

**Volume 2**

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**Myanmar's Struggle - II**

**Lead: After three Anglo-Burmese Wars in the nineteenth century, *Myanmar*, better known as Burma, was forced to become a province of British India.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In Burma, a highly developed Buddhist civilization had existed in the Irrawaddy Valley of Southeast Asia for a 1000 years when over a period of 50 years Britain ate away at the its borders finally annexing the nation completely in**

**1886. The Brits were traders, in Burma seeking teak, oil, and rubies, and access to Chinese trade over the mountains. Britain did not want a troublesome independent government in Burma causing any difficulties, therefore, the English took over.**

**As often happens when a military power assumes control over a new territory, it begins to dominate the political, social and cultural life of the people. Myanmar, called Burma by the British after the name of the dominant language in the region, was no exception. Over the years after 1886, many Burmese collaborated with the British and because of economic and social ties had grown very comfortable**

**in the relationship. It was profitable for both. This cooperation was deeply resented by many other Burmese and when during the 1920s a large segment of the population began to agitate for independence, the leaders of Burmese society became divided between those ready for quick change and conservatives tied to the regime.**

**In 1936, a student movement, led *Aung San* began to oppose the British in a series of student strikes. The rule of the British had become so irritating to many Burmese that even after Myanmar was separated from India in 1937 and given a constitution of its own, opposition continued to swell. So completely did Aung San despise the British that in the early days of World**

**War II, he and several others cooperated with the invading Japanese.**

**By 1943 Aung San realized that the Japanese whip was far heavier than the British hand, and he offered his services to the allies. With the defeat of the Japanese, the older conservative Burmese came home from exile, and, because of his collaboration with the Japanese, demanded that Aung San be tried as a traitor. The British realized he held the affection and support of the vast majority of the Burmese people and prudently insisted that he be included in the national government.**

**Almost immediately, Aung San began negotiating with the British for independence, but in July, 1947 just months before the freedom for which he worked so long, he and six of his colleagues, including his brother, were assassinated by a Burmese rival. Next time: A lady shakes them up.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### Resources

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**Clements, Alan. *Burma : The Next Killing Fields?* Berkeley, CA: Odonian Press, 1992.**

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