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CHINESE IN COLONIAL BURMA

A MIGRANT COMMUNITY IN A MULTIETHNIC STATE

YI LI

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Yi Li

Chinese in Colonial Burma

A Migrant Community in A Multiethnic State

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For Julio

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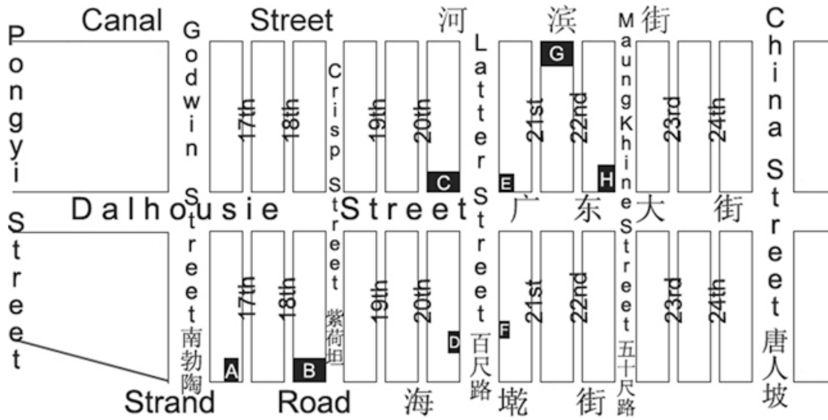
Map 1 Illustrative map of colonial Burma

Map 2 Illustrative map of western Yunnan and upper Burma

Map 3 Illustrative map of Pyapon and its surrounding area



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In a letter dated December 20, 1961, Chen Yi-Sein, a junior Chinese scholar from Rangoon in his late 30s, announced his most sincere aspiration, stating that "I have decided to dedicate my entire life to the study of Burmese History and the history of Chinese in Burma."[1] This letter of self-introduction was sent to Hsu Yun-Tsiao, one of the founders of the *Nanyang Xuehui* (South Sea Society)[2] and an established figure in the study of Southeast Asian Chinese in post-war Singapore, then the center of Chinese culture and education in Southeast Asia. Half a century on, the slightly over-eager but fully determined self-announcement, marking the first-ever attempt of writing a history for the Chinese in Burma, is still palpable today.

Born in the Irrawaddy Delta town of Pyapon to a Cantonese father in 1924, Chen grew up in Lower Burma and took refuge in wartime China before returning to Rangoon after World War II (WWII). He was a member of the Burma Historical Commission (now the Myanmar Historical Commission) from its inauguration in 1955 and a part-time lecturer at the Rangoon University in 1957.[3] In the following decades, Chen would publish numerous articles on the history of early Sino-Burmese interactions and Chinese settlement in Burma in English, Burmese, and Chinese.[4] Soon after the above-mentioned letter was sent to Singapore, a Burmese-Chinese

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dictionary, *A Model Burmese-Chinese Dictionary*,[5] compiled singlehandedly by Chen, was published in Rangoon, and it remains one of the most important references for language learners ever since.

Chen Yi-Sein was part of a small group of Chinese intellectuals, or "men of letters," from Rangoon's Chinatown in the 1950s and early 1960s who saw the importance of writing a history for this ethnic minority, ex-migrant community in a newly independent Southeast Asian nation-state. Between January and December 1962, a special column, *Daguangcheng Yehua* (Dagon City's Night Talks), appeared in the Rangoon-based Chinese newspaper, *Xin Yangguang Bao* (New Yangon Daily). It told stories and anecdotes about the Rangoon Chinese community from 1911 and was written by Huang Chuoqing, a Rangoon-born Cantonese and self-educated journalist.[6] In the meantime, Chinese publications, often funded by community associations for special occasions, were filled with their own histories and legends. Among these articles and semi-chronicles, a notable one was a long list of entries recording significant community events for the 40 years between 1911 and 1950, first published as an annex to a special anniversary issue of a Rangoon Chinese commercial association.[7]

However, this self-motivated history-writing effort by the community was doomed. After the 1962 coup, Myanmar took up the "Burmese Way to Socialism," and the political environment for its Chinese population deteriorated rapidly.[8] The hostility toward ethnic Chinese reached its peak in June 1967 when an anti-Chinese riot broke out in Yangon[9] and forced many of them to leave the country. Chen Yi-Sein eventually settled in Taipei, while both Huang Chuoqing and Chen Xiaoqi, the compiler of the list of 40 years of events, left for mainland China.[10] Lacking both the facility and motivation from within the community and the availability of primary sources to foreign scholars, the Chinese community in colonial Burma became one of the most understudied subjects in the history of modern Southeast Asia and the history of Chinese migration, with the exception of a handful of sporadic and fragmented attempts.[11]

1.1 Chinese in Burma

The current unsatisfying situation of scholarly works does no justice to the long and rich historical exchange between Myanmar and China. The lands that today belong to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar are by no means a strange place for the Chinese. Textual and archaeological evidence indicates that Sino-Burmese interactions, via overland routes[12]

and maritime networks,[13] can be traced back to the second century BCE.[14] Unfortunately, records on Chinese activities in interior and coastal Burma remain too insufficient for the time being to allow for anything more than speculation about the scale of Chinese settlement.

Nonetheless, being adjacent to China's southwest frontier, various ancient kingdoms in Burma experienced continuous inflows of Chinese peoples and products. These interactions were often peaceful, but there were occasional bouts of violence: the invasion by the Yuan (Mongol) army of Pagan in the 1270s and 1280s; the tragic ending of the fleeing Yongli, the last Ming Emperor, and his entourage outside the capital of the Toungoo Dynasty near Sagaing in 1661; and the Sino-Burmese War launched by the Qing Emperor Qianlong in the 1760s, to name just a few episodes, all brought waves of Chinese soldiers, officials, and ordinary people to Burma. Shortly before the British arrival, a Chinese traveler in the late eighteenth century observed that "western products were assembled in Rangoon before being transported to Canton and Hokkien."[15]

Despite the longevity of the Chinese presence in Burma, this book focuses only on the colonial period, beginning in 1826, the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826), and the start of British rule in parts of Burma that ushered in the transition of Burma from a pre-modern Southeast Asian kingdom to a European colony. More importantly, this was also the era when Chinese arrived in significant numbers over a sustained period of time, for many beginning a period of permanent settlement in the area even though these waves of Chinese migrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, partly due to the European colonial expansion in the region, were not the first of their kind. The investigation ends in 1942, when the Japanese army occupied Burma along with most of Southeast Asia. From the close of WWII, colonial regimes throughout the region were replaced with independent nation-states one after another. This radically changed the prevailing dynamics of migration from China, and the flow of migrants never returned to its previous level. To some extent, 1942 marked the end of several centuries of Chinese migration as well as British imperial control over this region, even though the colonial government in Burma would not see its official end until the beginning of 1948.

There are, of course, historical milestones during this long, 116-year period, in Burma, in the British Empire, and in China. For the British overseas territories in the East, the Indian Rebellion of 1857 not only marked the end of the East India Company but also restructured the

administrative system of British India, of which (Lower) Burma was then a part. The next administrative reform, known as Diarchy, aiming to encourage indigenous political participation in light of the pressure of Indian nationalism, was introduced to Burma in 1923. Beyond the borders of British India, pubic engagement in and opposition to empire-building at the turn of the twentieth century in Britain,[16] regime changes, regional warfare, and foreign invasion in China inevitably made their respective impacts on the Chinese in Burma, however far away these events were, demonstrating the extension of linkages beyond national and continental borders.

The most important and direct influences on the formation and development of the Burmese Chinese community came from within. The annexation of Rangoon and Lower Burma after the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852) saw the arrival of colonialism to the region and its multiethnic residents, including an increasing number of southern Chinese recently sailing from coastal China and other nearby Southeast Asian ports. Rangoon was chosen as the provincial capital for the newly established Burma province of British India in 1862, where the largest Chinese quarter in Burma, the Rangoon Chinatown, was designated and flourished thereafter. In 1886, the British completed its final annexation, thus officially bringing Upper Burma and its peoples (including the southwestern Chinese who had plied cross-border caravan routes from Yunnan for centuries) into the British colonial world. Over the next few decades, the Sino-Burmese border was secured in the north, and large-scale development projects, especially the opening of rice fields in the Irrawaddy Delta, were implemented with considerable success in the south. All of these not only redefined the social and economic landscapes of the new colonial state but also supported, in every aspect, an expanding migrant society for the Chinese.

Table 1.1 shows a dramatic population increase in Burma from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. Within half a century, almost 10 million people, majority of whom were immigrants from India, were added to the total population. In the 1920s, Rangoon became one of the largest immigrant ports in the world, its inflow of immigrants exceeding that of New York.[17] The same period also witnessed a steady increase in its Chinese population. The biggest leap occurred within the three decades between 1881[18] and 1911, during which the number of Chinese increased nearly tenfold. However, throughout the colonial era, the Chinese remained an absolute minority in the total population, reaching slightly over 1 percent in 1931, the last time the census was taken before WWII.

Table 1.1 Chinese population in Burma, 1881–1931

Year	*Chinese population*	*Total population*	*Percentage*
1881	12,962	3,736,771	0.35
1891	41,457	7,722,053	0.54
1901	62,486	10,490,624	0.60
1911	122,834	12,115,217	1.01
1921	149,060	13,212,192	1.13
1931	193,594	14,667,146	1.32

Sources: Data adapted from Government of India, *Census 1891, IX, Burma Report* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1892); *Census of India, 1901, XII, Burma* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1902); *Census of India, 1911, IX, Burma* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1912); *Census of India, 1921, X, Burma* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1922); Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 41–48

1.2 Burma in the British Imperial World and the Southeast Asian Chinese Maritime Network

Colonial Burma presented a peculiar case in the British Empire, and recently its unique position has been noticed and re-examined by a number of historians.[19] Burma was a late entry to the British imperial world (first confrontation in 1824, final annexation in 1886) and occupied a critical location at the crossroads of South, East, and Southeast Asia. The initial motivation of Calcutta to annex Burma could be summarized as being twofolded: to secure India's northeast frontier and to open up a direct route to China.[20]

The irony is, when the territorial expansion was finally achieved in 1886, the original plan was no longer valid, or at least, not as urgent as it used to be. Access to China had been secured on the Chinese southeast coast after the Treaty of Nanjing (1842), and the establishment of Hong Kong provided a reliable base for Anglo-Chinese exchange, both of which made the southwest hinterland route from Burma less desirable, if not entirely redundant. As for the frontier security of India, the 1857 rebellion and rising Indian nationalism appropriately reminded the British that the real threat was from within the Empire, not from beyond its border.

This was the moment when the third connection surfaced, that is, Burma was first and foremost a Southeast Asian country that shared more commonalities with Siam and the Straits Settlements than with either India or China. In fact, Calcutta had realized its mis-orientation quite earlier on and made considerable, if not explicit, adjustments soon after. If the

First Anglo-Burmese War was masterminded from Calcutta and fought by armies from Bengal and Madras Presidencies, whose rank and file had their entire career based in South Asia,[21] both the person who negotiated the Treaty of Yandabo (1826) with the Burmese Kingdom of Ava at the conclusion of the First Anglo-Burmese War (John Crawfurd)[22] and the British Resident at the court of Ava afterward (Henry Burney)[23] were East India Company men with extensive experiences in Southeast Asian locales such as Siam, Singapore, Malaya, and Cochinchina. Calcutta's adjustment was more evident subsequently even though Burma was nevertheless created as the newest province of British India after the Second Anglo-Burmese War. The first generation of district commissioners in Lower Burma (such as Arthur Phayre, later the first Chief Commissioner of British Burma) had considerable Southeast Asian knowledge and an eye (and ear) to local cultures, languages, and customs.

Similarly, Chinese immigrants, especially those who traveled over the sea to Rangoon and coastal towns, often had spent time in other Southeast Asian ports before heading to Burma. Well-established Chinese communities in Bangkok, Batavia, and, in particular, the British settlements of Penang and Singapore provided the much-needed guidance and set models for their kinsmen in the newly opened Burma. Over time, Burma firmly established itself as the westernmost node (the tiny Chinatown in Calcutta excluded) of the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Chinese maritime network in *Nanyang* (South Sea).[24]

Burma's late entry into the British imperial world and the Southeast Asian Chinese maritime network meant Burma had a lot to learn—a whole set of well-tested protocols made ready by its better established peers, even though the knowledge developed elsewhere was not always suitable for Burma. Indeed, both the colonial government and the Chinese migrant community were active in transplanting discourse and practices to the new colony and made Burma the last and the largest social "Experimental Garden" in the region.

Until 1937, Burma remained a province of India no matter how awkward this administrative arrangement had proven to be. A direct result of being part of India was a demographic imbalance. Indian migrants outnumbered any other migrant group and many local ethnicities in colonial Burma. In the extreme case of Rangoon, Indians surpassed the local-born Burmese and became the largest ethnicity from 1901 (Table 1.2), essentially making Rangoon an Indian city on Burmese land.

It is under this multilayered intersection that this study positions itself. Within Burma, comparisons between two "Foreign Asian" migrants, the

Table 1.2 Distribution of population by birthplace in Burma and Rangoon, 1891–1911

Province of Burma

	1891		*1901*		*1911*	
	Figure	*Percentage*	*Figure*	*Percentage*	*Figure*	*Percentage*
Born in Burma	7,282,213	95.71	9,888,124	94.26	11,465,246	94.64
Born in India	280,719	3.69	415,953	3.96	493,699	4.08
Born in China	23,060	0.30	43,328	0.41	75,365	0.62
Total	7,608,552		10,490,624		12,115,217	

Rangoon Town

	1891		*1901*		*1911*	
	Figure	*Percentage*	*Figure*	*Percentage*	*Figure*	*Percentage*
Born in Burma	88,555	49.11	105,343	44.85	122,407	41.73
Born in India	83,052	46.06	117,713	50.12	153,478	52.33
Born in China	4915	2.73	7939	3.38	11,759	4.01
Total	180,324		234,881		293,316	

Sources: Data adapted from Government of India, *Census 1891, IX, Burma Report* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1892); *Census of India, 1901, XII, Burma* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1902); *Census of India, 1911, IX, Burma* (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1912)

Indian and the Chinese, are drawn throughout this book, especially in the second part. Many perceived "characteristics" of Burmese Chinese were interpreted as being derived from a unique experience of a Chinese community in a Southeast Asian colony governed by Europeans with an India-based system. In the meantime, references to other Southeast Asian places, especially the Straits Settlements, are frequently made in order to trace the evolution of so many things that were practiced in Burma. But after all, the difference between British Burma and the Straits Settlements regarding their "Foreign Asian" immigrants was decisive: the former was dominated by the Indian with just a tiny minority of Chinese and the latter vice versa (Table 1.3). As this book shows, numbers matter tremendously in our story.

Table 1.3 Percentage of Indian and Chinese population in Burma and the Straits Settlements, 1891

	Burma (percent)	*The Straits Settlements (percent)*
Chinese	0.54	44.50
Indian (For Burma, it includes Hindu castes, Sikh, and Musalman)	5.50	10.52
Major indigenous group (For Burma, it includes Burmese, Talaing, Shan, Karen Pwo, Karen Sgau, Karenni, Chin, and Kachin; for the Straits Settlements, it refers to Malay and other natives of the Archipelago)	95.79	41.59

Sources: Data from Merewether, E. M., *Report on the Census of the Straits Settlement Taken on the 5th April 1891* (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1892); Government of India, *Census 1891, IX, Burma Report* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1892)

By recognizing Burma's peculiar position in the British imperial world and the Southeast Asian Chinese maritime network and positioning the Burmese Chinese community at the junction of those complicated and dynamic frameworks, this book attempts to bring trans-territorial influences into a local context. Post-war study on overseas Chinese has shifted from being based on nation-state[25] to emphasizing transnational connectivity,[26] and Chinese immigrants are often portrayed as struggling between conflicting identities.[27] Each approach represents an insightful yet potentially limited perspective.[28] The case of Chinese in Burma, peculiar as it was, could be an interesting site to explore the combination of both local- and transnational-based approaches without conflict. The unique position of Burma meant the Chinese there had to face something that was possible only in this particular place. However, almost every element in this highly localized experience had precedents elsewhere, which Burma, as a latecomer, had to inherit, digest, and improvise, either out of convenience or necessity.

1.3 Structure of the Book

Being situated at the geographical and discursive crossroad gives to the Chinese community in Burma two distinctive features: members of the community came from both the southeast coast of China and its southwest hinterlands and the community had a small population and, therefore, limited influences in every aspect.

This book is divided into two parts, touching upon the two features, respectively. Part 1 looks at the process of "coming to Burma" by two different Chinese migrant groups with distinct regional features and how they settled down in two different parts of colonial Burma. Part 2 explores how the Chinese immigrants, despite their internal divisions, were perceived, presented, and transformed in this colonial state by colonial, community, and transnational institutions and found a way of "being Burmese Chinese" under more than a century of colonial rule in a multiethnic state.

1.3.1 Coming to Burma

In many respects, the Burmese Chinese community was a combination of several concurrent communities with different backgrounds, orientations, and expectations, albeit all holding a singular racial identification that was understood in the general colonial literature. The notion of a unified Chinese overseas community, though often advocated by politicians and scholars, is problematic. The concept of the Overseas Chinese, like the Chinese in China, has never been a homogeneous one that fits all of its members, and the vagueness of this term cannot be avoided or ignored in any study of Chinese diaspora.

In the case of Burmese Chinese, the differences could not be more obvious. Here we have Yunnanese, who were based in landlocked southwest China, trading with Burma by caravans across the mountainous Sino-Burmese borderlands and moving around in the area between western Yunnan and the former Burmese capitals of Ava, Amarapura, and Mandalay. Then we have Cantonese and Hokkien, coastal peoples who had traditional access to the high seas in the southeast Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. By then, they were familiar faces on the sea and in many ports of Southeast Asia. Located in the southern periphery of the Middle Kingdom, Yunnan, Guangdong, and Fujian all have unique histories of transformation from frontier lands to well-integrated Chinese provinces. However, domination, either politically or culturally, by the main power center in Northern China was far from complete.[29] Hence, these regional cultures diverged distinctively from each other and from other parts of China, from temple to cemetery, from dialect to cuisine. It was these multiple Chinese regional groups and their subsequent interactions, not to be found easily in other maritime Chinese migrant communities, that made the Burmese Chinese more than a unitary entity.

Historians have long urged for the incorporation of Yunnan into the study of Southeast Asia.[30] In this book, the inclusion of Yunnan is more

than desirable, it is inevitable. The Yunnanese were an inseparable part of the Chinese community and Yunnan shared a long border with colonial Burma. It is under this paradigm that Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to the community-building and communal networks of the Yunnanese in Upper Burma and the Hokkien and Cantonese in Lower Burma. This also corresponds to a conventional category that divides the Chinese in Burma into the "Mountain Chinese" (Yunnanese) and the "Maritime Chinese" (Hokkien and Cantonese), a concept first suggested by Victor Purcell in the early 1950s.[31]

However, under colonial rule and especially in the twentieth century, the administration was firmly established, the co-existence of multiple ethnic subjects was evident, and modern technological innovations were introduced. All these significantly facilitated inter-province communication between Lower and Upper Burma, and the exchange between the Yunnanese Chinese and Hokkien/Cantonese Chinese was irreversibly enhanced. Meanwhile, boundaries along ethnic lines were rigidly defined as part of the colonial policy in the multiethnic state. This de-regionalized process was further accelerated by the growing Chinese nationalism brought to Burma by transnational agencies with political agendas (to be discussed in Chapter 6). Chapter 2 argues that the loss of free spirits and mobility in the Southeast Asian highland, or the "Zomia" as James Scott advocates,[32] and increased adherence to the perceived image of "Chinese," largely based on the southern Chinese experiences, were acutely felt among the Yunnanese who had been the "old Burma hands" in Upper Burma long before the arrival of the British. The colonial presence, no matter how nominal it might seem, played a decisive role in the shaping of the Yunnanese group and, eventually, the Chinese community in Burma as a whole. It is not an exaggeration to say that on the eve of the Japanese invasion, a singular "Burmese Chinese" community, with regional differences largely downplayed, nearly managed to emerge.

1.3.2 Being Burmese Chinese

The second part deals with one central question: what best defined the "Burmese Chinese" and how did that definition come into being. Focusing on three common characteristics recognized by both contemporary literature and the present-day Chinese community in Myanmar, three chapters here trace the formation and development of three great "myths" of the Burmese Chinese: they were successful traders, purveyors of morally corrupt vices, and silent onlookers with no interest in politics.

These myths were neither confined in colonial Burma nor on ethnic Chinese. Myths of Asian peoples that were created, disseminated, and challenged—in imagination and reality—have been a consistent theme in post-colonial studies.[33] Recent imperial historiography places considerable emphasis on the mutual dynamics of colonial knowledge formation and the legitimacy and efficiency of colonial regimes, both at the peripheries and in the metropolis.[34] This study of an Eastern community in a European colony finds this approach, inevitably influenced by Saidian and Foucauldian perspectives, useful. Here, the abstract concept of knowledge is understood and presented by individual and community experiences of the subject itself and others related to it. By analyzing how these experiences formed and transformed in a colonial state, we could stitch this piece of information to the regional and global history of colonial knowledge production.[35]

However, a colonial discourse is more than a product of the ruling colonial power alone, and it is dangerous to "see colonial power as an all-embracing, transhistorical force, controlling and transforming every aspect of colonised societies."[36] Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss how multiple dynamics made their respective contributions and how the resulting discourse took in many influences that functioned over time. Agencies from the Chinese Empire and later the Republic of China, for example, employed a similar methodology to the same subject community as its European colonial counterpart did.

In retrospect, and with evidence, these chapters carefully scrutinize and sufficiently de-mystify the three most commonly accepted characteristics of the Chinese in Burma and challenge a notion of "being Burmese Chinese" that bases itself on certain stereotypes. However, for many in colonial Burma, including the Chinese themselves, these impressions were so strong that they became defining features of what it was to be Burmese Chinese.

1.4 Limits of the Current Study

Being the first step to a systematic re-examination of the subject after the unsuccessful attempt by the community intellectuals in the 1960s, this book never pretends to be a comprehensive chronicle of the Chinese in colonial Burma. With limited sources and historiography, and the huge scope the subject covers, the present work endeavors simply to provide a starting point for, and an inspiration to, further scholarly investigation in the future.

Most primary sources in this book come from English and Chinese archives. Despite their problematic nature,[37] they proved to be the most accessible and highly usable materials. The references to Chinese activities

in English sources, such as government reports, newspapers, and individual accounts, numerous as they are, are scattered and incidental to say the least. Great effort has been made to assemble them, but a thorough examination in colonial-era documents is beyond the author's individual capacity. As for the contemporary Chinese sources from within Myanmar, except for inscriptions of Chinese temples and cemeteries in major cities, many paper-based materials were destroyed during WWII and the anti-Chinese movements in post-war Myanmar, a loss that will never be recovered. Due to empirical reasons, this book contains very little input from Burmese sources, and it welcomes future scholars to fill in the gap.

The gaps are also felt in the historiography of the subject. The only substantial scholarly work in the English language on the Chinese in colonial Burma, before the current study, is one chapter in Purcell's *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, first published in 1951. Being the first generation of post-war Southeast Asianists, Purcell's pre-war career in British Malaya as a colonial official inevitably influenced his perception, and his reliance on colonial reports, detailed as they were, ignored the reaction from the subject community. On the other hand, post-war community history in Chinese, written by Chen Yi-Sein and his peers at the height of the Cold War conflict in this region, was unsurprisingly tainted by individual political orientations, research capabilities, and access to relevant sources. Neither provides a solid foundation upon which the current study could draw.

Most readers will soon find out that this book is merely a fragmented sketch, or a prelude to a possibly much grander picture. Indeed, it is perhaps better thought of as a collection of some of the most prevailing impressions and practices of the time, aiming to reproduce, as much as possible, the basic social context and ordinary people's experience of the subject community. Inevitably, too many interesting stories I have heard, and surely many more that are unknown to me, could not be included here. In the Rangoon Chinatown alone, each temple, each clan, and each school could be excellent subjects for stories on their own rights. So much could be done in this field, yet so little has been done.

In particular, three ambiguous groups, each deserving a separate book, are not covered here. The first are the seasonal laborers along the Sino-Burmese border, especially those working in jade, silver, and other precious stone mines. The second are the *Hui* (Chinese Muslim) refugees who fled to northern Burma in the mid-nineteenth century after a failed uprising in Yunnan and formed a unique Chinese Muslim community known as the Panthay by the Burmese.[38] Finally, it is worth remembering that the current national border between China and Myanmar is a fairly

recent creation. Before the territorial dispute between the two countries was settled in 1960, a few parcels of borderland were typically under *de facto* governance by the local headmen of different ethnicities under the nominal control of the British or the Chinese Government. This was a frontier with the most fluid identity and least constraint. With many ethnicities on both sides of the (changing) border, it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss residents there as part of the migrant community.

One may criticize it as "story plucking, leapfrogging legacies, and time flattening" if one expects a general history here[39] because this study, being the very first step in a long-forgotten field, is bound to be incomplete and open to corrections and challenges. Thorough investigations and deep analyses have yet to be conducted, and satisfactory answers to questions raised in and beyond this book are still to be found. To borrow an old Chinese idiom, I see this book a brick, sturdy yet unrefined, and I throw it out to the world in the hope of attracting more valuable pieces of jade.

1.5 Notes on Transliteration and Spelling

A few words are needed on transliteration and spelling. This book uses the contemporary British spelling for names of people and places wherever possible to faithfully reflect the historical reality under scrutiny. For instance, Burma and Rangoon are used here instead of Myanmar and Yangon, unless the context explicitly relates to the present time. For the Romanization of Burmese words, it uses John Okell's system.[40]

As for the Chinese names, spelling is more difficult. The dialects of the Hokkien, Cantonese, and Yunnanese to various degrees all differ from Mandarin, the current official Chinese language system. However, as commonly practiced during this period and in this region, the English spellings for Chinese places and names mostly followed their dialect pronunciations. Thus, Chan (a popular surname in Hokkien), rather than Zeng (its Mandarin *Pinyin* spelling), is used in almost all contemporary English documents. Similarly, Hokkien and Cantonese are used instead of Fujian and Guangdong in most cases. In cases where original English sources were not available, I use the Mandarin *Pinyin* spelling even though I am fully aware that they will sound vastly different from how they would have been heard by contemporary local observers. The Chinese characters are provided whenever possible for better references in the Glossary. All Chinese sources quoted here, including inscriptions, prose, and poems, are translated by me.

Notes

1. Lew Bon Hoi and Chou Wen Loong, eds., *The Correspondence of Hsu Yun-Tsiao* (Selangor: Malaysian Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2006), 44.
2. For details on the South Sea Society and Hsu Yun-Tsiao, see Lee Chee Hiang, ed., *Nanyang yanjiu huigu, xianzhuang yu zhanwang* [The Retrospection, Present, and Perspective of Southeast Asian Studies Handbook] (Singapore: Nanyang Xuehui: Bafang Wenhua Chuangzuoshi, 2012); Leander Seah, "Hybridity, Globalization, and the Creation of a Nanyang Identity: The South Seas Society in Singapore, 1940–1958," *Journal of the South Seas Society* 61 (2007): 134–51.
3. This biographic data is kindly provided by U Thaw Kaung, a member of the Myanmar Historical Commission and a long-time colleague of Chen.
4. Selected articles include "The Chinese in Rangoon during the 18th and 19th Centuries," *Artibus Asiae Supplementum* 23, Essays Offered to G. H. Luce by His Colleagues and Friends in Honour of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday. Volume 1: Papers on Asian Religion, Languages, Literature, Music Folklore, and Anthropology (1966): 107–11; "Yuan zhiyuan monian de zhongmian heping Tanpan" [The Sino-Burmese Peace Talk in the late Zhiyuan Reign of the Yuan Dynasty], *Shiroku Kagoshima University* 5 (1972): 1–16; 7 (1974): 23–32; 8 (1975): 17–26; "Hantang zhi songyuan shiqi zai miandian de huaren" [The Chinese in Burma During the Han, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties], *Haiwai Huaren Yanjiu* 2 (1992): 41–57; "Guoqu sangeshiji (sanbainian) qijian zai miandian de guangduongren" [The Cantonese in Burma Over the Past Three Centuries], in *Yangguang guangdon gongsi (guanyin gumiao) 179 zhounian ji chongxiu luocheng jinian tekan* (hereafter GYGM179) [Special Memorial Edition for the 179th Anniversary of the Rangoon Cantonese Company (the Ancient Temple of Guanyin) and its Renovation] (Yangon: Yangguang Guangdong Gongsi, 2004), 89–150.
5. Chen Yi-Sein, *Mofan mianhua da cidian* [A Model Burmese-Chinese Dictionary] (Rangoon: Jimei Yinwu Gongsi, 1962). It was reprinted in Japan in 1969 under Chen's authorization.
6. The collection of this column, along with Huang's other writings, was later reprinted in China. Huang Chuoqing, in Zheng Xiangpeng, ed., *Huang Chuoqing Shiwenxuan* [Selected Essays and Poems of Huang Chuoqing] (Beijing: Zhongguo Huaqiao Chuban Gongsi, 1990).
7. Chen Xiaoqi, in Chen Zhaofu and Zhou Yunning, eds., *Miandian huaqiao 50 nian dashiji* [Fifty Years' Big Events of the Burmese Chinese] (Macau: Aomen Mianhua Huzhuhui, 2009).
8. For history of post-war Myanmar, see relevant chapters in Robert H. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009); Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

9. Fan Hongwei, "The 1967 anti-Chinese riots in Burma and Sino-Burmese relations," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012): 234–56.
10. The Myanmar Historical Committee compiled a two-volume collection of Chen's work after his death in 2005. The Burmese volume was published in 2007.
11. Recent works by expatriated Burmese Chinese include Feng Lidong, *Mianhua bainian shihua* [A Hundred Years' History of the Burmese Chinese] (Hong Kong: The Mirror Inc., 2002); Yin Wenhe, *Yunnan heshun qiaoxiangshi gaishu* [A Brief History of Yunnan Heshun Village as Homeland of the Overseas Chinese] (Kunming: Yunnan Meishu Chubanshe, 2003); Zeng Guanying, ed., *Mianhua zawenji* [Essays on Burmese Chinese] (n.p., 2002?). The Macau Association of Mutual Help of Myanmar Overseas Chinese (*Aomen mianhua huzhuhui*) has conducted a general research on Burmese Chinese community, including its colonial history. It published four volumes of *Mianhua shehui yanjiu* [Studies on the Burmese Chinese Community] between 1999 and 2007. Recent English works includes Jocelyn Co Thein, "The Resilience of an Immigrant Community: The Chinese-Burmese in Twentieth Century Rangoon Chinatown" (Undergraduate diss., Harvard College, 1997).
12. Chinese envoys to the south sometimes collected information on Burma during their visits. Between 240 and 260, for example, Kang Tai and Zhu Ying visited Funan (present-day southern Cambodia) and were informed of places in South and Southeast Asia, including places possibly located on the north coast of the Malay Peninsula (Tenasserim) and the Bay of Bengal. This is mentioned in Lawrence Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1951). The exchange between ancient Pyu and China is recorded in "Nanman xia" (Vol. 147–III: Southern Barbarians III), *Xin Tang Shu* [New Book of Tang] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975). For more research on early Sino-Burmese relationships see, for example, Janice Stargardt, *The Ancient Pyu of Burma* (Cambridge: PACSEA, 1990); Elizabeth Moore, *Early Landscape of Myanmar* (Bangkok: River Books, 2006).
13. Chinese travelers from the fourteenth century onward have written about southern Burmese ports and their trade with coastal China. For example, see Wang Dayuan, *Daoyi zhilue* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981) on *baduma* (Martaban) (written around 1349); Zhu Mengzhen, *Xinanyi fengtu ji* (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1936) on Cantonese and Hokkien junk boats trading copper, iron, and ceramics in ancient Pegu (near the Sittaung River) (written in the sixteenth century). Excavation of ceramics like Martaban jars, either imported from China or locally produced, further attests to the integration of this area as calling ports in the contemporary regional maritime trade network, with inevitable connections with China. Martaban jars, named after the harbor of Martaban opposite Moulmein,

are large glazed black stoneware vessels widely used as storage for foodstuffs and commodity export. They were described by the fourteenth-century Arab traveler Ibn Batuta as "huge jars, filled with pepper, citron and mango, all prepared with salt, for a sea voyage," quoted in Henry Yule and Arthur C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* (London: John Murray, 1903), 560. However, this generic term disguises multiple locations and eras that produced this type of jar. For trade in this area see Pamela Gutman, "The Martaban Trade: An Examination of the Literature from the Seventh Century until the Eighteenth Century," *Asian Perspectives* 40, no. 1 (2001): 108–18. Chinese porcelains, many from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were unearthed on the Tenasserim coast and in offshore shipwrecks by the British in the 1930s. The work was organized by Maurice Collis, Deputy Commissioner of the Mergui District (1932–1934). Maurice Collis, "Fresh Light on the Route Taken by Export Porcelains from China to India and the Near East during the Ming Period," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society* 13 (1935–1936): 9–29. Furthermore, a Chinese ceramic Maitreya Buddha statue was found in Twante, and an incense burner and plates in the fifteenth-century Ming style were found in Shwe Gyin. Chen Yi-Sein, "The Cantonese in Burma," 92.

14. In circa 129 BCE, a Han envoy to Central Asia found Southwest Chinese products (cloth and bamboo sticks) that had been imported from India by locals, highlighting the existence of an overland trade route linking India and China, very possibly via Burma. This story is mentioned in "Dayuan liezhuan" (Vol. 123: Treatise on the Dayuan), *Shi Ji* [Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982); "Zhangqian liguangli zhuan" (Vol. 61: Biographies of Zhang Qian and Li Guangli), *Han Shu* [Book of Han] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962).
15. "Miankao," in Shi Fan, ed., *Dian xi* (Yunnan Tongzhiju, 1887).
16. For example, see Bernard Porter, *The Absent-minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
17. Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, 19.
18. Data from 1881 is based on language and excluded Upper Burma (which was still under the control of the Burmese Kingdom). The author understands that figures returned in this way are usually lower than the actual situation because it excludes the population of Chinese who did not speak Chinese as their mother tongue. For the problematic ethnic classification adopted in colonial census like this, see Charles Hirschman, "The Meaning

and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (1987): 555–82.

19. Astuko Naono, *State of Vaccination: the Fight against Smallpox in Colonial Burma* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan: Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London, 2009); Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011); Jonathan Saha, *Law, Disorder and the Colonial State: Corruption in Burma c.1900* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Tharaphi Than, *Women in Modern Burma* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2014); Ashley Wright, *Opium and Empire in Southeast Asia: Regulating Consumption in British Burma* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
20. Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: The Cresset Press, 1962), 1–2.
21. On the dearth of British information in the First Anglo-Burmese War, see Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113–28.
22. Crawfurd led several missions in this region for the Company; for details see, John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830); *Journal of an Embassy from Governor General of India to the Court of Ava* (London: R. Bentley, Bell and Bradfute, 1834).
23. D. G. E. Hall, "Henry Burney: Diplomat and Orientalist," *Journal of Burma Research Society* 41 (1958): 100–110.
24. For recent research on the Burmese Chinese with regional connections, see Michael Charney, "Chinese Business in Penang and Tenasserim (Burma) in the 1820s: A Glimpse from a Vietnamese Travelogue," *Journal of the South Seas Society* 55 (2002): 48–60; "Esculent Bird's Nest, Tin, and Fish: The Overseas Chinese and Their Trade in the Eastern Bay of Bengal (Coastal Burma) during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-Keong, eds., *Maritime China in Transition 1750–1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz, 2004), 245–59; U Thaw Kaung, "Preliminary Survey of Penang-Myanmar Relations from Mid-19th to Mid-20th Centuries," in *Selected Writings of U Thaw Kaung* (Yangon: Myanmar Historical Commission, 2004), 163–86.
25. Immediate post-war Sinologists and anthropologists studied Chinese communities in Southeast Asia as a replacement to post-1949 China but ignored the connections between overseas communities and the home-

land. For them, "overseas" is approached as an isolated location and the Chinese communities there seen as social fossils. For instance, see anthropological studies on Chinese in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and southern China in Maurice Freedman, *The Study of Chinese Society: Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979); *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London: Athlone Press, 1966); Chinese community in Thailand in G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957). American sociologist Paul Siu suggests the relationship between the immigrant's present physical environment and his mental homeland is not compatible, although Siu does not deny a cultural agency. Paul Siu, "The Sojourner," *American Journal of Sociology* 58, no. 1 (1952): 34–44; *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation* (New York: New York University Press, 1987).

26. Adam McKeown explores a new dimension and suggests an outlook that goes beyond the territorial and nation-state boundaries. He argues that both the previous homeland and the present environment are but two of many nodes in an ever-changing transnational migrant network composed of many nodes in between, and constant flows of personnel, goods, capital, and information freely moving around without physical obstacles such as geographical distance and state borders. Adam McKeown, "Conceptualising Chinese Diasporas, 1842 to 1949," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (1999): 306–37; *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).
27. Vocabulary like "assimilation," "acculturation," and "integration" with strong post-war state-building connotations often appear in early post-war studies on Chinese migrant communities. The dilemma between sojourners and settlers remains firmly along the lines of state borders. Representative works include Wang Gungwu, *China and Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991); *Community and Nation: Essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Published for the Asian Studies Association of Australia by Heinemann Educational Books [Asia], 1981); Anthony Reid, ed., *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese: In Honour of Jennifer Cushman* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996).
28. Some argue that the transnational network is no less problematic than the territorially bounded nation-states concept it criticizes. Ien Ang, "Undoing Diaspora: Questioning Global Chineseness in the era of Globalisation," in Ien Ang, ed., *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and West* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001): 75–94.
29. David Faure explores the social and cultural integration of Canton into the state in the Pearl River Delta of the last three centuries. David Faure and Helen F. Siu, eds., *Down to Earth: The Territorial Bond in South China*

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Tao Tao Liu and David Faure, eds., *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996).

30. Denys Lombard, "Another 'Mediterranean' in Southeast Asia," trans. Nola Cooke, *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 1 (2007): 3–9.
31. Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 46.
32. Willem van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20, no. 6 (2002): 647–68; James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
33. An early work on this subject is Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: F. Cass, 1977).
34. For the imperial propaganda on British home society see, for example, John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
35. For the colonial power/knowledge mechanisms in British India, see Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
36. "Imperial and Colonial History," Stephen Howe, accessed August 16, 2015, http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/imperial_post_colonial_history.html. See also Stephen Howe, ed., *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009).
37. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
38. For a brief migration history of Chinese Muslims in this region, see Andrew D.W. Forbes, "History of Panglong, 1875–1900: A 'Panthay' (Chinese Muslim) Settlement in the Burmese Wa States," *The Muslim World* 78, no. 1 (1987): 38–50; Maung Maung Lay, "Study on Chinese Muslims in Burma: Emergence of the Panthay Community in Mandalay," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 129 (2007): 50–55.
39. Frederick Cooper, "Postcolonial Studies and Study of History," in Ania Loomba et al., ed., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 401–22 (404–48).
40. John Okell, *A Reference Grammar of Colloquial Burmese* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

PART 1

Coming to Burma

CHAPTER 2

From Frontier to Heartland

To trace Chinese activities in colonial Burma, we must first go to western Yunnan. In the nineteenth century, western Yunnan, despite being officially administrated under the provincial government of the Qing Empire, was part of a frontier under overlapping and rival influences from the Burmese Kingdom, the Siamese Kingdom, local ethnic polities, and the expanding British Indian Empire. It was a borderland that saw "distinct social configurations" and "transnational flows,"[1] including well-established and extensive social and economic connections with Burma.

Let us start the story from Heshun, a small Han Chinese village less than 100 kilometers from the Sino-Burmese border (Map 2). In local community memories and oral traditions, Heshun is famous for its "eight to nine out of ten residents" who make a living by trading Burmese cotton and precious stones.[2] According to local gazetteers, Heshun used to be inhabited by the Wa people (an ethnic group that lives in southern Yunnan and northern Myanmar today) and had a Wa name, Yangwentun. However, in the first years of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the Han Chinese came to this region in large numbers with military campaigns and later settled down, taking part in a centralization process that brought this southwestern periphery under the direct control of Beijing. By the end of the seventeenth century, Yangwentun was officially referred to as Heshun in government documents, a characteristically Han Chinese name that indicated a complete erasure of its non-Han past.[3] This village, along with many other towns and villages near the Sino-Burmese border, supplied

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significant numbers of people who migrated to or sojourned in Upper Burma well before the British period.

A few kilometers from Heshun is the county town of Tengyueh (Tengchong, also known as Momein), a regional trading center in the northern part of the Sino-Burmese frontier. Like Ssu-mao (Si'mao), another border town to its southeast, it is strategically located along traditional trans-frontier caravan routes.[4] In the 1890s, through treaties with China, the British successfully obtained the right to set up consulates in this area, thereby further securing the British–Indian frontier with an eye to opening up a Chinese interior market from the southwest after having established firm rule first in India, then in Burma, in the preceding decades.

This chapter follows the development in this Sino-Burmese frontier in the context of confrontations between colonial Britain and imperial China since the early nineteenth century and how this development affected the self-perception of the local Yunnanese. Under the colonial rule, the frontier was transformed into a borderland demarcated by British and Chinese officials according to the principles of the modern nation-state. During this process, the free flow of people and goods was challenged by stricter border controls. More profoundly, this transformed borderland also initiated a transition that distinguished the (Han) Chinese ethnicity from others and saw the formation of an ethnic and community boundary that echoed the physical and political borders. The presence of the colonial regime, with its clearly defined categories of territories and peoples, forced the sojourning Yunnanese to identify themselves as a migrant community in Burma for the first time in their long history of encounters with their southern neighbors. With increasing interactions between two regional Chinese groups, the Yunnanese and the Hokkien/Cantonese, in Upper and Lower Burma, they eventually reached a certain level of uniformity despite regional differences and formed a shared profile of ethnic Chinese that was expected and acceptable under the colonial rule.

To understand this transformation, a few representative events are investigated here chronologically. After a brief retrospective look at the frontier and its communities immediately prior to the arrival of the colonial powers, it examines British expansion and colonial establishment to secure this borderland. Next, it analyzes the impact of colonial presence on the Yunnanese community on both sides of the border-in-progress, which resulted in a reinforcing of loyalty to Beijing on one hand and the consolidation of the communal network on the other. The transformation also meant increased mobility and intermingling among different Chinese

regional groups across Burma. It further facilitated ethnic demarcation between the Yunnanese and their non-Chinese neighbors and integration between the Yunnanese and their fellow Chinese immigrants from Lower Burma. Consequently, the Yunnanese, once the people of an open frontier, formed an inseparable part of a Chinese immigrant community while still retaining a certain degree of regional distinctiveness.

Due to the limitation of primary sources, most of the stories told here are centered on Tengyueh and its surrounding areas, especially Heshun, the affluent village that could afford intellectual exchanges and written documents. Very little is mentioned regarding other nearby Yunnanese counties, which also supplied large numbers of migrants, including, but not restricted to, seasonal laborers who worked in mines—a more desperate choice for people with less capital and little education.

2.1 A Pre-colonial Frontier

Historically a minor polity surrounded by the Kachin hills in northern Burma, Bhamo was known to local Chinese as Xinjie (New Street, implying its commercial prominence) no later than the mid-eighteenth century, as opposed to Old Street or old Bhamo nearby.[5] It was sometimes also referred to as Jiangtoucheng (Riverhead Town),[6] although the actual location is still the subject of debate. Bhamo and Tengyueh are the two termini of well-explored Yunnan–Burma caravan routes in the northern part of this frontier. Passing through this area, similar routes saw not only caravans but also lively military, political, and economic engagements involving multiple ethnic actors from all social strata.[7]

Throughout the pre-colonial era, goods and capital, as well as personnel and ideas, had moved around in this frontier without too many interventions from remote power centers. This free spirit cultivated in the periphery under various imperial influences was further encouraged by geography. Tengyueh, although first established as a regional center according to the Yuan Dynasty's administrative map at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was geographically separated from the rest of Yunnan by the high mountains of Gaoligong, an eastern extension of the Himalayas, and the Nu River (the Salween in Burma) and had always maintained a closer connection with the frontier than with the Middle Kingdom.

Previous Chinese dynasties did make some effort to assert their sovereignty over the border region using, of course, Chinese protocol. For example, in the area near the present-day Mohnyin and Myitkyina, a

stele was erected by a Ming military official, Wang Ji, during his frontier pacification campaign over local polities around Tengyueh in the 1440s. It reads, "Only until the stone is rotten and the river is dried, can you possibly cross this river,"[8] an exclamation intending to eternally deter any further ambitions over this conquered territory. In Bhamo, a Weiyuan Garrison was stationed during the Toungoo–Ming wars in the 1580s–1590s, led by Baoshan-Tengyueh military officials Deng Zilong and Liu Ting.[9] A foundation stone for the garrison, ordered by Liu Ting and supported by four Native Officials in this region, was also established in 1584.[10]

This frontier became of special interest to Burmese and Chinese rulers in the second half of the eighteenth century, and at least three locally inspired plots managed to attract the highest attention from the courts in both Ava (the capital of the Burmese Kingdom) and Beijing before 1800. Before the Sino-Burmese War in the 1760s, the head of the Maolong silver mine, Wu Shangxian (Aye Thu Yei in Burmese records), went to the Burmese capital in 1750, accompanied by thousands of armed men from his mine. Pretending to be an imperial envoy from the Chinese emperor, he was well received by the last Toungoo King, Mahadhammaraza Dipadi, and successfully persuaded him to send a diplomatic mission to Beijing. This mission, under the arrangement of Wu's influential Mandarin friends in Yunnan and Beijing, was received by the Qianlong Emperor with great satisfaction.[11] Wu Shangxian was from a humble background in Shiping County, in eastern Yunnan. With the support of the local Wa chief, he had established himself in the Maolong silver mine that fell outside the effective controls of Yunnan and Burma in the Wa hills, and was responsible for managing thousands of miners. In addition to the bogus envoy to the Toungoo King, Wu also developed networks among provincial officials and paid voluntary taxation into provincial coffers.[12]

As his growing power became a threat to Chinese frontier control, Wu was eventually found guilty of transgression and executed. Undeterred, another native official played a similar trick a few decades later, obviously inspired by Wu's bold innovation.[13] In order to resume cross-border trade, which was vital to the local economy, frontier residents hatched another plot to remove the embargo from Beijing after the Sino-Burmese War.[14] A native ruler, probably of Tai ethnicity, forged an imperial letter and presents and sent his son on a bogus mission to the Konbaung King Bodawpaya in 1787, claiming to be an envoy from the *Utibwa* (the "East King" in Burmese). The mission was well received by Bodawpaya and a reciprocal mission was soon dispatched to Beijing, accompanied

by interpreters introduced by plot planners. Once again, the Qianlong Emperor was happy to see this tributary gesture, and the embargo, as expected, was lifted. In 1790, another mission brought three "Chinese princesses," as gifts from the Chinese emperor, to Bodawpaya. Many believe this was another bogus mission orchestrated by Yunnan officials and the three maidens were merely local girls from Yunnan.[15] While later British and Myanmar scholars often identify the mastermind of the 1787 mission as the Bhamo *Sawbwa* (the Shan headman), records from the Qing court address him as the Native Official of Gengma.[16] Regardless of his true identity, it was certain that in this frontier area, native rulers often held multiple (sometimes nominal) titles from competing forces and maintained multi-layered loyalties. Additionally, local residents, Han and non-Han, had long been accustomed to having free movement throughout the land and were even freer in their ways of thinking. Parker, the acting Adviser on Chinese Affairs for British Burma in the 1890s, later reflected, "in nearly every instance the Burmese embassies were preceded by bogus embassies purporting to be from the Emperor of China to the King of Burma but in reality got up to deceive both the Emperor and the King by the Yunnan officials."[17] By rigid imperial Chinese standards, it was extremely audacious to impose oneself as an endorsed representative of the Emperor, "the mandated son of Heaven." Such wild imaginations and unbelievably successful implementations were certainly less possible, even unthinkable, in the Chinese hinterland.

2.2 The Yunnanese in Burma Before 1886

For generations of young Han Chinese men in western Yunnan, to travel along the Yunnan–Burma caravan route was a challenge in its own right. The popular *Yangwentun Xiaoyin* (A Little Ballad of Yangwentun),[18] which was often read as travel and moral guide for young Tengyueh travelers, described the journey from the home village to Wacheng (the "Wa" City, present-day Mandalay and its surrounding area)[19] via Bhamo:

> All your relatives see you off at the start of the road to Guanpo.
> This place feels like the dark mountain at your back.
> Passing this point, you leave your homeland behind completely.
>
> The most dangerous part is crossing the barbaric mountains and it is worrying at every moment.

> Previously they [the local people] wanted tobacco and alcohol, and they stopped our journey and asked for it.
> Now it is almost like robbery, firing their guns or using other weapons easily.
> When it could not be settled, both sides camped and fought, with two results: we won or we paid.
> Sometimes we may be under siege for several days, and having exhausted our food, have to suffer from hunger and the bad weather.
>
> After arriving at Bhamo, we started to worry about the downstream river journey, the boat may be too small, or the wood may decay; there might be some large float in the river; and midnight attacks from robbers when staying overnight in big towns.[20]

All southbound travel pointed to Wacheng, the Burmese capital and the center of the Yunnanese community. It was believed that business was going particularly well after trade was resumed in the last years of the eighteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century, many Tengyueh shops had been established in Wacheng and other towns in Upper Burma for several generations and possessed considerable commercial and social influence. For example, the *San Cheng* shop, a family business of the Lis of Heshun, traded mainly in Burmese cotton and jade and Chinese silk. Its headquarters was in Wacheng and branches were spread over Upper Burma and Yunnan. It also played a leading role in the renovation project of the Amarapura Yunnanese temple in the 1830s. One of the banners in the temple was dedicated by Li Dasen, son of the founder of *San Cheng*, and Yin Rong, who worked in *San Cheng* as in charge of its cotton business. Both of them were believed to be leaders of the local Yunnanese community at that time.[21]

In Mandalay today, several religious sites attest to the early stage of the formation of this community. At the waterfront of the Irrawaddy, next to the Monasteries Quarter, stands a Chinese temple, Jinduoyan.[22] According to the Mandalay Yunnanese, this was an old Chinese meeting point, a convenient riverfront location for caravans coming down the river.[23] It is difficult to identify the founding date of the Jinduoyan; some placed it during the late Ming and early Qing periods (the seventeenth century).[24] As late as 1860, a member of the Tengyueh gentry, while visiting Wacheng's places of interest, composed a classic poem describing the arrival of a steamer near Jinduoyan.[25] He described the steamer as a new technological innovation at that time.[26] This location perhaps started as a combination of a harbor, warehouse, tavern, and a place of worship for friends and relatives from

Tengyueh and surrounding areas.[27] Its deities, as the community believes, included the *Tudi* (God of Earth) and the *Caishen* (God of Money), both of whom were popular local folk deities back home.

After the interruption of the Sino-Burmese War, another Chinese temple was built (or rebuilt) in the heart of the Amarapura Chinese quarter in 1773.[28] The Amarapura Yunnanese temple's main deity was *Guanyin*, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, a Sinified Bodhisattva popular all over China; hence, its formal name was *Guanyin Si* (Guanyin Temple). It is commonly known as the *Thaung-myo* ("southern town" in Burmese) *Guanyin Si* among the local Chinese because Amarapura is located to the south of Mandalay. The last renovation took more than eight years (1838–1846) to complete and the final expenditure reached an enormous amount,[29] an apparently vast figure even for the well-off Yunnanese merchants. Upon the completion of this renovation project in 1846, the bill was not fully paid off despite donations from Yunnanese and Burmese merchants and officials in the capital and in Bhamo. A renovation committee, made up of 16 shops (probably the most prominent Yunnanese shops in the town and in Upper Burma, including the aforementioned *San Cheng* shop), had to continue charging a compulsory special levy on the cross-border trade of silk, cotton, "various local goods from Beijing and Canton,"[30] and Bhamo caravans in general for almost 20 years![31]

The renovation of the Amarapura Yunnanese temple in 1846 was typical for a trans-national community proclaiming its material and cultural connections. This was practiced by many other diasporic Chinese communities, including the Cantonese and Hokkien in Rangoon in later years. The Wacheng Yunnanese believed that the renovation closely followed the architectural blueprint of temples at home in Heshun. According to the inscription, artisans specialized in wood-carving, stone-carving, sculpting, painting, and inscriptions were hired from Tengyueh. A junior Mandarin from Tengyueh, Li Kailiang, composed the essay for the inscription. A large quantity of construction materials was procured in Yunnan and transported via Bhamo on caravan routes.[32] Similar temples also emerged or developed, along with Chinese quarters, in other Upper Burma towns such as Bhamo.

This community-building project in Upper Burma among the Yunnanese sojourners was in tandem with what was happening in contemporary Tengyueh society. From around the beginning of the nineteenth century, before the presence of colonial pressure in Upper Burma, a construction boom of grand country houses, clan halls, and temples was evident in and outside Tengyueh,[33] thanks primarily to the profits made in

Burma. For instance, the 1814 renovation of the Zhongtian Si (Temple) in Heshun was supported by donations of 612 silver taels from sojourning Heshun villagers from the Namtu jade mine (known in China as the Old Silver Factory), the ruby mine of Mogok, Hkakyu near Myikgyina, and Wacheng.[34] This followed a similar practice during its previous renovation in 1776. The boom was accompanied by the compilation of lineage books for large local clans by country gentries, which was arguably part of a frontier urbanization process.[35] It was not only the local Yunnanese who were fond of this project. Native place associations of other provinces in China were also established in various frontier towns such as Tengyueh and Ssu-mao. For example, the Wanshou Gong (Temple) in Ssu-mao was established by commercial sojourners from Jiangxi in order to attend to the needs of traveling merchants from that province and facilitate their business networks.[36] As an inseparable part of this frontier, Wacheng was unsurprisingly caught up in this contemporary boom. However, in the nineteenth century, the traditional Chinese community, which had followed its own rhythms and patterns, had to face a new challenge, the increasingly aggressive approach of a colonial power.

2.3 British Efforts to Secure the Frontier

British interest in the Sino-Burmese frontier was evident long before the actual extension of their rule to Upper Burma. In 1795, Michael Symes led an embassy to Ava, the first-ever official mission to the Burmese court from the Governor General of India. Symes met the Governor of Bhamo, who claimed to have visited Beijing twice via a "very fatiguing" journey of three months. He was told that although "the Birmans have not liberty to pass at will into the Chinese territory, or the Chinese into that of the Birmans," the Governor himself had the "power to grant passports," something "of the chop, or seal, which he was accustomed to affix to such papers."[37] If there had been border control up until that time, it seemed that any such control was rather nominal and loose, where the local head of a border town could act of his own liberty, even with a third country official like Symes.

Symes's expedition was one of many British frontier expeditions launched in the years of British imperial expansion, with clear diplomatic, territorial, and commercial ambitions in this part of the world, spanning from northwest and northeast India, central Asia, and Tibet to northern Burma and southwest China. As a well-tested practice in the British imperial project, they collected and digested local knowledge in a format

comprehensible to imperial readership and integrated these geographical and ethnographical landscapes into the intellectual map of the Empire, preparing for the imperial wars, trade, and rule that would follow.[38] In the case of the Burmo-Yunnanese frontier, the process that transformed a historically caravan-friendly frontier into a colonial borderland can be traced to the early nineteenth century, soon after the East India Company's annexation of coastal Burma in the 1820s. As a natural extension of British India's northeastern frontier, this area was a wide expanse about which the British had been keenly taking notes for a considerable time.

Different routes had been tried around Bhamo, all driven by the aim to find a through route connecting British imperial territorial possessions in this region, namely northeast India, central Burma, and the southern and eastern coasts of China. After the First Anglo-Burmese War, British rule in Lower Burma and its presence at the Burmese court in Upper Burma helped to facilitate better access to information on this frontier, sometimes through visiting local headmen from the Indo-Burmese border.[39] In 1836, Captain Hannay visited Bhamo and Mogoung from Ava by traveling upstream along the Irrawaddy.[40] In 1837, Griffith crossed the Patkoi range (Patkai hills of the Indo-Burmese border) and the Hukong Valley (*Hukang Hegu* in Chinese, present-day Hukawng Valley in the Myitkyina District) from Suddyah in northeastern India. In Patkoi, he met Bayfield, who was sent by the Resident at the court of Ava, Colonel Burney.[41] Bayfield's trip from Ava to Patkoi was via Bhamo, thus marking the completion of the northern through route between India and Burma.

After the conclusion of the Second Anglo-Burmese War and the annexation of Pegu in 1852, British expansion proceeded up the Irrawaddy eastward, often toward the Shan states. Within a few decades, interest in the Sino-Burmese border, still beyond British reach, was renewed. In 1868, a new expedition, led by the British political agent in Ava, Major Sladen, was proposed by Albert Fytche, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma from Rangoon. The exploration of trade routes between Bhamo and western Yunnan was based on previous officers' beliefs in the existence of ancient Yunnan-Burmese trade routes. It was approved by Calcutta, and King Mindon (r. 1853–1878, the penultimate king of the Konbaung Dynasty) provided logistical support for the team.[42]

Fytche emphasized the great commercial potential of routes to southwest Yunnan, whose "commercial highway," he believed, would allow the British to reach neighboring Sechuen (Sichuan) and Kweichow (Guizhou), "the wealthiest and most populous provinces in China," where the majority

of products traded in Canton were produced. Furthermore, with the treaty ports of Shanghai and Hankow, both along the Yangtze River, opened to the British, and Chung Ching (Chongqing), "the great Central mart on its banks" of the Yangtze, also in Sichuan, could then be reached.[43] Thus, the connection from China's eastern coast to the western hinterland, then directly linking the British territories of India and Burma (the annexation of Upper Burma was perhaps just a matter of time for him), could be achieved.

