *The Pa-O: Rebels and Refugees* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2006), Page 20.

Pa-O as 'blood brothers' (the Karen and Pa-O are ethnically related) that turned initial unrest into action in 1949.

This manifested politically as a demand by Pa-O politicians for greater representation in the state government, since they held only 3 out of the 25 seats in the Shan State Council. They made demands for an additional 3, for a total of six seats.[20] Outside the political mainstream, Henri-André Aye further notes that there was a military arm of the Pa-O, headed by Phra Bwa Hla Pe (also sometimes referred to as U Hla Pe), which advocated against Bamar domination in the Union and against Shan domination in the Shan State. Phra Bwa Hla Pe was not a Pa-O, but a Karen from the south delta region, and had been one of the Karen observers at the second Panglong conference in 1947. He was considered a charismatic and experienced leader.[21]

A slightly different account of the Pa-O presented in *The Pa-O: Rebels and Refugees* by Russ Christensen and Sann Kyaw. The Saophas are presented in a generally negative light, as oppressors of the Pa-O. William Dunn Hackett, who lived and worked in villages to the south of Taunggyi in the late 1940-early 1950's, is cited at length by the authors. He states that the Shan typically characterized the Pa-O as "ignorant farmers" and blamed them whenever there was an incidence of banditry. He further states that they were "exploited and dominated" and that taxes paid to the Saophas went to finance the towns, rather than back to the villages, which were kept deprived of education, health and welfare services as rural areas. When they tried to engage in trade and industry in towns, they "fell victim to the petty persecution of the Shan officials" and was often "at the mercy of Shan, Indian, and Chinese brokers who became wealthy, whereas the Pa-O villager remained poor."[22]

It should be noted that the Pa-O were not completely without power or recognition within Shan State. Khun Kyi was the Pa-O ruler of Hsa Htung (also known as Hsi Hseng) State and helped bring about the first Panglong Conference in 1946. He did not attend the second Panglong Conference in 1947, but sent his representative, U Pyu, who signed the Panglong Agreement on his behalf.[23] The state had so many Taungthu (another name for Pa-O) inhabitants that its Myosa had long been one too.

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[20] Henri-André Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma* (North Charleston: BookSurge Publishing, 2009), Page 47.
[21] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Page 47.
[22] Christensen and Sann Kyaw, *The Pa-O: Rebels and Refugees*, Page 16.
[23] Ibid., Page 18.

Furthermore, the plight of the Pa-O villager was similar to the plight of many villagers, who tended to be neglected and exploited more easily than town dwellers, due to their relative isolation and small numbers. Finally, the Saophas were a mixed bag of rulers, some were more autocratic, some more progressive. At the time of independence there were 34 different Shan states, which made for a great variety.

The United Pa-O Nationalist Organization (UPNO) was established in August 1950. U Pyu was its chairman, U Kyaw Sein it secretary, U Hla Pe was responsible for the economy and Bo Chan Zone administered defence. It was the UPNO which won the three seats in the Shan State government during the 1951 elections. However, Christensen and Kyaw cite Martin Smith to state that through the early 1950's, the Pa-O National Organization (PNO-military branch of the Pa-O movement), became "one of the largest insurgent forces in Burma...operating in four military regions in the mountains around Taunggyi and Inle Lake"[24] and therefore posed a significant threat to the Shan State Government.

However, as is the case with many insurgent forces, all was not smooth going internally:

> [...] the lack of clear differentiation between political and military wings of the Pa-o movement caused confusion and resentment among villagers. Taxes were often collected by both the political organizers working in the villages and the military commanders backed by their armed soldiers who passed through the villages.[25]

Finally, in 1958 there was a desire for peace after almost 10 years of fighting. After a secret peace agreement was negotiated by U Hla Pe and a Burmese army general, almost 2,000 insurgents gave up their arms at a ceremony in Taunggyi on May 5, 1958. Almost a year later, on April 24, 1959, the Saophas formally gave up their rights and privileges to the Shan government in Taunggyi, in exchange for a lump sum pension. The Pa-O leaders thus felt their anti-saopha campaign had been successful and there were peaceful relations between the Pa-O and government until the military coup in 1962.[26]

5.3 External invasion: KMT activities and clandestine US operations

There were reports in early 1950 that Chinese communist troops had crossed into Kengtung, chasing after the 93rd KMT division which had retreated there. In

[24] Ibid., Page 22.
[25] Ibid., Page 23.
[26] Ibid., Page 25-26.

January, 1950 a force of 200 KMT troops had entered Kengtung.[27] The Saopha of Kengtung met the commander and notified Rangoon, and it was decided that the KMT soldiers should be detained in a kind of internment camp. However, by March an additional 1,500 troops and 500 dependents had entered the state and the later arrivals refused to submit to Shan authorities.[28] According to Lowe, there was no diplomatic means to remove the KMT troops (an estimated 2,000-3,000) since the US and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek were trying to keep them there as a possible remaining foothold in the region, close to China, in the advent of a theoretical return there.[29]

The following is an excerpt from a speech made by the American ambassador to Burma, David McKendree Key Sr. during the presentation of his credentials to the president in Rangoon on April 26th, 1950:

> Your valiant struggle to achieve unity and your efforts to remove the causes of domestic upheaval and to restore the prosperity of the country, which tragic civil strife has endangered, cannot but excite in the American observer a feeling of admiration and sympathy [...] A significant advantage which the United States had in the evolution of its own national unity was its isolation between two vast oceans from involvement in the troubles of the rest of the world. Burma, however, must build itself in the very shadow of international political issues of the gravest import [...] it creates an urgency about the need for national unity, so that the Union of Burma may clearly identify and – as a strong, free nation – vigorously pursue and defend its national interest. These few thoughts will perhaps serve, Your Excellency, to explain the friendly attitude of my country toward Burma and to indicate our appreciation of the magnitude of the problems which confront you.[30]

There is a great deal of irony inherent in this speech, considering the actual actions being undertaken by the CIA at that time. Key's note that America's evolution of national unity had successfully evolved in thanks to its isolation and freedom from external interference is an interesting point to make. Also notable is Key's statement that America has a great deal of sympathy towards Burma and its problems...problems which American foreign policy was soon going to exacerbate.

On June 25, 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War made regional events more threatening. The KMT in Kentung were now belligerent.[31] They began to recruit Shan

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[27] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 11.
[28] Ibid., Page 12.
[29] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 108.
[30] David McKendree Key Sr , "Presentation of Credentials by American Ambassador and Dutch Minister" in *Burma Weekly Bulletin* (Week Ending the 29th April, 1950): 1.
[31] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 109.

and Chinese who lived on the border. Taylor notes: “Most of the Shans had to be bribed or threatened into joining.”[32] By May 1951 it became apparent that the KMT were receiving supplies though Thailand and the definite existence of clandestine US involvement became more certain.[33]

Lowe states that in January 1952, the British consul in Maymyo “visited the Shan region and traversed the often arduous terrain. Unrest was endemic with Karen rebels, White Flags and Red Flag communists, the KMT and dacoits [bandits] all operating plus periodic excursions by the Burmese army.”[34] By February 1952, there were an estimated 12,000 KMT troops in Burma.[35] The British began to feel they should propose that Burma raise the KMT issue in the UN Security Council, since the establishment of an investigative commission might be able to discourage the continued involvement of Thailand and the US in helping to sustain the unrest; it also began to be suggested that the KMT in Shan state was using opium to finance its activities.[36] By March 1953, it was reported that there were 30, 000 KMT troops on the border. They seized power in Kengtung, Manglum and Kokang, forcing out the Shan administration belonging to the Burma government and taking over the role of state authority, including tax collection.[37]

On March 25, 1953, Burma requested that the UN charge the government of Formosa (Taiwan) with aggression.[38] This was accepted for discussion in the General Assembly and on April 22, 1953, the UN General assembly passed a resolution condemning foreign interference and urging all external parties involved to desist and withdraw.[39] However, the UN response was perceived as weak by the government of Burma, since in comparison with other UN resolutions, the UN seemed to advocate taking harsh steps against communist aggression but only much lighter steps against anti-communist aggression.[40] Subsequent to the UN resolutions, negotiations between the US, Thailand, Nationalist China (Formosa/Taiwan) and Burma took place and as a result, by 1954, at least 5,000 troops had been removed to Taiwan, though figures

[32] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 12.
[33] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 110.
[34] Ibid., Page 114.
[35] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 13.
[36] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Pages 114-115.
[37] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 14.
[38] Ibid., Page 26.
[39] Ibid., Pages 27-28.
[40] Ibid., Page 28.

vary.[41] However, by this time, the KMT had successfully become entrenched. Its activities had so weakened the Shan government's control of its border with China that the opium trade continued to thrive. Additionally, members of the KMT remained in the region and actively engaged in opium cultivation and trafficking to maintain their small, private armies. In January 1955, the British consul in Chiang Mai, who had also served in Taiwan, reported a conversation with his American colleague Rufus Smith. Rufus Smith had met with two KMT colonels:

> [...] they maintained that their forces operated independently of Taiwan, financed by the opium trade. They were well armed: poor quality weapons had gone to Taiwan with personnel already evacuated. The colonels claimed that KMT forces totalled approximately 8,000, more than previously thought.[42]

In the Wa, Kokang and Kentung regions, the opium trade was now flourishing.[43]

5.3.1 The Burma Army and local defence in Shan State

Part of the desire for Shan troops to fight in Shan state arose from the apparently brutal behaviour of the Burmese soldiery. Yawnghwe notes that this point became a contentious issue, given that reports of abuses are hard to verify and since his Burmese friends later stated that the soldiery were equally brutal everywhere. Still, both the Shan government and people, who had first welcomed the Burma Army when it came to fight the KMT, began to see it as "just another foreign occupation force no better than the KMT, especially in the eyes of the rural people."[44]

The counterargument to this is the contention that the Shan Saophas requested government troops to deal with the KMT incursions and then turned around and complained when the army simply did its job.[45] In fact, if the Burmese army truly was the army of the Union, and Shan State a member of that Union, it was only sensible that the Union army be called in to protect its own member. The behaviour of the soldiery is arguably what made local populations feel as though they were no different than the invaders. Charney writes that when martial law was declared again in 1952 (it was first declared during1948-50), the Saopha's governments were brought under Army administration, police forces integrated into those of the state and the Saophas themselves agreed to replace their own authority with that of democratic

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[41] Ibid., Page 50; Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 113.
[42] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 116.
[43] Sai Kham Mong, *Kokang and Kachin in the Shan State (1945-1960)*, Page 73.
[44] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 112.
[45] Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 76.

