

***Constructing an intelligence state: the development of the colonial security services in Burma 1930 – 1942.***

**Submitted by Edmund Bede Clipson, to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, January 2010. This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgment.**

**I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.**

**Signature**

## Abstract:

My doctoral research focuses on the development and operation of the intelligence services in British colonial Burma during the years 1930 to 1942. This involves an examination of the causes of intelligence development, its progress throughout 1930-1942, its rationale and modus operandi, and the pressures it faced. This time period permits us to assess how intelligence development was a product of the colonial government's response to the 1930 peasant uprising which came as such a shock to colonial security and how thereafter intelligence helped prevent popular hostility to the government from taking the form of an uprising. As a result, intelligence information was increasingly used to secure colonial power during the period of parliamentary reform in Burma in 1937. The thesis further examines the stresses that riots and strikes placed on colonial security in 1938, the so-called 'year of revolution' in Burma. The thesis then proceeds to consider how intelligence operated in the final years of colonial rule before the Japanese occupation of Burma in 1942.

This study is significant not only because very little work on the colonial security services in Burma exists for the period under review, but also because it reveals that intelligence was crucial to colonial rule, underpinning the stability of the colonial state and informing its relationship with the indigenous population in what remained, in relative terms at least, a colonial backwater like Burma. The argument that intelligence was pivotal to colonial governmental stability in Burma because of its centrality to strategies of population control departs from conventional histories of Burma which have considered the colonial army to have been the predominant instrument of political control and the most significant factor in the relationship between the state and society in colonial Burma. Rather it will be argued here that the colonial state in Burma relied on a functioning intelligence bureau which collected information from local indigenous officials and informers and employed secret agents to work on its behalf. This information was collated into reports for the government which then became integral to policy formulation. The primary source base for this work includes British colonial material from government and private collections predominantly in the British library as well as government papers in the National Archives in Kew.

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## Abbreviations

### **Abbreviations**

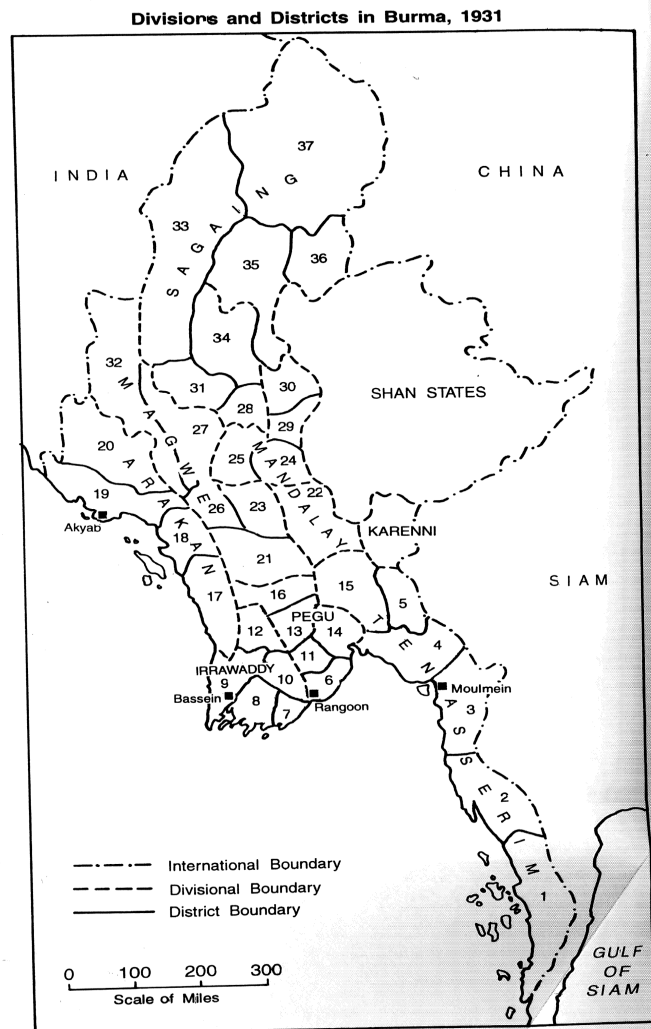
#### Used in text:

BDB	Burma Defence Bureau
BFB	Burma Freedom Bloc
BFF	Burma Frontier Force
BMP	Burma Military Police
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIO	Central Intelligence Officers
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
DAA	Dobama Asi Ayon
DIB	Delhi Intelligence Bureau
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
FECB	Far Eastern Combined Bureau
FESS	Far Eastern Security Services
GCBA	General Council of Burmese Associations
GOC	General Officer in Command

GSO	General Serving Officer
INC	Indian National Congress
IPI	Indian Political Intelligence
MI2 (a)	British Military Intelligence Section 2, a department of the Directorate of Military Intelligence, part of the War Office.

Used in footnotes

BL	British Library
CAB	Cabinet Office
CO	Colonial Office
IOR	India Office Records
IOSM	India Office Select Materials
KV	Records of the Security Service
Mss Eur	European Manuscripts
PREM	Records of the Prime Minister's Office
TNA	The National Archives
WO	War Office



9 Divisions and their districts:

- I. TENASSERIM *Districts:* 1. Mergui, 2. Tavoy, 3. Amherst, 4. Thaton, 5. Salween, 15. Toungoo
- II. PEGU *Districts:* 6. Hanthawaddy, 11. Insein, 13. Tharawaddy, 14. Pegu, 16. Prome
- III. IRRAWADDY *Districts:* 7. Pyapon, 8. Myaungmya, 9. Bassein, 10. Maubin, 12. Henzada

- IV. ARAKAN *Districts:* 17. Sandoway, 18. Kyaukpyu, 19. Akyab, 20. Arakan
- V. MAGWE *Districts:* 21. Thayetmyo, 23. Magwe, 26. Minbu, 27. Pakokku, 32. Chin Hills
- VI. MANDALAY *Districts:* 22. Yamethin, 24. Meiktila, 25. Myingyan, 29. Kyaukse, 30. Mandalay
- VII. SAGAING *Districts:* 28. Sagaing, 31. Lower Chindwin, 33. Upper Chindwin, 34. Shwebo, 35. Katha, 36. Bhamo, 37. Myitkyina
- VIII. SHAN STATES
- IX. KARENNI

Source: Based on the map from Cheng Siok Hwa, *The Rice Industry of Burma, 1852-1940*, University of Malay press, Kuala Lumpur, 1968. Reproduced from Parimal Ghosh, *Brave Men of the Hills: Resistance and Rebellion in Burma, 1825-1932*. (London: Hurst and Company, 2000).

Map 1. Colonial Burma in 1931.