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## **COLONIAL BURMA AND POPULAR WESTERN CULTURE: AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY**

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## COLONIAL BURMA AND POPULAR WESTERN CULTURE: AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY

### Abstract

*Over the centuries, images of Burma in the Western imagination have been remarkably consistent. At the broadest level, they have emphasised Burma's remoteness, strangeness and harshness, or offered a much more idealised, romantic view of the country and its people. Within these two broad schools there have been a number of recurring motifs that have helped confirm the idea of Burma's dualistic nature, and contributed to its mixed reputation. These tropes too have proven to be surprisingly resilient, the result in large part of their repeated use in many vehicles of popular culture. By providing memorable, if selective and commodified, glimpses of colonial Burma and the Burmese, they have helped to reinforce stereotypes and strengthen clichés, many of which survive to the present day.<sup>1</sup>*

Burma — land of mystery, of gilded Buddhas and almond-eyed dancing girls, of patient elephants piling teak, of shaven, yellow-robed priests, smouldering incense, and the silver tinkle of temple bells. The jungle — teeming with tropical life and potential death.

Otis Adelbert Kline  
'Tam, Son of the Tiger'  
*Weird Tales*, June-December 1931.

Burma's modern history has been one of continual, and often dramatic, change.<sup>2</sup> Since 1824, when Great Britain opened its campaign of conquest and annexation, the country has been wracked by four major conflicts and dozens of 'small' wars.<sup>3</sup> It has experienced almost every kind of government, from an absolute monarchy through different colonial administrations, a parliamentary system and various military regimes, to the current 'disciplined democracy'.<sup>4</sup> As the country has changed, so have its economic fortunes. Also, Burma is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, a major factor in recurring social tensions.<sup>5</sup> Yet, for all this flux and diversity, popular perceptions of Burma in the West have been remarkably consistent. The mental pictures of the country formed in Europe, North America and the white settler colonies from the 16<sup>th</sup> century

onwards seemed to take root in the public consciousness and flourish there.<sup>6</sup> Even when more information about Burma was available and Western audiences became more sophisticated, these perceptions were hard to shift. Many survive to the present day.

These enduring images developed over many years and in many ways. Memoirs and official reports played a part, as did the intellectual products of social elites, such as literature and high art. However, a more potent source of impressions about Burma in Western countries were the vehicles of popular culture, notably newspapers and mass entertainments, such as songs, plays and movies, as staged in drawing rooms, music halls and theatres.<sup>7</sup> This broad category can be extended to include a wide range of cultural artefacts often dismissed as ephemera or colourful collectibles, such as pulp magazines, comics, posters, postcards and trading cards. To an extent still unrecognised by many academic observers, these manifestations of popular commercial culture, together with *objets de curiosite* exhibited in public venues, complemented the pictures painted by the mainstream media. By providing memorable, if selective and commodified, glimpses of Burma and the Burmese, they helped to reinforce stereotypes and strengthen clichés about their subjects throughout the Western world.

By surveying such sources, it is possible to identify a number of persistent patterns and themes that have characterised popular perceptions of Burma over the centuries. At the broadest level, they reveal two approaches. The first emphasised Burma's remoteness, strangeness and harshness, while the second offered a much more idealised, romantic view of the country and its people. At times, the two schools were combined, with Burma being presented in terms of stark contrasts, between the good and the bad, the soft and the hard, the light and the dark. They were seen as two sides of the same coin. Considered together, however, they offered vivid pictures of Burma that even now live in the minds of many Westerners. Within these two broad themes there were also a number of recurring motifs that, in their own ways, helped to confirm the idea of Burma's dualistic nature, and contributed to its mixed reputation. These tropes too have proven to be surprisingly consistent and resilient, although inevitably the tourist literature and coffee table books have favoured the quaint and picturesque over other perspectives.<sup>8</sup>

Given the wide range of factors contributing to enduring images of Burma in the West, it may help to break down these pictures into their main elements and, by citing representative examples, identify some of the sources that have contributed to their creation, impact and durability. For heuristic purposes, these elements can be listed under five headings; Burma's exotic reputation, its physical geography, the role of Burmese women, Burma's culture and economy, and Britain's impact on traditional Burmese society. Finally, it is worth looking briefly at descriptions of the country during and after the Second World War, to note continuities and contrasts with the colonial period.<sup>9</sup> For the conflict in the China-Burma-India (CBI) theatre from 1942 to 1945 not only thrust Burma into the consciousness of millions of people in the West, but it revived and reinforced many old images of the country.<sup>10</sup> In describing how Burma has come to be viewed, under all these headings, emphasis will be given to sources drawn from the

popular culture of Great Britain but, albeit to a lesser extent, other parts of the world have reflected similar patterns.

### **Exotic Burma**

The baseline for popular perceptions of Burma as an exotic and exciting place was established early in contacts between the West and the ‘mysterious Orient’.<sup>11</sup>

From its ‘discovery’ by Western adventurers and traders in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Burma tended to be portrayed in dramatic terms.<sup>12</sup> In their ship’s logs and private journals, explorers and traders emphasized the sensational and the shocking, such as Burma’s reputedly fabulous wealth. Travelers never tired of describing the country’s shrines ‘filled with images of massy gold and gems’.<sup>13</sup> One merchant from Bologna who visited Burma in 1505 wrote that the king of Pegu, in Lower Burma:

wears more rubies on him than the value of a very large city, and he wears them on all his toes. And on his legs he wears certain great rings of gold, all full of the most beautiful rubies; also his arms and ears are full.<sup>14</sup>

Ralph Fitch, the first Englishman to visit Burma, in 1586, was also impressed by the king of Pegu’s ‘treasure wonderfull rich’:

He hath houses full of golde and silver, and bringeth in often, but spendeth very little, and hath the mines of rubies and sapphires, and spinelles.<sup>15</sup>

Precious stones were said to be so abundant that Burmese warriors used rubies as ‘bullets’ in their blowguns and embedded them under their skin before battle to make themselves invulnerable.<sup>16</sup> While sometimes dismissed as mere travelers’ tales, such stories were given wide circulation and were accepted as accurate by many in the West.

Another topic much remarked upon by early visitors to Burma was its inhabitants’ sexual freedom. There were reports, for example, that Burmese women went about ‘in almost complete nudity to entice the men and to keep them away from sodomy’.<sup>17</sup> Other travelers, like the Dutch merchant John van Linschoten in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, described the Burmese custom of offering Western visitors women as ‘temporary wives’, for their amusement and comfort.<sup>18</sup> In 1795, the British envoy Michael Symes wrote that:

The lower class of Burmans makes no scruple of selling their daughters, and even their wives, to foreigners, who come to pass a temporary residence among them. It reflects no disgrace on any of the parties, and the woman is not dishonoured by the connection.<sup>19</sup>

The idea of readily available Burmese women was a powerful one that kept reappearing in books and letters. In the 1826 edition of the popular British guide *The Modern Traveller*, for example, it was stated that:

Unfortunately, however, for the perpetuity of conjugal felicity, in no country, perhaps, is the marriage contract regarded with so little respect, or maintained with so little propriety, as in Birmah.<sup>20</sup>

Other Europeans described what they saw as the promiscuity of Burmese women. After spending two years in the Burmese capital of Ava, for example, Thomas Trant wrote in 1827 that ‘Chastity, in the sense we understand the word, is but little known’.<sup>21</sup> Seventy years later, the British tourist Gwendolen Trench Gascoigne hinted at the uninhibited behaviour of Burmese women when she wrote that ‘Utterly unlike their miserable Mahomedan and Hindoo sisters, they enjoy absolute liberty — a liberty of which, if rumour prove true, they make ample use’.<sup>22</sup>

Burmese men were not spared this kind of prurient attention. The Venetian Nicolo di Conti, for example, wrote after a visit to Pegu around 1435 that the local men inserted small bells under the skin of their penises ‘to satisfy the wantonness of the women’. He added that:

The members of some men stretch way down between their legs so that when they walk they ring out and may be heard.<sup>23</sup>

This practice was associated so closely with Burma that, when adopted by the Chinese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was known as *mian ling*, or ‘Burmese bells’.<sup>24</sup> The Florentine merchant Francesco Carletti, who circumnavigated the globe between 1594 and 1602, claimed that the use of penis inserts was ordered by the ‘Queen of Pegu’, not only to satisfy Burmese women but also to discourage ‘the practicing of venery in illicit parts of the body even with men’.<sup>25</sup> That subject too kept cropping up in early European accounts of Burma. Ralph Fitch, for example, wrote that the inserts were invented because:

... they should not abuse the male sexe. For in times past all those Countries were so given to that Villanie that they were very scarce of people’.<sup>26</sup>

Probably drawing on the same accounts, a number of later visitors, like the Englishman Alexander Hamilton in 1727, suggested that Burmese men were ‘addicted to sodomy’.<sup>27</sup> The topos of ‘Eastern sodomy’ occasionally surfaced in other reports, usually to highlight Burma’s bizarre customs and ‘un-Christian’ decadence.<sup>28</sup>

As foreign contacts grew, and Burma came to be visited more often by traders, officials and missionaries, memoirs and travelogues grew in range and number. Particularly after the fall of Mandalay in 1885, tourists too began to publish descriptions of their travels. Thomas Cook opened an office in Rangoon in 1891 and began promoting visits to this ‘charming’ and ‘little explored’ country, a journey made easier by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.<sup>29</sup> Each year, Cook’s issued a *Burma Pamphlet* which was ‘circulated throughout the world in order to give information concerning the province to intending

visitors'.<sup>30</sup> Descriptions of Burma flowing from this heightened level of interest usually focused on the unusual and unfamiliar;

Burma combines so much: the glory of the East; the mystery of the unknown, in its strange tribes and races as yet but half understood, even by those who have studied them most; the fascination of nature untamed; and the comfort of travelling under British rule.<sup>31</sup>

As Burma became better known, publications about it became more comprehensive, accurate and reflective. However, whether they promoted the country as savage, romantic, or both, most works continued to focus on the exotic and to encourage outlandish ideas which were eagerly consumed by credulous audiences 'back home' in the West.

In this regard, Burma's fauna and flora were particular sources of interest. The country teemed with wild animals and beautiful birds, and was the home to many species of plants unknown to botanists and horticulturists in Europe and America. They all attracted the attention of 'sportsmen', ornithologists and plant hunters, keen to take home evidence of their travels in the Burmese wilderness. A number wrote books about their adventures, adding to the colony's reputation as a natural wonderland awaiting the attention of 'civilised' white men armed with high-powered rifles, fishing rods and garden tools.<sup>32</sup> This subject was also of interest for another reason. As Jonathan Saha has written;

According to imperial writings, the Burmese were too close to animals, both physically and emotionally. It was claimed that some Burmese people had innate connections to animals, notably elephant drivers with their elephants. British writers were also intrigued but disgusted by what they deemed to be inappropriate interactions with animals, recounting apocryphal tales of women breast-feeding orphaned non-human mammals.<sup>33</sup>

In 1882, for example, the British official James Scott described a sacred white elephant that was 'suckled by women' in its youth.<sup>34</sup> A German visitor to Upper Burma wrote in 1886 that, due to the high status accorded to such creatures, Burmese women considered it an honour to nurse small white elephants.<sup>35</sup>

To audiences in the West, particularly in Britain, such accounts appeared to provide insights into the nature of a country that was foreign in every sense of the word.

Another recurring theme in stories about Burma around this time was Britain's efforts to stamp out armed bandits, or *dacoits*. Following the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885), remnants of the defeated Burmese army, criminal gangs and other disaffected elements roamed the countryside, waging guerrilla warfare against the occupying forces and threatening the local population. Denied any political status by the colonial administration, they were the targets of a long 'pacification' campaign by soldiers and military policemen.<sup>36</sup> Through stories and pictures in journals like *Navy and Army*

*Illustrated* and *The London Illustrated News*, dacoits soon entered the imagination of Western readers.<sup>37</sup> In the 1887 musical revue *The Blue Bells of Scotland*, for example, the two heroes travel to Burma where they fight off a horde of dacoits.<sup>38</sup> Rudyard Kipling's fictional Private Mulvaney fought dacoits in 'The Taking of Lungtungpen'.<sup>39</sup> In *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu*, published in 1913, the eponymous criminal genius (who was active in Burma) employed dacoits to attack his enemies back in London.<sup>40</sup> The 1946 children's story *Drummer Boy of Burma* described a youngster's contribution to the defence of an isolated British garrison threatened by 'them blood-thirsty devils'.<sup>41</sup>

Even after three Anglo-Burmese Wars, however, and the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886 (which gave Britain control over the entire country), few people in the West knew very much about it. If they had heard its name at all, it was most likely in connection with biological rarities like Burma's 'hairy families', or the dwarf Smaun Sing Hpoo, who was described on postcards as 'the smallest, most perfectly formed man in the world'.<sup>42</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both caused sensations in Western Europe and the United States. Yet another source of fascination was the 'giraffe-neck' Padaung women of eastern Burma, who wore brass rings to elongate their necks.<sup>43</sup> Like Toung Talaung, the supposedly 'rare' and 'sacred' white elephant obtained from Burma by Phineas Taylor Barnum in 1883, and other Burmese elephants acquired later, these women were put on display by circuses in Britain and the US.<sup>44</sup> The posters advertising such attractions claimed that viewing them had educational value, but they were essentially sold to the public as freaks.<sup>45</sup> Another subject considered worthy of comment around this time was the spicy side dish known as *ngapi*, which a number of visitors to Burma considered 'the rankest filth', 'perfectly unbearable to the European'.<sup>46</sup> Kipling was told by a compatriot that it was 'fish pickled which ought to have been buried long ago'.<sup>47</sup>

As one historian has observed, accounts of unusual people, animals and practices were 'no doubt a way of portraying Burma as a strange and backward place'.<sup>48</sup> It was a theme also pursued in popular literature.

During the 1920s and 1930s, stories in pulp fiction magazines and 'dime novels' in Britain and the US promoted an unashamedly Orientalist view of Burma that emphasised its 'otherness' and encouraged fanciful notions about the country and its people.<sup>49</sup> For example, a story by Arthur Zagat published in *Dime Mystery Magazine* in 1924 titled 'Midnight Fangs' featured Burmese 'tiger-women'. In a 1929 story called 'Up Irrawaddy Way', Edgar Gardner described giant man-eating plants and flesh-consuming fungi.<sup>50</sup> In 1931, Otis Kline wrote a six-part serial for *Weird Tales* titled 'Tam, Son of the Tiger'.<sup>51</sup> With nods to Kipling's *Jungle Book* and Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan stories, it was about a boy abducted by a tiger and raised by a monk.<sup>52</sup> He later rescued a princess from giant, blue, dinosaur-riding creatures with four arms who lived in caves beneath Burma.<sup>53</sup> In 1932, a contribution to *Oriental Stories* magazine described the adventures of a 'jungle girl' in the 'devilishly dangerous' Wa country of northern Burma.<sup>54</sup> Burma's gemstones continued to fascinate Western audiences, as indicated by J.S. Fletcher's 1933 novelette 'The Burma Ruby'.<sup>55</sup> In 1940, Kline collaborated with E. Hoffman Price to write a story



for *Weird Tales* called ‘Spotted Satan’, about a were-leopard that preyed on Burmese teak workers.<sup>56</sup> There were many other pieces written in the same vein.

Even the more serious illustrated magazines available at the time insisted on portraying Burma as an exotic place full of rare flora and fauna, inhabited by simple, often peculiar, ‘natives’ and adventurous white men. In 1909, for example, an article in the American, but internationally distributed, *National Geographic Magazine* stated that;

Few parts of the wide empire of Britain offer such a tempting array of features which are attractive alike to the ordinary globe-trotter, to the naturalist, the anthropologist, or the hunter of big game, as does Burma.<sup>57</sup>

Articles in later issues of the same magazine looked at ‘Untoured Burma’ and ‘Strange Tribes in the Shan States of Burma’.<sup>58</sup> The accompanying photographs highlighted the country’s dramatic landscape, unique architecture and unusual inhabitants. In 1923, *Asia* magazine published a series of photographs of the ‘Shy Karens of Lower Burma’.<sup>59</sup> In 1933, *Wide World* magazine offered a story by the well-known British plant hunter Frank Kingdon Ward about ‘The Unknown Triangle’ of the upper Irrawaddy River. Typically, the article began: ‘Irrawaddy! There is music and romance in the very name’.<sup>60</sup> *Life* magazine’s contribution to public knowledge about Burma before the Second World War was an illustrated article about the festivities accompanying the cremation of a senior Buddhist monk.<sup>61</sup> It was all heady stuff for the average reader in the ‘civilized’ West.

From 1913, when the silent film *A Maid of Mandalay* was released in the US, these colourful images were greatly strengthened by movies.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps more than any other medium of mass communication, they helped shape the public imagination of Western populations and their attitudes towards Burma and the Burmese.<sup>63</sup>

The early movies set in Burma tended to portray it as an unhealthy tropical sinkhole, populated mainly by criminals, ‘fallen women’ and the outcasts of empire. For example, in 1926 Lon Chaney starred in *Road to Mandalay*, ‘a lurid silent thriller about prostitution and murder’.<sup>64</sup> The old royal capital featured again in *Mandalay*, which was released in 1934. This was a torrid melodrama in which a Russian refugee, abandoned by her gun-running lover, becomes a prostitute in a Rangoon nightclub. *The Girl from Mandalay*, released in 1936, revolved around a marriage between the jilted manager of a teak plantation and an opportunistic nightclub singer.<sup>65</sup> So negative were the images of white people conjured up by such films that, in the minds of local officials, they risked damaging European prestige, on which the small colonial administration depended to maintain its psychological dominance, and thus political control, of the country.<sup>66</sup> Outside Burma, however, these plots were readily accepted as the norm and during the inter-war years helped fix in the popular imagination a rather distorted picture of the country and its inhabitants, both foreign and local.

Burma's 'otherness', as depicted in these and other movies, was often highlighted by exaggerated descriptions of the country's sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh, but always spectacular, landscape.

### **The Physical Setting**

During the colonial period, two contrasting images of Burma's geography became firmly imprinted on the minds of Western audiences.