Advocating commercial benefits inevitably involved Britain's imperial competitors, as Fytche reminded Calcutta of Washington's increasingly ambitious seaborne trade with China, a great threat to the opium exports. Fytche clearly knew how to touch "a tender point"[44] of the Indian Government in his advocacy. The competition was further complicated by the involvement of other imperial rivals. Precisely in 1868, a French Mekong expedition, starting from Saigon under the leadership of Ernest Doudart de Lagrée and Francis Garnier, arrived at Ssu-mao, the terminal of another Sino-Burmese caravan route and not far from Tengyueh.

Thus, this proposed expedition, a round trip between Mandalay and Tengyueh, was not only necessary but also urgent. By early 1868, a team of British officers and engineers, along with Burmese staff, was already in Bhamo, ready to commence its journey along the ancient caravan route. According to the descriptions by contemporary British explorers, Bhamo had a distinctively Chinese flavor. Anderson, the 1868 expedition's naturalist, described the town as having two portions, one Chinese and the other Shan. The Chinese quarter was in the middle of the town with 50 to 60 houses, whose enterprising residents had "regulate[d] the cotton market."[45] They also sold

> Manchester goods, long-cloth, Chinese yarns, ball tea, opium, spices, preserved oranges, jujubes, walnuts, chestnuts, raisins, apples, potatoes, beans, water-melon seeds, betel-nut, salt, flint, gypsum, yellow orpiment, vermillion from Talifoo, copper wire, lead, bees-wax, coarse sugar, sugar-candy, twine, catgut, and many articles of less importance.[46]

The landmark of this quarter was the Chinese temple (Fig. 2.1). Anderson was particularly impressed by its circular doorway:

> A neat little temple and theatre in one, consisting of an outer and an inner court terminating in the temple itself, which contains another court, their holy of holies. The entrance to the first was through what was a novelty to us, a circular doorway. The court is paved throughout, and lies at a lower level than the one immediately above it, which appears to be the orthodox

Fig. 2.1 Doorway of a Chinese temple, Bhamo (Photograph by Willoughby Wallace Hooper, 1886. © British Library Board, Photo 312/ (69))

> fashion adopted in Chinese temples. The theatrical stage is over the entrance to the second court, and faces the religious part of the building, which, in its turn, is raised above the court immediately below it. The court of the sanctuary has a covered terrace round its three sides with recesses off two of them, containing seated figures nearly life-size, with rubicund, almost fiery faces, having black beards and moustaches of formidable cut and dimensions. They are all, in accordance with a Chinaman's just appreciation of the value of rupees, carefully protected from dust and injury by being placed in square boxes, which I ought to dignify with the name of shrines, closed in front with almost opaque, gauze netting. A few priests live in a court-yard at the side of the building which is built entirely of brick, and after the Chinese grotesque idea of architectural beauty.[47]

The temple was dedicated to the *Guandi* (God of War), a popular god among Han residents of the Yunnan frontier, perhaps due to this region's ready exposure to warfare among all ethnicities and also his patronage over the merchants. Its last renovation was carried out in 1806, presumably at an old worshipping site for Yunnanese jade, silk, and cotton merchants at least from the early decades of the eighteenth century, and was disrupted by the Sino-Burmese War in the 1760s.[48] In addition to halls dedicated

to the *Guandi* and other deities, a stage for folk performances[49] and a Chinese school were also established in the temple's compound, functioning and regarded as the *de facto* Tengyueh Association in Bhamo.[50] It was also at this spot, popularly known as the Joss-house among the Europeans and the *Guandi* Temple by the Chinese, that the Chinese mercenary Set Kyin (Chinese name Jin Guoyu) was assassinated by his followers in 1885, just before the fall of Bhamo to the British troops.[51]

The Bhamo Chinese gave an apparently amicable reception to the team. As observed by both Anderson and Sladen, the local Chinese headman had considerable influence and good connections among his fellow countrymen, Burmans, Kachins, Shans, and others, from Mandalay to Tengyueh and the vast unknown between. He invited the British to a feast of "grand style"[52] in the temple, a "hospitality of our new Chinese friends"[53] that deeply impressed both Anderson and Sladen:

> We sat round a table on which a very complete dessert of twenty five dishes had been previously arranged. Tea was handed round, and each guest, in addition, found a veritable teapot at his side, filled with the strongest samshoo. The dessert being removed, fresh and substantial signs of hospitality evinced themselves in the appearance of nine separate dishes of cooked meats and vegetables, which we were forced by good breeding to attack with chopsticks.[54]

The expedition, however, was quietly opposed. Talking about the difficulties of the journey that seemed impossible to overcome, the Chinese hosts tried to discourage their guests with *samshoo*, "a kind of ardent spirit made in China from rice,"[55] and Chinese dishes. It did not work, and the British left Bhamo, only to find that the objections of the Chinese had escalated. The only Kachin chief who was willing to help admitted his great reluctance, as he had "Chinese friends" both in Bhamo and in the country to the east, all of whom urged him not to provide any assistance.[56] Furthermore, there was a legendary bandit, Chief Lees-hee-ta-hee,[57] a shadowy figure who remained throughout the journey and could stop the team at any time if it trespassed into his territory.

Three months on, in March 1868, the team's Chinese interpreter, a half-Chinese, half-Burmese man, Moung Shwe Yah, who was assigned to the team by King Mindon, further surprised Sladen. Thought to be "eminently useful on account of his local and varied experiences,"[58] Sladen found out that Shwe Yah received

> …advice all along …[to] murder me at a convenient season, and take possession of the cash chest and other Government presents of which I had charge … His private efforts to thwart and confound my plans having failed at Bhamo, he bethought him of the dastardly expedient of robbery and bloodshed … but in this too he missed his mark, and, fearing exposure, chose rather to return in confusion to Bhamo than let it be supposed by the Burmese Government that after all he might have been secretly aiding in the fulfillment of our undertaking.[59]

For all these obstacles framed by the Chinese, the British expedition willingly attributed it to a conflict of commercial interests. As Sladen and Anderson claimed, the Chinese in Bhamo, Mandalay, Tengyueh, and the surrounding area had a firm grip on the entire cross-border trade at that time, and it was natural for them to keep "to themselves their present petty earnings" if the British effort to "open out to all the overland routes between Bhamo and South Western China" failed.[60]

However, if commercial interests were the explicit priority for the expeditions of the British commissioners and agents, it could not be fully understood without considering the contemporary Anglo-Burmese conflict. Sladen blamed the Burmese for bringing him trouble, which was tactically implemented via the hands and minds of the Chinese. Lees-hee-ta-hee was said to have received the endorsement of the Burmese king, and Shwe Yah "was specially told off to our assistance by the King of Burma."[61] The trouble from the Chinese was thus directed toward the independent Burmese Kingdom, which was still competing with British Burma at that stage. Unsurprisingly, upon the conclusion of the 1868 frontier expedition, Fytche managed to persuade the Indian Government, as well as King Mindon, to create the post of British Deputy Resident in Bhamo. Captain Storer was the first to hold this position in 1869, marking the start of the British presence in this border town. As for the Chinese, they would interpret this same issue with quite different perspectives and further concerns (to be discussed shortly).

Later, more extensive routes were also tested from another direction. In 1871, Thomas Thornville Cooper, who advocated an Indo-Tibetan route over the Burmese route to link markets between India and southwest China, became the British Resident at Bhamo, and was later killed in that town,[62] summarized the situation:

> At the present time the Chinese province of Yunnan is attracting attention in its geographical, commercial, and political relations with the adjacent coun-

> tries. It has been, so to speak, attacked front three sides and that almost at the same time, by explorers acting independently of each other; viz.: the French expedition from Saigon, on the south; Major Sladen's party, on the Burmese or western side; and, last and least, an attempt was made by myself to reach Talifoo from Atenze, on the northern frontier.[63]

After the opening of the Chinese treaty ports and the heartland of the Yangtze River, journeys from Shanghai to Bhamo (and further south in Burma) were explored extensively. A. R. Margary, working in the British Consular Service in China, traveled from Shanghai to Bhamo to meet another British expedition under Browne in 1874. In February 1875, on his way to Manwyne near the border, Margary was attacked and killed, arguably under the order of the same Lees-hee-ta-hee. Some scholars believed this was in fact Li Chen-kuo, a Tengyueh native born of a Chinese father and a Burmese mother, and a military commander of a border station in the area.[64] Undeterred, many others followed the same route, for example, Captain A. M. S. Wingate in 1898[65]; Scottish geologist Logan Jack in 1901, who had previous experience in Australia[66]; and an American traveler, William Geil in 1903.[67] In 1906, Reginald Johnson, a Scot working in the Colonial Service in Hong Kong and China, who later became the mentor of the last Qing emperor, also managed to reach Mandalay from Peking in northern China.[68] By means of presentations to academic societies or the publication of their travelogues, many of these travelers introduced their journeys to the British public.[69] Such publicity led to an increased interest and attracted more resources, all, in turn, helping to facilitate further exploration including, in the case of Burma, the final annexation in 1886.

The establishment of British rule over all of Burma did not bring immediate peace, and with the Kachin hills dominating this part of the land, the priority of the new colonial regime was to deal with various rebels on the mountainous frontier. The British army occupied Bhamo in the end of 1885 and continued its military operations, with troops stationed in strategic locations such as Katha and Mensi. After the 1890s, the Pacification Campaign was concluded and most regular operations were carried out by the military police,[70] most notably the Mogaung Levy (later the Bhamo Battalion), which consisted of 15 companies in 1896 and stationed in many outposts in the hill tracts and near the borders.[71]

Along with the strong presence of the police force, civil establishments followed. Public works built roads and bungalows in the hill tracts and along the newly delimited border; schools were established by the government and missionaries; hospitals, post and telegraph offices, and bazaars expanded from major towns to the hill areas.[72] Forest stations and rest houses were erected to administer the rich timber resources of the area, and from 1905, a Rangoon-based company, Messrs Steel Brothers Ltd., became its main teak trader. A customhouse was established in December 1904, where goods were repacked and a rebate of seven-eighths of the levy was refunded on goods exported to China, an incentive created by Rangoon to boost Sino-Burmese trade.[73] Opium was under close supervision by Excise officers when opium shops were erected in Bhamo and Shwegu in 1904, along with other licensed products.

Within a few decades, Bhamo, once an outpost in the Kachin hills of northern Burma, a frontier frequented by multiple ethnicities, was transformed. As a district in Upper Burma, Bhamo administered two subdivisions (Bhamo and Shwegu) and two Kachin hill tracts. In terms of its Chinese population, one Yunnanese resident in 1893 estimated that there were about 500 or 600 permanent residents in Bhamo (around one-seventh or one-eighth of the district population according to the 1891 census), while "more than a thousand people come down in the cold weather," bringing "cloths, silk, cotton, fruit, walnuts, apples, pears … salt pork" and taking back "amber, jade and lac."[74] In the 1901 census, speakers of Chinese language numbered 1080 (13.58 percent), while the number increased to 6447 in 1911 (5.7 percent, the drop in percentage was perhaps due to an increase in the Burmese-speaking population). The 1911 census also indicates that the number of immigrants to Bhamo from "other Asiatic countries" was 7998, outnumbering all other emigration regions, including Mandalay, the Shan states, the rest of Burma, and India. In this case, the predominant source of immigration had to be from Yunnan.[75]

With the British securing the colonial frontier and installing colonial institutions, the Yunnanese now had to make a conscious choice: either to be the loyal subjects of the Middle Kingdom on one side of the border or be immigrants (and subjects of a European empire) on the other. By all means, the fluidity that featured in the frontier for centuries was disappearing, slowly but decisively.

2.4 Community Reconfiguration Along the Border

The geographic attractiveness of Burma remained despite the tightened control over borders under colonial rule. Especially upon the completion of a railway extension to Katha (1895) and Myitkyina (1898), the Tengyueh route became even more convenient and was preferred by many from western Yunnan who wanted to go to eastern and northern China. These travelers often combined rail with a sea journey at Rangoon to reach Southeast Asia, then coastal China, and continued northward if necessary. Before the fall of the Qing Dynasty, young Confucian examinees made the long-distance journey by taking the steamship from Rangoon to Tianjin, a port city in northern China close to Beijing, the imperial capital, instead of the more demanding overland option via Kunming, the provincial capital.[76] In 1895, after succeeding in the national level Confucian examination in Beijing with a *Jinshi* title, Tengyueh native Cun Kaitai took the sea route to go home and was welcomed by his fellow countrymen in Wacheng. He attended a banquet held at the Wacheng Yunnan Association, accompanied by Mandarin-attired Chinese men and Burmese dancing girls.[77] Other young graduates extended their journeys to Japan for overseas studies in Japanese universities, bringing back not only modern technologies but also revolutionary and reformist ideologies. In the 1920s, the coffin of a Yunnanese community leader in Wacheng and an early member of Tongmenghui (or the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance), Cun Haiting, who had died in Shanghai, found its way back via Hong Kong, Rangoon, and Mandalay and was eventually buried in his home village of Heshun. Many years later, the natural obstacle of the mighty Nu River became an effective line that separated the Japanese occupied zone in western Yunnan from the rest of the province in 1942. In the following years, western Yunnan was the only area in southwest China, together with Burma, that was under Japanese occupation and saw one of the fiercest battles in the China–Burma–India Theater.

Nonetheless, a foreign institution brought over by colonial rule was changing the social landscape and the free spirited living experience of its multi-ethnic residents. Officials from both sides started to demarcate the border, whose work lasted till the very end of the colonial rule.[78] In the meantime, the Yunnanese underwent a community reconfiguration with divided identity, if not loyalty. Some began to reinforce their attachment to the Chinese emperor and fully adopted a Chinese identity. Others, based on the pre-existing community monuments, devoted their efforts

to work on a migrant community centered in Wacheng, the "capital" of the Yunnanese in British Burma, that fitted into the colonial ethnographic infrastructure and regional precedents.

2.4.1 Chinese Intelligence

Like their southern compatriots who took sea routes to Southeast Asia, the Chinese plying the Yunnan-Burmese caravan routes often spent the majority of their life in Burma. The practice of having Chinese and Burmese wives was so common that many of their descendants were of mixed blood, or *banda* as known among the Yunnanese.[79] In fact, the streets in front of the Amarapura Yunnanese temple, described by some contemporary British travelers as the Chinese quarter, have been the home of these mixed children and their descendants until today. The same could be seen in villages and towns in Tengyueh, where Burmese grannies with completely Han lifestyles lived well into the twentieth century.[80] The ethnic boundary, if there was any, was rather blurred and easily transgressed.

Some of the children, often boys, were sent by their fathers to receive classical Chinese education in Yunnan. Through education, these young men were brought up and aspired to become true Mandarin Chinese, willingly throwing themselves into the Chinese gentry system without too much reference to their "alien" background. In the face of colonial rule, however, some tended to take advantage of this background by gathering intelligence on British activities for the Chinese government, for example, under the guise of interpreters and guides. By doing so, they promptly and consciously identified themselves with the long-established, albeit waning, influences from Beijing in the form of growing patriotic enthusiasm.

One such example was a late-nineteenth-century Heshun man, Zhang Chenglian, who came from a merchant family that had been trading in cotton and silk in the Burmese capital for three generations and extensively intermarried with the Burmese ever since. Born in Burma and educated with classical Confucian canons under scholars in Tengyueh, Chenglian passed the provincial examination in 1879, earning the title of *Juren*. Attempting to further this conventional career path of Mandarin gentry, he was preparing for the national examination in Beijing. Sometime at this point, Chenglian was spotted by a Tengyueh frontier official who was closely watching the latest developments of the Anglo-Burmese conflicts across the border. The official persuaded Chenglian to work as a spy for the Qing emperor utilizing his family ties in Burma as an alternative way to serve the country, no less important than going to Beijing to earn a

higher degree title.[81] Inspired by this prospect, Chenglian went back to Burma, posing as an ordinary Tengyueh businessman who traveled back and forth between Tengyueh and Wacheng/Bhamo, a very familiar route to his friends and families, and started to send information back.

In his later career, Chenglian continued to be a Mandarin gentry and fully immersed himself in the Middle Kingdom's officialdom. For other political reasons, he was demoted and sent to Xinjiang after several years' service as a County Magistrate in Guangdong and Guangxi, and, until his death, remained in this northwest frontier near Russia and Central Asia, another frontier area that was very different geographically from his tropical homeland. His Burmese wife, it is said, followed him throughout China; she was respected by his Mandarin colleagues as *miansaosao* (Burmese sister-in-law) and was renowned for her Burmese culinary skills.[82]

In 1890, finding that the British planned to survey the borderland, Chenglian reacted swiftly after receiving an instruction from above to "look for suitable personnel to follow the British and find out their doings."[83] Under his arrangement, his relatives became guides and interpreters for the British teams, just as Shwe Yah had done for Sladen decades before.[84] They successfully gathered first-hand information from the British and duly reported back to Yunnan. Chenglian's brother, Zhang Chengyu, followed one British team for seven months from Wacheng to the area of the Jiulong River (in Sipsongpanna) in the southern part of the frontier.[85] His nephew, Zhang Dexin, followed another team up from Bhamo to the north of Myitkyina along the Irrawaddy for four months.

As in the attempted assassination of the 1868 expedition, and many more before and after that particular case, the approach of a European colonial force prompted Chinese reactions motivated far beyond commercial loss or orders from the Burmese court, as the British preferred to believe. The revenue from southwest Yunnan was comparatively insignificant to the national treasury.[86] The penetration of colonialism and subsequently the threat to China's border created a far greater confrontation and tremendous confusion for the regional government officials and traveling merchants alike.

Chengyu's diary, written in Burmese during his journey, commented on a meeting between the British and a local chief:

> This headman doesn't totally forget China. But presently the Chinese officials and the generals are disappointing; it is as if they are sleeping. Now the enemy [the British] has been over our border already and tried to lure

> and ally with this headman, but nowhere can I see the military and diplomatic reactions of China. The enemy is so unscrupulous; are our [Chinese] government officials waiting to be killed by the thunder?[87]

Dexin, on his Bhamo-Myitkyina trip, found that the British planned to advance into what was traditionally Chinese territory and tried to dissuade them. He also secretly went to see the local headman and warned him:

> You and your brothers have benefited from China for many generations, why do you welcome the British into China today? … Though you have moved to this place, you'd better be loyal to China and find a way to stop the British now… otherwise, you and your brothers might lose your lives.[88]

Meanwhile, Dexin told the Chinese porters of this team:

> The British behave so badly, and believe the misleading Burmese guide, without understanding the practical difficulties (of going into China). If anything happens, we should be prepared. We are all Chinese and should retain our loyalty. If we meet the Chinese armies there, we must take the chance to attack the British to show our hidden loyalty, which might bring our families honor.[89]

His suggestion was unanimously supported by his fellow countrymen, who had complained extensively about their British employers' abuses.

Showing loyalty to the Emperor was evidently attractive over the years of colonial penetration to a range of people who might not be as deeply involved with politics and officially recognized like Chenglian and his extended families were. This included provincial Qing officials, Han Chinese (educated or not and mixed blood or not), and native officials with multiple tributary orientations. In 1886, the Chinese in Myitkyina found that Wang Ji's stele was pushed into the Irrawaddy by the British, an action understood as symbolic of the unapologetic ambitions of the colonizers. In Bhamo, the Weiyuan stone was rediscovered and photographed by local Chinese residents and Burmese monks, after which a memorial pavilion in the Chinese style was built on the site. Sojourning Yunnanese near Wacheng also visited ancient sites where the last Ming emperor was said to have been captured, collecting details of the last days of Yongli.[90] Such archeological activities closely knitted with history and literature had always been a cultivated hobby favored by Chinese gentry scholars. By carrying out this activity in the now British colony, the Yunnanese demonstrated

their orientation toward China in a way that not only integrated Burma into historical China's imperial discourse and cultural sphere but also declared themselves and their community to be Chinese.

2.4.2 Building a Migrant Community

Meanwhile, the process of community-building among the Yunnanese in Burma had accelerated, now with a renewed agenda under the British rule. Based on the existing institutions, a Yunnanese migrant community started to take shape with increasing numbers of typical Chinese community institutions, such as temples, burial lands, associations, and schools that were often found in many other parts of the region.

The Amarapura Yunnanese temple was the forerunner of the Wacheng Tengyueh Association. Around 1876, the association was established at the center of Mandalay, the new royal city founded by King Mindon. Its premises, like the temples in Amarapura and Bhamo, featured a circular doorway. It took over most social responsibilities from the Amarapura temple, including the management of burial lands.[91] Over the years, this association changed its official name from Tengyueh (a prefecture in western Yunnan), to Yixi (an ancient name for the western Yunnan area), to Yunnan, indicating the expansion of its members' homelands.

Instrumental to the establishment of the Tengyueh Association was one legendary figure, Yin Rong, the Tengyueh Association's first chairman. According to popular folklore, Yin Rong was believed to be born in 1822 into a frontier family with long traditions of serving as interpreters in both Chinese and Burmese courts. Leaving for Wacheng at the age of 16, he became a major textile trader in the Burmese capital, maintaining frequent contact with Burmese royals and allegedly playing a role in mediating the throne dispute between King Pagan and King Mindon. His most talked-about accomplishment was the design and supervision of the construction of a new royal palace in Mandalay that followed closely the layout and the style of Tengyueh town.[92] He received special respect from all four Burmese kings whom he had served. According to Yin Rong's descendants, he was also invited to join the British Government, but he refused to do so and returned home and died in Heshun in 1901.[93] One of the legacies of this legendary U Hsa ("Uncle Salt," his honorable Burmese name[94]) is a piece of land at the center of Mandalay, a gift from the King for U Hsa's dedication to the court, which Yin Rong donated to the Wacheng Tengyueh Association.

Today on 80th Street, known as *hanrenjie* (Chinese Street) by the local Chinese, the grand hall of the Wacheng Yunnan Association still stands and maintains a deep influence in the city.

The establishment of associations like this was more than a continuation of pre-colonial community-building activity. Under the changing administrative system in Upper Burma, the Yunnanese responded with the development of temples, burial lands, associations, and schools for the community, through which an increasingly clear image of ethnic Chinese could be recognized in order to differentiate itself from its non-Chinese neighbors. Such clarification was necessary for them to fit into ethnic pigeonholes allocated by the colonial ethnographic infrastructure. There was no more space for ambiguity. As colonial subjects, they needed to tick the boxes, choosing from indigenous races, Indian castes, or other Asiatic migrants, limited options that were clearly defined in the census and other government documents. Under this classification system, the Yunnanese had no other choice but to become part of the Chinese migrant community (Fig. 2.2).

Fig. 2.2 A Baker's Shop in the Chinese quarter of the town. It is not perhaps a very inviting place, nevertheless the bread made in Mandalay is exceedingly good (Photograph by Willoughby Wallace Hooper, 1886. © British Library Board, Photo 312/ (83))

Along with the construction of community monuments, defining and promoting social protocols based on morality from the homeland also helped transform these frontier people now seeking distinctive Chinese features in a foreign land. This was best exemplified by the popular ballad mentioned already, the *Yangwentun Xiaoyin*. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *Xiaoyin* had been widely circulated among Tengyueh sojourners and their families. A vernacular ballad without complicated instructions or obscure language, this was simple educational material suitable for the traveling youth. It started with a cry for one's homeland, emphasizing the unaltered attachment to the Chinese homeland despite one's destiny as a sojourner. Whenever possible, returning home within "one year or two, and at most three to four years"[95] remained an important life task for the sojourners.

Next came practical guidance for fresh Yunnanese apprentices in Wacheng. The first step of the settling-down process was to "go and look for [someone], and ask him to find a place for you to live and work."[96] With the help of relatives and friends, the young apprentices should follow a code of good behavior:

> Make decent friends, respect the elders, and walk slowly after them.
> Learn the foreign language, practice it all the time.
> Learn the writing and math, and always practice.
> Do business in a fair way, don't cheat the elders and the youth.
> Do the bookkeeping carefully, don't forget any items.
> When lending money, be diligent and go to check [the debtors] often.
> When buying goods, know their quality.
> Be prepared for price fluctuations, sell and buy at the right time.
> When there is profit, don't be too greedy and sell at the right moment.
> Never be too ambitious and forget to give back.[97]

Having Burmese wives, a very common practice among sojourning Yunnanese, was a danger that was to be avoided strenuously, according to *Xiaoyin*. Unlike the positive image of Burmese female in much of the contemporary European literature, in Upper Burma, they were looked upon unfavorably by the Yunnanese, particularly when compared with the good wives back home who were alleged to have better moral standards. "The Burmese woman will only marry the Chinese if she wants better food and clothing. How could the good women from a decent household be willing to marry *tayouq* [China or the Chinese]?"[98]

> The Burmese women are really shrewd and want to make you their victims.
> They pass you the smoke pipe and leave you with very sweet words, and they wear pretty make-up to attract you.
> You will be lost in her charms without hope, like the fish eating the bait.
> There are her parents, and her brothers and other relatives, whom you will need to fully support.
> When you have money, they call you *saya* [teacher], using *shin* [sir] all the time.
> If you are an artisan, you must be diligent; if you are a businessman, you must be good at trading and socializing.
> All you have earned will be barely enough to support this Burmese woman's family, while nothing will be left for your own parents and your wife and children (at home in China).
> You have no hope to go home, and wait [here] year after year.
> When you have no money, their reaction is very ugly.
> They call you *kwe* [dog] repeatedly, the *kwe tayouq* [Chinese dog].
> The whole family will come out and slash you altogether, slap your face with *hpanaq* [sandal] and ride on top of your head.
> When the verbal and actual abuse is enough, they will go to the Government and spend some money to get rid of you.[99]

In extreme cases, *Xiaoyin* warns, the ignorant Chinese husband might marry a Burmese woman who has mastered wicked witchcraft, such as transforming her soul into animals at night or using *htamein* (Burmese women's long skirt) to cover the poor man's head. In whatever situation, Chinese men with Burmese wives were doomed and trapped, with no hope of getting rid of them and returning to their proper families.[100] Therefore, Burmese wives were dangerous for proper Chinese men and must be carefully avoided, drawing a clear ethnic line when choosing a wife, and in general, families, and lifestyles.

At the same time, thrift and saving were much more preferable. Good men were not supposed to be lazy and wander around seeking a luxurious lifestyle, purchasing expensive gifts, or making lavish celebrations on occasions such as weddings and birthdays. Furthermore, their womenfolk at home should not spend too much and should save the hard-earned money for the family.[101]

In fact, the Yunnanese keeping a low profile was a prominent feature well acknowledged by both the Hokkien and Cantonese and the Yunnanese. Although all groups were equally successful businessmen and

possessed equally considerable wealth, their attitudes were very different. As a general protocol, the Yunnanese considered themselves less flamboyant and preferred to keep a low profile by not placing undue emphasis on personal and material indulgence. However, this is not to say they could not or would not spend money. Several Yunnanese burial lands in the Mandalay area clearly show that the decoration and arrangement of the tombs were equally as exuberant as those in the Rangoon Hokkien and Cantonese cemeteries, though they followed different regional styles of construction. As early as the eighteenth century, the funeral of a well-known Heshun businessman in Bhamo was reported to have attracted more than 800 attendees, both Chinese and Burmese, all dressed in white, and more than 100 tables were set up for the banquet afterward.[102] This must have been a rather spectacular scene in the border town of Bhamo given its small population. But regional stereotypes like this have been commonly accepted by the Burmese Chinese until today, thanks partly to the increasing interactions between the Yunnanese and the Hokkien/Cantonese since the colonial era.

2.5 Interactions Among Regional Chinese Groups in Burma

The biggest impact of colonial rule on shaping the Chinese experience, however, was the opening up of Upper Burma to Hokkien and Cantonese from Rangoon on one hand and Lower Burma and coastal areas to the overland Yunnanese on the other. Historically, the Yunnanese had traveled as far south as Tenasserim and Chiangmai by caravan routes.[103] Chinese from other parts of China were also involved in cross-border trade in Bhamo well before colonial times.[104] However, it was under the British rule that such mobility and inter-regional interaction reached an unprecedented level, especially in the twentieth century.

Under the British rule, the Hokkien and Cantonese now came to the north in large numbers with the expansion of colonial projects. In 1893, a Yunnan-born merchant who had been in Wacheng since King Mindon's reign and had been serving as a Municipal Commissioner of Mandalay from 1888, estimated that among the Chinese population there, 30 percent were Yunnanese and 70 percent were Cantonese.[105] Cantonese construction workers reached as far north as Myitkyina, the railhead, to build the railways, and many towns in Upper Burma for government buildings and markets. The Cantonese were particularly active in the trade of

precious stones from northern mines, working closely with the Yunnanese and utilizing their better command of the English language, their familiarity with commercial practices, and their closer connection with Southeast Asian and southern Chinese ports through their regional networks. By the end of the nineteenth century, Cantonese jade merchants in Wacheng had organized their own occupational association, Kun Xing Tang, on *hanrenjie*, a few steps away from the Yunnan Association. The co-operation between the Cantonese and the Yunnanese on jade business is well remembered today by elderly Mandalay Cantonese, though not without regional competition and prejudice.[106]

At least two Cantonese temples were established by the turn of the century in Wacheng. One was located on *hanrenjie*, a few blocks away from the Yunnan Association, and worshipped the same deity *Guanyin* as the other Cantonese temples in Lower Burma. The other, the *Renji Gumiao* (Temple), which functioned as a charitable hospital and funeral home for the Cantonese community, was also not far from *hanrenjie*. Burial lands for the Cantonese and the Hokkien were located on the east side of the city.[107] An 1891 inscription for the Cantonese cemetery stated the rules of this communal burial land defined by its management body, Yuedong Renshu Tang. This must be a special hospice and funeral management umbrella organization made up of notable Mandalay Cantonese associations, shops, and individuals. Its chief member was no other than the Kun Xing Tang, the leading association for the Cantonese jade traders.

On the Hokkien side, this northward movement could be illustrated by the family experience of Taw Sein Ko (1864–1930), the Government Archeologist and Examiner in Chinese Language and a Mandalay resident. Taw's father was an Amoy native who was involved in pre-steamship-era "coastal shipping" along the Burmese coast in the 1840s.[108] He married a Burmese (or perhaps Mon) woman[109] and Taw Sein Ko was born in 1864 in Moulmein. Later, the family moved to Mandalay and Bhamo during the reign of King Mindon. Despite heavy governmental duties in Rangoon, Taw's official address remained the "Peking Lodge" on West Moat Road, next to the former Royal Palace in Mandalay.[110] The Taws could not possibly have been the only Hokkien in the Burmese capital and Upper Burma during the 1860s. When the Wacheng Hokkien temple, Hock Kheng Keong, opened in 1908, the Hokkien community must have been firmly established for a considerable time. To commemorate this important Hokkien community occasion, a congratulation banner was sent from the Wacheng Yixi (Yunnan) Association, indicating the inter-regional protocol at that time.

In addition to individual and communal interactions, trans-national political institutions also intensified exchanges among different regions from the early 1900s. The Tongmenghui Burma branch was established in Rangoon in 1908, with a majority of Hokkien and Cantonese membership in Lower Burma (to be discussed in Chapter 6). But well before the branch's official establishment, some Yunnanese had been actively engaged in Tongmenghui activities and obtained membership probably through networks within Yunnan. Indeed, several Tengyueh graduates in Tokyo were among the very first to join the Tongmenghui upon its foundation in 1905,[111] and they had a considerable impact on their home community in Burma and western Yunnan. Zhang Chengqing,[112] the younger brother of the Emperor's spy Zhang Chenglian, was among the first Tongmenghui members active in Burma.

By the 1920s, Wacheng was seen as much as a Hokkien and Cantonese place as a Yunnanese place. In 1926, a Heshun businessman, Yin Zhaorong, was urged by his fellow Heshun youth to adopt a modern style for his younger brother Zhaofu's wedding. Yin Zhaorong was not particularly interested, as he had seen this new wedding style in Tengyueh and thought it was not very impressive. However, the youth insisted, "We Yunnanese have never ever practiced this new wedding style in Wacheng, and we need this to establish a new trend. Otherwise, it will be living proof that we Yunnanese are too conservative, as the Cantonese and the Hokkien always say."[113] Convinced perhaps by this subtle regional competition, Yin Zhaorong finally agreed to invite Chinese, Burmese, and Indians to the Yunnan Association's grand hall for a tea party and organized a car procession around the town for the newlyweds, which cost him 2800 Rupees in total for this new-style wedding ceremony. Even so, Yin Zhaorong was still cynical about this innovation. He wrote a Chinese classical poem afterwards:

> *Mingala zaun* is the Burmese word for wedding.
> All the respectable guests are dressed properly.
> A *kweq* [cup] of coffee and a plate of *moún* [cake].
> This is all about the new civilization.[114]

Regional rivalry was undeniable, but it is important to note that in 1926, the Yunnanese tended to compare themselves with the Hokkien and Cantonese instead of with other ethnicities living next to them. There were certainly more interactions than before, compared with their previous

isolated situation from southern Chinese migrants and greater attachment to the various local ethnic groups.

In the meantime, the Yunnanese, whose traditional "comfort zone" was firmly rooted in the area between western Yunnan and northern Burma, also grasped the opportunity to explore the southern territory. Although Upper Burma remained a strong and reliable backyard that was so integrated into the lives of these old Burmese hands, the cosmopolitan port city of Rangoon provided much greater potential. It was especially attractive to the merchants, the core of the Yunnanese community. When their businesses were expanding, they began to find it increasingly obligatory to have a presence in Lower Burma to fully utilize its superb commercial and transportation facilities.

The life experience of Li Xianhe, a Tengyueh-born merchant, illustrated this trans-regional and trans-national mobility. Born in 1851, Li Xianhe lost his father and other senior family members in the Panthay Rebellion (a Chinese Muslim revolt between 1856 and 1872 in central and southern Yunnan) while still a child. As a typical frontier resident, he moved to Bhamo and engaged in the precious stone business. With peace restored and business going well, Li settled his family back in Yunnan, purchasing land, building houses, and arranging education for his younger brothers and children. Li Xianhe himself remained in Burma and married a Burmese woman, Daw Pwu, perhaps from an influential family under King Mindon. Together, they funded Shwe In Bin, a teakwood monastery in Mandalay, for their son's *shinpyu* (initial ceremony as a Buddhist novice).[115] Established as a Yunnanese merchant in Mandalay, a pattern enjoyed by generations before him, he was able to explore the possibilities of a larger operation that only the colony could provide. The precious stone business was headquartered in Mandalay, with branches in Genong (probably in the Hpakan area) for jade and Mogok for ruby, and retail networks in Yunnan, Burma, and the east and south coasts of China, no doubt taking advantage of the port of Rangoon. Later, Li Xianhe also ventured into the tea trade (in which he failed) and rice mills in the delta, in addition to the trade in jade and rubies with Shanghai and Canton. One of his sons managed a family shop in Canton and died there, and the other children and grandchildren were well established and married into families of high-ranking Burmese colonial officials.[116] By the time of his death in 1917 in Rangoon, his connections with southern and eastern Chinese ports were particularly extensive, benefiting from his relocation to Lower Burma.[117]

When Mandalay in the early twentieth century saw a Chinese community whose regional members actively mingled and competed with each other, Rangoon played an increasingly significant role in Yunnanese community life and subtly altered the distribution and perceptions of the Yunnanese population. One example of incorporation of this changing paradigm is Chong Xin Hui, a Heshun youth organization founded in 1925 in Mandalay. With remittances from Burma, Heshun maintained a relatively high level of education, and Heshun children were often sent back for education by their sojourning fathers. The village consistently produced Confucian degree holders in the Qing period and university undergraduates and renowned intellectuals during the Republican era. As with the like-minded both in and outside China, the 1920s generation of educated Heshun youth embraced modernity and was eager to introduce a new lifestyle to the landlocked village and to challenge the conservative elders. Chong Xin Hui was therefore established under this mission.

Based in Mandalay, the association had easy access to human and financial support. The beneficiaries, however, were schools and a library in Heshun, all formed on Western models rather than traditional Chinese ones. In this organization, two geographical divisions existed from the very beginning, the internal (Heshun) and the external (Burma and the rest of the world). In 1931, there were 144 internal members and 334 external members (including one university student in Japan).[118] At the decision-making level, apparently both divisions shared responsibility equally. For example, in a 1935 discussion of the structure of the association, the internal division expressed its opinion, which was different from the opinions of the external members, and this difference in opinion was treated carefully in order to "discuss together and express everyone's opinion."[119]

As the majority of its members and main supporters were in Upper Burma, this association was headquartered in Mandalay, the center of the external half of the Yunnanese community. External members were organized into three geographic subgroups: the Mohnyin branch, covering areas from Myitkyina to Naba; the Kawlin branch, covering the area between Kawlin and Shwebo; and the Mandalay branch, which was responsible for Bhamo, Shan places such as Lashio, Hsipaw, and Kyaukme, as well as Rangoon. Although questions had been raised regarding the rationality of this grouping method by its members, who saw it as an uneven one in terms of pure geography, it nevertheless presented a reality of the distribution of Heshun or, more widely, the Yunnanese population in Burma. In this version, the Mohnyin area and the Kawlin area, both of which were close to the northern border and relatively insignificant

in the colonial administrative system, saw a disproportionately high concentration of Yunnanese to an almost equal scale of that in Mandalay and the Shan States, the traditional key regions of Upper Burma. With regard to the area below Mandalay, including the colony's capital Rangoon, the prosperous delta, and the southern coast, they obtained a rather low priority, at least based on this chart.

However, one noticeable exception was Rangoon, where the association's main output, its official annual journal, was edited and published. Its Rangoon representative, Cun Zhongyou (S.W. Swin), was in charge of this journal. In addition to managing his business as well as being the local contact for the association, Cun Zhongyou was also an active participant in Rangoon's Chinese community activities, mingling with the Cantonese and Hokkien, including having membership in a cross-regional anti-Japanese association in the late 1930s.[120] In fact, Cun Zhongyou openly welcomed any articles "from our hometown as well as any other places"[121] to be sent to his Rangoon address at 24 Vinton Street in Kemmendine (outside the Rangoon Chinatown). The publisher of this Heshun journal was the Ming Ming Publishing Company on Canal Street, the printing facility for a Chinese language newspaper and whose customers included many Cantonese and Hokkien individuals and associations in Lower Burma. The educated Yunnanese youths, like their fellow merchants, found it more inspiring and were better equipped to advocate in favor of their agenda of modernization from a base in Rangoon.

The organizational structure of this relatively modern organization, which was not a secret society or a kinship association with much older traditions and stricter protocols, epitomized both the changing landscape of Yunnanese community life under British rule and the persistence of this community's frontier past. The dual centers of Mandalay and Heshun/Tengyueh were of equal weight but with different emphases. The physical distance itself could be almost psychologically ignored. As was often said in Heshun, Burma was their place of work and Heshun their living quarter. Place names such as Kyaukme or Wacheng were as familiar as that of Tengyueh or Kunming, and the entire area between Mandalay and Tengyueh was seen as a reliable and accessible base, still overlooking any lines drawn by national borders and political systems.

However, the presence of the colonial administrative system made a difference to the community by encouraging its expansion and development toward somewhere unknown to its forefathers. Rangoon became increasingly important for the economic, social, and perhaps also political needs of the Yunnanese. If in the pre-colonial times they were but another local people

moving around the frontier, it was more likely in colonial Rangoon than anywhere else that they would find themselves a new identity as immigrants, a non-indigenous group that needed a clear social definition and community boundaries. In this cosmopolitan city, they met the British and Indians, as well as Chinese, and, to a lesser extent, their old acquaintances such as the Burmans, Shans, and Kachins. It provided a ready space to mingle with their fellow Chinese, the Cantonese and Hokkien, whom they might not have had much chance to know back in China. The more they mingled, the less of a frontier character they were likely to possess while carrying the more typical expectations of a Chinese migrant. Thus, Yunnanese like Cun Zhongyou might have found themselves less "Tengyueh" and more "Chinese" through their daily encounters with their Cantonese and Hokkien colleagues and friends from Rangoon Chinatown.

Today in Yangon, in the heart of its Chinatown, there is a large building on the southern part of Latter Street, opposite the Kyan Taik headquarters, the most powerful Hokkien secret society in Burma, and the Eng Chuan Tong Society (the Hokkien Tan Clan Association), one of the founding clans of the Rangoon Hokkien temple. It is believed to be the original site of the Rangoon Yunnan Association, which was officially registered in 1912. But the commercial, social, and revolutionary activities of the Yunnanese started much earlier. According to a recent study by the Yunnanese community, that building was a business premises for a large Yunnanese company, the *Hong Sheng Xiang* shop, which arguably looked after the Rangoon Yunnanese and coordinated their activities and welfare issues before the association was formally established.[122] Unfortunately, many details of the association remain unknown for the time being, and the significance of the Yunnanese in colonial Rangoon is yet to be fully disclosed.

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In response to the changing sovereignty in the Sino-Burmese frontier, the Yunnanese had divided, transformed, and, eventually became part of the Burmese Chinese community under colonial rule on the Burmese side of the border. Losing its pre-colonial freedom, the existing Yunnanese community had to search for a new place for itself in this multi-ethnic state. By the early decades of the twentieth century, it was clear that the community managed to reorient itself by being associated, if not fully merged, with the southern Chinese despite considerable regional differences. Consequently, the Yunnanese, being part of the ethnic Chinese community in colonial Burma, would be regarded under the same social

expectation by the colonial public, as well as by members from within the community, as were their southern compatriots, the Hokkien and Cantonese in Lower Burma.

Notes

1. van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance," 662–65.
2. "Yangwentun Xiaoyin" [A Little Ballad of Yangwentun], in Yin, *Heshun*, 410–40 (419).
3. Yin, *Heshun*, 53.
4. Giersch names this area the Northern Crescent, as opposed to the Southern Crescent linking Ssu-mao, Sisuopanna, Kengtung, and Chiangmai. Charles Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
5. Old Street may be Kaungton (*Laoguantun*), which was mentioned during the Sino-Burmese War in the Qing Chronicles.
6. This name appears from the Yuan Chronicles onward. It mentions a "Grand Ming Street outside of Riverhead Town" in Zhu, *Xinanyi Fengtu Ji*. Possible locations of Jiangtoucheng are Bhamo, a town opposite Bhamo, Katha, Myikgyina, or other places along the Irrawaddy. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that this is an important post where the trade route meets the river.
7. For more information on this frontier area during the period between the 1720s and the 1850s, before the arrival of western colonial powers, see Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*.
8. Vol. 171, *Ming Shi* [Book of Ming] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974).
9. Vol. 247, *Ming Shi*.
10. Lu Weilin, *Miandian Sanji* [Random Essays on Burma] (Singapore: Qingnian Shuju, 1964), 235–38. The four local heads mentioned here are Mengyang *xuanweisi*, Mubang *xuanweisi*, Luchuan *xuanweisi*, and Mengmi *anfusi*. This stone is also known as "Shwehintha Inscription." Chen Yi-Sein (pseud. Tian Jiaqing), "Bamo weiyuanying beiwen shang de 'jinsha' yu 'guiku'" ["Jinsha" and "Guiku" on the inscription of the Weiyuan Garrison in Bhamo], *Nanyang Wenzhai* 3, no. 3 (1962): 54. For military activities during the Ming Dynasty, see Chen Yi-Sein, "The Chinese in Upper Burma before A.D. 1700," *Journal of Southeast Asian Researches* 2 (1966): 81–94.
11. A silver palm-leaf manuscript from this mission survives in the Taipei Palace Museum. For details on this manuscript, see U Thaw Kaung, "Palm-leaf Manuscript Record of a Mission Sent by the Myanmar King to

the Chinese Emperor in the Mid-eighteenth Century," *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 6 (2008): 3–18.

12. For Wu Shangxian and his other activities, see Yang Yuda, "Yunnan Miner Group and Borderland Order in the Mid-Qing Dynasty: Based on Wu Shangxian from Mau-long Silver Mine," *China's Borderland History and Geography Studies* 4 (2008): 43–55.
13. This incident is mentioned in Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1967), 199–200; G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1925), 279–80; Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 133–34.
14. Many suggest that the main plotters were a combined force of Tai rulers, Chinese merchants, and Yunnan frontier officials, all of whom shared a great commercial interest. Original sources involved are as follows: *The Royal Orders of Burma*, Part 4, 1782–1787, which records the bogus mission to Amarapura; *Qing Shilu*, which records the reciprocal mission to Rehe received by Qianlong; later accounts include Henry Burney, "Some Account of the Wars between Burmah and China." All quoted in Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 251. Recent works include Yingcong Dai, "A Disguised Defeat: The Myanmar Campaign of the Qing Dynasty," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 145–89; Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 98–111.
15. For recent accounts on this and the 1750 missions, see U Thaw Kaung, "Bogus Chinese Envoys, Spurious Chinese Princesses at the 18th-Century Myanmar Royal Court," *Journal of Burma Studies* 18, no. 2 (2014): 193–221.
16. Maung Htin Aung uses the title *Sawbwa* of Bhamo, and Giersch described him as *Gengma Xuanfushi* (the Native Official of Gengma).
17. Parker, *Burma, with Special Reference to Her Relations with China*, quoted in Purcell, *Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 63.
18. In the voice of a senior family member, *Xiaoyin* describes a young Tengyueh merchant's life experience in Burma, intermixed with practical and moral advices. It is not possible to identify the original author, and it is perhaps a product of oral history or folklore. Its present-day collector, Yin Wenhe, obtained a written and complete copy of this ballad from his relative in Mandalay in 1990. This copy was written on rice paper with Chinese ink calligraphy by one Mr. Xu in July–August 1930. After consulting relatives and friends and looking at local historical sources, Yin Wenhe suggested that it was compiled by a man of the Cun clan (a major surname in Heshun and among the Yunnanese in Upper Burma) in Mandalay. Mr. Cun could have been born around the mid-nineteenth century and perhaps composed the ballad in its current form based on what had been

widely circulated in western Yunnan emigration areas orally without a definite written format for many years, often as informal education material from a very early age. The current version of this ballad is a mixture of classical and colloquial Chinese, in the format of ten characters grouped in 3–3–4 per line, 790 lines in total in addition to three semi-poems at the beginning, middle, and end of the ballad. Yin, *Heshun*, 77–78.

19. This is the most popular name used by the Chinese in Burma to refer to the Burmese capital, most likely based on the pronunciation of Inwa (Ava), a capital city for successive Burmese dynasties (e.g., the Tongnoo Dynasty [1599–1752], and the Konbaung Dynasty [1765–1783 and 1821–1842]). It continued to be used even after the royal capital was relocated to Amarapura and Mandalay by later Konbaung kings. According to specific context, this book uses Wacheng and Mandalay interchangeably to faithfully follow the local practice despite the changing location of the capital itself.
20. "Xiaoyin," 422.
21. Yin, *Heshun*, 87–91.
22. There are three explanations for this apparently neither-Han-nor-Burmese name in the present-day Mandalay Yunnanese community: (1) "Jin-Duo" sounds like "I" in Burmese, "Yan" means far in Yunnanese dialect. Together, they make a broken sentence, meaning "I come from afar," an imagined answer by the Yunnanese caravan traveler to a curious local's question. (2) A Yunnanese dialect variation, meaning "how far"? (3) "My pond" in Burmese. "Mandele jinduoyan tudici shilue" [History of Jinduoyan, the God of Earth's Temple, in Mandalay], in *Mandele Yunnan Huiguan Shilue* (hereafter *MDL-YN*) [A Brief History of the Mandalay Yunnan Association] (Mandalay: Mandalay Yunnan Association, 2007), 26–30; and author's informal conversations in Mandalay, 2008.
23. Jinduoyan lost its significance to the larger harbors nearby during the second half of the nineteenth century, when the Irrawaddy was increasingly plied by steamers from downstream. Today, this temple has undergone several renovations and is used by the Chinese without regional differences for the worshipping of the God of Earth.
24. "Jinduoyan," 26.
25. This poem was written by Yin Yi of Tengyueh. "Jinduoyan," 27.
26. After prolonged diplomatic negotiations with the court of Ava, the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company got permission to operate a monthly service to Bhamo in 1868 and upgraded it to a fortnightly service around 1902. "Burmah (Burma)," Encyclopedia Britannica, 10th ed. (1902), accessed April 24, 2012, http://www.1902encyclopedia.com/B/BUR/burmah.html. By 1906, there were two weekly steamers plying between Mandalay and Bhamo (a three-day express service and a five-day cargo voyage) plus

a daily ferry between Bhamo and the rail station in Katha. Geoffrey William Dawson, ed., *Burma Gazetteer: Bhamo District*, vol. A (Rangoon, 1912), 60. In 1921, the schedule changed to a monthly Bhamo-Mandalay service and a daily Bhamo-Katha service. *Burma Gazetteer: Bhamo District*, vol. B (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1906; No. 27, 1913; No. 28, 1921).

27. In 1797, Captain Cox noticed the boats carrying cotton from China embarked at Sagaing, not far from the site of Jinduoyan along the river, which must have been traveling from Bhamo along the Irrawaddy. Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire* (London, 1822), quoted in Purcell, *Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 52. Crawfurd mentioned Chinese Points (*Tarok-mau)* or Chinese Towns (*Tarup-myo*) at different sites along the Irrawaddy on his embassy to Ava in 1826, though the exact locations of these early Chinese quarters were unknown. Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy to the Court of Ava*, 29 and 75. On his 1837 journey from Moulmein, McLeod mentioned Chinese caravans heading to Kenghung north of Ava. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (hereafter HCPP): 1868–69 (420), East India (McLeod and Richardson's journeys). "Copy of papers relating to the route of Captain W. C. McLeod, from Moulmein to the frontiers of China, and to the route of Dr. Richardson on his fourth mission to the Shan provinces of Burma, or extracts from the same," August 10, 1869.
28. *Chongxiu guanyinsi gongde xiaoyin* [The Inscription of the Renovation of the Guanyin Temple], Amarapura, the 26th year of the reign of Daoguang (1846).
29. Ibid. The figure, written in Chinese, is 907 *ku* 6 *kang* 1 *jia* 7 *mu*. The last two units (*jia* and *mu*) may refer to the Burmese monetary units of *kyat* and *mu*. However, the author is unable to properly identify this measuring system or its connection to other systems in contemporary Burma, China, or British India.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid. The levy increased from 2 *fen* before 1828, to 4 *fen* in 1844, and 6 *fen* afterward. The estimation was that it had to continue until 1847 to pay off the full amount.
32. Ibid.
33. Yin, *Heshun*, 14.
34. From an 1814 inscription in the temple, quoted in Yin, *Heshun*, 101.
35. Giersche, *Asian Borderlands*, 127–58.
36. Ibid., 154.
37. Michael Symes and Henry Glassford Bell, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava in the Year 1795*, vol. II (Edinburgh: printed for Constable and Co.; and London: Hurst, Chance and Co., 1827), 91.

38. For this process in British India, see Bayly, *Empire and Information*.
39. Anderson mentioned a Singpo (Kachin) chief traveling from the northern border to Ava provided some information about his journey to the local British. John Anderson, *A Report on the Expedition to Western Yunnan via Bhamo* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1871), 54–56.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Captain Williams was the engineer of the team (replaced later by Gordon); Anderson was the naturalist; Captain Bowers, Stewart, and Burn were representatives of the commercial interests from Rangoon.
43. Albert Fytche, "Memorandum," in E. B. Sladen, Robert Gorden, and Albert Fytche, *Official Narrative of and Papers Connected with the Expedition to Explore the Trade Routes to China via Bhamo* (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1869), 10.
44. Ibid.
45. Anderson, *Report on the Expedition to Western Yunnan*, 217.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Yin, *Heshun*, 66; "Bamo guandimiao shiji" [The History of the *Guandi* Temple in Bhamo], in *Qingfugong baizhounian qingdian tekan* (hereafter *KHK100*) [The Special Memorial Edition for the 100th Anniversary of Kheng Hock Keong] (Rangoon, 1961), 6–7. In 1941, it was used as a temporary refugee camp for the Chinese who fled from the south and totally destroyed by the Allied Forces when recapturing Bhamo in 1944.
49. For further description of this stage and performances in the late 1920s, see Walter Harris, *East for Pleasure: The Narrative of Eight Months' Travel in Burma, Siam, the Netherlands East Indies and French Indo-China* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1929), 23–26.
50. "Guandimiao," 6–7; Yin, *Heshun*, 63.
51. Set Kyin was previously hired by the Bhamo Chinese merchants to protect the trade route but did not get the payment he demanded. In retaliation, he attacked the town just before the British occupation in December. This incident is known as Jin Guoyu's Riot in Mogok and Bhamo in the tenth year of the reign of Guangxu. Yin, *Heshun*, 63; *Bhamo District*, vol. A, 18.
52. Anderson, *Report on the Expedition to Western Yunnan*, 218.
53. Sladen, Gorden, and Fytche, *Narrative*, 13–14.
54. Ibid.
55. Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 789.
56. Sladen, Gorden, and Fytche, *Narrative*, 17.
57. Ibid. In Anderson's report, the name is "Leesetai"; in the 1906 district gazetteer, it is written as "Li Si Tai."

58. Sladen, Gorden, and Fytche, *Narrative*, 11.
59. Ibid., 51.
60. Ibid., 13–14.
61. Ibid.
62. For Cooper's explorations on overland access to Tibet from Yunnan and Assam, see Thomas Thornville Cooper, *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce in Pigtail and Petticoats: or, An Overland Journey from China towards India* (London: John Murray, 1871); Cooper's articles on the Royal Geographic Society in London in 1868–1870; Alastair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia: the Road to Lhasa, 1767 to 1905* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960). For Cooper's death in 1878, see Rutherford Alcock, "Address to the Royal Geographic Society," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society of London* 22, no. 5 (1877–1878): 346.
63. Thomas Thornville Cooper, "On the Chinese Province of Yunnan and its Borders," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society of London* 15, no. 3 (1870–1871): 163–74.
64. The Browne Expedition was another major British attempt to develop a direct route between Burma and China after Sladen's 1868 expedition. It was abandoned after Margary's death. However, it led to the Chefoo Convention of 1876, which, under the negotiations of the British Minister in Beijing, Thomas Francis Wade, eventually granted the British the access to Tibet via Sichuan and further privileges in China. For British diplomacy in China before and around the Chefoo Convention, see James C. Cooley, *T. F. Wade in China: Pioneer in Global Diplomacy 1842–1882* (Leiden: Brill, 1981); for the Margary Affair and Li Chen-kuo's involvement, see Shen-Tsu Wang, *The Margary Affair and the Chefoo Agreement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 28.
65. A. M. S. Wingate, "Recent Journey from Shanghai to Bhamo through Hunan," *The Geographical Journal* 14, no. 6 (1899): 639–46.
66. Logan Jack, "From Shanghai to Bhamo," *The Geographical Journal* 19, no. 3 (1902): 249–74.
67. William Geil, *A Yankee on the Yangtze* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904).
68. Reginald Johnston, *From Peking to Mandalay* (London: John Murray, 1908).
69. Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
70. Dawson, *Bhamo District,* vol. A, 66.
71. Ibid.
72. *Bhamo District*, vol. B (1906).
73. Ibid., 56.

74. Royal Commission on Opium, *Volume II, Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on Opium* (London: printed for H.M.S.O. by Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1894), 216, Yang Fu.
75. Census data quoted in *Bhamo District*, vol. B (1906).
76. Yin, *Heshun*, 192.
77. A picture of this banquet was taken in the 21st year of the reign of Guangxu (1895). *MDL-YN*, 69.
78. The last Sino-Burmese border demarcation under British rule was conducted in the 1930s. However, due to the outbreak of the war, there was no official result thereafter.
79. *ban* in Chinese means half, but the author has yet to identify the origin or the meaning of this word.
80. Yin mentioned several examples in his home village of Heshun. Yin, *Heshun*.
81. Yin, *Heshun*, 192.
82. Ibid.
83. Yao Wendong, *Yunnan kanjie choubianji* [The report of border investigation in Yunnan] (Taipei: Wenhai Chuban She, 1968), 229.
84. The 1874 Browne expedition also hired a Chinese interpreter, Moung Yo, whom Browne met in Prome. His Chinese name was Li Han-shing and he claimed to be a distant relative of Li Chen-kuo. Wang, *Margary Affair*, 49. Given these circumstances, it was possible that Moung Yo acted in a similar capacity as Moung Shwe Yah, Zhang Chenglian, and Zhang Dexin.
85. It was written in Burmese to make it incomprehensible to his British and Chinese companions and later translated by him into Chinese of a mixed classic and colloquial style before his death in Bhamo.
86. The profit could not be ignored, at least at the local level. For example, the 1770s trade embargo after the Sino-Burmese War had significantly hurt frontier peoples of all ethnicities, and Yunnan provincial revenue was clearly affected in the following years. Giersch, *Asian Borderlands*, 108.
87. Zhang Chengyu, *Lujiang yidong zhi jiulongjiang xingji* [Travelogue from the East of the Lu Rive to the Jiulong River], the 27th day of the third month in the 16th year of the reign of Guangxu (1890). This report is also collected in Yao, *Choubianji*, 271–311.
88. Zhang Dexin, *Dajinshajiang shangyou jixing* [Travelogue of the Upper Stream of the Great Jinsha River], the second day of the first month in the 17th year of the reign of Guangxu (1891). This report is also collected in Yao, *Choubianji,* 231–69.
89. Ibid.
90. Yin, *Heshun*, 43.
91. Four Yunnanese burial lands have existed in Mandalay since then. The oldest one is Ling Xing Gong, near the Amarapura temple and the Taungthaman

Lake, where few tombstones are still identifiable today; Qing Piao Gang, a site near an old airstrip; a site in Tampawaddy between Mandalay and Amarapura, facing the Irrawaddy; and the current one is Gya Ni Kan ("red lotus pond" in Burmese) along the Mandalay-Pin Oo Lwin main road.