government.[46] At face value, this confirms the cooperation of the Saophas and explains the increased vulnerability of Shan State to the army. In fact, during the initial stages of the KMT invasion in 1950, Shan State had been left to fend for itself without significant support from the central government.[47] For example, the Kokang Saopha had to retake the administration of Kokang by himself in 1952 and recruit new soldiers. The Burmese army only arrived and began to seriously fight the KMT in 1953.[48] Given this type of situation, it is understandable that the Shan government, having asked for help without receiving it and therefore being forced to fend for itself, when finally given help in the form of an army which began to appropriate control, might have a different opinion of the 'positive' effects and stability of martial law imposed by the Burma army.[49] Furthermore, part of the Shan State government's lack of control in these areas was related to their inability to establish roads, schools, medical facilities or an effective police force since they did not have a sufficient budget to fund such development.[50]

5.4 Aftermath of KMT activities, military expansion in the Shan states

While the external threat diminished after 1954 and rebel forces had been contained, six years of civil war had created a powerful military presence in the country, a military used to an increased budget and great freedom of action. In the parts of southern and eastern Shan state which had been placed under martial law, military men who were positioned there as military administrators "enjoyed sweeping powers."[51] The army was able to establish itself as *the* state presence in areas where the civilian state had not yet been able to extend control.[52] Additionally, the military's elite were politically affiliated with politicians like U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein (who would later form 'Stable AFPFL' in contrast to U Nu's 'Clean' AFPFL), which gave them a politicized view of themselves. Yawnghwe states that the decisive strength of the military came from General Ne Win's establishment of an effective

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[46] Ibid., Page 77.
[47] Sai Kham Mong, *Kokang and Kachin in the Shan State (1945-1960)*, Page 122.
[48] Ibid., Page 81.
[49] The issue of administration in Kokang, between the Saopha and the Shan state government is quite complex and interesting, since the Saopha does not appear to have been particularly helpful at first. Sai Kham Mong, *Kokang and Kachin in the Shan State (1945-1960)*, Pages 85-87.
[50] Ibid., Page 89.
[51] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 106.
[52] Mary P. Callahan, *Political Authority in Burma's Ethnic Minority States* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2007), Page 12.

controlling body within the military, the MIS, which kept dossiers on all army officers and civilians and answered to no-one but him. As the army had extra-legal authority in Shan state and other non-Burmese homelands, the MIS was extremely powerful and acted as a secret police force.[53]

Lowe writes that around January 1957, F.A. Warner and Group-Captain Peter Townshend toured the Shan region and submitted a report. In Kentung, locals informed them that there was:

> [...] oppressive conduct by the Burmese army, which included widespread rape and extortion. The Burmese had abandoned attempts to expel KMT troops: the last significant operations occurred in 1954 and 1955. The army claimed to have defeated the KMT but residents of Kentung described it as 'a costly defeat'. Therefore, the KMT troops were left to their own devices: they had settled down with their families, fields and airstrip by the Mekong with their camps situated in the hills behind. They seemed to number approximately 2,000 with a following comprising bandits and renegades. [...] The impact of KMT presence on the local economy was detrimental because local people had to support themselves plus their 'guests'.[54]

The perception of many Burman at the time was that the former Frontier Areas like Shan State were backward[55] and there were processes of subtle and not-so-subtle Burmanization ongoing throughout the country, notably through the special Ministry of Culture whose aim was assimilation.[56] Cady states:

> The Burman majority was quite prepared to acknowledge the political and cultural contributions of minority groups to national independence and welfare and took care to say nothing in disparagement of their customs and aspirations. But a homogenous people was the inevitable goal.[57]

The Burma Army was no exception to this point of view. Its creed was, and still is: "One Blood, One Voice, One Command." Yawnghwe avers that the stated position of this motto:

> [...] precluded the concept of a multi-centred structure for Burma. Such things as autonomy, state rights, federalism, and so forth, were perceived as utter rubbish and tolerated only because Aung San, the father of the army, had decreed them in 1946-47.[58]

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[53] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 107.
[54] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 117.
[55] Bixler cites an article written by Burman U Htin Fatt proposing that "prejudice arose in Burma Proper not because of past history but because of chauvinism in the Burmese nationalist movement, whose student leaders ignored or downgraded those who were not Burman-Buddhist." Bixler, *Burma*, Page 228.
[56] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 638; Silverstein, *Burmese Politics*, Page 225.
[57] Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Page 638.
[58] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 113.

Lowe notes that the long-running KMT activities in the Shan states and US support for them, helped to shape the paranoia which would later characterize the military regime: "it pushed General Ne Win and his supporters towards the conclusion that the military should assume full power and protect the integrity of the state against Shan autonomists, the KMT and interference from the United States."[59]

The military point of view made Chapter X of the Union constitution seem particularly threatening, since it promised the right of secession for the Shan and Karenni after 10 years of Union government. This made the upcoming year 1958 a potentially dangerous year. Many assumed they would try to secede, despite a lack of any concrete indications given by either the Shan or Karenni leadership. It was further assumed that other ethnic groups would demand to follow suit and all the initial turmoil of 1948-1950 would be resumed.

Tucker notes that there had long been a significant division between the two philosophies which characterised Burman nationalism. One form of nationalism was based upon "an idealized Burma ruled by its own king, Theravada Buddhism and the *sangha*" while the other "drew inspiration, naively, from the new values introduced by the colonial rule, modern science, modern institutions and humanist rationalism."[60] Aung San could perhaps be said to have held the latter view, while the military adopted something like the former. Divisions within the AFPFL and central government were perhaps simply expressions of a basic divide in what the nation was perceived to be about.

5.5 Union Government, Shan State Government and the anti-Saopha campaign

At this juncture, a brief examination of the parliamentary structure will perhaps be useful in explaining the existing power structures in the Union and Shan State.

5.5.1 The Union Government

The Union parliament had a bicameral legislature with a Chamber of Deputies (Lower House of parliament) and a Chamber of Nationalities (Upper House of parliament). The creation of the Chamber of Nationalities was, according to Lian Sakhong, meant to safeguard ethnic rights and symbolize the equality of Panglong.

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[59] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, Page 118.
[60] Tucker, *Burma*, Page 73.

Originally, each national state was to send an equal number of representatives to the Chamber of Nationalities, regardless of the size of their state.[61]

However, the Chamber of Nationalities under the 1947 Constitution was designed so that the non-Myanmar nationalities would send their chosen representatives to the Upper House, but Burma proper would elect its representatives on a population basis. Burma proper had 53 representatives while the combined representatives of the five other states were only 72. Unless there was absolute agreement between states, Burma proper could always dominate. This became a crucial issue in 1961 when U Nu sought to make Buddhism the official religion of the state. The Chamber of Nationalities could do nothing to halt the passage of this bill, an event which caused hostility amongst certain of the ethnic nationalities, especially the Karen. The Chamber of Deputies was also dominated by Burma Proper so that the entire Union Assembly was under the basic control of the Burman majority.[62]

States could legislate their own affairs but state laws could be altered by the Union government. Matters related to natural resources were under Union jurisdiction.[63] States legislatures were actually composed of members of the Union legislature from their respective states, and not separately elected.[64] Constitutional clauses made the state subordinate to Burma proper and there was little consultation between Union ministers and Union officials and state governments. The constitution was also always legally interpreted in favour of the Union government on matters of administration and finance.[65] Silverstein writes:

> Officially the government supported the constitution and its objectives; unofficially it sponsored and advocated policies which ran counter to its formal pronouncements and sought to create unity through the Burmanization of the people.[66]

In terms of bureaucracy, Tinker notes that the states had series of departments with parallel functions to Union Government ministries, the use of which he derided: "It is not always clear whether these are the product of administrative necessity or of state *amour propre*."[67] Of course, they might well have been the result of the confused

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[61] Sakhong, "Federalism, Constitution Making and State building in Burma" in *Designing Federalism in Burma*, Page 19.
[62] Ibid., Page 19.
[63] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 111.
[64] Seekins, "Historical Setting" in *Burma: a country study*, Page 46.
[65] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Pages 433-435.
[66] Josef Silverstein, "The Federal Dilemma in Burma" in *Far Eastern Survey* (Vol. 28, No. 7, July, 1959), Page 97.
[67] Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, Page 158.

constitution which had once promised separate institutions to state governments and then given all institutional authority to the central government. Tinker's analysis in general is geared toward how one would go about creating an efficient system, according to a unitary model. It does not take into account a non-unitary state of affairs. While Tinker deplores the 'feudalism' of the Frontier Areas, he also notes that local institutions there are very strong: "when the traditional, hereditary system of authority has been destroyed, it will not be easy to substitute a new official administration [...] The problem will not be solved by a snap solution, by an attempt to introduce Burmese officials, or to hand Government over to carpet-bag politicians."[68]

Financially, Tinker notes the utter dependence of the states on the central government: "The states are allotted the land revenue, excise duties, and other taxes to finance their activities but, in practice, the states depend on large subventions from the Union Government."[69]

5.5.2 The Shan State Government

In the Union parliament, there were a total of 250 members in the Chamber of Deputies, 25 of whose members were from Shan State. In the Chamber of Nationalities there were a total of 125 members, 25 of whom were from Shan State. Most of these 25 members were Saophas and their representatives. [70]

These 25 members of the Chamber of Deputies from Shan State, plus the 25 members of the Chamber of Nationalities from Shan State formed the Shan State Legislative Assembly (SSLA), from which members of the Shan State government were elected. For instance, Namkham U Htun Aye was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1948 as the Shan MP from Namkham. Simultaneously, in the Shan State Government he was the minister of education and social welfare.[71]

With regards to who became the chairman of the Shan State Council of Ministers (the head of Shan State government), there was apparently interference by the Saophas. Originally, U Htun Myint of Langkhur, Mawkmai State in Shan State, was elected to the position by the SSLA. However, Andre Htun Aye reports that the Saophas wanted Sao Hkun Hkio, Saopha of Mongmit, to become chairman and asked the Prime Minister to intervene. Constitutionally, the PM had the authority to do so,

[68] Ibid., Page 163.
[69] Ibid, Page 158.
[70] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Pages 43 and 45.
[71] Ibid., Page 45.

since the head of Shan State was also automatically a minister in the Union government.[72] U Nu therefore asked Langkhur U Htun Myint to step aside and he was appointed as minister of finance in the Shan State government instead. Sao Hkun Hkio was then made chairman.[73] This is evidence of how the Constitution undermined the power of State government, since in this case, the elected leader chosen by the majority of the SSLA could constitutionally be replaced at the will of the Union Prime Minister.

5.5.3 The anti-Saopha campaigns

As the years passed and 1958 drew closer, efforts to pre-empt secession were made by certain elements in Burma proper, notably the army. Thus began a campaign to de-legitimize the Saophas, seen as the traditional leaders of the Shan and therefore rallying points. Yawnghwe states that in newspapers, magazines, journals, short stories and novels, the Saophas were increasingly portrayed as "despotic, indolent, exploitative, disloyal and feudal reactionaries who plotted with KMT opium warlords, SEATO agents, Thai pimps, American war-mongers and British neo-colonists to destroy the Union."[74] U Maung Maung, writing after the coup, provided the following description of the state of affairs in Shan state after independence:

> Their chieftains, the Sawbwas, had their reserved seats in the Chamber of nationalities and kept their rights to collect revenue at gambling festivals, and their customary pomp and privileges. The socialist professions of the Burmese leaders, however, made the chiefs and the land-owners in the State nervous. The land nationalization law, which was passed soon after independence did not reassure them. The law could not go into operation due to the outbreak of insurrections.[75]

The tension is framed in ideological terms, as though the Saophas were privileged conservatives unconcerned with the actual well-being of the rest of the Shan and made nervous at the prospect of fair Burman socialist re-distribution of land.

