BOOK REVIEWS

Shelby Tucker. *Burma, The Curse of Independence*. London: Pluto Press. 2001. xx + 282. Maps, Glossary, Illustrations, Index. ISBN 07453 1541 0.

What could have prevented the Burmese civil war? What are the causes underlying Burma's troubles with ethnic secessionism? From a largely counterfactual view, Shelby Tucker looks into Burma's past and argues that ethnic divisions under British colonialism, bloody struggles during the Japanese occupation, and Ne Win's exploitation left the country economically bankrupt and politically in turmoil.

Burma, The Curse Of Independence is Tucker's second book on Burma. An American trial lawyer by training, he was also the author of a much acclaimed book, Among Insurgents: Walking Through Burma (2000) which details his dangerous liaisons with the Kachin insurgents. In contrast to his earlier poignant travelogue, Burma is a historical account of Burma's struggles for statehood. In this book, Tucker relies heavily on current scholarship, conversations, and ideas from well-known Burma academics and also impressions from his illegal adventure to northern Burma via the Yunnan border in 1989.

There are nine wide-ranging chapters in Burma. It begins with "The Burmese Void," which provides a review of scholarship on Burma and recollects Tucker's first encounter with and appreciation for Burmese politics. The following chapter, "Geography and Ethnicity" examines the historiography on the first inhabitants of Burma. It describes the attributes and aspirations of diverse peoples, artificially brought together by history and politics. Chapter Three, "British vs. Japanese Line-Up" leads readers summarily into the British conquest of Burma in the late nineteenth century and portrays Burmese colonialism as an organic extension of British rule in India rather than a premeditated, imperial plan (p. 28). Tucker sees colonial Burma as a divided country and argues that the resistance during the Japanese occupation intensified those divisions. As he writes, "While most Burmans shared the goal of a free and independent Burma, they differed in the tactics to be used to that end" (p. 39). In "We Burmans and Aung San's Triumphant," Tucker departs from the usual beatification of Aung San as a national hero. Instead, he is critical of Aung San's ambitions, motives, successes and failures in dealing with the British, the Japanese, and Burma's ethnic communities in the 1940s.

Burma is currently the world's second largest producer of illicit opium and a primary source of amphetamine-type stimulants. In "The Narcocrats," Tucker provides a brief history of opium production in Burma and suggests how the Kuomintang with the help of the Americans, created a vibrant narcotic industry and a trading infrastructure along the Burma-China border. Like journalist Bertil Lintner, Tucker provides circumstantial evidence to demonstrate the Rangoon military regime's involvement in the booming drugs trade at the "institutional level" (p. 184). In "The Kleptocrats," Tucker delves into the failures of the Rangoon government and its succeeding regimes to manage the economy. In broad sweeps, readers are introduced to the notorious Defence Services Institute, the disastrous impact of Ne Win's idiosyncratic The Burmese Way to Socialism ideology, the demonetization of currencies in 1987, and the creation of the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Company Limited as part of the New Economic Policy to demonstrate how the various military regimes debilitate the economy (pp. 190-6).

"A Hero's Death" is perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book. Revisiting the theories behind the assassination of Aung San, Tucker displays his legal acumen by casting doubts on the culpability of U Saw, a military official and politician, tried and hanged for directing the murder of Aung San and his colleagues on 19 July 1947. Tucker says he found no direct evidence of U Saw's involvement (p. 143) and is shocked that "all records pertaining to the most important crime in modern Burmese history have disappeared" (p. 151). The author vehemently rejects alternative theories advanced by the BBC, which points to British commercial interests behind the murders (p. 153). Not surprisingly, Tucker links Ne Win and his 4th Burma Rifles to Aung San's death, as they were seen as eventual beneficiaries in the post Aung San period.

"Whither Burma" is another interesting chapter as it collates diverse views of the prospects of Burma by a cadre of experts on Burma. Tucker examines the possibility of a regime breakdown and compares the predictions by scholars such as Martin Smith, Mikael Gravers, David Steinberg, Josef Silverstein, Mary Callahan, Andrew Selth, Robert Taylor, Morden Pedersen and Bertil Lintner (pp. 201-9). Based on some principles provided by international law and growing norms to protect human rights, Tucker submits that there are grounds for the United Nations to withdraw the credentials of the current State, Peace and Development Council (SPDC) military regime in Burma (p. 215). Besides, he also urges the international community to act against the SPDC which supports the production of half the world's opium. Against conventional wisdom, Tucker believes that the end of the military regime might come sooner than expected (p. 217). But apart from drawing on Callahan and Silverstein's assessments that there may be splits within the top military leadership, Tucker does not offer any concrete evidence to support this wishful hypothesis.