Large tracts of Burma consisted of cultivated land, tropical or temperate forests and semi-desert. In their own ways, each appealed to the eye and to the imagination of foreign observers, who waxed eloquent about the fertile and picturesque countryside, with its bucolic vistas of emerald green rice paddies, swaying toddy palms and glorious 'Eastern' sunsets. This view was encouraged by writers like Rudyard Kipling who, after his brief visit to Burma in 1889, described the scene below 'the old Moulmein pagoda':

turning me around, [I] looked upon a view of water, island, broad river, fair grazing ground, and belted wood that made me rejoice that I was alive. The hillside below me and above me was ablaze with pagodas ... Far above my head there was a faint tinkle, as of golden bells, and a talking of the breezes in the tops of the toddy palms.<sup>67</sup>

In countless books and magazines, in prose, poetry, paintings and photographs, the Burmese countryside was portrayed along similar lines. In such scenes, replete with golden pagodas and quaint thatched villages, industrious 'natives' in colourful costumes ploughed their fields, pursued their handicrafts and drove two-wheeled bullock carts, enthusiastically described by the London-based *Illustrated Missionary News* as 'one of the prettiest conveyances in the East'.<sup>68</sup>

One of the most widely read books about Burma published during the colonial period was *Burma Painted and Described* by the artist Robert Kelly. It was commissioned by the publisher A. & C. Black to obtain 'an accurate visible reproduction of what travellers might see when they ventured to exotic destinations such as Burma ...'.<sup>69</sup> It was released in 1905 with 73 coloured plates.<sup>70</sup> Four years later, a cheaper edition was published under the title *Burma*, reproducing 12 paintings.<sup>71</sup> Kelly's pictures of Burmese life were 'shaped by the desire to see it through the possibility of framed pictures'.<sup>72</sup> They thus reflected the tastes of his prospective clients back in Britain, and showed a country that was not only interesting and charming but also, as the current fashion demanded, 'picturesque'.<sup>73</sup> As Stephen Keck has written, Kelly 'offered a portrait which was appealing — and thus more marketable — than faithful visual description ever could be'.<sup>74</sup> Also, following in the footsteps of travel writers like Alice Hart, V. Scott O'Connor and Geraldine Mitton, Kelly described Burmese life through scenes that told a story but were devoid of any serious political content.<sup>75</sup> It was an idealised view that found a receptive metropolitan audience.

Not all descriptions of Burma, however, were so favourable. Adventure stories and movies tended to focus on the country's 'steaming' jungles, 'teeming with tropical life and potential death'.<sup>76</sup> For example, 'Captain' W.E. Johns, author of the popular 'Biggles' books for children, set seven of his plots in Burma.<sup>77</sup> In *Biggles Flies Again*, first published in 1934, he described an encounter in the 'leech-infested swamps' of the Irrawaddy delta with 'bloated foot-long centipedes', freshwater crocodiles and 'a snake of enormous dimensions'.<sup>78</sup> In *Biggles and the Lost Sovereigns*, Johns described the mangrove swamps found in the Mergui Archipelago:

If the stench of slime and putrefying vegetable matter, with its oily scum and the bubbles of gas it discharges, is nauseating, the reptiles and insects that make it their home, preying on each other, are creatures of a nightmare.<sup>79</sup>

Such places were invariably accompanied by the 'noisome stench of corruption', 'an atmosphere of sinister foreboding', 'spectral wraiths of mist', and other intimations of unseen menace.<sup>80</sup> The tropical climate was always 'sticky' and 'oppressive' and the annual monsoon was full of 'seething fury'.<sup>81</sup> Purple prose was not uncommon in other books by Johns, but when he described Burma he gave his imagination free rein.<sup>82</sup>

A similar approach was taken by many correspondents during the Second World War. Unsurprisingly, they emphasized the bitter struggle between the Allies and the Japanese, under 'appalling conditions', in what Selwyn Speight of the *Sydney Morning Herald* characterized in 1943 as a 'merciless country' with 'some of the most terrible mountains in the world'.<sup>83</sup> In both their news dispatches and private letters, war correspondents often drew on cinematic images to describe what they saw in Burma, such as 'fantastic Hollywood-like deluges' of rain.<sup>84</sup> Alluding to the 1940 movie *Moon Over Burma*, Speight wrote in 1944 that the jungle he encountered in Burma was:

... real honest-to-God Dorothy Lamour stuff ... tall trees shooting up into the sky and blotting out the sun; innumerable creepers hanging about like untidy cobwebs; undergrowth so thick that you have to cut your way through ... The weird collection of animals that wander through Hollywood jungle movies do exist too.<sup>85</sup>

In a story for *The Argus* in 1944, another Australian war correspondent described Burma during the wet season as 'a slimy treacherous hell'.<sup>86</sup>

These were only the hardships that could be seen. Others were invisible, like the diseases that throughout the colonial period took a terrible toll on foreigners and locals alike. For example, during the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-6), 15,000 of the 40,000 men who served in the expeditionary forces died. Only 4% of these losses occurred in battle.<sup>87</sup> Illnesses like malaria, cholera, smallpox, dysentery and bubonic plague were major challenges for the colonial authorities.<sup>88</sup> Kipling's 1896 poem 'Cholera Camp', for example, was written with both India and Burma in mind.<sup>89</sup> Between 1905 and 1940, there were 165,400 plague deaths reported.<sup>90</sup> Some early observers suggested that

Burma's slow population growth was the result of its attachment to Buddhism, an opinion echoed by a few US anthropologists in the 1960s.<sup>91</sup> However, as Judith Richell has explained, it was more likely to be a combination of the unhealthy environment and malnutrition.<sup>92</sup> Medical standards gradually improved, but these issues never went away. In 1944 alone, the Allies counted 250,000 casualties from sickness, most suffering from malaria and dysentery.<sup>93</sup> They fared better than their fellow-servicemen in 1824-6, but Burma's reputation as a dangerous place was confirmed.

At the same time as Burma was being painted in lurid colours for Western audiences, however, and its diverse physical challenges emphasized in prose and photographs, the obverse image of a gentler, more enticing country never entirely went away. This duality was acknowledged by the Australian war correspondent George Johnston, who wrote in his 1947 war memoir *Journey Through Tomorrow* that:

it is a rueful thing to me, that the only memories I have of Burma are memories of war. I know nothing of the real Burma, this lovely, placid land of charming, beautiful people, the Burma that the Burmese call *Shwe Daw Pyee*, "the Golden Land".<sup>94</sup>

Johnston's reference to the 'real' Burma harked back to softer, more romantic notions of the country which had become fixed in the popular imagination before the Second World War. It did not matter that the picture painted was a simplistic, two-dimensional one. Indeed, that made it easier to comprehend, and remember. It was a classic case of what Edward Said referred to as 'imaginative geography', that is, the poetic endowment of a place that exceeded what was empirically known about it.<sup>95</sup>

### **The Role of Women**

Perhaps nothing epitomized the mixed Western attitudes towards Burma more than the way in which the country's women were portrayed, based on both direct experience and hearsay. For, as noted above, from the earliest times Burmese women made a strong impression on foreign observers. Even after acknowledging the perennial fascination Western men seemed to have with Asian women during this historical period, the quintessential 'Burma girl' seemed to cast a special kind of spell.<sup>96</sup> This helped to ensure that she featured prominently not only in Western literature and art, but also in many vehicles of popular culture.

Kipling only spent three days in Burma in 1889, but he was struck by the beauty of the local women, particularly one girl he saw sitting on the steps of a pagoda at Moulmein. She inspired his immensely popular ballad 'Mandalay'.<sup>97</sup> It first appeared in the literary weekly *The Scots Observer* on 21 June 1890.<sup>98</sup> It was later included in the collection *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses*, published in London in 1892. Its opening lines resonated deeply within the Western psyche:

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,

There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;  
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say:  
'Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!' <sup>99</sup>

It is difficult to overestimate the impact this particular work had on popular perceptions of Burma and its women. In the years that followed, the poem became very well known in Britain and the US, and was familiar to many further afield, particularly in the English-speaking colonies. In the half century that followed its first appearance, it not only inspired more than 180 adaptations and imitations, both in verse and music, but it helped shape Western images of Burma and Burmese society in ways that still resonate today. <sup>100</sup>

The pictorial covers of the sheet music that carried these tunes invariably depicted young couples surrounded by the usual props of pagodas, palm trees and moonlight. In addition to 'Mandalay', song lyrics also included references to places with evocative names like 'Rangoon' and 'the Irrawaddy'. Several plays and musical revues catered to the public's apparently insatiable demand for such plots and settings. <sup>101</sup> This taste was also met by paintings, prints and posters. For example, after a visit to Burma in 1908-9, the British painter Gerald Kelly cemented this romantic ideal with his landscapes and pictures of demure young Burmese dancers. He was further inspired by a chance meeting with a Shan 'princess' in London in 1931. His paintings of this woman, which it must be said were more accurate in their depictions of Burmese native dress than some of the sheet music and trading cards of the time, were very popular. <sup>102</sup> Since the 1930s, over 50,000 prints have been sold of just three portraits in this series. <sup>103</sup> Revealingly, the writer Somerset Maugham said of Kelly's Burma paintings that he had 'given us the character of the East as we of our generation see it'. <sup>104</sup>

Burmese women were also noted for another reason. Unlike their sisters in other Asian countries, they were seen as remarkably independent. There were frequent comparisons with less tolerant cultures and approving references to the fact that in Buddhist Burma women did not have to submit to practices such as *sati* or *purdah*. <sup>105</sup> For example, the American Baptist missionary Ann Judson wrote in 1823 that 'the sexes have equally free intercourse as in Europe'. <sup>106</sup> In 1878, Charles Forbes wrote that:

Though the inferiority of the softer sex is a point that has never been disputed, in Burma women enjoy a much freer and higher position than elsewhere in the East; indeed, in some matters they have attained rights that their sisters in England are still seeking to obtain, or have only lately gained. <sup>107</sup>

The British civil servant J.G. Scott (writing in 1882 under the pseudonym 'Shway Yoe') felt that 'Burmese maidens ... enjoy a freer and happier position than in any other Eastern country, and in some respects are better off even than women in England'. <sup>108</sup> As Chie Ikeya and others have pointed out, the situation was more complicated than that, but most observers agreed that Burmese women stood out from others in many ways. <sup>109</sup>

For example, they were considered to be excellent business and household managers. Writing about ‘the Burmese wife’, for example, Scott stated that ‘she keeps the shop that is to be found in almost every house in the country towns, and usually makes far more money than the goodman himself’.<sup>110</sup> In Burma, wrote another British observer, ‘few husbands would dare to enter into any mercantile arrangements without the aid or advice of their wives’.<sup>111</sup> Other foreign visitors commented on the dominant role that Burmese women played in the local markets and bazaars. In his 1888 short story ‘Georgie Porgie’, for example, Kipling noted that:

No race, men say who know, produces such good wives and heads of households as the Burmese.<sup>112</sup>

In a report to the University of Chicago in 1907, Alleyne Ireland put it a little differently when he wrote of the Burmese:

Great dabblers in small mercantile ventures, they may be called (the women especially) a race of hucksters.<sup>113</sup>

Writing soon after the Second World War, the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett said of Burmese women that ‘Throughout the East they are known for their shrewdness in business dealings, their independence, and the fact of their higher social status than any of their sisters in Asia’.<sup>114</sup>

In this regard, Burmese women were sometimes contrasted with ‘ornamental’ European women, who were described by colonial men of a particular mindset as ‘a useless, expensive misery’.<sup>115</sup> In other ways too, European women suffered from comparisons with their Burmese counterparts, who were clearly attractive to chauvinistic — and other — Western men. Kipling tapped into this feeling when he wrote:

Tho’ I walks with fifty ‘ousemaids outer Chelsea to the Strand,  
An’ they talks a lot o’ lovin’, but wot do they understand?  
Beefy face an’ grubby ‘and –  
Law! Wot do they understand?  
I’ve a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land!  
On the road to Mandalay ...<sup>116</sup>

Burmese women were described by foreign observers as ‘on the whole, remarkably good-looking’, with ‘faultless figures’.<sup>117</sup> According to one local scholar, ‘Even that proud conqueror of Ava, Lord Dufferin, although he was received with dark looks by the Burmese during his state visit to Mandalay early in 1886, wrote back to a friend in England, extolling the grace, charm and freedom of Burmese women’.<sup>118</sup> In 1900, two British observers clearly shared the views of many men when they wrote that ‘I have never in my life seen more perfect figures than those possessed by the young girls’.<sup>119</sup>

At the same time, however, Burmese women were constantly being patronised and infantilised, treated as though they (and the Burmese people more generally) were ‘immature and incomplete, and therefore in need of protection and control by a more historically adult people, which is how the British thought of and represented themselves’.<sup>120</sup> This attitude was summed up by the title of a well-known book about the country called *A People at School*.<sup>121</sup> While at one level their independence and business acumen were acknowledged, Burmese women were repeatedly dismissed by officials, tourists and others as ‘happy, smiling, care-free little women’ and ‘grinning, good-humoured little maidens’.<sup>122</sup> One observer felt that ‘a more cheery little body is not to be met with on earth’.<sup>123</sup> Burmese girls were also praised for their delicate charm and ‘winsome womanhood’.<sup>124</sup> A popular 1905 postcard informed Westerners that ‘Life to them must seem a great joke, as they are always laughing’.<sup>125</sup> In 1907, a visitor to Burma described them as ‘dear coquettish little things’.<sup>126</sup> Six years later, a book argued that, in Burma, ‘the maidens are as simple and sweet as wild flowers’.<sup>127</sup>

These remarks were meant as compliments. To both men and women in Western countries, the supposedly childlike qualities of Burmese women added to their charm.

This attraction was recognised by local entrepreneurs. By the 1890s, photographers like Felice Beato and Philip Klier were turning out large numbers of prints of Burmese women, for sale to Western tourists. Almost all these photos, many of which were also used to produce postcards, were of girls standing or seated in staged poses, either in the countryside or in studios. They wore traditional dress, albeit sometimes taken out of context. For example, in one a girl in formal clothes was seated on a bicycle.<sup>128</sup> They always looked demure. As a few historians have pointed out, the modesty shown by Burmese girls was in contrast to the apparent willingness of North African women to be photographed topless for contemporary French postcards.<sup>129</sup> Paul Edmonds remarked in his 1924 book *Peacocks and Pagodas*, presumably after enquiries, that it was difficult to persuade Burmese girls to pose for artists in the nude, or even semi-naked.<sup>130</sup> Burmese conservatism and a strong personal sense of *ah-shet* (shame) made that impossible. The most risqué postcard on public sale was of ‘S.W. Monsoon Gale’, in which a local girl was depicted with her *htamein* (sarong) open to reveal her leg above the knee.<sup>131</sup>

Despite their characterization as ‘dainty damsels’ and ‘little silken ladies’, however, and the absence of risqué photographs, Burmese women retained their reputation for sexual availability.<sup>132</sup> George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India from 1895-1903, for example, was reported to have said that Burmese girls were ‘busy engaging females, with a natural aptitude for the society of men’.<sup>133</sup> This observation seems to have been based on the fact that, in 1898, about 90% of British officials in Burma had ‘temporary wives’.<sup>134</sup> In these circumstances, it is little wonder that Western audiences were regaled with stories about Burmese mistresses. In Kipling’s story ‘Georgie Porgie’, for example, a British official purchases a Burmese girl but returns home to marry a European woman.<sup>135</sup> Somerset Maugham tells a similar story in ‘Masterson’, published in 1929.<sup>136</sup> The editor and writer Frank Harris included a reference to Burmese girls in his tell-all autobiography, *My Life and Loves*, which appeared between 1922 and 1927:

There in Rangoon began for me a new series of experiences which forced me to the conclusion that the Burmese half-caste girl is one of the most fascinating in God's world, as she is one of the prettiest and best-formed; she is cheap, too.<sup>137</sup>

Burmese mistresses were the subject of several other literary works, some loosely based on personal experiences. One was Pablo Neruda's 'Widower's Tango', written after the Chilean poet's diplomatic posting to Rangoon from 1927 to 1928.<sup>138</sup> Another was George Orwell's 1934 novel *Burmese Days*.<sup>139</sup> H.E. Bates' post-war novel *The Jacaranda Tree* also featured a Westerner with a Burmese mistress.<sup>140</sup>

### **Burma's Culture and Economy**

At the same time as conservative, patriarchal societies in the West were being shocked or titillated by such stories, they were subject to wide-ranging and multi-layered campaigns by business houses and other commercial enterprises, which reinforced tailored and homogenised views of Burma through trade cards, postcards, posters and other forms of advertising.

Notwithstanding the appearance, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, of newspapers and national magazines designed for mass circulation, trade cards were a common way of promoting commercial products. They came into their own in the 1800s, when the development of lithographic printing techniques made it possible to produce cards in large numbers, and in colour. They typically had an illustration on one side and a printed text on the other, and were included in containers of produce. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many businesses began to issue series of numbered cards with specific themes. They were intended to promote sales by encouraging people to acquire complete sets, if necessary by swapping duplicates with other collectors. They came in many forms, but of particular note were the small cards used after 1875 to stiffen soft packets of cigarettes. These quickly became known as 'cigarette cards'. By the 1920s, card trading and collecting was an international phenomenon, with millions of cards being produced annually, in many countries around the world.<sup>141</sup> Not all were in the West.<sup>142</sup>

As already noted, some of these cards made reference to Burma, either as part of a discrete series, or as a subject in its own right.<sup>143</sup> For example, one large trade card produced by the Singer Manufacturing Company in 1892 depicted three Burmese women sitting around a sewing machine, a device that the card stated was introduced to Burma in 1874. A large trade card, issued around the same time by the Chicago coffee company W.F. McLaughlin, showed a Burmese girl in formal court dress. McLaughlin also issued a card showing 'devotees' throwing themselves under the feet of a sacred white elephant, in what was probably intended to be Burma.<sup>144</sup> All three cards reflected high production values. Several series of cards included illustrations of Burma's colonial crest and the flags flown before and after its annexation by Britain. Others showed medals issued to British and Indian servicemen who had fought in Burma.<sup>145</sup> A series of cigarette cards on colonial regiments depicted a member of the Burma Rifles while another, about colonial



police forces, showed a Burmese policeman in his distinctive uniform.<sup>146</sup> One series issued by the British firm Ogden's around 1919 was devoted entirely to pictures of Burmese women, probably for distribution in Burma itself.<sup>147</sup>

Such cards added to Burma's allure, but the most powerful impressions were created by those purporting to show 'typical' Burmese scenes and people. These usually included views of pagodas, 'native' villages and bullock carts.<sup>148</sup> Portraits of Burmese girls in traditional costume were also common, as were pictures of the country's many colourful ethnic minorities.<sup>149</sup> Several firms, like the New England Confectionary Company in 1930, issued cards featuring 'giraffe-neck' Padaung women. While most cards carried simple labels, some tried to educate collectors. Several gave brief descriptions of Burma, or aspects of Burmese life, such as the six cards issued in 1910 by the shoe polish maker Diamantine, and a set issued in 1914 by the German chocolate maker Gartmann.<sup>150</sup> One sumptuous series produced by the Liebig Company, makers of meat extract and soup cubes, depicted six scenes supposedly taken from Burmese history.<sup>151</sup> Another popular subject was Burma's capital Rangoon and the iconic Shwedagon Pagoda at its heart.<sup>152</sup> Several cards depicted Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, precariously balanced on a giant boulder covered with gold leaf in the north of Mon State.<sup>153</sup>

Burma was primarily a land of small farms and cottage industries, but after the annexation of Lower Burma in 1852 the economic life of the country began to be dominated by large British conglomerates, which exploited the country's agricultural riches and natural resources, notably rice, timber, oil and precious stones, on a large scale.<sup>154</sup> By 1931, for example, Burma was the largest rice producing country in the world.<sup>155</sup> All these industries were celebrated in a range of promotional materials, notably posters, trade cards and cigarette cards. For example, in 1916 Will's Cigarettes produced a series of cards on mining that included two about Burmese rubies.<sup>156</sup> In 1927, the British tobacco manufacturer Godfrey Philips issued two cards in its 'Empire Industries' series that showed rice growing and teak tree felling. In 1938, the Typhoo Company included a card about Burma's teak forests in its packets of tea. Another showed elephants hauling logs in a river and included a brief description of the Burmese timber industry. The depiction of all these industries in Burma strengthened views of the country that by then had become common in Britain, the US and elsewhere.<sup>157</sup>

All these images resonated particularly with impressionable young children, who tended to be among the most avid trade and cigarette card collectors.