92. Many Yunnanese believed that the Mandalay Royal Palace was based on the blueprint of the old city of Tengyueh with additional Burmese flavor, constructed under the supervision of Yin Rong. Yin, *Heshun*, 185–89. However, the development plan for the new capital of Mandalay was one of the earliest examples of the use of Western cartography and surveying, and European knowledge in general, in Burma. Michael Charney, *Powerful Learning: Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752–1885* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 179. Today, the legend of Yin Rong continues, but only within the local Chinese community, which maintains close relationships with China and the Chinese language. Burmese-speaking members of the Mandalay Chinese Muslim community, for instance, are not aware of Yin and his stories.
93. Yin, *Heshun*, 185–89.
94. It is yet to establish the particular connection between Yin Rong and the salt trade. Nonetheless, salt had been an important cross-border commodity in this area since the early eighteenth century. See Jianxiong Ma, "Salt and Revenue in Frontier Formation: State Mobilized Ethnic Politics in the Yunnan-Burma Borderland since the 1720s," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 6 (2014): 1637–69.
95. "Xiaoyin," 420.
96. Ibid., 419.
97. Ibid., 419–20.
98. Ibid., 427.
99. Ibid., 426–27.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., 436.
102. Yin, *Heshun*, 10.
103. The traditional southern caravan route linked Tai polities in Sipsongpanna (Kenghung) with their southern neighbors of Kengtung and Chiangmai, as Captain McLeod witnessed during his 1837 journey to Kenghung from Moulmein. HCPP, 1868–69 (420), "East India (McLeod and Richardson's journeys)."
104. The British also noticed "a flourishing colony of Chinese" in Bhamo by 1906, including both Cantonese and Yunnanese. *Bhamo District*, vol. B (1906), 37.
105. Royal Commission on Opium, *Vol. II*, 214, Law Yan.

106. Author's informal conversation with a Cantonese jewelry shop owner in Mandalay, who was also a senior member of the Mandalay Cantonese Association, 2008.
107. *MDL-YN*, 141.
108. C. M. Enriquez, *A Burmese Enchantment* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1916), 213–14.
109. Chen Yi-Sein, "Qianren miandian kaogu diaochaju juzhang duchenggao" [Taw Sein Ko, the ex-Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Burma], *Nanyang Wenzhai* 2, no. 11 (1961): 24–25.
110. *Who's Who in Burma* (Calcutta & Rangoon: Indo-Burma Publishing Agency, 1926), 123.
111. Among them were Li Genyuan, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of China in 1923, from Tengyueh, and Cun Fuqing, a Heshun man from a sojourning merchant family. *Yunnan* was the official publication of these Yunnanese activists, and it secured significant donations from profits made in Burma.
112. The local Chinese community believed that Chengqing was murdered in Maymyo by the British in 1909 for his involvement in political agitations. Yin, *Heshun*, 198–201.
113. Yin Zhaorong, *Riji* [Diary], December 15, 1928.
114. Ibid.
115. "Zhuming ruiyingbing minasi juanjianzhe Li Xianhe" [Li Xianhe, the founder of the famous Shwe In Bin Monastery], in *MDL-YN*, 187–88.
116. For example, one of his daughters married a Burmese who worked in the colonial Financial Ministry, and another son and his children all married prominent Burmese in Rangoon. Daw Amar, "Our Mandalay," quoted in "Li Xianhe," *MDL-YN*, 187–88.
117. *Li Xianhe muzhiming* [The Epitaph of Li Xianhe], outside the west wall of Shwe In Bin Monastery, Mandalay, 1917.
118. *Heshun chongxinhui zhounian jinianKan* (hereafter *CXH*) [The Annual Memorial Journal for the Chong Xin Hui of Heshun] 5 (1931).
119. *CXH* 9 (1935): 33.
120. Yin, *Heshun*, 282.
121. Back cover, *CXH*.
122. Author's informal conversations with members of the Yangon Yunnan Association, 2008 and 2014; Sun. Daqiang, "Jianjie yangguang yunnan huigui de chengli yu fazhan" [Brief Introduction of the establishment and development of the Yangon Yunnan Association], 2013.

CHAPTER 3

A Chinese Mental Map of the Irrawaddy Delta

On a Sunday afternoon in November 2008, a Chinese wedding ceremony was proceeding in the Hokkien Association Hall in Myeik. Known as Mergui in the colonial time, this seaside town facing the Andaman Sea used to be renowned for its busy port in southern Tenasserim. The modest Hall building was opposite the Tianhou Gong (Temple of the Heavenly Queen, or *Mazu*), arguably the earliest Chinese temple surviving in Burma built by maritime migrants. Being the only Chinese visitor in the town at that time, I was invited by elders of the local Chinese community to the wedding. During the banquet, one attendee, a middle-aged Chinese woman of Hokkien origin who had spent her entire life in Burma, who was sitting next to me made a heartfelt comment on the ceremony, telling me in Mandarin that, "Without our surname and native-place associations, how different would we Chinese be from any other people here?"

Like many Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, clan/surname, native-place and occupational associations, temples, and secret societies compose the basic social infrastructure of the migrant community. These institutions often provide welfare from birth to death and organize communal festivities, ceremonies, and rites of passage. Following on the construction of community institutions in the Sino-Burmese frontier, this chapter turns its attention to Rangoon and Lower Burma and examines similar institutions and their activities within the migrant community, mostly Hokkien and Cantonese in this case. Through a

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fictional migrant's personal experience, this chapter outlines the social landscape from an individual's perspective. Furthermore, trans-clan associations beyond family and kinship, such as temples and secret societies, often functioned across the boundaries dividing religious and secular spheres. The most visible showcase of these community institutions is the observance of rituals and ceremonies, which helps to facilitate the formation of a collective identity from within.

If Burma was divided into districts, divisions, and subdivisions and managed by commissioners, deputy commissioners, and officers in different departments according to the colonial government's administrative framework, the map of Burma in the minds of Hokkien and Cantonese migrants was organized somewhat differently.[1] This map was also not identical to that of the Yunnanese, which developed around the dual centers of Tengyueh and Mandalay, as we have glimpsed via the organizational chart of the Chong Xin Hui. Interwoven into the Hokkien and Cantonese mental map was the pyramid-like network of community organizations and flamboyant ceremonies they organized, whose influences were tangible and deeply felt in the migrants' everyday lives. The foundation of associations, renovation of communal buildings, and expansion of community networks not only delineated and extended the boundary of the mental map but also witnessed, step by step, the development of the Hokkien and Cantonese society in Lower Burma from the very beginning.

Scholars studying about China have convincingly demonstrated that lineage and other grassroots associations are the institutional force for the rural community during its negotiation of power and resources with the state within the context of imperial China over the past few centuries.[2] For Chinese migrants in the nineteenth century, these community associations were often brought over to the new land and continued to support a familiar community life as well as functioned as an interface to external authorities in the colonial states. This chapter explores the institutions' width and depth within the migrant community at its lowest levels and its development within the colonial context. Unlike colonial authorities or officials back in China, these community organizations did not possess explicit authority and administrative powers. However, in terms of shaping the community's collective experiences and presenting a unified and unique ethnic profile, they were no less and, in many cases, were actually more effective than their more official counterparts.

3.1 A Hokkien Individual's Experience in Lower Burma

Let us follow one fictional figure, villager C, a young Chinese man from Hokkien, to experience with him a new immigrant's community life in Lower Burma. This illustrative story is reconstructed based on fragmented historical documents, real-life experiences, and reasonable imagination. Here, villager C serves as a composite and through his eyes and ears we can navigate the social and economic landscapes that would have been experienced by ordinary new immigrants at the very bottom of the social strata. With a personal touch, it allows us a closer look at kinship and lineage networks via multilayered clan associations during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Between 1901 and 1911, the Chinese population in Burma almost doubled from 62,486 to 122,834 (Table 1.1), the largest growth ever recorded by the census. It is precisely during this decade that we place our villager C on the stage of Lower Burma.

Villager C, whose surname was Chan, came from Chanya (Zengying) *she*, a rural community in the Amoy (Xiamen) suburb. In this southeast region of Fujian, a core Hokkien dialect-speaking area, the tradition of migration overseas was long established and family networks were particularly strong.[3] The *she* was a local community unit that had been prevalent in rural southern China, mostly organized around a group of people with the same surname, who shared a common ancestor several generations before, and who, over time, expanded into several branches while still living in the same location (thus more often than not a *she* was naturally also a village). The members of the *she* usually worshipped a common local deity in addition to their common ancestors. In fact, the *she*, though not an official administrative unit today, still exists in many rural areas of southern Fujian.[4]

Chan was a major surname in southeast Hokkien and had numerous branches and many *shes* in the surrounding area of Amoy. When villager C was in his mid-teens, many Chans from his and other nearby *shes* had already been seeking their fortunes in Burma for almost half a century. In fact, a few male members of his *she*, including perhaps his father, uncles, and a few of his elder brothers and cousins, had already settled there. As he neared adulthood, C was sent by his family to Burma to follow in the footsteps of other relatives and neighbors. In the 1910s, an ideal place to start a life in Burma for a new migrant like C was probably Pyapon.

In Burma, the provincial capital of Rangoon would have been an attractive and obvious option at first sight. However, being the biggest urban

center in the province, it might have been too demanding and highly competitive. For many new arrivals like C, the prosperity of Rangoon was well beyond their affordability upon first arrival, while the villages and the upcountry in Lower and central Burma provided opportunities that were much easier to handle and offered more space to develop. This was particularly true given the social and economic conditions at the turn of the twentieth century in Burma. The colonial administration was finally consolidated and established, and the previous social instability due to the change of the regime was slowly fading out. Both the government and the public now had the energy to concentrate on the economy, and indeed, the delta attracted the majority of capital and human resources.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Pyapon, along with nearby towns and villages in the Irrawaddy Delta, underwent unprecedented agricultural development and became a major rice-producing area. From 1903, it was administered as a district, with regional governmental offices and law courts established in the town. During this period, Chinese migrants, especially the Hokkien, played an important, if not dominant role economically. One subdivisional officer from Pyapon mentioned, "Chinese shops spread all over the place, of these shops the majority are small ones … There is scarcely no village which has no Chinese shop if it contains about 15 or 20 houses."[5] His colleague from Kyaiklat, a town not far from Pyapon, reported a similar situation that "in this subdivision, Chinese shops are increasing year by year, and even a hamlet of very few houses could hardly be found without a Chinese shop."[6] Some locals estimated that, at one point in this period, in Pyapon and its surrounding countryside, 80 percent of Chinese merchants were of the Chan clan that originated from the Chanya *she*. In the area north of Pyapon up to Kyaiklat, via Myingagone and south to Bogale (Map 3), the waterway and its banks were filled with rice boats and shops belonging to the Chans of Chanya,[7] earning this town the reputation of a Chinese nickname *Zengjiawan* (Port Chan). In fact, Pyapon was regarded as the Burmese home for the Hokkien Chans and Kyans.[8] One of the most famous Chinese of Burma, the rich merchant Chan Ma Phee, was a fellow member of the Chanya *she*, and it was in Dedaye, a place not far from Pyapon in the delta, that Chan Ma Phee apparently earned an early fortune in the rice trade and married the daughter of a local Burmese headman.

For Hokkien and Cantonese like villager C, the center of their mental map was Lower Burma, extending south to the waterways of the delta and north along the railway as far as Myitkyina and the Shan states, which

overlapped part of the Yunnanese map. Places were associated with certain clans, and memories continue to linger in the community today. Like the Chans in Pyapon, the dominant group in Moulmein was the Hokkien Soo (or Saw) clan. The Soos' original home was the Zhendai *she* of Tongan County, which was not far from the Chans' *shes*. Even after the clan's expansion to Rangoon, Moulmein remained a stronghold of the Soos that continued to produce prominent local figures[9] and was seen as the root of the Soos in Burma.[10]

The Cantonese Mei clan was associated with Bassein, another delta town, thus becoming known as Bassein-Mei, where the Meis outnumbered any other Cantonese and Hokkien surnames in that period. The Chinese temple in Bassein, considered one of the earliest in Lower Burma, was based on the Cantonese architectural style and deities and shared many features with the Rangoon Cantonese temple. Its 1892 renovation inscription listed three Meis as its committee members; another Mei, a Mandarin titleholder, composed the commemorative essay; and a high percentage of Meis were listed as donors.[11] This perhaps also suggested that Bassein could be a relatively early Chinese settlement from a time when the Cantonese were yet to be outnumbered by the Hokkien in Lower Burma.

If the Yunnanese map was centered on the twin cities of Tengyueh and Mandalay, the map for the Hokkien and the Cantonese was determined by the dichotomy of Rangoon and *Shanba*. *Shanba*, a widely used Southeast Asian Chinese term, roughly meant the countryside and referred to an upcountry and rural lifestyle in general. In the context of Burma, it often specifically indicated any area that was outside Rangoon. Therefore, strictly speaking, Bassein, Moulmein, and even the former capital Mandalay were somewhat *Shanba*. As long as it was outside of the cosmopolitan colonial capital, everyone and everything was *Shanba*. The distinction between the rural and the urban, as the word *Shanba* implied, also represented lifestyle, wealth, and social status. To geographically move from *Shanba* to Rangoon was almost the equivalent of the upward social mobility of moving from being a laborer in the field, or petty trader in the upcountry or on the outskirts of *Shanba* towns, to becoming a business proprietor and property owner in Rangoon Chinatown, or even better, in certain areas of suburban Rangoon, which was the exclusive domain of the most privileged in the colony.[12]

Back in the *Shanba* of Pyapon, villager C was still at an early stage of his social mobility; and whether or not he would eventually reach Rangoon was yet to be known. For now, he was an assistant to a rice merchant, who also owned a shop in the town center. The boss was none other

than a fellow Chan, perhaps a remote uncle or granduncle in the clan. As an apprentice, villager C worked hard and learned the necessary business skills and local languages. This was before the Great Depression and the Burmese rice trade was flourishing.[13]

In addition to the rice business, other Hokkien and Cantonese Chinese here traded general goods and ran grocery shops in the towns and countryside.[14] Some sold spirits, while others specialized in seafood products and became involved in fishing; however, this declined in the 1930s.[15]

Villager C and his fellow Hokkien usually got along well with the local Burmese. As one clan history in Burma relates,

> At that time, the indigenous Burmese in the delta were very friendly and trustworthy, and they had an extremely good relationship, without any discrimination, with us Chinese. In those days, oral promises were more reliable than today's written contracts; everyone kept his word.[16]

Some of them married Burmese girls, like their fellow *she* member Chan Ma Phee, while others went home to marry the brides arranged by their families in Amoy and brought over the whole family a few years later. Therefore, villager C found that among his friends of about his age, some were born outside China and, if they had Chinese and Burmese parents, he liked to call them *kabya*, the Burmese word for those of mixed parentage.[17]

At home in the Chanya *she*, C's family belonged to one branch called Aw Kai Koot (Houkengjue, also known as Wuzhujiao), and this entitled him to membership in the local Aw Kai Koot Society in Pyapon. This society was established in 1912. The story, which C was soon told, was that around 1912, Chengye of this branch heard about a house for sale on Strand Road in Bogale and decided to go to this nearby town and have a look. He took a boat from Pyapon and stopped over at a place called *Kanfeng Xiangen She*. There, Chengye met another branch member, Shuisheng, who ran a general grocery store. Over a nostalgic conversation about the hardship of fellow *she* members, they thought the best solution was to buy this property and make it a public house for the welfare of the members of the entire Aw Kai Koot branch, both in the Pyapon area and back home. After the purchase, the house was rented out and the income was sent back to Chanya. Later, a second public house was bought in Pyapon by the society for the same purpose.[18]

As a Chan from the Chanya *she*, C of the Aw Kai Koot branch also joined the Tsong Seng Tong of Pyapon, an association for all the Chans from the

Chanya *she*. In Tsong Seng Tong, representatives of seven branches of the Chanya Chans, including the above-mentioned Aw Kai Koot, were elected to the committee. With many significant Pyapon merchants taking membership, funding for the associations came from donations and profits from annual alcohol licenses. The local alcohol sale was firmly in the hands of the Chans, who won the auction almost every year at a price that was prearranged by the head of the clan. With plenty of public funds, the Tsong Seng Tong in Pyapon, like other associations, bought public properties in the town center and made profits from the rentals. Until 1939, it owned three houses with a monthly income of 337 Rupees and 8 Annas. This revenue was solely to be used for members' welfare and public projects back home in Chanya, such as education, disaster relief, and investment.[19] As stated in the association's charter, one of the most important purposes was to "improve the internal solidarity among the Chans in Pyapon and seek to maximize the welfare for the Chans in Burma."[20]

Every year, a special ceremony was organized by the Tsong Seng Tong to worship the deity of the Chanya *she*, General Tian. The big day was the 14th day of the first lunar month, the birthday of the General. This event, which took place in the association hall, was the best-attended event of the Chans in this area. Therefore the committee also scheduled its annual general meeting here, making it *the* social event of the year for the Pyapon Chans. In addition to the ceremony and meeting, there were Chinese banquets and stage performances in Hokkien style; these followed the same practices as back home.

Two statues of General Tian were on display for public reverence. These two statues, according to the elders, had been taken to Burma by the first generation of the Chans in Pyapon. Prior to their journey overseas, two Chan brothers were given the family statues by their parents as a symbol of good fortune. They later founded the Tsong Seng Tong in Pyapon and made the statues the community's holy objects.

Villager C sometimes had the opportunity to travel to other places, mostly on business errands. We do not know the status of the printing and circulation of Chinese maps of Burma in this period. However, an example of contemporary geographic guidance could be found in a 1925 publication, the first volume in a series called *Huaqiao baojian*, compiled by a Burmese Chinese, Chen Qisen.[21] In a style comparable to today's telephone directories and *Yellow Pages*, it listed Chinese shops, schools, and associations in major Burmese towns with contact details, grouped by location and organized along transportation routes such as railways and waterways.

In the index system used by *Baojian,* the main modes of transportation helped to chart the territory of Burma in the minds of Chinese immigrants. North to Rangoon, it followed major stops along the new, Rangoon-Mandalay railway line and its branches. (This line was completed about 1894, and therefore, it was a relatively new line when compared to the old, 1877 Rangoon-Prome line). Built before and after the final annexation and being part of the Empire-wide railway-construction enthusiasm, these two railways (and their extensions in later years) became the backbone of land transportation in Burma and greatly improved its capacity of moving passengers and goods within the province. The new line ran from Rangoon to Mandalay and later extended as far north as Myitkyina. Bhamo, the town near the Sino-Burmese border, was normally included as part of this route, though no railway actually reached it. Within and below the delta, the old railway from Rangoon to Prome and a southern coastal line via Pegu to Moulmein were the major baselines.

Waterways were as important as railways in Burma, and the most important waterway was the Irrawaddy. On the Hokkien and Cantonese mental map, this water route only became prominent south of Mandalay, as upstream above Mandalay, the river would be the domain of the Yunnanese. The Irrawaddy passed trading centers in central Burma such as Prome and Pakkoku and the oilfields at Yenangyaung. As it approached the delta, the waterway divided and fanned out to reach numerous delta towns. Here, the water routes were organized along several major ports. Henzada was one such port in the delta. Two routes started from here, one toward Bassein and another toward Prome. Lastly, of course, there was a sea route linking Moulmein, Tavoy, Mergui, and Victoria Point, which could further extend to Siam, Malaya, and the East Indies.

The western and eastern regions of Burma, for example, the Arakan District and the Chin Hills and the off-coast areas in the Tenasserim District, were normally absent from this mental map, except for a few big towns with Chinese presence, such as Akyab. Similarly, the other two major rivers, the Chindwin in the western hills and the Salween in the eastern hills, did not feature prominently in this Hokkien and Cantonese map.

Villager C might not be able to access any Rangoon-based publications, nor was he educated enough to be able to read *Baojian*. Nevertheless, he traveled by boat to most of the destinations in Lower Burma and the southern coast. After all, “Port Chan” provided the most convenient water transportation in the delta. During his journey, villager C did not worry about orientation, accommodation and board, or any other practical inconvenience in new places, even though he had never been there before.

Providing free lodging and other facilities for short-term visiting members from other districts was one of the functions written in many such clan associations' charters.[22] Villager C was quite relaxed as he knew that he could always count on the unfailing hospitality of the local Chans, as long as they existed (which was often the case given the Chans' widespread presence), in addition to contacts and acquaintances whom his boss, friends, and other fellow members had provided prior to his trip. When he went to Rangoon, the Tsong Seng Tong branch there was one of the first places upon which villager C would call.

The Tsong Seng Tong branch in Rangoon, similar to its Pyapon equivalent but larger in scale, was probably founded in 1871. A public property on 24th Street was bought as an investment and as a headquarters, along with the publication of the association's regulations and the establishment of its committee. A donation in the form of a property on 19th Street was later made by Chan Ma Phee.[23] By then, this well-known Chanya native had established himself in Rangoon after ten years' trading in general goods in *Shanba*. He became

> Probably the largest property owner in the Chinese community … he acquired land from time to time and erected upon it houses and shops, from which he now draws a considerable rental. At one time he speculated extensively in rice, becoming, in fact, the largest dealer in that commodity among the Chinese between the year 1894 and 1899.[24]

The prominent Chans in the capital, such as Chan Ma Phee and his sons, were, without doubt, the leaders of the Tsong Seng Tong in Rangoon.

One of the major functions of this Rangoon association was to provide initial help to new arrivals from Hokkien, as Rangoon was normally their first port of call. Given the co-operative spirit commonly shared by clan associations at that time, it is no exaggeration to suggest that almost all the Chans of Chanya would perhaps spend their first few nights in Burma either on the floor of the association hall or on the ground floor of shop houses owned by fellow *she* members[25] before being recruited as apprentices by other Hokkien business owners in or outside Rangoon. For villager C, it was exactly here that he was informed by the experienced members about the opportunities in the delta and life in Burma in general; they also wasted no time introducing him to the job vacancies in Pyapon.

In Rangoon, villager C also made the acquaintance of other Chan members from the Sum Yik Tong, a joint association of the Chans from

three *she*s, Chanya, Hawwa (Houjing), and Napoonkhen (Linbangkeng), all in the Amoy suburb not far from each other. One of his acquaintances would definitely take him to visit the headquarters of the Burma Chan-Khoo clan, the grand Leong Sun Tong on Canal Street (Fig. 3.1).

At the top of the pyramid of clan associations of the Chans, Leong Sun Tong presided over all the Chans and Khoos in Burma, with representatives of the Chan clan from Sum Yik Tong and the Khoos of the Sinwa (Xin'an) *she*, also from the Amoy suburb. At home, the Khoos and Chans were related by marriage some generations before and, since then, saw each other as a single family with common ancestors, and they chose Leong Sun as their association's name. Before its expansion to Burma, the

Fig. 3.1 Leong Sun Tong, Yangon, 2008

Chan-Khoo clan had been well established in Penang, and its clan association, the Leong San Tong Khoo *Kongsi*, was founded in 1835 and became the most influential Hokkien clan in Penang. In Burma, this clan (in a jointed-form of Chan-Khoo) was one of the six founding members of the Rangoon Hokkien temple. The Burma Leong Sun Tong Association was established no later than 1875.

Villager C, accompanied by his friends, visited its grand hall on Canal Street. In the center of the hall, he found several deities and tablets of notable ancestors. There were Twa Sye Ya and Ong Soon Ya, the common deities of the Leong Sun Tong back home and overseas. In the side halls, C also found his own branch's deity, General Tian, along with some other lesser deities from other participating *shes*.

Although the Leong Sun Tong in Rangoon was not usually a lodge for someone like villager C from Pyapon, he did know that as a member of the Chans, he was entitled to its protection and welfare. In fact, three of his fellow Chans in Pyapon once had disputes with the locals and faced trial by the jurisdiction. The incident, with no further details available today, seemed pretty serious, and despite all the influence of the Pyapon Chans, it could not be settled favorably. The association thus decided to send a senior member to Rangoon to discuss the matter in person with the heads of Leong Sun Tong, Chan Chor Khine (son of Chan Ma Phee) and Khoo Ee Khwet, both prominent residents of the capital. Leong Sun Tong eventually arranged a Rangoon-based lawyer[26] to handle the case and the issue was satisfactorily resolved after the lawyer paid several visits to Pyapon.[27]

Protecting members and working as guarantors, if necessary, had always been a key function of Leong Sun Tong and other similar associations. As indicated in its regulations in 1934, its mission was, in part, "to help members with legal expenses in cases where they may be oppressively or innocently involved in civil or criminal cases" and "to stand surety or bail for any member in any Civil or Criminal matter."[28] Considering the strong influence of the Leong Sun Tong, it was no surprise that in 1931, when five young Chinese intellectuals were charged with anti-government behavior, all but one were deported. The lucky one who was permitted to stay was none other than a member of the Khoos, Qiu (Khoo) Xiaoru of the Sinwa *she*, and he escaped deportation thanks only to his powerful guarantor, his own clan association, Leong Sun Tong.[29]

Villager C was still a young bachelor with few family-related concerns when he first visited Leong Sun Tong. He could not foresee that several years later, it was here in the ancestor hall of Leong Sun Tong that he would

have his wedding ceremony, free of charge as part of the membership benefit of the association. By then, C had managed to move to Rangoon after years of working in the rice business in the *Shanba* and became resident C of the Rangoon Chinatown. His wife was also a Hokkien girl of the Tan clan, an equally large and well-established Hokkien surname from the same Amoy region back home, although she herself was born and grew up in Burma. Over the years, resident C, with an average income and a stable and growing family, saw the need to send his children to schools in the Chinatown set up by community associations for Chinese education, whose tuition fees were paid by the association. Better still, due to an outstanding performance at school, one of C's children was awarded scholarships and prizes, again from the clan association.[30] Of course, although resident C was not as lucky as his fellow *she* member Chan Ma Phee, given all the previous help and the spirit of clan solidarity, he still felt obligated, and in practice was expected, to contribute to the public welfare and mutual aid through regular donations to the clan, even though the amount he subscribed was always modest.

This seemingly complicated network of clan associations, a replica of the social network back home, strengthened and intensified communal links in order to cater to the special needs of the migrants. The ubiquitous existence of the connections to a remote homeland, through physical objects, ritual performances, and in-kind and financial aid, brought intimate mental exposure to the migrants and constantly reminded them of their ancestors and homelands through everyday practice.

But more important than being nostalgic was to deal with present challenges in a foreign land, sometimes in its own way. Often, these kinship institutions went beyond the civic functions and stepped into the ambiguous judicial realm, a domain officially reserved for the colonial government. "To undertake arbitration or settlement of any disputes if approached by any member provided it is thought advisable to do so" was written in the charter of Leong Sun Tong.[31] This was not an exceptional privilege for the powerful Chan-Khoo clan, but a common practice that faithfully reflected what happened back home. As implied in the case of the Pyapon Chan's lawsuit, the clan network still retained some degree of influence to intervene and supplement the official administrative infrastructure in the colonial state, despite in a very different social and judicial context from what it had been used to over the last few centuries in imperial and rural China.

Navigating through the social landscape in Lower Burma with villager-turned-resident C, one observes the reconstructed kinship networks by

Chinese immigrants from the south who eagerly followed practices at home and managed to chart an alien land into a familiar grind. Of course, certain adaptations needed to be made and some strategies needed to be planned for, and this was most evident in several religious and secular associations headquartered in Rangoon Chinatown, the place where our C, together with his wife and children, would spend the rest of his life along with many fellow immigrants from southern China.

3.2 Cross-clan Associations in Rangoon

Beyond the kinship network built upon pyramids of clan associations, other community institutions crossed family boundaries to hold the community together even more tightly. One of them was the temple, an institution that often stepped out of religious sphere in Chinese communities. Also worshipping deities, albeit from a more mixed scope of fictional and historical figures, were the secret societies whose existence and activities were never actually a secret in this colonial state.

3.2.1 Temples as Community Centers

Temples can be found in many Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and are almost always the center of lives in the community that they serve. Chinese temples were often a syncretic worshipping place for a pantheon of Buddhist, Daoist, Animist, and various folk deities. The line between their religious and communal dimensions was seldom defined and exceptionally fluid. It created a lively, if less organized, meeting point and an assorted set of common rituals.

When migrants arrived by water, either in Rangoon by sea or in Wacheng via the Irrawaddy, they often chose their first landing place as the location for their worshipping sites, as Jinduoyan at the Irrawaddy waterfront in Mandalay attested. One reason might be that water, according to *Feng Shui*, or Chinese geomancy, is often the symbol of wealth.[32]

This was true elsewhere in the region. For example, in Penang, an early Chinese temple, Kong Hock Keong, was founded in 1800 to house *Guanyin* and *Mazu*, folk deities popular in coastal Fujian, as its main deities. As its name indicated, Kong (Cantonese) Hock (Hokkien) Keong was jointly managed by the Penang Cantonese and Hokkien communities. It was located in the original center of George Town, at the intersection of Pitt Street, where important colonial buildings were placed, and China

Street, which led to the harbor, thus providing a probably unblocked sea view, at least in the early years.[33]

Similarly, one of the oldest Chinese temples in Singapore was Thian Hock Keng. This temple was completed in 1839, 21 years after Stamford Raffles made Singapore a British colony. It is on Telok Ayer Street, a quiet side street in the Central Business District of present-day Singapore; however, it used to be a seafront road in the colony's original Chinese *Kampong* (quarter) beginning in 1822.[34] The main deity here was also *Mazu*, and it became the first communal meeting venue for the Hokkien in the town.[35]

Before relocating to Burma, many Burmese Chinese had previously lived or worked in other European colonies in the region and continued to maintain close relationships.[36] It was natural that they followed the practice of, and received guidance and support from, their fellow countrymen in these locations where Chinese communities had been well established and were highly functional. This is especially true in the early years when both the colony and the Chinese communities were in their formative phases.

The 1863 foundation inscription of the Rangoon Hokkien temple, or Kheng Hock Keong, listed Xu Zhangguan (probably Khaw Soo Cheang, a Hokkien native with close connections to Penang, who was also the Governor of Ranong in Siam) as its top donor. Xu donated 1200 Rupees, significantly more than any other listed here did.[37] Other individual and business donors included boat (presumably junk) owners from Amoy, Malacca, Penang, Singapore, Batavia, Semerang, and Palembang, who donated between 24 and 600 Rupees. Similarly, in its renovation inscription of 1868, the Rangoon Cantonese temple also listed many boat-owner donors,[38] albeit without specifying their places of origin.[39] It is not unreasonable to assume that some of these boats were based in or plied between major ports in the region and southern China.

Mergui was one of the first British establishments after the First Anglo-Burmese War, and also one of the earliest places where the Hokkien and Cantonese settled in Burma. Being a southern port on the coast of Tenasserim, Mergui's commercial importance had been acknowledged by Maingy, the first Commissioner of Tenasserim.[40] Furthermore, with a strong connection with Penang, a major Chinese settlement in the region, it is logical that Mergui is arguably the site of the first Chinese temple in Burma built by the maritime migrants. The distance between Penang and Mergui by sea was much shorter than that between Rangoon and Mergui. According to materials kept by the local Chinese community

today, the *Mazu* temple of Tianhou Gong, founded no later than 1838, was most likely initiated by the Cantonese.[41] Over the next few decades, however, it became a joint institution maintained by both the Cantonese and Hokkien.[42] Today, Tianhou Gong is a few blocks from the sea and the central market. It is easy to imagine the busy wharfs and bustling markets that once existed next to this Chinese temple in Mergui's heyday in the nineteenth century.[43]

In Rangoon, a map used by the British Army during the First Anglo-Burmese War marked the locations of a China Wharf and an area called Tackly, the old Burmese name for the Chinese quarter.[44] China Wharf, located at the end of Latter Street (*baichi-lu* in Chinese, meaning "100-foot street" to indicate its designed width) and also known as the *Sheng Mao Guanzai* among the old Chinatown residents,[45] has, since then, continued to be the major wharf for the Chinatown. A Chinese burial land is believed to be located at the site of the present-day Holy Trinity Church. A contemporary witness described it as "on the road leading to the great pagoda," which was "thickly populated…belonging exclusively to the Chinese resident at Rangoon…Each grave had a coating of fine chunam [cement], as well as a space of some few feet around it."[46]

In the chessboard-like urban development plan of Rangoon in 1853, a quarter was specially designed for the city's Chinese population, and remains the center of Chinese social and commercial activities in Myanmar today.[47] It is located west of the Sule Pagoda and next to the India-town. The Chinatown (Map 4) is an area bound by Shwedagon Pagoda Road (China Street in the colonial era) to the east, Pongyi Street (probably replacing the original boundary of Lanmadaw Street [Godwin Street] in the colonial time) to the west, Anawrahta Road (Canal Street) to the north, and Strand Road to the south. The east–west thoroughfare of this Chinese quarter is Maha Bandoola Street, known as Dalhousie Street during the colonial era and *Guangdong Dajie* (Cantonese Grand Street) among the local Chinese. It neatly divides the Chinatown into two halves: the northern half is the Cantonese section and the southern half the Hokkien section.

A piece of land at the corner of Latter and Dalhousie Streets was granted to the (Cantonese) Chinese community free of charge and with exemptions from taxation for religious use, alongside several other pieces of land in the city center that were used for similar purposes by different ethnic communities, including an American Baptist church, an Armenian church, a Hindu temple, a synagogue, two mosques, a convent, and another (Hokkien) Chinese temple.[48]

Granting free land for religious usage to multiethnic communities was an occasional practice of the time. A few isolated examples from the Empire included a free parcel of land that was granted to the Trustees of Kong Hock Keong in Penang by the East India Company on December 29, 1838, perhaps for the temple's extension,[49] and the land for the new Chinese Town Hall in Penang in 1875.[50] In 1822, 30 years before British officials were working on the planning for Rangoon, which was then devastated by the Second Anglo-Burmese War, Raffles had a similar plan for the newly acquired colony of Singapore. In the plan for the town of Singapore, it was neatly divided into several ethnic quarters, along with designated religious sites for each ethnicity. Neither free purchase nor tax exemption was mentioned here. However, when William Montgomerie was appointed Superintendent Surgeon in Rangoon in 1852, it seemed that it was necessary to encourage diversified religious practice in this new colonial city. Having been in Singapore until 1842 as the Secretary of the Town Committee, Montgomerie had substantial first-hand experience in developing an idealized colonial urban center from scratch and accommodating multiple Asian communities, experiences that were much needed for the new Rangoon. As a result of Montgomerie and his colleagues' planning work, the city, which had already seen a Chinese quarter develop naturally before British rule,[51] looked promising for attracting more residents from other ethnic backgrounds. Matching the government's welcoming immigration policy, the new Rangoon incorporated a cosmopolitan outlook that was inclusive of global residents; even their spiritual needs were thought about in advance.

Of course, the presence of colonialism was just one of the many stimuli for numerous Chinese temples in Burma, where temples in most towns were built regardless of government sanction. In the case of Amarapura, the land of the Yunnanese temple was said to be a gift from the Burmese king for the capital's Yunnanese in 1837. In the meantime, the Yunnanese admitted that they "had also prepared the money to buy the land from the owners at a fair price [in case], and the transaction had already cost more than thousands."[52] In Rangoon, a third Chinese temple, Fushan Si, the Hokkien temple in Kokine, was established by a group of Hokkien farmers in the Rangoon outskirt who supplied vegetables and meat to the urban population. As claimed in its foundation inscription of 1874, the land was donated by Qiu (Khoo) Zhumu (literally means "pig's mother").[53] Although at a similar time of establishment, with similar management and donation personnel, albeit on a smaller scale than those of Kheng Hock

Keong, this suburban Hokkien temple did not enjoy any privileges from the colonial municipality; it was a purely local initiative.

When he entered Rangoon in 1825, Major Bennett, from the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Regiment during the First Anglo-Burmese War, noticed that "not less than six or seven hundred Chinese were attracted to Rangoon, and were closely allied to our interests from the ready sale of their teas, sugars, and many other acceptable articles."[54] One night in February, he and his men were woken up by "a running fire of musketry, apparently towards the extreme skirts of the suburbs," which was in fact Chinese firecrackers. Following the noise, and not without alarm, Bennett was greeted by "a comical, religious, merry-making, well-conducted uproar, in full activity,"[55] as he recalled his adventure:

> A confused clatter of explosions guided me to a small barn-like-looking building. Here my conjectures were soon put to rest by the appearance of some Chinese, who answered the door on its receiving a hard knock or two with the butt end of a firelock. Indeed, had I been ever so angry at the alarm these Chinese had created, their smiling faces would soon have pacified me, independent of an order they submitted to my notice, given by Sir A. Campbell, which sanctioned their observances in ushering in, according to their calendar, a new-year's day.[56]

Inside the building, "the right and left-hand corners were appropriated to tables covered with fruit and preserves of all 'chops', and hot tea of the purest flavour… The centre of the apartment formed a general field for the burning of gold paper into vases, and in it there was occasionally an explosion of crackers…on the celebration of a victory."[57] Bennett witnessed an ongoing Chinese ceremony:

> At the upper end were three altars, brilliantly lighted up with tapers. On these the Chinese gods, bronze elephants and other sacred objects, were arranged according to their several degrees of omnipotence and attributes. Before each of the altars the Chinese, in rotation, make their salams, and, with little or no reverence, hastily uttered their prayers, or anything else, for aught I could glean from their inexpressive features, and then proceeded to burn gold paper, or matches, taking care the ashes should drop into urns, which were placed at hand for that purpose.[58]

Bennett's accounts indicated the secular dimension and relaxed attitude in that New Year's ceremony, where "no priests that I could distinguish to

direct the rites in performance; all acted independently, and, in fact, seemed more disposed for 'fun'…their salutations to their deities were actually like nodding the 'how do' to an acquaintance."[59] The gods and altars were intermingled with delicacies and firecrackers. Be it a temporary site for the New Year's worship or the precedent of the Rangoon Cantonese temple, this incident shows that from the very beginning, religious practices were deeply integrated into the community life of Chinese migrants.

Chen Yi-Sein believed that Latter Street had been a creek before urban redevelopment and reclamation. Following the custom of waterfront auspiciousness, the Cantonese thus built their temple on the banks of this creek. He also suggested that those three deities worshipped by the Cantonese at the Chinese New Year's Eve in 1825[60] were *Guanyin*, *Mazu*, and *Guandi*, all of whom were already familiar figures in Chinese temples throughout the region.[61] Like many Chinese temples before and after it, the Rangoon Cantonese temple, formally known as the *Guanyin Gumiao* (the Ancient Guanyin Temple), simultaneously functioned as the Guangdong *Gongsi* (the Cantonese Association) and, for a time, provided the space for a Chinese school for Cantonese children before it could afford a separate venue.

For a short period, the Cantonese temple also served as the temporary premises for Ngee Hain (also known as Moh I Myew or Hong Shun Tang), the Cantonese Triad branch. The inauguration ceremony of the Ngee Hain took place in the side hall of this temple on February 6, 1853, and was attended by 37 sworn members.[62] It was not until 1883 that Ngee Hain had its own building erected at the corner of Dalhousie Street and Maung Khai Street (*wushichi-lu* in Chinese, literally "50-foot street").[63]

In 1861, another Chinese temple, Kheng Hock Keong, appeared in Rangoon to serve the city's Hokkien community (Fig. 3.2).[64] Both its name and its architecture display a southern Fujian identity. The temple, like many other Hokkien temples, bears the character Hock (*fu*, also means "bliss") to declare its Hokkien regional origin. Like its Cantonese counterpart, the land was granted by the government free of charge and taxation to the "Fukien Chinese Temple."[65] It is situated on Strand Road, between 18th and Crisp Streets, directly facing the Rangoon River, making it a prominent waterfront landmark. This auspiciousness was so important to the temple that when the Customs Office built a warehouse across the road from the temple in 1908, every effort was made by the Hokkien community to dissuade the government, as this would obscure the direct view of the water, hence significantly reducing its good *Feng Shui*. After

Fig. 3.2 Chinese Temple [Rangoon] (Photograph by Philip Adolphe Klier, 1895. © British Library Board, Photo 88/1 (18))

negotiations with the government, and a compensation of 7950 Rupees paid on January 6, 1909, the warehouse was demolished.[66]

A similar incident happened in Penang. According to a well-circulated local legend, out of jealousy of the commercial success of the Chinese, the British decided to block the auspicious view of Kong Hock Keong by erecting a clock tower (or a private house in another version) and digging a well in order to violate the *Feng Shui* that was believed to help the Chinese fortunes.[67] In both cases, the Chinese concept of *Feng Shui*, which was seen necessary for Chinese temples, became a vital element of the confrontation against the colonial administration.

According to its 1863 foundation inscription, *Guanyin* was the main deity of Kheng Hock Keong. Nonetheless, from its very beginning, the temple also essentially functioned as the association of the Hokkien clans in Rangoon—just like Thian Hock Keng in Singapore did a few decades earlier. Its management body, the Kheng Hock Keong Trust Committee,

included as many members as there were Hokkien clans in Rangoon. The committee was composed of six big clans in 1861 (all of whom were involved in the temple's foundation), 12 representative clans in 1935, and increased to 20 in 1938; all members shared the rotating annual presidency. Similar to the Cantonese temple, it was also used as a school for Hokkien children in various periods and managed an affiliated clinic for the elderly and the poor.[68] Kong Hock Keong in Penang, established six decades earlier than Kheng Kock Keong, had 20 trustees on its Board, the makeup of which was half Cantonese and half Hokkien. The ten Hokkien trustees were from the so-called big five Hokkien clans,[69] each of which had two representatives. The fact that four of these five Penang clans (Chan-Khoo, Lim, Tan, and Yeo) were related with their Rangoon counterparts, who were among the six founding clans in 1861 (plus Lee and Soo), no doubt set the example for the management framework of Kheng Hock Keong.

The Hokkien temple in Mandalay, Hock Kheng Keong, has the same characters in its name as the temple in Rangoon but in reverse order. In Toungoo, another Hokkien temple, Hock Guan Kheong, was established in 1894. All of them bear southern Hokkien architectural features as well as the character "Hock" in their names to mark both the bliss they would like to seek during their sojourning years and the connection to their Hokkien homeland, and functioned as centers in each location catering for the communities' religious and community needs.

3.2.2 Procession of Deities

The procession of local deities is the highpoint of many folk-religious festivals in rural China. On such occasions, the statue of the deity from the local temple is carried along a carefully designed route, accompanied by gongs and drums (and other Chinese folk instruments), flower-filled stages and pavilions, folk performances, and, most importantly, the believers and followers as well as the spectators, all forming an essential part of the occasion.

Researchers have examined the historical and anthropological perspectives of deity processions in villages in southern China, especially in Guangdong and Fujian,[70] the homeland of many Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia. Cultural and religious rituals are generally interpreted as symbolic and instrumental performances that accommodate rival voices in local or regional power dynamics. After their emigration, this practice, which was organized by the religious institutions in each town, continued to be the highlight of community living among the migrants.

At least two processions were carried out by Kheng Hock Keong in 1918 and 1936, respectively; however, no reports have yet been found in the *Rangoon Gazette*, the colony's major English newspaper, or in other English literature. The local government must have learned a good lesson from the 1857 Chinese riots in Penang, which were triggered by police intervention in the Chinese festival ceremony on the grounds of Kong Hock Keong.[71] Unlike in Penang, the Chinese had never organized an independent secular community association in Rangoon,[72] and big temples like Kheng Hock Keong remained *de facto* community centers. Even if such processions would have had to seek official permission for the use of public space, the government might not have found it appropriate to involve itself in the religious activities of one ethnic group, and the English-oriented media, without official involvement, had hardly developed an eye for the grassroots activities of ethnic minorities.

However, this does not negate the enormous scale and impact that these events had on the local Chinese community. The 1936 event was described as "a rare splendid gathering over the last hundred years, and is still remembered favorably by the local (Chinese) twenty-five years later" when the temple celebrated its centenary in 1961.[73]

On October 5, 1918, the first day of the ninth month of the lunar year of *Wu-Wu* (the Earth Horse), the major deity of Kheng Hock Keong, *Guanyin*, was carried out for a parade. To prepare for the event, 2000 leaflets showing the route of the procession were printed and distributed to Chinese residents in Rangoon in advance. In addition to the member clans of the temple, other non-clan-based Chinese associations and societies also participated by sending their teams, equipped with ceremonial costume, music, and decorations. This included two rival Hokkien secret societies: Kyan Taik and Ho Sum and their affiliated associations; and the Chinese Merited Association, the association for the descendants of Hokkien-Burmese with a strong Buddhist vision.[74] There were also other Fujian regional associations outside the core area of the Hokkien dialect-speaking area, such as the Sanshan Association of the Fuzhou area and the Yongding Association for the Hakka in western Fujian. Interestingly, a few non-Hokkien associations and other unrelated deities also took part, such as Lu Shain Hong, a guild for carpenters and builders, whose members were predominantly the Cantonese. Lu Ban Gong, the patron saint for carpenters, also took part. In addition, the neighborhood of 17th Street sent its own team to join the parade.[75]

As suggested by researchers of rural religious processions in contemporary China, such festivities carry more socially symbolic significance than

a mere religious display. It is often the key battlefield for negotiations and confrontations among local actors and for the demonstration of communal authority. The participants are to show their loyalty, and the route is to mark the territorial range of power. Without much information on the 1918 procession, which presumably remained within the proximity of the Rangoon Chinatown, it is difficult to reconstruct the scene behind the stage. It is true that a few Cantonese associations joined this Hokkien procession, and two rival secret societies were able to go along, at least on this occasion. However, we simply do not know whether or not this cooperation implied a certain level of Hokkien-Cantonese collaboration at the end of World War I (WWI), and if so, the reason for and the negotiations behind it. Similarly, it may also suggest some reconciliation between secret societies, if the analysis of similar religious festivities in contemporary rural China is also valid in this case.

More information is available for the 1936 ceremony. Three days in the ninth lunar month[76] saw the parade of a gilded statue of *Guanyin* on a phoenix-shaped sedan chair, both of which were kept in the main hall of Kheng Hock Keong on normal days. Each day at four o'clock in the afternoon, the parade started from the gate of Kheng Hock Keong on Strand Road. The parade proceeded from China Street to Latter Street on the first day, from Latter Street to Godwin Street on the second day, and from Godwin Street to Pongyi Street on the last day. When the parade passed the streets, "each household burned incense and lit candles on their doorstep, [which was] accompanied by non-stop firecrackers."[77] This occasion also attracted Chinese from outside Rangoon. Twenty-three teams participated in the parade, and their order in the procession was decided by a roll of dice, probably to avoid any conflicts surrounding social status. Among them were member clans, two Hokkien secret societies, the Chinese Merited Association, the Chinese Buddhist Research Association, and a few other small associations.[78]

If the principle of organizing the deity parade as a display of power demarcations in rural southern China is valid, some rather speculative, though not unreasonable, observations can be suggested here. The inclusion of the blocks between Godwin Street and Pongyi Street in the route might indicate an extension of Chinatown as perceived by the Chinese community, from the original western border of Godwin Street as designed in 1853, at least in 1936. However, the details of the route are unclear. It could have gone through only the main roads of Dalhousie Street, Canal Street, and Strand Road. Or more likely, it may have zigzagged through

all the side streets from 24th to 13th over the course of three days, with or without the inclusion of the northern, Cantonese half of the side streets between Canal Street and Dalhousie Street, in addition to the Hokkien territory in the southern half. Without further information, it is difficult to map out the subtle power relationships that so often featured in rituals of Chinese communities at home or overseas, which must have been contested and compromised behind this crucial community occasion of the Hokkien community.

Only 16 clans participated this time, with the noticeable absence of the Yeos, who had been members since 1861. The Yeos were a prominent Hokkien clan in Rangoon with large memberships and considerable commercial and social influences. Perhaps this again implied different opinions within the Hokkien community, or it may suggest the possible decline of the Yeos by the 1930s.

The holding of the procession in 1936 had been encouraged by a few elders in the context of an unfavorable market and poor socioeconomic environment, when the world was still in the throes of the Great Depression, and the Burmese Chinese, especially the Hokkien, were particularly vulnerable, being small- and medium-sized general merchants in the colony. The 1930s also saw increasing inter-racial tensions between the Chinese and the Burmese, along with frequent bad news from China, such as wars and natural disasters, and the local political transition from being a British Indian province to a separate British Burma. All of these contributed to a gloomy time for the Burmese Chinese, who then eagerly sought a change of luck by praying to their gods.

The target audience of these events, in addition to the gods, presumably included the Chinese residents and visitors and non-Chinese communities in and outside Rangoon. Through daily worship and special parades, temples and community associations established dominance over their members, brought individuals under their moral and practical leadership, and, to some extent, defined a distinctive collective feature for the Chinese. In the meantime, such community events provided a channel for inter-clan communication and co-operation and mediated trans-clan conflicts whenever possible.

3.2.3 Secret Societies, Their Founding Myths and Protocols

In addition to temples, other cross-clan associations further facilitated coherence among the Chinese, most notably secret societies. Despite attracting

very negative publicity in the colonial public media and administrative sphere as the main cause of Chinese vices, secret societies provided much-needed mutual aid for the migrant society by "help[ing] through disasters and illness … assist[ing] family members during marriages and funerals, and shar[ing] the sweet and bitter, the safety and danger."[79] As legendary heroes representing the oppressed seeking justice, the founding members and successive leaders were often mystified and deified, somewhat close to the status of the deities worshipped at the temple altars.

In Burma, three major Chinese secret societies stood out throughout the colonial period: Kyan Taik, Ho Sum (or Hosain), and Ngee Hain. The first was mainly a Hokkien organization, although it also accepted non-Hokkien members; the other two were both Triad branches with regional focus on Hokkien and Cantonese, respectively.[80] Both Ho Sum and Ngee Hain proudly claimed roots in rebellious heroes of China in the mid-seventeenth century, whose explicit mission was to overthrow the Manchu regime and restore Han sovereignty. When the Chinese moved out of South China, clandestine organizations like these, along with other community institutions, followed them faithfully. Many of them were often engaged in fatal fights. In Burma, the most notorious rivalry was between the Kyan Taik and the Ho Sum, and their violent history is well remembered even today.

According to its members in Burma, Hokkien merchants in Penang founded Kyan Taik in 1841 in a coconut plantation in the Penang suburb of Jelutong. The special publication for the Kyan Taik Society's 112th anniversary in Burma enshrined the founding event in romantic mystery.

> In the twenty-first year of the reign of Daoguan [1841], or the lunar year of *Xin-Chou* [the Golden Ox], Qiu Zhaobang, Qiu Tiande, and Su Xiwei promoted sincerity and solidarity among the Chinese immigrants, and established the Kyan Taik on the twenty-first day of the eleventh month, in Jelutong, Youhua Guan, deep in the coconut plantation.[81]

According to this publication, the founding members expressed disapproval of the deteriorating morality among the Penang Chinese, claiming that

> over the long course of living in an alien land, our people have been busy with mundane trivia. Some of them have forgotten their origins and ancestors, and live conformably in this faraway place; some of them, even worse, have begun to fight against their compatriots as if they were the worst enemies in their lives.[82]

To reverse this deteriorating morality, these three men established the new society to "make great achievements" and promote "virtue, humility, respect, and manners."[83]

However, this account published in the 1950s was a mixture of myths, misunderstandings, and facts. It contradicted some accounts from Penang, the birthplace of the society.[84] A more accepted version in Penang states that it was on December 30, 1844 (the 21st day of the 11th month of the lunar year of *Jia-Chen* [the Wooden Dragon]) that Khoo Teoow Peng (Qiu Zhaobang), a leading member of the Hokkien Khoo clan in Penang, established this society. More than a decade later, Khoo Thean Tek (Qiu Tiande) succeeded him as the next head. Most of its members were Hokkien, and it also had Malay and Kling (southern Indian) affiliated members. In order to control profitable businesses such as nearby tin mines, secret societies based on different home regions were in constant conflict in those days in Penang. The 1867 Penang riots were precisely initiated by the Toh Peh Kong Society (Kyan Taik) and the Ghee Hin Society (Ngee Hain). During the fight, some local Hokkien residents also asked the Ho Seng Society (Ho Sum) to intervene.[85] These three societies, active in Penang, had already extended their network to Burma by then and would later dominate the lives of many Burmese Chinese for almost a century.

Kyan Taik expanded northward from Penang and southern Siam to Tenasserim and established its first branch in Burma in 1852 under the leadership of one of the presumed founders, Su (Soo) Xiwei.[86] After a transition period in Moulmein, it set up headquarters in Rangoon in 1868, followed by a rapid organizational expansion to the *Shanba* in the last few decades of the nineteenth century (Table 3.1). Kyan Taik's expansion followed a similar geographic pattern as demonstrated in the mental map of the Hokkien and Cantonese, particularly along transportation routes. Prior to 1900, Lower Burma was its key interest, and places in the delta and along the Irrawaddy saw a mushrooming of branches, reflecting the contemporary distribution of the Hokkien population in general. Unsurprisingly, Pyapon had one of the most magnificent branch buildings, certainly thanks to the support of the many Chans there. The unwritten rule that prevailed and was well recognized by the community was that Kyan Taik developed along the new railway line, while the old railway line was the domain reserved for Ho Sum, Kyan Taik's archenemy—the physical separation thus keeping these two powers in check.

Similarly, Ngee Hain in Burma weaved facts and fiction in its foundation myth and presented an even more fascinating story. In 1952, two

Table 3.1 Branches of the Kyan Taik Society in Burma Before 1900

Year of establishment	*Location*	*Notes*
1852	Moulmein	
1868	Rangoon	
1871	Allanmyo-Thayetmyo	The Irrawaddy waterway, central Burma
1873	Prome	The Irrawaddy waterway and an important town
1888	Pyapon, Wakema, Dedaye, Kyauktan, Yandoon, Magwe-Minbu, Sinbuygyun, Thayetmyo, Danubyu, Myingyan, Toungoo, Pyinmana, Mandalay, Pegu, Insein, Yamethin, Taikkyi, Gyobingauk, Okpo, Letpadan, Bassein, and *Bo An Tang* (Botataung?)	Four branches in the Irrawaddy Delta, eight along the main Irrawaddy water route, six on the new railway line, three on the old railway line, one unknown.
1891	Kyonmagone	Delta waterway
1893	Ngathaignyaung	Delta, between Henzada and Bassein

Source: Data from *Yangguang jiande zongshe 112 zhounian sheqing tekan* [The Special Memorial Edition for the 112th Anniversary of Rangoon Kyan Taik Society Headquarters] (Rangoon, 1955)

slightly different versions of its foundation were published by the organization. Readers, then and now, would no doubt be fascinated by this great adventure and, hence, it is quoted in full here:

> In the early nineteenth century, most Cantonese in Rangoon worked as carpenters and there were several major contractors with substantial influence among the Cantonese, the most notable of whom was Huang Xiang. Once, Huang Xiang was waiting for a ship in Hong Kong to get back to Rangoon; that was before the days of regular passenger steamers between these two ports, and travellers had to hitchhike on cargo ships. He met a friend, Cao Gonghuan, also a notable Cantonese contractor in Rangoon. Cao heard that there was a ship available, but believed that it was a pirate ship. They were eager to get back so they decided to take the risk of travelling with the pirates. On board, Huang got along well with the captain, a Hokkien named Wen Cheng. Wen introduced himself as a native from Mawei who used to be unsuccessfully involved in the Triad activities in Hokkien, and, therefore, switched his attention to the sea. During the last five to six years, he had extended the Triad network to the calling ports along his sea route. Wen acknowledged that the situation was going quite well, and, by then, the Triad had almost dominated the Chinese communities in Malaya, Borneo, and the East Indies. They had many members in the ports and on the boats, and those

> who knew the Triad signals would make his journey much easier than others who did not. At that point, Wen said that the development of the Triad in China was so promising that he wanted to enhance its influence in the south. Huang then realized the powerful existence of the Triad, and asked Wen to expand this network to Rangoon. Wen agreed and, therefore, it happened.[87]

Another version is slightly different:

> The one who took the pirate ship was Huang Ji, a professional messenger travelling between the sea and the countryside, who had known Wen Cheng for a long time. Huang understood how important it was for Burmese Chinese to join the Triad network in the region, and lobbied notable Cantonese contractors such as Huang Xiang. Totally in agreement, Huang Xiang sent a letter to the Triad regional headquarters in Singapore to ask for support and permission. Wen Cheng was therefore sent over to open the Rangoon Triad branch, the Ngee Hain, in 1851.[88]

Despite being filled with legendary flamboyance, these stories are not without historical basis. Wen Cheng was arguably the person also known as Wen Zancheng, one of the committee members listed in the Kheng Hock Keong's 1863 foundation inscription, while Cao Gonghuan was the fourth biggest donor, who contributed 386 *yuan*, to the Cantonese temple's 1868 renovation. This clearly shows that they were leaders of the Chinese community in Rangoon in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet, even though no evidence or further investigation of Wen's and Cao's identification exists, the stories indicate that interactions between the Hokkien and Cantonese groups were more intimate than in later years.