While the Saophas were not all the despots they were painted, they were also neither all saintly nor universally popular. There were several prominent Shan anti-Saopha politicians such as Namkham U Htun Aye, U Kyaw Zaw and U Tin Ko Ko (amongst others) who toured Shan state sometimes, with the support of the army and some members of the AFPL leadership, and garnered support.[76] It is notable, if

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[72] Ibid., Page 45.
[73] Ibid., Page 46.
[74] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 114.
[75] Maung Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win*, Page 198.
[76] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Page 114.

humorous, that some of the anti-Saopha political leaders had received their education and political formation through scholarships paid for by the Saophas of the areas in which they lived.[77]

However, the anti-feudal movement was not begun by the army in the early 1950s. It was a local movement. Henri-André Aye states: "Almost immediately after independence, the people of Shan State began to demand that the saophas transfer their administrative power to the people."[78]

After the establishment of the Shan State Council in 1947, as popular representatives could meet and voice their opinions, many reforms were proposed and opposition arose from certain Saophas who would not listen to the Council or do as it asked. Tension between pro-feudal and anti-feudal factions therefore sprang up quite early. Henri-André Aye notes that amongst the Saophas there were moderates, led by Sao Hkun Hkio, who believed in reforms and the transfer of power. The hardliners, who wanted to retain all their powers, were apparently led by Saonang Hearn Kham, also known as the Mahadevi of Yawnghwe.[79] It should be noted that the Mahadevi was a very independent woman who had her own set of views and political leanings, vis-a-vis her husband Sao Shwe Thaike. Finally, there was the fierce anti-Saopha contingent, which Henri Andre Aye characterizes as radicals in the Shan State Freedom League party, the United Pa-O Organization and leftist university students, who wanted the Saophas to give up their power and position without compensation of any kind.[80]

There was a local understanding of the delicacy of the situation. A veteran Shan administrator named U Htun Aung "suggested gradual change, giving the *saopha* enough time to think about adaptation, and the introduction of reforms to meet the needs of the times."[81]

Local anti-Saopha politicians should not simply be classed as lackeys of the army, even though some received support from it. For instance, it is notable that in the early '60's, both Namkham U Htun Aye and U Tin Ko Ko supported the federal

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[77] According to Harn Yawnghwe, this was true in the principality of Yawnghwe where a number of students Sao Shwe Thaike had sponsored for university education returned determined to dismantle the Saopha system.
[78] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Page 49.
[79] Ibid., Page 49.
[80] Ibid., Page 50.
[81] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 333.

movement, which surprised many.[82] This indicates that they had a truly legitimate interest in the welfare of Shan State. Yet despite his advocacy of the federal movement, Namkham U Htun Aye (sometimes spelt Toon Aye) remained vocal in his attacks on the Saopha and suspicious of their motives. His eventual link to the military cannot be ignored, given that Ne Win made him to be head of Shan State after the coup.[83] However, in *The Shan Conundrum*, his son Henri-André Aye makes a good effort to explain the complexity of his father and the political situations he faced him. In the period after the coup, Henri-André Aye notes:

> [...] the political cohabitation between my father and the military was uneasy and stressful [...] Some outsiders observed a successful and peaceful political accommodation, because they saw only the smooth surface and had no knowledge of what was really happening underneath [...] He knew so well that he could be sacked anytime given the fact that the general was ruling the country at whim.[84]

He also states that his father was actually a moderate, when it came to the Saopha, in that he viewed them as a hereditary ruling class, which therefore had legitimate rights. He therefore agreed with the Union government proposition that they should receive an indemnity if they gave up their rights voluntarily.[85]

It must be accepted that the Saopha system of hereditary rule was feudal, which would have been anathema to any of the educated younger generation who had been exposed to concepts like socialism, communism or democracy. Times had changed and "the world political system would not permit feudalism to survive."[86] In the opinion of Namkham U Htun Aye, the Saopha system had contributed to a lack of unity in Shan State. His son writes:

> My father's political objective was to remove the social and economic inequality between the over-privileged feudalistic class and the underprivileged agricultural proletariat. He thought that the Shan were never an integrated society because of class-consciousness under the feudalistic order.[87]

The general attitude towards the Saophas in Shan State, however, was not necessarily violently antagonistic. Yawnghwe states that in Muang Loen, Kengtung, Muang Nawng and Laikha, where the Shan were the predominant people, or where inhabitants had only encountered the Burmese as invading soldiers, the people deeply

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[82] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, Pages 236 and 238.
[83] Ibid., Page 238.
[84] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Page 117.
[85] Ibid., Page 50.
[86] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, Page 336.
[87] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Page 41.

resented the Burman-sponsored attacks on the Saophas.[88] Elsewhere in Shan State, the anti-Saopha campaign was unsuccessful not because the populations there felt any sympathy for the Saophas but because they felt the Burmans were interfering too deeply in internal affairs. There was additionally still a basic suspicion and prejudice against one another on both the Burman and Shan sides.[89]

Even the Pa-O movement, which had a longstanding dislike for the Saophas, was mistrustful of central government interference:

> [...] elements of the ruling party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), were working covertly to undermine the Shan *sawbwas'* authority, and the Pa-O military was under pressure from government forces. The Pa-O dislike of *sawwbwa* rule was not as great as their fear of Burman central government control. As a result, the Shan *sawbwas* and Pa-O entered into a "temporary liason" in 1955.[90]

For these quite simple reasons, the anti-Saopha campaign provoked a strong counter-reaction which alarmed the army and was misinterpreted not as the natural consequence of unsubtle propagandizing, but as proof that the Saopha were plotting revolution. It is important to note that there was a proliferation of arms in Shan State, though they were usually old weapons, which related both to the recent history of WWII and civil war (thus the necessity for self-defence as well as access to weapons) and also to the Shan custom of bearing arms, which the British themselves had never interfered with.[91] The army found this state of affairs intolerable.

In 1956, the military dispatched its first army columns into Shan state to weed out those they saw as potential rebels and disarm the populace. A campaign of terror began amongst the rural Shan populace. Hundreds of village leaders, the political organization of rural life, were taken away for brutal interrogations where they were beaten, maimed, tortured and left mentally scarred. As the situation worsened, local Shan authorities found there was little they could do. The army remained under the jurisdiction of the Union government so that the Shan government at Taunggyi, MPs, civil servants, political parties and the Saopha could do nothing themselves to redress the situation. Those who attempted to approach Union ministers or local army commanders "were not only rebuffed, but accused of slandering the army in repeating

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[88] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma,* Page 114.
[89] Ibid., Page 114.
[90] Christensen and Sann Kyaw, *The Pa-O: Rebels and Refugees*, Page 24.
[91] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma,* Page 114.

harmful and seditious gossip, creating disunity, dancing to the tune of American war-mongers and British neo-colonialists, and even of plotting rebellion."[92]

To those who felt that the moderate way of dialogue and cooperation employed by the politicians had failed, the alternative of armed rebellion began to seem like the only solution. There was also an inter-generational divide, as the older politicians saw the dangers of rebellion and the up-and-coming generation saw it as the only way forward.

What should not be overlooked is that the Saopha-system, what the army claimed was the source of threat motivating their offensive, had already become a non-issue, before the removal of the KMT in 1954 allowed the army time to change its focus to internal divisions. The Saophas themselves had already agreed they were an outdated institution, not best suited to the running of a modern state. As of 1952 the Saophas announced that they would surrender all their remaining power to the Shan government at Taunggyi.[93] This was not a transfer of power to the Union or Burmese government, but to the Shan government, and it was completed by 1957, a rapid process in some of the smaller states, but slow in places like Muang Loen and Kengtung.[94] The formal transfer of power took place on April 24, 1959 in an agreement signed by the Shan State government (at the time being led by Sao Hom Hpa, Saopha Luang of Hsenwi, brother-in-law of Sao Shwe Thaike) and the Shan Saophas. Chao Tzang Yawnghwe states that there was:

> [...] awareness that the division of the Shan State into semi-independent principalities was no longer practical, especially since the British would no longer be around. It was a practical decision, reached by the Shans themselves with no pressure from anyone, *particularly not the Burmese*. [Emphasis added][95]

The forcefulness of this statement is because General Ne Win, who was present at this 1959 ceremony in Taunggyi, was often presented by the army and in the popular press at the time as having brokered the agreement, when in fact, he had nothing to do with it. In return for the transfer of power, the Saophas received nearly $5,000,000. This is stated to be a huge sum, especially given the time period. However, Yawnghwe explains how the sum was broken down:

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[92] Ibid., Page 115.
[93] Ibid., Page 117.
[94] Ibid., footnote 38, Page 148.
[95] Chao Tzang Na Tawnghwe, "Comments on Mr. Hauret's Paper 'The Shans of Burma'", in *Anuson Walter Vella*, Ronald D. Renard, editor (Chiang Mai and Honolulu: Payap University, 1986), Page 353.

> [...] this sum had to be shared between thirty-four ruling lords and their families, retinues, and officials. This amount was based on fifteen years revenues, which meant that for the next fifteen years the annual average income of each *saopha* would be approximately $9,803, making the *saopha* a very strange bunch of tycoons. (The amount is even less if one takes into consideration the actual conversion rate between *kyats* and dollars in the open market.)[96]

Rather than being the result of hostile agitating by the Saophas, it was the destabilizing and traumatic experiences of the civil war and subsequent KMT invasion which greatly contributed to discontent amongst the Shan. Taylor states:

> The large number of Burman troops in the area, and the imposition of martial law in 22 of the 33 Shan States because of the KNDO's and the KMT's, increased the antagonisms of the Shans towards the central government. When, in 1958, Shan separationist feelings were on the increase, the negative experience of the army's rule was an additional argument for greater autonomy.[97]

Taylor notes that the Shan National Army was formed in 1960 "to fight for the secession of the Shan State from Burma. The Shan troops, most of whom were located around Kengtung, the area of the largest KMT concentration, were motivated primarily by a dislike of the Burma army."[98]

5.5.4 Perceptions of the threat of secession

With reference to the oft-cited secession clause in the Constitution, which permitted Shan State to secede from the Union after ten years, what is less often written about is that in order for Shan State to secede there had to be a 2/3rds majority vote for secession in the SSLA.[99] This is why, despite fears propagated in Rangoon about Shan secession, it was not a likely political reality in Shan State. Even if all the Saophas had been secessionist rebels in favour of a separate state (which was not the case, though some did favour secession), the Saophas alone could not have voted secession through the Shan State Legislative Assembly.