Postcards were another powerful vector of images and ideas. From their invention in France in 1870, they rapidly became a global phenomenon. Their extraordinary popularity between 1890 and 1918 meant that the pictures of Burma they carried reached a very wide audience.<sup>158</sup> One genre, known as 'native views', was especially desirable in Europe and America. They 'relied on a pre-existing repertoire of aesthetic themes and conventions in its depiction of colonial space'.<sup>159</sup> They also coincided with a period in British history 'during which national and imperial ideologies were reinvented in such a way that the dominant symbols of the British nation became inseparable from imperial

ones'. As Steven Paterson has written, they revealed 'how the British imagined and depicted the empire'.<sup>160</sup> He continued:

Postcards not only linked empire and the metropole, but served to re-export imperial ideology back to Britain in condensed but effective units of information that showed "typical" scenes of the imperial encounter, which made for accelerated, if often vicarious, contact with other cultures.<sup>161</sup>

The widespread passion in the West for collecting postcards also ensured that their images were imprinted on the minds of millions, both young and old, and helped form lasting impressions of the places depicted.

The invention of photography and lithographic presses, which had greatly stimulated the production of trading cards and picture postcards, also made it possible for both official and private agencies to advertise their goods and services on brightly coloured posters. While they displayed some originality, the same old themes prevailed. For example, under the title 'Burmah: A Land of Rich Resources', the British Empire Marketing Board produced two posters in 1928. One depicted a rice harvest, complete with bullock cart and half-naked farmers, with a pagoda in the background. The other showed elephants stacking teak logs in front of a timber mill.<sup>162</sup> Travel to Burma was also promoted on posters, which highlighted the by now familiar scenes of gilded pagodas, swaying palms and contented villagers. Bibby Line posters, for example, showed one of its passenger ships passing a pagoda on its way to 'sunshine'. Another was of a turbaned Burmese sailor on a rice boat, beside a Bibby ship.<sup>163</sup> This style was later copied by the airlines. For example, a 1957 poster by BOAC urged customers to 'Jet your way to Rangoon' by depicting the Shwedagon Pagoda.<sup>164</sup> One 1960 Pan American Airlines poster showed a massive chinthee, while another produced in 1964 featured a typical Burmese 'beauty'.<sup>165</sup>

The commercial exploitation of such images helped cement them in the popular imagination, a phenomenon that can also be seen in the labelling of foodstuffs. For example, 'Burma' and 'Mandalay' used in the names of condiments was a clear allusion to 'them spicy garlic smells' mentioned by Kipling in his famous ballad. Such references were reinforced by pictorial labels. In a 1907 marketing campaign, for example, Heinz's 'Mandalay Sauce' was presented against a backdrop of elephants and pagodas.<sup>166</sup> The recipe was advertised as having been discovered by an English army officer posted to 'the Far East', a completely spurious claim that in 1910 prompted the US Board of Food and Drug Inspection to charge the H.J. Heinz Company with false advertising. Unlike Worcestershire Sauce, which was developed from a genuine Indian recipe in the 1830s, the 'rare Oriental savor' of Mandalay Sauce was created in the Heinz kitchens.<sup>167</sup> The label of 'Burma Sauce', made by the London firm of White, Cottell and Company, and popular in Britain between the wars, showed a Burmese girl in traditional dress standing in front of palm trees.<sup>168</sup> Empire Spice Mills, purveyors of Burma Brand Spices, prominently featured a tiger on its labels, despite being established in Chicago in 1937.<sup>169</sup>

These and similar products did more than cater to the acquired Anglo-Indian tastes of Victorian Britain and their counterparts in the US and elsewhere.<sup>170</sup> As Mona Domosh has written, they encapsulated a tourist's view of Burma that was 'exotic and unthreatening'.<sup>171</sup> They invited consumers comfortably ensconced in metropolitan countries to hear 'the East a'callin'', and make a vicarious gastronomic journey to a remote tropical land that, thanks again to Kipling, was forever associated in the public mind with 'the sunshine an' the palm trees, an' the tinkly temple bells'.<sup>172</sup> Jonathan Saha has suggested that consumers may have been looking for a 'taste of empire', rather than of Burma itself, but even so the country's purported connection with these kinds of foods emphasised their 'otherness' and remoteness from ordinary European and American cuisine.<sup>173</sup> By extension, Burma was seen as different and enticing.

In other ways too, the advertising of commercial products and the firms that sold them deliberately evoked Burma, capitalising on the country's reputation for exotica of different kinds. For example, 'Burmese' glass tableware and vases, first made in 1885 by the Mount Washington Glass Company of New Bedford in the US, was so named because Queen Victoria once remarked that their opaque pink and yellow glazes 'reminded' her of a Burmese sunset.<sup>174</sup> Never having been to Burma, however, the British monarch can only have known about its sunsets from reading or hearing stories by travellers and officials. In 1886, this style of glass, sometimes decorated with painted patterns, was licenced to be manufactured in Britain under the name 'Queen's Burmese'.<sup>175</sup> To cite a different kind of example, the exclusive Paris jeweller Bijou Burma, which was established in 1927, was named specifically to remind customers of the country's reputation for precious stones, notably rubies and sapphires. It aimed its innovative advertising campaigns mainly at celebrities, such as royalty and well-known entertainers, thus raising its public profile, and Burma's.<sup>176</sup>

The name 'Burma' (and 'Burmah') periodically surfaced in the daily lives of Western consumers. In Britain, the most obvious example was Burmah Oil, with its distinctive red, blue and white logo. The company was founded as the Rangoon Oil Company in 1886 to exploit the new province's plentiful oil reserves. Its assets in Burma were nationalised in 1962, but by that stage it had grown into a major multinational corporation, controlling Castrol and British Petroleum (BP). It was taken over by Amoco BP in 2000.<sup>177</sup> Also, from 1883, several British pottery firms, including Royal Albion, Wedgwood, England, Morgan Wood and Grindley, produced sets of 'Burmah' bone china. In the 1950s, Royal Worcester made a 'Burma boy' figurine.<sup>178</sup> In the 1940s and 1950s, London firms like Dobbs and Christy's produced 'Burma Brown' felt hats, and in 1966 a 'Burma' fashion coat by Misty Harbour made its appearance on the catwalks. This is not to forget that, between 1923 and 1963, motorists in the US were kept amused by multiple roadside signs advertising 'Burma-Shave' brushless shaving cream. The firm claimed that one of its 'secret' ingredients came from Burma, hence its name.<sup>179</sup>

The name 'Mandalay' particularly resonated with Western consumers. This was in part due to Kipling's popular ballad, but it was more than that. Somerset Maugham summed up the phenomenon best when he wrote, after a visit to Burma in 1923;

First of all Mandalay is a name. For there are places whose names from some accident of history or happy association have an independent magic and perhaps the wise man would never visit them, for the expectations they arouse can hardly be realised.<sup>180</sup>

As he went on to say, ‘Mandalay has its name; the falling cadence of the lovely word has gathered about itself the chiaroscuro of romance’.<sup>181</sup> It was doubtless to capitalise on this appeal that, between 1971 and 1986 Royal Doulton potteries produced a range of fine bone china named ‘Mandalay’. Spode and Royal Albert (in Britain), Royal Schwarzburg and Hutschenreuther (in Germany), Sakura and Mikado (in Japan) and Castleton in the US, among other firms, also released ‘Mandalay’ tableware collections, seeing little problem in associating Burma’s time-worn royal capital with intimations of elegance and luxury. The subliminal messages conveyed by such marketing ploys were enough.<sup>182</sup>

A survey of the ways in which Burma’s culture and economy were perceived in the West during the colonial era and after would not be complete without a brief reference to the large public exhibitions that were staged, mainly in Britain but also in continental Europe and the US, after the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (the ‘Great Exhibition’) was held in London in 1851.

Even before the fall of Mandalay in 1885, Burma was included in such exhibitions, as a province of British India. After 1937, it appeared as a colony in its own right.<sup>183</sup> These ethnographic displays reinforced stereotypical views and strengthened popular misconceptions about Burma and its people. For example, in 1896 there was a Burmese village in the Crystal Palace exhibition centre, described in *The Times* as follows:

The village, which consists of several huts erected in the native style, has been picturesquely placed under the central dome ... [It] has been entirely constructed by the natives, who now inhabit it, and all the materials have been brought from Burma. The Burmese have been collected from all parts of their native land, and may be seen plying their many trades, including the manufacture of brass and silver repousse work for which they are famous. In the theatre at intervals during the day the natives give performances.<sup>184</sup>

In addition, there was an extensive ‘collection of native workmanship’, on loan from private collectors.<sup>185</sup> Displays included examples of other traditional arts and crafts such as lacquerware, tapestry and silk weaving, wood carving and cigar-making. These skills were also mentioned on cigarette cards produced around that time.<sup>186</sup>

A grand Burmese pavilion in the traditional style was erected at the British Empire Exhibition in London in 1924.<sup>187</sup> It was a popular subject for postcards, one of which claimed the exhibit ‘represents every branch of commerce and art in Burma’.<sup>188</sup> Once again, there were displays of Burmese handicrafts and, in an obvious counterpoint for visitors, examples of the ‘technical progress’ that had been achieved under the British, for

example in the rice, timber and petroleum industries. A coloured poster produced at the time showed a Burmese (that is, ethnic Burman) man and woman, in full court dress, performing a traditional dance.<sup>189</sup> A second poster invited visitors to inspect a facsimile of the Burmese royal court, while a third depicted elephants hauling teak logs. Another large Burma pavilion was built for the 1938 Empire Exhibition in Glasgow. It was guarded by two massive chintzes. According to a cigarette card issued by Mitchell and Son that year, the pavilion displayed ‘all that the art and science, trade, commerce and industry of the country can show’.<sup>190</sup>

Mention should also be made of the private collections of Burmese cultural artefacts and *objets de curiosité* that could be viewed by members of the public in Britain during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, in 1826 the naval officer and author Frederick Marryat donated two large Burmese sculptures to the British Museum.<sup>191</sup> The Trustees turned down an offer of his entire collection of Burmese antiquities, but the following year, after displaying some items in another public exhibition, he donated the remainder to the Royal Asiatic Society.<sup>192</sup> Another prominent collector of Burmese artefacts was the wealthy tea merchant Frederick Horniman, who travelled extensively through the province in late 1895 and early 1896. He had opened a private museum near London in 1890, and later dedicated an entire room to Burma. According to one observer, the displays of religious artefacts, royal regalia and weapons projected an image of;

A country steeped in ancient religious tradition and inhabited by an ostentatious ex-monarchy, diverse and outlandish ethnic minorities, and bellicose communities.<sup>193</sup>

The museum was enormously popular. In 1895 alone, more than 85,000 members of the public passed through its turnstile.<sup>194</sup>

These and other displays gave Burma and the Burmese a tangible presence in Britain, albeit a very selective and packaged one. From all accounts, they attracted a large number of visitors, not only from Britain itself but also from the continent, the US and other places. The 1924 British Empire Exhibition, for example, was the largest of its kind staged anywhere in the world to that time and attracted 27 million visitors.<sup>195</sup> However, the ethnographic displays served mainly to confirm widely-held notions of Burma as picturesque but primitive, making it an ideal candidate for colonisation and management by the more sophisticated and technically advanced West. As Nicky Level has written, they:

... projected a subjective, fictional, and fetishized image of reality. An imagery which was predicated on the separation and differentiation of self from other, of the familiar from the exotic, of the progressive, “scientific”, civilised West from the “inferior”, barbaric East.<sup>196</sup>

They were celebrations of ‘the white man’s successful transplantation to the furthest reaches of the globe, and his creation there of societies modelled on European lines’.<sup>197</sup>

Little, if any, attention was paid to the feelings and aspirations of the Burmese people who, despite being celebrated in public, were not accorded any independent agency.

### **Burmese Society**

Another key source of impressions about Burmese society, particularly during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was books written by Christian missionaries, which enjoyed a wide readership in Britain and the US. Unfortunately, as Maung Htin Aung has pointed out, many of these descriptions of Burma presented a ‘cruel and distorted picture’ of the country.<sup>198</sup> For example, an account by the American Baptist Ann Judson, published in 1823, was to become an authoritative source for many who followed developments in Burma. She wrote that ‘Burmans are politically and morally wretched’.<sup>199</sup> She felt that she and her fellow missionaries were ‘surrounded by despotism, avarice, and cruelty; and the darkness, the dreadful moral darkness, of heathen idolatry was evident, wherever we turned our eyes’. To Judson, and many who came after her, the ‘natives’ were ‘ferocious’ and ‘barbarous’. It was a view shared by some other observers at the time. One was the merchant Henry Gouger, who was imprisoned by King Bagyidaw during the First Anglo-Burmese War and witnessed at first hand the cruelty and squalor suffered by his fellow convicts. To him the Burmese were all ‘savages’.<sup>200</sup>

While not without complaints of their own, later visitors tended to take a more tolerant approach to Burmese society. However, according to Helen Trager, the ‘assortment of anecdotes, normative adjectives and phrases’ found in early missionary writings, such as ‘ignorant’, ‘arrogant’, ‘barbarous’, ‘cruel’ and ‘superstitious’, ‘became the clichés and stereotypes used insensitively in the period and ever since’.<sup>201</sup>

Many early missionaries in Burma felt that they stood ‘on the dividing line of the empires of darkness and light’.<sup>202</sup> Their criticisms took on an increasingly bitter tone as it became clear that the overwhelmingly Buddhist population were impervious to their Christian messages. Most converts came from the country’s largely animist ethnic minorities, like the Karen, Chin and Kachin. Buddhism was never going to be ‘overthrown’, as the missionaries had once hoped, and sung about in hymns.<sup>203</sup> Gradually, however, the mood changed. Particularly after the 1879 publication of Edwin Arnold’s sympathetic portrayal of Buddhism in *The Light of Asia*, there was a ‘cultural attitude shift in the West concerning perceptions of the Buddha and receptivity to Buddhism’.<sup>204</sup> This trend was encouraged by other developments in Europe and the US, such as the flowering of scientific enquiry, including the emergence in the 1860s of the academic discipline of comparative religion. Together they challenged many of the assumptions of the established Christian Church and encouraged a more open-minded attitude. Buddhism could even be mocked in light verse, as in Kipling’s reference to a ‘Burma Girl’;

An’ a-wastin’ Christian kisses on an ‘eathen idol’s foot’:  
Bloomin’ idol made o’ mud -  
Wot they called the Great Lord Budd ...<sup>205</sup>

Indeed, the period in which Kipling wrote 'Mandalay' has been described by one scholar as the 'Buddhism-steeped Nineties'.<sup>206</sup> Increasingly, accounts of the Burmese portrayed them as a peaceful, spiritual people. Pagodas and Buddha statues were frequently depicted on postcards and trading cards.<sup>207</sup>

Under both its monarchy and the British administration, Burmese society was predominantly rural. Urban centres like Rangoon and Mandalay were exceptions to the rule.<sup>208</sup> This encouraged portrayals of a landscape of thousands of small villages living under the benign administration of colonial officials. Contemporary illustrations typically depicted 'contented natives' driving bullock carts or members of the country's ethnic minorities going about their (usually undefined) business.<sup>209</sup> As depicted by journalists and travel writers, the 'mighty' Irrawaddy impressed itself on the popular imagination as 'the living soul of the land, moulded and coloured through countless ages by the influence of the majestic river'.<sup>210</sup> These sorts of images were the subject of numerous engravings, photographs, postcards and trading cards, occasionally collected into albums for sale, both to tourists in Burma and others in Europe, the US and Western outposts, like Australia.<sup>211</sup> Some of these scenes, like elephants hauling teak, peasants ploughing paddy fields and rice boats on the Irrawaddy River, were given a measure of official endorsement by being depicted on the colony's first postage stamps, issued in 1937.<sup>212</sup>

Notwithstanding the ubiquity of such images, one way that the British justified their rule in Burma was to point to its physical and social transformation under the colonial administration. Particularly after 1885, there was a flood of promotional material that trumpeted the growth of Rangoon, the province's cosmopolitan new capital.<sup>213</sup> Photographers like Linneaus Tripe, Felice Beato and Peter Klier produced many thousands of prints for sale and display, celebrating the construction of public buildings, factories, railways and bridges.<sup>214</sup> As already noted, they were powerful vehicles for communicating non-verbal messages about Burma's changing landscape, reinforcing those provided over the years by writers and artists. As Paul Theroux has noted:

In the beginning, photography was the proof that the exotic was not the confidence trick of the traveling painters or the sketchers on board the ships of discovery.<sup>215</sup>

Western audiences were regaled with pictures of fine buildings in the distinctive Anglo-Indian style, such as the Colonial Secretariat, the Chief Law Courts and the General Post Office.<sup>216</sup> In 1913, Lambert and Butler, a branch of Imperial Tobacco, issued a cigarette card showing a locomotive on Burma's expanding railway network.<sup>217</sup> Postcards also celebrated infrastructure projects like the Gokteik railway viaduct in the Shan States and the Ava Bridge across the Irrawaddy River.<sup>218</sup> These feats of engineering were implicitly contrasted with the 'primitive' technology of the local population, most of who still lived in small houses made of bamboo and palm thatch.