The Triad network, as introduced in these stories, was powerful and ubiquitous among Chinese diasporic communities with local misinterpretation or variations. All three major Chinese secret societies in Burma were of foreign origin, either from other parts of the region with very close contacts (Penang) or from within China. Hence, their existence represented both protection for the practical needs of migrants under precarious conditions and a link to the homeland and other Chinese communities scattered throughout the region, thus forming a virtual brotherhood that these migrants shared. Being part of a transregional and transnational community institution that worshipped common deities, practiced under common codes, and performed common rituals provided an institutional and psychological attachment for the otherwise rootless migrants. No wonder Huang Xiang felt that it was crucial for the Burmese Chinese to be integrated into this network.

Given all these contexts and implications, the secret society became a social necessity for Chinese migrants in Burma. Over a long period of time, probably almost all Chinese (male) migrants were members of one of these competing secret societies regardless of their personal intentions. To join a secret society was simply a guarantee for the security of one's personal life and the safe operation of one's business. Accepting the grand organizational vision "to promote traditional spirits of us Chinese ethnicity with great loyalty and great justice, to follow the principles of us Chinese migrants as peaceful and kind,"[89] one would even be proud to be part of this long-standing and expanding institution and would willingly let it dominate his and his family's lives.

In everyday life, procedures and formalities practiced by secret societies and, to a lesser extent, other traditional associations also helped community institutions to penetrate the lives of their members in an extraordinary way. One important principle in the secret societies was the absolute authority of its leadership with lifelong tenure.[90] Once a senior member was selected as *dage* (the eldest brother), he would hold this top position forever. The title itself reflected a family-based structure, as senior members were addressed as *fuxiong* (father and elder brothers). In certain circumstances when the *dage* was unable to perform his assigned duties, either for health or other reasons, he would still remain in position while his more capable subordinates would run the daily business on his behalf. The *dage* would only be replaced after his death. For instance, the first *dage* of Ngee Hain was the successful Cantonese merchant Lee Nie Hee, holding the position for 20 years from 1872 to 1891. After his death, a 20-year transition period passed under the leadership of senior member Cao Huayan, followed by the succession of Lee Ah Lye, the former *dage*'s younger son, who also inherited many other leading positions in the community from his late father.[91]

Just as temples organized communal celebrations, secret societies introduced a set of moral values and behavioral codes for the community. Together, these community institutions, which were never officially endorsed and were, from time to time, viewed suspiciously by the colonial state, dictated the collective life of the community and regulated, sometimes violently, the behavior of their members.

3.3 Ceremonies of Spectacles

Perhaps the best showcases of community institutions were ceremonies for important occasions such as the Chinese New Year, weddings, and funerals. Here, they reached a climax of performance in a rather theatrical way, with intended and incidental audiences all over multiethnic Burma.

To some extent, it reminds us of the performance of power in Bali as examined by Clifford Geertz.[92] But here in Burma in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these extravagant performances, which were defined either by the Chinese practitioners or the colonial onlookers, or both, displayed a distinctive ethnic feature closely linked with the community. Some of them were met with mixed responses, but, eventually, all were incorporated into the colonial multiethnic discourse.

3.3.1 The Chinese New Year Celebrations

The account of Major Bennett on his encounter with the Cantonese in Rangoon in February 1825 perhaps provides the earliest description in English sources of the Chinese New Year celebrations in Burma. In later years, accounts by different members in this colonial state presented a rather mixed picture, reflecting how this highly ethnic-centered festivity survived, adjusted, and suffered protests as the colonial state itself underwent challenges brought about by global movements over the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Huang Chuoqing described a lively panorama of the season's celebration remembered by a Cantonese teenager in Rangoon in the 1920s:

> From the fifteenth day of the twelfth month, we started to prepare for the Winter Solstice Festival, and made rice balls… The night before the New Year's Eve, every house was cleaned, and every family went shopping for the celebration. On Cantonese Grand Street, there were many temporary calligraphers writing Spring Festival couplets… On the New Year's Eve, everyone had a family dinner and some of them stayed awake overnight, so did the Cantonese and Hokkien temples, which were full of the smell of incense and sounds of bells.
>
> From the night before the New Year's Eve, until the fifth or tenth day of the New Year, everyone enjoyed themselves by eating and gambling. [For the Chinese] gambling was legal for three days only, and this was specially permitted by the Government for the Chinese New Year. After the 1922 prohibition on prostitution, the whole Cantonese Grand Street became a huge gambling den.
>
> Firecrackers were the most expensive thing. Some associations would release the firecrackers along their doorsteps after their annual banquet, often in the afternoon. Those firecrackers, which were hung high from the third floor of the association's building, often numbered about ten thousand, and could last for an hour or two, creating deafening sounds and suffocating smoke.

> The New Year's entertainment of gambling and firecrackers had to be permitted by the local police on Latter Street. Even though the Chinese applicants could not communicate well in English with the policemen, they always managed to obtain permissions using gestures and sounds.[93]

The temporary granting of legal status to gambling was a concession from the government, especially catered to its Chinese subjects' perceived need. Although gambling had been a permanent target of the colonial police, especially those stationed in the Rangoon Chinatown, the regulation was somewhat loosened on special occasions like this.

The firecracker, a trivial but annoying issue, was not received without consistent resentment by neighbors in other communities. In 1888, while reporting the celebration and ceremonies of the Chinese merchants and firms, the *Rangoon Gazette* quietly suggested that "some restriction should be placed upon the firing of crackers out in the public streets, especially late at night and in such streets that have much gharry traffic," as the explosions of the crackers felt like "a bombardment of Rangoon."[94]

Almost four decades later, in February 1927, another reader, "a Canal-Street sufferer," wrote to the editor of the *Rangoon Gazette*, complaining of the same issue. It said,

> From the 1st of the month, life on Canal Street and its vicinity has become unbearable on account of the continuous firing of crackers by the Chinese residents of this quarter of the town. It is not that these crackers are let off in ones or twos but in volleys, which at times last from 15 minutes to an hour, and this goes on for five to six hours at a time. It is a bit trying when the cracker firing starts at 12 pm and keeps up till 7 am.[95]

What made things worse, the reader confessed, was that the Chinese quarter was in the vicinity of the General Hospital, "where quiet is essential in the treatment of the sick, and it is the last place where one would expect noise to be tolerated … there is not one member in my household who has had a perfect night's rest since the 1st February."[96]

However, English readers of the *Rangoon Gazette* were not the only ones who disapproved of the busy ceremonies. A visiting Yunnanese also found it disruptive. In 1903, Yin Zijian, a junior Mandarin titleholder, moved to Burma to try his commercial luck after being unsuccessful in his scholastic career. In Mandalay, knowing that Lim Chin Tsong, a Rangoon-based Hokkien merchant and community leader, was looking for a Chinese language tutor for his children, Yin Zijian decided to apply for the job. He arrived in Rangoon a week later and stayed in the shop of a fellow Heshun man.[97]

His stay coincided with the Chinese New Year and he witnessed grand celebrations at the beginning of 1904. He also noticed the very popular practice of lightning firecrackers. Being used to this type of celebration back home, Yin did not have the same complaints as the readers of the *Rangoon Gazette*. However, he found it quite "meaningless," as it lasted for many hours in the middle of the night and cost hundreds of rupees. He also noticed that some Hokkien performers earned extra income by dressing in Ming imperial costumes and wishing New Year's good luck to Hokkien households along the street. "But, to act in a Chinese way on foreign soil makes others laugh at us, and we lose our Chinese decency. This really should stop!"[98] In contrast to this complicated and noisy New Year's celebration by his fellow countrymen from southern provinces, Yin Zijian, an educated Yunnanese, celebrated this important occasion in his own quieter way by burning incense and praying to the sky on the morning of New Year's Day. Later that year, Yin Zijian joined the Teong Hwa Chinese School as one of its chief teachers.[99]

3.3.2 A Prominent Chinese Family's Weddings and Funerals

Weddings and funerals, the red and white auspicious affairs exemplifying ancient traditions, were other ceremonies that entertained the multiethnic residents of this colonial state, also with mixed responses. In 1918, 1919, and 1920, Lim Chin Tsong married one son and two daughters consecutively, and all these events were duly covered by the *Rangoon Gazette*.

Lim Chin Tsong was perhaps the most influential Chinese in Burma at the turn of the twentieth century. For many years, he had been an agent for Burmah Oil Company. Starting from a modest operation with his father's import-export trade between China, the Straits Settlements, Rangoon, and Upper Burma, Lim Chin Tsong successfully operated, in various periods of his career, a rubber plantation in Twante; steamships transporting commodities and passengers between Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Swatow, and Amoy; a match factory; a peanut production facility; and a mineral exploration project, while also managing agencies for major European firms.[100] Between 1909 and 1922, he was the only appointed member in the Burma Legislative Council from the Chinese community. Lim was at the pinnacle of his career in the late 1910s, when he was newly awarded an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his contribution to the WWI effort and the construction of his luxurious residence, the Kokine Palace, was about to be completed.

In 1918, still in his old, but “spacious and gorgeously decorated”[101] residence on China Street, a wedding took place between Lim Chin Tsong’s English-educated son, Lim Kar Gim, and Miss Khoo Shwe Lin, from the powerful Khoo clan in Penang. Although invitations were mostly issued to members of the European community, including the family of the Lieutenant-Governor, and the catering was provided by the Vienna Café, a few key components were still distinctly non-European and non-Burmese, such as the preliminary ceremony carried out the day before “as is customary in such Chinese weddings”; the bride’s “Oriental” hair dress and robe, a “centre of the attraction”; and a glass cabinet displaying “row upon row of prettily embroidered slippers” made by the Nyonya bride, a special domestic skill of girls from Chinese-Malay families.[102]

The following year, the wedding between Lim’s eldest daughter Lim Gaik Kin and Chan Chor Pyne, the youngest son of Chan Ma Phee, united the two most prominent Chinese merchants in Rangoon. It was an “elaborate reception…carried out with full Chinese ceremony,” as described by the *Rangoon Gazette*. During the reception, “Mr Moniz’s orchestra was in attendance and the Vienna Café did the catering. The bride was dressed in a gorgeous wedding gown suitable for the high-class Chinese lady, and received the guests in her pink and blue dressing room.” The celebration, it said, lasted for several days, including days dedicated to the European community and the Burmese community, respectively, in addition to the Chinese.[103]

In 1920, when Lim married another daughter, Lim Gaik Kee, to Dr Teoh Kyee Lwin, an assistant surgeon attached to the Rangoon General Hospital, the ceremony took place in the Kokine Palace. When the bridegroom arrived at the bride’s house

> [he was] heralded by the sound of Chinese music from the entrance to the grounds through which he came in state preceded by a Chinese orchestra and attendants. A short ritual was gone through after his arrival in respect to the bridegroom, then the bride came downstairs from her room and met him and leading the way they went back to the nuptial room where both offered up prayers and later the bride came down and cut the wedding cake, a gorgeous five-tiered affair, a work of art by the Vienna Café's European expert, the cake bearing icing in Chinese characters and lettering.[104]

The guests, including Lieutenant-Governor Craddock and his wife, and Prince Amoradhat of Siam, were entertained by an international assembly of artists, including Malay dancing girls, string orchestras from the Union Picture House, and Majestic and Hippodrome Cinemas performing the

latest waltzes and foxtrots, in addition to the local Chinese orchestra. One of the most convenient arrangements, reported by the newspaper, was "the installation of a telephone system from the portico to the compound"[105] for the purpose of swiftly providing motorcars for the guests.

On the second day after his arrival in Rangoon in November 1920, Colonel Harry Ross, Commandant of the Rangoon Brigade, was among the European guests at this wedding. It impressed the newly arrived Ross, who described it as

> A very grand Chinese Wedding which took place at the palatial mansion of the head of the Chinese Community, named Chin Tsong. A great number of Europeans had been asked & for their amusement some professional musicians played the piano & sang. What we saw of the wedding was long enough, but what the Bride & Bridegroom had gone through would have put most people off marriage altogether.[106]

Clearly, both the reports in the *Rangoon Gazette* and the memoir of the British guest emphasized the special Chinese style, from the "various Chinese delicacies which many tasted for the first time"[107] to the traditional dress of the bride and the ceremony that "was unique to many of those present to whom the Chinese wedding ritual was seen for the first time."[108] Despite being deeply immersed in Western mannerisms, Lim Chin Tsong demonstrated distinctive Chinese features through his children's weddings.

Much like weddings, funerals were another important affair for the Chinese. Just a few years later on November 2, 1923, Lim Chin Tsong died in his lavish residence, the Kokine Palace. On November 5, 1923, the *Rangoon Gazette* reported Lim's death from heart failure, accompanied by an announcement by Harcourt Butler, the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, expressing his sympathy to the family. Butler described Lim as "an old, tried and valued friend, who had endeared himself to all communities and classes in Rangoon, in Burma, and beyond… In the highest sense of the word, he was a true sportsman, a true friend, and a true citizen of the Empire."[109]

Another version, however, circulated among some contemporary Rangoon Chinese, which attributed his death to failed business, broken cash flow, and lawsuits from debtors, and even hinted at his possible suicide. A few months later, visiting scholar Jiang Kanghu from China was told of this by his local friends, who did not approve of Lim's intimacy with the British and his alienation from the Chinese.[110] Decades later, a Burmese journalist still mentioned the popular rumor that Lim's coffin was filled with debt slips he could not write off.[111]

In the second week of November 1923, the *Rangoon Gazette* fully covered Lim's "simple but impressive" funeral. It was said that thousands of people from every community of Rangoon, "many prominent in Government, business, and professional circles, [as well as] many military men," attended his funeral. After a short but "interesting Chinese ceremony" at his Kokine residence that morning, the coffin was carried to the Tamway Hokkien Cemetery via Kokine Road, Churchill Road, Park Road, and Tamwe Road, all of which were "admirably policed" by the Circle Inspector of the Police of Bahan. A band from the Rangoon Town Police was invited, as well as another band from "the Anglo-Chinese school, which the deceased founded and of which he was so proud."[112]

The cortège was marked by "many banners of various colors, shapes and sizes." The hearse was drawn by two motorcars, and the coffin was also on a specially designed motorcar. In front of the hearse came the most "striking feature" of "a cross made of flowers which was carried by one of the school boys and following directly behind came another boy carrying an enlargement of a photograph of Mr Chin Tsong." In the motorcars in front and behind the hearse were Buddhist monks, close relatives, family, and friends, followed by more motorcars with many representatives of the European and other communities. It was estimated that "fully a thousand cars took part in the cortège."[113]

One of the schoolboys in the cortège was the 13-year-old Huang Chuoqing. As a young Cantonese boy, Huang attended the Lim Chin Tsong Anglo-Chinese School but had to quit a few years later due to family financial hardship. Forty years later, he still proudly remembered his participation in this funeral with his classmates. Before the funeral, Huang and his classmates were excited to have the rare chance to visit the famous Kokine Palace and were indeed deeply impressed by its grandness. Huang himself was selected to carry the cross-shaped wreaths and walked in front of the school band with other schoolboys, who were all in navy-blue uniform. According to Huang, this group of Chinese schoolboys stole the show that day.[114]

As rightly suggested by the *Rangoon Gazette*, Lim's funeral was nothing special among the contemporary Chinese community, as there were many such ceremonies, for instance, Tan Boon Tee's funeral in 1909. According to the *Rangoon Gazette*, it was "very elaborate, over two hundred Chinese societies took part in it, with between twenty and thirty bands of all descriptions, the funeral cortège being of immense length."[115]

3.3.3 *Exercising "Chinese-ness" in a Multiethnic Colonial State*

These ceremonies, be they public or private, communal or individual, were eagerly or curiously watched by people in and outside of the community. In addition to Chinese audience, they also attracted non-Chinese observers and became a silent way to proclaim a unique ethnic profile in this multiethnic colony. In a similarly spectacular but better publicized event in 1923, the Chinese community joined their multiethnic neighbors in Rangoon to welcome Reading, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India.[116]An archway (pandal) with strong Chinese architectural features was specially erected on a major road in central Rangoon (see the book cover), confirming the presence of an unmistakable Chinese ethnicity on this imperial stage whose potential audience could cover the entire British Empire and beyond.

Both Chinese and non-Chinese features were simultaneously emphasized throughout the ceremonies discussed here. The distinctive Chinese feature of the firecracker, as annoying to some observers as it was, or the specially costumed Hokkien folk performers reached a level that even the Chinese from Yunnan could not comfortably accept. Furthermore, the weddings and funerals were full of Chinese music, food, wedding costumes, banners, and special rituals, which were quite overwhelming for non-Chinese guests such as Ross. On the other hand, global elements were cautiously adopted by the ceremony designers through the Western orchestra bands, pastry from the posh Vienna Café, ballroom music, Malay dancers, and Burmese monks, all of which catered to the non-Chinese attendants.

However, even the special display of Chinese features on public occasions was not designed without the potential multiethnic audience in mind. The Chinese archway for the Viceroy was erected with a clear awareness as a showpiece on this global imperial stage. There could be strong incentives to present these unique ethnic features as relevant community institutions utilized opportunities like this as key strategy to negotiate with colonial establishment and their agents. One successful case to the point was the temporary lifting of the ban on gambling (for the Chinese only) in Chinatown during the Chinese New Year. Under the light-hearted and merry-making disguise of Chinese traditions, even a persistent Chinese crime was happily granted a temporary reprieve by the colonial police to indicate the government's tolerance of ethnic diversity. Through these ceremonies and practices, which fit into the colonial ethnic infrastructure, community institutions thus had sufficient grounds to justify their, sometimes, strange behavior and bargain for special rights for the community.

This may also explain the well-being of Chinese secret societies, temples, and other community associations despite the existence of colonial legislation against dangerous organizations, and its everlasting suspicion of incomprehensible Eastern internal factions. By practicing complicated rituals and ceremonies in a theatrical way, these institutions neatly provided a convenient, although, in the eyes of Europeans confused by Eastern protocols, a somewhat comic entry into the colonial state's administrative and social framework.

But one should never over-estimate the effect of these subtle and passive community negotiations, especially in Burma, where the Chinese minority was rather insignificant. The difference between Burma and Singapore, where a dominant Chinese community existed, could not be more obvious. When the Straits Settlements government decided to consolidate its randomly developed burial lands in 1887 with the introduction of the Burials Bill, the Chinese launched a large campaign of protest, ranging from public meetings to petitions to the Governor; the community's advocacy extended as far as the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London. They claimed that the Bill was a violation of *Feng Shui* and of Chinese customary rituals, religious faith, and Confucian teachings on ancestor worship. The Bill was eventually passed; nevertheless, a concession was made so that the three municipalities (Singapore, Penang, and Malacca) where the Chinese had a stronger voice, instead of the Government of the Straits Settlements, would manage the public burial lands.[117] In Rangoon, the municipality had a similar managerial role over its multiethnic burial lands without much trouble from its Chinese residents, except for once in 1916. On that occasion, the municipality decided to allocate extra burial lands for each community in response to the increasing demand for space and granted Kyandaw in the west of the city and Kyaikasan Road in the east to the two Chinese regional groups. Unlike the Chinese in the Straits Settlements, protest was unthinkable here and the best the community could do was to minimize the impact the new burial lands introduced. Considering the long distance between the new and existing cemeteries for each community, Ouyang Jinsong, a Cantonese head engineer in the Rangoon Municipality, negotiated between the government and the Cantonese and Hokkien elders to swap the allocated sites in order to reduce the logistical inconvenience for both.[118] To commemorate his earlier contribution to the Cantonese cemetery, a special inscription was put on the west wall of the central hall of the Cantonese temple to ensure that "when Mr and Mrs Ouyang pass away, we Cantonese should remember them during the sacrifice and pay our due respect, and fulfill their wishes."[119]

Although seen by non-Chinese onlookers as a single ethnic community, the Chinese in Rangoon were far from a unitary entity. Like their counterparts in Mandalay, the Cantonese/Hokkien and the Yunnanese continued to hold different opinions even on shared practices derived from a common culture. However, Yi Zijian's disagreement on certain practices to celebrate the Chinese New Year did not prevent him from celebrating the same festival (albeit in his own style), seeking job from a Hokkien merchant, or joining the Hokkien/Cantonese-founded Chinese school. As in Mandalay, different Chinese groups tended to acknowledge more common "Chinese-ness," even though regional rivalry and mutual prejudice were still unavoidable.

One curious omission from Burmese Chinese community life, at least based on currently available sources, was food, presumably a significant but silent aspect of Chinese life. Not much is known about the culinary habits of the residents in Rangoon Chinatown or any other Chinese quarters in Burma, nor is any legendary restaurant, chef, or dish especially savored by contemporary and present Burmese Chinese, unlike other Chinese communities in the region.[120] The caterer for the weddings of the Lims was unmistakably a European pastry, and even Huang Chuoqing failed to provide more details on restaurants, street hawkers, and teashops in Chinatown apart from a brief mention of the 19th street, which was well known for its Chinese street-food.[121]

One rare exception was a menu published in the *Rangoon Gazette* in 1925 on the occasion of the inauguration of a new clan hall for the Hokkien Yeos. To celebrate the opening of a new clan hall at Nos. 75–76 Strand Road, at the corner of 17th Street, a few blocks west of the Kheng Hock Keong and also facing the Rangoon River, Sit Teik Tong, the Yeo clan association, organized a grand reception on Wednesday December 16, 1925, for the completion of a two-year construction project that cost nearly 2 lakh (200,000) Rupees.[122] Rangoon dignitaries from all ethnic backgrounds, including the newly appointed ministers Lee Ah Yain and Dr. Ba Yin (to be discussed in Chapter 6), attended the reception. European, Indian, and Burmese guests, many of whom were members of the Legislative Council or the Rangoon Municipal Corporation, also came. They were served "a most sumptuous repast of Chinese delicacies"[123] followed by a performance by an *Anyein Pwe* or Chinese Theatrical Company on the roof garden. The menu was almost entirely made up of southern Chinese specialties, expensively suitable for the occasion, including "birds' nest soup, sweet and sour fish, shark fin omelet, almond pigeons, patties,

roasted sucklings, crisp and tender, white mushrooms, chicken rolls, crab roe and asparagus spiced chicken, and almond jelly and aster tea."[124] This banquet was catered for by Hokkien-owned Sin Lyan Tye Hotel on Canal Street[125] and was serviced by waiters from European-styled Maison Continental.

While the *Rangoon Gazette* preserved this Chinese banquet menu of a community function where prominent figures were present, neither the colonial state nor the Chinese community associations took serious interest in this rather mundane practice of food. For the local temples, clan associations, and secret societies, despite their attention to detail in rituals and formalities where food often played an important role, they never granted it sufficient status to be written into the organizations' official history, legends, and regulations, thus depriving us any further investigation into the culinary custom at that time.

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Following the mental map of the Hokkien and Cantonese, this chapter examines the everyday practices of the Chinese community in Lower Burma. It traces the foundation, development, and adjustment of this migrant community in a multiethnic colonial state through the lens of a pyramid-like network of community associations and events over which they presided. Associations discussed here were not a novel phenomenon. They were a product of non-natives who were in need of mutual aid and networks and could be dated several centuries back in China, with counterparts in many other migrant communities throughout the world.[126] However, the increased visibility and, to some degree, the social acknowledgement of a community with strong ethnic features in a wider context in Burma indicate ongoing negotiations and compromises between the subject community that inherited particular self-perceptions from a remote homeland and its effort to cope with the colonial establishment in dealing with everyday practicalities in a foreign land.

Notes

1. The Cantonese and Hokkien often used different Chinese characters to name the same place, based on the pronunciation of their respective dialects of its Burmese name. For example, Rangoon was written in one way in early Cantonese documents, such as the inscription of the Ning Yang Association. It was later rewritten in another way based on the Hokkien pronunciation, which is now the most commonly used Chinese name for Rangoon. This perhaps suggested the later but larger existence of a Hokkien

community in the city (see Glossary). This study takes reference from *Miandian huaqiao gongshang gaikuang* [Brief Information on Burmese Chinese Industries and Trades] (Rangoon: Xin Yangguang Bao, 1948); *Zhongyingmian wen duizhao: Miandian diming* [Place Names in Burma in Chinese, Burmese and English] (Rangoon: Nanchiao Printing Press, n.d.). The latter is a compiled list of commonly used place names in Burmese/Chinese/English published in the 1960s, with notes from Huang Chuoqing and an article by Chen Yi-Sein (written on October 11, 1961). Some places in Upper Burma also have a Chinese name based on the Yunnanese pronunciation.

2. For post-war Chinese communities and lineages, see Freedman, *Study of Chinese Society*. For community institutions during the Ming and Qing periods in the Pearl River Delta, see Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*.
3. For an early study on the emigrant communities, see Ta Chen, *Emigrant Communities in South China: A Study of Overseas Migration and Its Influence on Standards of Living and Social Change* (New York: Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1939).
4. For rural associations and local deity worship in the present-day Putian area of Fujian, see Kenneth Dean and Zheng Zhenman, *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plain*, 2 Vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
5. National Archives of Myanmar (hereafter NAM): 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. “Misc: – Increasing Influx of Chinese Shop-keepers into the Division.” General Department No. 6688/2Q–9, “Miscellaneous: Increasing Influx of Chinese Shop-keepers into the Divisions 1917–1918,” December 10, 1917.
6. Ibid.
7. Lin Taiyuan and Lü Qingyun, “Hukou yusheng shuo chunqiu: Miandian guiqiao Zeng Guanying koushu lishi” [The oral history from Zeng Guanying], accessed May 13, 2015, http://www.hmyzg.com/q-zy.com/2010-mhbbj/2010-mhbb/3-mhlw/mhlw-ls/mhlw-cgy.htm
8. Ibid.
9. For example, in *Who’s Who* and Arnold Wright, ed., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources* (London: Lloyd’s Greater Britain Pub. Co., 1910), many prominent Chinese from Moulmein have the surname of Soo.
10. *Rules and Regulations of Law San Tong Society/Yangguang sushi lushantang zhangcheng* (Rangoon, 1932).
11. *Chongxiu sanshenggong juanti leishi beiji* [The Inscription of the Renovation of Sansheng Gong], Bassein, the 18th year of the reign of Guangxu (1892).
12. Chan Ma Phee’s life exemplified this geographical and social mobility.
13. For details on the Burmese rice production in the delta, see Cheng Siok-hwa, *The Rice Industry of Burma 1852–1940* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968); Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852–1941* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

14. It was mentioned by the police superintendent and subdivisional officer in Pyapon. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
15. *Lümian shubang zengshi chongshengtang zushi* (hereafter TST-Pyapon) [A Clan History of Burma-sojourning Chan's Tsong Seng Tong in Pyapon] (n.p., 1947), 5.
16. Ibid.
17. The Hokkien and Cantonese used the Burmese word in this circumstance, which is different from the Yunnanese. Another Hokkien word, *baba* (or its Cantonese variation, *vava*), was also common in the Chinese community in Lower Burma. It most likely came from the Malay Peninsula, where *baba* was used for the male children of Chinese and non-Chinese ancestry.
18. *Trust Scheme for the Management of Aw Kai Koot Society Burma/Lümian zengying she houkengjue jiazu gongsi jianshi* (n.p., 1953).
19. *TST-Pyapon*.
20. Ibid., 11.
21. Chen Qisen, *Huaqiao baojian (Diyi hui): Miandian zhibu* [The Precious Mirror of the Overseas Chinese, vol. I: Burma] (Rangoon: Ming Ming Yinwu Youxian Gongsi, 1925).
22. *Scheme Containing the Objects, Rules and Regulations of the Leong Sun Tong Society/Yangguang longshantang zhangcheng caoan* (Rangoon: The New Nurma Printing Co., 1934), 8.
23. *Yangguang zengying chongshengtang chengli 130 zhounian jinian tekan* [The Special Memorial Edition for the 130th Anniversary of the Tsong Seng Tong in Yangon] (Yangon, 2001).
24. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 309–12.
25. The Hezhen Company, a big rice company managed by three Chan partners from Chanya, was one such temporary lodging place for the newly arrived Chans in Rangoon. Lin and Lü, "Zeng Guanying."
26. This lawyer's name in written Chinese is *ni-guo-li*, and its pronunciation in Hokkien is close to *ngi-kueh-let*. Although no further information is available, it certainly refers to a non-Chinese person. However, this raises another question because, by that time, the influential Chan-Khoo clan had produced several law degree holders from prestigious British universities and qualified barristers-at-law, a fact many surviving honorable banners in the clan hall can attest. Therefore, there must be reasons why they decided to employ a non-Chinese lawyer for this case instead of using its own member.
27. *Aw Kai Koot*, 7.
28. *Leong Sun Tong*, 8.
29. This incident is mentioned in several memoirs, see Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 398; Zeng, *Zawenji*, 69; and Feng, *Shihua*, 64.

30. *Leong Sun Tong*, 8.
31. Ibid.
32. *Feng Shui* is certainly more complex than a simple combination of water and an elevated position. Examples of good *Feng Shui* are the combination of the Irrawaddy and the Mandalay Hill in Mandalay, and the combination of the Rangoon River and the Singuttara Hill (along with the Shwe Dagon) in Rangoon, both of which provide the necessary auspiciousness for local Chinese temples. Kheng Hock Keong is known for its good location, as it "leans back at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda high above, and faces the water." *Chongjian yangguang qingfugong beiji* [The Inscription of the Renovation of Kheng Hock Keong of Rangoon], Rangoon, the 28th year of the reign of Guangxu (1903).
33. On the 1803 and 1807–1808 maps of George Town, Court House and Public Offices were next to this temple. City Council of Georgetown, Penang, *Penang Past and Present 1786–1963: A Historical Account of the City of George Town since 1786* (Penang: City Council of Georgetown, 1966).
34. On Jackson's Plan, or the "Plan of the Town of Singapore" (1822), a Chinese *Kampung* was marked out, with Telok Ayer Street as its seafront border.
35. Thian Hock Keng, "About Us," accessed July 30, 2011, http://www.thianhockkeng.com.sg/aboutus.html
36. U Thaw Kaung, "Preliminary Survey of Penang-Myanmar Relations."
37. *Qingfugong juanyuan shibei xu* [The Inscription of the Foundation and Donation of Kheng Hock Keong], Rangoon, the second year of the reign of Tongzhi (1863). The second donor of this list donated 900 Rupees. The author believes "Xu Zhangguan" was most probably Khaw Soo Cheang (Xu Sizhang) (1797–1882), a native of Zhangzhou in southern Fujian, who had significant trading and mining businesses in Penang and southern Siam and was appointed the Governor of Ranong, the Siamese province directly opposite Victoria Point in Tenasserim, by King Mongkut in 1854. For the Khaw family history, see Jennifer W. Cushman, *Family and State: the Formation of a Sino-Thai Tin-mining Dynasty 1792–1932* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). In this inscription, male adults were referred to with three Chinese characters: surname + (one character) given name + *guan* (an honorable suffix). Nineteenth-century inscriptions from the Hokkien community in Malacca, Penang, and Singapore, as well as in Fujian and Taiwan, have many examples following this general name pattern. For detailed discussion, see Tan Yeok Seong, "Preface" in Chen Ching-Ho and Tan Yeok Seong, eds., *A Collection of Chinese Inscriptions in Singapore* (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen Daxue Chubanbu, 1970), 23. However, the 1863 Rangoon inscription uses *guan*[a] but almost all other Hokkien inscriptions in Burma use *guan*[b]

instead. For the Cantonese, the most common pattern for male adults' names on temple inscriptions in Burma was surname + *ah* + (one character) given name.

38. *Guanyin gumiao chuangjian jinian beiwen* [The Inscription of the Foundation of the Ancient Temple of Guanyin], Rangoon, the seventh year of the reign of Tongzhi (1868). Here, boat donors' names starts with *guang* (Guangdong) and ends with *chuan* (boat).
39. Interestingly, the currency used in donation lists in most Hokkien temples is the (Indian) rupee, or *dun* in Chinese, referring to the colonial monetary system. Notably, the 1868 Inscription from the Rangoon Cantonese temple (and some other Cantonese temples or associations) uses *yuan* (a Chinese monetary unit) and the 1846 Inscription from the Amarapura Yunnanese temple uses a probably Burmese system (see Chapter 2).
40. J. S. Furnivall, in Gehan Wijeyewardene, ed., *The Fashioning of Leviathan: The Beginnings of British Rule in Burma*, (Canberra: Department of Anthropology, Australian National University in association with the Economic History of Southeast Asia Project and the Thai-Yunnan Project, 1991; originally published in Rangoon, 1939), 15.
41. The inscription on a metal bell in the temple was dated the 12th month of the 17th year of the reign of Daoguang (around January 1838). It was donated by Xiao Ri from Panyu County and Wu Zhenghui from Xiangshan County, and was cast in Foshan Town, all in southern Guangdong.
42. Other objects in the temple indicate that there have been at least four renovations since then in 1881, 1884 (a banner was donated by a group of Cantonese to memorialize this project), 1907 (initiated by a Hokkien), and 1925 (jointly organized by the Cantonese and the Hokkien). This may also imply the changing demography of the Chinese in Mergui: the population of the Cantonese, who were early laborers and miners, decreased and that of the Hokkien increased.
43. "Danlao tianhougong shilue" [A Brief History of Tianhougong in Mergui], in *KHK100*.
44. This map was also mentioned by Chen Yi-Sein. He argued that before the First Anglo-Burmese War, the Chinese quarter, known as *Tat-ga-le* (Tackly on the map), occupied a similar location as that of Chinatown after 1853. Chen, "The Chinese in Rangoon during the 18th and 19th Centuries."
45. This name comes from the fact that there used to be a *Sheng Mao* shop at the corner and a government checking point (*Guanzai*) in the wharf. *KHK100,* 20B.
46. Bennett, "Burma and the Burmese during the Late War," *United Service Journal* Part III (1838): 80–81 (80).

47. For discussions on everyday life in Yangon Chinatown today, see Jayde Lin Roberts, *Mapping Chinese Yangon: Place and Nation among the Sino-Myanmar* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).
48. Bertie Reginald Pearn, *A History of Rangoon* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1939), 195.
49. This document was attached to the letter from the Government of India to Blundell, July 31, 1857 (SSR. S25, Item 1170) during the investigation of the 1857 Penang riot. Jean DeBernardi, *Rites of Belonging: Memory, Modernity and Identity in a Malaysian Chinese Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press; London: Eurospan, 2003), 242.
50. Ibid., 240. The Chinese Town Hall was granted a trust deed for the plot of land in 1875.
51. Pearn mentioned that Mogul Street and China Street were named after the ethnic residents already established there. Pearn, *History of Rangoon*.
52. Inscription, Amarapura, 1846.
53. *Fushansi juantiyuan bei* [The Inscription of the Donation for the Fushan Temple], Rangoon, the 13th year of the reign of Tongzhi (1874).
54. Bennett, "Late War," 80.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 80–81.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. 1825 is the Year of *Ren-Zi* (the Watery Mouse), and its New Year's Eve was on the 19th of February.
61. Chen Yi-Sein, "Yangguang guangdong gongsi (guanyin gumiao) shilue" [A Brief History of the Association (Guanyin Temple)], in *GYGM179*, 20.
62. Ibid., 20. However, the foundation year registered by the Ngee Hain with the colonial government was 1858. West Bengal State Archives (hereafter WBSA): Criminal Investigation Department, 125/22, 173/22. "List of Political, Quasi-Political and Religious Societies, *Athins, Sabhas, Anjumans*, etc., in Burma for the Year 1920–21," 3.
63. *Miandian yangguang hongshun zongtang baizhounian jinian tekan* (hereafter HST100) [Special Memorial Edition for the 100th Anniversary of Hong Shun Tang in Rangoon, Burma] (Rangoon, 1952), 25. Its registered address in 1920 was 115 Dalhousie Street. WBSA: Criminal Investigation Department, 125/22, 173/22. "List," 3.
64. This temple is also locally known as *Guanyin Ting* (Guanyin Pavilion). *Ting* is a Hokkien word commonly used for temples or cemeteries, and is still widely used in Singapore and Malaysia today. This differentiates it from its Cantonese counterpart, whose formal name is *Guanyin Gumiao* (Guanyin Ancient Temple).

65. Pearn, *History of Rangoon*, 195. However, the actual transaction was perhaps conducted between 1858 and 1859 according to the estimation of the temple committee. Unfortunately, the original documents were lost. *KHK100*, 4.
66. Another version is that Taw Sein Ko, in the capacity of a senior government official, negotiated with the government to make this arrangement on behalf of the Kheng Hock Keong. *KHK100*, 7.
67. For details of this episode, see DeBernardi, *Rites of Belonging,* 141–43.
68. *KHK100*, 20.
69. Wong Yeetuan, "The Big Five Hokkien Families in Penang, 1830s–1890s," *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 1 (2007): 106–15.
70. For example, see Helen Siu, "Recycling Tradition: Culture, History, and Political Economy in the Chrysanthemum Festivals of South China," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 4 (1990): 765–95; Irene Eng and Yi-Min Lin, "Religious Festivities, Communal Rivalry, and Restructuring of Authority Relations in Rural Chaozhou, Southeast China," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 61, no. 4 (2002): 1259–85.
71. DeBernardi, *Rites of Belonging,* 43–52.
72. The Penang Chinese Town Hall essentially took over most of the community responsibilities from Kong Hock Keong since its foundation in the 1870s, under the suggestion of the Chinese and the government.
73. *KHK100*, 20.
74. The Chinese Merited Association was the association for offspring of unions between Hokkien and Burmese. To downplay its racial complexity, the association concentrated on the Buddhist merit-making activities arguably following both Chinese and Burmese traditions. This was best reflected in its English name ("merit") and Chinese name, *Chong Zhu Shenghui* (The Holy Association of Worshiping the *Zhu*—*Zhu* is the ancient Chinese name for India, the birthplace of the Buddhism).
75. Ibid., 19–20.
76. The 19th day of the ninth month is believed to be the day when *Guanyin* attained enlightenment. Together with the day before and the day after, this is a three-day celebration in the Buddhist calendar.
77. *KHK100*, 19–20.
78. Ibid.
79. *Yangguang jiande zongshe 112 zhounian sheqing tekan* (hereafter KT112) [The Special Memorial Edition for the 112th Anniversary of Rangoon Kyan Taik Society Headquarters] (Rangoon, 1955), 7.
80. The Triad also had its regional organization in Yunnan. For a recent study of Yunnanese secret societies before the colonial period, see Ma Jianxiong, "Shaping of the Yunnan-Burma Frontier by Secret Societies since the End of the 17th Century," *Moussons*, 17 (2011): 65–84.

81. *KT112*, 7. Another explanation of this event, from the author's informal conversation with a senior member of the Kyan Taik in 2008, was that Jelutong, Youhua Guan, and the coconut plantation were not actual places but secret codes among its members.
82. Ibid.
83. *KT112*, 17.
84. For the origin of Kyan Taik in Penang, see The Penang Riots 1867 Commission of Enquiry, *Appendices Nos 1–24* (unpublished typescript, the Penang Historical Society, 1955), 20; Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple, *Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple*, *Bestowing Luck & Prosperity on All: Commemorative Publication* (Penang: Areca Books, 2007), 37.
85. The Penang Riots 1867 Commission of Enquiry, *Appendices*, 29.
86. *Maodanmian fujian tongxianghui lueshi* [The Inscription of a Brief History of the Hokkien Association in Moulmein], inside the Kyan Taik Society, Moulmein, date unknown.
87. *HST100*, 21–23.
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93. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 23.
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102. Ibid.
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110. Jiang Kanghu, *Nanyou Huixiangji* [In Retrospect: A Journey to the South] (Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju, 1924), 46.

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112. "Simple but Impressive Funeral," *Rangoon Gazette*, November 12, 1923, 23.
113. Ibid.
114. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 149–54.
115. "Funeral of Tan Boon Tee," *Rangoon Gazette*, August 23, 1909, 3.
116. Yi Li, "Chinese Pandals: Chinese Communities and a Viceroy's Visit to Colonial Burma," *Ex Plus Ultra* 3 (2012), http://explusultra.wun.ac.uk/images/issue3/2012Li.pdf; "Yingyin zhimin shiqi de miandian huaren jiqi zhengzhi canyu" [The Political Participation of Burmese Chinese in Colonial India], *Huaqiao huaren lishi yanjiu* [Overseas Chinese History Studies] 2 (2015): 46–55.
117. For research on the dispute over burial lands in the Straits Settlements, see Brenda S. A. Yeoh, "The Control of 'Sacred' Space: Conflicts Over the Chinese Burial Grounds in Colonial Singapore, 1880–1930," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1991): 282–311.
118. *KHK100*, 16.
119. *Jinian beiji* [The Memorial Inscription], West wall, the Ancient Temple of Guanyin, Rangoon, the fifth year of the Republic of China (1916).
120. For example, the Nyonya cuisine, a mixed Chinese-Malay cooking style developed over the past two centuries, is a well-recognized local culinary tradition and is popular in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia today.
121. The 19th Street has seen a new life as the most popular place for food, drink, and nightlife in Yangon among locals and tourists since 2011. Huang also mentioned that 28th and 29th Streets were Chinese red-light districts until the prohibition of prostitution in 1922, but they remained an entertainment zone renowned for their fine food and drink. In the 1930s, the Rangoon Chinese food business reached its peak, with some restaurants in the present-day Lamadaw area employing waitresses, a rather provocative scene for the conservative Hokkien and Cantonese elders. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 177–82.
122. "Sit Teik Tong 'Yeo' Clan—Opening of New Temple," *Rangoon Gazette*, December 21, 1925, 10.
123. Ibid., 23.
124. Ibid.
125. It was located at the corner of Canal Street and 19th Street, on the floor above the premises of the *Yangguang Ribao*. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 181.
126. For an overview of Chinese guilds, or *huiguan*, see Christine Moll-Murata, "Chinese Guilds from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries: An Overview," *International Review of Social History* 53 (2008): 213–47.

PART 2

Being Burmese Chinese

CHAPTER 4

Merchants of the Empire

Ever since the urban development in the 1850s, Rangoon Chinatown had been the center for Chinese merchants and shops in this colonial state. With the highest density and visibility of Chinese businesses, it was, and continues to be, the best example of Chinese mercantile prosperity in Burma/Myanmar.

This is not a unique phenomenon. Throughout Southeast Asia, Chinese commercial operations have been established over the last two centuries, if not longer. As a visible, intermediary Asian minority in European colonies, the Chinese often represented a commercial community to the local peoples, a layer that separated the colonizer and the colonized. To some extent, this image, based on reality and on narratives, has significantly shaped the uneasy relationships between the Chinese and other local communities that led to serious social and political tensions both in the colonial era and later in newly independent nation-states after WWII.

However, the notion that being Chinese means doing business, and doing well, is particularly strong in Burma. When asked about the characteristics of the Chinese community in Burma as a whole, many elderly Burmese Chinese today, either born in Burma or migrants from China, like to point out that one of the key features to distinguish them from Chinese in other parts in the region is that the Chinese were better-off than other peoples in colonial Burma. According to them, one was more likely to find Chinese bosses and also Chinese workers in other places of this region but not so in colonial Burma. Here, one seldom saw Chinese

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doing menial work, or Chinese beggars. Although there were of course individual exceptions, in general, many Chinese today still believe that their forefathers, at least in the colonial era, were business owners, while Indians and Burmese were more likely to be workers and laborers. Actually, this is one of the major reasons they attribute to their families' decisions to move to Burma instead of some other places in the region with similar conditions and geographically more convenient to reach from their homeland.

This chapter first examines the popular image of Chinese merchants as described in two colonial publications from the early decades of the twentieth century and one popular Rangoon-based English newspaper. Publications and media often functioned as a platform for institutional actors in pursuing their respective agendas, and, in the colonial setting, this was particularly true for merchants and officials who had already been confidently utilizing this publicity machine in the metropole for years. However, narratives from colonial sources did not always match historical facts and contemporary accounts. In the second part of the chapter, some complicated data on Chinese laborers and "coolies," which seems to contradict the commonly held image expressed above, is gathered and analyzed in order to form a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Upon tracing the narratives and realities of both Chinese merchants and laborers, the last section positions itself in a global and imperial context, drawing a comparison with the image of the Indian, the other Asian migrant community in colonial Burma and in British Empire, and explores various colonial, transnational, and community interests behind this image-making process in Burma and beyond.

Present-day Chinese elders' accounts are well supported by colonial government reports. In 1917, in a report from the Irrawaddy District, the emerging rice bowl of the country, a District Superintendent of Police in Pyapon noticed the following situation when investigating "Chinese shops":

> I have spoken with many of these men and nearly all say that they came to Burma penniless and got some job under another Chinamen on very small pay. As soon as they learn Burmese their pay is increased and they save money and start a shop for themselves.[1]

Although he did not specify the regional roots of these shop owners, we can be relatively certain that most of them would be from Hokkien (see Chapter 3). Taking part in the colony's economic boom, Chinese petty traders, shop owners, peddlers, and local representatives for big Chinese firms were soon to be found throughout the Burmese upcountry, and a

widespread network began to develop. A Superintendent of the Excise Department from the same subdivision observed that

> The progressively increasing influx of the Chinese shopkeepers into the districts…is attributable to the migration of the Chinese labour class into Burma… They are sent out all over the villages of the districts as their representative agents to secure the paddy for the various millers and other Chinese traders at Rangoon. They also established themselves as grocers throughout the district and cater for all the commodities required by Burmans for their food.[2]

Two decades later, an ethnic Chinese politician and a delegate representing Burma in 1931 at the Burma Round Table Conference in London summarized that in Burma, "practically, the village is incomplete without a Chinese shop."[3]

The ubiquitous Chinese shops in upcountry and their commercial competency were further confirmed in the oilfields of Yenangyaung in central Burma. In this atypical, industrial location in a largely agricultural country, a Western engineer in 1912 confirmed that "the Chinese storekeeper, similarly, may always be expected to oust the Burman competitor, and so it is at Yenangyaung."[4]

Although most of these petty traders, being at the bottom of the pyramid of the Chinese commercial network, would never be as successful as Lim Chin Tsong or Chan Ma Phee, their very existence nevertheless confirmed the overall and long-lasting image of the Chinese as merchants, best exemplified by a handful of "prominent" figures in popular contemporary publications in the Empire. Behind this well-publicized profile were not only the merchants and officials of the colony but also the Chinese themselves, who eagerly sought an uplifting and positive image in order to obtain social status and recognition. In this regard, the colony's commercial interests and Chinese community institutions worked closely with each other to produce a "commercial race" in colonial Burma. This image has proved so durable that the Chinese in Myanmar today still, habitually and willingly, identify themselves with it.

4.1 Chinese Merchants in Colonial Publications

The relationship between the imperial experience of the British public at home and the Empire's ongoing overseas colonial expansions during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been a subject of recent research.[5] Some argue that popular culture depicting imperial and colonial

affairs and supplying "full and reliable information with reference to the outlying parts of the Empire" encouraged excitement among the British public,[6] a phenomenon reaching all classes that was at its peak at the turn of the twentieth century and lasted at least until WWII.[7] This chapter, using the case of the image of Chinese merchants in Burma, demonstrates that publications on colonial possessions and foreign experiences, whose target readership was British at home and overseas, helped to define and spread the pictures of the imperial landscape and peoples.

While general information could often be gathered from directories about India,[8] textual and visual data on Burma in general, and on the Burmese Chinese, their families, residences, and business premises in particular, is often difficult to come by. To investigate in detail the life of the Chinese merchants in Burma, two British publications are examined here. The first one, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Burma: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources*, published in 1910, was part of a series aimed at providing "a literary survey of the various component parts of the British Empire and of leading countries in which British capital is extensively invested, or in which British political interests centre."[9]The encyclopedia-like *Twentieth Century Impressions* series was published by Lloyd's Great Britain Publishing, Ltd., founded in Australia by Reginald Lloyd in 1900, which later expanded its commercial operations to South Africa.[10] With heavy business investments in several parts of the Empire, the company's publishing project explicitly aimed to widen "public knowledge of the great self-governing colonies…and the vast dependencies which together give such impressiveness to the British Empire…to meet that demand for a comprehensive survey of British possessions beyond the sea." The perspective echoed the Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain's enthusiasm for "knowledge as a factor in the furtherance of Imperial ideals."[11] Starting in 1901 with publications on Western Australia[12] and in 1906 on the Orange River Colony and Natal, the two colonies associated most directly with the company, the publishing company proceeded to publish successive volumes with "full and accurate information regarding the component parts of the Empire."[13]

Arnold Wright, a journalist whose previous employers included the *Times of India* and the *Yorkshire Post* and an experienced traveler in Australia and Asia, was appointed the chief editor for volumes covering "the East": Ceylon (1907), British Malaya (1908), Siam (1908), Hong Kong, Shanghai, and other treaty ports of China (1908), Egypt (1909), Netherlands India (1909), and Burma (1910). In the 1910s, Wright

also edited similar directories on imperial possessions, such as *The Malay Peninsula* (1912) that focused on Singapore, and several volumes on parts of India.[14] During the same decade, the company also published volumes on the Americas,[15] thereby truly encompassing the global reach of the Empire and its far-flung influences.

The series was especially dedicated to "the greatest of Colonial Secretaries and the best business man who has ever figured in the Imperial Government,"[16] as Wright indicated in his first editorial volume for the series, claiming an undisguised imperial orientation. In the meantime, it was a commercial enterprise that "appeal[ed] to the business instincts of communities which are above all things commercial."[17] Although Wright repeatedly cited his professional inspiration from John Stow's survey on London "with patient application and scrupulous regard for accuracy,"[18] accuracy was hardly the highest priority. Wright never denied the profit-making purpose of the series, whose pages were on sale for "the insertion of commercial photographs, and…commercial paragraphs."[19] Naturally, a book of such heavy weight, massive binding, and glazed paper was not everyday reading material for ordinary individuals in the early twentieth century, and the target readership must be those with considerable means and influence, such as businessmen, statesmen, and well-off intellectuals, and privileged groups who also likely had a say on state and commercial issues of the Empire; in other words, the imperial and colonial decision-makers and opinion-makers.

In 1926, the second book under examination, *Who's Who in Burma*, was compiled and published. It was the first work of its kind about Burma. Like the *Twentieth Century Impressions* series, *Who's Who* was a popular title across the Empire, providing classified digests of information about prominent people. The first such volume was published in 1849 by A & C Black, then an Edinburgh-based publishing house. When, in 1926, the first edition of *Who's Who in Burma* was completed, it was a late addition to supply "a longfelt want" in the welcoming word of J. A. Maung Gyi, the Home Minister to the Government of Burma.[20] It compiled a list "of those belonging to contemporary Burma, but is also a mine of information for those who will have to deal with Burma men, in one capacity or another."[21]

It is therefore interesting to examine the Chinese figures depicted in these imperial publishing projects, which would no doubt be circulated and, to a great extent, accepted among readers throughout the Empire. It is important to note the gap between the publishing dates of these

two books, one in 1910 and the other in 1926, two very different stages in colonial Burma's history that were separated by WWI (1914–1918). The 1910 publication introduced the generation of Chinese migrants who were often born in China around the middle of the nineteenth century and benefited from the economic boom in the second half of the century in Burma. The 1926 publication, on the other hand, was the platform for the following generation, who were often the former group's sons, nephews, or younger brothers and were active after WWI but before the Great Depression. In this group, the percentage of Burma-born Chinese had increased, as did non-commercial professionals, which was a natural career alternative for later generations of migrant families with means. Considering the turmoil caused by the war, increasing racial tensions, and the development of nationalist movements in Burma, India, and China, the generation of 1926 displayed a much more diverse profile than their fathers and uncles had. Nonetheless, both books placed emphasis on the mercantile aspect of the Chinese and consistently produced descriptions of an ethnic group with certain features despite the generation gap and slightly different layout.

The other common feature was the active contribution from the subject group to the dominantly European editorial teams. The Chinese touch could easily be spotted in sections that provided an overview of the Chinese and their activities in the colony. Indeed, the editing and compiling of these sections were not possible without sufficient Chinese inputs. The editor of *Who's Who in Burma* himself pointed out that this book

> adopted the policy of personally approaching the subjects themselves and by whom biographical details were supplied, it has only been in exceptional instances where personal interviews were rendered practically impossible owing to distance, persons being on leave, or various other reasons, that liberty was taken to obtain records from other sources.[22]

The compiler's primary source was the Chinese themselves who, upon request, willingly wrote their own biographic paragraphs and, in some cases, attached pictures that pleased themselves the most.

As for the sources of *Impressions of Burma*, no specific approach was mentioned regarding the collection or verification of the data. Nevertheless, its editorial style reflected collaboration between the Chinese portrayed here—often as successful businessmen—and Wright and his editing team. This can be identified through illustrations accompanying the prominent Chinese biographical information. Often, these were large family portraits

including the man (always a man) and his spouses (wives and concubines), his parents, his children, and, if possible, grandchildren; photos of deceased family members, sometimes in the formal costume of Chinese Mandarins even though they were ordinary people in reality; and landscape photos of the family vault, family residences, and business premises. The illustrations of the family vault and deceased parents showed the importance of ancestors in Chinese life, a distinguishing feature that was not to be found often in the sections devoted to their European counterparts.

The biographical texts also give clues to the combined work from the subject and the compiler. The biography, which was supposed to focus on the person in question, often spent more than half of the text describing the experience of the person's father. In the extreme case of Tan Sew Him, for instance, it was only in the last sentence that his name was actually mentioned, among those of other siblings, while the rest of the paragraph was dedicated to his father, Tan Boon Ban.[23] This again showed the unmistakable Chinese attitude toward ancestors. Some paragraphs read more like a Chinese genealogy book than an English commercial encyclopedia. However, it was still an English book, and the inputs from English editors are readily apparent from the inclusion of names and marital status of not only sons but also daughters, the latter of whom, even at that time, were traditionally non-existent in almost every formal Chinese occasion according to strict Chinese gender hierarchy.

Indeed, publishing projects like these were not, and would have been impossible to be, a one-way effort for colonial and imperial interests only, no matter how enthusiastic their intentions were. The Chinese, the subject matter here, duly made their own contributions, not only encouraged by colonial demand but also motivated by their individual needs and community expectations. The image of Chinese presented here, therefore, was deemed to be a mixed product incorporating multiple interests from the very beginning.

4.1.1 Main Chinese Businesses in Burma

After the final annexation in 1886, Burma was governed entirely by a European colonial power and the speed of its integration into the global market accelerated. With rich natural resources to be extracted and frontiers to be opened up, its commercial potential was high enough to attract migrants from all directions, within and outside Burma. The profile of the Chinese merchants, as described in *Who's Who in Burma* and *Impressions of Burma*, certainly reflected contemporary commercial development.

Twenty Chinese people were introduced in *Impressions of Burma* as being "prominent" in Rangoon's social arena. Given the ethnographic distribution of the contemporary population, this was a rather high proportion of coverage for the Chinese as compared to only one Burmese lady (Mah May Hla Oung) and 14 Indians, who jointly represented the non-European sector of notable members in the capital. Although Chinese only made up around 4 percent of Rangoon's population in the 1910s (Table 1.2) and Chinese business was relatively insignificant compared to that of Indians,[24] the omnipresence of commerce in Chinese people's lives was too strong to be ignored. All of these 20 "prominent" Rangoon Chinese, along with a handful of Chinese from other towns, operated impressive enterprises covering a wide range of business from the grocery trade to construction work.

Similarly, in *Who's Who in Burma*, which listed more than 450 entries on colonial notables, the majority of the identifiable Chinese entries (31 out of 42) were involved in commercial activities. Most of them were introduced as "general merchant" or "proprietor"; other popular occupations included "rice miller," "rubber planter," "mine owner," "land owner," and "contractor." At the same time, they were also described as managers, agents, and brokers for large European firms.[25]

Several trades seemed to be particularly favored by the Chinese, such as rice and plantation enterprises, construction work for the Cantonese, and, for those with better command of English, acting as local agents of European companies. One of the most common choices for these Chinese merchants, unsurprisingly, was the rice business. The second half of the nineteenth century saw unprecedented development in Lower Burma from a delta frontier to one of the most productive rice-exporting areas in the world, supplying about 37.5 percent of the world's rice exports in the 1930s.[26] It provided excellent economic and social opportunities to the colonizers (the British), the locals (Burman and other ethnic groups), and immigrants from the west (India)[27] and the east (China), as administrators, laborers, or merchants, all of whom were eager to take their share from the booming delta. Chinese living in the region certainly took part. A contemporary observer noted a typical merchant who "deal[t] largely in rice and paddy, and advances money to cultivators and others. The business is the oldest of its kind owned by a Chinaman, either in Rangoon or Moulmein."[28] Some also became landowners in the delta. Take, for example, the case of Kwai Ba Gyi (Kwai Teong Kee), who was "the only Chinese in Burma at present who owns so many thousands of acres of

paddy land, which are situated in every Kwin and Circle on the Maubin Township, and he is a benefactor to his cultivators."[29]

In the southern region bordering Siam and northern Malaya, for a certain period around the First and Second Anglo-Burmese Wars, the Chinese were said to be involved in the operations of rubber plantations and tin mines. In fact, Chinese had traded local products well before the arrival of the British.[30] According to *Who's Who*, the Chinese still kept a decent share of mining businesses no later than 1926. Among eight Chinese rubber planters, two were from Tavoy, five were from Mergui, and one was from Kyaikto. All three towns were located to the south of Rangoon. Mine owners were also from the south, such as major Tenasserim ports of Mergui, Tavoy, and Moulmein.[31]

Among the Cantonese, construction work was a very common practice, reflecting the high demand for public buildings and infrastructure in the early years of colonial establishment. Some successful Cantonese became head contractors, taking large government assignments in big towns such as Prome and Moulmein.[32] Leong Hain Kee was a contractor in Rangoon, after whom a theater in Rangoon Chinatown was named later[33]:

> In 1875 he came to Rangoon and started business as a contractor. His first work was for the Rangoon Public Works Department, and he afterwards undertook contracts for the municipality and Port Trust. At the present time he employs some two thousand men, and is engaged in carrying out contracts for the railways.[34]

Chinese businessmen took up multiple positions and expanded their operational lines as widely as possible, working for some well-established European and American firms. Through such agency positions, in which considerable administrative and financial autonomy was often allowed, they obtained access to not only capital and products but also to the necessary networks—always key to the success of the business, as we have already seen in the case of Lim Chin Tsong.