However, whether or not secession was really likely, the fear in Rangoon was very real. Henri-André Aye notes that on April 27, 1957, in a speech in the town of Lashio in northern Shan State, Prime Minister U Nu "reminded his audience of the history of the civil war in the United States and said that Burma should not make the

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[96] Ibid., Page 357.
[97] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 19.
[98] Ibid., Page 52.
[99] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Page 43.

same mistakes. His speech implicitly indicated that the Burmese would never allow letting the Shans go from the Union."[100]

The geo-political context should now be recalled. The Cold War was in force and Burma maintained a neutralist policy, belonging to the non-aligned movement. While countries like the US deplored this stance, China praised it. In 1954, the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai "assured the government of Burma that it had no reason to fear China as long as Burma remained neutral."[101] Taylor notes that in both 1955 and 1956, troops of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had entered the Wa States, since this border area was somewhat disputed. In 1959, the Chinese occupation of Tibet made the threat of a potential Chinese invasion seem real. According to Henri-André Aye, his father felt that if Shan State ever became independent, it would not last long as a nation, but soon be swallowed up by China.[102]

Boundary negotiations were ongoing between Burma and China, culminating in the Sino-Burmese Boundary Agreement signed by General Ne Win on Janary 28th, 1960 and the Boundary Treaty signed with China by PM U Nu on October 1, 1960. The results of these boundary agreements were territorially favourable to Burma,[103] yet they were a reminder that Burma had a large and powerful neighbour who could not be slighted.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has attempted to cover some of the larger issues dominating politics and events in Shan State during the 1950's, from the early effects of the civil war to the Pa-O movement, the KMT invasion, the anti-Saopha campaigns and the behaviour of the Burma army in Shan State.

Between the White Flag Communists, the KNDO and Pa'O allies, the KMT and the Burma Army, unrest and armed warfare reached everywhere in Shan State. Yet the conflict that arose in the Shan State after the civil war period was in large part spurred by external actors, and did not pose the same kind of direct threat to Rangoon that Karen and communist forces had in the first two years of independence. Instead, the conflict of the following years raised an indirect threat to Rangoon's power, and

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[100] Ibid., Page 56.
[101] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 54.
[102] Aye, *The Shan Conundrum in Burma*, Page 57.
[103] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, Page 55.

yet because of the Cold War context, the possibility of foreign-led invasion was seen as equally dangerous and threatening to central power.

Yet, the concerns of local insurgents in Shan State (and one could argue, across Burma) were never about seizing power over the country from the central government. Rather, they were usually always concerned with claiming some kind of autonomy for a portion of the population they claimed to represent, or in order to achieve local political goals. The Pa-O are an example of this: once there had been a measure of political change in Shan State, the Pa-O were willing to stop fighting.

The willingness of the military leaders of the Burma army, and certain politicians in Rangoon, to believe that the events in Shan State posed a threat to national unity is curious. Factors such as the Cold War context and the KMT invasions can explain the paranoia and fear of foreign influence in these areas. Yet the enormous powers granted to Burmese military officers and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) in Shan State seem to belong more in the class of behaviour undertaken by an occupying force, than the actions of a liberating army. There would soon be a rebellion in Shan State, between 1958 and 1960. Though it would be small and disorganized, it would further contribute to the perception that the people of the Shan State were sources of disunity.

By the end of the 1950's, it was clear that political belief in what the 'nation' was, looked less and less inclusive than it had at independence. Outright Burmanization seemed more like the order of the day and the need for 'national unity' as a necessity in the threatening context of the Cold War, became the rallying cry of the army. Though the Union had existed now for almost a decade, a single sense of national unity did not. It began to seem as though the Union could not exist as a nation without the homogenization of its people. Whether or not this was actually true remains a matter for contemplation.

CHAPTER SIX

The Army and the Federal Movement (1958-1962)

6.1 The Military 'caretaker' government

By 1958, the situation with the KMT in the Shan states was mostly under control. On July 31, 1958, U Nu offered a general amnesty to all insurgents who agreed to surrender, and around 2, 000 men did. However, the army was not pleased with the amnesty, as U Thaung notes "Most of the military leaders were hardliners who believed in fighting to the end in the war against the Communists and again were in disagreement with U Nu's offer to the rebels."[1] The AFPFL had begun its split into the 'Stable' and 'Clean' factions and it became obvious that the political elites were no longer united. At the end of September, 1958, the army had made its move to take power after a series of talks with U Nu. On September 26, U Nu made a radio broadcast announcing that General Ne Win would replace him and lead an interim administration, with popular elections to be held in April 1959 and a return to civilian government.[2] The army officially took power on October 29, 1958 and actually remained in power until 1960.[3]

They called themselves a 'caretaker government' and it was stated that U Nu had invited them to take power, in order to stabilize the country and hold free and fair elections.[4] However, U Nu always referred to this incident as the 'first' coup.

U Thaung offers the following assessment of the army at that time:

> The army, born during World War II, and fostered by Japanese militarists, was bound to be led by strong militarists. The military leaders believed themselves to be a superior class, united to act as savior of the nation. Military teaching and brainwashing, carried out with a generous military budget for a long time, had made them believe that they were the only patriots. They had forgotten that the Communists and the nationalists had fought against the Japanese military forces while they were collaborating with the invaders. They discredited all the political forces and people's movements and claimed they were the only force that had brought freedom to Burma. They arrogated to themselves the duty of safeguarding the nation's sovereignty. And now, the army decided to do the job actively.[5]

One of the ways in which the army attempted to legitimize itself was through a ceremony held to formalize the "surrender of power" of the Shan Saophas. Ne Win's

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[1] U Thaung, *A Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma*, p.39.
[2] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, p.120.
[3] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, p. 53.
[4] U Thaung, *A Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma*, p.40.
[5] Ibid., p.39

caretaker government used to maximize its own political capital and paint itself as an agent of democracy. For example, U Maung Maung writes:

> Gen. Ne Win undertook and accomplished two other major tasks in his time as leader of the Caretaker Government: [the first was] the introduction of popular government in the Shan and the Kayah States [...] These were tasks which previous governments had undertaken without reaching clear and final decision.

Crediting General Ne Win with the achievement of something that had been accomplished with the voluntary cooperation of the Saophas and Shan leaders probably did nothing to lessen the feelings of leaders in the Shan community that the Central government was not interested in cooperation so much as shoring up its own power.[6] This excerpt from General Ne Win's speech, as quoted by U Maung Maung, appears exceptionally jarring:

> I would like to urge [the Saophas] to devote their brains and their financial resources to the promotion of the social, economic and industrial development of the Shan State. To the people of the Shan State also, I would like to say this. The fact that the Saophalongs and Saophas have given up their powers does not mean that you may behave disrespectfully towards them[7].

The arrogance inherent in this statement is notable.

6.2 Unrest in the Shan states

The British maintained an ambivalent attitude towards the Shan Saophas. According to British Ambassador Richard Allen, they were "often corrupt or inept yet preferable to administrators appointed by the Burmese government" and he went on to describe Sao Shwe Thaike as "extremely stupid."[8] However, the British officials tended to be very free with their opinions and not always correct. This was certainly the case with Malcolm MacDonald, whom the Foreign Office relied upon to talk with Ne Win and who believed that the General would be good for Burma.[9] In any case, rumors were rife and a variety of external actors appeared to be at work:

> British intelligence had obtained information confirming that the Burmese army had no idea as to how to handle Shan discontent. [...] The Chinese communists were causing trouble in border areas and had established an 'autonomous area' in Yunnan, adjacent to the border,

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[6] It should be noted that the Saophas were given a pension by the Central Government in exchange for having given up power. This was similar to the stipend they had received under the British when their authority was reduced in 1922. Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 117.
[7] U Maung Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win*, p. 265.
[8] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, p. 120.
[9] Ibid., p. 123.

> which they invited the sawbwas to visit. [...] The Russians had encouraged rumours that the United States wanted to create a separate Shan state and establish an atomic base there.[10]

In 1959, an illiterate paramilitary officer named Bo Mawng and a Rangoon University student, Sao Kyaw Toon led a group of Shan, La and Wa fighters in revolt and captured the town of Tangyan. After ten days of fighting, they were driven out by the army, but the battle provoked armed response all throughout Shan state. Armed bands were led by "former village heads, ex-policemen, adventurers, even monks – men who had no connection with the princes or politicians"[11] Yawnghwe describes the leadership as mostly peasant leaders who knew how to fight, but did not have the advantage of united strategy. Oddly, if the Saophas actually had been involved in the uprising and been able to supplement the force and strength of numbers of local leaders with centralized planning and additional support, the attempt to drive the army out of Shan state could have succeeded.[12]

In a case of damned if you do, damned if you don't, the Saophas had the unenviable position of being criticised on all sides. First, by the army who accused them of fomenting rebellion and second by local voices who rebuked them for not actually having supported rebellion. The 1959 uprising in Tangyan led the Shan government to realize that something concrete must be done to bring about some control of defence to the state level, since they disagreed with the army's methods of employing worse violence to combat violence, and in general to establish a balance of power between the Burmese and non-Burmese. For the rebelling people within Shan state to cease their struggle, they must believe that the Taunggyi government was capable of protecting them, and to establish this, the Shan government needed to re-negotiate the terms of power with the Central Government. In this manner, the idea of finally amending the constitution was adopted and became popularly known as the Federal Movement.[13]

6.3 The Federal Movement: Efforts at re-establishing co-operative negotiation

The Shan government cooperated with prominent individuals, politicians, MPs and the Saophas to establish the federal movement. Yawnghwe characterises it as:

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[10] Ibid., p. 120.
[11] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 116.
[12] Ibid., p. 116.
[13] Ibid., p. 118.

> [...] an act within the legal and constitutional framework undertaken by the responsible and moderate elements in Shan society and politics aimed at circumventing a civil war situation and defusing the armed rebellion. It had nothing to do with alleged secession plots or the discontent of the chaofa over the loss of power.[14]

Yawnghwe goes on to state that the federal movement's steering committee was not attempting to issue an ultimatum towards the central government but merely pointing out the constitutional clauses which made Shan State a subordinate state, in an attempt to stimulate discussion with the central government.[15] It was common practice in the time around and after the coup, for Sao Shwe Thaike to be characterised as a lead 'troublemaker', working for the break-up of the union and garnering foreign support for an armed Shan insurrection should Shan demands not be met.[16] Prime Minister U Nu himself stated "that most people, including himself, suspected that some *saopha* were, somehow or other, aiding the insurgents."[17]

Some have taken this stated position at face value, regardless of whether or not it was true. With regard to Sao Shwe Thaike's alleged involvement, little effort was made to discover whether the origins of these rumours began in the military in an attempt to discredit a man who was, at the time, a recognizable national figure, despite being Shan. Depending on one's point of view, if the military did have expansionist, chauvinist ideas about what Burma should be, it was sensible to discredit and remove any figure who might have the political stature to rally or consolidate support against this expansionist chauvinism.