Burma did boast some grand edifices of its own, and these too were favourite subjects for artists, for example in 'oilette' postcards produced by Raphael Tuck and Sons, and hand-

tinted cards sold by the prolific Rangoon-based photographer D.A. Ahuja.<sup>219</sup> However, local sites such as royal palaces, pagodas, monasteries and Buddha statues were presented more as historical curiosities than as examples of architectural or cultural achievement. Also, thus depicted, with barely any accompanying explanations, they could not give foreign audiences any understanding of their political or religious significance, past or present. As Saloni Mathur has pointed out, such pictures catered to the curiosity and voyeurism of European spectators, and were underpinned by a range of assumptions about the inherent superiority of the British and the legitimacy of their claims to empire.<sup>220</sup> Broadly speaking, these images were held up to demonstrate the achievements of the colonial administration in ‘taming’ Burma and turning it into a peaceful and productive province of India, and later independent colony.

Particularly between 1895 and 1918, described by one scholar as the ‘apogee of British governance’ in Burma, these images were readily accepted by Western populations that were being presented with a brighter and more optimistic picture than those provided by earlier observers.<sup>221</sup> The province had effectively been ‘pacified’ and the economy was growing rapidly. Colonial rule was deemed to have been a success, and accepted gratefully by the local population. When the Prince of Wales (later George V) toured Burma in 1906, the ‘real Burmese’ were described by a Calcutta-based journalist in his party as:

The clean, happy-go-lucky aristocratic children of the land, content to leave the sordid pursuit of lucre to their more astute and prosaic competitors from East and West ... It is an idyllic people, almost unreal in its delicate quaintness’.<sup>222</sup>

By 1916, the Burmese were being described in books as ‘the happiest people on earth’.<sup>223</sup> Herbert Hoover, who worked in Burma as a mining engineer before becoming president of the US in 1929, considered the Burmese ‘the only truly happy and cheerful race in all Asia’.<sup>224</sup> At least until the 1930s, when a variety of political and economic tensions made themselves felt, there was rarely any mention of urban race riots, agrarian unrest or the rise of a nationalist movement dedicated to the removal of the British regime.<sup>225</sup>

The apparent success of colonial rule in Burma was a source of great satisfaction in the West. Inspired by notions of social Darwinism, and encouraged by militant Christians, many felt that Britain (and, through its Baptist missionaries, the US) were on a civilising mission in Burma. As Kipling later wrote to his American readers, it was ‘the white man’s burden’ to ‘send forth the best ye breed ... to serve your captives’ need’.<sup>226</sup> To those holding this view, the benefits to Burma were obvious. According to one official, writing in 1888:

If riches and personal comfort, protection of property, just laws, incorruptible judges and rulers, are blessings as a set-off against Utopian dreams of freedom, then Jack Burman has a happy future.<sup>227</sup>



Britain's role was made possible in large part by its military and economic power, and its advanced technology but, as one of Orwell's fictional characters claimed, the British saw themselves as 'torchbearers on the path of progress'.<sup>228</sup> Naturally, this attitude was reflected in official and private activities, and commercial products, 'back home'.

It has been claimed that, by the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, the portrayal of the empire in such positive terms was a 'gigantic confidence trick' to distract people from Britain's faltering great power status.<sup>229</sup> If this was indeed so, it was made easier in Burma's case by the ignorance of the population, in Britain and the West more generally, about the harsh reality of the colony's political, economic and social problems, and the challenges they posed. For, even by the 1930s, few Westerners had any first-hand experience of Burma. The colonial government had always been small, and the military units posted there rarely stayed very long. Most businesses were run by a few foreigners supported by large local staffs. As a result, the wider public in Britain, and elsewhere in the West, were largely dependent on the selective, distorted and misleading representations of Burma derived from mass communication and popular culture. Burma did not become a real place to most Westerners until Japan invaded it in December 1941 and drove out the British, requiring a major military effort to restore the status quo ante.

### **The Second World War and After**

More than any other historical development, the Second World War brought Burma to the attention of populations in Europe, the US and elsewhere, including Britain's former 'white colonies' of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In different ways, all were caught up in the conflict, and a number had citizens fighting there.<sup>230</sup> The statistics vary greatly, but according to one study there were more than 606,000 men and women in the British Commonwealth forces, although it must be noted that the majority were drawn from India and the African colonies. Another 12,000 Americans served in the wider CBI theatre.<sup>231</sup> Some sources give much higher numbers. The Burma campaign was the longest of the entire war, lasting from December 1941 to August 1945. Also, it was arguably the fiercest and the most varied in terms of the terrain and styles of fighting.<sup>232</sup> In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the notions of Burma that had taken root in the West before the war were both strengthened and reshaped by the experiences of the participants and the reports published 'back home'.<sup>233</sup> However, there were shifts in the ways that these ideas were conveyed and reinforced.

Typical of the kind of reporting sent back to metropolitan audiences was a two-part article by *Life* magazine's correspondent Clare Boothe. Passing through Mandalay during the retreat from Burma in 1942, she wrote:

Yesterday, what did I know of Mandalay? Yesterday, to me it was just a Kipling song, an Empire sound ... from Moulmein to Mandalay the course of the Empire took its hot triumphant way, when Kipling was a war correspondent given to writing wondrous jungle jingles before the century began. ... Mandalay in my mind was only a shadowy, mysterious Oriental montage. I envisaged the city of

Thibaw's evil queen, whose name was Supayalat, full of bustling noisy bazaars where lacy silver and solid gold trinkets, rubies from Magok, sapphires and jades and amber, bright lacquer bowls and carved teak were sold. I saw, in my mind's eye, Buddhist priests, kneeling before the innumerable white pagodas, heard the temple bells, the chant of temple rites, the chug-chug of little steamers on the Irrawaddy, the creaking of the wheels of lazy bullock carts. I fancied the smiling faces of black-haired, sandal-footed, flowery-robed Burmese girls ... I smelt the fragrance of incense and flowering trees ...<sup>234</sup>

The story contained a number of minor errors (Kipling was not a 'war correspondent' as such and 'Magok' should be 'Mogok', for example). However, the 'shadowy, mysterious Oriental montage' described by Boothe constitutes a comprehensive catalogue of the stereotypical images of Burma that lived in the minds of most Westerners at that time.

Another potent source of impressions about Burma during this period was the pictorial supplements found in newspapers and popular magazines. Throughout the war these and other publications, like *The War Illustrated* and *Yank Magazine* showed scenes which, if nothing else, confirmed the by-now-standard Western perception of Burma as a beautiful if rather strange and primitive country. Elephants helping to load American transport planes with stores, mules carrying supplies along narrow mountain tracks, British soldiers marching past gilded pagodas, Sherman tanks parked in front of Buddha statues and aircraft flying over snow-clad Himalayan mountain peaks, were all typical fare.<sup>235</sup> The Burma (later Ledo) Road to China was hailed as an engineering miracle due to the harsh weather and rugged terrain endured by the construction crews.<sup>236</sup> Another subject touched upon in these publications was Burma's legends, manifested mainly through the *chinthe* statues that guarded many pagodas. The *chinthe* was adopted as a name and unit insignia by General Orde Wingate's 'Chindit' long range penetration groups.<sup>237</sup>

Official reports too could be quite influential. One in particular springs to mind. In 1943, the British social anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer was commissioned by the US Office of War Information to write a 'diagnostic study' of the 'Burmese personality', about which the US armed forces at the time knew almost nothing. He concluded, on the basis of an idiosyncratic interpretation of Sigmund Freud's controversial teachings, that 'the fundamental Burmese character was founded on the factual and psychological dominance of women'.<sup>238</sup> They were described as 'good-humoured, cool, impersonal, kindly, firm, efficient and helpful'.<sup>239</sup> They managed the household and most family business, and generally dominated, but without claiming dominance. By contrast, Burmese men were to Gorer's mind weak and unreliable. He felt they were vain, lazy, pampered and gossipy. They were unable to resist temptation, enjoyed 'the ecstasy of violence', took pleasure in cruelty and demonstrated theatrical exhibitionism. As one later commentator editorialised, 'In public station they are irresponsible and capricious'.<sup>240</sup> Gorer sheeted these traits home to infantile trauma, lax toilet training and distorted gender roles. Considered overall, it was a damning indictment of traditional Burmese society.<sup>241</sup>

Gorer's monograph was initially given a 'Confidential' security classification and its distribution confined to official circles. However, it circulated widely. According to Peter Mandler, it was 'read avidly across a variety of agencies, used as background for propaganda and as cues to intercultural training in civil affairs schools'.<sup>242</sup> It was probably also a source for the handbook prepared by the US Army's Information Branch for American service personnel on what they might expect when they entered Burma, after it was liberated.<sup>243</sup> Also, in 1943 a slightly revised version of Gorer's report was released in mimeographed form under the title *Burmese Personality* by the Institute of Intercultural Relations, a small non-profit organisation created by a group of scholars who had pioneered the study of national character through anthropological methods.<sup>244</sup> Not surprisingly, the report attracted a wide range of responses, but it was picked up after the war and helped inform an academic debate about the Burmese and their culture.<sup>245</sup> The general population was probably not aware of these rather esoteric discussions but, even so, they contributed to the broader public discourse on the country and its people.

After the war, postcards and trading cards did not disappear but, with changes in taste, technology and marketing techniques, they were no longer as critical in forming the views of consumers. To cater to a more literate and mobile society, printed matter became more important. The war became a staple subject for memoirs, novels and short stories, as former servicemen and women, among others, sought to capitalize on their experiences. This was important for, as Josef Silverstein has written;

Fiction provides a popular entryway for the "average" reader to reach beyond his normal range of knowledge and imagination; it is more likely he will have read a novel or short story rather than a history or scholarly work and it is from this source that he will have formed his ideas and adopted his stereotypes.<sup>246</sup>

In addition, there were numerous stories about wartime Burma in the cheap illustrated magazines and 'glossies' that were increasingly taking the place of the pulps.<sup>247</sup> Comic books, which had become popular in the 1930s and 1940s, also proved to be powerful vectors for images of Burma.<sup>248</sup> This process was greatly assisted by the movies set in Burma that appeared in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the first few decades after the Japanese surrender in 1945 there was an outpouring of novels written about the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific, a disproportionate number of which focussed on operations in Burma and China.<sup>249</sup> Special attention was paid to irregular units like the Chindits, Merrill's Marauders and the Kachin Rangers. Among the most evocative of these works were Donald Eyre's *Foxes Have Holes*, David King's *The Brave and the Damned*, and Tom Chamales' *Never So Few*.<sup>250</sup> Such stories emphasised the difficult terrain in which the soldiers and airmen (of both sides) had to operate, the dreadful weather conditions and other hardships. Attention was also paid to the physical and mental toll that such conditions took on the men in Burma, as shown for example in Walter Baxter's *Look Down in Mercy*.<sup>251</sup> Little attention was paid to the local population, although some novels included references (both positive and negative) to 'the natives'. These included H.E. Bates' *Jacaranda Tree* and Francis Clifford's *A Battle is*

*Fought to be Won*.<sup>252</sup> One Japanese contribution to the genre was *The Burmese Harp*, a sensitive children's story about the war by Michio Takeyama, published in 1946.<sup>253</sup>

As Silverstein has written, quality fiction could provide 'an important prism through which the strands of light propel images and ideas of Burma to the reader that help him to understand aspects of Burmese life and culture'.<sup>254</sup> They may have had the same basic ingredients, and reflected many of the same stock images, but the same cannot be said of the thousands of cheap magazines, war comics and airport novels produced, mainly in Britain and the US, during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>255</sup> Their readers were offered a view of Burma through a glass darkly.

After 1945, the dime novels and pulp fiction of the pre-war era evolved into cheap illustrated magazines, also intended for mass audiences. Even the so-called 'girlie' magazines of the period included adventure stories, which gave wide scope for material about Burma. They ranged from breathless 'true' tales, such as J.H. Williams' 1954 story 'Elephant Man from Burma' in *Men*, and 'How Merrill's Brave Marauders Were Sold Down the River', in a 1962 copy of *Male*, to obviously fabricated accounts such as Ben Giordano's '16,000,000 in Rubies and It's Still There!' in the April 1964 issue of *Real Men*.<sup>256</sup> A 1957 story in *Man's Conquest* about travel through a leech-infested part of the country was titled 'Flesh-Feast for the Beasts of Burma'.<sup>257</sup> There were also numerous stories that set real or imagined wartime adventures in Burma within the soft-core sexual milieu of these magazines, such as 'I Led the Airborne Nymphs of Burma', published in *World of Men* in 1962, and Leon Lazarus's 'Yank Who Led Burma's Nude Nymph Commandos', in *For Men Only* in 1964.<sup>258</sup> In 1969, *True Action* magazine carried a story entitled 'He Lived with the Devil Love Worshippers of North Burma'.<sup>259</sup>

As the titles of these stories suggest, the physical setting was often less important than their content. In their own ways, however, they all helped to emphasise Burma's exoticism and remoteness from the world of the average city-bound Western reader. The same phenomenon can be seen in many of the mass-market paperback books about Burma that were produced in Britain and the US.

*Burmese Days*, George Orwell's 1934 novel condemning imperial rule in Burma, was re-released as a paperback in 1952, but with the sensational tagline: 'A saga of jungle hate and lust'. The book's cover showed a European couple passionately embracing while a half-naked Burmese girl looked on.<sup>260</sup> Edward Aarons' 1962 suspense novel *Assignment Burma Girl*, about the search for two Americans missing in the jungle, also had a half-naked Burmese girl on its front cover.<sup>261</sup> Yet another barely-clad Burmese girl graced the cover of F. Van Wyck Mason's 1963 thriller *Trouble in Burma*, about an agent sent to destroy a lost missile in Burma.<sup>262</sup> To give one more example of this genre, the Asian woman on the cover of *The House of Bamboo*, by Charles De Verteuil, was almost fully clothed, albeit in what appears to be a Chinese costume. However, the paperback had the cover blurb 'In a Burmese girl's warm, seductive beauty he found escape from the flames of forbidden desire ... and the nightmare past'.<sup>263</sup> Such pictures and texts were doubtless intended to promote sales at a time when the market was being flooded by cheap pocket

books, but they incidentally encouraged the idea of Burma as a remote tropical country full of violent men and lustful women.

At the same time, war comics like *All-American Men of War* began to claim the attention of Western readers. They were closely followed from 1958 by British comics like *War Picture Library* and, from 1961, *Commando Comics*. During the 1960s and 1970s, the first released 12 titles a month and was enormously popular in Britain and its former dominions.<sup>264</sup> Some British comics, like *Air Battle Library* and *Combat Picture Library* were even printed in Australia and New Zealand to cater to the local markets. Most of these comic books carried stories about the war in Burma. *Battle Picture Weekly*, for example, published from 1975 to 1988, was known for a series titled 'Darkie's Mob', 'nothing less than a comic strip version of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', set in Burma during the war.<sup>265</sup> Several of the authors and artists employed to produce these publications had served in the CBI theatre, and were able to give Burma-related stories a degree of accuracy and immediacy.<sup>266</sup> Even so, in all these comics, when the country featured as a backdrop to tales of wartime derring-do, it was invariably portrayed in stereotypical terms as a dense green jungle full of wild animals and colourful locals, suffering torrid heat and monsoon downpours. Readers could be forgiven for thinking that the natural environment posed the Allies greater challenges than the Japanese.

The old tropes were still proving useful well into modern times, albeit occasionally reinforced by other material. In 1986, for example, a story in the *G.I. Combat* comic series titled 'Dead Winner' described a group of mercenaries who, in an attempt to evade the police in the Bay of Bengal, sailed up the Chindwin River (somehow skipping 600 kilometres of the Irrawaddy River). In a bizarre mix of literary clichés with both Asian and African overtones, there was a missionary sick with fever, a faithful retainer, a damsel in distress, 'treacherous jungle', poisonous snakes, 'native drums', witch doctors and head hunters.<sup>267</sup> In 'The Search for Byron', published in 1996, the costumed comic strip character known as The Phantom ('the ghost who walks') went to southern Burma to rescue a missing aviator from 'head hunters'.<sup>268</sup> He revealed that he had been there before, sorting out 'a nasty tribal war'. He described Burma in (by now) conventional terms as 'a terrible country ... wild animals, thick jungle, incredible heat, ferocious natives'.<sup>269</sup> It all made for great entertainment, but bore little relation to the real Burma.

Burma's reputation for the unusual and bizarre was kept alive by enterprises like *Ripley's Believe it or Not!* From a small newspaper panel in 1918, it evolved into an international franchise producing magazines, radio programs, short movies and, from 1949, television series. Burma featured in these productions on several occasions. In 1954, for example, the magazine ran a story about 'the women who smoke through their cheeks'. The story claimed that 'The Palaung girls of Burma cut holes in both their cheeks to hold their foot-long cheroots'.<sup>270</sup> The Padaung 'giraffe girls', who wore brass rings around their necks, were also mentioned, and were even displayed as wax figures in various Ripley's 'odditoriums' (museums). A subject covered several times was Burmese pythons, which had a reputation for growing up to 25 feet (7.62 metres) long and enlarging their own hearts by 40% when eating. One story was about an albino specimen. Another story

published by Ripley's was about Burma's king Siritaribhavanadityapauaraanditasudhammarajamahada-ipatinarapatisithu, whose subjects were required to pronounce all 69 syllables of his name whenever he was addressed.<sup>271</sup> The 'gravity-defying' Kyaiktiyo pagoda has also received the Ripley's treatment.<sup>272</sup> So too has the 'Lai Tu Chin tribe', whose women cover their faces with tattoos.<sup>273</sup>

Perhaps the most indelible impressions of Burma during this period, however, came from the cinema. Between 1941 and 1962, almost all of the 14 feature movies set in Burma were war stories. These included *Objective Burma*, starring Errol Flynn (1945), *The Purple Plain* (1954) starring Gregory Peck, *Never So Few* with Frank Sinatra (1959) and *Merrill's Marauders* starring Jeff Chandler (1962).<sup>274</sup> There was a Burmese heroine in *The Purple Plain*, and in *Merrill's Marauders* there is a scene in which local villagers share their meagre food supplies with exhausted American soldiers. However, none of these movies gave a realistic portrayal of Burma, its people, or the war.<sup>275</sup> *Objective Burma* was considered so inaccurate that British veterans protested and it had to be withdrawn from local theatres.<sup>276</sup> The studios were still fixed on the idea of a beautiful but rugged country cursed with intolerable weather, inhabited by primitive locals and savage animals. Occasionally this theme was taken too far, as in *Escape to Burma*, a 1955 movie in which Barbara Stanwyck played the manager of a teak plantation in what was described on the movie's publicity posters as 'the hot green hell of the Burma jungle'. The movie contains a memorable scene in which the heroine encounters a chimpanzee, which is native to Africa, and an orangutan, which is only found in Indonesia.<sup>277</sup>

It might be noted in passing that Western countries were not the only ones that peddled clichéd images of Burma, for public consumption. Between 1948, when it regained its independence, until the mid-1970s, Burma itself promoted many of the same themes. Until the Union of Burma Bank introduced a new range of banknotes in 1972, for example, the country's paper currency repeatedly featured pictures of rice boats on the Irrawaddy River, women spinning silk, elephants hauling teak, women planting paddy and farmers ploughing their fields with bullocks.<sup>278</sup> It was not until the issue of a new 20 kyat note in 1965 that the currency acknowledged the country's attempts to adopt mechanised farming methods. After 1972, most of these images were abandoned, although the 90 kyat note issued in 1987 again depicted a farmer and his bullock.<sup>279</sup> This pattern was not repeated on the country's postage stamps, which favoured political themes, but occasionally issues included a rural scene or a reference to traditional cottage industries.<sup>280</sup> In their own ways, all these pictures reflected the tropes found in the West, which was already primed from a wide range of other sources to receive them.