A few others attempted to directly compete with Western firms, with limited degrees of success. One example is Tan Lwee:

> [Tan Lwee] finally ran two launches—the *Star of China* and the *New Superintendent* of eighty and one hundred and twenty tons respectively—between Dedaye, Kyaiklat, Pyapon, and Rangoon, until competition from the newly-established Irrawaddy Flotilla Company necessitated their withdrawal.[35]

In addition to these occupations, there were still others that were not often associated with the Chinese in European colonies. For example, Chow Soon Thin, born in Moulmein in 1864 and based in Mandalay, had an assorted business in his long career:

> Started business at Mandalay in 1903, when he opened a Burmese Curio Depot, doing a large business in these curios which he collected from all parts of the country. He is a contractor to the Burma Mines, Railways, and the Smelting Company, now known as the Prome Mines, Ltd., for the supply of food-stuffs, limestone, and in this department employs over five hundred men. Is a commission agent, in which capacity he does a large business in Timber with Jardine Skinner & Co., Calcutta, and Best & Co., and King & Co., Madras. Is also the Managing Agent for the Oo Doung Saw Mill of the Burma Timber Trading Company where some fifty hands are employed under his direction. The other agencies which he controls are The Royal Insurance Company Ltd., The State Assurance Co., Ltd., The Standard Life Assurance Co., etc… He served with Messrs. Thomas Cook & Sons, as Head Accountant, and with the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation Ltd. as Head Book-keeper, prior to the setting up in business for himself. He acquired some oil wells at Yenangyaung and is known as a Twinza. He is also a Dealer in, and Manufacturer of, Burmese wood carvings, silverware, embroidery, Burmese silks and precious stones.[36]

Like their counterparts in other European colonies and Asian ports, successful Chinese businessmen were involved in a wide range of commercial activities and best remembered, thanks to publications like these, for their sharp business senses and adaption to ever-changing local circumstances.

4.1.2 Regional Connections

One of the common features shared by many Burmese Chinese merchants, especially the earlier China-born immigrants, were their previous experience in other colonies in the region, where they had tasted the excitement and bitterness of making a living in an alien land. For example, Peh Beng Teng, a committee member for the 1903 renovation project of the Kheng Hock Keong, was born in Amoy and traveled to Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Chefoo, and Penang from the early age of 13.[37] Chan Ma Phee, the best known Chan clan member in the early decades of the twentieth century, spent two years in the Straits Settlements before moving to Burma.[38] Yeo Cheow Kaw, one of the outstanding members of the Yeo

clan, immigrated to Penang in 1859 to work for a Chinese business for three years before conducting his own business in Rangoon.[39]

These early experiences naturally led to useful personal connections that were nurtured and developed later after immigrants established themselves in Burma. The maritime transportation network in the region, especially among ports with considerable Chinese establishments, was utilized to expand commercial operations based on personal links. Lim Tha Dun, for example, was not only Municipal Commissioner of Moulmein but also an agent for the British Indian Steam Navigation Company handling maritime transportation for Penang, Rangoon, and Siam.[40] One of Lim Chin Tsong's early enterprises, the successful operation of steamships in regional waters, helped to lay the foundations of his extensive business network and remained one of his core businesses throughout his career:

> He chartered a steamer for trade between Penang and Rangoon, and subsequently purchased a steamer for the passenger trade, by which emigration from the congested districts of Southern China to Burma was encouraged. His steamers now ply regularly between Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, Swatow, and Amoy, affecting an exchange of commodities between the Chinese Empire and Burma, whilst a fortnightly direct service is also maintained between Rangoon and Amoy.[41]

Yeo Cheow Kaw, in a similar manner, expanded his network to all the major towns in the region, in and outside Burma. He

> [o]pened branches at Singapore and Penang under the style of Yeo Chip Moh & Co., at Amoy under the style of Chip Kee and Co., at Myingyan, Upper Burma, under the style of Yeo Heng Cheang & Co., at Oktwin, Nyoungchidouk, Kywebwe, under the style of Yeo Chip Moh; and at Gyobingouk and Okpo, under the style of Chip Moh Chan. The firm, who are agents for Wee Bin & Co., ship-owners, employ upwards of forty hands at the Rangoon branch alone.[42]

The strong links between Burma and the rest of the region led to extensive regional social networks, which were most visible through the expanding of clan associations and temples as discussed previously. Furthermore, education, marriage, and other social activities were also, and often, arranged across the region along this line and further enhanced regional connections. Two Hokkien from Mergui, Lim Oo Ghine and Tan Teik Aik,[43] and two sons of Cantonese Leong Hain Kee were educated in Penang's

St. Xavier's School instead of at local schools,[44] such as St. Paul's in Rangoon or St. Patrick's in Moulmein. Given Peh Beng Teng's rich experience in the region, it is not surprising that his eldest son had a Hokkien bride from Penang.[45] Koh Ban Pan, another Rangoon Hokkien and member of the 1903 Kheng Hock Keong renovation project, donated generously to Chinese temples in Penang.[46]

4.1.3 An Affluent and Modern Lifestyle

An accident in Rangoon Chinatown gives us an unlikely glimpse into the prosperity of Chinese businesses of the time. In December 1925, a fire broke out at the corner of Strand Road and Latter Street. A building belonging to Lyan Seng, a general trade company whose business "rang[ed] from rickshaws to dried meat and tinned sardines, cotton, and a variety on oils in drums and tins,"[47] caught fire. The flames engulfed both the shop downstairs and storage space upstairs and caused "loss and damage to the amount of over a lakh of rupees," among which "the stock may have been worth Rs 75,000" alone, and "the insurance on the building and stocks consisted of five policies aggregating Rs 1,20,000."[48] This was the year when 100 baskets of paddy were worth 170 Rupees[49] and the annual salary of a government minister was 60,000 Rupees.[50]

This incident was covered by the *Rangoon Gazette*, a popular English newspaper in Burma. Echoing the institutional agenda of contemporary publications throughout the Empire, the English press in Rangoon maintained heavy commercial and official tones from the very beginning. The *Rangoon Gazette*, established in 1861 by a group of European merchants, was a rival to the existing *Rangoon Times*, established for the European and Eurasian communities shortly after the Second Anglo-Burmese War.[51] The *Rangoon Gazette* maintained a close relationship with the authorities through its chief staff members. John Hannay, the journalist favored by King Mindon, was in charge of the newspaper in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Its coverage of the Third Anglo-Burmese War was so good that it became the main news supplier not only to Indian newspapers and Reuters but also to the colonial government in Rangoon itself.[52] Frank McCarthy further enhanced this government connection. After serving as the editor of the newspaper for more than 30 years, he became the President of the Burma Legislative Council and a member of the Whyte Committee in 1921, which investigated the Reform Scheme for Burma prior to the Diarchy.[53] In 1910, about a dozen English newspapers

were circulating in Burma, at least four of them based in Rangoon,[54] representing the colony's English public voice.

A luxurious lifestyle of Chinese merchants, made possible by successful business operations, found plenty of coverage, often occupying many column inches in the *Rangoon Gazette*, especially in reference to major events, such as weddings and funerals, as we have seen in the case of Lim Chin Tsong. Supplementing successful Chinese merchants' stories in *Impressions of Burma* and *Who's Who in Burma*, this kind of publicity easily attracted the attention of the general public in the English-speaking quarters of the colony.

Furthermore, the Chinese covered in these reports would only be too happy to have such publicity. The Confucian ideology in China persistently defended the superior social status of gentry and put merchants at the bottom of the social scale, according them little prestige. To counteract such exclusion, overseas migrants, often from humble origins and with strong motivations to improve their financial status, turned to the ostentatious display of wealth to gain elite social status.[55] For them, being portrayed in an extravagant way in the colonial media was an ideal platform to show off their material success and to fulfill their desire for recognition.

Many well-off Chinese built impressive villas and gardens in premier locations in Rangoon that were normally reserved for the privileged members of the colony, keeping their distance from their fellows in Chinatown. Chan Ma Phee had two residential premises in Kemmendine and off Loundary Road,[56] and his son Chan Chor Khine lived in "Brightlands" at 44 Park Road.[57]

The most outstanding villa among the Rangoon Chinese was Lim Chin Tsong's Kokine Palace (*Xiede Yuan*) next to Victoria Lake (Inya Lake),[58] an exclusive location in suburban Rangoon. Built largely in a Chinese style, Lim was not satisfied with its limited display of Asian extravagances. One anecdote claims that, on his trip to London, Lim met a newlywed couple, Ernest Procter and his wife Dod,[59] in a restaurant on Tottenham Court Road. Finding out they were painters, he invited them to Rangoon to decorate the walls of his new mansion.[60] Even though the quality of the Procters' fresco on the upper floor of Lim's building was disappointing,[61] there is no doubt that it was an impressive showpiece in the city at the time.

Local-born, English-educated Chinese often sought a modern, Western lifestyle that was deemed suitable for accomplished colonial gentlemen. This indicated their effort to mingle with the colonial mainstream once financial success was secured. Sports and clubs, normally reserved for the

privileged and Western oriented, were their favorite pastimes despite many existing restrictions based on race and class. However, the Chinese, at least portrayed by these publications, were not as unsuccessful as their other non-European counterparts in the *Burmese Days*. Several Chinese developed an interest in horseracing, became the proud owners of thoroughbred horses, and actively participated in competitions. For example, Chow Soon Thin, the Proprietor of the Burmese Curio Depot in Mandalay

> (w)as greatly interested in and promoted racing in Upper Burma. He was Hon. Secy. for the Mandalay Race Club from 1910 to 1919… He now owns a first class breeding farm in C. Road, Mandalay, and has gained the best reputation in Breeding amongst the racing Public, with his English Thoroughbred Horses, Medway; Sampier; Callini, besides other Arabs.[62]

Chow was not alone in engaging in this expensive hobby. In Rangoon, Lim Chin Tsong attended the Horse Show in 1909, was "appointed to act as committee" for the January 1910 show, and was one of the "donors of cups" that year.[63] Lim Chin Tsong must have had a special interest in equestrian sports. After his death, an annual Lim Chin Tsong Challenge Cup of Polo was organized,[64] obviously as a memorial to his contributions to this sport, financially and otherwise.

On the occasion of the 1909 show, Lim was joined by another Hokkien horse owner, Yeo Eng Pwa, who presented the "cup for the special breeding class."[65] In the 1909 racing season alone, several other Rangoon Chinese horse owners were there, including L. Beng Hoe, Tan Toe, Yeo Ba Gywai, Yeo Poon Whet, L. Beng Tee, C. Kyin Chain, L. Taik Kee, and, of course, Lim Chin Tsong, with his horses Red Spec, Melba B., Guideline, and Pure.[66]

The Yeos were remarkably visible in the Rangoon horseracing scene, which was not irrelevant to this clan's successful business in general. In fact, the Yeos were one of the earliest and most important clans among the Hokkien in Rangoon and one of the six founding clans of the Kheng Hock Keong in 1861. The Yeos were not a particularly big clan and their hometown was Ayeo (Xiayang), a small village just outside of Amoy. However, the Ayeo Yeos did quite well overseas and became one of the five big clans in Penang in the nineteenth century, owing partly to their tin business near Phuket.[67] In Rangoon, they founded the Yeo's Sit Teik Tong Clan Association in 1854, just two years after the British annexed Rangoon.[68] Five out of 20 prominent Chinese in Rangoon, as listed in *Impressions of Burma*, were from the Yeo clan. The Yeos also produced

several important figures in the heavyweight local associations, serving as heads or committee members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Educational Association.[69] Although the fortune of the Yeos was in decline around the turn of the twentieth century,[70] still, or perhaps due to the wealth obtained by previous generations, the younger Yeos could afford to maintain luxurious hobbies like horseracing.

It is interesting to note that in *Who's Who in Burma*, the favorite sports claimed by the Chinese were tennis (four times), billiards (three times), football, swimming, hockey, cricket, bridge, chess, boating, walking, and game shooting. All of them were very Western and must have been seen as tasteful and decent in British colonies.[71] One Chinese, a university scholarship holder, proudly stated that he "played football for Lower Burma in 1916, winner of the Principal Cup in the Half Mile Race at the Government High School, Rangoon; Pole Jump at St. Paul's Institute (about 9 ft. 5 ins.)."[72] Amusingly, one can never find any mention of things such as *mah-jong*, a popular four-player Chinese game that was almost always linked with gambling. We may never know how popular *mah-jong* was among these "prominent" Chinese who managed to secure their listing in *Who's Who*, but the omission certainly indicated that this popular Chinese game might not be perceived, by the Chinese, the British, or both, as a proper hobby for a prominent Chinese to present to the colonial public.

Another unavoidable social venue in the colony was the club. Membership in a social club was an important status symbol for the notables listed in *Who's Who in Burma*. There were still no Chinese members in Rangoon's most exclusive gentlemen's clubs such as the Pegu Club and the Gymkhana Club. Among the 13 Chinese who provided their club membership information, five belonged to the Oriental Club and three to the Chinese Merited Association. Other clubs attended by the Chinese included the Golden Valley Club and the Turf Club in Rangoon, and Akyab Club, Mandalay Club, Chinese Club (Mergui), Jail Club (Bassein), Prome Social Club, and Prome Tennis Club in other towns. Except for the Chinese Merited Association, which was actively involved in Rangoon Chinese community activities, no other "[S]ocial Union which is too well known to the Government officials,"[73] as understood by the excise officer in Pyapon (i.e., grassroots community association), was named here. One possible reason could be that these "Social Unions" were not acknowledged as clubs in conformity to the standards used by *Who's Who* and its editing teams. After all, the decision to exclude Chinese community associations from "proper" clubs was perhaps due to the same concern as in the above-mentioned case of *mah-jong*. In order to present a desired

image of the prominent Chinese suitable for the colony, the criteria were consciously adjusted and the content selectively supplied.

Certainly, successful stories were encouraging and the luxurious lifestyle was eye-catching for most readers in the colonies and the metropolis. Examples cited above, trivial and fleeting as they were, were merely a small sample of a much larger picture. But the tone was unmistakable. Reading through and between the lines of *Who's Who in Burma*, *Impressions of Burma*, and other contemporary newspapers and reports, it is impossible to overlook the overwhelming impression of Chinese as the epitome of commercial excellence. This was a message strongly advertised to the colonial public, through certain imperial-oriented publications, to promote a commercially successful ethnic community in a colonial economy. It received considerable co-operation from the subject group, as the Chinese merchants were very happy to be seen in this way, by complying with suitable and selective information.

In some extreme cases, the Chinese even seized the opportunity offered by these publicity channels to maximize their own business profits. For Aw Boon Haw, the Rangoon-born owner of the Tiger Balm, *Who's Who* not only printed a half-page advertisement for the Tiger Balm but also ran a personal campaign on Aw's philanthropic works mixed with commercial promotions, claiming that "during the past three years he has repatriated 784 aged people at his own expense, not only paying their passage but giving each one ten dollars and some Tiger Balm."[74] Here, as in many similar cases examined so far, it was hard to neatly differentiate between the colonial and Chinese interests. It suffices to say that presenting an image of the successful Chinese merchant was a joint project that benefitted many stakeholders in this colonial state.

4.2 The "Short-sleeves" Chinese

The English publications, the opinion-makers of the general English public in the colonial era, as well as the Chinese elders today in Yangon have no hesitation to present and emphasize an image of the Chinese as a real "commercial race." However, it is not difficult to dig out the other side of the story. In fact, it is too obvious to ignore because that comes from the popular nicknames for the Chinese in the Burmese language. The Chinese, as known by the ordinary Burmese, were commonly categorized into two groups, the *leq-she* (long-sleeves) and the *leq-to* (short-sleeves). These terms came from the typical outfit of the Burmese Chinese, the

former referred to the merchants, shop assistants, and other clerks who had to wear jackets with long sleeves, mostly Hokkien, while the latter referred to the simpler clothes convenient for outdoor workers, such as carpenters and builders, often Cantonese.[75] In fact, these two words became the defining feature of the two Chinese groups, so much so that in the 1930s, one Cantonese boy in the delta was asked by his primary school teacher to compare his arms (*leq* also means arms) with those of his Indian, Karen, and Burmese classmates. To everyone's disappointment, they found that this Chinese boy's arms were not particularly longer or shorter than theirs.[76]

If an ordinary Burmese schoolboy knew the difference between "long-sleeves" and "short-sleeves" Chinese, obviously there were a large number of Chinese laborers in the colony, as many perhaps as that of merchants. This should have been common knowledge in the colony, contradicting the popular image of Chinese as merchants. Contemporary census data indeed verified this distribution of labor, with the percentage of Chinese "traders and merchants" (41 percent) plus "clerical workers" (5 percent) almost equal to that of Chinese "carpenters and workers" (38 percent) and "semi-skilled workers" (9 percent) combined in Burma in 1931.[77]

Other sources support a diversified job profile with more details. In the Chinese community of Tavoy, it was believed that the earliest local association, the Xiangshan Association, was organized by the Cantonese from Xiangshan (Zhongshan) County who worked in nearby mines.[78] Maingy, the first Commissioner of Tenasserim in 1825, remembered how Low Ah Chong, probably a Cantonese, claimed "he would form a labour gang out of one thousand Melakan Chinese to work tin-mines in Tavoy."[79] This practice was resumed after the British completed the final annexation in 1886. In 1888, a surveyor from Calcutta and a revenue officer from Rangoon were sent to Perak in Malaya to study the local tin mines worked by Chinese labor "with a view to the adoption of similar labour in the development of tin resources in Tenasserim."[80]

To prepare for the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852, British forces arranged in advance to make sure that "timber, mats, etc. for the construction of temporary barracks were prepared by Chinese carpenters at Moulmein to be taken to Rangoon in due course."[81] The father of U Shwe I, a Chinese pearl trader in Mergui, was one of the Chinese pilots on the boats that shipped British soldiers from Penang to Burma during the war.[82]

Chinese construction workers, especially carpenters, were to be found consistently in colonial reports ever after[83]; and the quality of their work

was well known among the British. Contemporary daily wages were three-quarters a Rupee for ordinary Burmese carpenters, one to one and one-quarter Rupees for better workmen, and one and one-half Rupees for Chinese carpenters.[84] In the oilfields of Yenangyaung in 1921, Chinese carpenters "dr[e]w bigger wages and d[id] vastly better work than the Burmese. The latter cannot understand why a bungalow should be built with any more care than a derrick."[85]

In 1924, a workshop was built in the Government Timber Depot in Ahlone, west of central Rangoon, where many timber factories, saw mills, and Cantonese households were located. It eventually became a showroom to "increase the use of Burma hardwoods in a number of different industries."[86] This project was under the technical direction of a British expert, Mr. Cogger, who had worked with a number of Chinese carpenters. "The work already turned out by the carpenters under his direction is of a distinctly higher class than anything of its kind hitherto manufactured in Burma,"[87] which perhaps explained their higher salaries and their popularity and wide participation in the construction sites of Burmese public works.

Although the report did not specify the origin of the Chinese working in the workshop, based on the common opinion of the community, the most renowned carpenters in Burma would have come from Xinning (Taishan) County in southern Guangdong, a relatively poor, mountainous area in the otherwise affluent Pearl River Delta and home to the majority of Chinese immigrants in the USA and Australia in the nineteenth century. In fact, the existence of (Cantonese) Chinese carpenters and their skills had been well recognized by the British governments throughout this region. In Penang, two Cantonese carpenters' guilds, both worshipping Lu Ban, the patron saint of Chinese carpenters, were established in 1855 and 1884, respectively,[88] but their skills must had been well known long before that. In a widely circulated story, one legendary Chow Ah Chey, a Cantonese carpenter from Penang, was said to be among the followers of Raffles when he first landed in Singapore in 1819 and became an early leader of the Cantonese community there.[89] On the other side of the Bay of Bengal, *The Calcutta Review* in 1858 reported that "ship-carpenters" formed a considerable part of the tiny "Chinese colony" in central Calcutta.[90] Following these precedents, the Cantonese were also the major force in construction sites in Burma. They often worked for government projects on public infrastructure, such as public buildings, markets, and railway stations (if not the rails) in towns and villages all over Burma. Cantonese associations were widely spread, often in seemingly unlikely

locations that had little Chinese connection otherwise. That was partly due to the Cantonese who followed the extension of rail lines to many *Shanba* places in eastern and northern Burma. This could also explain the existence of many construction-related occupational associations in the Chinese community, mostly dominated by the Cantonese. In Rangoon alone, there were at least three occupational associations related to construction work: Lu Shain Hong, Lee Shain Hong, and Jing De Hang, all of which worshipped the Chinese deities Lu Ban (like their counterparts in Penang) or Jing De, the latter being the patron saint of blacksmiths. All three associations were located in the northern, Cantonese, section of Chinatown and, without exception, were dominated by Cantonese management and members.

In addition to skilled or unskilled workers, other Chinese worked as peasants and farmers throughout the colonial period. According to a Japanese source in 1944, 23.3 percent of the Chinese in Burma were working in the agricultural and farming industries.[91] Chinese butchers were found in cities, perhaps as early as the late eighteenth century.[92] In the 1830s, less than a decade after the British annexation of Tenasserim, a visiting American missionary heard about 500 Chinese living near Moulmein.[93] Local Chinese believed they were the early settlers in the suburb of Moulmein who grew vegetables and fruits in a place called *Taung-waing* ("hill-circle" in Burmese, its Chinese name is *Lingding*).[94] Similarly, another group of Hokkien farmers raised pigs and produced vegetables for the needs of city dwellers in Rangoon. They were concentrated in the northern suburb and built their own temple, the Fushan Si, in 1874.[95]

In the contemporary publication with commercial interests, this dimension was deliberately overlooked. *Who's Who in Burma* listed several Chinese from the south who were owners of mines and rubber plantations, as mentioned above, but failed to mention that there could also be Chinese working in the tin mines and plantations, not as bosses or managers but in menial labor. The achievements of the Cantonese contractors were impressive, such as Leong Hain Kee in Rangoon from *Impressions of Burma*, who "employs some two thousand men" to carry out large-scale public works.[96] However, among these 2000 men, if one looks in other sources beyond the colonial publications, perhaps the majority in the early days were (Cantonese) Chinese carpenters, blacksmiths, and occasionally brick masons.[97]

If the ordinary Burmese schoolchildren understood the existence of multiple facets within the Chinese workforce, there was no reason that their English contemporaries and the Chinese themselves would forget this.

However, the production of a particular image for an ethnic community, through a colonial publication, was itself a selective process based on certain interests of the publishing personnel and many parties involved. It showcased institutional necessities of the colonial state and its agents, not excluding the Chinese elites themselves. Through this process, some aspects of the subject community were quietly downplayed, while others were emphasized, and leave us today with an overwhelming image of a commercially successful ethnic group in the colonial media and in public memories alike even though contradicting information is easy to obtain.

4.3 Merchants of the Empire?

In the West, the image of China and the Chinese underwent a long evolutionary process. Colin Mackerras argues that the essential turning point of this process was between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Western powers reached Asian coasts and islands seeking economic profits and territorial expansions; the Middle Kingdom, on the contrary, passed its zenith under the Qing monarchs. Several awkward encounters eventually led to a direct confrontation between these two powers. The old image of China, brought to Europe and which became predominant as a moral and material model up until the Jesuit missionaries in the mid-eighteenth century, was challenged, negotiated, and revised under the global expansion of imperialism. Eventually, it gave way to a new impression of despotism and irrationality. The latter sharply contrasted with that of its contemporary rival, the West, which was presented as being equipped with enlightened philosophies and advanced technologies.[98]

4.3.1 Presenting the Chinese in an Imperial World

In her recent work on Sino-Western interactions, Ulrike Hillemann explores the formation of the knowledge of China and the Chinese by the British Empire in the building-up to the Opium War, with attention to European colonies in Southeast Asia.[99] According to Hillemann, the knowledge of China and the Chinese was obtained, transformed, and propagated via several key "contact zones" both in peripheries and in the metropole. The British experience in Southeast Asia, one of her proposed peripheral contact zones, was as determinative as that of the British embassies to Beijing and the East India Company's Canton factories. Taking a closer look at this building-up process, Hillemann traces it to the contemporary imperial

interests in the region in the form of colonial commercial and territorial expansion and Christian missionaries.

British experiences with China and the Chinese in Southeast Asia were quite different from those that occurred within China itself. On the one hand, the Chinese in this area were not under the strict control imposed by the Qing government, which often restricted individual mobility and hurt those with commercial aspirations. Instead, the Chinese outside of the Qing territory could adjust themselves promptly in order to maximize their welfare, often via commercial approaches. In the meantime, without state backing, they were not seen as direct competitors to British imperial interests. Therefore, this location provided a unique ground to create the desired Chinese subject under British or Western rules.[100]

A few characteristics of the Chinese were singled out and repeatedly mentioned and reinforced in the later period, illustrated by terms like "industrious," "hard-working," and "commercially skilled." These were well accepted as desirable traits of the Chinese and seen as the secret to Chinese success in general. It was not difficult to find convincing examples in Burma under the colonial gaze through the eyes and pens of editors, journalists, and officials.

For instance, the works of Kyan Swee Lone, a Canton-born carpenter who arrived in Rangoon in 1889, were described as "undertak[ing] the erection of some of the most important buildings in and around Prome, among others were the barracks, the schools, and the hospitals at Prome, as well as many bridges."[101] His career "furnishes an excellent example of what can be accomplished in the commercial world by dint of industry and application."[102] Leong Chye, also Canton-born, came to Moulmein to join his uncle at the age of 16 and became a local notable "due to industry and enterprise, and a careful regard for details."[103] Business aside, Chinese taking up other professions shared this same quality. Among the Chinese head clerks in Yenangyaung, they were "generally a conspicuous success, owing to their honesty, thoroughness, and capacity for hard work."[104]

At the same time, the closeness of the Chinese community was also mentioned as a great advantage. An excise officer in Pyapon observed that

> The Chinese as a race are clannish to their following particularly to these that belong to the same Social Union which is too well known to the Government officials. The elders find immediate employment to the new comers who in turn extend the same advantages to others as they find themselves in solvent circumstances.[105]

As understood by these officials, the Chinese possessed "the single object of making money"[106] and were determined to accomplish it without deviation or hesitation. For example, the Chinese were quick language learners because "(a)s soon as they learn Burmese their pay is increased."[107] As a whole,

> the Chinese are a commercial race and by their clannishness and philanthropic considerations for their labourers gain the confidence of their elders by their zeal and honesty and in a very short space of time are entrusted with responsible posts of trust… They are in fact a thoroughly organised class of traders with no scruples and with the single object of making money.[108]

All these proved to be a particularly useful set of skills for the Empire and its colonies, which were in need of versatile but obedient laborers and commercial personnel. As a comparatively late entry into the British colonial world in the East, Burma in the early twentieth century was heavily influenced by the prevailing discourse advocated in other parts of the Empire and easily took up the image of ethnic Chinese presented earlier.

However, in Burma, this image had a slightly different variation, with more emphasis placed on commercial skills than on hard labor. Thus, we see the general absence of Cantonese laborers and workers in the public perspective even though their existence was substantial. What is more, the long-established seasonal workers from Yunnan, who worked in jade, ruby, and other precious stone mines in the border areas, were hardly mentioned at all.

In the context of Burma, it was the commercial skills and financial achievements of the Chinese that highlighted colonial knowledge. First of all, to promote the commercial success of the Burmese Chinese did not bring substantial threats to the Empire, unlike the case in the Dutch East Indies. The difficulties in dealing with the Chinese in the East Indies, and consequently the different image of the Chinese produced by the Dutch, were partly based on land ownership.[109] The Chinese in Java were certainly more numerous and had a longer history and more resources than their counterparts in Burma. They were seen as real threats to both the Dutch and the Javanese because of their access to the ownership of very considerable amounts of land, which entitled them to be not only merchants and dealers but also, more importantly, landowners. The threat was taken seriously and was decisive in Dutch policy and Dutch knowledge regarding the Chinese. However, in Burma, the Chinese were relatively insignificant in number and lived under many restrictions despite individuals being described as

landowners or property owners in both rural and urban areas.[110] In the Burmese Chinese community today, a popular anecdote of Chan Ma Phee, "probably the largest property owner in the Chinese community,"[111] states that Chan once owned 99 properties in Rangoon. Why 99? Many explain that the Chinese, being foreigners in colonial times, were not allowed to own more than 100 properties according to the government regulation, even though Chan Ma Phee could well afford his 100th property and many more.[112] Certainly, here the number 99 is a typical Chinese customary term to symbolize a large quantity instead of an accurate figure, but the limitation on land ownership should not be taken as merely imaginary.

With the assurance that no real harm would be done, the colonial interests, especially the commercial institutions and their agents, knew they could safely promote the positive, mercantile side of the Chinese. The image of commercially successful Chinese supplemented and reinforced the Chinese characteristics of industriousness. Almost without exception, the Chinese rags-to-riches stories started with astonishing poverty. It was exactly because the protagonist possessed and exerted his characteristic feature of being industrious and hard-working, plus the opportunities that could only be found in a new colony like Burma, that he succeeded and eventually earned both wealth and respect.

Such a story surely exemplified a preferred image of the colonial society that was undergoing rapid economic development and radical political changes with non-existent or dismantled traditional hierarchies.[113] It assured the abundance of social mobility and commercial opportunities, as well as competition. Hence, it was a perfect place for a determined person with ability, regardless of his race, origin, or education. Under this rationality, colonial Burma was an ideal place for the ambitious and diligent. The Chinese, who were understood to possess such features, grasped the opportunities as much as they could and no wonder became ideal British subjects welcomed as the merchants of the Empire.

4.3.2 Indian Versus Chinese

A police superintendent in the delta area once observed that "there is no doubt that the Burman and even the Indian cannot compete with the Chinese shop keeper."[114] This prompts an interesting comparison between two most important Asian migrant communities in the British Empire. It seemed inevitable that a choice, or at least some priorities, had to be made when these two images of the Chinese and Indian, which were

both constructed under conditions of imperial necessity, came to share a common space. This was exactly the case of colonial Burma, where Indians and Chinese lived and worked in the same place; in the case of central Rangoon, they were juxtaposed, literally, side by side in the India-town and Chinatown, respectively.[115] Who would be the face of the idealized laborers and who would present the model merchants?

Throughout the British Empire, Indians were widely seen both as laborers and merchants who made significant contributions to the empire-building project. The images of Indian laborers, along with Indian merchants, must have been developed along a similar, if not identical, path as that of their Chinese counterparts.[116] The balance, however, was perhaps most influenced by the demography of Burma. Unlike other trading ports in Southeast and East Asia, Rangoon was an Indian-majority rather than a Chinese-majority city. Burma had been administered as a province of British India until 1937 and the government attached more significance to its Indian subjects than to the Chinese. As discussed before, from the beginning of the twentieth century, Indians became the most populous ethnic group in Rangoon.

Reflecting today, one tends to find that Indians continued to be referred to as the main labor force and are remembered most significantly for several community and inter-racial riots that significantly influenced the history of Burma.[117] This was certainly related to the strong existence of Indian laborers in Burma compared to other British colonies. Although Indian merchants, soldiers, and officials were found in many other British colonies, Burma, being a province of the British Indian Empire and sharing a long overland border and convenient sea routes crossing the Bay of Bengal, was an ideal destination. If one compares the situation between Burma and British Malaya, which also received Chinese and Indian migrants, it was clear that in Malaya, despite Indian immigration, the workforce was mainly Chinese.[118] For impoverished Indians from the Coromandel Coast and along the Bay of Bengal, Burma probably represented the lowest cost, the best economic return, and the easiest journey.[119] It was geographically close; administratively, it remained within British India, at least until 1937, reducing the legal obstacles to migration. One could imagine that the Government of India would have also welcomed emigration as a means to relieve pressure from a large population often plagued by disasters and poverty.

On the commercial front, both the Chinese and the Indians produced some impressive examples contending for the image of the model merchants of the British Raj. Once again, numbers were important. The high

percentage of Indian business in the section of "Commercial Oriental" in *Impressions of Burma*, for example, sufficiently demonstrated Indian commercial dominance. In fact, the visibility of Indians at all levels was so overwhelming that it often obscured the presence of their Chinese counterparts. The most obvious example was the Chettiar from southern India. The negative image of this affluent group of Indian merchants, partly due to the development of Burmese nationalism in the later years of colonial rule, became the most representative face of the greedy moneylender in Burma.[120] Research then and now shows that their contemporary Burmese, Chinese, and non-Chettiar Indian counterparts were often overlooked, even though in some cases their impacts were no less than that of the Chettiar.[121] In the business of money lending, the Chinese were not outsiders at all. Chinese pawnshops, often run by the Cantonese, could be found in many urban and rural areas, and their customers were not confined to ethnic Chinese. What was more, one of the major credits available for the Burmese rice industry was from the Chinese shop owners, who often simultaneously acted as moneylenders, rice brokers, and mill agents throughout the upcountry and towns, especially in rice-producing areas. The Chinese shop owners, ubiquitous in the Burmese rural landscape, offered loans to Burmese cultivators in the form of goods or seeds and gathered the crops at harvest time, earning considerable profits with a lower price agreed to beforehand.[122] Contemporary observers, researchers, and the Chinese community itself all had accounts of this common practice. This, however, was completely overshadowed by the alleged dominance of the Chettiar.

If Indian merchants were indeed more influential and powerful than their Chinese counterparts in every aspect, their perceived image in Burma tended to focus on often negative features, and they were inevitably associated with colonialism and capitalism as the direct consequence and most identifiable face of British rule. The Chinese, despite, or perhaps because of, their small numbers and limited capacity, managed to find a small leeway in colonial discourse and present an image that was commercial but in a less threatening way.

4.3.3 Chinese Internalization

Local Chinese with financial and social means made conscious input to the advocacy of certain images through publications and were assisted by the demographic composition of Burma. Furthermore, they also received

support from the general public of the Chinese community who eagerly disseminated and internalized this image. Another unexpected source of influence came from opinions within China, which had a very different agenda but, nonetheless, endorsed an image of Chinese as being industrious, hard-working, and commercially skilled, and compared favorably to the Indian.

A travelogue written by a Chinese visitor in the 1920s illustrates a middle-class, intellectual Chinese perspective on the conditions of Indian laborers and merchants in Rangoon. Even though the motivation of this Chinese reformer, intellectual, and educator was purely based on the contemporary political crisis and anti-colonial sentiment in China, the discourse he adopted incidentally echoed that of the colonial regime he was mostly opposed to and is almost identical to the accounts from the Chinese elders in Yangon today, showing how strong and deep-rooted this impression has been.

Jiang Kanghu visited Rangoon in the winter of 1923–1924.[123] This was part of his three-month Southeast Asian trip to Singapore, Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur, Klang, Penang, Rangoon, Bangkok, Saigon, and Manila. Upon returning to Shanghai, Jiang published a travelogue, *Nanyou huixiangji* (In Retrospect: A Journey to the South), introducing his trip to Chinese readers. During his journey, he visited local Chinese communities in each location, with special interest paid to Chinese newspapers and schools. He stayed in Rangoon for seven days and spent the New Year of 1924 there. The impression he obtained was brief and superficial, and further confusing his impressions was the fact that Jiang was hosted by a group of like-minded visiting Chinese or Burmese Chinese intellectual friends, and he was inevitably influenced by their views. As a Chinese intellectual who was deeply concerned with imperial threat in China, the experience in European colonies in Southeast Asia provided the best negative example to educate and alert the Chinese public back home. In a section titled "Indian coolies," he observed that

> Chinese are to be found everywhere in Malaya, some of them are coolies from Fujian and Guangdong. However, this is not the case in Burma. The Chinese here only trade, they are not laborers; all the coolies are from India. There are more Indian than Chinese, and their living standard is lower than that of the Chinese. The Indians are tough and hardworking, which is admirable but also pitiful. They eat twice a day, only beans, rice is rare, meat is almost non-existent; a long shawl for men; and some wrapping cloth for women, nothing else. Taking sky as the roof and ground as the bed, they sit and sleep on

> streets. Their everyday life is almost beneath the level of human being's. Sigh! Five-thousand-year's civilisation, 350 million population, descendants of the Buddha, how does this come into being? There are many castes, languages, characters and physical features among the Indians. One group has a high cheekbone and pointed chin, and is thin. They take menial jobs, humble, cautious, and obedient, often die of malnutrition. Their womenfolk and children are even more waned and lifeless. Another group has square face and elongated ear, like the statue of the Maitreya Buddha. They are specialised at money exchange, precious stone trade, and high interest earning, having many tricks and are good at accumulating wealth. Round faced with a look of rich men, they like to decorate themselves. Men always wear golden beads. As for women, they wear earrings, nose rings, (finger) rings, bracelets for foot and hand, and necklace, all over their body, as heavy as armoury. Their skin is dark, but facial features are delicate, and they particularly like to wear perfume. These women are not openly social. When they meet strangers, they are shy and uneasy, like maids from hinterland in our country.[124]

The impression obtained by this visiting Chinese over Indian in Rangoon was understandably partial, although the two groups discussed here, the workers in Rangoon and the moneylenders (almost certainly the Chettiar), were rather accurate and no doubt derived from his personal encounters. Based in Shanghai at that time, Jiang would not be unfamiliar with Indians, but the sheer number he saw in Rangoon must still have been a shock. His brief visit meant he had to overlook many subtle dynamics of ethnicity, power, and commerce in the colony. However, as an influential writer, his travelogue had considerable impact on domestic Chinese readers and general opinions of the Chinese society, which would have increasing influence on overseas Chinese communities, too, as the twentieth century progressed. The detailed descriptions of Indian laborers and merchants, even though they were eyewitness accounts, fit so well to the colonial discourse and Chinese perception, which, by then, had been almost one and the same. In the particular case of Jiang, it could be a mixture of traditional Chinese prejudice against non-Chinese, the borrowing (or repeating) of prevailing opinions among the Chinese in Rangoon, the Chinese impression of Indians in contemporary Chinese treaty ports, and the unconscious impact of the British imperial discourse.

The presentation of non-laboring Chinese was deeply internalized by the subject community itself in the early decades of the twentieth century, and a dispute over rickshaw pullers in the Rangoon Chinese community is most telling. Rickshaws were seen on the Rangoon streets before the turn of the twentieth century, perhaps introduced by the Chinese from Malaya.

At the beginning, Rangoon rickshaw pullers were Chinese from Xinghua County, a poor region in Fujian just north of the core Hokkien-dialect area. However, the Chinese public view was opposed to this occupation because it was "shameful for human beings to carry other human beings."[125] Some Chinese expressed their disapproval by "throwing stones [at the rickshaw pullers] to show their objections."[126] As a result, Xinghua natives were forced to stop working as rickshaw pullers in Burma. Predictably, "the ubiquitous rickshaw pullers were totally of Indian stock."[127] This was a stark contrast to almost all other parts of Southeast Asia, where rickshaw pulling remained firmly in the hands of the Xinghua natives, who, as late-comers to the region, had no choice but to take the only available, though less desirable, job at that time.[128]

What is striking here is not the fact that Chinese might take up menial jobs, but the community's very denial of their existence. It shows the surprisingly wide acceptance of this image, if originally fabricated and propagated by the colonial institutions, among the community itself, which was reluctant to rectify this image when temporary violations occurred. It seems that the image of the Chinese as the merchant of the Empire had been fully internalized to such a level that it became unthinkable for this image to be disrupted. In this case, the community institution and its agents from within, not only representing a handful of commercial elites but also the general public, were determined to ensure conformity with the pre-defined image.

Parallel to the rickshaw dispute is the successful story among the Rangoon Chinese of a rickshaw shop on 16th Street, established and managed by a Chinese who arrived in Burma from Penang on a junk boat in 1880. In a narrative echoed in *Impressions of Burma* and *Who's Who in Burma*, this became yet another example of a Chinese business development going from strength to strength and ended up with stocks of up to 1000 rickshaws with branches in Bassein and Prome in Burma, and Madras in India,[129] a more conventional ending, well expected and comfortably received by both British and Chinese readers alike.

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Starting from colonial commercial directories and popular publications of the time, this chapter traces the development and dissemination of the image of Chinese as merchants of the Empire in colonial Burma. Although the creation of successful Chinese merchants as preferred colonial subjects began far away from the land of Burma and long before the establishment of British Burma, the twists and turns of this image in the context of

Burma, a late entry to the British colonial world, were made possible by joint efforts from colonial commercial and official interests, the Chinese community, including its elites, and transnational Chinese influences. In particular, due to Burma's special geographic and demographic position, the discourse of its Chinese merchants and laborers was further complicated and supplemented by that of their Indian counterparts.

Notes

1. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
2. Ibid.
3. Burma Round Table Conference, *Proceedings of the Committee of the Whole Conference* (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office 1932), 48. Hoe Kim Seing, December 10, 1931.
4. A. M. Finlayson, "Labour on the Burmese Oilfields," *The Mining Magazine* VI (1912): 137–40.
5. For the impact of imperial culture on metropolitan and colonized societies, see the Series of Studies in Imperialism by the Manchester University Press.
6. Arnold Wright, ed., *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Co., 1908), 9.
7. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 1–16.
8. For instance, *The Cyclopaedia of India: Biographical, Historical, Administrative, Commercial* (Calcutta: Cyclopaedia Pub. Co., 1907–1909) contains several sections on Burma.
9. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 9.
10. Arnold Wright, ed., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Co., 1907), 315–17.
11. Ibid.
12. The first volume of the series, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia,* was published in Perth by P. W. H. Thiel & Co., a business associate of Reginald Lloyds since 1900. *Impressions of Ceylon*, 315.
13. Wright, *Impressions of Ceylon*, 315–17.
14. Books on India were produced in collaboration between Wright and Somerset Playne, a former manager of Lloyd's Great Britain in Ceylon, thus partly explaining the consistent style as in the *Twentieth Century Impressions* series. For more about Wright and the series, see Robert Bickers, ed., *Introduction to Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the Seas* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–7.
15. It published volumes on Argentina (1911), Uruguay (1912), Brazil (1913), Cuba (1913), the West Indies (1914), and Chile (1915), sometimes with editions in both English and local languages (Spanish or

Portuguese). Bickers, Introduction, 5–7; W.S.B., "Review: Brazil," *The Geographical Journal* 43, no. 1 (1914): 75–76.
16. Wright, *Impressions of Ceylon*, 315–17.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. W. S. B., "Review: Brazil."
20. J. A. Maung Gyi, Foreword to *Who's Who*.
21. Ibid.
22. Preface to *Who's Who*.
23. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 326.
24. In the same chapter about Rangoon, there is a section of "Commercial Oriental" for non-European business, which was dominated by Indian merchants and only a few Chinese companies were mentioned.
25. For example, the British India Steam Navigation Company, the Burmah Oil Company, Messrs Steel Brothers Ltd., and the Arracan Co.
26. Cheng, *Rice Industry*, 206.
27. For details on Indian laborers in the rice-producing area in Burma, see Adas, *The Burma Delta*.
28. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 383.
29. *Who's Who*, 87.
30. For example, in the first half of the nineteenth century, birds' nests, tin, and fish trading were traded by the Chinese in Mergui and Tavoy. Charney, "Esculent Bird's Nest."
31. *Who's Who*.
32. Ibid., 382–83 and 403.
33. This theatre, made of wood and located on the northern (Cantonese) part of 17th Street, was destroyed by a big fire in the early twentieth century. It remained a favorite topic of teatime Chinese gossip for decades afterward. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 29–31.
34. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 312–13.
35. Ibid., 314.
36. Ibid., 224.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 310.
39. Ibid., 312.
40. *Who's Who*, 246.
41. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 309.
42. Ibid., 317.
43. *Who's Who*, 4 and 78.
44. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 312.
45. Ibid., 314.
46. Ibid., 316.

47. "Disastrous Fire in Chinatown," *Rangoon Gazette*, December 28, 1925, 18.
48. Ibid.
49. Cheng, *Rice Industry*, 44; price as in 1928.
50. BL: India Office Records (hereafter IOR), V/9, Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma 1897–1922; Burma Legislative Council Proceedings 1923–1936. March 18, 1926.
51. Pearn, *History of Rangoon*, 205.
52. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 132–39.
53. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, Taw Sein Ko, February 27, 1924.
54. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 132–39.
55. Glen Peterson, "Overseas Chinese and Merchant Philanthropy in China: From Culturalism to Nationalism," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 1, no. 1 (2005): 87–109.
56. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 308.
57. *Who's Who*, 54.
58. *Xiede* was also the name of Lim's flagship trading company. In 2014, Myanmar's Ministry of Culture announced it would grant this building heritage status.
59. Specialized in portraiture, Ernest (1886–1935) and Dod (1892–1972) Procters' work can be found in the National Portrait Gallery and Tate Britain in London today.
60. Maurice Collis, *Trials in Burma* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1928), 34.
61. Ibid. Comment made by an English visitor a few years after Lim's death.
62. *Who's Who*, 224.
63. "Rangoon Horse Show," *Rangoon Gazette*, November 22, 1909, 16.
64. *Rangoon Gazette*, January 5, 1925.
65. "Rangoon Horse Show," *Rangoon Gazette*, November 22, 1909, 16.
66. *Rangoon Gazette*, August 30, 1909; September 27, 1909; October 11, 1909; November 8, 1909.
67. Wong, "The Big Five Hokkien Families."
68. Memorial Tablet, Sit Teik Tong, Rangoon, December 1924 (English version); *Xinjian yangguang zhidetang ji shitou gongsi beiji* [The Inscription of the Newly-built Sit Teik Tong alias *Shitou* Company in Rangoon], Rangoon, the thirteenth year of the reign of the Republic of China (1924) (Chinese version).
69. Yeo Cheow Kaw was the head of the Educational Association, as well as a Taotai of Red Button, a middle-level official in the Qing officialdom. Yeo Choo Sum was the chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 312 and 315.
70. Yeo's biggest commercial operation, at the corner of Strand Road and Latter Street, was arguably taken over by Chan Ma Phee.

71. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 273–78.
72. *Who's Who*, 20.
73. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
74. *Who's Who*, 93.
75. Chen, "Cantonese in Burma," 110–11. However, there is another explanation: the *leq-she* is for the outdoor workers (the Cantonese), who have to wear long sleeves as a protection from the sun, and the *leq-to* is for the indoor clerks (the Hokkien), who wear minimum clothes to keep cool in a tropic country. The author thanks several Burmese friends in Singapore for pointing this out.
76. Chen, "Cantonese in Burma," 111.
77. Census in 1931, quoted in Purcell, *Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 45.
78. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 497. Huang also mentioned that the recruitment of miners for tungsten mines in Mergui was first conducted by the Dutch.
79. Straits Settlements Records, K–17, 41, quoted in Charney, "Esculent Bird's Nest."
80. "Geographical Survey of India in Burma," *Indian Engineering*, December 1, 1888, 423.
81. Pearn, *History of Rangoon*, 170.
82. Walter Grainge White, *The Sea Gypsies of Malaya: An Account of the Nomadic Mawken People of the Mergui Archipelago, with a Description of their Ways of Living, Customs, Habits, Boats, Occupations &c.* (London: Seeley, Service, 1922), 67.
83. Among the local Chinese, some believe that as early as 1604, the British started to build shipyards in Syriam (Thanlyin) and Dalla, both near Rangoon, and the demand for carpenters and wood-craftsmen was high. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 497. This date corresponds to the control of Syriam by the Portuguese adventurer Filipe de Brito e Nicote, but no reliable sources are available to verify Chinese labor involvement with de Brito.
84. Purcell, *Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 68.
85. Finlayson, "Labour on the Burmese Oilfields," 138.
86. BL: IOR, V/24/1397, Forest Department, Report on Forest Administration in Burma. Year 1922/23, 22; Year 1924/25, 27.
87. Ibid.
88. Lu Bei Hang (for carpenter apprentices) and Bei Cheng Hang (for carpenter masters) later merged. Tan Kim Hong, *The Chinese in Penang: A Pictorial History* (Penang: Areca Books, 2007), 68.
89. Tan Yeok Seong, "Xinjiapo kaibu yuanxun caoyazhu kao" [Study on Chow Ah Chey, the Pioneering Settler of Singapore], in *Yeyinguan wencun*, vol. 1 (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1983), 66–73.
90. Henry Alabaster, "The Chinese Colony in Calcutta," *The Calcutta Review* 31 (1858): 368–84 (368).

91. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 35.
92. An Italian priest, Father Sangermano, noticed that fresh pork, often to be found in China, was on sale in Amarapura and Rangoon markets for foreigners, and there were Chinese in suburban Amarapura in the late eighteenth century. Vincenzo Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire A Hundred Years Ago*, 3rd ed. (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1893; repr. Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1995), 68 and 198–99. Pig-slaughtering was an occupation that needed to be licensed by the government and was often taken up by the Chinese. Chen, "Cantonese in Burma," 119. For the Moulmein Chinese butcher's stall, see Geraldine Edith Mitton, *A Bachelor Girl in Burma* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), 77.
93. Howard Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia: Embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam and China; with Notices of Numerous Missionary Stations, and a Full Account of the Burman Empire*, vol. 1 (London: Charles Tilt, 1839), 67. In addition to 500 Chinese, Malcolm also mentioned 2000 other foreigners, mostly Indians, in Moulmein.
94. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 35. Also see Yi Li, "Revisiting the Nineteenth-century Marketplace, and the Chinese Community in Moulmein," *Journal of Burma Studies* 20, no. 1(2016): 63–103 (73).
95. Inscription, Rangoon, 1874.
96. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 312.
97. Later, brick masonry and some of the blacksmith jobs were taken up by the Indians. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 53.
98. Colin Mackerras, *Sinophiles and Sinophobes: Western Views of China* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also see Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
99. Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
100. Ibid.
101. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 413.
102. Ibid., 413.
103. Ibid., 382. Also see Li, "Revisiting the Marketplace," 77–82.
104. Finlayson, "Labour on the Burmese Oilfields," 138.
105. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*.

110. Cheng and Adas both mentioned Chinese paddy landowners. In most cases, the land was the forfeited deposit to Chinese moneylenders from Burmese cultivators.
111. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 309.
112. Author's informal conversation with present-day members of the Chan clan, Yangon, 2008.
113. Adas, *The Burma Delta*.
114. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
115. The general geographic distribution of Indian immigrants differed from the pattern of their Chinese counterparts. Burmese locations with a high density of Indians were Rangoon, the provincial capital that required a large amount of labor and capital; Arakan, the district adjacent to Bengal; and the Irrawaddy Delta, where agriculturalists were needed for newly opened paddy fields. A large Indian population was also present where jobs were available from the Public Works, the Burma Railways, and the Rangoon Harbor. See, for example, Adas, *The Burma Delta*, 83–102; relevant chapters in Sunil Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
116. For Tamil labor in the same period in British Malaya, see Sunil Amrith, "Indians Overseas? Governing Tamil Migration to Malaya, 1870–1941," *Past and Present* 208 (2010): 231–61.
117. Most notable are the 1930 and 1938 riots, which started from disputes between Indian and Burmese laborers, or Muslim Indians and Buddhist Burmese.
118. Adas, *Burma Delta*, 101.
119. Ibid., 83–102.
120. Ibid., 174.
121. Creditors available in the Burmese rice industry included Chettiar, Burmese, and Chinese shopkeepers and brokers, and other Indian businesses such as banks. Adas, *The Burma Delta*, 54 and 187; Cheng, *Rice Industry*, 186.
122. Author's informal conversations, Yangon, 2008.
123. Jiang Kanghu (Kiang Kang-hu, Chiang Kang-hu, 1883–1954) was an early advocate of Western ideologies in China, a modern educator, and a world traveler. He was the founder of the Socialist Party, advocating socialism and anarchism. He also established three women's schools in Beijing sponsored by the Qing court, perhaps the first of their kind in China, as well as the Southern University in Shanghai. In the 1910s, he taught Chinese at the University of California; and between 1930 and 1933, he was Professor of Chinese Studies at McGill University in Canada. Originally trained as a Japanese translator for the Qing court, he traveled extensively in Europe, America, and Japan. John Benjamin

Powell, ed., *Who's Who in China; Containing the Pictures and Biographies of China's Best Known Political, Financial, Business and Professional Men*, 3rd ed. (Shanghai: The China Weekly Review, 1925), 166–67.

124. Jiang, *Nanyou*, 53.
125. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 71.
126. Ibid.
127. K. S. Sandhu and A. Mani, ed., *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing; Times Academic Press, 1993), 588.
128. The story of Xinghua rickshaw pullers in Southeast Asia is discussed in James Warren, *Rickshaw Coolie: A People's History of Singapore, 1880–1940* (Singapore; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
129. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 71.

CHAPTER 5

The Rangoon Vice

In 1913, a crime novel featuring Fu Manchu, a Chinese super villain, was published on both sides of the Atlantic. Based in Limehouse, London's notorious East End and its first Chinatown, this master criminal began to "stretch out a yellow hand to the West" from the heart of the imperial metropole.[1] Interestingly enough, before taking up his craft to "corrupt the white race" in London, he had suspiciously practiced in Burma, "a plague-spot, the home of much that is unclean and much that is inexplicable."[2]

The author of the Fu Manchu series was an English novelist born in Birmingham, who admitted no specialist knowledge of China and the Chinese, nor experience in Burma. Nonetheless, he continued to write more volumes for the series over the next decades with great commercial success and also saw many film and TV adaptions. The popularity of the iconic Chinese villain was indicative of the wide acceptance of a negative portrait of Asian people, and Chinese immorality in particular, in Western popular culture in the early years of the twentieth century. In an unexpected way, Burma made a small contribution to the creation and propagation of this popular global image of Chinese vice.

But the liaison between Fu Manchu and the colony of Burma was far from an artistic imagination. Like the image of successful Chinese merchants, the discourse of Chinese vice was yet another example produced by multiple actors in and beyond this colonial state, and embodied in a singular ethnic face. This chapter examines the presentation and consequences of Chinese vices in Burma. It first takes a glimpse of crimes

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associated with the Chinese as presented in the colonial public media in the late nineteenth century, illustrating negative stereotypes and racial classification that categorized imperial subjects under certain pre-defined labels. However, as the twentieth century progressed, several Chinese vices, especially opium in rural districts and secret societies in urban centers, both of which were well-recognized attributions of Chinese vice that had been propagated in the colony, started to threaten the very foundation of the colonial regime, not always in a way the colonial institutions expected. Along with the deteriorating political and economic situations in the region and the world after the 1920s, these developments prompted the colonial government to tighten the control of its border, often along ethnic lines. Lastly, the chapter discusses the relationship between the two seemingly contradictory images of the Chinese: being commercially successful and being morally corrupt. Trying to reconcile the juxtaposition under the framework of imperial necessities and global contexts, this chapter further reviews the historical and political implications underlying ethno-crime discourse of Indians and Chinese in the colonial knowledge.

Many institutional and individual actors in the Chinese community were involved in the "vices," including secret societies, shop owners, and opium farmers, some of whom have been discussed earlier in the book. Indeed, the Chinese were not unaware of the damage caused by these immoral activities, and like any sensible people, they were strongly opposed to such endeavors. In *Xiaoyin*, the popular ballad among the Yunnanese in Upper Burma, numerous examples were given to deter Yunnanese youth from developing nasty habits with prostitutes, opium, and gambling.[3] However, this chapter is more interested in understanding the image of Chinese vices as perceived by the colonial public; therefore, it focuses on the presumptions and consequences underlying this long-lasting image.

5.1 Chinese Vices in Public Media

On an everyday basis, associations between the Chinese and crime were most apparent in the colony's public media, such as the *Rangoon Gazette*. As discussed earlier, this English newspaper, with strong commercial and official connections, was oriented to British officials, merchants, and English-educated local elites. It was a key stage where competing ideas were expressed, trying hard to influence public opinion. Not surprisingly, the *Rangoon Gazette* provided an appropriate space for the portrayal and dissemination of ethno-crimes, including some typical Chinese vices.