As he concedes, "Ultimately, Burma's fate is not in a man's gift. It is a matter of prayer" (p. 217).

Burma watchers looking for novel insights in Tucker's new book may be disappointed, as it does not offer anything new by way of facts. There is little said of the on-going "civil war" between the military regime and the ethnic communities or problems with opposition parties such as the National League of Democracy. Insufficient attention is also paid to how the successive military regimes after Ne Win manage to defy international pressures to reform and continue to rob the country of a chance at nationhood. The current crisis facing Burma is inadequately brought up to date.

Burma is better read as a selective review of existing literature and as a lively account of Burma's struggles to independence. The appended comprehensive "Chronological Guide to the Burmese Civil War" is useful to anyone who needs a quick overview of Burma's landmark events. As Tucker acknowledges, this book does not "pretend to compete with current work" but rather "hopes to complement and build on it" (p. 1). Indeed, Tucker's emphatic and colourful writing is enough to whet any reader's appetite to learn more about this unfortunate "cursed" state.

Netina Tan
Ph.D. Candidate
Political Science Department
University of British Columbia

Monique Skidmore (ed.). *Burma at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005. 304pp. Index, Illustrations, Maps. ISBN 13: 978-0-8248-2897-4

From the second paragraph on, this in many ways interesting and informative book seems to be about 45 degrees off beam. It is perhaps a bit over persnickety for a reviewer to point out that the book to which the editor refers at that point, Manning Nash's study of Burmese peasant life in the 1950s and early 1960s, The Golden Road to Modernity, is not an edited volume as claimed, but a single-author monograph. But such errors set a reviewer off in search of other errors of fact, and more importantly, of interpretation.

All of the ten European or American contributors, plus the one Japanese, are students of Myanmar's artistic and social life. This makes the book most valuable because there have been few such studies since the early 1960s. The opening of Myanmar to foreign researchers after 1988 has begun to bear fruit in terms of advancing foreign appreciations of the lives and times of at least the population of Yangon and the artistic world of Mandalay. More such studies would be welcome. Essays in Burma at the Turn of the 21st Century deal with such themes as gambling, changing religious and "superstitious" practices, legitimization debates, and musical, literary and artistic production.

The editor makes an acute observation in her introduction that "the state is not one monolithic rational entity" (p. 1), but too frequently contributors to the volume see the issues which the Myanmar people face in their day-to-day lives as being the result of central state driven policies. In many instances, however, they are the result of decisions taken independently, and sometimes at odds with, the intentions of the ruling military State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) by local officials. Or are based on a misunderstanding of the purpose of an ill-defined and poorly articulated government goal. Methodologically, the book suffers from that fact that apparently too often the authors are content to base their descriptions of peoples' lives and their interpretations of their life chances and opportunities on the basis of one or a few sources. The researcher thus relates one view of reality as if it were the predominant one while, in fact, there may be a number of alternative interpretations extant at any one time in Myanmar social life. One expects social scientists to have a range of sources when discussing social life and times. Even journalists claim to triangulate their sources.

Occasionally observations advanced by contributors approach being stupefyingly naïve. My favourite is a discussion in one contribution that suggests that power in Myanmar "was brokered through membership in 'clubs' that demanded ethnic homogeneity and unquestioning loyalty from members." (p. 116) Examples are said to be the military elite as a fictitious "Ne Win's Club" of the 1990s and the "Tuesday Club", a monthly dining group of Indian, American, British, Pakistani, Malaysian, Singaporean, Australian, French, and Japanese foreign investors and traders as well as others who make it difficult to describe as homogeneous or politically powerful. It was, in fact, rather like the Rotary Club in other cities, organizing social events for its members and occasionally lobbying government for improved rules and regulations for foreign investors. Sadly, however, one can find many others less inane but analytically more serious errors of fact and interpretation.

Take, for example, the contention by one contributor that "Until [the SPDC] incorporate[s] her awza [i. e., power], and that of other respected civilians, into a national government . . . it is unlikely that there will be an end to personality cults and conspiracies." (p. 136) This implies that Myanmar's political life must endlessly deal with "personality cults and conspiracies" when, of course, what is lacking that would end the power of such individuals and the rumours that circulate about them is the creation of formal and respected political institutions that can survive the rise and inevitable fall of one or more individuals. It is the absence of enduring political institu-

tions in Myanmar beyond the army which allows for the patterns described in the book to persist.