In these and other ways, large and small, the idea of Burma as a land of jungles, elephants, paddy fields, pagodas and pretty girls was reinforced in the minds of Western populations. As a result, whenever people in places as far apart as Europe, the US, Australia, Canada or New Zealand were reminded of Burma, however fleetingly, their initial mental responses were coloured by the stereotypes which had become familiar and widely accepted as accurate. From the 1950s through to the 1980s, such occasions became increasingly rare, as Burma under General Ne Win's socialist government

adopted policies that favoured economic autarky and strict neutrality in foreign affairs. As the country withdrew into isolation, and actively discouraged foreign contacts, so it faded from public view in the West. Burma rarely warranted stories in the mainstream news media, or was the subject of newsreels and feature movies.<sup>281</sup> Even academic studies of Burma fell into abeyance, as Western scholars turned their attention to places that were more accessible.<sup>282</sup> Yet, occasionally, there were reminders of Burma in the daily life of Westerners that could trigger memories, reawaken old images, and polish old misconceptions.

For example, the elephant that paraded through Washington on the occasion of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's inauguration in 1953, as the Republican Party's official mascot, was named 'Burma'.<sup>283</sup> A number of board games popular in the 1950s and 1960s drew on Burmese scenes and, it was claimed, local traditions and legends.<sup>284</sup> It is still possible to buy jigsaw puzzles based on paintings of the old royal palace in Mandalay (destroyed during the Second World War), and paintings of Burmese women in national dress.<sup>285</sup> Between 1969 and 1986, Britain's Queen Elizabeth rode a horse named 'Burmese' at the annual Trooping the Colour ceremony in London.<sup>286</sup> In 1973, the queen ordered a tiara from the jeweller Garrard and Company, set with 96 rubies gifted to her by the Burmese people on the occasion of her marriage in 1947.<sup>287</sup> She still wears it to state functions, its Burmese connection occasionally exciting tabloid journalists.<sup>288</sup> The name 'Burma' has fallen out of fashion somewhat, and in any case was formally replaced by 'Myanmar' in 1989. However, 'Mandalay' remains popular, lending itself to casinos, holiday resorts, shipping firms, musical groups and a range of other commercial enterprises. The logo of Mandalay Pictures is a tiger.<sup>289</sup> In various ways, they are all trading on Burma's exotic reputation and, by its exploitation, perpetuating it.

The abortive 1988 pro-democracy uprising dramatically changed the public face of Burma. Since then, the country has been thrust into the world's headlines by periodic reports of human rights abuses and civil unrest, which now receive much greater attention in the West than in the past. The public's eye also focused on attractive, Oxford-educated opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Held under house arrest for nearly 15 years, she became a potent symbol of the peaceful struggle for a democratic government. Her marriage to an Englishman prompted the military regime to draw unfavourable comparisons between her and Kipling's 'Burma girl', who was seen to have chosen a foreigner over her own people.<sup>290</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi discouraged tourism, apparently to deny the regime foreign exchange, and advertisements for those still prepared to visit Burma were muted, compared with the past. In the activist literature, and also in some official statements, the regime was described in terms reminiscent of comments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century British press about the reputedly drunken and blood-thirsty King Thibaw and his scheming wife Supayalat.<sup>291</sup> Despite all this negative publicity, however, an idealised picture of Burma survived. For many, it came to represent what Burma could become under a truly democratic government.

After 2011, when power was formally handed over to an elected civilian government, albeit under a fair measure of military control, tourism was again encouraged. Travel

agencies and other commercial enterprises immediately sought to regenerate the West's romantic notions of Burma. Coffee table books, brochures, postcards and websites were filled with views of golden pagodas, working elephants, green paddy fields, Buddhist monks and colourful locals. It is no coincidence that, in their content, such outlets mirrored similar works produced over 100 years ago. The old stereotypes had been given a new lease of life.<sup>292</sup> Clearly, these campaigns have worked. The number of foreign visitors to Burma ballooned from 791,505 in 2010 to 4,364,101 in 2019.<sup>293</sup> Despite the international backlash against the brutal 'clearance operations' against the Muslim Rohingyas in 2016 and 2017, Burma is still ranked as one of the world's fastest growing holiday destinations, with an increase of over 40% in tourist numbers in 2019.<sup>294</sup> Overwhelmingly, these visitors have sought out the sights, sounds and experiences that they have come to associate with traditional Burma, through decades of exposure to the stereotypes in popular culture.<sup>295</sup>

## Conclusion

In recent years, scholars and commentators have tried to answer the questions: how was colonial Asia perceived in and by the Western world, how did people in countries like Britain and the US form their views, and how were they manifested?<sup>296</sup> Burma has not been prominent in these studies, but it is starting to receive greater attention.

Historians have led the way, not only by informing Western audiences about past developments in Burma but also by describing how European contacts over the centuries gave rise to a wide range of myths, mysteries and misconceptions.<sup>297</sup> Other social scientists have made useful contributions. In 1985, for example, Josef Silverstein discussed the portrayal of Burma in several novels by European and American authors.<sup>298</sup> Clive Christie and Stephen Keck later surveyed the travel literature produced during the colonial period, and weighed its impact on Western perceptions of Burma.<sup>299</sup> Deborah Boyer has searched through Victorian-era periodicals for references to Burma and its role in the British Empire.<sup>300</sup> In 2009, this author examined the way in which Burma had been represented in Hollywood movies and how this might have influenced foreign views of the country.<sup>301</sup> Others have commented on the paintings of Burma and Burmese people produced by British artists during the colonial period.<sup>302</sup> There have also been a number of public exhibitions that have looked at engravings and photographs that influenced the way in which Burma and other parts of Asia were seen in the West.<sup>303</sup>

The most enduring mental pictures of a country, however, are formed not from a single source, but from the combination of many, often subtle, influences, accumulated over time. The perceptions of Burma formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries derived in part from high culture, but arguably the vehicles of popular culture were more powerful vectors. For, despite their lowly status and often ephemeral nature, they were highly influential social artefacts that portrayed Burma and the Burmese people in ways that helped them become part of an imaginative inner world. Indeed, these packaged, archetypal images were presented in economical ways that almost guaranteed their absorption into the Western subconscious. Also, the creation and consolidation of these pictures in the public



mind was a dynamic process. References made to particular aspects of Burma, either real or imagined, gave them a higher profile, but it was the constant repetition of such tropes that ensured their survival. Once established, they were then available for even wider distribution and exploitation. To paraphrase Edward Said, in his ground-breaking study *Orientalism*, first the vision was created, then it served the world conceived.<sup>304</sup>

Burma, and the 'Far East' more generally, was cast as 'a daydream realm of ahistorical, exotic, and erotic pleasures, locked away in a charming past that bears no immediate relation to the concerns of modern, progressive, real Europe'.<sup>305</sup> It was a highly distorted picture, at several levels. However, the crudity and simplicity of the messages conveyed by movies, pulp fiction, postcards, trading cards and other vehicles of popular culture helped to ensure their impact, and durability. In this regard, George Orwell's views remain pertinent. In an essay on 'Boys' Weeklies' first published in 1940 he wrote that:

Most people are influenced far more than they would care to admit by novels, serial stories, films and so forth, and from this point of view the worst books are often the most important because they are usually the ones that are read earliest in life. It is probable that many people who consider themselves extremely sophisticated and 'advanced' are actually carrying through life an imaginative background which they acquired in childhood.<sup>306</sup>

Orwell was writing about children's story papers like the *Gem* (1907-39) and the *Magnet* (1908-40), but his comments could apply equally to other vehicles of popular and commercial culture.

Burma features less in such areas these days, but it is still the subject of countless stories, many of which bear little relation to reality. Since the 1988 uprising, accounts in the news media, in activist literature and online have often been overly simplified, inaccurate or biased.<sup>307</sup> They have reinforced many of the old clichés about a country torn between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. For example, it is easy to find descriptions of Burma that emphasise its natural beauty, unique culture and charming people. At the same time, the country has for many years been described as a poverty-stricken hell-hole, dominated by a military regime that has been guilty of gross human rights violations, even crimes against humanity. Also, some Western countries are still falling into the trap of thinking that they are more mature societies, and that the Burmese are unable to determine their own future. As Thant Myint U has written, before Aung San Suu Kyi formed a coalition government with the armed forces, Burma was widely viewed as 'a naturally rich country of tremendous potential held back by a despotic and singularly inept regime ... This was the image of Burma that was being carved in stone: wicked generals, a faultless icon and an innocent people waiting for salvation'.<sup>308</sup>

Aung San Suu Kyi is now in power, after a fashion, but conditions in Burma have not changed as much as was once hoped. The country still suffers from a wide range of 'fiendishly complex' problems that seem to defy solution.<sup>309</sup> Also, due to the depredations of the armed forces against the Rohingyas and other ethnic minorities,

Western governments still see Burma as posing a major humanitarian problem that needs to be addressed by the international community.<sup>310</sup> Yet, for all those concerns, Burma stubbornly clings to its more romantic image, helped along by the growing number of travelogues, memoirs and photographic collections that are being produced by tourists and temporary residents.<sup>311</sup> Also, their enthusiasm may now be waning, but many entrepreneurs still speak of shaking the 'pagoda tree', much as they did under the British.<sup>312</sup> Through such means, Burma seems destined to retain its mystery, and to continue weaving its magical spell on armchair travellers and others in the West who dream of remote and exotic places, populated by wild animals and sweet girls sitting by golden pagodas. Perhaps, as Paul Theroux has written;

We are bewitched by visions of the faraway and the fantastic, because dreams of these Edens, of the overseas worlds of beauty and oddness and pleasure, seem to make life bearable.<sup>313</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> This paper draws on a book and several articles written by the author over the past ten years or so, looking at specific subjects relating to Burma and popular Western culture. They cover music and songs, movies, pulp fiction, juvenile literature, graphic novels, comic books, trading cards, postage stamps, matchbox labels and medals. These works are cited where appropriate in the endnotes.

<sup>2</sup> In 1989, the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) changed the name of the country (in English) from Burma to Myanmar. The new name was accepted by most governments and international organisations, but some governments, news media outlets and activist groups continued to use 'Burma' as a protest against the country's military regime. In 2016, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi stated that either name was acceptable. In this article, the older name is used for editorial convenience, except where 'Myanmar' appears in formal titles and references.

<sup>3</sup> This term is taken from C.E. Calwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), which examines a number of these conflicts.

<sup>4</sup> In 2011, the military regime permitted the formation of a hybrid civilian-military government under the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, with the national parliament consisting of both elected civilians and non-elected military officers.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Smith with Annie Alsebrook, *Ethnic Groups in Burma: Development, Democracy and Human Rights* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 1994), p.17.

<sup>6</sup> In this article, the 'white settler colonies' are taken to include Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. Technically, the US could be included in this category, but is treated separately.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Williams wrote in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 'Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (p.87). What exactly constitutes 'popular culture' is also the subject of considerable debate, but it typically includes mass-produced 'commercial culture'. By contrast, 'high culture' is usually the result of individual acts of creation. This differentiation has its weaknesses, but for the purposes of this article it is useful as a working model. See John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2015), p.6.

<sup>8</sup> The majority of the photographs collected in modern coffee table books about Burma focus on iconic subjects like pagodas, Buddhist monks, ethnic minorities in national dress, traditional festivals and the country's natural beauty. Very few include scenes of political, military or economic significance, although these would in some cases be more representative of contemporary Burmese society. Typical of this genre is *Myanmar: Land of the Spirit* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 1996). One exception to the trend is James Mackay, *Abhaya: Burma's Fearlessness* (Bangkok: River Books, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Burma formally regained its independence from Great Britain in January 1948, but the colonial period effectively ended with the retreat of the British from the invading Japanese and their Burmese allies in 1942.

<sup>10</sup> 'China-Burma-India' or CBI, was a US term, but became widely used. It was not one of the recognised theatres of the war, since it extended geographically across the boundaries of India Command and of the Southeast Asia and China theatres. See Vice-Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia, 1943-1945* (New Delhi: The English Book Store, 1960), p.7

<sup>11</sup> Along with evocative phrases like 'the inscrutable East', the origins of this Eurocentric term are obscure, but it appears to have a very long history, possibly since classical times. It initially referred to the region that became known as the 'Near East' or the 'Middle East', but was later also applied to the 'Far East'.

<sup>12</sup> The first recorded contact between Europe and Burma was the visit of the Venetian merchant, Nicolo di Conti, around 1435. Burma was, however, known to the Greek geographer Ptolemy and was touched by Roman commercial agents on their way to China. The first Westerner to mention Burma was Marco Polo, who referred to it (as 'Mien') in his *Travels*, written after his return to Europe from Asia in 1297. See 'The

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Travels of Marco Polo the Venetian (1298)', *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Vol.2, No.2, Autumn, 2004, pp.91-9.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824, the Beginning of the English Conquest* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), p.175.

<sup>14</sup> G.P. Badger (ed), *The Travels of Ludovico de Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India and Ethiopia, 1503-1508*, translated by G.V. Jones (London: Hakluyt Society, 1863), p.220.

<sup>15</sup> Cited in J. H. Ryley, *Ralph Fitch: England's Pioneer to India and Burma* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), p.162. See also 'Ralph Fitch: An Account of Pegu in 1586-1587', *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Vol.2, No.2, Autumn, 2004, pp.167-79, at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64315.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Diane Morgan, *Fire and Blood: Rubies in Myth, Magic and History* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), p.131.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in D.F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), Vol.1, Bk.2, p.554.

<sup>18</sup> J.H. Linschoten, *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1885), Vol.1, p.98.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava, Sent by the Governor-General of India in the Year 1795* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1800), p.217. See also D.G.E. Hall, *Early English Intercourse with Burma, 1587-1743, and the Tragedy of Negrais* (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), p.100.

<sup>20</sup> *The Modern Traveller: A Popular Description Geographical, Historical and Topographical of the Various Countries of the Globe: Birmah, Siam and Anam* (London: James Duncan, 1826), p.89.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Trant, *Two Years in Ava, from May 1824 to May 1826* (London: John Murray, 1827), pp.219-20.

<sup>22</sup> G.T. Gascoigne, *Among Pagodas and Fair Ladies: An Account of a Tour Through Burma* (London: A.D. Innes and Co., 1896), p.43.

<sup>23</sup> 'Nicolo de' Conti of Venice: Early Fifteenth Century Travels in the East', *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Vol.2, No.2, Autumn, 2004, p.113, at <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64309.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Sun Laichen, 'Burmese Bells and Chinese Eroticism: Southeast Asia's Cultural Influence on China', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.38, No.2, June 207, pp.247-73.

<sup>25</sup> K.M. Philips, *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245-1510* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), pp.140-1. See also Elisabetta Colla, 'Southeast Asia "Ethnic Minorities" in an Account by the Florentine Merchant Francesco Carletti: A 17<sup>th</sup> Century Manuscript', in Huhua Cao (ed), *Ethnic Minorities and Regional Development in Asia: Reality and Challenges* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), p.41.

<sup>26</sup> 'Ralph Fitch, An Account of Pegu in 1586-1587', pp.176-7. See also Philips, *Before Orientalism*, p.141.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies, being the Observations and Remarks of Captain Alexander Hamilton Who Spent his Time there From the Year 1688 to 1723* (Edinburgh: John Mosman, 1727), Vol.2, p.51.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Peter Borschberg (ed), *The Memoirs and Memorials of Jacques de Coutre: Security, Trade and Society in 16<sup>th</sup> - and 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014), pp.136-7; and Carmen Nocentelli, *Empires of Love: Europe, Asia and the Making of Early Modern Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p.35.

<sup>29</sup> Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 159 Years of Popular Tourism* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1991), p.212.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold Wright, H.A. Cartwright and O. Breakspear (eds), *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma: Its history, people, commerce, industry and resources* (London: Lloyds Greater Britain Publishing Co., 2010), p.358. These publications are not to be confused with the 11 'Burma Pamphlets' produced between 1942 and 1947 by Longmans, Green and Co., under the auspices of the Burma Research Society.

<sup>31</sup> G.E. Mitton, *A Bachelor Girl in Burma* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), p.2.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, G.P. Evans, *Big-Game Shooting in Upper Burma* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912); E.C. Baker, *The Game-Birds of India, Burma and Ceylon*, 3 volumes (London: The Bombay Natural History Society, and John Bale Sons and Danielsson Ltd., 1921); and Frank Kingdon-Ward, *In Farthest Burma: The Record of an Arduous Journey of Exploration and Research Through the Unknown Frontier Territory of Burma and Tibet* (London: Seeley, Service, 1921).