Table 5.1 Criminal reports in the *Rangoon Gazette*, January–April 1888

Suspects with identifiable ethnicities	*Number of cases under investigation or on trial*	*Main charges*	*Percentage in the reports*	*Percentage of population in Rangoon, 1891 (by birthplace)*
Burmese	80	Dacoity, thefts, fights, misconduct of native police constables, domestic quarrels	37.38	49.11
Indians (Hindus and Muslims)	58	Business disputes; coolie thefts; possession of *ganja*; religious disputes (Muslim), domestic quarrels	27.10	46.06
Chinese	24	Illicit possession of opium, illicit distilling and selling of spirits	11.21	2.73
Europeans	41	Sailors desertion of duty and drunk	19.16	1.59 (all other continents)
Others or unspecified	11	Shan, Karen, Jewish, and Japanese were mentioned among others.	5.14	0.52 (other Asian countries, seas and unspecified)
Total	**214**	–	**100**	**100**

Sources: Data adapted from *Rangoon Gazette*, 1888; Government of India, *Census 1891, IX, Burma Report* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1892)

Sampling data from the "Local and Provincial" section of the *Rangoon Gazette* over the first four months of 1888 is illustrative.[4] This small sample includes more than enough cases to the point. Crimes, such as possession of opium and liquor, theft, robbery, gambling, and communal violence, were inseparably linked with the Chinese, often with succinct details. Table 5.1 is an incomplete list of cases during this four-month period, which were either under police investigation or presented to local magistrates. The table is broken down by suspects' ethnicity, which was often explicitly indicated on the newspaper for the multiethnic city of Rangoon. The distribution of crime by ethnicity did not deviate significantly from the results returned by the nearest census (1891) in terms of ethnographic distribution, as the last column indicates. However, the charges associated with the Chinese made up a typical portfolio of Chinese vices.

Opium was very much associated with the Chinese. In January alone, readers were told that one "Chinaman" was found guilty of possession of 16 pounds of opium; another one for selling opium[5]; in the same month, one was found with 51 tolas of opium, together with some pipes and cooking utensils,[6] and another was found "in possession of a quantity of opium."[7] All of them were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from one to six months. Two months later in March, an opium case concerning some Chinese in Akyab, the regional center of the Arakan District in western Burma, generated considerable local public interest. In the meantime, in Rangoon, a mistress of a brothel on 27th Street was charged for the possession of eight tolas' first-class and about eight Rupees' worth of second-class opium, as well as all the pipes, light, and tubbies needed for opium smoking.[8]

Illicit distilling and selling of liquor was another issue that frequently featured Chinese involvement. In February 1888, "a Chinaman and his wife" were charged with distilling and selling liquor without a license.[9] The increase in Chinese women's involvement in the illegal liquor business attracted more attention: in one week alone in February, three were convicted for offenses against the excise regulations and lenient fines were imposed.[10] The next month, the issue of *shamshoo (samshoo)*, the Chinese rice spirit that was popular all over Burma and had been given to Sladen's Expedition team in 1868 by the Bhamo Chinese, made the headlines. Four "Chinamen" were charged for having 200 gallons of *shamshoo*,[11] and another one at Dalla, on the opposite side of the Rangoon River, was arrested for having two casks containing 100 gallons of *shamshoo*.[12]

Readers soon learned that the Chinese were active and, in many cases, the only bidders for government licenses, a common practice in the region to guarantee significant revenues from government-monitored sales of opium, liquor, tobacco, butchery, and other products and services. These were common occupations among the Burmese Chinese. In March, the *Rangoon Gazette* reported a license auction for the year 1888–1889, where 200 to 300 "Chinamen" gathered in the deputy Commissioner's Court and bid for the opium licenses (the successful bid came to 170,000 Rupees), 14 public houses (253,800 Rupees), retail licenses (100,400 Rupees), and licenses for Tsein Ye (a type of liquor, 80,600 Rupees).[13] Other liquor licenses were auctioned on March 22, 1888, and the final prices, according to the newspaper, were much higher than the actual value, "representing a fictitious value and were due to the excitement of the Chinamen at the time of the auction."[14]

Further investigations revealed some conflicts inside the license-auction practice, this time in Bhamo, the border town in northern Burma. A correspondent told a story about the Chinese liquor licensees. In late March,

> [a] great row took place in the bazaar the other day between the Yunnan and Fuhkien Chinese. It seems that the Fuhkien licensee of the spirit monopoly is accused of gambling with loaded dice, and I should not be greatly surprised to hear that the enraged losers have attacked and hurt him.[15]

In April, the same correspondent followed up with a new episode. The "heathen Chinese," he said, "practised his wily arts to some purpose in connection with this business"[16] during the annual government auction of the liquor license in Bhamo. Although he admitted it was without solid evidence, it was reported that the three Chinese communities, Fukhian (Hokkien), Canton, and Yunnan, had formed a compact in order to avoid bidding against each other on the official auction. As a result, one of the Chinese got the license at the price of a mere 3200 Rupees from the government. Upon securing the license, internal Chinese bidding started, and the final winner, the correspondent believed, was the same Hokkien man who had caused trouble in March and paid as much as 12,500 Rupees in the end. The correspondent expressed regret for the financial losses suffered by the district government.[17] What he would not possibly have known, of course, was that in many cases like this, the surplus from annual license auctions would often go to the maintenance of local Chinese schools, a very common practice as seen among the Chans of Pyapon.

Theft and robbery involving the Chinese on central Rangoon's streets were often mentioned in the "Local and Provincial" section too. In January, Ah Ket was charged with stealing apparel, jewelry, and money from another Chinese; he was wearing some of the stolen clothing when arrested.[18] In the same month, an extensive robbery was committed in a wealthy Chinese house on Dalhousie Street by seven Chinese[19]; afterward, two were arrested near the market on Merchant Street and 42nd Street for attempted incendiarism.[20] In the following month, a Chinese was sentenced to 20 lashes for stealing a gold bangle worth 13 Rupees from the arm of a child on Strand Road.[21]

In 1888, a three-day riot in Singapore was extensively reported by the *Rangoon Gazette*. According to the crew of the *SS Khandalla*, a ship at the Rangoon Port which brought news from Singapore, the riot was initiated by local Chinese gang fights. At least seven Chinese were shot dead and

over 100 arrested and put into prison for 6 to 12 months, with 20 to 30 cuts each with a rattan. All the houses in the affected area were barricaded during the riots. "The Chinamen" were armed with sticks and stones, and a few with revolvers. The riot caused significant problems for local businesses and the lives of ordinary residents, as well as for ships landing at the Singapore Port.[22]

Similar accounts on Chinese gang fights in nearby colonies, including the 1867 Penang riot, the largest of its kind in the region, would have been duly covered and the information easily spread in Burma. These sensational stories from within the region would no doubt repeatedly remind the readers of the *Rangoon Gazette* of the dangerous, incomprehensible, and unpredictable behavior of rival secret societies. For them, the danger was tangible, as Chinese secret societies, similar to and closely connected with those who made headlines in other parts of the region, also existed in Burma, although local fights tended to be of smaller scale, involving fewer numbers and with less violent consequences. A news story on "Chinese Gang Fights" between two competing secret societies, the Kyan Teik and the Ho Sum, in Rangoon on October 18, 1909, was full of sensational details:

> After several weeks of quiet in the Chinese quarter between the two rival factions, the Keng Taik [Kyan Taik] and Hosain [Ho Sum] societies, they broke out again on Wednesday evening in 24th Street and in a moment bottles, brick-bats and stones were flying from houses on both sides of the street between Dalhousie Street and Strand Road. According to the official report of the affair there were about forty on one side and thirty on the other when the police charged and dispersed them… The injured men were taken to the hospital. They are He Sin, who had a large piece of flesh cut from his back, Tan Ka Lean, stick wounds, Shim Shein, wounds on the head and shoulders, Kyan Sein, wounds to the head and body.
>
> About 12.30 pm on Thursday Kya Wah, son of the headman of the Hosain Society…was on his way from the police station to his house in Latter Street when he was set upon near his house by several members of the Keng Taik society who beat him severely. A police whistle was blown and the assailants ran away. Two of them were seen to enter the club house of the Keng Taik society in Latter Street. They were recognised as Teon Sanga, a well known character from Amoy, and Eya alias Hline. …About half an hour after this word was received of another assault in the back drainage of space between 21st and Latter Streets, by other members, it is said, of the Keng Taik society. The police on reaching the scene found Ke Wah of the Hosain society in a

> semi-conscious state with his face badly cut. On coming round he stated that he had been struck with a bottle by one of five Keng Taik men.[23]

The violent factional fights among Chinese secret societies were certainly a perennial headache for the British authorities in this region. Legislation had been passed to control dangerous societies and their unpredictable behaviors.[24] However, the actual result in Burma, let alone in the Straits Settlements with much larger Chinese populations, was questionable, as exemplified by this incident, among many others.

The *Rangoon Gazette* had strong government ties. It functioned as a semi-official bulletin board, often publishing government announcements and abstracts from Rangoon municipal meetings and Burma Legislative Council meetings. The above-cited news pieces about Chinese vices were sourced from the police and the courts and routinely announced to the public. In this sense, it was the colonial administration that provided numerous examples of Chinese vices, continuously feeding news to maintain the image, along with vices of other imperial subjects, with everyday reinforcement.

Nevertheless, the Chinese were certainly not the main subject of this newspaper's coverage. It is not known whether there were any Chinese employees, particularly editors, reporters, or correspondents, in the *Rangoon Gazette* or any other contemporary English newspapers and, if so, whether or not the existence of Chinese staff members would have affected the perspective of the newspaper. Based on the current information, it might be fair to say that coverage of the Chinese could best be described as incidental, since it only appeared on occasions that invited the newspaper's editorial attention, either through various government offices or through large-scale, government-involved events, such as official ceremonies, prominent figures, and grand social functions.

Neither was the *Rangoon Gazette* particularly obsessed with Chinese vice. In this four-month window of our sample, except for the coverage of a disproportionately high percentage of European sailors, which reflected the newspaper's large European readership and the location of Rangoon as an international port, reporting was relatively consistent with the overall ethnic distribution of the population in the descending order: Burman (the most numerous local group), Indian (a major migrant group), and Chinese (a minor migrant group). Chinese crimes were plentiful enough to alert sensible readers, but it was yet to be developed into a scale that supported a master villain like Fu Manchu.

Perhaps more revealing from the sample data is the categorization of crimes that were neatly compartmentalized by ethnic groups. Here, we see that better-off Indians were more likely to be associated with commercial disputes, while the coolies were associated with thefts or possession of *ganja* (the Indian word for cannabis). As for the Burmans, their criminal profile varied from dacoity (a commonly used term in British India referring to armed banditry, to be discussed later) in the countryside, robbery, thefts, and fights in urban areas, to general disputes among families, negligence of duty among native police constables, and, in a few cases, gambling and selling opium and spirits. With a numerically modest representation, the Chinese vices, however, did not lack dramatic details that caught the imagination of loyal readers of the newspaper and subsequently painted a vivid picture of Chinese quarters where illicit opium and liquor, gambling, theft, and violent gang fights were more than abundant.

Associations with specific crimes like these undoubtedly reflected the contemporary ethnic divisions, to some extent, when Indian merchants and coolies, Chinese licensees, and Burmese rebellions were common in this colonial state. It also reflected the Empire's ideological tradition of associating various features with mystical and incomprehensible local peoples in an oversimplified way.[25] In this colonial ethnic paradigm and governance tactic, local population such as Malays, Javanese, and Filipinos were frequently labeled as lazy[26] and certain Indian groups as "martial races"[27] at various stages and in different parts of the Empire. Following this fashion, the Chinese were conveniently grouped into a category with opium, gambling, illicit alcohol, and violence among secret societies, a ready-made set of evils applied to Chinese communities in colonial regimes in the region already, and to be easily followed by the newly established British Burma. As exemplified in the public media, repeated coverage of these pre-defined ethno-crimes, tailored especially for various Asian subjects in the colony, both cast and reinforced these negative projections, making future manipulation along ethnic lines possible for both colonial and anti-colonial causes.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that Chinese vices, although covered here with numerous examples, were never fatal to the regime, no matter how annoying it was purported to be. Unlike Chinese secret societies in Indochina, which were treated as anti-government organizations by the French,[28] nothing was reported here about Chinese involvement in "dangerous" activities. Chinese vices in Burma, including the notorious

gang fighting among secret societies, were perceived to be comparatively less threatening to the establishment than to community security, at least as understood in this period, and therefore were tolerated to some extent. An 1875 police report acknowledged that "Crime is not confined to any particular class or race,"[29] reflecting the general attitude to crimes by the colonial regime at this stage.

5.2 Chinese Corruption in Burmese Lives

In fact, during the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, the Chinese were not the specific targets of the police, nor were they believed to be more evil than any other peoples in the colony. Another set of sample data,[30] this time taken every ten years from reports of the Burma Police between 1867 and 1939, seems to confirm this general hypothesis. In the report of 1875, in three cases where the Chinese were involved, one was a victim of dacoity in Rangoon[31] and the other two were murder cases, both in the Mergui District involving pirates or household disputes between the Chinese on both sides.[32] In the next three sampling years (1885, 1895, and 1905), there was no single explicit mention of the Chinese at all.

However, things started to change in the second decade of the twentieth century, at least as seen in reports from the police force. In 1915, while the Chinese continued to be mentioned as victims (twice, one in Insein in case of dacoity and the other in Mandalay in case of robbery), a Chinese gambling club in Henzada was reported to be causing ongoing problems for the local police.[33] In 1925, illicit opium smuggling in Irrawaddy and Toungoo, involving influential Chinese men, received significant attention, along with that of the difficulties in dealing with Chinese owners of gambling houses in Bassein. This was in addition to other cases where the Chinese continued to be victims of dacoity in other districts.[34] In 1935, the last year of the sample, once again, a serious situation is mentioned involving opium smuggling in Mandalay and the Shan States, with complaints centered on the Chinese Government's unwillingness to prohibit poppy cultivation.[35] Despite being consistent to the public portrait of Chinese vices in earlier years, these details, especially the increasing number of cases related to opium and gambling, are worth exploring, as some fundamental changes were now occurring beneath superficial and banal media coverage and routine administrative reports, which eventually forced the regime to tighten the control through legal action.

5.2.1 Opium, Chinese Shops, and Rural Crimes

As in many contemporary Asian ports and colonies, opium was intricately linked with the Chinese and played an important role in British colonial expansion in Asia.[36] In Burma, the association between Chinese and opium existed from the very beginning. In the late 1820s, Maingy imported from Penang not only Chinese laborers to work in mines but also Indian opium in order to keep the imported Chinese workers productive as well as to compete with Chinese opium farmers who were already heavily involved in this business in Tenasserim.[37]

In 1893, a team of the Royal Commission on Opium visited Rangoon and Mandalay under the direction of James Lyall. Its mission was to evaluate opium production and consumption in India and the Far East.[38] Twelve Chinese, from the Burmese towns of Rangoon, Prome, Mandalay, and Bhamo, gave evidence in December 1893[39]; five more had been called in early that month in Calcutta. The selection of suitable persons for the commission was the result of co-operation between the government and the Chinese community. For instance, in Bhamo, the two Chinese were chosen by the Deputy Commissioner from six candidates recommended by the local community.[40] Except for two merchants from Rangoon, none of them spoke English and had to answer through an interpreter. They represented a wide scope of occupations including general merchants, shopkeepers, medical doctors, schoolteachers, civil servants, and priests. Many of them were originally from Canton, Hokkien, or Yunnan, and some had been in Burma (or India) for several decades.

The evidence from the Chinese often indicated little difference in opium consumption between the Chinese and other ethnicities. Without supplementary sources, it is impossible to know whether these answers were the result of some sort of pan-Burma Chinese solidarity or simply spontaneous individual responses. On December 19, 1893, the 28th day of the commission's hearing in Rangoon, on behalf of the Rangoon Chinese community, Kum Low Fong, a former clerk for an opium farm with reasonable English language skills, presented a petition to the commission to request a total prohibition on opium. This petition was written in English by Leong Shain Tuck (presumably a Cantonese, as he had a typical Cantonese surname), "a Chinese cutch merchant of Rangoon"[41] who himself gave evidence in English several days earlier. The petition was signed by more than 300 Chinese individuals (opium consumers or not) and shops, 60 of whom were at the meeting and more outside the meeting room. It stated:

> The ruination opium has brought upon all people is manifest enough. Almost every one of the Chinese people is cognisant of the fact that opium has injurious effect upon those who make use of it. It is not only the Chinese who are affected by the baneful influence of the indulgence in opium, but other nations who use opium must suffer also.[42]

Again written by Leong Shain Tuck and supported by 286 signatures, the Chinese community in Moulmein presented a similar memorandum. Feeling "the unjust stigma, which has been laid upon our community in regard of opium…we Chinese know, by a rather longer experience, the disastrous effects of this vice, and our condemnation of it is most unmeasured."[43] They expressed their strong objection against opium:

> It is said that these facilities are maintained on account of the Chinese, and that but for them opium would be entirely prohibited. We resent the imputation of being unable to do without opium, and do not want the door to be left open or even half open to this vice in Burma on our account. We will not be the pretext for the ruin of this country, but want opium altogether forbidden.[44]

Nonetheless, there were too many imperial interests at stake, and the commission eventually deemed a total prohibition impracticable.[45] The colonial government continued to sell opium to non-Burman smokers and forbade only Burmese consumption. Recent research on opium in colonial Burma suggests that the government's opium policy was "an uneasy mixture" of British officials' struggle between being "responsive to the wishes of the population and being responsible for the population's well-being."[46] Perplexing as the decision-making was, Rangoon never doubted the deep involvement of Chinese consumption and trading of opium, a knowledge that was already well known throughout the Empire and affirmed by local evidence in Burma. Chinese here were allowed not only regulated opium consumption but also to handle most of the opium farms, whose profits contributed considerably to the government treasury through the excise system. With such official attitude prevailing in the colony, it was all too natural that the *Rangoon Gazette* had plentiful coverage of Chinese engagement in this indecent business.

One consequence of the expanding Chinese commercial networks in rural Burma, a development that was encouraged by mainstream institutions, was that the local administration started to be alarmed by destructive influences allegedly brought over by Chinese-owned village grocery

shops. On May 8, 1917, an Irrawaddy Division conference was held in Bassein, a major delta port in Lower Burma. One of issues raised there was “the increasing influx of Chinese shopkeepers and their peculiar position in the illicit trade of opium, liquor and cocaine.”[47] Local officials, especially the police and excise officers, were instructed to investigate the situation in their respective areas.

In these areas, to quote one Superintendent of Police, the Chinese “were a nuisance and were teaching the Burmans to gamble, drink and take drugs.”[48] It was suggested that to take up an illicit trade was an almost natural step forward in the Chinese businessman’s commercial roadmap, when “his attention is next called to the facilities for obtaining a regular supply of opium from our shops and the enormous profits to be accrued by selling it.”[49] Government opium tickets, the permit to purchase opium legally in government shops, were only open to registered Chinese smokers under excise regulations. Nevertheless, it was very common (in Bassein 24 out of 54 in 1917)[50] among the Chinese ticket holders to abuse this system to provide for illicit consumption, often among the Burmans. Although the negative impact was widely acknowledged, and complaints among the local officers were plentiful, it was difficult to bring the accused to justice. In 1917, in Pyapon, for example, 100 “Chinamen” were suspected of receiving stolen property. However, as the report explained, “That is to say the sub-inspectors of police suspect them of doing so, but none of them are ever caught and convicted.”[51] The most pressing problems were opium, liquor, and drugs, as a Subdivisional Officer in Pyapon reported,

> [T]he Chinese also keep opium dens which are much resorted to by unregistered opium consumers. There is an instance in which village elders at Setsan, which was established about four or five years ago, made complaints against 2 or 3 Chinese for carrying on illicit trade of opium and liquor for taking steps to compel them to shift from their village… Big Chinese shops carry on honest trade in grocery and paddy and they are not harmful, but the small ones such as these described above are detrimental to young men in the village as it stimulates the growth of opium consumers.[52]

Another Subdivisional Officer from nearby Kyaiklat agreed,

> It is an admitted fact that very few Chinese shop keepers carry on a purely honest trade. They keep gambling and opium dens and trade in illicit sales of liquor, opium and cocaine, and thus forming a pleasant but undesirable resort for bad hats. It is also an admitted fact that a Burmese shop cannot

> flourish when there is a Chinese shop in competition for the reason that the Chinese shop keepers have another source of income by dishonest means, besides the superficially honest trade with false weights and measures, which enable them to put down the Burmese rival shops.[53]

In Shege, a village on the Henzada border, where a year before "there was certainly no morphine subjects," "the attendant evils of this spreading of the drug habit" was believed by the officer to be "endless crime and misery and the Chinaman will have a lot to answer for" because "the majority of Chinamen, in Burma at any rate, are connected with smuggling in some form or other and the trade being very lucrative, it is to their interests to push it and obtain as many recruits as possible."[54]

The resentment caused, at least among the subdivision and district officers, was considerable. A Subdivisional Officer in Kyaiklat regarded Chinese shops as "a curse of the country."[55] A similar claim from the police officer in Pyapon was that the Chinese were "entirely without any moral sense and his presence in Burma is a serious obstruction to our administration."[56] J. S. Furnivall, the future founder of the Burma Research Society and a renowned scholar in post-war Southeast Asia Studies, was then the Deputy Commissioner of Myaungmya; in his report, he admitted that the "Chinaman like the Indian does not even pretend to adapt himself to village administration."[57]

In the same year, the Superintendent of Police in Hanthawaddy District, a Lower Burma district north of Rangoon, raised a similar issue in a Mandalay conference that "it was the general opinion of most of those present that the Chinamen were doing harm and that some action was necessary."[58] Echoing their colleagues' views from neighboring districts, the Irrawaddy District recommended a total ban on Chinese residing in the villages without permission of a subdivision or township officer, or to make amendments on legislation.

One year later in 1918, Chinese petty traders, cultivators, and laborers were driven out of the villages in the Tharrawaddy District because they were suspected to be involved in opium smuggling and illicit trading and contributed to an increased crime rate in the district. Like Irrawaddy and Hanthawddy districts, Tharrawaddy was another rice-producing area in Lower Burma, not far from the former two. The problem from Tharrawaddy drew attention in the Burma Legislative Council, one of the highest decision-making bodies of the government. Lim Chin Tsong, the only Chinese member in the Council, addressed the issue on behalf of the community

he represented at a meeting on April 13, 1918, in Maymyo. He strongly objected to the accusations, insightfully pointing out "the guilt is nailed to the doors of the Chinese residents of the villages and village-tracts" even though they were merely "at the bottom of this nefarious practice."[59]

Resonating with Lim's speech were several of Taw Sein Ko's English articles, first published in the *Rangoon Gazette* as readers' letters and later collected into his two-volume *Burmese Sketches*. Under Taw's description, the same episode, which had caused continuous protests from the police and local government over recent years, was now understood somewhat differently:

> It appears that, of an evening, the young bloods of the villages of Tharrawaddy require a mild sort of excitement to promote their circulation and to keep them in good humour. They resort to a Chinaman's shop, which is the cleanest and most roomy in the village, and ask their host to be allowed to play cards. From cards, the young Burmans go off, step by step, in a graduated series, to liquor, *ganja*, morphia, cocaine, etc. They become thieves, robbers, and dacoits. The sins of the Burmans, who are devoid of self-control, are visited on the Chinamen.[60]

At that time, Lim Chin Tsong and Taw Sein Ko were the only two persons with Chinese backgrounds who held high positions in the colonial government. Taw Sein Ko was a distinguished archaeologist, a senior government officer, and an expert on China and the Chinese in the government.[61] Using his scholarly knowledge of the region and an insider's familiarity with the administrative system, Taw attributed the Tharrawaddy problem to historical, geographical, and educational reasons,[62] essentially defending the Chinese against their alleged vices. Taw did so through the public media, the *Rangoon Gazette*, advocating his opinions among the colony's European residents and English-educated elite, just as Lim Chin Tsong did, more directly, within the Legislative Council. If the institutional tolerance of Chinese opium smokers and opium farmers was a deliberate strategy of the British to share the blame of introducing and spreading opium addiction to the Burman,[63] the calculated intention was not well concealed and could be rhetorically revealed or hinted by public figures like Taw and Lim, even though their messages were not always well heard, nor were they the dominant voices of the time.

But if there was indeed an initial "blame-sharing" intention, it eventually backfired, with serious consequences. The concerns among district officials were not without reason. Twelve years later, in 1930, it was precisely

in Tharrawaddy that the Saya San Rebellion, the first significant Burmese uprising that shook the very foundation of the regime and ushered in the new era of Burmese Nationalism, broke out; the movement soon spread to surrounding areas including the Irrawaddy District. A deteriorating economic situation and competition over access to resources in rice cultivation areas contributed significantly to the outbreak of the rebellion. Furthermore, social instability, as reflected in reports about Chinese vices from these districts more than a decade earlier, might well have suggested the first signs of some more serious economic disputes and inter-racial tensions. However, the root of the problem might not necessarily have been initiated between the innocent rural Burmese and malicious Chinese shop owners, as the regime argued, but in the deep resentment of the public under colonial rule that expressed itself through "local crime" and several typical "wrong" doings (e.g., opium), utilizing the ready-made Chinese vices that were well publicized and accepted by almost all social strata by then. For the authorities, the strategy of emphasizing Chinese immorality was merely a temporary, though not very successful, preventive method to moderate, divert, and delay the outbreak of Burmese dissatisfaction, the real threat to their colonial legitimacy.

It is difficult to trace the exact connection between "local crimes," anti-colonial sentiment, and Chinese presence in these areas, or to what extent the Chinese really contributed to the development of local resentments. Interactions between Chinese "shop-keepers" and Burmese "local crimes" are poorly documented in currently available sources, especially at the subdivisional level and below. Nonetheless, looking beyond the moral concern, administrative nuisance, and ethnic generalization, there was no doubt in the regime's interest to portray the Chinese as a criminal race who distributed destructive drugs, alcohol, gambling, and, perhaps more importantly, the unspoken and most devastating vice of dangerous ideas that nurtured anti-colonialism and nationalism among the subjects of the Empire, or in the officials' words, "to corrupt the Burmans."

5.2.2 Gambling Clubs and Political Societies

Compared to Chinese vices with potential political implications in rural Burma, the documentation in the colonial capital of Rangoon shed more light on the political dimension of Chinese vices. In Rangoon and other cities, police reports revealed daily Chinese vices of mixed nature; some were well-anticipated clichés, while others were explicitly political agitations. To

counteract the potential danger the Chinese might introduce to Burma and its population, the government started to apply strict border controls.

The traditional profile of Chinese vice still prevailed, especially in Rangoon Chinatown. A police station had long been established on Latter Street, the very heart of the Rangoon Chinatown where a number of important Chinese community associations were located. One of the persistent problems it had to deal with was Chinese gambling clubs.[64] A superintendent of the Rangoon Central Division between 1923 and 1925 remembered vividly the Chinese criminals along with the wealthy Chinatown bosses. The police launched regular raids on Chinese gambling clubs on side streets in Rangoon Chinatown and its vicinity. The hide-and-seek game between the police and the Chinese club owners dominated his career in the Rangoon Central Police.[65] The police, however, never effectively eradicated gambling in Chinatown, and they were known to complain that the "difficulties the police experience in dealing with cases in which Chinese are concerned are well known."[66] Data from the existing reports of the Rangoon Town Police (1899–1938) confirm the consistent problems created by Chinese gambling clubs throughout the period.[67]

In the meantime, the changing regional and imperial context meant that the colonial police force, in order to keep domestic law and order, had to look beyond "conventional" crimes. This was particularly so when the two most powerful neighbors of Burma, India and China, both of whom also had large diasporic communities and considerable influence in this colonial state, started to undergo fundamental political changes in the opening decades of the twentieth century.[68] In response, Rangoon now found it necessary to keep watchful eyes over its Chinese subjects, not only for their well-known "vices" that could disturb community life but also for new, subversive, and much more dangerous threats.

At least two of the three major secret societies in Chinatown had been registered with the government by the late 1910s. The Ngee Hain, with 6000 members in 1920, was understood by the government as a "political" society, while the Kyan Taik, with 900 members, was considered a "social" organization. Both of them were believed to have "local and general influences."[69] These well-established Chinese secret societies were on the government's radar along with other religious associations in Burma (including Hindu and Muslim groups among the Indians and Buddhist groups among the Burmese); and their basic information was compiled into annual lists, which were then widely circulated among intelligence sectors in other parts of India to prevent possible inter-provincial connections.

Also in the 1910s, as part of the duty of the government's Chinese Language Examiner, Taw Sein Ko was asked to monitor Chinese newspapers published in Rangoon and their community and political backgrounds. The explicitly expressed purposes of this monitoring retained a frontier/border orientation and diplomatic concern, stating it cared about "only two things: (i) whether China will again be subjected to another convulsion; and (ii) whether our Burmo-Chinese Frontier will be disturbed."[70] However, the decision to monitor community newspapers in vernacular languages, although less restrictive than imposing censorship, implied the regime's concern over the potential political discontent among its Chinese subjects and the influence that could be extended to the colony.[71]

The 1911 Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the Republic of China on Burma's northern border attracted further attention from the government at other levels. In 1913, there was an investigation of a "Geh Min Dan Society"[72] by Rangoon police and intelligence officers. According to the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, this society, "formed under orders from Pekin," had its headquarters at 26 Latter Street, "almost directly opposite the Latter Street Police Station." There were about 3000 members in Rangoon, over 1000 in Mandalay, "all the Chinese population in Myitkyina and Mogaung,"[73] and many more in branches in almost every town in Burma, which were exclusively Chinese. The organizational exchanges between Rangoon, other branches in Burma, and China were active through significant monetary subscriptions. In 1913, a large amount of money was sent back to Yunnan in response to Britain's attempted annexation of the Phemma (Pimaw, Hpimaw, or Pianma) area in the northern end of the Burmo-Chinese border, "the gate to India," where the Chinese planned roads to link it with Nepal, Tibet, and Bengal.[74]

Even if the number of pro-revolutionary, ultra-nationalist Chinese in Burma was insignificant, relatively easy to control, and whose primary concern was in China, the colonial government had other reasons to worry about the potential dissemination of dangerous, or revolutionary and nationalist, ideas across ethnic lines within its territory. Given the geography of Burma and the cosmopolitan nature of Rangoon, the spillover was almost inevitable. In 1913, there was a rumor in Bhamo highlighting the Geh Min Dan's general attitude toward Burma (and the rest of India) under British rule:

> A number of Cantonese and Fukanese have gone to India with revolutionary intentions. Their object is to impress on the Indians how they, the Geh Min Dans, were able to over-throw the yoke of the Manchus, and that Indians who have more than half of the British Army and Navy of their own nationality should experience no difficulty.[75]

In the meantime, in Rangoon, there was another rumor involving a donation of 30,000 Rupees to the Geh Min Dan Society by one Meshedi Khan. It was hardly a coincidence that the connection between this Indian businessman and his Chinese partners and managers was built through a gambling club on 29th Street in the India-town of the capital. The profits from the joint business, based on the most typical Chinese vice (and no doubt, the raiding target of the police superintendent and his colleagues), were said to "assist revolutionary movements in India and the Republic in China."[76]

In Mandalay, another club was formed by the Geh Min Dans, and its leader urged that since "at present China was in a disturbed state…the only thing to be done now was to make friends with all influential natives in Burma, including Hpoongyis [monks], and then when China was cool, a rebellion in Burma would be an easy matter."[77]

Indian nationalism and its impact upon Burma during these years had already spread and inspired Burmese anti-colonial sentiment. Now the regime had to face a similar challenge from a second front, the Chinese, who also shared historical links and contemporary similarities with the Burmese. It would have been important to discourage extensive contacts between the Chinese and the Burmese to prevent further exposure to revolutionary ideologies. Like the situation in rural Burma, the Chinese vices in their most recognizable forms (gambling clubs and new types of "secret" societies) were conveniently available to put on the cordon.

Under these contexts, control along the border became increasingly tightened, often focusing on ethnic and nationality differences. Although no legal restrictions on free movements of Chinese within Burma had been actually implemented despite repeated suggestions from several districts, the open immigration policy and relatively loose legislation in the early years that attracted many Asian immigrants into Burma were under revision now.

There was an increasingly strict control on passports. Starting in 1905, as a means to prevent "Chinese race who are British-born subjects" from claiming dual nationalities at their own convenience (no doubt previously utilized by many), they were required to apply for a Burmese passport and register with British consulates when traveling in China in order to obtain British consular protection.[78] Since the 1930s, the granting of a Burmese visa to Chinese nationals was further restricted in the British consulates of Amoy and Swatow, and in British colonies such as Hong Kong and Singapore.[79] At the Port of Rangoon, additional scrutiny was conducted by the police upon the arrival of foreign passengers, most of whom were Indians and Chinese.[80]

Likewise, there were coercive measures on exiting Burma. The enforcement of the Foreigners Act (1864) to expel unwanted non-Europeans, an old act that was not regularly heeded in Burma until the 1920s, became a police routine.[81] In 1926, the Expulsion of the Offenders Act was introduced to remove similar persons of Indian origin (because Indians were not "foreigners" in this British Indian province).[82] The Foreigners Act almost exclusively removed unwanted Chinese, as the Expulsion of the Offenders Act did for the Indians (Table 5.2). Although no details are available for charges under each deportation case, it would not deviate too far from contemporary newspaper and government reports, which

Table 5.2 Deportees from Burma, 1923–1938

Year	*Under Expulsion of the Offenders Act*	*Under Foreigners Act*	
	Expelled total	*Deported Chinese*	*Deported (other nationalities)*
1923	–		Actions are taken to deport under Foreigners Act persons who are not British subjects and who are known to commit crime in Rangoon
1924	–	19 from Rangoon, 2 opium smugglers from Henzada	5 Japanese, 3 unknown (total 29)
1925	–	147	4 Japanese, 3 unknown (total 154)
1926	–	159	1 Russian, 1 Swedish, 1 Japanese
1927	21	82	0
1928	37	85	3 French subjects (Indians from Pondicherry)
1929	78	129	2 Estonian subjects with Chinese passports who trekked from Siam, Moulmein to Rangoon were sent back to China
1930	81	85	4 Afghans
1931	62	96	0
1932	101	216	2 Kabuli (moneylenders), 1 Japanese, 1 French
1933	105	239	1 Chinese and 1 Kabuli granted short re-entry, 1 French
1934	128	119	1 French, 1 Russian, 1 German
1935	99	68	1 Siamese, 1 French, 1 German
1936	89	132	5 French, 7 Afghan, 1 Japanese, 1 Nepalese
1937	95	120	1 French, 1 Afghan
1938	76	113	0

Source: Data from BL: IOR, V/24/3246–47, Police Department. Report on the Rangoon Town Police, 1923–1938

meant a mixture of conventional Chinese vices and newly found political agitations. These legislations thus cleared two major sources of unwanted contacts, accelerating the already shrinking foreign labor force once vital for the colony's early economic development. After all, the colonial state was hit heavily by war and economic depression over these decades, and it had a strong motivation to remove surplus foreign laborers.

The changing policy was in line with the increasing control over Chinese communities in the entire region, particularly in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. While colonial governments had managed their Chinese population not without difficulty, the key focus by then was the unruly secret societies and the "traditional" Chinese vices they facilitated. However, with Chinese political and cultural nationalism spread by political parties and their local branches, the British in Singapore saw an increasing ideological threat. They responded with a series of new legislations and other restrictions, along with immigration regulations to regulate the number of immigrants entering as well as removing dangerous personnel out of the colonies.[83] As in Burma, the number of deportations significantly increased and the control of the borders tightened.

Over these decades, as a reaction to the changing international environments, administrative institutions with domestic priority increasingly persuaded policy-makers and influenced legislative enforcements to exert tighter and more rigid control over its population. It was under these circumstances that Chinese vices were institutionalized and slowly went beyond the public image as an annoying yet not-that-significant threat in the early years.

5.3 Interpreting Chinese Vices

If presenting Chinese vices was part of a deliberately designed strategy motivated by the colonial administration for its own governance and legitimacy, one may wonder why there was still space in its public sphere for the portrait of commercially successful Chinese, as discussed in the previous chapter. Did not these two images contradict each other, especially when it was never a secret that many successful merchants obtained their fortune from monopoly of opium and liquor farms, and subsequently became heads of grassroots associations, including secret societies, as recognition of their social status by the community?

At first glance, they do. For a public platform presumably accommodating multiple voices in the colony, such as the *Rangoon Gazette*, it was common to see frightening stories of Chinese crimes alongside coverage of

charitable behavior of prominent Chinese. Take one example in February 1888. Literally right beside the reports on Chinese opium and spirits offenders, there was an article enthusiastically praising a charitable deed by "a well-known Chinese merchant of this city, Mr S. Pinthong" for his offering to build a public bathing place. Quoting an old saying that "cleanliness is next to Godliness," the editor added, "No better work of merit could be performed by benevolent citizens"[84] than funding public baths. Since there were many vacant plots available in the city suitable for such use, Mr. Pinthong set a role model for "rich Burmese and natives of India…[who are] benevolently inclined" to dive into this "ample scope"[85] for public welfare.

Even when the regime accelerated its propaganda of Chinese vices after being aware of their severe implications, the positive image of successful merchants never faded, and two representative publications examined in the previous chapter were in fact published in 1910 and 1926, respectively, a peak era of Chinese vice as analyzed here.

As a result, today one finds that throughout colonial literature these two contradictory images of the Chinese existed side-by-side, without visible uneasiness or awkwardness or any doubt, let alone challenges, from anyone, as if it was natural that the community that is well known for its respectable and commercially prominent figures could, and should in the meantime, be the hotbed for producing super villains who indulged in vices such as opium, gambling, and gang fights. Those who constructed and disseminated the images found neither the dichotomy strange nor discrepancy unreasonable. Contemporary writers, editors, and correspondents all talked as if they were dealing with completely different peoples.

Of course, like any social group, there are many internal layers divided by class and region, and the Chinese community in Burma was no exception. Yet, most of the time, such division was not that well defined nor clearly identifiable outside of the community. For the colonial general public, the Chinese were indiscriminatingly understood under one generic face that covered all internal social strata. Thus, Lim Chin Tsong felt the need to speak for the community he represented on its alleged liaison with opium, as this was "certainly of the greatest concern and importance to the Chinese community."[86] It was under the same context that Lim delivered farewell notes on ceremonial occasions, such as the retirement of Lieutenant-Governors,[87] alongside representatives of the Burmese, Shan, Karen, and Anglo-Indian communities. In all of these circumstances, Lim attached himself to the ethnic Chinese community, not merely to a small group of wealthy and prominent Chinese to which he himself belonged.

The juxtaposition is also found in government reports, a domain that was less diverse yet more authoritative than the public media, as a matter of fact. For example, in the 1917 Irrawaddy subdivision report, the tone of the District Superintendent of Police in Pyapon was ambiguous, to say the least. He started his reports in a neutral tone:

> In the jungle villages outside the towns of Bogale, Kyaiklat, Pyapon and Dedaye there are about 512 Chinamen's shops. (NB, this figure does not include the Bogale Police station jurisdiction) I have no figures to show the increase of Chinamen but I believe an increase has taken place because I am often coming across villages where new shops have been opened in the last few years and I have met many Chinamen who told me that they had only been a few years in Burma.[88]

Next, echoing that of the *Rangoon Gazette* local news, it moved to the regular crimes of the Chinese:

> In almost every village I have visited I have found Chinese shops on the river bank overhanging the water. Chinamen would not always choose such sites unless they had a good reason for it and I believe that one of the reasons for their choice is the facility with which people can enter and leave their houses without being seen by the other villagers. Almost the whole of the liquor, opium and cocaine trade is in the hands of Chinamen's and they are such expert smugglers that it is not surprising that they can smuggle out stolen property as easily as they can bring in cocaine etc. Several senior district superintendents of police believe that Chinamen train Burmans to take opium with the object of making money out of them afterwards when they have become regular "beinsas" [problems].[89]

Immediately following that, the police officer expressed his acknowledgment of the Chinese commercial skills that exceeded those of the Indians (quoted in Chapter 4). The report concluded by suggesting limiting the commercial activities of the Chinese, thus leaving the opportunities to Burmans and Indians, both of whom were British subjects. Regarding those Chinese who were "British born or became naturalized," legally also British subjects, he was clearly suspicious of them, as he believed "their hearts are in China and they are only parasites here."[90]

If this report seems confusing and capricious in its attitude, it was certainly not the case at the time. The dual image of the Chinese being excellent traders and dreadful smugglers was a common reality for the public and the establishment, bolstered by competing and compromising interests

of the time. Imperial commercial interests needed a successful Eastern race to stimulate and testify to the economic success of colonization, while the administrative forces with concerns over the colony's internal order required negative categorization of its Asian subjects. The Empire needed all these and many more to function properly. Hence, various institutions defined images according to their respective imperial needs and adjusted their priority with changing political and social circumstances. Without any of the above, the Empire would have found itself handicapped.

5.3.1 *Chinese Vices in a Global Context*

When placed in a global context, Chinese vices in Burma were not as significant as those of other peoples in other places at other times, just as the Chinese commercial influence was not decisive in Burma as it was in some other parts of the region. In 1878, a maritime strike broke out in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, hoping to prevent the Australasian Steam Navigation Company from replacing white Australian seamen with lower-paid Chinese sailors. Some decades later, in 1903, there was a debate throughout the Empire when the mining companies in Transvaal attempted to import Chinese indentured laborers. In both cases, Chinese labor was portrayed as a threat to the white communities to a level beyond that of any other ethnic groups, a threat from outside of the Empire.

In Britain itself, the similar issue of Chinese labor received extensive publicity around the 1905 election and to some extent helped the Liberal Party's victory. In a recent study on Chinese vices in Limehouse during the early twentieth century, the anti-Chinese sentiment in the West was investigated under complicated economic competition and moral corruption brought over by cheap Chinese laborers.[91] Indeed, it was here in the metropole that the face of "John Chinaman" started to emerge around the turn of the twentieth century.

Even though he may have had a previous life in Burma, it was only in London that a fictional Fu Manchu could conduct his master plan to corrupt the "white" world, and it was in places like Britain and the USA that his popularity was the highest. It is unknown whether the series of Fu Manchu ever reached the readership of Burma and, if so, what reception it had. Nevertheless, readers in Burma would not be unfamiliar with the contemporary international concern over the "Yellow Peril," given Burma's well-connected position in the global network.[92] However, inter-racial tensions, and the popular culture consequently derived, were primarily a

product of different institutions centered in the imperial metropole and other parts of the world that had decisively different priorities and outlooks than their counterparts in Burma. Back in Burma, lacking similar dynamics, the propagated image of Chinese immorality, at least before the nationalist rise, was comparatively mild. As this chapter has shown, even with economic pressure, political implication, and administrative regulation, Chinese vices *per se* never orchestrated any direct confrontation, at least in the eyes of the colonial regime. No white man was threatened by the presence of the Chinese and their alleged vices.

The global propagation of Chinese vices indicated a balance of the rivalry among contemporary institutions. Consequently, countries with a dominating white population had real concerns and urgent needs to present as much evil as possible, while the imperial presence in China had first-hand knowledge and practice through daily confrontation with the Chinese masses. Even though it also applied the regular racial denigration and hierarchies as an inevitable colonial strategy, Southeast Asia, in-between these two highly motivated or equipped ends, was not on the frontline. In this regard, Burma was in an even weaker position compared to the Straits Settlements, where its Chinese subjects, dominating the population and commercial life, occasionally made serious trouble. In fact, it was only when connecting with the majority of the colonial subjects, in this case the Burmese, that the propagation of Chinese vices gained real momentum and led to serious consequences. Thus, the co-existence of two contrasting images of the Chinese, in Burma and other colonies with similar situations, was essentially a complementary result backed by different institutions through their agents, who, first of all, had no fundamental conflict within the Empire, and secondly, had different priorities at any given time.

5.3.2 The Vocabulary of Ethno-crimes in Burma

During the 1903 labor dispute in Transvaal, a retired Indian Civil Service (ICS) man wrote to the *Times* commenting that the Indians were "certainly more tractable and easily managed than the Chinese; and they do not form secret societies…[are] under the control of a friendly and British Government…[and] relatively civilised in their habits." Most importantly, "(t)he Indian coolie is always willing and anxious to return to India."[93] This brought up another good occasion to make the Indo-Chinese comparison. Without adequate analysis on Indian "vices" themselves, it was plain enough to say that the demographics of Burma continued to play a

vital role here. Especially after the rise of Burmese/Indian nationalism and the governors started to feel the real threat, the highlight here was always the Indian. Not only because the Indian was the main subject of the British Indian Empire but also because in Burma, Indians largely outnumbered the Chinese as a migrant population. Negative impressions associated with the Chinese were often associated with the Indian as well, only ten times magnified. Subsequently, the Burmese and Indian workers' disputes in the Rangoon harbor, remotely resembling the competition between white and Chinese seamen in Britain a few decades before, led to large-scale anti-Indian riots in 1930. Moreover, the public anger from rural, rice-producing districts was concentrated mostly on Chettiar moneylenders, even though Chinese grocery shops were also allegedly responsible for "corrupting" the physical and moral conditions of the rural youth.

But there was perhaps never an "Indian vice" after all. The fundamental difference is best exemplified in the vocabulary. Going through almost all colonial literatures, official, commercial, or private, it is impossible not to notice the choice of language in describing Chinese immorality. It might be "vice," or "corruption," or plain "crime," hardly "Yellow Peril" (which never gained currency in Burma as discussed above), but never that special word: *dacoity*. Finding its origins in Hindi, dacoit was a generic term meaning "a robber belonging to an armed gang" in British India, and was later institutionalized in the Penal Code by the East India Company, so "to constitute *dacoity*, there must be five or more in the gang committing the crime."[94] The Thuggee and Dacoity Suppression Acts, 1836–1848, were introduced to Burma, along with the entire administrative system and legal infrastructure that were based on and designed for India.[95]

The first large-scale dacoity in Burma happened in the 1890s, when the British encountered local armed resistors in Upper Burma who remained loyal to the Burmese monarchy and refused to accept colonial rule soon after the final annexation. It was also known as the Pacification Campaign.[96] Although deliberately playing down its political connection, dacoity was never an ordinary crime of robbery or banditry in Burma. It continued to be applied, both by legal documents and public media, to anti-government rebels and conflicts many years after the Pacification, as late as in the Saya San Rebellion in the early 1930s.

Furthermore, almost from the very beginning, this term also denotes a spatial division. Dacoity often occurred in a rural or mountainous setting involving local ethnic groups, while vices had a predominantly urban feature, most likely to happen in the Rangoon Chinatown and other Chinese

quarters. Even the vices allegedly introduced by Chinese shops to *Shanba* were evidently foreign to the rural environment and bore the evils of urban decadence.

The discourse of dacoity clearly points to political agendas challenging British rule in the Burmese context. No matter how annoying and disturbing to the general public and local police, be it a trivial complaint on firecrackers during the Chinese New Year or fatal gang fighting involving dozens of casualties, Chinese vices were simply not defined as dacoity. The language itself officially acknowledged an apolitical nature of Chinese crimes. Subsequently, there was hardly any "Chinese dacoity" but plenty of Chinese vices in the colonial narrative and perception.

***

This chapter investigates the presentation of Chinese vices on public media and official documents of the colony and its development over the time. Although stereotyping their subject peoples based on ethnicities, often with negative connotations, was a strategy commonly used by contemporary colonial governments, the Chinese vice in Burma was not perceived as particularly dangerous in the early years. However, with the changing circumstances in the region in the early twentieth century, certain Chinese vices started to acquire political connotations and were increasingly associated with local and regional anti-colonial confrontation, thus becoming target for legal enforcement. Even so, throughout the colonial era, Chinese vices in Burma were never perceived, at least in the ruling discourse, to impose the most fatal challenge to the foundation of the regime.

Notes

1. Sax Rohmer, *The Insidious Dr Fu-Manchu* (UK title: *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu*) (London: Methuen, 1913; repr. Forgotten Books, 2008), 89.
2. Ibid., 119.
3. "Xiaoyin," 419–20.
4. The choice of the sampling period between January and April 1888 for examination is deliberately random in order to eliminate unwanted "noise" and obtain a general situation of a normal year with no international, regional, or domestic disturbances. The decision to cut a window of four-month is made for practical reasons in order to provide sufficient and manageable data.
5. "Local and Provincial," *Rangoon Gazette*, January 6, 1888, 18.
6. Ibid., January 13, 1888, 20.

7. Ibid., January 27, 1888, 3.
8. Ibid., March 2, 1888, 16.
9. Ibid., February 3, 1888, 11.
10. Ibid., January 24, 1888, 14.
11. Ibid., March 9, 1888, 14.
12. Ibid., March 16, 1888, 3.
13. Ibid., March 23, 1888, 20.
14. Ibid., April 13, 1888, 11.
15. Ibid., March 30, 1888, 8.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., April 20, 1888.
18. Ibid., January 13, 1888, 10.
19. Ibid., January 20, 1888, 3.
20. Ibid., January 13, 1888, 19.
21. Ibid., February 24, 1888, 21.
22. Ibid., March 16, 1888, 3.
23. Ibid., October 18, 1909, 2. This must have been a significant event, as the same fight was also reported in the police report under the section heading "Chinese faction fights (Kenteik vs. Hooseng)," BL: IOR, V/24/3245, Police Department, Report on the Rangoon Town Police (1909), 3.
24. Officials in the Straits Settlements had long pressed for actions to be taken in controlling Chinese secret societies by the colonial government. The Dangerous Societies Suppression Ordinance was passed in 1869 after the 1867 Penang riots, followed by the Societies Ordinance in 1889.
25. For race, ethnicity, and colonialism, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1997); Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art, Colonial Culture* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).
26. Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*.
27. Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
28. Thomas Engelbert, "'Go West' in Cochinchina: Chinese and Vietnamese Illicit Activities in the Transbassac (c. 1860–1920s)," *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 1 (2007): 56–82.
29. BL: IOR, V/24/3234, Report on the Police Administration in British Burma (1875), 40.
30. As discussed in note 4 of this chapter, to obtain a balanced view over these seven decades with minimum disturbance from ad hoc social turmoil, the

method used here is to collect seven samples from annual police reports, with interval of a decade (1875, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915, 1925, and 1935). BL: IOR, V/24/3234-3239, Home Department, Report on the Police Administration in British Burma 1867–1884; Report on the Police Administration of Lower Burma 1885–1887; Report on the Police Administration of Burma 1888–1939.

31. Ibid. (1875), 19.
32. Ibid. (1875), 38.
33. Ibid. (1915), 15, 17, and 21.
34. Ibid. (1925), 22 and 38–39.
35. Ibid. (1935), 34–36.
36. For the case of Chinese in Southeast Asia, see Carl. A. Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1990); for the case in Burma, see Wright, *Opium and Empire*. Other recent works in the region are as follows: Hunt Janin, *The India-China Opium Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999); R. K. Newman, "Opium Smoking in Late Imperial China: A Reconsideration," *Modern Asian Studies* 29 no. 4 (1995): 765–94; George Bryan Souza, "Opium and the Company: Maritime Trade and Imperial Finances on Java, 1684–1796," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 1(2009): 113–33.
37. Wright, *Opium and Empire*, 24–25.
38. For details on the Royal Opium Commission in Burma, see Wright, *Opium and Empire*, 61–94; for this commission in general, see John Richards, "Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895," *Modern Asian Studies* 36, no.2 (2002): 375–420.
39. They were the 12th, 13th, 15th, and 19th of December 1893.
40. Royal Commission on Opium, *Vol. II*, 216, Yang Fu.
41. Ibid., 208.
42. "Petition from members of the Chinese community in Rangoon," ibid., 525–26.
43. "Translation of Memorial from certain Chinese Residents in Moulmein," in Royal Commission on Opium, *Volume V, Appendices; Together with Correspondence on the Subject of Opium with the Straits Settlements and China* (London: printed for H.M.S.O. by Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1894), 345–46.
44. Ibid.
45. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, W. J. Keith, April 13, 1918.
46. Wright, *Opium and Empire*, 4.
47. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 86691/5M–13, "Minutes of the Divisional Conference," May 8, 1917.
48. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
49. Ibid.

50. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 62/1L–3, D. C. Officer of Bassein, January 3, 1918.
51. Ibid.
52. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 43451/5M–17, J. S. Furnivall to the Commissioner of the Irrawaddy Division, May 31, 1918.
58. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
59. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, Lim Chin Tsong, March 13, 1918.
60. Taw Sein Ko, "The Chinese in the Tharrawaddy District," in *Burmese Sketches,* vol. II (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1920), 129.
61. More biographic information on Taw Sein Ko see, Penny Edwards, "Relocating the Interlocutor: Taw Sein Ko (1864–1930) and the Itinerancy of Knowledge in British Burma," *Southeast Asia Research* 12, no. 3 (2004): 277–335; Yi Li, "Governing the Chinese in Multi-ethnic Colonial Burma between the 1890s and 1920s," *South East Asian Research* 24, no. 1 (2016): 135–54.
62. Taw Sein Ko, "Tharrawaddy: A Criminal District," in *Burmese Sketches*, vol. II, 125–28.
63. Wright, *Opium and Empire*, 10.
64. For gambling and colonial policing in Burma, see Jonathan Saha, "Colonization, Criminalization and Complicity: Policing Gambling in Burma c 1880–1920," *South East Asian Research* 21, no. 4 (2013): 655–72.
65. BL: IOPP, Mss Eur C49. Roger Franklin, *A Burma Bobby* (Devon, 1969).
66. BL: IOR, V/24/3245, Report on the Rangoon Town Police (1911), 6.
67. As in notes 4 and 30 in this chapter, to minimize "noise" over the period of 40 years and obtain the average situation in Rangoon, a similar method is applied to take sample data from 1905, 1915, 1925, and 1935.
68. Li, "Governing the Chinese."
69. WBSA: Criminal Investigation Department, 125/22, 173/22. "List," 3.
70. NAM: 1/1 (A)/ 4049, 1C–6. "Annul report by Mr. Taw Sein Ko on the Chinese newspaper publish in Rangoon." No. 6/C.R.D, "Annual report on the Chinese newspaper published in Rangoon, by Mr Taw Sein Ko," from the Supdt., Archaeological Survey and Examiner in Chinese, Mandalay to the Personal Assistant to the D.I.G., R. & C. I., Burma, January 14, 1916.
71. At least in 1914, much to the relief of the regime, Taw Sein Ko reported that "The new Chinese newspaper assumes a correct and loyal attitude towards the British Government, and carefully abstains from discussing

local politics or ventilating local grievances." NAM: 1/1 (A)/ 3945, 1C–10. "Annual Report on the Chinese Newspaper Published in Rangoon," by Mr. Taw Sein Ko. No. 2/C.R.D, from Taw Sein Ko to the Personal Assistant to the D.I.G., R. & C. I., Burma, January 5, 1914.

72. This society was believed to be related to the Tongmenghui and its political successors in China. The English banner hung on its headquarters on Latter Street was inscribed "Kak Min Society" (Kaik Min Tong in the Hokkien dialect, and Geh Min Dan in Mandarin), meaning "Revolutionary Party." The two Chinese banners on the headquarters were Kaik Min Tong and Eng Swat Shea (literature group). NAM: 1/1 (A) /3896, 1C–36, "Chinese Intrigue in Burma. The Geh Min Dan Society. 1913." No. 1361/32(g), M. J. Chisholm, Deputy Inspector-General, April 21, 1913. According to Chinese sources, the second floor of this building was *Juemin Yueshubao She* [Juemin Book and Newspaper Reading Room], an affiliation of the *Juemin Ribao* newspaper, the organ of the Geh Min Dan. However, *Zhonghua Gemingdang* [the Chinese Revolutionary Party] was not established until 1914 by Sun Yat-sen in Japan. In the years up to 1913, the active China-oriented nationalist party in Southeast Asia was the Tongmenghui (dissolved after 1911) and the Kuomintang (KMT) (established by some Tongmenghui members in Beijing in 1912). In 1912 and 1913, the KMT sent two key members to organize party branches in Singapore and Malaya. One of them was Yunnanese Lü Tian Min (alias Lü Zhi Yi), a native of Ssu-mao who joined the Tongmenghui on its inception in 1905. Lü had spent years in Rangoon as chief editor of Chinese newspapers such as Tongmenghui's organ prior to 1911. It is not known whether Lü and his colleagues visited Burma in 1912 or 1913, and the relationship between the KMT in Beijing, the KMT branches in Southeast Asia, and the "Geh Min Dan" in Burma is not clear. At this stage, it is sufficient to assume that the Geh Min Dan as investigated here had a close connection with the Tongmenghui in Burma and the KMT in China, and therefore inherited the premises, the banners, and perhaps more, from the former Tongmenghui Rangoon Branch. Additional discussion regarding Chinese political activities is in the next chapter.
73. NAM: 1/1 (A) /3896, 1C–36. No. 1845/40M, September 30, 1913.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., No. 1361/32(g).
77. Ibid., Remarks by an Intelligence Officer, March 15, 1913.
78. NAM: 1/1(C) /9121, 1–P, 11, "Grant of Passports to Persons of Anglo-Chinese Nationality." No. 780/1P–11, from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, to the Commissioner, Irrawaddy Division, August 21, 1905.
79. BL: IOR, V/24/3246–47, Report on the Rangoon Town Police (1932), 14.