It was perhaps another case of damned if you do, damned if you don't. Sao Hkun Hkio expressed this feeling at a press conference given by U Nu on July 11, 1961: "The Shan insurgency did not arise from our activities in respect of the revision of the constitution but started when Naw Seng occupied Taunggyi in 1949. These days the *saohpa* are blamed for whatever happens in the Shan State."[18]

Unfortunately, a second KMT crisis unfolded in February and March of 1961 when KMT troops infiltrated Burma again, linked to US operations in Laos. They joined up with rebel Karen and Shan groups and began attacking villages and towns in border areas.[19] Taylor writes: "The demands of Shan and Karen rebels, although they

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[14] Ibid., p. 118.
[15] Ibid., p. 119.
[16] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 403 and footnote 16, p. 614.
[17] Ibid., p. 404.
[18] Ibid., pp. 429-30.
[19] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, p. 61.

had had some legitimacy in the eyes of some Burmans before, now met with much less sympathy, especially from the military because of the minorities' collusion with the KMT."[20] Yet it is not clear why *all* the minorities should have been judged to be 'collaborating' with the KMT, since this was not the case. The communist rebels, for instance, contained many ethnic Bamar, yet not all Bamar were accused of being rebels.

A concrete indicator that the true nature of the federal movement was not a separatist, insurgent-supporting movement is that it had the support of all the governments, leaders and politicians of other non-Burmese states. If it had been a purely self-interested Shan grab for special privileges, it is unlikely this would have been the case. The only criticisms of it were raised by three individuals at the Taunggyi Constitutional Conference[21] in June 1961 (U Aye Soe Myint, a Karen; Samma Duwa Sinwa Maung, a Kachin; and Zahre Lyan, a Chin), out of a combined 226 delegates. Even then, their criticism called for caution in dealing with the central government rather than opposing the movement altogether.[22]

In August, 1961 U Nu estimated there were only 750 remaining KMT troops, 3,000 KNDO's, 2,000 Shan rebels and 1,500 Communist rebels. He also predicted that, since the Thai government had evacuated around 4, 000 KMT from Burma by the end of March 1961, the Shan rebellion would soon die out, as they would no longer be receiving KMT arms.[23] By January 1962, U Nu stated that only the Shan and Karen rebels posed a threat to the government and that the Communists, KMT and Kachin insurgents were no longer a problem.[24]

Prime Minister U Nu met with state leaders on multiple occasions to discuss the issue of constitutional reform.[25] He stressed that the leaders of Burma Proper "did not practice chauvinism, nor did they have expansionist intentions" and that "no problems could not be solved fraternally at a face-to-face meeting."[26] Sao Htun E, the Saopha of Hsa Mong Hkam, reminded the prime minister of the "timely help given by the Shan State to the Union during the critical period of insurgency in 1948-49" and asked the prime minister not to believe the rumours being spread, since the Shan State

[20] Ibid., p. 64.
[21] Also referred to as the 'All States Conference' at Taunggyi.
[22] Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 119.
[23] Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT Intervention in Burma*, p. 62-63.
[24] Ibid., p. 63.
[25] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 402
[26] Ibid., p. 403.

would never try to break up the Union.[27] At a later meeting between Shan politicians and AFPFL leadership, Minister Dr. E. Maung stated that Shan state had no intention of seceding and that if it had wished to, it could have done so in 1948, '49 or '50 when the central government was almost overrun.[28]

Time gives us the benefit of realizing that while both U Nu and Sao Htun E might have been stating what they thought to be true, they might still have been wrong. Just as some might claim Sao Htun E's statement was naive, since there were Shan rebels, it can be argued that Ne Win's revolutionary government embodied the expansionist chauvinism which U Nu claimed did not exist in Burma Proper's leadership.

Perhaps it is not a case of strictly right or wrong. U Nu's leadership did not contain expansionist chauvinist elements, but the leadership of the military did. While some Shan factions wanted secession, Sao Htun E and his associates represented Shan leadership who did not. Yawnghwe[29] provides an illustrative anecdote. At one point in 1961 he smuggled a leader of the SSIA insurgents, Sai Kyaw Sein, into Rangoon and suggested to the Saopha of Hsipaw, Chao Kya Seng that he meet with this SSIA representative. Cha Kya Seng would not and responded by handing him a copy of the Union Constitution, saying: "Please read the oath we have sworn as MPs." It was an oath of loyalty.[30] Prime Minister Nu himself later stated "No one in authority in the Shan State has ever said that they would fight if the constitution was not amended in accordance with the Shan proposal."[31] While existent Shan rebel groups definitely wanted to secede, this might have changed had the negotiations between Shan leaders and the Central government been successful. In politics, it seems, it is never quite so much about what things are, but rather what things are made to become.

The proposals of the Shan regarding constitutional reform related 9 grievances which focused mostly on the fact that there was little to no consultation between Union ministers and officials and state governments. Further, the Shan felt the constitution was always legally interpreted in favour of the Union government on

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[27] Ibid., p. 403.
[28] Ibid., p. 426.
[29] While Chao Tzang was pro-secession as a youth, his father Sao Shwe Thaike was not. This was actually a source of disagreement between them.
[30] Nevertheless, the army was not fond of Sao Kya Seng. On the day of the coup he was one of the Saophas arrested and never seen alive again. Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, footnote 19, p. 146.
[31] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 429.

matters of administration and finance.[32] A Government advisory committee reviewed the grievances and concluded that most of them could be addressed through dialogue and did not require constitutional reform. A crucial point was the nature of the federal system in Burma. The committee presented a report on the constitutions of the United States, Australia, Canada, South Africa, India and Switzerland and concluded that there was no 'true' type of federalism. The committee also noted that it seemed the Shan desired a federal system akin to that of the United States, but made the argument that when civil war erupted in the U.S., the northern states took power by force to prevent secession and gradually, all forms of federalism become unitary.[33]

The committee finally stated that what was perhaps the most basic issue was not to do with political systems at all:

> In fact, what the Shan State government and its people and what other State governments and their people feel most sore about is their own helplessness in relation to their own land, their own forests, their own mines, their own minerals, and their inability to start to work any industry in their own state. All they know and feel is that they are not allowed to participate in the distribution of their own land and in the working, regulating, and developing of their own forests and mines. In this respect their feelings are real and intense.[34]

On January 20, 1962, the States Unity Organization submitted a document to Prime Minister U Nu which encapsulated all their thoughts and feelings based on all the discussion which had taken place. In turn, U Nu told them that the document would be discussed at a national conference, to be held in March. The document clearly stated that the desire of the ethnic leadership for a federal constitution had been present even during the time of the struggle for independence, and that they accepted the present constitution for the reasons already detailed in this essay, not because they felt it adequately represented their wishes.[35] In their view, the basic problem of the constitution was that instead of having separate governments, the central government of Burma acted as both the government for Burma Proper *and* that of the whole Union.[36] In essence, there was no higher authority which could assess or regulate the state of Burma Proper, thus Burma Proper essentially ran the other states. For this fundamental reason, the Shan and other ethnic leaders desired constitutional reform.

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[32] For the full list of these grievances, see Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, pp. 433-435.
[33] Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 436.
[34] Ibid., pp. 437-38.
[35] Ibid., p. 442.
[36] Ibid., p. 442.

The national conference, the forum in which all of these various attitudes and positions were to be debated, began at 6pm on February 4, 1962. Prime Minister U Nu and members of the Government Advisory Committee, Dr. Ba U, U Thein Maung, U San Nyunt and U Chit Thaung were present, as were members of the AFPFL and the National United Front in conjunction with representatives from the states. The national conference lasted for two days before it was interrupted by the coup which took place in the early hours of March 2, 1962.

6.4 The Military Coup

The coup delivered the final blow to all hope of cooperation. All members of U Nu's government were arrested as were all the Saophas, several of whom, including Sao Shwe Thaike, were never seen alive again. The explanation offered by Ne Win's revolutionary government was that the coup dealt a deathblow to unrest across the country and was intended to maintain the integrity of the union in the face of Shan secessionist threats (perceived as a form of blackmail to ensure the changing of the constitution).[37] Donnison maintains that disintegration was no idle fear and that all the major minority communities in Burma were in open revolt.[38] From the point of view of many Westerners who were not participating in the National Conference, it may have seemed that political solutions were a pipe dream, but this should not be blamed on the actions of the ethnic leaders. U Aung, U Nu's son, recalled that on the evening before the coup members of the Shan delegation approached his father after the day's meeting and humbly asked him not to believe all the rumours he was hearing because they had no intention of seceding and still held him in respect, believing in the process they were engaged in.[39]

It is difficult to know the moods and thoughts of the actors of that period because so few of the ethnic leaders who were actually there are still alive and of those who are, few have spoken clearly or at length on the subject. While some might say that outside scholars have an increased chance of maintaining objectivity, it is sometimes difficult to obtain information when one is an outsider, or to know what one can believe.

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[37] F. S. V. Donnison, *Burma* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1970), p. 165.
[38] Ibid., p. 165.
[39] U Aung, lecture at Chulalongkorn University, Southeast Asian Studies Program, Feb. 4th 2010.

Attempts should be made to understand the coup-makers, yet there are so many strange facets to the coup that cannot be explained as anything other than forceful and oppressive over-reactions. For instance, the demolition on July 8th 1962 of the Student Union Building at Rangoon University and the student-killings by the military because of the student demonstrations the day before.

Michael Aung-Thwin, writing in the late 1980's about the coup in 'Burma's Myth of Independence', states:

> [...] the coup was precisely the sort of action that many people in Burma *at the time*, wanted. (And this is something we tend to forget today, the critical nature of the situation, real or imagined, *at the time*.) [...] Aside from the immediate historical reasons for the coup of 1962, there was a more fundamental cause: a collective psychological desire to establish "real" independence, which necessarily included purging one's colonial past. [...] The majority of Burmans accepted the coup as a good thing precisely because they felt it would set right what Frank Reynolds and Regina Clifford have called a skewed *dhamma*-realm.[40]

These statements, however controversial they may seem to us in the present day, must be considered coolly. There were, initially some positive responses from external observers. For instance, Lowe cites Fred Warner, then head of the British Foreign Office South-East Asia Department, giving the following assessment of Ne Win to Lord Home, the foreign secretary, on the day of the coup, March 2, 1962:

> He is a very good man and can be relied on to do his best for Burma. Though originally anti-British, he has developed quite an affection for us in recent years and personally made great efforts to ensure the recent success of Princess Alexandra's recent visits to Burma. He adopts a fair attitude as between east and West.[41]

Malcolm MacDonald also engaged in the same kind of short-sightedness. He was in Rangoon at the time of the coup in May and shortly before the demolition of the Student's Union Building in July, 1962 he encouraged Ne Win to hold onto power. Lowe provides a direct quote from a letter Malcom MacDonald wrote on June 30, 1962: "I urged on him again that he should be prepared to remain in his supreme position, if necessary for the next decade or two."[42]

However, let us also examine two other British views which are quite the opposite, one written almost ten years before the coup and one written three years later. The first is an assessment written on November 29, 1951 by Richard Speaight, the British ambassador in the early 1950's:

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[40] Aung-Thwin, "Burma's Myth of Independence" in *Independent Burma at Forty Years*, p. 24-25.
[41] Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism and Communism*, pp.121-122.
[42] Ibid., p. 123.