Too frequently the essays in Dr. Skidmore's volume, all of which were originally presented at the 2002 Burma Studies Conference held at Gothenberg University, suffer from a lack of historical knowledge. Many of the phenomena are described as if they are new or novel when in fact similar practices have been going on for decades. The continual effort to make many things in Myanmar's economic and social life the consequence of the military government has the danger of distorting the cultural significance of what is described. The book is well worth close study but keep your critical thinking cap on while doing so. There is much to be learned and much to be doubted, but it all stimulates thought.

Robert H. Taylor
Senior Visiting Research Fellow
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
Singapore

Elaine Halton. *Lord of the Celestial Elephant*. London: Burlington Press for author. 1999. Maps, Illustrations, Photographs, Bibliography, Appendices. 144 pp. ISBN 0 9537094 0 X

In Lord of the Celestial Elephant, Elaine Halton sets out to give an account of the life of her grandfather and "the last Crown Prince of Burma"(p. 4), Mowng Lat (1852 - 1936), also referred to as Setkya-wadi Min, Hteik Tin Lat, and John William Mowng Lat [footnote 1], based on English language manuscripts and orally transmitted memoirs of the Prince inherited by the author. The book has the potential to be a welcome and useful insight into the Burmese royal family at a critical moment in Burmese history: Mowng Lat witnessed two Anglo-Burmese Wars and the move of the Burmese capital from Pegu in Lower Burma to Mandalay in Upper Burma, and then back south to Rangoon under British colonial rule; he had personal contact with all three kings who took the throne during his lifetime as well as with key British colonial officials; as a teenager, he raised armies throughout Lower Burma to rebel against the Burmese King until the British arrested and exiled him to British India for nearly seventy years; born a Buddhist noble, he later embraced Christianity as a political prisoner and married an Australian woman. The author's promise to offer a colorful and personal novel about this intriguing historical figure that touches on "all the elements of life. love, hatred, struggle, success, life and death, humor and tragedy," (p. 5) however, is not kept despite her worthy intentions. Halton attempts to interweave fiction and non-fiction and ends up doing neither successfully.

The reader learns little about Mowng Lat in the first half of the book because Halton is concerned primarily with telling the story of how he was deprived of his "rightful" claim to the throne first by King Mindon (ruled 1853 - 1878) and then by the British colonial administration. While no historical documentation to this day has demonstrated that King Mindon intended to name Prince Mowng Lat as his heir-in fact, he refused to name an heir after his younger brother Crown Prince Kanaung was murdered by King Mindon's own sons in an unsuccessful rebellion on 18th June, 1866-Halton insists that she is "sure that the King [Mindon] wanted to name him [Mowng Lat] as his successor" (p. 126). Her justification for portraying Prince Mowng Lat as the rightful heir and the "Crown Prince," which remains unconvincing even as the book concludes, hinges on the fact that King Mindon seized the throne from King Bagan (ruled 1846 - 1853) and killed Bagan's brother and Crown Prince Hleine Mein [Hlaing Mein], Prince Mowng Lat's father. Halton also alleges that King Mindon told British colonial officials that the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow him in 1866 took place on account of his nephew, Prince Mowng Lat, who had been placed in the care of Crown Prince Kanaung at the age of eight. He explained that his sons feared that upon the death of Crown Prince Kanaung, the throne would go to Mowng Lat rather than to them (p. 79). According to Halton, King Mindon also told Prince Mowng Lat following the 1866 rebellion that his own sons, Thibaw and Limbin, were unfit to succeed him as king and that he wishes to secretly train Mowng Lat for the role (pp. 43 - 44). She does not indicate on what sources, if any, she bases these assertions and given the frequency with which usurpation of the throne occurred in Burmese history, not to mention the fact that Crown Prince Hleine Mein was still a young man likely to produce more offspring when he was killed, it is uncertain whether Mowng Lat was in fact in line to become king one day.