80. BL: IOR, V/24/3246–47, Report on the Rangoon Town Police (1932–1938).
81. In reports of the Rangoon Town Police, deportation under the Foreigners Act was seldom mentioned before the 1920s.
82. A similar regulation, the European Vagrancy Act, also existed for the expulsion of unwanted British and Empire nationalities, but the number expelled was not comparable to those of Chinese and Indians.
83. Relevant legislations to remove unwanted persons included Banishment Ordinance and its amendments after the 1910s, Schools Ordinance (1920), Printing Press Ordinance (1920), and border control measurements such as Passengers Restriction Ordinance (1919), Immigration Restriction Ordinance (1930), and the Aliens Ordinance (1933). C. F. Yong and R. B. McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya, 1912–1949* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, 1990), 44–79.
84. *Rangoon Gazette*, February 10, 1888. S. Pinthong, as mentioned here was possibly Soo Pin Tong, the leader of the Hokkien Soo Clan in Rangoon and one of the founders of the Kheng Hock Keong that were listed in its 1863 foundation inscription.
85. Ibid.
86. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, Lim Chin Tsong, March, 13, 1918.
87. Ibid., Lim Chin Tsong, April 5, 1917 for Harcourt Butler; November 14, 1922 for Reginald Craddock.
88. NAM: 1/15(E)/4185, 6M–4. General Department No. 6688/2Q–9.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law and "The Chinese Puzzle" in Imperial Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
92. A catalog from a public library in Rangoon shows a list of English language publications accessible by the English readership in the colony in 1917. Bernard Free Library, *Catalogue of the Bernard Free Library, General Department* (Rangoon: Printed for the Educational Syndicate, by the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1917).
93. *Times*, December 14, 1903, 16, quoted in Auerbach, *"The Chinese Puzzle."*
94. Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, 290.
95. For local criminal practice (in this case the Thugs) and colonial discourse, see Martine van Woerkens, *The Strangled Traveler: Colonial Imaginings and the Thugs of India*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
96. Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London: E. Arnold, 1912). Michael Aung-Thwin argues that the Pacification was never properly completed throughout the colonial period. Michale Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order without Meaning," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (1985): 245–61.

CHAPTER 6

Making No Political "Noise"

The first half of the twentieth century saw the steady rise of nationalism and anti-colonialism throughout the Empire, with British India (including Burma) being one of the most active fields. Indeed, it was not only the "Chinese vice" that could not remain purely apolitical in Burma; various elements in the Chinese community got involved, willingly or reluctantly, in politics and the "noises" they made were to be heard near and far, both in the colonial state and back in China.

But just as the colonial vocabulary never managed to accurately capture the political implication of ethno-criminal activities, the notion of ethnic Chinese remaining politically silent was too strong to be altered for the colonial public, even in the age of high nationalism. As late as 1936, on the eve of Burma's separation from India, notwithstanding the heat of Burmese nationalist and student movements, a letter to the *Rangoon Gazette* still stated that Burma was not a political playground for the Chinese:

> For those of the Chinese students who are 'politics-crazed' China is the proper place, there they can voice their views before Chiang Khai-shek. And for the Indian pseudo-politician, India is the place – there he has a good chance of becoming Gh-'s right-hand man.
>
> It is important to make it known that very few Chinese students are members of the Students Union. The major section of the Chinese students are interested only in their studies. It is their chief duty to be peaceful and useful

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> citizens and to make no 'noise'. They take part only in the social activities of the various associations and not in political intrigue, for it is not their desire to get mixed up in any political claptrap.
>
> Burma is foreign to us, and it is not our business to meddle with her political affairs. Some of us may have studied a lot, but not enough, and the mind of the student is too young still to appreciate the intricacies of politics.[1]

The letter, written by "a Chinese student," while not denying active political involvement of Chinese and Indian diasporic communities for their respective homelands, continued to support an image of Chinese political indifference in domestic affairs of Burma. Like the portraits of Chinese commercial skills and Chinese vices, the impression of an apolitical Chinese community dominated the colonial public discourse. However, it was eventually proved inaccurate almost on every ideological front.

This chapter examines political engagement among the Chinese in Burma. First, it looks at the transnational expansion of Chinese institutions and their impact on the overseas community from the beginning of the twentieth century. Like political and social changes in China, this period saw the emergence of numerous Chinese political groups and their agents outside the homeland. Several significant events provided windows to showcase the complicated interaction between homeland and overseas actors. To some extent, these transnational exchanges helped to reshape the self-identification of the Burmese Chinese as a singular Chinese ethnic group in the context of a newly formed Chinese nation. It crossed the geographical boundaries that were rigidly drawn by the colonial regime under the conceptualization of a modern nation-state and by the regional division based on birthplace, dialect, and kinship, which had traditionally dominated the migrant community. Exerting trans-territorial and transnational influences through local agents, Chinese political institutions extended their networks to shape the social landscape in this colonial state, overlapping with a domain normally monopolized by British imperial interests.

What is fascinating here is not only the existence of a very active political scene within the community but also the colonial regime's lack of awareness of, and interest in, these foreign-originated and foreign-oriented activities and its slowness to react, at least until the 1920s. It was only after 1923, with the implementation of Diarchy (political reform in British India that encouraged the participation of local multiethnic entities), that the Chinese political presence in the colony finally became

visible to imperial observers. Chinese politicians representing community and ethnic interests in the administrative system and Chinese involvement in anti-colonial movements are to be discussed next in this chapter, with the latter inevitably having post-independence repercussions.

The mismatch of active transnational Chinese political networks and a limited colonial infrastructure to accommodate ethnic stakeholders also explains the perceived lack of political interest, which was another characteristic ascribed to the Chinese, along with the circulation of the image of the apolitical Chinese in the colonial mentality. Compared to other Chinese "myths," this image is particularly vulnerable and open to challenge. This chapter reveals how politically enthusiastic and sophisticated the Burmese Chinese had persistently shown to be throughout the period. Indeed, the Chinese were anything but apolitical on almost every possible front.

6.1 Chinese Domestic Politics and Its Transnational Networks

From the beginning of the twentieth century, political changes in China heavily influenced overseas Chinese communities. Being a neighboring British colony southwest of China, Burma saw waves of competing Chinese political institutions that solicited support from and exerted influence, if not authority, over its emigrants and their descendants.

6.1.1 The Reformists and the Conservatives

In the courtyard of the Yunnanese temple in Amarapura, a couplet inscribed on two wooden plaques is said to have been composed by Kang Youwei, the renowned scholar and pro-emperor reformist of China at the turn of the twentieth century, during his visit to Burma in the summer of 1903. After a failed attempt at reform in 1898 in Beijing at the Qing court, Kang fled China into exile overseas (1898–1913), during which he became a campaigner and fundraiser for the royalist's and reformist's cause among Chinese diasporic communities in the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Kang did not talk much in his travelogue about his experience in Burma apart from Buddhist practices and the grand Shwe Dagon Pagoda.[2] Among the Burmese Chinese, the best remembered legacy of Kang's visit today is perhaps the couplet in Amarapura (Fig. 6.1). Here, this Canton-native commemorated his brief visit to Wacheng and his encounters with the local (mostly Yunnanese) Chinese. It reads:

Fig. 6.1 Couplet by Kang Youwei, courtyard of the Yunnanese *Guanyin Si*, Amarapura, near Mandalay, 2008

> Those accompanying me are all my compatriots. Our meeting is like a Buddhist assembly: no conflict with the mundane world, and both the Buddha and the Heaven are delighted;
>
> Driving through this foreign land, I incidentally leave my footprint here, and will always cherish this occasion that is perhaps seeded from my last incarnation, as well as this passionate night.[3]

However, Kang was more than a scholarly connoisseur of foreign landscapes and exotic customs. He had a mission here to advocate reformist ideas and loyalty to the Qing Emperor among the Burmese Chinese. Under Kang's influence, a branch of the Baohuanghui (Society to Protect the Emperor)[4] was founded in Rangoon in 1905, using the name *Zhonghua Wenhui* (Chinese Literature Association).[5] Like-minded supporters also established one of the first Chinese schools in Burma, the Teong Hwa Chinese School, in 1903, making it the reformists' main propaganda and educational base. Arguably the earliest Chinese newspaper,[6] the *Yangjiang Xinbao* (Rangoon River's New Paper)[7] was then under a mixed management of conservatives

and reformists and might also have been involved in, though not exclusively, the reformists' propaganda campaign. Both the newspaper and the school managed to recruit some prominent Chinese, including Taw Sein Ko, into their management bodies.

Even before Kang Youwei's visit, the influence of royalists and their reform efforts at the Qing court had caught the attention of the Burmese Chinese. *ZhiXin Bao*, a newspaper founded in 1897 by the reformists in Macau, remained a propaganda base for dissidents like Kang after the 1898 coup. On April 29, 1900, some Burmese Chinese, headed by "Hokkien Lim Chin Tsong and Cantonese Lee Zhongxin, along with forty-seven thousand Chinese here,"[8] published an open letter in the newspaper. It was addressed to Qing ministers in Beijing and "suggested" that the Empress Dowager should return power to Emperor Guangxu, who had been under house arrest by her order since 1898, so that she could peacefully enjoy her elderly years.[9] This was one of the many messages that the *ZhiXin Bao* published during that period sent in from Chinese communities in Singapore, Siam, Batavia, Malaya, and many other Southeast Asian places; all expressed great concern for the Empress Dowager's good health, an indirect but clear message supporting the imprisoned young emperor.

As a transnational political organization based in Chinese diasporic communities, the Baohuanghui's nationalist outlook was also evident in a global context. In 1905, in response to the Sino-American treaty limiting Chinese labor immigration to the USA, Kang and his followers launched a global anti-American boycott through Baohuanghui's worldwide network in Chinese diasporic communities.[10] A leaflet published in Rangoon in June that year expressed a global solidarity and vowed to "resist the great oppression…to work together and co-operate with one another…to wipe out our shame and disgrace."[11]

In the meantime, the conservatives, headed by the Empress Dowager and her ministers, also noticed the potential of those Chinese who had emigrated overseas. They officially abandoned the Qing prohibition on emigration in 1893.[12] One notable effort from the Qing conservatives was the establishment of a series of Chinese Chambers of Commerce in Southeast Asia in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was an enterprise promoted by the Qing court to solicit financial and human support from its overseas merchants.[13] The Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, for example, was established in 1906, a direct result of the efforts of Penang-born, Hakka immigrant Chang Pi-Shih through his 1905 Southeast Asian tour.[14] This was followed by stints in Penang (1907), Selangor, Perak,

Rangoon (1909), and Bangkok (1910). These Chambers of Commerce were semi-official bodies that registered themselves with the Minister of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce in Beijing and were granted official seals from the court.[15] As a subtle way of exerting authority over overseas Chinese under the cover of commerce, this practice was to be followed by subsequent Chinese regimes and political parties.

Second-class royal titles were said to be awarded to 12 Chinese in Burma, one of whom was Koh Ban Pan, a senior member of the Hokkien community in the late nineteenth century, a "prominent" Chinese introduced in the *Impressions of Burma*, and a fundraiser in the 1903 renovation project of the Kheng Hock Keong.[16] This distribution of imperial titles was also widely practiced in other Chinese communities in Southeast Asia.[17]

In addition to the couplet in Amarapura, Kang Youwei also left his calligraphy in Rangoon on the banner of "Liu Ye Xuan," a social club for Chinese elites, as well as the banner for the *Zhonghua Wenhui*. The latter became somewhat of a local point of interest and a valued antique that hung on the second floor of a grocery shop on Maung Khai Street as late as 1925.[18] In the meantime, Liu Ye Xuan became a wealthy Chinese club affiliated with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce at the corner of Latter Street and Strand Road. A fusion such as this surely symbolized not only the competing agents representing Chinese domestic politics by claiming the loyalties of the Burmese Chinese but also the adjustment and adoption of these interests in the local context over the years.

Kang Youwei, who represented the pro-emperor royalists and reformists, and his rivals who were loyal to the Empress were perhaps the first generation of modern Chinese political activists to bring Chinese domestic political contests into overseas settings. Over the next few decades, Burma, like many other places around the world where Chinese diasporic communities flourished, remained a regular destination for visiting activists representing China-oriented political forces in their efforts to seek overseas support.

6.1.2 The Republicans

Trailing the reformists' political footsteps were the new waves of modern Chinese political institutional expansion. Also, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Tongmenghui, under whose leadership the Republic of China was to be established after the 1911 revolution, reached Burma. Founded in Tokyo in 1905 by Sun Yat-sen, himself from a Cantonese

family whose members had emigrated to Hawaii, the Tongmenghui set as its ultimate mission the overthrow of the Qing regime. This organization gained increasing support among Chinese migrant communities all over the world, particularly in Southeast Asia.[19]

In Burma, a group of people with similar republican ideas started to challenge the royalists and reformists around the same time. Three Rangoon-based Hokkien, Xu Zanzhou, Chen Ganquan, and Zhuang Yinan (one of the organizers of the 1903 renovation of the Kheng Hock Keong), were among the most active. They were acquainted with like-minded visiting Chinese activists, such as Qin Lishan, who was close to Sun and his comrades and had fled to Southeast Asia from China after a failed attempt to assassinate a Qing official. At the Sino-Burmese border, Dao Anren, a local headman (*tusi*) of Tai ethnicity in Ganya,[20] also became acquainted with Chen, Xu, and Zhuang while visiting Rangoon. Later, Dao pursued military studies in Japan, where he joined the Tongmenghui in 1906[21] and developed a military training center in his frontier territory.[22] As mentioned in Chapter 2, a number of Yunnanese, having joined this organization through networks in Yunnan, were already active in Upper Burma around this time.

Soon after the Singapore branch was established in 1906, Tongmenghui members were sent from Singapore to Burma for fundraising; yet no institutional expansion was planned at this stage. Finally, in the spring of 1908, under the introduction of Wang Qun, a Sichuanese who joined the Tongmenghui in Tokyo and an acquaintance of Dao Anren, a Rangoon office was formally established. The first meeting was held in the Dalhousie Park in central Rangoon,[23] and a small group of Burmese Chinese became the first members of Tongmenghui in Burma. Xu Zanzhou became member No. 555 and its first head (replaced by Zhuang Yinan later that year).[24]

The Burma branch did not start auspiciously. Due to his extensive political activities, Xu Zanzhou was forced, under pressure from other partners, to withdraw his share from his Rangoon business. Within a few months, only a dozen people had joined, half of whom were adults and the other half youth.[25] Two months later, there were 37 members in total. In the autumn of that year, upon launching its official publication, membership rose to about 400. Finally, in the winter of 1908, committees were set up and office bearers elected following the general organizational system in other branches, with seven *Zhu Meng Yuan* (key sworn members) appointed, including both Hokkien and Cantonese.[26] Later, two members toured extensively in upcountry Burma and managed to recruit more

members from 24 *Shanba* locations. Often, branches were operated either under the name *Shubaoshe* (Book and Newspaper Club)[27] or under the personal name of the local contact.[28]

The major task of the Burma branch was no different from that of other overseas branches, namely to promote anti-Qing ideas among the local community and provide financial and human support for revolts in China and other Tongmenghui efforts. One important task assigned to the Burma branch was to develop a revolutionary base on the Yunnan border by utilizing Dao Anren's existing facilities. The strategy was that as soon as circumstances allowed, this remote Yunnan-Burmese base would provide significant military, industrial, and personnel resources for the organization's revolts in the southwest.

Prior to the successful revolution of 1911, the Tongmenghui Burma branch promoted its ideological goals among Chinese communities via newspapers and schools. One possible outlet was the Teong Hwa Chinese School, where both Xu and Zhuang were committee members. However, the battle for control of the school was soon lost to the royalists and their supporters. In 1907, the Qing court sent a special educational envoy, Sa Junlu,[29] to investigate overseas education in Burma and put this school under the financial (and perhaps also curricular) management of the Qing national educational system. Consequently, the Tongmenghui moved on to work on an evening school, the *Yishang Yexue* (later it became a day school). It remained under the tight control of the Tongmenghui and its successors, who used its premises as their temporary office, and its students formed the backbone of Tognmenghui activities.

The *Yangjiang Xinbao*, under a partial pro-Tongmenghui management, helped to promote anti-emperor thoughts, for example, by criticizing Kang Youwei's visit.[30] However, the management body of the *Yangjiang* also included royalists and reformists; therefore, it was important for the Tongmenghui to have its own propaganda tool. After *Yangjiang*'s closure in August 1908, Tongmenghui took over its equipment and started to publish its official organ, a new newspaper called *Guanghua Ribao* (Bright China's Daily). Ju Zheng, who later became the head of the Judicial Yuan of the Republic of China, was invited from Singapore to be its chief editor. The newspaper also secured the support of prominent and wealthy Chinese merchants in the town. Chan Ma Phee was one of its guarantors. It soon began to advocate revolutionary ideology. In 1909, *Guanghua* was under the threat of suspension owing to an incident related to the (Qing) Chinese Consul of Rangoon after the newspaper published a couplet ridiculing

the Consul in Rangoon, Xiao Yongxi, over his superstitious behavior in a Chinese funeral in Rangoon.[31] In 1910, with the intervention of British and Qing diplomats, the colonial government expelled two editors of the *Guanghua*, Ju Zheng and Chen Hanping, thus essentially dissolving the newspaper. It was widely believed that the government action was facilitated by *Guanghua*'s archenemy, the Baohuanghui. The royalists subsequently took back *Guanghua*'s equipment and started yet another newspaper, the *Shangwu Bao* (Commercial News).

Later, *Guanghua* managed to resume operations; but in the following year, it was once again forced to close down under pressure from the government. This time, despite the Singapore branch's effort to hire lawyers to defend the case in order to minimize the damage, its editors were once again deported from Burma.

This was a blow to the Tongmenghui in Burma, and it remained relatively quiet until 1911. Its director, Zhuang Yinan, fled to Penang and resumed the *Guanghua* there. In 1910, Sun Yat-sen organized the Penang Conference and managed to reshuffle the Tongmenghui, establishing Penang as its overseas headquarters and the *Guanghua* as its official organ.[32] During the conference, Sun also decided to launch the Guangzhou Uprising in April 1911. For this last major revolt before the successful revolution in October 1911, Burma sent at least three members, one Cantonese, one Hakka, and one Zhejiang. The Cantonese Li Yannan died in Canton and became one of the "seventy-two martyrs" of this revolt. His portrait still hangs in the Tong Xing Guan (a birthplace association for Cantonese from the Kaiping County) at the northern part of 20th Street, of which he was a native.

6.1.3 The 1911 Revolution of China

The first major modern Chinese political event that had a significant influence on the Burmese Chinese community was no doubt the successful 1911 revolution and the establishment of the Republic of China. The Tongmenghui Burma branch, until then the local agent of one of the Chinese political institutions in the colony, now enjoyed the sole official recognition of the new regime in China. On this occasion, the colonial state's Hokkien, Cantonese, and Yunnanese residents, who were often separated along regional lines, reacted in a largely united manner.

On the night of October 10, 1911, the Tongmenghui Burma branch received news from Reuters of a successful revolt in Wuchang, which

was then confirmed by sister branches in Hong Kong and Penang. Word immediately spread among the local Chinese. To celebrate the success, the community organized a public meeting in Jubilee Hall, followed by a street parade ten days later. Although it was raining heavily, the spirits of the participating students and the general public were reportedly unfazed. In November, when the royal court in Beijing fell to the Republicans, flags were flying over the rooftops of Chinese shops in Rangoon, accompanied by non-stop firecrackers. All the students and teachers of the *Yishang* School cut their queues.[33]

One Englishman noted that around 1911, "it was a remarkable testimony to the political significance of the queue when one saw many of the Chinamen appear in the streets 'curtailed'."[34] In a Cantonese sawmill in the Ahlone District of west Rangoon, Huang Chuoqing remembered that "my father and his colleagues cut their queues together. To celebrate this occasion, they had a banquet in the workshop and also set off some firecrackers to mark this auspicious event."[35] In Moulmein, it is said that in 1911, before the success of the revolt, a Chinese catechist "was bold enough to remove his 'pigtail' and appear with close-cropped hair, because he had read that 'It is a shame for a man to have long hair'!"[36]

However, for various reasons, other people chose not to cut their queues even after 1911. For example, U Shwe I, a Chinese pearl trader from Mergui, decided not to cut his "either because he was too old to care, or because he was numbered amongst those who decided to 'wait and see,' …It is not unlikely that he retained an idea that it was sacrosanct."[37] Just as responses in China toward the emperor and the revolution varied enormously by age, region, and social status, so too were they diverse in overseas locations such as Burma.

In the Tongmenghui Burma branch, Xu Zanzhou (Hokkien) and He Yinsan (Cantonese) promptly took action upon domestic requests for financial and human support, while its head, Zhuang Yinan, soon returned to his native Amoy to serve in the new provincial government of Fujian. On October 23, two weeks after the revolution, 10,000 Hong Kong Dollars were raised and sent from Rangoon via the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank to its Hong Kong branch. More funds were raised later, totaling more than 400,000 Rupees. Special priority in this fundraising campaign was given to the revolts in neighboring Yunnan, where money collected from the Mandalay regional office was sent.[38]

In the meantime, the Burma branch worked closely with its members at the Burmo-Yunnanese border base and within Yunnan to overthrow

the local Qing viceroy. On October 25, Dao Anren reported a successful revolt in Tengyueh and asked for support. The following day, two teams were dispatched from Burma, one under the direction of three Yunnanese and the other led by two Hokkien and one Cantonese, to join forces with Dao and his men in Yunnan. They not only brought over supplies and funds but also made a public announcement to the people of Yunnan under the name of the Tongmenghui Burma branch, on behalf of the "military government." The announcement elaborated the essential missions of the Tongmenghui and reassured the Yunnanese public of peace and order. A similar announcement was also distributed among Chinese communities in Burma, again in the name of the Burma branch, hailing this "unprecedented happy occasion"[39] and urging all Chinese in Burma to donate as "we share the same ancestor, so to support [the cause] is our responsibility that we can never give up."[40]

6.1.4 Post-1911 Rivalry and Solidarity

However, the establishment of the Republic in 1912 did not end the conflict among Chinese domestic political factions. In the following decades, power changed hands among various regional warlords and central governments in China. From the 1930s, the threat of Japanese military expansion, later escalating to the Sino-Japanese War, was acutely felt. All these events were faithfully relegated to and promptly reacted upon through local agents in the Burmese Chinese community and, from time to time, either separated or united the community.

The colonial government's monitoring of Chinese media and societies, discussed in the previous chapter, revealed but a small portion of the mounting post-1911 China-initiated and China-oriented political activities within the Chinese community. Tongmenghui underwent its own evolution and was eventually reshuffled and renamed as Kuomintang (KMT).[41] In Burma, the KMT was first mentioned in 1918,[42] though it may have been established earlier.[43] Along with the Chinese Consulate in Rangoon, the KMT's Burma office often engaged in local affairs of this diasporic community, styling itself as the official representative of the Chinese government.

Newspaper continued to be a major propaganda battlefield of competing political interests. The *Juemin Ribao* ("Chiao-Min-jih-pao" or "Daily Awakener of the People" in Taw Sein Ko's report), first published on September 2, 1913, was the political organ "tak[ing] the side of Dr Sun

Yat Sen."[44] It inherited *Guanghua*'s office (and most probably equipment again). As the KMT party newspaper, it was part of a global media network composed of major Chinese cities as well as Southeast Asian and American ports where significant Chinese communities and local party newspapers existed, and it shared news and resources internally among its members. A digest section in the *Juemin* that retrieved information from this network was dedicated to Chinese diasporic community news, especially on issues related to patriotic activities, education, and Chinese nationalities.[45] In 1921, the *Yangguang Ribao* (Rangoon Daily) was established by a Hokkien man, Xu Huili (W. L. Kough), one of the earliest members of the Tongmenghui.[46] From 1923, a third newspaper, *Miamdian Chenbao* (Myanmar Morning Post), sponsored by Aw Boon Haw, the "Tiger Balm King," joined the show. Both *Yangguang Ribao* and *Miamdian Chenbao* claimed to be impartial, with primary interest in Chinese commercial activities; in reality, they often provided alternative voices to the *Juemin* and were associated with different factions within the KMT and later, the Communist Party.

It is difficult to say when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as an organized political party started to engage with and disseminate its ideology among the Burmese Chinese.[47] Some suggested that in 1940–1941, a cell was established in Burma by a party member sent from the Southern Bureau, and that among the first recruits was a son of a Bassein-based Hokkien rice miller with the surname Tan (Chen).[48] However, the influence of Communism and Marxism could have been reasonably felt no later than the early 1930s. Young, local-born Burmese Chinese, some of whom received education in China, and visiting young Chinese intellectuals organized various associations and publications promoting anti-Japanese, anti-KMT, and pro-communist ideas. Minor newspapers, magazines, and newspaper supplements, such as the *Xinya Xiaobao* (Sprouts Gazette) and a Cantonese-dominated *Yefeng* (Coconut Breeze), a supplement to the *Yangguang Ribao*, mushroomed under their efforts. Despite the lack of institutional and official support from the CCP, these publications and their staff members, empowered by various revolutionary and left-wing ideas including communism, had considerable influence over the younger members of the community.

While rival forces led to division among members active in Chinese politics, the community meanwhile was drawn together by another significant development in China: Japanese military expansion. Indeed, it was the anti-Japanese movement that mobilized the widest support among the

community. The impact of this major event in China was so strong that it eventually united all factions under a common anti-Japanese frontline. In 1928, in response to a conflict between China and Japan in Jinan, Burmese Chinese donated 510,000 Rupees and launched a strong anti-Japanese campaign, including boycotting Japanese products, especially rickshaws, a symbol of Japanese manufacturing power.[49]

With escalating Japanese military advances in China, notably in 1931 and 1937, donations and anti-Japanese movements became routine to Burmese Chinese community life in the 1930s. Various factions and their agents temporarily downplayed their disagreements just as the same cause had united rival parties and forces within China. In 1937, the Sino-Japanese War openly broke out. A General Association of War Relief was soon established, with representatives from all major political agents as well as resourceful elites. Starting in 1939, the aid became more tangible for the Burmese Chinese after the opening of the Burma Road; many of them served along the road, while others traveled via this road to the Chinese wartime capital, Chongqing, and beyond. There were also individuals who returned to China and joined local anti-Japanese forces in their native towns and villages, sometimes under the direction of the Communist Party.[50]

To some extent, the transnational political influences originating in China transcended not only the physical boundaries between nation-states and colonies but also the invisible mental boundaries that deeply divided Chinese diasporic communities, especially along the lines of regionalism. Modern Chinese nationalism and revolutions defined a clear and unified image of the Chinese nation and, through their transnational networks, conveyed this strong message to its overseas migrants. Just as the colonial knowledge formation and dissemination within the British Empire had a significant impact on its governing policies and public representations, Chinese institutions developed a discourse that successfully managed to rebuild a single identification that overcame regional rivalries. Thus, even though the factional conflicts never ceased to exist within the Burmese Chinese community, now they were more often than not based on the difference in political ideologies instead of the age-old conflicts between different regional groups. It produced more interactions and cooperation among Hokkien, Cantonese, and Yunnanese immigrants and between existing migrants and visiting Chinese from other provinces and regions, a situation much less likely in other social and commercial encounters.

6.2 Slow Response from the Colonial Authority

Compared to the interest in some other activities within the Chinese community, the colonial administration in Burma paid little attention to Chinese political movements on its own soil, and government intervention was kept to a minimum except for occasional deportation of newspaper editors with dangerous thoughts and sporadic intelligence reports.[51]

In contrast to this negligence of administrative channels in Burma was an ever-expanding and influential administration of Chinese affairs in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States. From the 1920s, the spread of Chinese nationalism drew increasing attention from the colonial governments in the region and trans-colony coordination started to take shape. In November 1929, Secretaries for Chinese Affairs from the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and Hong Kong met in Hong Kong with the British Minister, the Consul-General of Canton, and others from the Chinese Consular Service. A similar meeting, again attended by Secretaries for Chinese Affairs from Singapore, Malaya, and Hong Kong, was held in Singapore in February 1931. The pressing topic for both conferences was colonial policy toward local KMT branches and their influence in particular, and increasing Chinese nationalism in general.[52] Curiously, the Government of Burma, despite having its own Chinese community and very close connections with other nearby British colonies, was not present at either conference and seemed to be excluded from this British trans-colonial scheme of developing a broad front against the spread of Chinese nationalism.

Burma's administrative subordination under the India Office might have prevented it from taking an active role in the trans-colonial campaign headed by British Asian colonies under the Colonial Office, as these two Offices were known for their different corridors of power and shared few common dynamics either in London or in Asia. But even within British India, Burma was less active on Chinese nationalism than some other provinces. For instance, in early 1925, the Intelligence Branch of the Bengal Government took note of some political speeches and publications made by a newly arrived Chinese professor, Lim Ngo Chiang, in Visva-Bharati, the educational initiative established by Rabindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan, in western Bengal, and requested further information about him from their Burma colleagues because Lim had spent some time in Rangoon before arriving in Bengal. The report from Rangoon arrived promptly, stating that Lim was employed as the principle of the *Huaqiao*

Zhongxue (Overseas Chinese High School) in Kemmendine, in western Rangoon. Established in 1909 with large donations from Chan Ma Phee and the Chan-Khoo Leong Sun Tong, the school was well regarded as the highest educational institute among the Burmese Chinese until its closure in the 1960s. Lim's brother was also a teacher in another Hokkien Chinese school in the delta town of Myaungmya. The report duly furnished details on Lim's professional activities with the school as well as several social engagements during his short stay between April 1923 and November 1924 in a matter-of-fact way without displaying any tangible suspicion that their Calcutta colleagues might have felt. In Rangoon's eye, Lim was "well known to the Chinese community," but "no political activity of his was observed."[53]

This may reflect that, from Rangoon's perspective, Chinese with nationalist ideas in Burma were never seen as seriously threatening as they were in other parts of the region. The limited attention suggested that such activities were accorded a relatively low priority, and on the occasions that the government did take action, the information was largely either fed by, or fed to, colleagues in other, more active locations.

The Rangoon Government had more important problems to deal with. The most important was Burmese nationalism, which the government believed was being influenced by Indians and connected with transnational Indian political organizations. Like the Chinese, migrants from India also brought over, and in many cases provided a basis for, the development of political movements from their homeland. Many parallels could be drawn between the Chinese and the Indians in Burma. In brief, the Burma Provincial Congress Committee was established by Gandhi's long-term mentor, Rangoon-based merchant P. J. Mehta, in 1908, the same year as that of the Tongmenghui.[54] Similarly, newspapers backed by Indian political agents, like the *Rangoon Mail*, edited by Nripendra Chandra Banerjee from the National Congress, were distributed in the colony's Indian communities just as the Chinese newspapers were. On the most visible occasions, the visits of renowned political and intellectual figures from India, such as Tagore in 1924 (whose greeting committee was joined by the Rangoon Chinese and for which a Chinese reception was organized separately by Lim Ngo Chiang[55]) and Gandhi's three visits, can also be echoed by line-ups of Chinese politicians and scholars, including Kang Youwei, Wang Jingwei (an earlier Tongmenghui core member and head of the pro-Japanese Government in China after 1937), and other well-known intellectuals.[56]

Indian-oriented and Indian-dominated movements in Burma were watched over closely and dealt with efficiently by the Government of British India, itself a product of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. This bureaucratic system was born out of the very need to prevent yet another fatal incident and was designed and implemented with the prevention of Indian rebellions in mind. It was precisely at the crucial moment of this political reshuffle in the British colonial paradigm that Burma was brought under its control. Indeed, India was "the touchstone around which colonial administrative systems were put together"[57] in the late Victorian and Edwardian period in Africa and Asia. The securing of Rangoon and Lower Burma in the early 1850s, after the Second Anglo-Burmese War, would allow plenty of space to establish a system from scratch on this newly acquired land, following the new administrative design in Calcutta after 1857. When the final annexation was completed in 1886, the entire British system for Burma was firmly transplanted from its contemporary model in India and was now mature and tested after three decades of practice and experiments.

British rule in Burma was, first and foremost, an Indian-oriented system from its inception, and the framework left limited space for its non-Indian subjects' political existence. Like the dynamics behind the presentation of commercially successful and morally corrupt Chinese, the ignorance of Chinese political engagement was eventually related to Burma's demographic and administrative features. The relatively insignificant number of Chinese meant it did not attract the same level of attention from the colonial administrators as in the case of the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and Hong Kong. Conversely, the government in Burma had been pre-occupied by its large Indian population both as a local problem and as a co-ordinated long-term policy throughout British India. Burma was part of the Empire whose primary task was to govern the Indian (and Burmese), while its Chinese dissidents' political activities, no matter how serious they might have seemed in the eyes of the Chinese government, accounted for a small portion of the Empire's global foreign relationship and was not a direct concern to the everyday running of the colony.

With this bottom line in mind, the colonial dominance quietly retreated, making room for trans-territorial and transnational networks of political institutions from China, which, in contrast, were particularly interested in its overseas emigrants. The Republic of China inherited the connection with overseas Chinese from the Tongmenghui era before its own birth. The Republican government and its various domestic political and military allies and rivals had fully utilized the financial, human, and, in the case of

WWII, the strategic potential of Chinese diasporic communities. Under this motivation and based upon a ready network, the participation in Chinese domestic affairs by diasporic communities was understandably active. They successfully took over the political stage among the Burmese Chinese, a space that had never been of much concern to the ruling British then.

6.3 Political Participation in the Multiethnic Colony

The colonial government's limited intervention and considerable tolerance of its Chinese subjects' China-oriented political activities, however, did not mean the lack of interest and practice in its governing mechanism toward the Chinese community and its concern for Sino-Burmese border security. The governance over Burma's Chinese population had undergone a long and careful adjustment from being Empire-oriented to community-based. Paralleling the priority shifting from Sino-Burmese border issues to ethnic minority community within Burma, the government first relied on British expats with rich China-related experience in other parts of Asia, then sought support from local interlocutors and agents, and adopted a less coercive approach. With the changing regional and imperial circumstances in the early twentieth century, more cooperation with the subject community was necessary and a Chinese Advisory Board, composed of every important community figure and closely working with the colonial government, became a solution to effectively govern this minority community from within.[58] Meanwhile, with an increased possibility to engage in local political activities, more members of the Chinese community developed interest in politics not only toward China the remote homeland but also in this colonial state where they lived and worked presently. Representing a minority ethnic group in the multiethnic state, they participated in the colony's political stage on every ideological front, and with considerable challenges.

6.3.1 Chinese Politicians in Colonial Government

Before the annexation, Chinese from Yunnan had been known to work for Burmese kings. Under British rule, Chinese continued to negotiate their political space in compliance with the colonial state's administration. With the delayed introduction of the Diarchy to Burma in 1923, the Chinese finally found their place in the political landscape in British Burma, as a

representative of one of the ethnic communities in the colony. Even so, this political integration into the colonial constitutional framework was not a direct response to Chinese political movements in Burma (which remained China-oriented throughout the era) but an attempted solution by the colonial regime to counteract growing Burmese/Indian nationalism through encompassing as many non-Burmese elements as possible into the policy-making and administrative body, at least on paper.

In 1923, following the Montagu–Chelmsford Report (1918) and the Government of India Act (1919), Diarchy was applied to Burma and the new Legislative Council was formed, aiming for enhanced political participation among the native populations in this province. The first new Council to some extent was a step toward self-governance, at least within the constitutional framework.[59] Under the Diarchy, the Burma Legislative Council would have more elected members representing general and special constituencies and fewer nominated members, positions normally reserved for high-ranking government officials. Prior to the reform, Lim Chin Tsong, nominated in 1909, was the sole Chinese representative in the Council. Under the new electoral regulation, Taw Sein Ko, being a high-ranking government official, remained a nominated member until at least 1924.

From 1923 onward, at least two ethnic Chinese were constantly elected to the Council, one from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce,[60] now a special constituency representing the ethno-commercial interests, the other from the general constituency of Rangoon West, where the country's largest Chinatown was located.[61] The seat from Rangoon West was so firmly in the hands of the Chinese that it was widely seen as an entirely internal matter. One Burmese member in the Council once correctly pointed out, "Among the Chinese, there is an arrangement that the two clans, the Cantonese and the Fukinese, should by turn face a general election once in three years."[62]

This was not outsiders' hearsay. In 1928, when it was the Hokkien's turn to represent the general constituency,[63] Chan Chor Khine was the candidate. The Committee of the Kheng Hock Keong (i.e., Rangoon Hokkien Association) passed a resolution on September 29, 1928, requesting all Chinese voters to support Chan Chor Khine and published it in local Chinese newspapers. In October, upon hearing that Saw Teik Leong,[64] another Chinese (perhaps also a Hokkien of the Soo [Saw] clan), was also thinking of running, the committee wrote a formal letter to dissuade him, as "the Chinese voters should concentrate on a single target in order to be (politically) powerful."[65] With respect to the Chinese members in the Rangoon Municipal Committee, the general practice was to have at least

two Chinese members, one from each region. A letter from the Cantonese temple (i.e., Guangdong *Gongsi*) to its Hokkien counterpart on December 25, 1925, notified the latter to "present one Cantonese candidate and one Hokkien candidate, and please support their election campaigns."[66]

However, this internal agreement between the Cantonese and the Hokkien seemed to indicate that, instead of communal solidarity, a reconcilable relationship between these two regional forces could hardly be reached.[67] It was only to fit awkwardly into the constitutional system, which required a representative from one single Chinese community as designated by the British, that an apparently amicable agreement was reached. In fact, wherever possible, these two communities would definitely choose their own candidates, as in the case of the Rangoon Municipal Corporation. Contrary to the transnational network of domestic Chinese politics that united the Chinese of different regional origins, at least for a short period, the colonial institutions continued to facilitate regional identities through its administrative framework in spite of its simplified perception of one Chinese community.

Table 6.1 shows elected Chinese members in the post-Diarchy Burma Legislative Council. In addition to Rangoon West, other Chinese strongholds, especially in the delta and southern ports, such as Pegu, Bassein, and Tavoy, often also elected Chinese members from different political parties. This representation of Chinese community interests in the colonial government was explicitly advocated. During the 1931 Burma Round Table in London, when negotiating Burma's independence from India, Hoe Kim Seing (or Hoe Kim Seng)[68] sought to further increase the Chinese seats by 2 percent in the future Lower House, based "on the importance of the trades which they represent."[69]

It is hard to obtain reliable statistical data on Chinese civil servants working in the colonial government. Scattered information from various sources, however, showed a continuous flow of Chinese government workers in this period with great varieties of personal background and positions they held—from ministers in the Secretariat in central Rangoon to interpreters and staff in regional offices. Some were middle-ranking and lower-ranking officials in different departments. For instance, Xu Huili, the editor of various Chinese newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s, worked in the Excise Department.[70] Cantonese Ouyang Jinsong worked in the Engineering Department of the Rangoon Municipality and helped to rearrange Chinese burial grounds in 1917. Also in Rangoon, the police expressed their intention to recruit a Chinese Inspector in 1915.[71] In

Table 6.1 Elected Chinese members in the Burma Legislative Council, 1923–1935; and Chinese candidates for the 1932 election [incomplete list]

Year	*Name*	*General constituency represented*	*Notes*
1923–1925	Lee Ah Yain	Rangoon West	Cantonese-Burmese
	Khoo Hock Chuan	Tavoy Rural	Hokkien-Burmese, opposition party whip
1925–1928	Keng Beng Chong	Rangoon West	Unknown
(from 1926)	C. Soo Don	Tavoy Rural	Unknown
(from 1927)	Hoe Kim Seng	Pegu North	Possibly Cantonese
(from 1927)	S. Jone Bin	Bassein Town	Possibly Hokkien
1928–1932	Chan Chor Khine	Rangoon West	Son of Chan Ma Phee, Hokkien-Burmese
	Hoe Kim Seng	Pegu North	Possibly Cantonese
	U Po Aye	Yamethin	Hokkien-Burmese?
1932–1935	L.Choon Foung	Rangoon West	Possibly Cantonese
	Hoe Kim Seng	Pegu North	Possibly Cantonese
	Khoo Hock Chuan	Tavoy Town	Hokkien-Burmese, opposition bench
	Khoo Lock Chuan	Tavoy Rural	Hokkien-Burmese, opposition bench
Chinese candidates for the 1932 election			
	Yoe Hyi Han	Tavoy Town	Unknown
	S. Jone Bin	Bassein Town	Elected before
	Lim Oo Khine	Mergui Rural	Hokkien, also mentioned as 'Lim Oo Ghine' in *Who's Who*, 78
	Hoe Kim Seng	Pegu North	Elected before
	Khoo Zun Ni	Tavoy Rural	Hokkien
	U Po Aye	Yamethin North	Elected before

Sources: Data from BL: IOR, V/9, Burma Legislative Council Proceedings 1923–1936; Yu Dingbang, "Zhimindi shiqi miandian lifa huiyi de huaqiao yiyuan" [Chinese Members in the Burma Legislative Council during the Colonial Period], *Dongnanya Xuekan* 3 (1999): 34–37; Xu Huili, "Miandian lifa jigou yu huaqiao" [Burma's Legislative System and the Chinese], *Nanyang Wenzhai* 5, no. 4 (1964): 47–48

addition to working in Upper Burma as interpreters and language examiners, Yunnanese also found government jobs in Rangoon. Cun Zhongyou, a Heshun native, businessman, and editor of Chong Xin Hui's journal, also worked for the government during his time in Rangoon.

Educated Cantonese seemed to be particularly interested in pursuing government jobs, perhaps due to their overall higher level of English[72] and the possibility that they were generally less commercially competitive than the Hokkien.[73] In 1936, Kway Foung Ho, a young Cantonese man, was

one of the two candidates who succeeded in that year's open competition for the ICS from Burma, the other one being an Indian.[74] His father, Ho Kim Kyone, was the Honorary Magistrate of Rangoon, and probably a relative of Hoe Kim Seing, the member of the 1931 Round Table, and represented Pegu North in the Legislative Council.

Taking advantage of the Diarchy, the Burmese Chinese made themselves one of the participating ethnic groups in a multiethnic colonial state, a status designed and acknowledged by the colony. However, political participation of an ethnic minority could be tricky, especially when race was an easy card to be played by both pro-colonial and anti-colonial forces.

6.3.2 The Controversy on the Chinese Minister

The political participation of ethnic Chinese in Burmese politics as part of the colonial establishment was not without controversy, especially among Burmese nationalists who advocated that "Burma is for Burmans,"[75] not for the British colonizers, but also excluding Asian immigrants and other local ethnicities. If the image of a successful commercial community practically facilitated the political participation of the Chinese, the equally wide-circulated impression of Chinese vice became a convenient tool to challenge Chinese political involvement within the constitutional framework.

In addition to introducing a new form of the Legislative Council, Diarchy also restructured ministerial framework in the provincial government. Transferred Subjects such as education, public health, forests, excise, agriculture, and public works were under the charge of two (non-British) ministers, while the Reserved Subjects of defense, law and order, finance, revenue, and labor were handled by two British members from the Executive Council. In 1923, the two Burmese ministers in charge of Transferred Subjects were U Maung Gyee of the Nationalist Party and J. A. Maung Gyi. In addition, the Home Ministry remained in the hands of Burmese politicians, first Maung Kin and then U May Oung upon the former's death in 1924.

During the second Council in 1925, a Rangoon-born Chinese of Cantonese origin, Lee Ah Yain (1874–1932), was appointed Minister of Forests, Agriculture, and Public Works. Lee Ah Yain was from "a well-known and respected family"[76] with Cantonese and Burmese origins. He was the "fifth son of Lee Nie Hee, merchant of Rangoon,"[77] who "built up an extensive export business, chiefly in jade,"[78] and Ma Pwa, Hee's Burmese wife (or concubine).[79] Lee Nie Hee was an undisputed community leader

in the late nineteenth century among the Rangoon Cantonese: the top donor for the Cantonese temple's 1868 renovation and the head of the Guangdong *Gongsi*, *dage* of the Cantonese Triad Ngee Hain, head of the Ning Yang Association (a birthplace association for Xinning natives) and the Cantonese Lee Clan Association, among others. Also successful merchants, the family owned "business premises of Hone Kyan & Co. in Dalhousie Street,"[80] the thoroughfare in Rangoon Chinatown.

Many of Lee Ah Yain's siblings were also prominent locally, including "Lee Ah Moo, and Lee Ah Chong…for some years honorary magistrates of Rangoon"[81] and members of the Chinese Advisory Board. Lee Ah Yain's younger brother Lee Ah Lye, one of the "prominent" Chinese figures introduced in *Impressions of Burma*, inherited the leadership in the Cantonese community from his deceased father. Lee Ah Yain, on the other side, seems to present the Western or colonial side of this successful Cantonese family. He was educated at Cambridge, became a qualified barrister-at-law in London's Lincoln's Inn, and worked at the Chief Court of Lower Burma around 1910.[82] In short, Lee Ah Yain's well-established family in the Chinese community, the extensive family business, the mixed-racial origin of Cantonese and Burmese, and his Western education and professional practice made him an ideal choice to represent the Chinese in Burma.

In December 1925, when the government appointed him the Minister, Lee Ah Yain was a member of the Legislative Council representing the special constituency of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Established in 1909, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Burma outlived the Qing Empire and its designated China-oriented initiatives, swiftly adapted itself to the local circumstances, and became the highest representative body of the Chinese community in this colony. It was created as a special constituency for the Burma Legislative Council under Diarchy, together with other similar commercial or ethnic organizations such as the Burma Chamber of Commerce, the Burma Railways, and the Port of Rangoon. Indeed, what could be a more suitable choice to represent the Chinese community as a whole than a commercial association, given the publicity on successful Chinese merchants encouraged by the state?

Membership in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was open to both individuals and companies, regardless of their place of origin, hence providing a pan-Chinese platform that crossed the regional lines that divided many community associations. Most of the members were successful merchants and shop owners, often the heads of clans and trustees of temples, and they essentially represented the real elite in the community. For

example, in the early years of the twentieth century, 11 out of 20 prominent Chinese in *Impressions of Burma* were committee members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, including one president (a Hokkien Yeo) and two vice presidents (a Cantonese contractor Leong and a Hokkien Tan who was the head of the Rangoon Tan clan). Over the years, it transformed itself to be the most important interface for the Chinese community, especially toward the colonial government and on official occasions. In 1909, for instance, to welcome the Chinese Consul to Rangoon, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce held the official welcome reception in its premises on Latter Street, and most of the committee members were present. The attendance list could have been read as a Rangoon Chinese version of *Who's Who* at the time.[83]

When the appointment was announced, Lee Ah Yain had already been a member of the Corporation of Rangoon for 18 years and was heavily involved in colonial political affairs. The announcement was welcomed by the Rangoon Chinese and their allies as a sign of official acknowledgment of this migrant community's achievement. In response, the Chinese community organized a celebratory meeting in Jubilee Hall on a Sunday morning, inviting the Chinese elders and seating them alongside Lee's multiethnic colleagues in the government. For the Chinese community, this was seen as "recognising the principle of equal treatment to all persons born or domiciled in Burma."[84] Others interpreted it as "a clear indication of the policy of the Government of Burma that posts in this province for judicial, administrative, and executive were a monopoly of no particular race."[85] Similar meetings were also organized by Chinese communities outside Rangoon. For example, in Toungoo, a meeting was held in a Cantonese temple on December 18.[86]

Even today, Lee Ah Yain is still the pride of the community, remembered and talked about by the local Chinese in Yangon. In the Cantonese Lee Clan Hall on Maha Bandoola Street (Dalhousie Street), notable members of the clan are honored in the form of traditionally decorated Chinese banners inscribed with individual names and titles. Lee Ah Yain has three honorary banners dedicated to him, for the awarding of Kaisar-i-Hind in 1921, the appointment of minister in 1925, and the awarding of an OBE in 1929 (Fig. 6.2). In the most traditional way of Chinese decoration with red background and gold-gilded Chinese characters, these three shinning banners, along with another banner for a Lee member awarded a Mandarin title in China, dominate the central hall of this newly renovated building.

Fig. 6.2 Honorary banners for Lee Ah Yain inside the Cantonese Lee Clan Hall, Yangon, 2008

However, beyond Chinese quarters, the atmosphere was not that favorable to Lee Ah Yain. "The tentative honeymoon under diarchy was quickly over,"[87] at least after the 1925 election, when the opposition parties were unable to maintain a majority in the second Council.[88] With the Nationalist faction in the government diminished and its internal confusion increased, and the tension between Burman and non-Burman members intensified,[89] Lee Ah Yain's appointment was predictably a hotly debated issue throughout the second Council. Almost immediately after his appointment, a no-confidence motion was put against Lee in the Council, denying him ministerial salary by the leader of the Home Rule Party, U Pu (Toungoo South). It was backed by U Ba Pe of the Nationalist Party and Tun Win of the *Swaraj* Party. All three parties belonged to the Nationalist bloc in the Council. Albeit claiming an amicable relationship with Lee Ah Yain, they were critical of his political capability. One Anglo-Indian member claimed:

> During the three years Mr Ah Yain sat in this council, on not a single occasion did he ever vote against the Government, and if I am correct in saying so, he never once spoke in the Council. I think I am perfectly correct in this. I never heard him speak once.[90]

In 1929, another member, in questioning Lee's ability to be a government minister, agreed that "for the last three years (he) has not done anything for the country."[91]

Next came the challenge of the constitutional validity of Lee's appointment, and an investigation on the nationality of members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was suggested. U Ba Pe pointed out that it "has a membership of 883. Of these, only 14 are British subjects: the rest are all Chinese subjects… The Chinese Chamber of Commerce is therefore non-British and alien."[92] Later, some other members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce were proved to be qualified British subjects,[93] and the figures mentioned were never officially confirmed.[94] However, it was undeniable that a considerable number of members of the Chamber, like the rest of the Chinese community in Burma, had ambiguity surrounding their nationalities and identification papers.[95] This called into question the basis for Lee Ah Yain's appointment to the Legislative Council or to any government position. As one argued, "No foreigner, no matter how friendly his nation may be to Great Britain, is allowed to vote, and if we have a commercial Chamber composed mostly of foreigners…it is not politic to appoint a Minister from such a constituency."[96]

To further complicate the situation, Chinese involvement with vice, so well known throughout the colony because of the regime's extensive publicity, inevitably became another weak point. Lee Ah Yain's predecessor, the Burmese J. A. Maung Gyi, was in charge of the Forest, Agriculture, and Excise Departments. However, in 1926, the Excise Department was transferred to the Ministry of Education. This might not be a coincidence and subtly reflected the colonial administration's perception of the Chinese community, one of whose most profitable businesses, as it propagated, was to obtain licenses under the control of the excise. Consequently, the transfer was taken as a preventive measure against potential conflict of interest between the new minister and his ethnic background. Furthermore, in practice, it also became the most questionable part regarding Lee Ah Yain's daily work. For instance, in 1927, a license auction for *Hlawzaye* (alcohol) in the Rangoon Town District led several opposition Council members to question its unusual bidding and distribution process, which allegedly did not comply with standard procedures.[97]

The other new minister for the Transferrable Subjects in 1925 was Dr. Ba Yin, who was appointed Minister of Education, Excise, and Local Government. Ba Yin was the founder and president of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), "perhaps one of the strongest and patriotic Burmese Associations of this province." Even this ex-member of the Rangoon Corporation, who worked as "a hundred per cent blooded Burman,"[98] could not escape the watchful eyes of the opposition party,

ironically under the identical charge as that of Lee Ah Yain: being a "Chinaman." Ba Yin found himself, suddenly and suspiciously, with "an addition to his name – Ong,"[99] a common Chinese surname, among the debate in the Council. Again, U Pu (Toungoo South), the leading figure in the Nationalist bloc, wasted no time pointing out

> (t)he word 'Ong' would indicate that he must have adopted a Chinese name, or that he must have taken himself to be a Chinaman, or that he must have been moving in Chinese society or that he must have supported the Chinese.[100]

Although no solid proof has ever been found to confirm Ba Yin's ethnic background, which was sometimes said to be "from the Mon Dynasty from his father's side,"[101] this may not have been a purely political rumor, given the public response cited by opposition parties. A Karen member described the response in Amhurst that

> The whole country was literally shocked at the news of the appointment. Some people were infuriated, some maintained a sort of philosophic silence, and some were apathetic over it. In my own district and the town in which I am living…some section of the people of Moulmein, the Chinese community naturally, made merry over the affair and celebrated the occasion. It was historical event and naturally they should feel proud over it, and we don't grudge them. They continuously celebrated the occasion by *anyein pwes*.[102]

No wonder U Pu asked, "Can the Government seriously say, by appointing these two Chinese gentlemen over and above our heads as Ministers, that it is now training up the Burmans in the art of administration?,"[103] which was supposed to be the main purpose of the Diarchy.

Here, opposition parties were not afraid to openly touch a very sensitive, or to put it in the words of one Council member, a very dangerous and interesting topic: race. It was an effective shortcut to mobilize wider support for nationalist campaigns. Under Diarchy, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, along with other ethnic communities and commercial organizations, became the constituencies with voting rights and thus made the appointments of non-British, sometimes non-Burman, ministers possible. However, with a minority in the Council, the untimely death of U May Oung as the Home Minister, who was succeeded by a British man, and the appointment of non-Burman ministers, the nationalists' road to self-governing within the colonial constitutional framework was not promising in the late 1920s. By examining the Legislative Council's Proceedings

between 1926 and 1932, it is clear that Lee Ah Yain and Ba Yin were responsible for managing a wide range of domestic projects between them, including bridge construction, vernacular textbooks, timber extraction, rice production, and opium licensing. To some extent, these two allegedly Chinese-related men ran the country on a day-to-day basis. It is not surprising this caused such a bitter controversy with the nationalists.

However, it was neither blood nor "race" that really mattered here. Even the contemporary observers noticed "several members on the other side who are not pure Burmans by race"[104] within the Council. Another leader of the Nationalist Party, U Pu (Yamethin), did not forget to praise his Chinese colleague, Khoo Hock Chuan,[105] an elected member from Tavoy Rural in 1923–1925 and the Chief Whip of the Party, who was half Chinese but whose "aspirations were identical with our aspirations."[106]

Among the opposition bloc, there were plenty of clues on Chinese involvements. Maung Gyee's exclusive Burman group for conservative, pro-Independence Burmese members in the Council, the Golden Valley Party, was allegedly financed by a wealthy Rangoon Chinese.[107] Allegedly, Hoke Sein, known locally as the "King of Chinatown," along with another Rangoon Chinese, Aw Ya Wa, "caused the disintegration of the United Party, once the most powerful Burmese political group…(under)…(c) harges of bribery, profit from local corruption and vice, and collusion between the Chinese and the party leaders."[108]

This clarified that the critical point of the entire controversy was the conflict between the colonial regime and the colonized peoples.[109] The debates over the proportion of government posts reserved for Indian members similarly reflected an anti-Indian sentiment from Burman members in the second Council.[110] Thus, the racial difference in general, and the Chinese politicians in particular, was merely an easy and ready starting point. As U Pu stated in 1927, the picture of racial disagreement was not confined to one particular people:

> When Chinese, Indians, French, Russians and Americans are sent to Burma they buy lands and build large buildings… When the Englishmen come from England…(they) take our ladies. Some marry them legally, while others keep them as mistresses and desert them. The bastards left behind by these Englishmen as a burden to the people of Burma. Chinamen behave in the same way. When they desert [Burmese women] they claim protection under the Chinese Customary Law and immunity from the Buddhist Law. So are also the Mohamedans and the Hindus… I wish to ask whether Government has come over to Burma to humiliate Burmans and to favour the foreigners

> such as English, Chinese, Kalas and Americans… What benefit is there if Home Rule is given to Burma after the Burmese nation has become extinct? Are we to be governed by a Chinaman, or an Indian or an Englishman?[111]

Under these circumstances, inter-racial riots in Burma in the following decade outside of the Government House, whether against the Indians or the Chinese, were almost inevitable given the "racial" strategy taken by the nationalists as a shortcut to mobilize local support and demand political concessions from the government. Like the Chinese politicians being challenged in the Legislative Council, the Chinese public became victims of an anti-Chinese riot in Rangoon in January 1931, both of whom stepped, actively or passively, into the heart of the colonial political conflicts and Burmese nationalist struggle.

In a post-war account by the Burmese Chinese community, the riot started when one Burmese customer refused to pay a Cantonese food hawker for his noodles outside of the Cantonese temple and assaulted the hawker. This irritated nearby Chinese onlookers and they fought back. Afterward, the Burmese customer gathered several friends and took revenge on the Chinese.[112] The one-week riot in Rangoon, albeit shorter in duration, with relatively fewer casualties and damages,[113] and generating less publicity than those of the anti-Indian riots,[114] happened in the middle of the height of the Saya San Rebellion that violently swept most of the delta, Rangoon included. Despite the official tone being eager to deny its relevance to the "communal trouble in Rangoon or other towns in Burma; …(and) the activities of Congress agents from India,"[115] the anti-Chinese riot was inseparable from "the tense atmosphere arising from the rebellion in Tharrawaddy which had recently began."[116] Putting all these incidents together, we observe that the 1931 riot was yet another example of the mounting social and racial tensions where Chinese, mostly against their will, became involved in Burmese political tussles.

Despite ethnic Chinese politicians' active participation in colonial affairs in the Secretariat and Government House and average Chinese being passively dragged into Rangoon street riots, the general public in the colony, including some Chinese themselves, was yet to accept an image of politically engaged Burmese Chinese, as the letter on the *Rangoon Gazette*, cited at the beginning of this chapter, indicated. Notwithstanding Chinese political interests in and outside Burma, the colonial discourse, even at this point, still found it difficult to accommodate the dimension of "politics-crazed" Chinese into its well-established perception of ethnic Chinese characteristics.

To some extent, it was simply not the right time. With the war breaking out first in China in the 1930s and eventually in Burma in 1942, it left too short a window to form a sound and convincing image after the 1923 Diarchy. It never had the chance to develop to the level to which the popular images of Chinese businessmen and Chinese vices had managed to achieve. Immediately before WWII, an American observer still insisted that, "in general, Chinese residents of Burma seldom interest themselves greatly in politics or acquire considerable political influence."[117] This was said despite the fact that, at that point, politics in China, especially the war waged against Japan, was no longer a Chinese domestic issue but so closely interwoven with the rest of the region and the world, including Burma, India, and Britain, and the political interaction between the Chinese, the Burmese, and the Burmese Chinese had intensified to a level that was never seen before.

