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### British Burma

Main articles: [British rule in Burma](#) and [Burma Campaign](#)



The landing of British forces in Mandalay after the last of the [Anglo-Burmese Wars](#), which resulted in the abdication of the last Burmese monarch, King [Thibaw Min](#).



British troops firing a [mortar](#) on the [Mawchi](#) road, July 1944.

The country was colonized by Britain following three [Anglo-Burmese Wars](#) (1824–1885). British rule brought social, economic, cultural and administrative changes.

With the fall of Mandalay, all of Burma came under British rule, being [annexed](#) on 1 January 1886. Throughout the colonial era, many Indians arrived as soldiers, civil servants, construction workers and traders and, along with the [Anglo-Burmese](#) community, dominated commercial and civil life in Burma. Rangoon became the capital of British Burma and an important port between Calcutta and Singapore.

Burmese resentment was strong and was vented in violent riots that paralysed Yangon (Rangoon) on occasion all the way until the 1930s.<sup>[58]</sup> Some of the discontent was caused by a disrespect for [Burmese culture](#) and traditions such as the British refusal to remove shoes when they entered pagodas. Buddhist monks became the vanguards of the independence movement. [U Wisara](#), an activist monk, died in prison after a 166-day hunger strike to protest a rule that forbade him from wearing his Buddhist robes while imprisoned.<sup>[59]</sup>

On 1 April 1937, Burma became a separately administered colony of Great Britain and [Ba Maw](#) the first Prime Minister and Premier of Burma. Ba Maw was an outspoken advocate for Burmese self-rule and he opposed the participation of Great Britain, and by extension Burma, in World War II. He resigned from the Legislative Assembly and was arrested for sedition. In

1940, before Japan formally entered the Second World War, [Aung San](#) formed the [Burma Independence Army](#) in Japan.

A major battleground, Burma was devastated during [World War II](#). By [March 1942](#), within months after they entered the war, [Japanese](#) troops had advanced on Rangoon and the British administration had collapsed. A [Burmese Executive Administration](#) headed by Ba Maw was established by the Japanese in August 1942. Wingate's British [Chindits](#) were formed into [long-range penetration](#) groups trained to operate deep behind Japanese lines.<sup>[60]</sup> A similar American unit, [Merrill's Marauders](#), followed the Chindits into the Burmese jungle in 1943.<sup>[61]</sup> Beginning in [late 1944](#), allied troops launched a series of offensives that led to the end of Japanese rule in [July 1945](#). However, the battles were intense with much of Burma laid waste by the fighting. Overall, the Japanese lost some 150,000 men in Burma. Only 1,700 prisoners were taken.<sup>[62]</sup>

Although many Burmese fought initially for the Japanese as part of the Burma Independence Army, many Burmese, mostly from the ethnic minorities, served in the British Burma Army.<sup>[63]</sup> The [Burma National Army](#) and the Arakan National Army fought with the Japanese from 1942 to 1944 but switched allegiance to the Allied side in 1945. Under Japanese occupation, 170,000 to 250,000 civilians died.<sup>[64][65]</sup>

Following World War II, [Aung San](#) negotiated the [Panglong Agreement](#) with ethnic leaders that guaranteed the independence of Burma as a unified state. Aung Zan Wai, Pe Khin, [Bo Hmu Aung](#), Sir Maung Gyi, Dr. Sein Mya Maung, [Myoma U Than Kywe](#) were among the negotiators of the historical Panglong Conference negotiated with Bamar leader General Aung San and other ethnic leaders in 1947. In 1947, Aung San became Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Burma, a transitional government. But in July 1947, political rivals<sup>[66]</sup> [assassinated Aung San](#) and several cabinet members.<sup>[67]</sup>

## Independence

Main article: [Post-independence Burma, 1948–62](#)



📄 British governor [Hubert Elvin Rance](#) and Sao Shwe Thaik at the flag raising ceremony on 4 January 1948 ([Independence Day of Burma](#)).

On [4 January 1948](#), the nation became an independent republic, named the *Union of Burma*, with [Sao Shwe Thaik](#) as its first President and [U Nu](#) as its first Prime Minister. Unlike most other former British colonies and overseas territories, Burma did not become a member of the [Commonwealth](#). A [bicameral](#) parliament was formed, consisting of a [Chamber of Deputies](#) and a [Chamber of Nationalities](#),<sup>[68]</sup> and [multi-party](#) elections were held in [1951–1952](#), [1956](#) and [1960](#).

The geographical area Burma encompasses today can be traced to the [Panglong Agreement](#), which combined Burma Proper, which consisted of [Lower Burma](#) and [Upper Burma](#), and the [Frontier Areas](#), which had been administered separately by the British.<sup>[69]</sup>