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- <sup>33</sup> Jonathan Saha, 'Among the Beasts of Burma: Animals and the Politics of Colonial Sensibilities, c.1840-1940', *Journal of Social History*, Vol.48, No.4, Summer 2015, p.910.
- <sup>34</sup> Shway Yoe [J.G. Scott], *The Burman: His Life and Notions* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1910), p.487.
- <sup>35</sup> F.J. Simoons and J.A. Baldwin, 'Breast-Feeding of Animals by Women: Its Socio-Cultural Context and Geographic Occurrence', *Anthropos*, Bd.77, H.3/4, 1982, p.423. These tales may not have been apocryphal. See, for example, 'Woman breast-feeding tiger cubs in Myanmar', *China Daily*, 4 April 2005, at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/04/content\\_430915.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-04/04/content_430915.htm)
- <sup>36</sup> Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1912).
- <sup>37</sup> See, for example, 'Our Troops in Burmah: Engagement with Dacoits at Chinbyit', *The Illustrated London News*, 7 January 1888, p.9.
- <sup>38</sup> See, for example, 'Robert Williams Buchanan: Theatre Reviews: 20. The Blue Bells of Scotland (1887)', at <http://www.robertbuchanan.co.uk/html/bluebells.html>
- <sup>39</sup> 'The Taking of Lungtungpen' was a short story by Rudyard Kipling, first published in the *Civil and Military Gazette* on 11 April 1887. It was subsequently included in the collection *Plain Tales From the Hills* (London: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1888).
- <sup>40</sup> Sax Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu* (London: Methuen, 1913), pp.24-6. Fu Manchu was pursued through several books by Sir Denis Nayland Smith, a Commissioner of Police in Burma who was granted a roving commission to apprehend the criminal mastermind. He was later attached to Scotland Yard.
- <sup>41</sup> W.O. Stevens, *Drummer Boy of Burma* (London: Collins, 1946), p.169.
- <sup>42</sup> A British delegation visiting the Burmese royal court in 1826 encountered an entertainer suffering from congenital hypertrichosis ('werewolf syndrome'), or an abnormal amount of body hair. Photographs of this man and his family were subsequently published in magazines and postcards in Britain and France. See John Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava, in the year 1827* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), Vol.1, p.318. Smaun Sing Hpoo was also described on circus posters as 'The only existing miniature man'. See, for example, '1880: The Burmese dwarf "Smaun Sing Hpoo"', *Lost Footsteps*, at <https://lostfootsteps.org/en/history/the-burmese-dwarf-smaun-sing-hpoo>
- <sup>43</sup> See 'The "Champagne-Bottle" Neck: Brass-collared Padaung Women', *The Illustrated London News*, 12 January 1935, p.48. See also J.M. Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p.252, n.58.
- <sup>44</sup> There is some doubt whether Toung Talaung was in fact a genuine 'white' elephant. See Sarah Amato, 'The White Elephant in London: An Episode of Trickery, Racism and Advertising', *Journal of Social History*, Vol.43, No.1, Fall 2009, pp.31-66. The white elephant named Pawah, however, acquired from Burma in 1926, seems to have been a genuine albino. He was the last creature of its kind to be exhibited in the US. See 'Pawah (Pa Wa) and Saw Durmay (Po Win)', at [https://www.elephant.se/database2.php?elephant\\_id=2847](https://www.elephant.se/database2.php?elephant_id=2847)
- <sup>45</sup> See, for example, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus posters produced in 1927, which advertised 'Pawah, The World-Famed Sacred White Elephant from Burma', described as the 'Only Genuine White Elephant Ever Transported from the Mystical East'. Other examples included the 1933 Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Combined Circus posters, which advertised 'Giraffe-Neck Women from Burma'. Similar posters advertising Burma's 'giraffe-neck women' were produced in the US by the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus and in Britain by Bertram Mills' circus.
- <sup>46</sup> C.J.F.S. Forbes, *British Burma and its People, Being Sketches of Native Manners, Customs and Religions* (London: John Murray, 1878), p.83. See also Colonel Pollock and W.S. Thom, *Wild Sports of Burma and Assam* (London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd., 1900), p.14.
- <sup>47</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel, Vol.1*, The Mandalay Edition (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1927), p.204. A prime ingredient in *ngapi* is fermented fish or shrimp paste, hence its strong smell.
- <sup>48</sup> Jonathan Saha, 'Condiments of Colonialism', 27 September 2013, at <https://colonizinganimals.blog/2013/09/27/condiments-of-colonialism/>
- <sup>49</sup> Andrew Selth, 'Colonial-era pulp fiction portrays "technicolor" Myanmar', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 11 July 2016, at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Colonial-era-pulp-fiction-portrays-technicolor-Myanmar?page=1>

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- <sup>50</sup> Edgar Gardner, 'Up Irrawaddy Way', *Weird Tales*, Vol.13, No.4, April 1929.
- <sup>51</sup> O.A. Kline, 'Tam, Son of the Tiger', *Weird Tales*, June-December 1931.
- <sup>52</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (London: Macmillan, 1894); and E.R. Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1912).
- <sup>53</sup> O.A. Kline, Tam, *Son of the Tiger* (US: Pulpville Press, 2009).
- <sup>54</sup> W.H. Miller, 'Jungle Girl', *Oriental Stories*, Vol.11, No.2, Spring 1932, pp.148-74.
- <sup>55</sup> J.S. Fletcher, 'The Burma Ruby', *Mystery Novels Magazine*, Winter 1933. See also J.S. Fletcher, *The Burma Ruby*, New Ninepenny Novels, No.16 (London: Ernest Benn, 1932).
- <sup>56</sup> O.E. Kline and E.H. Price, 'Spotted Satan', *Weird Tales*, Vol.35, No.1, January 1940. This story found an echo in the comics. See 'I Was the Burma Tiger-Man', *My Greatest Adventure*, No.59, September 1961.
- <sup>57</sup> Thomas Barbour, 'Notes on Burma', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Vol.20, No.10, October 1909, p.841.
- <sup>58</sup> C.H. Bartlett, 'Untoured Burma', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Vol.24, No.7, July 1913, pp.835-53; and 'Strange Tribes in the Shan States of Burma', *The National Geographic Magazine*, Vol.58, No.2, August 1930, pp.247-54.
- <sup>59</sup> 'Shy Karens of Lower Burma', *Asia: The American Magazine on the Orient*, Vol.23, No.2, 1923, pp.109-112.
- <sup>60</sup> Frank Kingdon-Ward, 'Into the Unknown Triangle: The Upper Irrawaddy in Burma', *Wide World Magazine*, November 1932.
- <sup>61</sup> 'Burmese Cremate a Monk with Buddhist Festivity', *Life*, Vol.2, No.20, 17 May 1937, pp.51-3.
- <sup>62</sup> *A Maid of Mandalay*, directed by Maurice Costello (Vitagraph Company of America, 1913), *International Movie Database*, at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0222174/>
- <sup>63</sup> Andrew Selth, 'Burma, Hollywood and the Politics of Entertainment', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol.23, No.3, June 2009, pp.321-34.
- <sup>64</sup> Edith Mirante, 'Escapist Entertainment: Hollywood Movies of Burma', *The Irrawaddy*, 1 March 2004, at [https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art\\_id=932&page=1](https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=932&page=1).
- <sup>65</sup> *Mandalay*, directed by Michael Curtiz (Warner Brothers, 1934), *International Movie Database*, at [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0025461/?ref=nm\\_sr\\_srsq\\_0](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0025461/?ref=nm_sr_srsq_0); and *The Girl From Mandalay*, directed by Howard Bretherton (Republic Pictures, 1936), *International Movie Database*, at [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0027673/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0027673/?ref=fn_al_tt_1)
- <sup>66</sup> C.J. Christie, 'British Literary Travellers in Southeast Asia in an Era of Colonial Retreat', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.28, No.4, October 1994, pp.684-5. George Orwell once observed that 'every white man's life in the East was one long struggle not to be laughed at'. See George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant', in *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p.96.
- <sup>67</sup> Kipling, *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches*, p.209.
- <sup>68</sup> 'The Burmese bullock carriage: One of the prettiest conveyances in the East', postcard produced by *The Illustrated Missionary News*, c.1880. See 'Burma Postcards', *Chasing Chintees*, at <http://www.chasingchintees.com/burmese-bullock-carriage/>
- <sup>69</sup> S.L. Keck, 'Picturesque Burma: British Travel Writing 1890-1914', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.35, No.3, October 2004, p.397.
- <sup>70</sup> R. Talbot Kelly, *Burma Painted and Described* (London: A & C. Black, 1905).
- <sup>71</sup> R. Talbot Kelly, *Burma* (London: A & C. Black, 1909).
- <sup>72</sup> Keck, 'Picturesque Burma', p.398.
- <sup>73</sup> 'Picturesque' was an aesthetic ideal introduced into Britain in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that encompassed the 'beautiful' and the 'sublime'. Efforts to represent the 'Far East' played a significant role in encouraging a taste for the picturesque in the West, notably in paintings and landscape gardening. According to Richard Cooler, 'The Cult of the Picturesque acknowledged that merely to enjoy a scene once was insufficient. Every attempt should be made to record the experience to renew it at leisure'. R.M. Cooler, *The Art and Culture of Burma* (DeKalb: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 2010), part 3, at [http://seasite.niu.edu/burmese/Cooler/Chapter\\_4/Part3/post\\_pagan\\_period\\_part\\_3.htm](http://seasite.niu.edu/burmese/Cooler/Chapter_4/Part3/post_pagan_period_part_3.htm)
- <sup>74</sup> Keck, 'Picturesque Burma', p.398.
- <sup>75</sup> Mrs Ernest [Alice] Hart, *Picturesque Burma* (London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1897); V.C. Scott O'Connor, *The Silken East* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1904); and Mitton, *A Bachelor Girl in Burma*.

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- <sup>76</sup> Kline, *Tam, Son of the Tiger*, p.1.
- <sup>77</sup> Between 1932 and 1970, W.E. Johns published 102 books about the intrepid aviator ‘Biggles’. Two more were published posthumously. See Peter Beresford Ellis and Jennifer Schofield, *Biggles! The Life Story of Capt. W.E. Johns* (Godmanstone: Veloce Publishing PLC, 1993), pp.304-6.
- <sup>78</sup> W.E. Johns, *Biggles Flies Again*, reprint of 1934 edition (London: Dean and Son, 1961), p.119 and p.126.
- <sup>79</sup> W.E. Johns, *Biggles and the Lost Sovereigns* (Leicester: Brockhampton, 1964), p.10. See also Andrew Selth, ‘Myanmar, Myeik and mythmaking’, *Nikkei Asian Review*, 16 October 2016, at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Life/Andrew-Selth-Myanmar-Myeik-and-mythmaking?page=1>
- <sup>80</sup> W.E. Johns, *Biggles Air Commodore* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p.94.
- <sup>81</sup> Johns, *Biggles Flies Again*, p.108.
- <sup>82</sup> Andrew Selth, ‘Biggles in Burma: Giving boys what they want’, *Griffith Review*, 27 March 2018, at <https://griffithreview.atavist.com/biggles-in-burma>.
- <sup>83</sup> Selwyn Speight, ‘Warfare in Wild Mountains’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1943, at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/17838468>
- <sup>84</sup> George Johnston, ‘Appalling conditions in N. Burma’, *The Argus*, 30 May 1944, at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/11825064>.
- <sup>85</sup> Selwyn Speight to ‘My darling Joy’, letter from Calcutta, 3 July 1944, National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection, MS6633, Box 1, Folder 3. See also ‘Moon Over Burma’, directed by Louis King (Paramount Pictures, 1940), *International Movie Database*, at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032809/>.
- <sup>86</sup> Johnston, ‘Appalling conditions in N. Burma’.
- <sup>87</sup> D.G.E. Hall, *Europe and Burma* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p.119.
- <sup>88</sup> Atsuko Naono, *State of Vaccination: The Fight Against Smallpox in Colonial Burma* (London: Orient BlackSwan, 2009).
- <sup>89</sup> Rudyard Kipling ‘Cholera Camp’, in *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse: Definitive Edition* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1940), pp.440-1.
- <sup>90</sup> Andrew Selth, ‘The Rats of Rangoon’, *New Mandala*, 29 March 2016, at <https://www.newmandala.org/the-rats-of-rangoon/>; See also Edith Mirante, ‘A plague of epidemics throughout Myanmar history’, *New Mandala*, 1 April 2020, at <https://www.newmandala.org/a-plague-of-epidemics-throughout-myanmar-history/>
- <sup>91</sup> Maung Ba Aung, ‘Why Burma Is Sparsely Populated, a Suggestion’, *Journal of the Burma Research Society* IV, part 2, 1914; and J. Stuart, ‘Why Is Burma Sparsely Peopled?’, *Journal of the Burma Research Society* IV, part 1, 1914, and part V, 1915. See also June Nash and Manning Nash, ‘Marriage, Family and Population Growth in Upper Burma’, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.19, No.3, 1963, pp.251-66.
- <sup>92</sup> J.L. Richell, *Disease and Demography in Colonial Burma* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2006), pp.259-65.
- <sup>93</sup> Frank Owen, *The Campaign in Burma* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1946), p.14.
- <sup>94</sup> George Johnston, *Journey Through Tomorrow*, (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1947), p.368.
- <sup>95</sup> E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.54.
- <sup>96</sup> See, for example, Sheridan Prasso, *The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls and Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).
- <sup>97</sup> Rudyard Kipling, ‘Mandalay’, in *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse*, pp.418-20.
- <sup>98</sup> ‘Barrack Room Ballads, No.10’, *The Scots Observer*, 21 June 1890, p.124.
- <sup>99</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen, 1892), pp.50-3.
- <sup>100</sup> Andrew Selth, ‘Rudyard Kipling and “Mandalay”’, *The Kipling Journal*, Vol.88, No.358, December 2014, pp.47-58.
- <sup>101</sup> Andrew Selth, *Burma, Kipling and Western Music: The Riff from Mandalay* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- <sup>102</sup> On trading cards, postcards and sheet music, Burmese women were sometimes shown in Indian dress, or clothes that seemed to stem mainly from the imaginations of the European illustrators. See, for example, Selth, *Burma, Kipling and Western Music*, p.141. See also ‘Dancing Girls of the World: Mandalay’, cigarette card, William S. Kimball and Company, 1889; and ‘On the Road to Mandalay’, words by Rudyard Kipling, music by Oley Speaks (Cincinnati: The John Church Company, 1907).

- <sup>103</sup> See, for example, Gerald Kelly, 'Burmese Silk', painting of Sao Ohn Nyunt, c.1932; and Ma Theingi, 'Shan princess "returns" to Myanmar', *Myanmar Times*, 13-19 June 2011, at <http://www.mmmtimes.com/2011/timeout/579/timeout57901.html>.
- <sup>104</sup> Cited in Derek Hudson, *For Love of Painting: The Life of Sir Gerald Kelly* (London: Peter Davies, 1975), p.36.
- <sup>105</sup> *Sati* (or *suttee*) was the custom, outlawed in India by the British in 1829, which required widows to immolate themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. *Purdah*, from the Persian for 'curtain', was the religious and social practice of female seclusion common among Muslim communities. This took the forms both of physical isolation and the adoption of clothes that concealed the female face and form.
- <sup>106</sup> J.D. Knowles, *Memoir of Ann H. Judson, Missionary to Burmah* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1855), p.111. Judson went on to say, however, that 'they treat the women as an inferior order of beings'.
- <sup>107</sup> Forbes, *British Burma and its People*, p.55.
- <sup>108</sup> Scott, *The Burman*, p.52. Burmese women were granted the vote in 1922. In Britain, most women over 30 were granted the right to vote in 1918, but full women's suffrage was not achieved until 1928.
- <sup>109</sup> Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011).
- <sup>110</sup> Scott, *The Burman*, p.61.
- <sup>111</sup> Gascoigne, *Among Pagodas and Fair Ladies*, p.43.
- <sup>112</sup> Rudyard Kipling, 'Georgie Porgie', in *Life's Handicap: Being Stories of Mine Own People* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), pp.331-2.
- <sup>113</sup> Alleyne Ireland, *The Province of Burma* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1907), Vol.1, pp.61-2.
- <sup>114</sup> W.G. Burchett, *Democracy with a Tommy-Gun* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1946), p.28.
- <sup>115</sup> W.N. Willis, *Western Men with Eastern Morals* (London: Stanley Paul and Co., 1913), p.196.
- <sup>116</sup> Kipling, 'Mandalay', pp.418-20.
- <sup>117</sup> C.T. Paske, *Life and Travel in Lower Burmah: A Retrospect* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1892), p.45.
- <sup>118</sup> Maung Htin Aung, 'George Orwell and Burma', *Asian Affairs*, Vol.1, No.1, 1970, p.21.
- <sup>119</sup> Pollock and Thom, *Wild Sports of Burma and Assam*, p.9.
- <sup>120</sup> Douglas Kerr, *Eastern Figures: Orient and Empire in British Writing* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), p.2.
- <sup>121</sup> H. Fielding Hall, *A People at School* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1906).
- <sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Cooper, *The Harim and the Purdah: Studies of Oriental Women* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1915), p.198; and Kipling, *From Sea to Sea*, p.205.
- <sup>123</sup> E.C. Browne, *The Coming of the Great Queen: A Narrative of the Acquisition of Burma* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1888), p.287.
- <sup>124</sup> Gascoigne, *Among Pagodas and Fair Ladies*, p.56.
- <sup>125</sup> 'Ma Hla-Byn (Miss Pretty and Fair)', postcard by Raphael Tuck and Sons, London, c.1905, *Paper Jewels*, at <https://www.paperjewels.org/postcard/ma-hla-byn-miss-pretty-and-fair>
- <sup>126</sup> Mitton, *A Bachelor Girl in Burma*, p.52.
- <sup>127</sup> Willis, *Western Men with Eastern Morals*, p.101.
- <sup>128</sup> 'Civilisation', postcard No.459 by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, c.1910.
- <sup>129</sup> See, for example, Mallek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). Alloula makes the point that many of the native girls depicted in risqué French postcards around this time were orphans and prostitutes paid to pose for the photographer. Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, p.17.
- <sup>130</sup> Paul Edmonds, *Peacocks and Pagodas* (New York: Dutton and Co., 1925), p.32.
- <sup>131</sup> 'S.W. Monsoon Gale', postcard No.460 by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, c.1910. 'Gale', or *galay*, means 'young', in this case a young girl (*min galay*). There is another Ahuja postcard (no.401, c.1910) titled 'Self-admiration', in which a girl is seen standing in front of a mirror with one breast exposed. The *sari* and anklet she is wearing, however, suggests that she is Indian, not Burmese. (Before the British Raj imposed restrictions on female dress, many Indian women wore saris without *choli* or blouses). A few other Ahuja postcards showed bare-breasted women, but these were from ethnic minorities such as the Wa, Mro, Kami and Andamese. See, for example 'Wild Tribes - Upper Burma', D.A. Ahuja postcard No.157, c.1910. These images seem to have been justified by what scholars later dubbed the 'ethnographical alibi'. See



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Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, p.52; and ‘Burma Postcards’, *Chasing Chinthes*, at <http://www.chasingchinthes.com/>

<sup>132</sup> R.B. Thurber, *In the Land of Pagodas* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1921), p.80.