It is to her credit that Halton devotes herself to providing a historical background for her book: she cites from British official documentation and administrative correspondence and features images of royal procession, for instance, taken from palm-leaf manuscripts held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London that serve as rich visual supplements. But lengthy quotations from British official records do not change the fact that the book is replete with unscholarly conjectures and cultural stereotypes. The historical background Halton offers amounts to a bleak picture of incessant and bloody succession wars fueled especially by "vicious and ambitious queens" (pp. 43, 50), a likewise persistent history of polygamy and intermarriage amongst the royalty resulting in insane kings, queens, princes and princesses, and a political culture entrenched in a philosophy she labels "Might

is power" (p. 51). This is not to suggest that the book is merely an apology for colonialism or for Orientalist representations of historical Burma. Halton remains critical of the British colonization of Burma throughout the book and often remarks on the arrogance of the British colonizers. She attempts to shed light on what she describes as "a breathtaking. devout Buddhist country which has escaped the ravages of change" (p. 12). Referring to the feuds over succession, Halton comments: "this seems at odds with the serenity of the country and totally in opposition to the Buddhist beliefs of the people" (p. 4). But it is precisely these kinds of cultural stereotypes abruptly inserted into the narrative that detracts from the story of Mowng Lat. In a passage where Halton describes the practice of chewing betel nuts in Burma, for example, she suddenly states, "It is interesting at this juncture, to be aware that the Burmese have never been sexist in any field" (p. 34).

The book leaves the reader with only a skeletal outline of Mowng Lat's life and story without the flesh. Neither story nor history, the book fails to captivate the reader or to measure up to the standard set by novels about turn-of-the-century Burma such as Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* (Random House 2000) and Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner* (Knopf 2002).

Dr. Chie Ikeya
Rockefeller Fellow, Project for Critical Asian Studies

Note
1. I use Halton's romanizations of Burmese names, which appear to derive from colonial period romanizations, for the sake of consistency. At present, however, "Mowng" Lat would more commonly be romanized as "Maung" Lat.

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Stevan Harrell (ed.). *Perspectives on the Yi of Southwest China*. Berkeley: University of California Press. xii + 321 pp. Tables, Maps, Figues, Index. ISBN 0-520-21989-9

This book is about the complexities of ethnicity of a particular official ethnic collectivity in China, the Yi (formerly known in the literature as Lolo or Luoluo), a collection of Tibeto-Burman peoples. It also contains a number of excellent ethnographic chapters on various Yi groups and their culture and social systems. On the other hand, its relevance to Burma studies is remote at best. For, Burma is not even mentioned once AND in most of the available literature on Burma there is no mention at all of any Yi/Lolo presence. This reviewer happened to come across evidence of some slight presence in Burma, during his research on the Burma-China border in 2003, however. The still unpublished and little known work of the Chinese ethnographer of the 1920s-40s, Yin Mingde, mentions a small Yi community in Northern Kachin State (as it is now), just over the Guligong range on one of the trade routes across to the India border, but I know of no other such mention. Some Yi varieties (Nisu and possibly also Sani), however do live in Southern-South central Yunnan right on the Burma border, and in my own work on the cross-border trade I found that some of these Yi families were involved in the old Yunnan-Buurma caravan trade, at least in the early 20th Century and later, as clients of the Yunnanese Muslims (Panthay as Burmese call them), who mainly ran these horse-and-mule trading caravans, in these cases between Lancang in Yunnan and Lashio in the Shan State. I know one of these families and the matter is of some interest because they spent a fair amount of time in and round Lashio, were employed at managerial levels in the caravan trade and learned a fair amount of English in consequence, which they still use back in China. My China colleague in the Yunnan Nationalities University at Kunming, George Yang Wen-An, is one of these, actually born in Lashio not above half a century ago, in fact. It strikes me as strange that none of this Burma connection is even hinted at in the usual Burma literature on either the cross-border caravan trade or the ethnology of 'tribal' minorities in Burma, and also not in the book under review, which is strictly China-centred, mainly having to do with the problems of ethnic classification and State-Minority relations in China. Moreover, there is not a hint anywhere in this book of Yi involvement in long-distance trading systems; at p. 146 it is merely observed that some Yi 'resided along important trade routes'.

I mention all this not merely to force some Burma relevance upon this book and its subject but also because the matter has its more direct bearing upon Burma Studies; for, it seems to me unfortunate that in all the literature on the 'tribal' minorities in Burma there is not a mention of their well-institutionalised involvement in large-scope commercial trade, with the exception, of course, of the material on Kachin involvement in the jade mines and their trade (see now Sadan 2005, passim). This in spite of the well-known fact that so many of the northern 'tribal' groups (Lahu, Lisu, Akha, etc., as well as Kachin) were long-term clients of the various old Shan States, the Shan themselves having long been major players in the crops-border trade. There is an interesting sidelight on this regarding the Yi. The Yi share with many other Lolo-Burmese speaking peoples of Southwestern China, a religious system centred on practitioners called bimo. It is quite clear (I write now as a linguist specialized in Southeast Asian languages) that this word is a Shan loanword, reflecting the patron-client relationship between the Shan and these other peoples. At p. 119, it is pointed out for the Northern Yi, far from direct adjacency to any Shan,