> General Ne Win is an ambitious, unstable and unscrupulous adventurer, out for himself and with little sense of true background or competence and hardly any military experience beyond some guerilla [sic] fighting; and he is intolerant of too professional an outlook in others. He has no strong cultural or intellectual interests, likes women and gambling and despises all forms of religion, including Buddhism. At the same time he has great personal charm when he cares to exercise it, and will go to considerable lengths to please those whom he likes. He lives very much fro day to day and is easily influenced by men of stronger character, if he finds them congenial.[43]

The second opinion is from Gordon Whitteridge, British ambassador from 1962-1965, writing on July 26, 1965:

> General Ne Win may now be the prisoner of the system he has created. It is becoming less and less likely that there will be a turning back; on the contrary the prospects of general coercion loom larger. A fundamental weakness which is becoming more marked is General Ne Win's personal isolation. His colleagues are too frightened of him to argue with him [...][44]

The interest in these quotes is that the reveal how difficult it is to ascertain with any certainty how events will turn out when one is close to them. With the benefit of hindsight, Speaight and Whitteridge proved correct in their judgements, while Warner and MacDonald were proven wrong.

Just as it was so obviously difficult to successfully analyse Ne Win based only on personal opinion, but much easier to judge based on the events which took place while he was in power, it is equally difficult to ascribe motives to the Shan and other ethnic politicians without written records of their own thoughts and agenda. All that is really available to us is the record of their actions.

The last concerted actions of the representative Shan and ethnic leaders before the 1962 coup did not involve armed rebellion. On the contrary, their actions underscore their acceptance of constitutional authority and therefore the attempt to achieve legal, constitutional reform through debate and dialogue with the central government in a forum proposed by the central government, the National Conference. Despite the armed insurgencies in their home states, despite widespread discontent in the former frontier areas, ethnic leaders continued to try to engage with their government through legal means. In a reassessment, the Federal Movement should be regarded as a movement working towards unity and the preservation of the Union, not its disintegration.

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[43] Ibid., p. 105.
[44] Ibid., pp.126-127.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The caretaker government put the military completely in power between 1958-1960. Even though U Nu was able to return to power in 1960, he was confronted with problems: There was renewed KMT activity in 1961, the military was now used to power and had a strong secret service, and there was popular controversy on the topics of religion, and the debate over separate Arakan and Mon states.

Meanwhile, with the relative, momentary stability, the Federal Movement made its demands for constitutional reform. These minority demands were then used as a pretext for the coup by the army.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Analysis and Conclusion

7.1 Analysis

In answer to Objective 1:

To re-examine the history of Myanmar's independence period (1946-62) and analyze it from the viewpoint of the ethnic nationalities, in a Shan perspective:

It appears that there was a difference of opinion amongst different leaders in Frontier Areas, so that they did not all have a similar outlook on what they wanted for themselves or their people. However, they shared solidarity in wanting to avoid Bamar hegemony. Demands made for internal autonomy were consistent from before the time of independence. Political leaders had good relations with some, but not all, Bamar politicians. Finally, distrust towards the Burma army grew over time.

In answer to Objective 2

To establish whether or not federalism was a viable political system for Myanmar and the different forms it could have taken:

Aung San suggested the Yugoslav model as a viable method of federation but later discarded it. The issue remained unresolved at the time of the adoption of the constitution. The structural situation in the Union needs to be thoroughly analyzed in the economic and political context. Practically speaking, 'independent' states were not possible, economically. The economy during the parliamentary period was troubled. However, the military regime's centralized government with its own 'socialist' economic programme further turned the country into an economic disaster.

It is very hard to know, in the end, since non-unitary federalism was never actually attempted. The government political structure remained bureaucratic and centralized, state governments had limited powers. Therefore this objective of my thesis remains unresolved.

In answer to Objective 3

To re-examine the role ethnicity played in preventing national unity and emphasize the political structure which meant the central government dominated the Union:

The peoples of the Frontier Areas did prevent a purely 'Burman' national vision, since they advocated a plural society. However, 'Burmanization' had already happened, to some degree under British, for example in the use of the Bamar language.

The Frontier Areas leaders had pragmatic acceptance of certain things, like Burman parliamentary majority and use of the Bamar language at the official level. This was evidence of necessary accommodation, not acceptance of a Bamar ethno-nationalist vision. During the crisis years of the independence, minority leaders in the former Frontier Areas stayed loyal to the government, but the situation worsened over time.

At the time of coup, older leaders still wanted negotiation. Divisions amongst younger people about secession, could potentially have been resolved politically. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Burma army saw ethnic peoples as dangerous, since they had fought against them and could not be controlled easily.

People in Burma proper still had limited experience with the Frontier Areas – an easy, 'unknown' target for the army to blame for the coup. This could account for the immediate suppression of well-known leaders from the Frontier Areas, including arrests and executions

7.2 Conclusion

The complexity in creating the Union fundamentally was related to several things, first, a lack of political integration between the Frontier Areas and Burma proper. Second, before the British, the 'minority peoples' had never been minorities before. They were not integrated into any state system. They were simply groups of people. Third, the British created a functioning, integrated state in Burma proper, but this was not so in the Frontier Areas. This is why joining the two was not a straightforward matter of 're-uniting' two areas.

The Union created in 1948 was an entirely new political creation, with an entirely new vision for government: parliamentary democracy with elections. This was not the traditional structure anywhere in the region. The leaders of the Frontier Areas who agreed to join the Union were agreeing to create an independent state, as equals. Insofar as was possible, this continued to be the aim of elected leaders in the Frontier Areas until 1962.

As the military grew more powerful and prominent, its leaders advocated more and more a ‘Bamar national vision’ that required authoritarian rule from the centre. This military vision framed the ‘minorities’ as a source of disunity, as a justification for their take-over of power.

The ultimate complexity of the nature of the state in Burma revolves around the fact that different actors have long had different ideas of what national unity and identity should mean and what the ‘nation’ even is. While British colonial policy cannot solely be blamed for this state of affairs, the divisions implemented by the British helped preserve a non-integrated state of affairs and the growth of separate national visions which made the creation of a fledgling, independent nation a particularly risky if imaginative experiment for the political leaders across the Union of Burma who worked to create a country out of thin air.

All of the people of Burma became victims under the military coup, became forced to operate in an unfair and repressive system, in the same way that all of Burma’s people were in a way victims of colonial rule: it changed the people’s own conceptions of self, so that they became a ‘ruled’ people.

When injustice reigns, there are no victors. Even those who seemingly profit from military rule, who sit at the top of the power pyramid, also suffer from the military regime. Not through physical or material suffering, but they are damaged nonetheless: because the system of military regime has utterly disconnected them from their fellow citizens, their countrymen in the Union. Their rhetoric will always be empty for, if they had true empathy and true ‘Union spirit’, they could not abide the very system they are part of.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Administrative Units in Scheduled Areas

Excerpt from the **'Burma, Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947, Report submitted to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and to the Government of Burma, June 1947'**

Reproduced exactly from *Democracy and Politics in Burma: A Collection of Documents.* Marc Weller, ed. Manerplaw: Government Printing Office of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, 1993.

Excerpted pages: 27-30

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4. Administrative Units in Scheduled Areas

The Scheduled Areas as defined in the 1935 Act cover 113, 000 square miles or about 47% of the total area of Burma, The population, however, is only 2, 400, 000 or 16% of the total. The main administrative units are the following: -

(i) *Federated Shan States.* The Shan States, though British territory, are a quasi autonomous area ruled by hereditary Shan Chiefs known as Sawbwas, under the general supervision of the Governor of Burma. In 1922 the states were formed into a species of federation for purposes of common subjects and for administrative purposes were divided into southern and northern groups. Within the Federation are the notified areas of Taunggyi, Kalaw and Lashio and the civil stations of Loilem and Loimwe, which were originally carved off from the states and placed under the direct administration of the Government of Burma through the Federation officials. The two groups are: -

(a) Southern Shan States

Area 36, 416 sq. mls.

Total Population (Gross figures for population are taken from the 1941 Census. The 1941 figures for population by race were lost as a result of the Japanese invasion. Figures in this paragraph are based on the assertion that the percentages given in the 1931 Census remained approximately the same in 1941 and that the increase in population should be distributed between races accordingly.) 927, 000

Population by Races:-

Shan and Lolo Moso 515, 412 or 55.6%

Karen Group 192, 108 or 20.4%

Burma Group 152, 955 or 16.5%

Palaung-Wa 50, 985 or 5.5%

Indian, Chinese and Others 18, 540 or 2.0%

(b) Northern Shan States.

Area 21, 400sq. mls.

Total Population

Federated States 690, 000

Unfederated Wa States 82, 614

Population by Races:-

Shan and Lolo Moso 333, 960 or 44%

Palaung-Wa 220, 000 or 28%

Indians, Chinese and Others 93, 840 or 12%

Kachin 71, 070 or 9%

Burma Group 53, 130 or 7%

There are six states in the Northern group including the Wa State of Mong Lun. The other Wa States which are not in the Federation were brought under administration only in 1935 and the Was are still addicted to head-hunting.

Kokang, a sub-state of North Hsenwi with a predominantly Chinese population and administered by a Chinese Myosa, claimed to be a separate state during the war.

(ii) (a) Bhamo District

Area 4, 148 sq. mls

Total Population 129, 000

Part I Population 52, 000

Part II Population 77, 000

Population by Races:-

Kachin 49, 794 or 38.6%

Shan 36, 765 or 28.5%

Burma Group 33, 540 or 26.0%

Indian, Chinese and Others 8, 901 or 6.9%

The Bhamo Part II Area is a Constituency Area, represented in the Burma Legislature and the Constituent Assembly.

(b)Myitkyina District.

Area 19, 762 sq. mls. (excluding the Triangle not measured).

Total Population 298, 000

Part I Population 189, 000

Part II Populaiton 109, 000

Population by Races:-

Kachin 157, 642 or 53.2%

Shan, Lolo Moso 76, 586 or 26.0%

Burma Group 40, 230 or 13.7%

Indian, Chinese and Others 23, 542 or 7.1%

Almost all the Burma Group of the population live in the Part II Area. Of this Area, Myitkyina is represented in the Burma Legislature and the Constituent Assembly, but Kamaing Townshp is Non-Constituency. The Shan States in the hkamti Long Area are included in Part I.

(c) Katha District. This district is in Ministerial burma, but includes a small Part I Area inhabited by a few hundred Kachins.

(iii) (a) Chin Hills District.

