

Burma (Myanmar) is a Southeast Asian country emerging from crisis after more than a half century of hardline military rule and cultural, diplomatic, and economic isolation. With the dissolution of its military regime, the State Peace and Development Council, in 2011, a formally civilian but military-dominated constitutional government was inaugurated. By 2012, Burma's president, retired General Thein Sein, had established a working relationship with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the country's pro-democracy movement since 1988. After a 2012 by-election, she and members of her opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), entered the new Union Parliament as legislators.

Even with the election of Daw Suu Kyi and the NLD in November 2015, Burma faces daunting challenges. It is still one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, fissured by long-standing ethnic conflicts that have made a nationwide peace agreement elusive and its people's security and the environment threatened by foreign economic exploitation. Religious discord is also present, as Buddhist militants instigate violence against the country's religious minorities, especially Muslims.

Burma's prospects are their best in more than half a century, however, as the country takes steps along the road to a more open society and economy. This second edition of *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)* encompasses not only current developments but Burma's more than 1,500 years of recorded history. It contains a chronology, an introduction, an extensive bibliography, and more than 700 cross-referenced entries on important personalities as well as important aspects of the country's politics, economy, foreign relations, religion, and culture.

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Editor's Foreword

What's in a name? Quite a lot, to judge by the still-ongoing debate between those who want the country to be called *Myanmar* and those who prefer that the old name, *Burma*, be restored. This division lines up with the supporters and critics of the constitutional but essentially military-controlled government. Because of the lack of unanimity concerning the country's name, this book will use *Burma*.

Ancient Burmese kingdoms such as Pagan ruled over vast lands and reached a high level of civilization and military prowess. Under British colonialism, the Province of Burma was one of the most prosperous—and profitable—in the Indian Empire. However, neither civilian nor military regimes have thrived since independence in 1948. The country has been torn apart by insurgency and counterinsurgency involving the central government and ethnic minorities who do not accept Burman domination. The Burman heartland of the country also has seen massive antigovernment movements, especially during 1988's "Democracy Summer." The result, therefore, has been little political or economic progress and ample opportunity for military control.

In 2011 a constitutional government was initiated, followed by the election in April 2012 of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) to the national legislature, the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw*. Following the general election of 8 November 2015, the NLD won a majority of national parliamentary seats as well as seats in regional/state legislatures, and the following year Daw Suu Kyi was given the post of state counselor, reflecting her and her party's dominance in the election if not the political system. Despite many serious problems to be overcome, Daw Suu Kyi and the military have joined in a partnership to oversee the country's development.

Like the previous edition, published in 2006, this book consists of several sections, all of which have been updated and expanded substantially to take into account events from 2005 to 2016, including a chronology, introduction, and list of acronyms and abbreviations. The largest section, the dictionary, contains more than 900 entries addressing important people, places, events, institutions, and concepts, including an array of ethnic minority and other political associations and insurgent movements. A substantial bibliography rounds out the volume. This second edition, like the first, was written by Donald M. Seekins, emeritus professor of Southeast Asian studies at Meio University in Okinawa, Japan. He has visited Burma repeatedly for fieldwork. He has written numerous articles and several books, including *The*