that the second syllable of bimo means 'a person of knowledge or accomplishment', which is exactly the meaning of mo in Shan, as in the Shan word for a professional spirit-doctor, phiimo - from the Shan verb mo, 'to know how to'. And the second syllable is given the Yi folk etymology of 'to recite or chant a scripture', which they certainly do; but it is more likely that the whole word is originally Shan, since the first syllable of phiimo means spirit. If this is right, then the Shan cultural influence (almost certainly via long-distance trade) extends farther north than hitherto realised, though maybe only by the spread of ideas rather than actual people.

Anyhow, the book is the result of an International Conference on the Yi in 1995, held at Seattle, Washington, USA. It consists of an Introduction, by the editor, Professor Harrell of the University of Washington, and sixteen chapters, of which, perhaps, the most interesting for scholars of Southeast Asia are those of Part II (Nuosu Society in Liangshan), not least Chapter 3, by Ann Hill and Eric Diehl on lineage organization, and Chapter 4 by Lu Hiui on cross-cousin marriage - these institutions found widely amongst Burma tribal peoples also; and Chapter 12, in Part IV (The Yi Today), by David Bradley, on language policy but really on Yi linguistics.

Apart from all this, the larger relevance of the book for Burma scholars is that it constitutes an exceptional extended study of the historical and current politics of ethnicity as a phenomenon of inter group relations, on which this reviewer began writing regarding Burma in 1967.

F. K. L. Chit Hlaing
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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RECENT DISSERTATIONS

Ritual space and the Making of a Locality. Contribution to the Ethnography of the Arakanese: A Population of Contemporary Burma

Alexandra Demersan
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris
Defended 22 December 2005

Members of the jury

Bernot Denise
Brac de la Perriere Benedicte
Galey Jean-Claude, Director
Goudineau Yves
Robinne François

Abstract:

This doctoral dissertation deals with the Arakanese, a Tibeto-Burman population of Western Burma, it explores the significance of territory as a constituent of this Buddhist society. In the first and contextual, I lay bare the peculiarity of Arakan State consisting of the predominance of water, and present the very field of my research observation: Mrauk U, capital city of the last Arakanese kingdom, still rich of its historical legacy. With regard to this legacy, I am interested in analyzing notably the founding rites as well as the current politics of the Burmese government to promote tourism. The ethnography of the ceremonies related to events such as funerals, noviciate, marriage, underscores two facts: on the one hand, that social relations are heavily based on membership to a residential unit; on the other hand, that the village, as a basic social unit, holds together the group. The cohesiveness of the group shows itself clearly during the ritual ceremonies. Indeed, annual worships of the spirits (nat) reveal the value conferred on locality and territory in the Arakanese society. Also this dissertation sets out how the ritual configuration of the territory is inscribed into several well-ordered units, which are included in a larger Buddhist cosmology. Finally, this study underlines that the legend of the Buddha's Mahamuni Image - the ancient palladium of the Arakanese kingship - is the founding and federating myth of the Arakanese society that maintains it via the Buddhist statuary. By doing so, this society perpetuates the sacred space of this locality.

Gender, History and Modernity: Representing Women in Twentieth-Century Colonial Burma

Chie Ikeya
Cornell University
January 2006

Abstract:

This dissertation documents and describes a conspicuous phenomenon that occurred during a formative period that defined Burma's transition from a premodern polity to a modern nation-state but has eluded scholarly inquiry: the emergence of a popular discourse concerning "Burmese women" and, in the 1930s, the explosion of censorious and misogynistic representations of "Burmese women." What interests motivated these discourses and representations? Why were there no parallel discourses concerning men or masculinity? Through an interwoven analysis of official and popular English and Burmese sources such as magazines, advertisements, newspaper editorials and serialized fiction, it revises the dominant historiography on colonial Burma that reifies and overly emphasizes the significance of ethnicity and is principally concerned with the identification of the origins of the Burmese nationalist movement. This dissertation redresses in particular the occlusion of women. It examines the colonial educational and textual practices, institutions, and media through which gender-specific identities were ascribed, challenged or appropriated by men and women and draws attention to the multiple connections between gender and both sides of the colonial struggle, colonial and anti-colonial. It argues that Burma's encounter with modern colonial rule produced a set of conditions in which colonizing and colonized women and men in unequal relations of power co-authored powerfully and essentially gendered discourses and representations of colonialism, modernization and nationalism—gendered discourses that in turn fashioned gender-specific cultural stereotypes that have long defined and constituted academic and popular knowledge about Burma. The conditions I attend to include the large influx of single male immigrants from England and British India upon the annexation of Burma; the establishment of secular government-funded educational institutions; the formation of new cultural media such as newspapers, magazines, cartoons and films; and the centrality of "the status of women" to the colonial civilizing mission and indigenous elite projects of modernization. This dissertation examines the complex and sometimes contradictory effects these conditions had on the status of women in colonial Burma and on the emergence of a popular discourse on "Burmese women," which became a privileged idiom for articulating, interpreting, and discussing new and old social inequities.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Chie Ikeya majored in Asian Studies at Cornell University, where she received her B.A. in 1999. She began her graduate studies at Cornell University immediately after completing her undergraduate degree and earned a Ph.D. in History in 2006. She currently holds a Rockefeller Postdoctoral Fellowship with the Project for Critical Asian Studies at the Simpson Center for the Humanities, University of Washington.

The Prison in Pre-Colonial Burma

Thet Thet Wintin
School of Oriental and African Studies
2006

Abstract:

This thesis is concerned with the prison in pre-colonial Burma. To secure a fuller understanding of the imprisonment culture in pre-colonial Burma, it is essential to explore the royal orders, court manuals, and religious teachings. The use of these various sources also makes it possible to explore the cultural, religious, and philosophical practices of punishment in pre-modern Burma. What was the purpose of confinement in pre-colonial Burma? Where was the prison erected? Who were the prisoners? What was the nature of imprisonment, and what was the impact on Burmese society? These are the questions that this thesis tries to answer.

Generally, punishment in pre-colonial Burma commonly involved not confinement but amputation, tattooing, enslavement, exile, or execution. Certainly, at the beginning of the Burmese dynasties, the prison was used for detaining debtors, as well as the accused awaiting trial, sentencing, or punishment. At the same time, the prison was largely used for confining political prisoners and the kings' personal enemies. At first glance, the prison in pre-colonial Burma seems to be a repulsive institution. But the arrival of the British in Lower Burma in the early nineteenth century forced significant changes in the prison under the Burmese kings, and these attempts transformed the prison into a place of confinement as punishment. Each chapter in the thesis focuses not only on prison administration and the approach to punishment that underlined it but also on the experiences of the prisoners and the prison staff. The first parts of the thesis provide descriptions of the prison, the prison buildings and the nature of the criminal administration. The thesis considers other types of punishment which involved the control of the movements of released convicts and

the effects of these punishments on their daily lives. The transformation of the prison under the kings, related to the arrival of the British, is considered in the last chapter.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

"Grappling with Independence: Burmese Culture, Media, and Daily Life in the U Nu Period, 1948-1962"

Paper proposals are invited for a workshop to be held in London at SOAS in September 2007 (specific dates TBA) on Burmese culture and society during the first fourteen years of independence (including the caretaker government period). The Nu government's inability to hold the union together, corruption, and restrictions on civil liberties, on the one hand, and the continuity of colonial-era elites, on the other, have encouraged an increasingly negative appraisal of the performance of the Nu government in the historiography on post-independence Burma (Myanmar). How the new regime responded to the numerous social and cultural challenges it faced raises questions about how everyday Burmese viewed, and reacted to, the transformations brought by independence (and the degree to which -and in what areas-- transformation actually occurred). New state policies regarding education, national culture, administration, and the economy had an important impact on society, but how they impacted popular culture and were reflected in film, newspapers, radio programmes and literature (including literary magazines) is in need of comprehensive reexamination. Papers that explore aspects of daily life during the period such as crime, red light districts, writers' associations, the cinema, medicine, the role of women in local political and social organizations, and Burmanization are especially encouraged. While these topics may appear at first sight to favour the urban context, the purpose of this workshop is also to determine just how far popular media helped to link cultural and social developments in urban areas with those in the countryside. Papers should consider these topics within the context of state censorship and other policies intended to control aspects of daily life outside of national politics.

Those interested in participating should submit a paper title and an abstract of 150-200 words by September 1, 2006, for review by the selection committee, to.

Dr. Michael W. Charney, Department of History, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, United Kingdom. Email: mc62@soas.ac.uk