Area 10, 377 sq. mls.

Total population 186, 000

Population by Races: -

Chins 183, 768 or 98.8%

Others 2, 232 or 1.2 %

Kanpetlet Subdivision in the south of the district has close ties with the neighbouring Chin population of Ministerial Burma.

(b) Arakan Hill Tracts.

Area 3, 543 sq. mls.

Total population 34, 000

Population by Races:-

Chin 25, 772 or 75.8%

Others 4, 624 or 13.6%

Burma Group 3, 570 or 10.6%

The Burma Group of the population who are Arakanese Buddhist nearly all live in the southern part of the Tract bordering on the Arakan Division.

(iv) (a) Salween District

Area 2, 582 sq. mls.

Total Population 57, 000

Population by Races:-

Karen Group 49, 020 or 86.0%

Tai (Shan) 4, 389 or 7.7%

Burmese 2, 223 or 3.9%

Others 1, 311 or 2.4%

(b) Karenni

Area 4, 519 sq. mls.

Total Population 70, 000

Population by Races:-

Karen 51, 310 or 73.3%

Shan 13, 580 or 19.4%

Burma Group 2, 660 or 3.8%

Others 2, 450 or 3.5%

(v) Naga Hills District.

Area 5, 895 sq, mls. (excluding Homalin (Part II) Subdivision)

Total Population 84, 000 + Homalin approx. 48, 000 = 132, 000

Population by Races, Part I Area only:-

Naga 71, 736 or 85.4%

Tai 12, 264 or 14.6%

Homalin Subdivision is a Part II Non-Constituency Area more advanced than the rest of the district. In Part I, the Shan States of Thaungdut and Singkaling Hkamti, and the Somra Tract inhabited by the Chins and Shans, are more advanced than the rest of the district which is inhabited by Naga tribes. These are the most backward of all teh frontier peoples, still addicted to head-hunting and human sacrifice. They were brought under administration only in 1940, and little progress in civilizing them has so far been possible.

(vi) Other Part II Areas

(a) Tamu Township Population 5, 870

Tam Township is a small Part II Non-Constituency Area on the India-Burma frontier in the Upper Chindwin District. Details of the racial composition of the population are lacking, but it is known to be predominantly Shan.

(b) Thaton Part II Areas Population 218, 008

(c) Eastern Toungoo 160,000

(d) Kyain 59,897

(e) Myawaddi 8,360

Details of the racial composition of the population in these areas *(b)* to *(e)* bordering on the Salween District, are lacking, but it is known to e predominantly Karen. All four areas are represented in the Burma Legislature and the Constituent Assembly.

Appendix B

Excerpts from email correspondence with Bianca Son Suantak, discussion about British policy in the Chin Hills, relating to her unpublished PhD thesis, working title:

"Marking History: The Border of the Zo Highlands Across Time and Space"

(Estimated publication date: October 2012)

SECTION I

From: Samara Yawnghwe

Sent: Wed, Mar 30, 2011

I was just wondering if you had an opinion on Carey and Tuck's Chin Hills Gazetteer? (Beyond it being a history of British interaction with people in the hills). Am probably going to mention it in my writing, just as a record of how British came to exert control in that area.

From: Bianca Son Suantak

Sent: 30 March 2011

Carey worked really hard and did a lot of good record keeping. Of course, much of what he said was somewhat orientalist in nature, but that was typical for that time. He spent a lot of time in the Chin Hills and would come to 'love' being among them. That is, in his early writings, it is evident that he did not appreciate the Chin and even felt revolted by them. This would later change as interactions grew in frequency. Carey, in a way, came to feel 'at home' there. In fact, when there were talks about where the border separating India from Burma should be drawn, Carey fought to bring the Chin Hills under Burma's jurisdiction. This may have not been a great move given today's situation, but I believe Carey genuinely felt that it would be best for the Chin.

Carey (Tuck didn't do much of the work), also worked hard to figure out the history of the Chin and in this way, continues to be a major primary source for anyone studying them.

In what context will you be referring to them? That is, another good early source is Newland's Image of War.

SECTION II

From: Samara Yawnghwe

Date: Apr 6, 2011

I'm just trying to get a clearer picture of British doings in the Frontier Areas, since policy seems to have been more closely linked to individuals there. I mean, the Frontier Areas strike me as being like Rangoon in the early days, before the colonial administration and government really settled in...so the potential was there for the British there to interact more with the 'natives' instead of other officials or colonial expats. So, the ones who stay there a long time seem to get very attached to the people.

But I was primarily just looking at early history of the British occupancy there.

From: Bianca Son Suantak

Date: April 6, 2011

After British secured India, Burma was a frontier. Then the foothills were and eventually the frontier ran all the way up to the Yunnan border. Lower Burma's frontier or border was finite; it was situated on the Bay of Bengal. The British were really overwhelmed financially after the third war. In fact, these three wars costs more than any other war in British history. They did not have the funds to occupy the whole of the highlands. Hence, there was a lot of discussion what to do. Instead of sending in loads of people and encouraging entrepreneurs to set up shop in the mountains, they sent in political officers like Carey to

1. work directly with the natives' already existing chiefs by giving them some power in terms of managing their own villages. They did, however, were expected to collect taxes on behalf of the British. And they were to punish their people for interfering with British infrastructure, mainly not to disturb the Telegraphy wires and to respect the borders drawn separating the mountains into jurisdictions.

And 2. Carey was to map and survey the area for future plans of building roads to India and China. Later, as early as WWI, the natives were recruited to serve as soldiers and hence, had to be 'understood' in terms of 'inherent characters.'

I am not sure how attached the officers got to the people, but I will say that they claimed a sort of ownership over them. To them, the natives of the hills were markedly differently from lowland Burmans. They felt that hill people were, by nature, more honest, hard working and sincere when compared to the "lying, cunning and inherently lazy Burmans." Once the highlanders began converting to Christianity, the officers' affinity for the natives increased even more. Still, I suppose it makes sense that they'd feel 'closer' to them given that it was often one officer living in a cluster of villages and hence, these people were his 'only' friends.

PS: I am not sure about the Shan, but yes, for the Chin and the Zo (now on the India side), there were just a handful of officers who impacted policy.

SECTION III
From: Bianca Son Suantak
Date: 06 April 2011

James Scott, in *Seeing like a State*, addresses the way in which outsiders viewed natives. They utilize specific frameworks and don't seem to 'see' anything else. What is of importance to them, is how these natives are useful in relation to the state and nothing else. No one ever tries to understand their religion, practices culture and such in order to emulate it, to learn from it and maybe change one's view of their own 'European' world. It is always in terms of how it impacts the agenda-at-hand, the expansion of Empire.

First they saw the ethnic minorities as relatively harmless 'men of the hills.' This changed once they entered ethnic areas. When the British faced resistance, the narrative changed to head-hunting savages which gave them permission to destroy and 'pacify' them. Max Weber (1921) argued that only a state has legitimacy to exercise violence, when someone outside the state does so, it is murder and terrorism. Hence, they killed the natives, again for the sake of the state. Finally, they subdued

them and forced them to become loyal subjects of the Crown by fighting Britain's war abroad. They then 'appreciated' the warrior-like quality of the natives because it was violence legitimized by the state....

APPENDIX C

Burma Round Table Conference: Proceedings of the Committee of the Whole Conference (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932)

Page 1, list of Delegates:

The Earl Peel (Chairman), Sir Samuel Hoare, The Marquess of Lothian, Mr. Isaac Foot, Mr. G. H. Hall, The Viscount Mersey, Major D. Graham Pole, Mr. J. S. Wardlaw-Milne, The Earl Winterton

The Sawbwa of Hsipaw, The Sawbwa of Yawnghwe, Sra Shwe Ba, M. C. H. Campagnac, Mr. N. M. Cowasjee, Mr. M. M. Ohn Ghine, Sir Oscar de Glanville,
U Tun Aung Gyaw, U Maung Gyee

Mr. S. N. Haji, Mr. K. B. Harper, U Chit Hlaing, Mr. R. B. Howison, Dr. Thein Maung, U Tharawaddy Maung Maung, Mr. Sidney Loo-Nee, U Ni, Miss May Oung [that is, Ma Mya Sein], U Ba Pe, Tharrawaddy U Pu

Mr. Hoe Kim Seing, U Ba Si, U Su, U Aung Thin

Appendix D

From the India Office Records archives of the British Library Asia and Pacific Affairs Section: IOR/M/5/106 Notes by Stevenson re: FA [Frontier Areas]

List of major points awaiting HMG's decision for which a clearer background is desirable than that at present available in London.

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1. The future political relations between Frontier Areas and the Dominion of Burma. We do not yet know whether the aim will be federation or complete unification under a single Government. For a decision HMG will need a full picture of the existing traditional forms of local government throughout the Frontier areas and a summary of the present hopes and aspirations of the hill peoples.

2. The financial settlement between the Dominion of Burma and the Frontier Areas. The question as to who is to pay the deficit in the Frontier Areas budget during the development period requires to be settled. Then there is also the very complicated problem of settling the proportions of indirect taxation e.g., customs and excise, imposed upon goods entering Burma, which should be credited to the Frontier Areas budget, and what proportion of the expenditure of collection of these taxes should be debited thereto. All the complicated calculations and estimations which resulted in the First and Second Schedules of the Federal Fund Order of 1940 will have to be repeated for all areas and a balanced appreciation of the conclusion drawn from there will require considerable background knowledge not yet supplied to London.

3. The Part II areas. A very early decision is necessary on whether or not these areas should be placed within the Frontier Areas now or after the elections. A great number of interrelated problems impinge upon this decision and it is desirable that these should be explained at length to the officials and members of HMG who will be responsible for framing the final decision.

4. The Karen demands for a separate Karen area inclusive of Tenasserim Division require examination I light of the latest evidence. This also requires considerable explanation.

5. Future of the Karenni States. This must depend to some degree on the answers to 3 and 4 above. Again much explanation of the historical and factual background to the present position in Karenni history is desirable.

6. Amalgamation of small states in the F.S.S. The policy to be followed in setting up the administration of amalgamated states will depend largely upon the answer to question (1) above and (7) below. The issues are complicated and not really explainable on paper.

7. Development of regional councils. The form which these must take, the nature and duties of the councils, the method of selection or election of members and many other points have yet to be decided. We need considerable latitude in making local decisions to fit local needs and this again requires complicated explanation.

8. The selection of technical experts e.g., geological, agricultural, veterinary and marketing experts. We are in danger of setting off on the wrong foot in our surveys, of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. It is highly desirable that I should have the opportunity to discuss methods of such surveys in other parts of the Empire and elsewhere with the offices concerned and to consult competent technical authorities on the scale of operation desirable in the light of known facts.