6.3.3 Chinese Involvement in Burma's Independence Movement

With the development of Burmese nationalism and independence movement, the Chinese in Burma now found another channel to practice their political skills, a situation that fell totally outside of the colonial institutions' influence. Burmese Chinese, like their Indian counterparts, were to be found among all factions of Burmese nationalist activism, from moderate to ultra-radical.

Mingling with anti-colonial Burmese activists was now also in the interests of various foreign institutions. The Chinese political presence, once confined to the Chinese community, as was generally understood by the colony's non-Chinese public, now reached wider Burmese sectors as agents directly representing China, skipping the ruling regime and its pre-defined infrastructure. In fact, after the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, and especially after the opening of the Burma Road, transnational Chinese political networks accelerated to develop a further intimate bilateral relationship with Burma. For the Chinese, Burma was of military and political significance, and the Burmese Chinese, once a resourceful overseas support base, was now a direct and strategic force that could be mobilized for domestic causes, especially the anti-Japanese war efforts.

The outlook of Burmese independence movement also changed. If India was a model for non-violent protest and constitutional reform within the British imperial infrastructure, the 1937 separation of Burma from India brought more direct confrontation, this time between the British

and the Burmese; the latter started to seek complete independence from London. For this, Republican China could be seen as an inspiration, and influences from the local Chinese and from China considerably increased in the late 1930s among student activists and young nationalists, quite a number of whom allegedly had Chinese ancestries, although this could never be confirmed.[118] The *Nagani* (Red Dragon) Book Club, founded by key members of the *Dobama Asiayone* (We Burmans Association, also known as the "Thakins"), published books on foreign affairs, among them Sun Yat-sen's political messages and the Chinese revolution. In December 1939, Thakin Nu (later the first Prime Minister of independent Myanmar) joined a nine-member delegation to China, among whom three were ethnic Chinese.[119] Subsequently, in the travelogue *Gandalarit*,[120] Nu introduced to the Burmese public his experience in wartime China and his contacts with the Chinese Nationalist Government and the CCP.

This time, transnational Chinese political groups entered political space in Burma through the close cooperation with anti-colonial, pro-independence Burmese forces with common interests. As before, imperial institutions failed to comprehend Burmese Chinese political activities, now being directly linked with anti-colonial struggles in Burma. The most exemplary event in this period was perhaps Aung San's mystic trip to China in 1940. Halfway in the journey, he managed to connect with the Japanese and proceeded to Tokyo. Less than a year later, a military training under experienced Japanese officers was arranged for Aung San and a small group of other "Thakins," known today as the Thirty Comrades, on Japanese-occupied Hainan Island and Formosa (Taiwan).

In a post-war Chinese newspaper in Yangon, an article describing this little-known episode of Aung San was published.[121] It said that in August 1940, due to increasing pressure from the government and possible influences from the CCP and its underground members, Aung San and Bo Yan Aung (Thakin Hla Myaing) decided to go to China to seek foreign support. They traveled on a Chinese-crewed, Norway-registered ship called *Haili* to Amoy but failed to establish any connection with the Chinese as planned.

When the article was published in the *Xin Yangguang Bao* in 1961, the feedback from an anonymous Chinese reader provided as much detail as he knew:

> They decided to go to Amoy. As the transportation between Rangoon and Amoy was totally in the hands of the Chinese, Aung San asked for help from his Chinese friend *U-Kyaw-Khin*[122] who still lives on 19th Street today. *U-Kyaw-Khin* talked to his friend Mr. Chen, saying he had two Burmese

> friends who wanted to go to Amoy in secret. They were good friends, so Mr. Chen promised to help. The *Haili* ship arrived at that time, and Chen discussed this with the seamen on the *Haili*. They decided to let these two Burmese get on board one day before its departure to avoid any trouble from the Customs House. On that day, *U-Kyaw-Khin* accompanied Aung San and Bo Yan Aung, who were waiting at the Fazai Tea Shop at the upper part of 19th Street, while Mr. Chen went to Xingya Dress Shop at the corner of Dalhousie Street and 22nd Street to buy two sets of Chinese dresses for them. At sunset, they hired a taxi (two Burmese, *U-Kyaw-Khin*, Mr. Chen, and another friend) to Pansodan Jetty to catch a sampan. Mr. Chen was with them on the sampan, and together they got on board the *Haili*. After talking with the seamen again to ensure their safety, Chen left. The following day, the *Haili* set off to Amoy.[123]

In another version from a Burmese publication in 1973, the Chinese middleman who arranged the ship was Li Wenzhen, a Rangoon agent of the *Haili* and a right-wing community leader.[124]

Yet another contemporary, Feng Lidong, identified Chen Deyuan (a KMT member who was active in the *Dobama* movement) as Mr. Chen. Claiming to have had a personal conversation with Chen himself, Feng thought it was the pro-Japanese KMT faction that actually facilitated Aung San's trip, with the very intention of putting him in touch with the Japanese, while the announcement that they were to connect with the Communist Party in China was nothing but Chen's trick in this plot. Feng's argument was that Aung San did not have to take the sea route, and he could only arrive at the Japanese-occupied coastline of China by this means. If he wished, he could have used the Burma Road, then an open and much more convenient option, to reach the southwest hinterland, which was still under the control of the KMT Government and where the CCP also had a presence.[125]

After the war, many scholars and eyewitnesses from Myanmar, Japan, and Britain were involved in the reconstruction of this key episode of Myanmar's founding father and his link with the Japanese intelligence office, *Minami Kikan*, which cooperated with the Burmese nationalist activists before and during WWII.[126] Based on Japanese and English sources, an English historian believed the driving force for Aung San and Bo Yan Aung's trip to Amoy was a Japanese Colonel Suzuki Keiji, who was instrumental in the foundation of the *Minami Kikan*, the training of the Thirty Comrades, and the formation of the Burma National Army in later years.[127] However, in several Chinese versions cited above, which

were extremely well circulated among the Chinese community despite inconsistency in details, it sufficiently illustrated the complicated interaction between transnational Chinese political interests and anti-colonial Burmese nationalists, among many other contemporary competing parties. In addition, the post-war reconstruction and publicity of this story revealed, at least among the Chinese community, the continued contest of rival Chinese political institutions, again originating from China, on an overseas ground. This had been a most prevailing feature throughout the colonial period and, as this story shows, extended well into the 1960s.

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The image of apolitical Chinese, another popular but groundless impression, developed in the Burmese context partly due to the special position of Burma in British India and the British imperial world. However, as examined here, the Chinese in Burma were active on almost every available political front, participating not only in a transnational network of Chinese political conflicts but also in colonial affairs, simultaneously inside the administrative system as government officials and on the street as anti-colonial activists, whenever opportunities arose. Not complying with the perception of a migrant community making no political "noise" in a colonial state, the Chinese instead proved themselves one of the most politically active people in Burma at the time.

Notes

1. "Readers' Letters," *Rangoon Gazette*, September 21, 1936, 12.
2. Kang wrote a travelogue about his Burma trip, in Kang Youwei, *Kang youwei yigao: Lieguo youji* [Kang Youwei's Manuscripts: Travelogue in Various Countries] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1995), 61–63.
3. Couplet, courtyard of the *Guanyin Si* (the Amarapura Yunnanese temple), date unknown.
4. This association was founded in Vancouver in 1899 by Kang Youwei and his student, Liang Qichao.
5. It is also possible that the Baohuanghui and the *Zhonghua Wenhui* were two different organizations and the latter was a "prominent supporter" of Kang. Chen Yi-Sein, "The Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the Chinese in Burma," *Journal of Southeast Asian Researches* 2, no. 95 (1966): 95–102.
6. There might have been another Chinese newspaper, *Zhonghua Ribao Ju* (China Daily Bureau), existed in 1897, who was a donor for the renovation

of the Kheng Hock Keong in 1903, but its details are yet to be investigated. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 354–56.

7. Its guarantors included a leader from the Kyan Taik, and its general manager was Zhuang Yinan, later the head of the Tongmenghui Burma branch. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 183–85.
8. Lee Zhongxin literally means "Lee the Loyal Heart." He must have been a prominent Cantonese who had similar social status among the Burmese Chinese as Lim Chin Tsong did. The author suspects this is someone from the family of Lee Nie Hee. However, Lee Nie Hee died before 1898, and Lee Ah Yain was an active pro-British politician, unlikely to claim to be the loyal subject of the Qing emperor. Thus, it may have been another senior member of this Lee family. Another possibility is Lee Ah Hpway (Lee Ah Phoy) (1839–1909), a government contractor, general goods trader, and rice mill owner of Rangoon. He is mentioned in *Who's Who*, 100 and Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 323. Also, Lee Ah Hpway was said to be the founder of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The number "forty-seven thousand" mentioned here is difficult to verify; according to the 1901 census, the Chinese population in Burma was 62,486.
9. The original text was published on the *Zhixin Bao* on April 29, 1900, and is quoted in Yu Dingbang, "1899–1900 nian dongnanya huashang de 'qinwang' huodong: Du aomen zhixin bao de youguan baodao" [Overseas Chinese Merchants' Campaigns of 'Saving the Emperor' in Southeast Asia: 1899–1900], *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2 (2007): 40–48.
10. Jane Leung Larson, "Articulating China's First Mass Movement: Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, the Baohuanghui, and the 1905 Anti-American Boycott," *Twentieth- Century China* 33 no.1 (2007): 4–26.
11. "Ju Jinyue Chuandan – Lü Mei Huaren Lai Gao" [Leaflet opposing the Exclusion Treaty – manuscript from Chinese living in America], quoted in Jane Leung Larson, "The 1905 Anti-American Boycott as a Transnational Chinese Movement," *Chinese in American: History and Perspectives* 21 (2007).
12. For the change of Qing policy and its impact on the Southeast Asian Chinese, see Michael Godley, "The Late Ch'ing Courtship of the Chinese in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (1975): 361–85.
13. Chang Pi-Shih was the man behind this enterprise. With the success of his business in Java and Malaya, Chang was heavily involved in the modernization movement in China, and obtained royal endorsement for his campaign to attract loyalties among the overseas Chinese like himself. Godley, "Courtship"; Yen Ching-Hwang, "Overseas Chinese Nationalism in Singapore and Malaya 1877–1912," *Modern Asian Studies* 16, no. 3 (1982): 397–425.
14. For the history of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, see Sikko Visscher, *The Business of Politics and Ethnicity: A History of the*

Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).

15. Yen, "Overseas Chinese Nationalism." However, it is yet to be confirmed whether the Burma Chinese Chamber of Commerce registered itself upon its establishment in 1909.
16. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 316. The title-awarding is mentioned in Feng, *Shihua*, 130.
17. Godley, "Courtship."
18. A Burmese Chinese journalist of Cantonese origin remembered that when he was a boy, he had seen this plaque, and how much he had admired it for its excellent calligraphy. Huang Chongyuan, "Midian huaqiao xinwen shiye jilue" [Introduction to Journalism of the Burmese Chinese], in Zeng, ed., *Zawenji*, 88. Liu Ye Xuan is also mentioned in Feng, *Shihua*, 47.
19. Branches in Saigon, Hong Kong, and Singapore were established in 1905, just after its Tokyo headquarters. In the following few years, more branches were set up in major Southeast Asian locations such as Malaya (1906), the East Indies (1907), Siam (1908), and Burma (1908). For Tongmenghui's overseas activities, see Feng Ziyou, *Geming yishi* [Anecdotal History of the Revolution], vol. 4 (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1946), 156–81.
20. Ganya's territory included today's Yingjiang County in Yunnan. The Ganya Native Office (*tusi shu*) was one of the native offices in the Qing's semi-autonomous administrative system for peripheral areas with a high non-Han population.
21. Dao Anran wrote about his visits to Rangoon, Singapore, and Hong Kong on his way to Japan, in *Daoanren Youliji*, a travelogue written in Tai language.
22. Qin Lishan worked at this base for Dao through the introduction of Xu and Zhuang.
23. Chen claims the meeting was held in the Fytche Square. Further details on the Burmese Chinese involvement around the 1911 revolution in Chen, "The Chinese Revolution of 1911."
24. Xu Zanzhou, *Miandian huaqiao gemingshi* [Revolutionary History of the Burmese Chinese]. It was written in Rangoon in 1928 and is included in Feng, *Shihua*, 319–40 (325).
25. Ibid.
26. They are Zhuang Yinan, He Yinsan, Chen Zhonghe, Liu Zhuangjun, Lu Xifu, Cao Peiling, and Lin Zhihe. Ibid., 326.
27. Eighteen branches were operated as book clubs in Rangoon, Mandalay, Pegu, Moulmein, Bassein, Toungoo, Kanyuthwin, Hsipaw, Nyaungoo, Pakokku, Monywa, Gyobingauk, Penwegon, Kyaikto, Myittha, Yenangyaung, Tavoy, and Mergui. Ibid, 329.

28. By the end of 1911, the number of members reached 2343. Feng, *Yishi*, 170; Chen, *Dashiji*, 21.
29. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 336–38.
30. Ibid., 183 and 354.
31. The funeral was for a Hokkien businessman Tan Boontay (Tan Boon Tee). Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 339–41.
32. Penang became the *de facto* headquarters of the Tongmenghui from 1906, but in 1908, the local colonial government announced the Tongmenghui illegal, and the financial situation of the Penang Chinese community was also not optimistic. Under the pressure, its official publication was moved to Rangoon under the style of *Guanghua* in 1908. In 1910, publication of *Guanghua Ribao* (*Kwong Wah Yit Poh*) resumed in Penang as the official voice of the Tongmenghui in Southeast Asia. It still exists today as one of the major Chinese newspapers in Malaysia. For the Penang Conference, see papers presented at "Sun Yat-sen and Huanghuagang Uprising: Penang Conference and Overseas Chinese," Penang, March 2010.
33. "8 November 1911," Chen, *Dashiji*, 19.
34. White, *The Sea Gypsies*, 67.
35. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 4.
36. White, *The Sea Gypsies*, 37.
37. Ibid., 67.
38. Chen, *Dashiji*, 16.
39. Full text of both announcements in Xu, *Gemingshi*, 334–38.
40. Ibid.
41. The Tongmenghui ceased to exist after 1911. In 1912, the KMT was established in Beijing but was dissolved in 1913. In 1914, Sun established the Chinese Revolutionary Party in Japan, with a mixed response from his former comrades in the Tongmenghui and the KMT. Eventually, Sun re-established the KMT in 1919 and consolidated after its first Congress in 1924.
42. Chen, *Dashiji*.
43. The relation between the Geh Min Dan and the KMT Burma office is yet to be clarified.
44. NAM: 1/1 (A)/ 3945, 1C–10. No. 2/C.R.D.
45. Huang Chongyuan, "Introduction to Journalism," 95.
46. Xu Huili had worked in the Excise Department and hence developed close relationships with prominent Chinese merchants, who supported his newspaper business. The newspaper had an affiliated printing house, the Ming Ming Publishing, which also financially subsidized the newspaper through its own printing business.
47. In December 1926, the *Juemin Ribao* reported leaflets commemorating the Canton Soviet were found in Burma. "December 12, 1926," Chen, *Dashiji*, 37. [Author's note, the Canton Soviet was established in

December 1927, there might be a typo in the *Dashiji*]. Feng argues that this was misleading information crafted by pro-Taipei factions in Myanmar in the 1950s, and the actual year that such leaflets were found was 1928; he also thinks the CCP was not active until the Sino-Japanese War. Feng, *Shihua*, 76 and 133.

48. His name is Chen Pingshan, and the envoy had the surname Li. However, this information is fragmented and yet to be confirmed. Feng, *Shihua*, 167.
49. Ibid., 69.
50. One example is a Hokkien female Chen Yuerong (Kangrong), born in Mandalay to a Hokkien father—an early Tongmenghui member—and a Japanese mother. She joined the CCP while studying in Amoy and returned to Rangoon to teach at a Chinese school. She was active among the Rangoon left-wing intellectuals. After 1937, she joined the CCP-led guerrilla force in Fujian and died in 1940. Zeng, *Zawenji*, 81–87; Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 453–54.
51. In 1924 alone, Bao Huiseng of the *Miandian Chenbao* and Dong Fangcheng of the *Juemin Ribao* were deported as suspected communists. Huang Chongyuan, "Introduction to Journalism," 98. Both of them were from the same county in the Hubei Province and joined the Tongmenghui before 1911. Bao took part in the 1911 revolution and Dong was one of the earliest members of the CCP in 1921. They were sent overseas by their respective parties. While teaching in Singapore and Malaya, Dong actively promoted communism and drew the attention of the British. When he moved to Rangoon, the local government was notified by Malaya. As a result, the newspaper was shut down and they were deported and detained in Penang and Singapore before being sent to Hong Kong. Bai Ren, "Dong Chuping: wode geming yinluren" [Dong Chuping: My Revolutionary Mentor], *Zongheng Magazine* 2 (2000): 19–23; 3 (2000): 41–45. Jiang Kanghu also mentioned Dong and Bao in *Nanyou*, 54. In 1931, four young Chinese, newly arrived from China as editors, writers, and translators for the *Xinya*, were deported for their alleged involvement in communist activities. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 398; Zeng, *Zawenji*, 69; Feng, *Shihua*, 64.
52. Public Record Office (PRO): FO 371/14728/1327, China, Code 10 Files, 1930; FO 371/15466/1824, China, Code 10 Files, 1931. Also see related discussions in Yong and McKenna, *The Kuomintang Movement in British Malaya*.
53. WBSA: Criminal Investigation Department, Intelligence Branch, 96/1925, 82/25, "Particulars on Phoe Low alias Sa Yong alias Pang Jong." Report attached to a letter, from Intelligence Bureau, Home Department to Intelligence Branch, Bengal, August 6, 1925. The Chinese characters written in this report is Lim Ngo Chiang[a], but in a 1943 Chinese article about the principle of the *Huaqiao Zhongxue*, the name is

written as Lim Ngo Chiang[b]. Wu Tiemin, "Miandian huaqiao zhongxue zhi qianhou" [The Before-and-after Story of the Overseas Chinese High School in Burma], *Huaqiao Xianfeng Yuekan* 5, no. 8 (1943): 65–68. Both names, based on their Hokkien pronunciation, can be anglicized as Lim Ngo Chiang.

54. Penny Edwards, "Struggling with History: Gandhiji in Burma, and Burma in Gandhiji," in D. Ganguly and J. Docker, eds., *Rethinking Gandhi and Nonviolent Relationality: Global Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2007), 166.
55. Swapna Bhattacharya, *India-Myanmar relations 1886–1948* (Kolkata: K. P. Bagchi, 2007), 49.
56. Prominent literature figures included the editors and writers for the *Juemin Ribao*: Nie Qiannu in 1923; and Ai Wu, deported in 1930. Zhang Guangnian, the lyric writer of a popular anti-Japanese song, the *Yellow River Cantata*, arrived in Rangoon and taught at a Chinese school in 1940 after spending years in Yan'an, the base of the CCP in northwest China. In 1942, before the fall of Mandalay, Zhang conducted the stage performance of this cantata, along with the *Miandian huaqiao qingnian zhanshi gongzuo xuanchuan dui* [Burmese Chinese Youth Wartime Propaganda Team] in Mandalay Yunnan Association Hall.
57. Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 2.
58. Li, "Governing the Chinese."
59. Among 103 members in the Council, 80 were elected from constituencies: 58 general constituencies, 15 ethnic communities (eight Indians, five Karens, one Anglo-Indian, and one British), and the remaining 7 from commercial associations (one each from the Rangoon Trades Association, the Burmese Chamber of Commerce, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and two from the Burma Chamber of Commerce) and the Rangoon University. In addition, there were 23 nominated members, including two *ex-officio*.
60. Members representing the Chamber in the Council from 1923 to 1935 were Lee Ah Yain, Chan Chor Khine, Chan Shal Lwai, Tan Cheng Hoe, and Aun Kim Hmein. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, 1923–1936. Also mentioned in Xu Huili, "Miandian lifa jigou yu huaqiao" [Burma's legislative system and the Chinese], *Nanyang Wenzhai* 5, no. 4 (1964): 47–48; Yu Dingbang, "Zhimindi shiqi miandian lifa huiyi de huaqiao yiyuan" [Chinese Members in the Burma Legislative Council during the Colonial Period], *Dongnanya Xuekan* 3 (1999): 34–37.
61. Indian candidates were given a special quota in the Council; therefore no competition occurred in Rangoon West, where the India-town was also located.

62. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, Dr. Thein Maung, March 2, 1929, 465.
63. Ibid. Thein Maung mentioned that in 1925, it was the Cantonese's turn to present a candidate for the general constituency of Rangoon West. However, to play extra safe, Lee Ah Yain decided to represent the chamber instead. As a result, the elected member from Rangoon West in 1925 was Keng Beng Chong, presumably also a Cantonese.
64. Saw studied law in Britain and qualified as a barrister; he later worked for the High Court. W. L. Kough (Xu Huili), *Burmese Buddhist Law and Burma Chinese Buddhists* (Hong Kong: David Press, 1962), x.
65. *KHK100,* 24.
66. Ibid.
67. Li, "The Political Participation of Burmese Chinese," 53.
68. It is possible that Kyi Nyunt and his Chinese translators mistook his name as U Jin Deng or Wang Jinsheng. Chit Kyi Yay Kyi Nyunt, *Four Periods*, 27–28.
69. Burma Round Table Conference, *Proceedings*, 47–50. Hoe Kim Seing, December 11, 1931.
70. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 429.
71. In 1915, there was a vacancy for a Chinese sub-inspector for the Detective Department, BL: IOR, V/24/3245, Report on the Rangoon Town Police (1915). According to author's informal conversation with the Chinese community in Yangon in 2008, there were at least two Chinese detectives at that time: Li Tengfang, who helped to deport the Chinese editors, and another Cantonese with the surname Zhao.
72. Many Cantonese were students of the Lim Chin Tsong Anglo-Chinese School, the only English-education school in the Rangoon Chinese community. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 9.
73. The division between long-sleeve Hokkien and short-sleeve Cantonese may imply better commercial skills among the Hokkien in general. Informal conversations with the Cantonese in present-day Yangon confirmed this. See Chapter 4 for details.
74. "The ICS examinations," *Rangoon Gazette*, May 4, 1936, 32.
75. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, U Pu (Toungoo South), February 11, 1927, 508.
76. Ibid., 326.
77. *Who's Who*, 248, other Chinese sources claim he was the eldest son.
78. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 326.
79. Lee Nie Hee's wife and concubine, both Burmese, donated 25 and 10 *yuan*, respectively, for the renovation of the Rangoon Cantonese temple in 1868. Inscription, Rangoon, 1868.
80. Wright, *Impressions of Burma*, 326.
81. Ibid.
82. *Who's Who*, 248.

83. *Rangoon Gazette*, July 12, 1909, 37. Those who attended the reception representing the Chinese Chamber of Commerce were Lim Chin Tsong, L. A. Yain, Sow Pain Ngway, Chan Ma Phee, Li Lie Ngum, Chan Sai Sway, Tan Kim Chye, Leong Hain Kee, Loo Soo Kwee, Tan Chong Yean, Pai Beng Teng, Lee Tuck Yim, and Kyee Bee Lan.
84. *Rangoon Gazette*, December 12, 1925, 8. The speech was made by Lee Woot Hong, a leading member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.
85. Ibid. The speech was made by M. Munshi, one of Lee's colleagues of Indian origin.
86. *Rangoon Gazette*, December 28, 1925, 4.
87. John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958), 247.
88. The Nationalist Party (21 Party), Home Rule Party, and *Swaraj* Party won a total of 45 seats in 1925 and decided not to accept any government posts. Ibid., 256.
89. Ibid., 256–57.
90. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, C. H. Campagnac, March 18, 1926, 447–48.
91. Ibid., Dr. Thein Maung, March 2, 1929, 462.
92. Ibid., U Ba Pe, March 18, 1926, 436.
93. Ibid., Finance Minister, March 19, 1926, 485. In addition to the Burma-born members, some were from the Straits Settlements, also a British colony.
94. John Leroy Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader* (Bombay: Thacker & Company, 1945), 278.
95. Many cases of forged documents in police reports and newspapers reflected this situation in general.
96. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, C. H. Campagnac, March 18, 1926, 447.
97. Ibid., July 4–6, 1927. The question on *Hlawzaye* licenses in Rangoon Town District was raised by C. H. Campagnac. At that time, Lee Ah Yain apparently resumed his duty as the Minister of Excise.
98. Ibid., Narayana Rao, February 12, 1927, 558.
99. Ibid., Home Minister, February 12, 1927, 562.
100. Ibid., U Pu (Toungoo South), February 12, 1927, 555.
101. *Who's Who*, 247.
102. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, Saw Po Chit, March 19, 1926, 470.
103. Ibid., U Pu (Toungoo South), February 12, 1927, 556.
104. Ibid., Home Minister, February 11, 1927, 513.
105. Khoo Hock Chuan, and his brother (or cousin) Khoo Lock Chuan, later returned to the Legislative Council and remained active in the opposition parties. According to *Who's Who*, they were both educated in England and qualified as barristers and were from the influential Hokkien clan of

Chan-Khoo in Tavoy, an early and important Chinese settlement along the Tenasserim coast.

106. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, U Pu (Yamethin South), February 12, 1927, 560.
107. Cady, *Modern Burma,* 258. His name is said to be U Ming Chang (a Chinese translation, probably Keng Beng Chong), the Propaganda Minister in the Independence Party. Chit Kyi Yay Kyi Nyunt, *Four Periods*, 29. Another source mentions that he was a rice miller and that the position of Propaganda Minister of the Independent Party was later taken over by Hoe Kim Seng. Yu Dingbang, "Chinese Council Members." For background information, see U Maung Maung, *Burmese Nationalist Movements 1940–1948* (Edinburgh: Kiscadale Publications, 1989).
108. Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invasion*, 278.
109. The Nationalist Party, Home Rule Party, and *Swaraj* Party were three parties in the Legislative Council prior to the 1925 appointment; Ba Yin and Lee Ah Yain were not members of any of them. According to the Nationalist Party, Ba Yin left it in order to take up his position as minister. Lee Ah Yain had never been on an opposition bench. As a result, the Nationalist Party initiated this objection, with an alliance with the Home Rule and the Swarajists. Soon after the appointments, two new parties were formed by pro-government members and their supporters, namely the Independent Party and the Golden Valley Party, which Lee Ah Yain and Ba Yin soon joined.
110. Cady, *Modern Burma*, 259.
111. BL: IOR, V/9, Proceedings, U Pu (Toungoo South), February 11, 1927, 510–11.
112. Zeng Guanying, "Midandian huaqiao Zeng Mapi fuzi shiji" [Stories of the Burmese Chinese Chan Ma Phee, and his Son], in Zeng, ed., *Zawenji*, 58.
113. According to one account, 12 were killed and 88 injured, including both Burmese and Chinese. Pearn, *History of Rangoon*, 291.
114. The riot was covered by two issues of the *Rangoon Gazette* (January 5 and 12, 1931), and a paragraph in the annual police report, BL: IOR, V/24/3246, Rangoon Town Police (1931), 11. In Chinese sources, *Dashiji* mentioned it briefly ("2 January: Big conflict took place between Chinese and Burmese communities in Rangoon due to minor disputes. 8 January: The Burmese Chinese riot is over. There are more than ten deaths and a dozen injuries from both sides, and great loss to the Chinese business"); Chen, *Dashji*, 44; Zeng, "Shiji," 58. However, the lack of Chinese records may be the result of the promotion of amicable Sino-Myanmar relationships after independence.
115. BL: IOR, L/PJ/7/42, Public & Judicial Department. Answer to Colonel Howard-Bury's Question No. 19, February 23, 1931.

116. Pearn, *History of Rangoon*, 291.
117. Christian, *Burma and the Japanese Invader*, 278.
118. For instance, Ne Win is widely believed by the local Chinese community, until today, to have been born to a Chinese parent. However, in a recent published biography of Ne Win, this is proved unfounded. Robert Taylor, *General Ne Win: A Political Biography* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2015), 11.
119. Saw Teik Leong, a lawyer (who contested the election in Rangoon West in 1928); William Tseng, the Secretary of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (probably member of the Chan clan); and Mr S. C. Liu. Hans-Bernd Zollner, ed., *Myanmar Literature Project Working Paper No.10:6, Materials on Nu* (Passau: Lehrstuhl für Südostasienkunde, Universität Passau, 2007), 4–17.
120. Its Chinese name is *Zhanshi Zhongguo* [Wartime China].
121. Huang Chuoqing wrote this article for the *Xin Yangguang Bao*.
122. Spelling based on Chinese pronunciation. The Chinese characters are "Yu Jue Qing," obviously a Burmese transliteration, but the author could not recover the original Burmese spelling. This could be a Burmese name for a Chinese.
123. Huang, *Shiwenxuan*, 378–80.
124. Kyi Nyunt, *Four Periods*, 35.
125. Feng, *Shihua*, 149.
126. Most notable is the memoir of a former *Minami Kikan* member, Izumiya Tatsuro, *Biruma Dokuritsu Hishi – Sono na wa Minami Boryaku Kikan* [The Secret History of Burmese Independence – Its Name: the Southern Stratagem Agency] (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1967); and its English translation by U Tun Aung Chain, *The Minami Organ*, 2nd ed. (Rangoon: Arts & Science University, 1985).
127. Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War 1941–1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 18–19.

CHAPTER 7

Epilogue

This book has examined the Chinese community in Burma up to the beginning of the 1940s, and there are good reasons to stop there. The Japanese occupation in 1942 was a turning point for British Burma and its many residents, as the war dramatically interrupted individual lives and social infrastructure. By that time, a generation of Chinese migrants who were active before and around the turn of the twentieth century as founders and leaders of community institutions, and often appeared in contemporary Chinese and European public space (and several times in this book), had long passed away. Chan Ma Phee died in 1920, Lim Chin Tsong in 1923, Taw Sein Ko in 1930, Lee Ah Yain in 1932, and Xu Zanzhou in 1933.

The younger generation of immigrants in Burma now had to face an unprecedented and epic flight.[1] Indian migrants in Burma painstakingly trekked across the Indo-Burmese mountains and entered Northeast India.[2] In the opposite direction, Chinese from all over Southeast Asia, but mostly Burma, fled into Yunnan via the Burma Road and other ancient cross-border caravan routes.[3] The wartime exodus was tough, and many did not make it. Lee Ah Lye, the younger son of Lee Nie Hee and younger brother of Lee Ah Yain, fled north and perished on the way; disappearing with him were many valuable documents from several major Cantonese associations in Rangoon.[4] Cun Zhongyou, the Rangoon representative of the Chong Xin Hui, was killed in the border area near Pianma.[5] Being an avid philatelist who donated many of his collections to the school in Heshun as educational

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material, Cun mercifully did not see his life-long stamp collection "flying like snowflakes" in the remote hills of the Sino-Burmese border.[6]

For others, the war announced a new beginning. Among those who survived the journey and managed to reach the Chinese hinterland, some young men served as interpreters and guides for the Allied Force when Burma was recaptured in 1945. Chen Yi-Sein spent the wartime years in Kunming and decided to compile a Burmese Chinese dictionary at the end of WWII.[7] With the removal of colonial rule in Burma and the establishment of an independent country in the following years, an era was forever gone. Only and precisely at this moment, the need to write a history emerged among the new generation of Chinese intellectuals who clearly saw their future, individually and collectively, lying in this new nation-state.

Throughout this book, I have used "Chinese in Burma" or "Burmese Chinese" interchangeably to refer to the subject community, the ethnic Chinese migrants. The book purposefully plays down race *per se* and often overlooks the differences between the "pure" Chinese and the mixed Burmese Chinese. Indeed, there was hardly a clear-cut, well-defined image of mixed-raced Sino-Burmese as a social group in the colonial period despite many figures discussed here being from families of mixed ancestry. Lee Ah Yain, the Cantonese-Burmese, Chan Chor Khine, the Hokkien-Burmese, and Taw Sein Ko, the Hokkien-Burmese (or Mon), represented a most recognizable Chinese face in the colonial administrative system and public media, as well as respectable leading figures of the community. Zhang Chenglian, who collected frontier intelligence for the Qing emperor, and Lees-hee-ta-hee, the alleged killer of Margary, were both born to Yunnanese fathers and Burmese mothers but associated themselves with Chinese imperial officialdom in Kunming and Beijing. On the other side of this ethnic line, there were also figures well recognized as unequivocally Burmese despite rumored Chinese ancestry. Inter-racial marriage was common as many female donors of local origins listed on the inscriptions of Hokkien and Cantonese temples can attest. One census official noticed in 1911 that "the Chinaman is in high repute with the women of all the races in the province as a husband," and "The ethnical confusion is completed by the practice of the sons of all mixed unions of Chinese with the women of the province being brought up as Chinamen, while the daughters adopt the race of the mother."[8] But it was much more than the female offspring who were affected by this issue, as the notable figures listed above were all male. However, offspring of these inter-racial unions failed to produce a collective ethnic profile of Sino-Burmese, even though as individuals, their

multiple connections could have made a significant difference. In the case of Zhang and Li, their Burmese heritage was used to facilitate their loyalty to Imperial China, while in the case of Lee Ah Yain, his Chinese traits irritated Burmese nationalists and became a reason for his political exclusion. However, in no circumstances was this group able or motivated to construct a distinctive profile with substantial and consistent influence like their counterparts in the Malay world, known as the Peranakan, the Baba-Nyonya, or the Straits Chinese, who developed a unique material culture and played a significant part as political, economic, and cultural elites in the colonial era distinguishing themselves from newly arrived Chinese.[9]

One possible explanation is that unlike the inter-marriages between the Malays and the Chinese over the last several centuries, the Chinese engagement in Lower Burma started relatively late. Chinese who were active around the 1860s, a period when the Burmese Chinese community and its many institutions were founded, were often born in China and traveled to Burma in the decades before the 1860s. Despite the fact that some had Burmese wives and concubines, there were only two or three generations of locally born Chinese by the 1940s, not long enough to form an influential group in their own right. In the case of Upper Burma, where Yunnanese had mixed with the local population for centuries, it was a different story. Historical waves of Chinese settlers were often absorbed into local ethnic landscapes and, over the course of time, became yet another local people.[10]

The weakly defined image of mixed Sino-Burmese was also exemplified by the history of two associations in Rangoon. Toon Yew Hong,[11] established in 1879 for the Cantonese-Burmese, was dissolved in the 1950s, as it realized its existence was no longer necessary.[12] The Chinese Merited Association, founded as a Hokkien-Burmese organization, survives today with its focus firmly on religious activities instead of ethnicity. It is undeniable that the Sino-Burmese, like other mixed-children in this multiethnic colonial state, existed throughout the colonial era and continue to exist today. However, with ethnic profile defined firmly along one line or another, a separate image for the racial "in-betweens" hardly emerged while individual cases can be studied either as Chinese (with Burmese ancestry), which this book has done, or Burmese (with Chinese ancestry).

On the legal aspect, I also hesitate to use the term "Sino-Burmese"[13] in the colonial context because the nationality, if there was such a concept, was rather weak and confusing. As the challenge to Lee Ah Yain's constituency validity in Chapter 6 shows, many Chinese in colonial Burma had dubious legal status to say at least, and this was rarely a concern of

the colonial government or the Chinese community. It was only after independence that obtaining citizenship became an increasingly critical issue, and the ethnic Chinese (including those with mixed ancestry) often found difficulty in qualifying for "native" citizenship and experienced considerable discrimination and inconvenience in post-war years.[14]

This book argues that sharing a common experience under colonial rule helps to bring different regional groups, the Yunnanese and the Hokkien/Cantonese, closer and formed almost one ethnic identity of Burmese Chinese. However, post-war years significantly reversed this de-regionalized process, resulting once again in a highly divided Chinese community with strong regional attachment. The Hokkien and Cantonese community experienced a steady decline in terms of population, wealth, and influence, especially after the 1967 anti-Chinese riots in Yangon that forced many to leave the country. This was particularly true for the Cantonese, who had been traditionally skilled workers in the construction industry in colonial times and could hardly find employment in post-war socialist Myanmar. Until the recent political and social changes in 2011, the northern half of Yangon Chinatown, the "Cantonese quarter," was in a regrettable situation where many old, once beautiful residential and commercial buildings had fallen into disrepair.

As for the Yunnanese in the north, the post-war years saw a completely different path taken by the community.[15] To some extent, it regained the frontier free spirit even though the border was properly demarcated in 1960, once and for all, without controversies (unlike the Sino-Indian border that caused considerable disputes and eventually led to the 1962 Sino-Indian War). Once again, Chinese adventurers took advantages of geographic proximity, like many generations before them, and moved to hills in northern Myanmar at various stages between the late 1940s and the 1980s, crossing the porous border. Some were former Chinese Nationalist Army regulars (and its local recruits and dependents), some were "anti-revolutionary" landlords and intellectuals who did not see their future in Communist China, and some were disillusioned urban youth who were forced to receive rural re-education in China's southwest periphery during the Cultural Revolution.

Continuous waves of new migrants from Yunnan during this period significantly changed the demographic layout of the old Yunnanese community and brought in fresh dynamics and new orientations. Furthermore, being far away from the power center of Yangon, and after years of ethnic and ideological conflicts in this region, the control of the Myanmar central government and implementation of its many policies were much less strict

than in the capital and the delta. Subsequently, the Chinese in northern Myanmar had a very different post-war experience from their southern counterparts, resulting in a widened gap between North and South in language proficiency, material achievement, and cultural confidence.[16] Now again, it is possible to talk about at least two Chinese groups in Myanmar: the northern one that maintains close connection with Yunnan and can speak reasonable Mandarin Chinese (with perhaps a little Yunnanese accent); and the southern one that is made up of descendants of colonial-era Hokkien and Cantonese immigrants who are now mostly Burmanized.

On the other hand, the three great myths of the Burmese Chinese, the focus of the second part of this book, are astonishingly intact, and to some extent, even enhanced, with a few modern twists. Immersed in nineteenth-century colonial documents and Chinese inscriptions as a historian, I have traveled around Myanmar, often encountering many unexpected moments of déjà vu. The strong perceptions of Chinese being commercially successful has once again surfaced, further enhanced by newly arrived Chinese investors who have considerable wealth and connections but little knowledge nor respect of local culture. Although the latter could hardly be identified as immigrants, their commercial enterprises are inevitably facilitated by, and sometimes co-operate with, established Chinese community members in Myanmar. In the meantime, Chinese vices, now in the form of corruption, abuse of local workers, and unethical extraction of natural resources, instead of colonial clichés of opium (to some extent still valid in some mountainous areas), alcohol, gambling, and gang fighting, have similarly caught the attention of the Myanmar public in recent years. What is different now, however, is that, in colonial times, Indians, with their sheer numbers, bore all the blame of the Burmese public against the ruling regime. Today, the commercially successful Chinese associated with disrespectable endeavors have become the new target of the Burmese majority in expressing their protest against first the military authoritarian regime (who made many concessions to China in exchange for its support) in the 1990s and 2000s, then the post-2011 political and economic reforms that are slowly revealing their inadequacies. Protests organized by activists against large-scale Chinese infrastructure projects in the 2010s remind anyone who is familiar with Burma's colonial past of anti-Indian riots in the 1930s. In the post-colonial era, when Indians are no longer an adequate target as the ethnic, religious, and cultural "other," the image of Chinese businessmen enjoying unearned privileges from the ruling regime receives the greatest attention. In both cases, the construction of perception and dissemination

of discourse work almost in an identical way. The myths of the Chinese, initiated under colonial rule and based on imperial experiences outside Burma, now find their new currency firmly rooted in this country.

In the immediate post-independence years, the Chinese continued to be politically active, and as in the pre-war years, they were still under transnational influences from their ancestral home in China, now split into two rival camps: Beijing and Taipei. This cost the Chinese community dearly during the 1967 anti-Chinese riot in Yangon.[17] As an unfortunate spillover of the Cultural Revolution outside of China, some pro-Beijing activists in the Yangon Chinatown became the victims of geopolitics, ideological conflicts, and the general policy of undermining non-Burman ethnicities in Myanmar. For decades after 1967, like their multiethnic neighbors, the Chinese remained silent on political issues in the country, being fully aware of their precarious existence; therefore, they took extra care to avoid being associated with politics. Since 2011, government censorship has been relaxed significantly, and these days, one may occasionally hear Chinese elders, relaxing in the outer courtyard of the Kheng Hock Keong at dusk, gossiping about Chinese ancestries or ethnic Chinese family members among important political and military figures in the present government and army. However, it seems almost irrelevant in the current context. Unlike in the colonial government, where Chinese (or half-Chinese) politicians were often seen as representing ethnic and community interests, the political space for a non-indigenous, ex-migrant community is now very limited, and politicians are not naturally asserting their professional allegiances by "race." In short, it is no longer a concern whether or not ethnic Chinese are politically active in a country that has been consistently promoting one major ethnicity (Burman), a very different scenario from the colonial state that was of multiethnic nature to a great extent.

Following the footsteps of Chinese immigrants in colonial Burma, I have visited many places in Myanmar since this project began in 2007. As a historian, nothing amazes me more than the great contrast between the past and the present while also experiencing that feeling of déjà vu. In Sittwe (colonial Akyab) in west Myanmar, where *Who's Who* and the *Rangoon Gazette* both depicted an affluent Chinese community with occasional opium use that annoyed local officials, all that remains today is an anonymous, dilapidated public house for a dozen or so local Cantonese households. In Dedaye, the promising delta town where Chan Ma Phee allegedly dug his first bucket of gold (or rice), the only identifiable Chinese building was the old Hokkien secret society of Ho Sum, standing quietly with locked doors and dusty windows. On the other hand, Myitkyina in

the Kachin Hills and Lashio in the Shan Hills, better known for military stations and unique "hill tribes" among colonial officials, have seen, since 1942, some of the fiercest battles in WWII fought by the Chinese Nationalist Army, smuggling of opium and jade along ancient caravan routes by local warlords with Chinese connections, and continuous ethno-militia conflicts closely associated with post-independence Myanmar's political and military problems (the latest one being the Kokang conflict in early 2015 when Lashio became a main refugee destination). So much has changed; yet, underlying all these changes, one principle remains intact: the Chinese in Myanmar today, like their forefathers in colonial times, continue to be influenced by the country's unique position and many institutional stakeholders from within the country, the region, and the world, each representing special interests and well-developed strategies.

Furnivall, for many years a division official in Lower Burma with first-hand interactions with the Chinese, made a famous observation on plural society in the colonial state. He noted "a medley of peoples…mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the marketplace in buying and selling."[18] However, the experience of the Chinese in Burma suggests the opposite may better explain the actual situation. People did interact in ways other than simple trade, and they did change (and over the years, "combine" seemed inevitable) because of the interaction. What was to be exchanged were not only commodities but also ideas and practices derived from existing knowledge and previous experiences. In the geographic and discursive intersection of colonial Burma, the "marketplace" was essentially made for confrontation and compromise. The individuals involved might or might not have been aware of the nature of these transactions; nevertheless, as a community, it was seriously affected, and in many cases, fundamentally reshaped.

Notes

1. For civilian retreat see, Michael D. Leigh, *The Evacuation of Civilians from Burma: Analysing the 1942 Colonial Disaster* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).
2. Hugh Tinker, "A Forgotten Long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma, 1942," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1975): 1–15.
3. A small number of Chinese fled to India. Jennifer Liang, "Migration Patterns and Occupational Specialisations of Kolkata Chinese: An Insider's History," *China Report* 43, no. 4 (2007): 397–410. For wartime Burmese Chinese refugees see, Tina Mai Chen, "Chinese Residents of Burma as

Refugees, Evacuees, and Returnees: The Shared Racial Logic of Territorialization in the Regulation of Wartime Migration," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2015): 469–92.

4. *HST100.*
5. Cun Shusheng, *Liangnianban de xiangcun gongzuo* [Working in the Countryside for Two and Half Years], 1943.
6. Yin, *Heshun*, 286.
7. Chen, Preface to *Cidian*, 1.
8. *Census of India, 1911 Volume IX, Burma*. Part I Report (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Burma, 1912), 324.
9. For an overview of the Straits Chinese see, Khoo Joo Ee, *The Straits Chinese: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Pepin, 1996).
10. Local legend claims that after the flight of the last Ming emperor to Burma in 1661, some of his entourage remained in Burma and slowly became a group of people known as *Guijia*, allegedly named after the Prince of Gui, the imperial title of the emperor. This proves to be a historical mistake. The Gwe or Gwe Lawa is thought to be a subgroup of Shan by James George Scott, and Parker disagreed with its connection to the Chinese retinue of the late emperor. Harvey, *History of Burma*, 354. However, the legend itself attests to a popular perspective in Upper Burma on the entangled connections between Chinese migrants and local peoples.
11. It is also known as Yoot Khyu Wa Wai or the Burma-born Cantonese Chinese Association. WBSA: Criminal Investigation Department Branch, 125/22, 173/22. "List," 4.
12. Chen, "Cantonese in Burma," 117–18.
13. Roberts suggests using "Sino-Myanmar" for the post-war Chinese in Myanmar to acknowledge their cultural ancestry as well as present-day situation. Roberts, *Mapping Chinese Yangon*, 6–9.
14. Elaine L. E. Ho and Lynette J. Chua, "Law and 'Race' in the Citizenship Spaces of Myanmar: Spatial Strategies and the Political Subjectivity of the Burmese-Chinese," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 5 (2016): 896–916.
15. For life stories of Yunnanese in this region in the post-war years, see Wen-Chin Chang, *Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).
16. One of the most visible differences today is the command of Chinese language, mainly due to the access to quality language education in post-war years. Yi Li, "Yunnanese Chinese in Myanmar: Past and Present," *Trends in Southeast Asia* 12 (2015), 10–16.
17. Fan, "The 1967 Anti-Chinese Riots."
18. J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 304.

Glossary

ah 亞
Ai Wu 艾蕪
Amoy (Xiamen) 廈門
Anfusi 安撫司
Aun Kim Hmein 洪金銘
Aw Boon Haw 胡文虎
Aw Kai Koot 后坑崛
Ayeo 霞陽
Baduma (Martaban) 八都馬
baichi-lu 百呎路
banda 半達
Bao Huiseng 鮑惠僧
Baohuanghui 保皇會
Bo An Tang 箔岸堂
Burma 緬甸
Caishen 財神
Cao Gonghuan 曹公歡
Cao Huayan 曹華炎
Cao Peilin 曹沛霖
Chan Chor Khine 曾祖慨
Chan Ma Phee 曾媽庇(曾廣庇)
Chan Shal Lwai 陳社來

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Chang Pi-Shih 張弼士
Chanya 曾营
Chen Deyuan 陳德源
Chen Ganquan 陳甘泉
Chen Hanping 陳漢平
Chen Pingshan 陳平山
Chen Qisen 陳起森
Chen Xiaoqi 陳孝奇
Chen Yi-Sein 陳孺性
Chen Yuerong (Kangrong) 陳月容(康容)
Chen Zhonghe 陳仲赫
Chengye 承業
China Street 唐人坡
Chinese Merited Association 崇竺聖會
Chong Xin Hui 崇新會
Chow Ah Chey 曹亞志
Chung Ching (Chongqing) 重慶
Cun Fuqing 寸輔清
Cun Haiting 寸海亭
Cun Kaitain 寸開泰
Cun Zhongyou (S.W. Swin) 寸仲猷
dage 大哥
Daguangcheng Yehua 達光城夜話
Dao Anren 刀安仁
Deng Zilong 鄧子龍
Dong Fangcheng 董方城
***dun* (for Rupee)** 盾
Eng Chuan Tong 潁川堂
Eng Swat Shea 文學社
Feng Lidong 馮勵冬
Feng Shui 風水
Foshan 佛山
Funan 扶南
Fushan Si 福山寺
fuxiong 父兄
Fuzhou 福州
Ganya 干崖
Gaoligong 高黎貢(山)
Geh Min Dan 革命黨

Gengma 耿馬
Genong 格弄
***guan*[a]** 觀
***guan*[b]** 官
Guandi 關帝
Guangdong Dajie 廣東大街
Guangdo *Gongsi* 廣東公司
Guanghua Ribao (Kwong Wah Yit Poh) 光華日報
Guangxu 光緒
Guanyin 觀音
Guanyin Gumiao 觀音古廟
Guijia 桂家
Haili 海力
hanrenjie 漢人街
Hawwa 後井
He Yinsan 何蔭三
Heshun 和順
Hezhen 合振
Ho Sum (Hosain, Hooseng) 和勝
Hock (*fu*) 福
Hock Guan Keong 福元宮
Hock Kheng Keong 福慶宮
Hoe Kim Seing (Hoe Kim Seng) 何金星
Hong Sheng Xiang 洪盛祥
Hsu Yun-Tsiao 許雲樵
Huang Chongyuan 黃重遠
Huang Chuoqing 黃綽卿
Huang Ji 黃[土吉]
Huang Xiang 黃享
Huangqiao Zhongxue 華僑中學
***Hui* (Chinese Muslim)** 回
Huiguan 會館
Hukong Valley 胡康(戶拱)河谷
Jiang Kanghu (Kiang Kang-hu, Chiang Kang-hu) 江亢虎
Jiangtoucheng 江頭城
Jin Guoyu (Set Kyin) 金國玉
Jinduoyan 金多堰
Jing De 敬德
Jing De Hang 敬德行

Jinshi 進士
Jiulong River 九龍江
Ju Zheng 居正
Juemin Ribao 覺民日報
Juemin Yueshubao She 覺民閱書報社
Juren 舉人
Kaiping 開平
Kanfeng Xiangen She 刊風先根社
Kang Tai 康泰
Kang Youwei 康有為
Keng Beng Chong 康明章
Khaw Soo Cheang 許泗漳
Kheng Hock Keong 慶福宮
Khoo Ee Khwet 邱貽厥
Khoo Hock Chuan 邱福全
Khoo Lock Chuan 邱祿全
Khoo Teoow Peng (Qiu Zhaobang) 邱肇邦
Khoo Thean Tek (Qiu Tiande) 邱天德
Koh Ban Pan 高萬邦
Kokang 果敢
Kokine Palace (*Xiede Yuan*) 協德園
Kong Hock Keong 廣福宮
Kuomintang (KMT) 國民黨
Kun Xing Tang 崑興堂
Kunming 昆明
Kweichow (Guizhou) 貴州
Kyan 簡
Kyan Taik (Kenteik, Keng Taik) 建德
L. Choon Foung 駱松芳
Laoguantun 老官屯
Law San Tong 蘆山堂
Lee Ah Lye 李遐禮
Lee Ah Yain 李遐養
Lee Nie Hee 李迺喜
Lee Shain Hong 利城行
Leong Chye 梁齋
Leong Hain Kee 梁慶記（梁啟裕）
Leong Sun Tong 龍山堂
Leong San Tong Khoo *Kongsi* 龍山堂邱公司

Li Chen-kuo (Leesetai, Li Si Tai, Lees-hee-ta-hee) 李珍國
Li Dasen 李大森
Li Genyuan 李根源
Li Kailiang 李開良
Li Tengfang 李騰芳
Li Wenzhen 李文珍
Li Xianhe 李先和
Li Yannan 李雁南
Lim Chin Tsong 林振宗
Lim Ngo Chiang[a] 林有昌
Lim Ngo Chiang[b] 林我將
Lim Oo Khine 林宇界
Lin Zhihe 林致和
Lingding 嶺頂
Liu Ting 劉綎
Liu Ye Xuan 六也軒
Liu Zhuangjun 劉莊君
Lu Ban (Lu Ban Gong) 魯班(魯班公)
Lu Shain Hong 魯城行
Lu Xifu 盧喜福
Lü Tian Min (Lü Zhi Yi) 呂天民(呂志伊)
Macau Association of Mutual Help of Myanmar Overseas Chinese 澳門緬華互助會
Manwyne 蠻允
Maolong 茂隆
Mawei 馬尾
Mazu 媽祖
Mei 梅
Miamdian Chenbao 緬甸晨報
Miandian Huaqiao Qingnian Zhanshi Gongzuo Xuanchuan Dui 緬甸華僑青年戰時工作宣傳隊
Miansaosao 緬嫂嫂
Ming Ming Publishing 明明印務有限公司
Nanyang Xuehui 南洋學會
Napoonkhen 林傍坑
Ngee Hain (Moh I Myew, Hong Shun Tang) 義興(武帝廟、洪順堂)
Nie Qiannu 聶鉗弩
Ning Yang 寧陽
Nu River 怒江

Ong Soon Ya 王孫爺
Qianlong 乾隆
Qin Lishan 秦力山
Qiu (Khoo) Xiaoru 邱筱儒 (丘巴寧)
Qiu (Khoo) Zhumu 邱豬母
Ouyang Jinsong 歐陽錦松
Panyu 番禺
Peh Beng Teng 白聯登
Phemma (Pimaw, Hpimaw, Pianma) 片馬
Rangoon [口養] 吆 **[based on its Cantonese pronunciation];** 仰光 **[based on its Hokkien pronunciation]**
Renji Gumiao 仁濟古廟
S. Jone Bin 蘇玉明
Sa Junlu 薩君陸
***San Cheng* Shop** 三成號
Sanshan 三山
Sansheng Gong 三聖宮
Saw Teik Leong 蘇德隆
Sechuen (Sichuan) 四川
Shanba 山岜
Shangwu Bao 商務報
she 社
Sheng Mao Guanzai 勝茂關仔
Shiping 石屏
Shubaoshe 書報社
Shuisheng 水盛
Sin Lyan Tye 新蓮台
Sinwa 新安
Sit Teik Tong 植德堂
Soo Pin Tong (S. Pinthong) 蘇品堂
Ssu-mao (Si'mao) 思茅
Su (Soo) Xiwei 蘇溪維
Sum Yik Tong 三益堂
Tan Boon Tee (Tan Boontay) 陳文鄭
Tan Cheng Hoe 陳清河
Tan Kim Chye 陳金在
Taw Sein Ko 杜誠誥
Teong Hwa Chinese School 中華義學
Tengyueh (Tengchong) 騰越(騰衝)

Thaung-myo **Guanyin Si** 洞謬觀音寺
Thian Hock Keng 天福宮
Tianhou Gong 天后宮
ting 亭
Toh Peh Kong 大伯公
Tong Xing Guan 同興館
Tongan 同安
Tongmenghui 同盟會
Toon Yew Hong 敦友行(堂)
Tsong Seng Tong 崇聖堂
Tudi 土地
Tusi shu 土司署
Twa Sye Ya 大使爺
U Po Aye 陳頗挨
Wacheng 瓦城
Wanshou Temple 萬壽宮
Wang Ji 王驥
Wang Dayuan 汪大淵
Wang Jingwei 汪精衛
Wang Qun 王群
Weiyuan Garrison 威遠營
Wen Cheng (Wen Zancheng) 溫成 (溫讚成)
Wu Shangxian 吳尚賢
wushichi-lu 五十呎路
Wu Zhenghui 吳正輝
Wuzhujiao 五柱角
Xiangshan 香山
Xiao Ri 蕭日
Xiao Yongxi 蕭永熙
Xin Yangguang Bao 新仰光報
Xinghua 興化
Xinjie 新街
Xinning 新寧
Xinya Xiaobao 新芽小報
Xu Huili (W. L. Kough) 許麾力
Xu Zanzhou 徐贊周
Xu Zhangguan 許漳觀
Xuanfushi 宣撫使
Xuanweisi 宣慰司

Yangguang Ribao 仰光日報
Yangjiang Xinbao 仰江新報
Yangwentun 陽溫暾
Yangwentun Xiaoyin 陽溫暾小引
Yao Wendong 姚文棟
Yefeng 椰風
Yeo Cheow Kaw (Yeo Teaning Ann, Yeo Soo Seng, Yeo Koe Tong) 楊昭固(楊奠安、楊子貞)
Yishang Yexue 益商夜學
Yixi 迤西
Yin Rong 尹蓉
Yin Wenhe 尹文和
Yin Yi 尹藝
Yin Zhaorong 尹兆榮
Yin Zijian 尹子鑒(尹梓鑒)
Yongding 永定
Yongli 永歷
Yu Jue Qing 宇覺慶
yuan 員 (元)
Yuedong Renshu Tang 粵東仁術堂
Zengjiawan 曾家灣
Zhang Chenglian 張成濂
Zhang Chengqing 張成清
Zhang Chengyu 張成渝
Zhang Dexin 張德馨
Zhang Guangnian 張光年
Zhendai 貞岱
Zhixin Bao 知新報
Zhonghua Gemingdang 中華革命黨
Zhonghua Ribao Ju 中華日報局
Zhonghua Wenhui 中華文會
Zhongtian Temple 中天寺
Zhu Mengzhen 朱孟震
Zhu Meng Yuan 主盟員
Zhu Ying 朱應
Zhuang Yinan 莊銀安
*** The inscription on the stele erected by Wang Ji near Myitkyina in the mid fifteenth century:**
石爛江枯爾乃得渡

* **Final expenditure for the 1846 renovation of the Yunnanese temple in Amarapura:**
  玖佰零柒砬陸亢壹甲柒母
* **Kang Youwei's couplet in the Yunnanese temple in Amarapura:**
  把袂盡同鄉會比龍華恰逢人海無爭佛天皆喜
  驅車來異域跡留鴻爪常記三生緣舊一宿情深

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