<sup>133</sup> David Gilmour, *The British in India: Three Centuries of Ambition and Experience* (London: Penguin, 2018), p.292.

<sup>134</sup> David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), p.285.

<sup>135</sup> Kipling, ‘Georgie Porgie’, in *Life’s Handicap*, pp. 328-39.

<sup>136</sup> W. Somerset Maugham, ‘Masterson’, in W. Somerset Maugham, *Collected Short Stories, Volume 4* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.267.

<sup>137</sup> Frank Harris, *My Life and Loves*, edited with an introduction by John F. Gallagher (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p.896. The fifth volume of Harris’s autobiography, first published in 1954, was largely ghost-written by the editor Alexander Trocchi. However, this particular passage appears genuine. See also James Campbell, *Exiled in Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, and Others on the Left Bank* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp.146-7.

<sup>138</sup> Pablo Neruda was posted to Rangoon in 1927 as the Honorary Consul for Chile. Fearing that he would abandon her (which he eventually did), his Burmese mistress threatened him with a knife — and inspired the poem ‘Tango del viudo’ (‘Widower’s Tango’) (1928). See Seamus Martov, ‘Neruda’s Burmese Days’, *The Irrawaddy*, 15 June 2015, at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/culture/nerudas-burmese-days.html>

<sup>139</sup> George Orwell (whose real name was Eric Blair) was a member of the Indian Imperial Police in Burma between 1922 and 1927. *Burmese Days* was first published by Harper and Brothers in New York, in 1934).

<sup>140</sup> Bates spent time in Burma and India in 1945. See H.E. Bates, *The Jacaranda Tree* (London: Michael Joseph, 1949).

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, Gordon Howson, *Collecting Cigarette and Trade Cards* (London: New Cavendish Books, 1995), pp.14-15.

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, Saowapha Viravong, ‘Thai cigarette cards’, *New Mandala*, 20 September 2012, at <https://www.newmandala.org/thai-cigarette-cards/>

<sup>143</sup> Andrew Selth ‘Colonial Burma, as seen through collectible cards’, *Nikkei Asian Review*, 11 March 2016, at <https://asia.nikkei.com/NAR/Articles/Andrew-Selth-Colonial-Burma-as-seen-through-collectible-cards>

<sup>144</sup> ‘Burmese Girl’, trade card by McLaughlin’s XXXX Coffee, Chicago, c.1880; and ‘Devotees throwing themselves beneath the white elephants feet’, trade card by McLaughlin’s XXXX Coffee, Chicago, c.1880. In Burma, people do not throw themselves under the feet of sacred elephants, although it was said that, when he took the throne in 1879, King Thibaw executed many of his rivals and relatives by sewing them in red velvet sacks and having them trampled to death by elephants. Morgan, *Fire and Blood*, p.81.

<sup>145</sup> For more on this subject, see Andrew Selth, ‘Foreigners, fighting and phaleristics: Military medals in British Burma’, *Tea Circle*, 23 December 2019, at <https://teacircleoxford.com/2019/12/23/foreigners-fighting-and-phaleristics-military-medals-in-british-burma/>

<sup>146</sup> ‘The Burma Rifles’, Player’s Cigarettes, Military Uniforms of the British Empire Overseas series, No.41, 1938; and ‘Native Constable, Burma’, Cope’s Cigarettes, The World’s Police series, No.17, 1937.

<sup>147</sup> The series of 25 cards reproduced black and white photographs of Burmese women in traditional dress. These cards appear designed for inclusion in its packets of ‘Polo’ cigarettes, which were sold in Burma.

<sup>148</sup> See, for example, ‘Burma: Carriage and pair of oxen’, Ogden’s Cigarettes, Modes of Conveyance series, No.7, 1927.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, ‘Home of a Kachin Chief, Burmah’, Player’s Cigarettes, British Empire series, 1904.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Burma’, Diamantine trade card (1910), and ‘Rangoon’, Gartmann trade card, series no.405, c.1920.

<sup>151</sup> These six cards depicted a dance in the royal palace, a ‘butterfly’ dance, a street market, a Karen funeral, a Kachin village and Burmese worshipping *nats* (spirits). English, French, German and Italian versions were produced, all in 1909. In 1888, Liebig also issued a card depicting a Burmese war canoe, as part of another series.

<sup>152</sup> A Typhoo Tea card produced in 1933, for example, called Rangoon ‘The City of the Golden Pagoda’. A card in the ‘Ports of the World’ series, produced by the Mills cigarette company around 1959, described the city as ‘a strange blend of the ancient East and the modern West’.

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- <sup>153</sup> See, for example, 'Kyaik-Ti-Yo Pagoda, Burma', W.D. and H.O. Wills cigarette card, 1926; and 'Sampan Pagoda', Sweettule Junior Service cigarette card, Wonders of the World series No.9, 1956.
- <sup>154</sup> See, for example, J.R. Andrus, *Burmese Economic Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1948).
- <sup>155</sup> Andrew Selth, 'Burma after forty years: Still unlike any land you know', *Griffith Review*, 26 April 2016, at <https://www.griffithreview.com/wp-content/uploads/Selth.Burma.Essay.Final.set.pdf>
- <sup>156</sup> 'Rubies: Mines at Mogok, Burma', Ringer's Cigarettes, Mining series No.40, 1916; and 'Rubies: Sorters at work, Burma', Ringer's Cigarettes, Mining series No.41, 1916.
- <sup>157</sup> 'Rice growing', Godfrey Philips, Empire Industries series, No.20, 1927; 'Teak felling' Godfrey Philips, Empire Industries series, No.18, 1927.
- <sup>158</sup> It has been estimated that between 1890 and 1918 hundreds of millions of postcards were produced. In 1908 alone, an estimated 860 million cards were reported as passing through the British post. Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p.114.
- <sup>159</sup> Mathur, *India by Design*, p.116.
- <sup>160</sup> Steven Patterson, 'Postcards from the Raj', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol.40, No.2, 2006, p.146.
- <sup>161</sup> Patterson, 'Postcards from the Raj', p.143.
- <sup>162</sup> Stephen Constantine, *Buy and Build: The Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1986), plates 27 and 28.
- <sup>163</sup> The Bibby Line was founded in 1807 and from 1890 was the primary carrier of passengers and cargo between Britain and Burma. See E.W. Paget-Tomlinson, *Bibby Line: 175 Years of Achievement* (Liverpool: Bibby Line, 1982), pp.11-16.
- <sup>164</sup> The British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) was created in 1939, when it inherited the Imperial Airways flying boat services to the British colonies in Asia and Africa. Imperial Airways' first flight from Britain to Singapore via Burma (with stops in Akyab and Rangoon) took place in 1930. It inaugurated a regular mail service to Rangoon from London in 1933. BOAC was the first commercial airline to introduce passenger jets in 1952, prompting a new advertising campaign that emphasised this mode of transport.
- <sup>165</sup> The latter was part of a series of posters produced by Pan Am in the 1960s, showing women from many different countries.
- <sup>166</sup> Q.R. Skrabec, *H.J. Heinz: A Biography* (London: MacFarland and Company, 2009), p.177.
- <sup>167</sup> Lizzie Collingham, *Curry: A Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005), pp.149-50. See also C.A. Coppin and Jack High, *The Politics of Purity: Harvey Washington Wiley and the Origins of Federal Food Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp.156-7. The case against 'Mandalay Sauce' was eventually dropped, but not before five cases of 'India Relish', another Heinz product charged with false labelling, were seized by the authorities.
- <sup>168</sup> Burma Sauce was immortalised on a collectible thimble made by the Fenton China Company of Stoke-on-Trent, complete with the product's famous slogan, 'The only sauce I dare give father'.
- <sup>169</sup> After its introduction in 1964, a popular colour for Ford motor vehicles (particularly Mustangs) was 'Rangoon Red'. It is not known how this shade came to be named, although it may have been in response to the release by Pontiac in 1959 of a 'Mandalay Red' Bonneville convertible.
- <sup>170</sup> See, for example, Collingham, *Curry*.
- <sup>171</sup> Mona Domosh, *American Commodities in an Age of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.174.
- <sup>172</sup> Kipling, 'Mandalay', pp.418-20.
- <sup>173</sup> Saha, 'Condiments of Colonialism'.
- <sup>174</sup> These distinctive colours were created using uranium oxide with a tincture of gold added. The surface was finished with acid to give it a satin look.
- <sup>175</sup> See Robert Reed, 'The Beauty That Was Burmese Glass', at <https://antiqueshoppefl.com/archives/rreed/burmese.htm>
- <sup>176</sup> See 'Maison Burma', at <https://en.bijouxburma.com/pages/history>
- <sup>177</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *A History of the Burmah Oil Company, 1886-1924* (London: Heinemann, 1983) ; and T.A.B. Corley, *A History of the Burmah Oil Company, Volume II, 1924-1966* (London: Heinemann, 1988)
- <sup>178</sup> This figurine, in the 'Children of all Nations' series, has been variously labelled 'Burmah', 'Burma boy' and 'Burman'. The Royal Worcester catalogue number is 3068.

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- <sup>179</sup> Frank Rowsome, *The Verse by the Side of the Road: The Story of the Burma-Shave Signs and Jingles* (Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1966), p.12.
- <sup>180</sup> Somerset Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1930), p.27.
- <sup>181</sup> Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, p.27.
- <sup>182</sup> Each range had distinctive decorations, but most featured elaborate flower motifs, or scrolls. Royal Albert's 'Mandalay' tableware featured a colourful butterfly. Sakura produced three lines in plain colours, under the names 'Mandalay Brown', 'Mandalay Moss' and 'Mandalay Blue'. In the 1960s, the British firm Broadhurst produced stoneware under the name 'Mandalay', decorated with stripes and geometric designs.
- <sup>183</sup> See, for example, Austin Kendall, 'The Participation of India and Burma in the British Empire Exhibition, 1924', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol.71, No.3689, 3 August 1923, p.654.
- <sup>184</sup> *The Times*, 5 May 1896.
- <sup>185</sup> 'Burmese Village at the Crystal Palace', *The Morning Post*, 5 May 1896.
- <sup>186</sup> See, for example, 'Burma', two cigarette cards by J.A. Patreiuoux, British Empire Exhibition series No.6 and No.28, 1929.
- <sup>187</sup> See, for example, 'Burma, British Empire Exhibition, Wembley', colour postcard by Photochrom, London and Tunbridge Wells, 1924; and 'British Empire Exhibition, Wembley: The Beautiful Carved Palace and Shrine', sepia photograph by Beagles Postcards, London, 1924.
- <sup>188</sup> 'British Empire Exhibition', Charles E. Flower, Raphael Tuck and Sons, Oilette Post Card No.3512, Series 2, London, 1924.
- <sup>189</sup> See 'British Empire Exhibition', *Pinterest*, at <https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/222365300331501111/> <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=1924+exhibition+burma+poster&tbm=isch&source=univ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj5mseg5KfmAhXl4zgGHdchAZkQsAR6BAgKEAE&biw=1920&bih=1057>
- <sup>190</sup> 'The Burmese Pavilion', cigarette card by Steven Mitchell and Son, Empire Exhibition, Glasgow, Scotland series, No.23, 1938.
- <sup>191</sup> Most of Marryat's collection had been acquired during his service as a Royal Navy officer in Burma during the First Anglo-Burmese War. It included a royal throne, a state carriage, numerous Buddha images and a variety of Burmese weapons. See 'Collection online', *The British Museum*, at [https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=251178&page=1&partId=1&searchText=Healer%20Buddha](https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=251178&page=1&partId=1&searchText=Healer%20Buddha). Also of interest is Alexandra Green, 'From India to Independence: The formation of the Burma collection at the British Museum', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol.28, No.3, 2016, pp.449-63.
- <sup>192</sup> Ralph Isaacs, 'Captain Marryat's Burmese Collection and the Rath, or Burmese Imperial State Carriage', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol.17, No.1, 2005, pp.45-71; and Ralph Isaacs, 'Marryat's Burmese Curiosities: A second look', *Journal of the History of Collections*, Vol.22, No.1, 2010, pp.69-79.
- <sup>193</sup> Nicky Levell, *Oriental Visions: Exhibitions, Travel and Collecting in the Victorian Age* (London: The Horniman Museum and Gardens, 2000), p.273.
- <sup>194</sup> Levell, *Oriental Visions*, p.14.
- <sup>195</sup> J.M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.101.
- <sup>196</sup> Levell, *Oriental Visions*, p.11.
- <sup>197</sup> Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.100.
- <sup>198</sup> Maung Htin Aung, 'Foreword', in H.G. Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes: Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p.xi.
- <sup>199</sup> Ann Judson, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire* (London: Butterworth and Son, 1823), p.87.
- <sup>200</sup> Henry Gouger, *A Personal Narrative of Two Years' Imprisonment in Burma, 1824-1826* (London: John Murray, 1860).
- <sup>201</sup> Trager, *Burma Through Alien Eyes*, p.xii and ppp.190-1.
- <sup>202</sup> Judson, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire*, p.224.
- <sup>203</sup> Selth, *Burma, Kipling and Western Music*, pp.35-51. See also Andrew Selth, 'Singing in the Monsoon: Hymns in Colonial Burma', *The Hymn Society Bulletin* 290, Vol.21, No.9, Winter 2017.

<sup>204</sup> J.J. Franklin, 'The Life of the Buddha in Victorian England', *ELH*, Vol.72, No.4, Winter 2005, p.941. See also Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia, or The Great Renunciation* (London: Trubner and Co., 1879).

<sup>205</sup> Kipling, 'Mandalay', pp. 418-20.

<sup>206</sup> P.L. Caracciolo, 'Buddhist Teaching Stories and Their Influence on Conrad, Wells and Kipling: The reception of the Jataka and allied genres in Victorian culture', *The Conradian*, Vol.11, No.1, May 1986, p.30.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example, 'Great Reclining Buddha at Wingaba, Rangoon', Rowe and Company postcard, 1900; and 'The Great Buddha at Pegu', Anstie's Cigarettes card, The World's Wonders series No.36, c.1915.

<sup>208</sup> According to the 1901 official census, for example, there were about 991,000 urban dwellers in Burma, compared with 9,500,000 living in rural districts, a ratio of about 1:10. Naing Oo, 'Urbanisation and Economic Development in Burma', *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Vol.4, No.2, August 1989, p.235.

<sup>209</sup> See, for example, 'Elephant working timber', 'Elephant hauling logs' and 'Elephant piling teak', three postcards by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, No.38 (c.1910), No.110 (c.1910) and No.112 (c.1913) respectively; and 'Burmese buffalo cart', postcard by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, No.29, 1917. See also 'A Burmese Carriage', John Player cigarette card, British Empire series No.2, 1904; and 'Home of a Kachin Chief, Burmah', Wills and Co. cigarette card, British Empire series No.37, 1904.

<sup>210</sup> E.A. Richings, 'The Irrawaddy', in Esther Singleton (ed), *Great Rivers of the World: As Seen and Described by Famous Writers* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1908), p.144.

<sup>211</sup> See, for example, *Typical Photographs of Burma: Burmese Life and Scenes* (Rangoon: Rowe and Co., 1900); *Living Burmah: An Album of Thirty-Six Views of the Country and Its People* (Rangoon: Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Co., c.1910); Mrs Ernest Muriel, *Glimpses of Burmah*, (Rangoon: Rowe and Co., c.1910); and F.M. Muriel and RG.J. Swinhoe, *Pictures from Lotus Land* (Rangoon: Rowe and Co., 1924).

<sup>212</sup> See 'Burma teak' (3 annas), 'Burma rice' (3 annas, 6 pies) and 'River Irrawaddy' (8 annas), Burma Postage, issued 1 April 1937. The Stanley Gibbons catalogue reference numbers are 7, 8 and 11. On 1 April 1937, Burma formally separated from India and became a crown colony in its own right.

<sup>213</sup> Although built on the site of a Burmese town, Rangoon was essentially a British creation laid out according to a grid pattern and constructed in the decades following the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852). See B.R. Pearn, *A History of Rangoon* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1939).

<sup>214</sup> N.F. Singer, *Burmah: A Photographic Journey, 1855-1925* (Gartmore: Kiscadale, 1993); and John Falconer, 'Cameras at the Golden Foot: Nineteenth Century Photographers in Burma', in John Falconer, et al, *Seven Days in Myanmar: A Portrait of Burma by 30 Great Photographers* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2014), pp.13-36. Also useful are Wong Hong Suen, 'Picturing Burma: Felice Beato's Photographs of Burma, 1886-1905', *History of Photography*, Vol.32, No.1, pp.1-26; and Olga Tsara, 'Linnaeus Trip's Views of Burma', *The La Trobe Journal*, Issue 79, 22 September 2007.

<sup>215</sup> Paul Theroux, 'Introduction', in Alan Beukers, *Exotic Postcards: The Lure of Distant Lands* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), p.11.

<sup>216</sup> See, for example, 'The Secretariat – Rangoon', 'Chief Court – Burma' and 'General Post Office, Rangoon', three postcards by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, No.306 (c.1910), No.110 (c.1910) and No.390 (c.1913) respectively;

<sup>217</sup> 'Burma Railway. Locomotive', Lambert and Butler cigarette card, 'World's Locomotives' series, No.4A, 1913.

<sup>218</sup> They were built in 1899 and 1934 respectively. See, for example, 'The Goteik Viaduct, Burma', postcard by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, No.39 (c.1910).