HNC Stevenson 8.7.46

Appendix E

From the India Office Records archives of the British Library Asia and Pacific Affairs Section: IOR/M/5/114 File B (I) 1183

Telegram (1)

INWARD TELEGRAM

Allotted to Burma Office

CYPHER

From Governor of Burma

To Secretary of State for Burma

Dated Rangoon, 18.05 hours, 23th January 1947

Received 14.00 hours, 23rd January 1947

MOST IMMEDIATE

Personal from Governor. Frontier Areas. Your 198 22nd January

2. Your paragraph 2. I agree that H.M.G. should press for committee of enquiry and regret that Delegation are showing opposition to this proposal. It is possible however that Stevenson's withdrawal from the scene may lessen Burmese fears in this respect if this is in fact the real reason for their opposition to a commission (see my 31 22nd January).

3. Your paragraph 6(A). I have discussed this with my Frontier Areas officers and understand that there would be no insuperable difficulty about ranging preliminary discussions at Panglong provided that it was clearly understood by all concerned that no repeat no immediate conclusions would be taken but that all representatives would be allowed to go home and report to their Councils and that observers representing H.M.G. are present at meetings. I agree that Stevenson should not repeat not attend. We can consider later who will be representative but my present inclination would be to send Leyden.

4. Your paragraph 6(B). Representatives coming to Panglong from other hill areas will be briefed so far as we know only to discuss whether or not the Frontier Area should send representatives to the U.K. and possibly also whether or not there should

be a Frontier Area Federation. None of the Hill Councils have as yet seriously considered immediate amalgamation with Burma. But this need not prevent preliminary discussions.

Letter (2)

Letter from Sir. G. Laithwaite's files

LETTER FROM SECRETARY OF STATE TO GOVERNOR OF BURMA

PERSONAL

5th February, 1947

My dear Rance

Thank you for your personal letter of 22nd January enclosing Mr. Stevenson's application to proceed on leave pending retirement. We have, since that letter was sent, had a good deal of telegraphic correspondence and I would only like to say how sorry I am that matters should have taken the turn that they have and that you should have had so much difficulty over Stevenson's case.

2. One could not but be struck by the attitude of the Delegates towards Stevenson and the Frontier Areas Administration. They clearly felt that he was hostile to their ideas and ambition and they continued to make the point that with the Frontier Areas Administration in the background there was little, if any, prospect of the Frontier Areas, much as they might wish to come into Ministerial Burma, saying frankly that they proposed to do so. I think that the atmosphere was definitely eased when I was able to announce that Mr. Stevenson had applied to retire, and I am very grateful to you for letting me have so prompt a reply to my enquiry; for not only was it of immediate value to be able to make an announcement, but it will also have made it more difficult for the Delegation to contend that Stevenson has been moved as a result of pressure from them.

3. As you know, they enquired at once the name of the successor, to which I replied that the matter was still under consideration. But from Laithwaite's conversation with them on the day on which Aung San and the main party left, it looks very much as thought they would be entirely content with Mr. Leyden, and having regard to the somewhat depressing report you gave me of the possible Burman competitor

mentioned in your telegram No.49 of 29th January, I am very glad that this should be so.

4. I note from your telegram 52 of 1st February that you think that Stevenson may be a nuisance when he returns. We cannot, I fear, exclude that possibility, and I gather that his enthusiasm for the Frontier Areas people is so great that it may carry him away. We can but deal with the situation as it arises
(SD) Pethick-Lawrence

Telegram (3)
CYPHER Telegram (OTP) from Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma dated 7th February, 1947.
IMPORTANT
No.4
Private and personal.
From Governor.
My personal telegram No.61 of February 6th. Frontier Areas.

1. Aung San's belief that a conference at Panglong would serve no useful purpose was partly due I think to his knowledge of the contents of Shan Sawbwa's memorandum 16c of January 29th which has been forwarded to the Under Secretary of State by Frontier Areas with their letter No. 56 FA (a)47 of February 2nd. Aung San mentioned at Council that Sawbwas were against the union with Burma and implied that Stevenson was responsible for this policy. Aung San as you know has always been convinced that but for Frontier Service officers there would be no disagreement between Shan States and Ministerial Burma. It is possible that there is a certain amount of truth in Aung San's belief as evidenced by the following two recent statements from Shan Sawbwas.

2. First statement dated November 14th 1946. Here insert text of my immediately succeeding telegram No.5

[The following is the text of telegram No. 5: CYPHER Telegram (OTP) from Governor of Burma to Secretary of State for Burma dated 7th February, 1947.

IMPORTANT

No.5

The Shan State's SAOHPA'S and people are determined not to remain in Frontier Areas administration and they should have their own system of administration and new constitution which is being worked out by the Saopalong of Mongmit State directly under their own control and with right to employ their own advisers of any nationality that they wish and that H.E. the Governor be approached to have this matter brought into effect forthwith.

2. SAOHPAS of Shan States are willing to negotiate on question of federation with Burma on understanding and basis of full autonomy for Shan States and this condition to be duly provided for and guaranteed in future constitution for Burma whether as a dominion in British Commonwealth of Nations or a complete Sovereign International State with right to secede from federation if so desired.

3. The Shan States claim right and privilege as an equal partner in Burma Federation of treating with H.M. Government in matter of financial or other Revenue Department adjustments and in event of Burma proper sending a representative to Great Britain to maintain its own cause then the Shan States should have right to send their own representative.]

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3. Second statement dated November 20th 1946.

Begins: The Executive Committee of federated Shan States resolved in their meeting held in Hsenwie on November 20th 1946 that Shan States should for the time being remain in Frontier Areas administration under the present framework.

4. At time second statement was dispatched Stevenson had been in Shan States for a few days. Leyden had not seen first statement until yesterday nor indeed had I. As far as he Leyden is aware, this statement was not distributed by the Frontier Areas Department.

5. I feel that if contents of first statement is truly representative of goodwill of Shan Sawbwas then the chances of finding agreement between Shan States and Burma proper are more optimistic than I was led to believe. Panglong should show.

Appendix F

From the India Office Records archives of the British Library Asia and Pacific Affairs Section: IOR/M/5/114 File B (I) 1183

Governor Burma Letter to Secretary of State

Government House Rangoon, 22 January 1947.

PERSONAL

My dear Lord Pethick Lawrence

I have today sent you a private and personal telegram concerning an application by Mr. Stevenson, Director of Frontier Areas, to proceed on leave pending retirement before the 1st April 1947. Stevenson's reasons and my comments and suggestions for his relief are fully given in my telegram. In this telegram however I mentioned that I was sending you by airmail a copy of his official application and also another document which I received from Burma Command. Both these documents are enclosed herewith.

I appreciate that much of what I said in the telegram may be conditional on the results of the discussions now taking place at home but as no information has yet arrived I am treating Mr. Stevenson's case as if the 'make-up' in Frontier Areas is to remain as at present.

Yours very sincerely HR. Rance

THE Rt. Hon LORD PETHICK LAWRENCE

Enclosed: Stevenson's letter:

With reference to our conversation of Saturday morning and my request to be permitted to go on leave pending retirement on or before the 1st April 1947, I would like to place on record my reasons for this extreme step.

Briefly they are these. The Hon'ble U Aung San's Loikaw speech made it clear that, insofar as he can represent them, Burmese objections to my occupying the post of Director have reached an extreme stage. Moreover it seems not unlikely to me that unless the Hon'ble Counsellor's view of my activities had received some endorsement of sympathy in discussion with Your Excellency he would never have had the presumption to assume publicly that Your Excellency would agree to my

removal from office at his behest. A crisis has therefore been reached which must be resolved.

Judging by correspondence and telegrams which have passed between Rangoon and London, together with the general trend of my recent conversations with Your Excellency, it appears certain to me that Your Excellency also inclines to the view expressed by the Hon'ble U Aung San that I am too strongly "partisan" to be acceptable as an adviser on Frontier affairs.

Now this view was expressed to me in so many words by Sir Gilbert Laithwaite during my recent visit to London, and, though I was at great pains to explain that, in the absence of a Council through which they could express their opinions, the hill peoples had perforce to call upon their own administration to act as their mouthpiece, I left London with the very definite impression that the Burma Office had not changed its views to any notable extent.

I had, however, hoped that your Excellency and the Executive Council would have appreciated this position. For example, even Mr. Walsh–Atkins was impressed, during his brief visit, with the simple faith of the hillmen that what they ask their officers to say for them will be accepted by higher authority without question. Mr. Walsh-Atkins was himself asked why he had been sent out to find what the hillmen wanted, since their desires had already been made known to the two Directors, FAA, to Sir John Walton, and to the then Governor, His Excellency Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith. Had these gentlemen, Mr. Walsh-Atkins was asked, not informed His Majesty's Government? And if so why this further exploration?

I have merely interpreted my position as being, pending the formation of a Frontier Council to discuss matters with the Burmese, the mouthpiece of the people to H.E. the Governor and vice versa. In that role I have explained to Your Excellency and the Executive Council the wishes of the hill peoples and to the hill peoples the wishes of HMG, Your Excellency and the Executive Council. This much I had to do if I was to discharge HMG's expressed policy of teaching the hill peoples to run their own affairs so that at the earliest possible moment they would be able to join in some form of union with Burma.

It is unfortunate that there have been persons mainly, I regret to say, Europeans in the Burma services, who have seen fit to interpret the whole framework of the Frontier Areas as an effort on the part of the Frontier Service and particularly myself to create a private empire. My resignation should at least squash that infamy.

However, there would be little profit in holding a “witch-hunt” to find out who has encouraged these strange views of the Frontier Areas Administration. The fact to be faced is that I remain suspect as a “partisan” in spite of all that can be found in the files and in the records of my talks and speeches to demonstrate that I have never been other than what I proclaim myself to be, that is, a believer in and propounder of the unpopular (in the hills) theme of a United Burma, an ex-oficio spokesman who had tried for over-long to secure a medium through which the hillmen can speak for themselves the unpleasant truths which have made some of my opinions so unpopular.

What does matter is that, in the negotiations which are now approaching, no jarring of personalities should be allowed to endanger the vital issues at stake.

In my opinion the suspicion which now appears to rest upon my word must aggravate a situation which is already delicate enough and in the circumstances I think it right that I should withdraw form the scene and so enable Your Excellency to choose another adviser in whom Your Excellency and the Executive Council, as well as the people of the Frontier Areas, can repose full confidence.

Now that Your Excellency has decided to form a Frontier Council my successor will not be placed in the same invidious position.

As to timing of my departure I have suggested the 1st April partly for my own convenience, partly in case Your Excellency might wish me to see through the first meeting of the FSS Council. There is, however, the possibility that my staying for that purpose might even be misinterpreted by the hyper-suspicious Burmese as evidence that I merely want to have a last chance to organize more trouble! I therefore leave it to Your Excellency to suggest whatever earlier date might seem expedient.

Signed. H.N.C. Stevenson. 20.1.

BIOGRAPHY

Samara Yawnghwe is of Shan and Canadian descent. She received her BA in International Development from McGill University, Canada (2008). She is currently pursuing her MA in Southeast Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University. Her areas of interest are geopolitics, minorities and German language.