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, 'Entrance, Shwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon' and 'Mandalay, The Palace. King Theebaw's Sitting Room', two postcards by D.A. Ahuja, Rangoon, No.496 (c.1910) and No.34 (c.1910), respectively. Ahuja started out as Kundundass and Company in 1885, but changed the firm's name to his own in 1900. He bought out the Watts and Skeen studio, and acquired the rights to many other photographs, getting them hand-tinted and printed in Germany to the highest standards of the day. See Mandy Sadan, 'The Historical Visual Economy of Photography in Burma', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol.170, No.2-3, 2014, pp.281-312 ; See also Nikhil Pandhi, 'How an Indian played a crucial part in preserving Burma's history for posterity', *Scroll-in*, at <https://scroll.in/article/720469/how-an-indian-played-a-crucial-part-in-preserving-burmas-history-for-posterity>

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- <sup>220</sup> Mathur, *India by Design*, pp.116-132.
- <sup>221</sup> S.L. Keck, *British Burma in the New Century, 1895-1918* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.2.
- <sup>222</sup> G.F. Abbott, *Through India with The Prince* (London: E. Arnold, 1906), p.211.
- <sup>223</sup> Arley Munson, *Kipling's India* (London: Eveleigh Nash Company, 1916), p.179.
- <sup>224</sup> Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1951), p.91.
- <sup>225</sup> There were race riots in Rangoon in 1930, 1931 and 1938. The 'Saya San' rebellion spread throughout central Burma between 1930 and 1932. The modern nationalist movement arose around 1917 and by the 1930s was becoming increasingly active.
- <sup>226</sup> Rudyard Kipling, 'The White Man's Burden (The United States and the Philippine Islands)' (1899), in *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, pp.323-4.
- <sup>227</sup> E.C. Browne, *The Coming of the Great Queen: A Narrative of the Acquisition of Burma* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1888), p.247.
- <sup>228</sup> Orwell, *Burmese Days*, p.36. See also Michael Mann, "'Torchbearers on the Path of Progress": Britain's Ideology of a "Moral and Material Progress" in India: An Introductory Essay', in Harald Fischer-Tine and Michael Mann (eds), *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), pp.1-26.
- <sup>229</sup> Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience. From 1765 to the Present* (London: Harper and Collins, 1996), p.140.
- <sup>230</sup> Most Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders fought in the air above, or seas surrounding, Burma, not in the land forces. Others were there as prisoners of war. See, for example, *Australians on the Burma-Thailand Railway, 1942-43* (Canberra: Australian Government, Department of Veterans Affairs, 2003).
- <sup>231</sup> Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster Into Triumph, 1942-45* (London: The Bodley Head, 2010), p.1.
- <sup>232</sup> This is the thesis, for example, of Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941-45* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1984).
- <sup>233</sup> The picture painted was not always accurate. For example, a calendar produced by the American Tar Company of Seattle in 1945 rightly claimed that 'Monsoons and Mandalay have brought fame to Burma, lush tropical country of Indo-China'. However, the accompanying illustration of 'A Temple in Burma' showed a structure unlike any found in that country. The same picture, painted by the British water-colourist Noel Leaver, was used on an ink blotter produced by the US firm Brown and Bigelow in 1953. Again described as 'A Temple in Burma', it carried the caption 'Her petroleum, rice, forests, undeveloped resources assure Burma a strong position in Asia's destiny'.
- <sup>234</sup> Clare Boothe, 'Burma Mission' (Part 1), *Life*, 15 June 1942, p.100.
- <sup>235</sup> Andrew Selth, *Australia's Relations with Colonial Burma, 1886-1947*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Working Paper No.89 (Monash University, Clayton, 1994), p.9.
- <sup>236</sup> The Burma Road, from Lashio to Kunming, was renamed the Ledo road after it was connected to Ledo on the Indian border in 1944. It was also known as the Stilwell Road, named after the US general who was second-in-command of Southeast Asia Command.
- <sup>237</sup> A *chinthe* is a leogryph, or lion-like creature, almost always depicted in pairs, usually at the entrances to pagodas. See, for example, the cover of *The War Illustrated*, Vol.8, No.198, 19 January 1945; and the 'chinthe' matchbox labels produced by Sweden's Burma Match Company for sale in Burma before the war. The latter is discussed in Andrew Selth, 'Colonial Burma, history and phillumeny', *New Mandala*, 24 May 2016, at <https://www.newmandala.org/colonial-burma-history-and-phillumeny/>
- <sup>238</sup> Geoffrey Gorer, *Burmese Psychology* (Washington: US Office of War Information, 1943), p.35.
- <sup>239</sup> Summarised by A.L. Kroeber in *Anthropology: Race, Language, Culture, Psychology, Prehistory* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1948), p.589.
- <sup>240</sup> Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p.589.
- <sup>241</sup> Andrew Selth, 'Geoffrey Gorer and the Study of Burma's "Personality"', *The Journal of Burma Studies*, Vol.24, No.2, 2020 (forthcoming).
- <sup>242</sup> Peter Mandler, *Return From the Natives: How Margaret Mead Won the Second World War and Lost the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p.76.

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<sup>243</sup> The handbook included chapters titled 'Meet the People' and 'The Way of the Burmese' which made several sweeping and simplistic statements about the character of the local population. *A Pocket Guide to Burma* (Washington: War and Navy Departments, April 1944), pp.8-17 and pp.20-23.

<sup>244</sup> Geoffrey Gorer, *Burmese Personality* (New York: Institute of Intercultural Relations, 1943) (mimeographed).

<sup>245</sup> See, for example, M.E. Spiro, 'Violence in Burmese History: A Psychocultural Explanation', in J.F. Short and M.E. Wolfgang (eds), *Collective Violence* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), pp.186-91; and L.W. Pye, *Politics, Personality and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p.179.

<sup>246</sup> Josef Silverstein, 'Burma Through the Prism of Western Novels', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, p.129.

<sup>247</sup> 'Glossies' was the name commonly given to the more expensive magazines printed on thick, shiny paper, the better to carry photographs and other illustrations.

<sup>248</sup> Andrew Selth, 'Burma and the Comics, Part 1: Wars and rumours of wars', *NewMandala*, 9 August 2016, at <http://www.newmandala.org/burma-comics-wars-rumors-wars/>; and 'Burma and the Comics: Part 2: Heroines, heroes and villains', *NewMandala*, 10 August 2016, at <http://www.newmandala.org/heroines-heroes-villains/>.

<sup>249</sup> See E.L. Rasor, *The China-Burma-India Campaign, 1931-45: Historiography and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), pp. 86-8.

<sup>250</sup> D.C. Eyre, *Foxes Have Holes* (London: Robert Hale, 1949); and T.T. Chamales, *Never So Few* (London: Allan Wingate, 1958).

<sup>251</sup> Walter Baxter, *Look Down in Mercy* (London: Heinemann, 1951).

<sup>252</sup> H.E. Bates, *The Jacaranda Tree* (London: Michael Joseph, 1949); and Francis Clifford, *A Battle is Fought to be Won* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960).

<sup>253</sup> Michio Takeyama, *The Harp of Burma (Biruma no Tategato)*, translated by Howard Hibbert (Rutland: Tuttle, 1966). Although he had never been to Burma, Takeyama managed to paint a convincing portrait of the country, by speaking to veterans who had fought there. In 1956, a film by Kon Ichikawa based on the book won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, ensuring the wide distribution of both the film and the book in the West.

<sup>254</sup> Silverstein, 'Burma Through the Prism of Western Novels', p.139.

<sup>255</sup> The French also produced some war comics about Burma, such as 'Attaque en Birmanie' (Paris: Dupuis, 1977). However, the bulk came from Britain and the US. The French tended to favour graphic novels. See Andrew Selth, 'Graphic novels chart Myanmar's history', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 1 April 2018, at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Graphic-novels-chart-Myanmar-s-history>

<sup>256</sup> J.H. Williams, 'Elephant Man from Burma', *Men*, Vol.3, No.10, October 1954; 'How Merrill's Brave Marauders Were Sold Down the River', *Male*, October 1962; and Ben Giordano, '16,000,000 in Rubies and It's Still There!', *Real Men*, April 1964.

<sup>257</sup> 'Flesh-Feast for the Beasts of Burma', *Man's Conquest*, May 1957.

<sup>258</sup> 'I Led the Airborne Nymphs of Burma', *World of Men*, Vol.2, No2, June 1962; and Leon Lazarus, 'Yank Who Led Burma's Nude Nymph Commandos', *For Men Only*, April 1964.

<sup>259</sup> Carl Sherman, 'He Lived with the Devil Love Worshipers of North Burma', *True Action*, Vol.14, No.6, November 1969.

<sup>260</sup> George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (New York: Popular Library, 1952).

<sup>261</sup> E.S. Aarons, *Assignment Burma Girl* (London: Frederick Muller, 1962).

<sup>262</sup> F. Van Wyck Mason, *Trouble in Burma* (New York: Pocket Books, 1963).

<sup>263</sup> Charles De Verteuil, *The House of Bamboo* (London: Panther, 1962).

<sup>264</sup> See, for example, 'Special Force Burma', *War Picture Library*, No.13, 1 March 1959; and 'Air Commando', *War Picture Library*, No.52, 1 June 1960.

<sup>265</sup> James Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), p. See also John Wagner and Mike Western, *Darkie's Mob* (London: Titan Books, 2011).

<sup>266</sup> See, for example, 'Breakthrough on the Burma trail', *Commando Adventures*, No.1, June 1957; 'Battler Britton and the Burma Buccaneers', *Thriller Picture Library*, No.200, 1957; and 'Burma Patrol', *Combat Picture Library*, No.33, February 1961.

- <sup>267</sup> Robert Kanigher, Sam Glanzman and Murray Boltinoff, 'Dead Winner', *G.I. Combat: The Mercenaries*, Vol.1, No.286, November 1986.
- <sup>268</sup> The first Phantom comic was published by Lee Falk in the US in 1936.
- <sup>269</sup> Jim Shepherd and Glenn Ford, 'The Search for Byron', *The Phantom*, No.1131, 1996.
- <sup>270</sup> *Ripley's Believe it or Not!*, No.3, January 1954.
- <sup>271</sup> Ripley, *Believe it or Not!* (Orlando: Ripley Entertainment Inc., 2004). As the magazine stated, the name was cited in *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, translated and published by Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce (Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1960), p.111. However, the chronicle did not specify that everyone had to use this formal name all the time.
- <sup>272</sup> 'Balanced golden pagoda in Myanmar seemingly defies gravity', *Ripley's Believe it or Not*, 12 December 2016, at <https://www.ripleys.com/weird-news/balanced-golden-boulder/>
- <sup>273</sup> 'The Disappearing Tradition of the Lai Tu Chin Tribe', *Ripley's Believe it or Not*, 16 August 2016, at <https://www.ripleys.com/weird-news/lai-tu-chin-tribe/>
- <sup>274</sup> This is not to forget the popular film *Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), directed by David Lean for Horizon Pictures (*International Movie Database*, at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0050212/>). Although based on a fictional story and set in Thailand, the film's association with the 'death railway' from Ban Pong in Thailand to Thanbyuzayat in Burma helped strengthen several myths about the war in the CBI theatre.
- <sup>275</sup> Win Min Than (also known as Helga Johnston) became a pinup for many Western men, but was rated less highly by Western women after she told interviewers that she could not pursue an acting career because her first duty was to care for her husband. See also 'Win Min Than', *International Movie Database*, at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0857008/bio>
- <sup>276</sup> I.C. Jarvie, 'Fanning the Flames: Anti-American Reaction to "Objective Burma"', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol.1, No.2, 1981, 117-37.
- <sup>277</sup> *Escape to Burma*, directed by Allan Dwan (Benedict Bogeaus Production, 1955), *International Movie Database*, at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048044/>
- <sup>278</sup> The 1948 and 1953 issues were typical. The latter included a 1 kyat note (depicting rice boats on the Irrawaddy River), 5 kyat note (women spinning silk), 10 kyat note (elephants hauling teak) and 100 kyat note (farmers ploughing their paddy fields). In 1958, a 20 kyat note was issued, showing women planting paddy.
- <sup>279</sup> For details, see O.W. Linzmayer, *The Banknote Book: Burma*, at <https://banknotenews.com/?p=9099>
- <sup>280</sup> See, for example, 'Rice planting' (2 annas, 6 pies) in 1949 and 'Rice farmer' (15 pyas) in 1966. See also Andrew Selth, 'Burma puts its stamp on the world: Philately and foreign policy', *The Interpreter*, 7 January 2014, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/burma-puts-its-stamp-world-philately-and-foreign-policy>; and Andrew Selth, 'Myanmar: Postage stamps and political signals', *The Interpreter*, 30 September 2019, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/myanmar-postage-stamps-political%20signals>
- <sup>281</sup> For example, *Beyond Rangoon*, directed by John Boorman and released in 1995, was the first feature film about Burma, in English, since *Merrill's Marauders* in 1962. See Appendix 3, 'English Language Films About Burma', in Andrew Selth, *Burma (Myanmar) Since the 1988 Uprising: A Select Bibliography* (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2018), pp.161-6.
- <sup>282</sup> Andrew Selth, 'Modern Burma Studies: A Survey of the Field', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.44, No.2, March 2010, pp.408-13.
- <sup>283</sup> 'Inauguration', *The Billboard*, 31 January 1953, at <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=KQsEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA47&lpg=PA47&dq=chicago+world+fair+burma&source=bl&ots=28dFpgSxNa&sig=ACfU3U17maeWb3WpeMfdsjRQxJbj23pBWw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi157327r3mAhUJ6XMBHecdDKgQ6AEwFnoECAyQAQ#v=onepage&q=chicago%20world%20fair%20burma&f=false>
- <sup>284</sup> See, for example, 'Mandalay: The Game of a Lifetime', by Fortune Games of Dallas, Texas, 1960. The game, which required players to loop rings over a selection of plastic spikes, claimed to present 'one of the mysteries concerning life and times that have come to us from the ancient East'.
- <sup>285</sup> See, for example, 'Burma / Mandalay Palace', Jigsaw Puzzle – 1000 pieces, Mary Evans Picture Library, Prints Online.
- <sup>286</sup> The horse was a gift from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It did not come from Burma.

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<sup>287</sup> The rubies were originally part of a necklace given to the queen as a wedding present in 1947. They were credited with protecting her from the 96 illnesses that can afflict the human body. See ‘The Burmese Ruby Tiara’, *The Court Jeweller*, 22 April 2017, at <http://www.thecourtjeweller.com/2017/04/the-burmese-ruby-tiara.html>

<sup>288</sup> One such occasion was a state dinner given in honour of visiting US president Donald Trump. Layla Ilichi, ‘The Story Behind the Ruby Tiara Queen Elizabeth II Wore to Meet President Trump’, *WWD*, 4 June 2019, at <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/queen-elizabeth-ruby-tiara-hidden-meaning-trump-1203149753/>

<sup>289</sup> Mandalay Pictures, part of Peter Guber’s Mandalay Entertainment Group, was founded in 1995.

<sup>290</sup> David Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.39-40. See also Andrew Selth, ‘Aung San Suu Kyi and Kipling’s Burma’, *The Interpreter*, 31 October 2014, at <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/aung-san-suu-kyi-and-kiplings-burma>.

<sup>291</sup> See, for example, ‘Burmah’, *The Times*, 10 March 1879; and ‘Editorial’, *The Times*, 24 March 1879. Also useful is Rachatapong Malithong, ‘News from “Burmah” : The Role of the English Press in the Making of the British Empire in Burma’, Thesis presented to The University of Manchester for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Humanities, 2018, pp.145-8.

<sup>292</sup> See, for example, *The Wonders of the World: A Popular and Authentic Account of the Marvels of Nature and of Man as They Exist Today*, by Eminent Travellers (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1910), Vol.1.

<sup>293</sup> ‘Tourist Arrivals in Myanmar’, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2020, at <https://tourism.gov.mm/statistics/arrivals-2019-december/>

<sup>294</sup> ‘Myanmar tourism increases a massive 40% in 2019’, *The Thaiger*, 11 February 2020, at <https://thethaiger.com/hot-news/tourism/myanmar-tourism-increases-a-massive-40-in-2019>

<sup>295</sup> According to Myanmar government statistics, 76% of foreign visitors in 2018 were from Asia, but they too appear to have absorbed many romantic, idealised images about the country. See ‘Myanmar Tourism Statistics 2018’, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, at <https://tourism.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Myanmar-Toursim-Statistics-2018.pdf>

<sup>296</sup> See, for example, M.G. Stanard, ‘Interwar Pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.44, No.4, January 2009, pp.27-48.

<sup>297</sup> See, for example, Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>298</sup> Silverstein, ‘Burma Through the Prism of Western Novels’, pp. 129-40. See also C. S. Braden, ‘The Novelist Discovers the Orient’, *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol.7, No.2, February 1948, pp. 165-75.

<sup>299</sup> Christie, ‘British Literary Travellers in Southeast Asia in an Era of Colonial Retreat’, pp. 673-737; and Keck, ‘Picturesque Burma’. Also useful is Stephen Keck, ‘Involuntary Sightseeing: Soldiers as Travel Writers and the Construction of Colonial Burma’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol.43, 2015, pp.389-407.

<sup>300</sup> D.D. Boyer, ‘Picturing the Other: Images of Burmans in Imperial Britain’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol.35, No.3, Fall 2002, pp. 214-26.

<sup>301</sup> Andrew Selth, ‘Burma, Hollywood and the Politics of Entertainment’, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol.23, No.3, June 2009, pp. 321-34.

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, Andrew Selth, *Burma Watching: A Retrospective*, Regional Outlook No.39 (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2012).

<sup>303</sup> See, for example, Roger Taylor and Crispin Branfoot, with Sarah Greenough and Malcolm Daniel, *Captain Linnaeus Tripe: Photographer of India and Burma, 1852-1860* (Washington and New York: The National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Delmonico Books, 2014); and Anne Lacoste, *Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010).

<sup>304</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp.51-2.

<sup>305</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), p.9.



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<sup>306</sup> George Orwell, 'Boys' Weeklies', in *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), p.124.

<sup>307</sup> See, for example, Andrew Selth, *Myanmar-Watching: Problems and Perspectives*, Regional Outlook Paper No.58 (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2018).

<sup>308</sup> Thant Myint U, *The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism and the Crisis of Democracy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2019), p.47.

<sup>309</sup> The term is from Timothy Garton Ash, 'Beauty and the Beast in Burma', *New York Review of Books*, 25 May 2000, at [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Beauty\\_and\\_the\\_Beast\\_in\\_Burma.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Beauty_and_the_Beast_in_Burma.htm)

<sup>310</sup> See, for example, Andrew Selth, *Myanmar's Armed Forces and the Rohingya Crisis*, Peaceworks No.140 (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, August 2018).

<sup>311</sup> For recent photographic collections see, for example, Scott Stulberg, *Passage to Burma* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2015); and Jaroslav Poncar, *Burma/Myanmar* (Mannheim: Panorama, 2016). For travelogues and personal diaries, typical are Patrick Forsyth, *Beguiling Burma: Awe and wonder on the road to Mandalay* (Great Yarmouth: Rethink Press, 2012); David Eimer, *A Savage Dreamland: Journeys in Burma* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); and James Fable, *In Search of Myanmar: Travels through a Changing Land* (London: The Author, 2019).

<sup>312</sup> Writing in 1913, the civil servant and archaeologist Taw Sein Ko noted that Burma is 'still the El Dorado of Europeans' who 'come here to shake the pagoda tree'. Taw Sein Ko, *Burmese Sketches*, (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1913), p.294.

<sup>313</sup> Theroux, 'Introduction', in Beukers, *Exotic Postcards*, p.6.

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