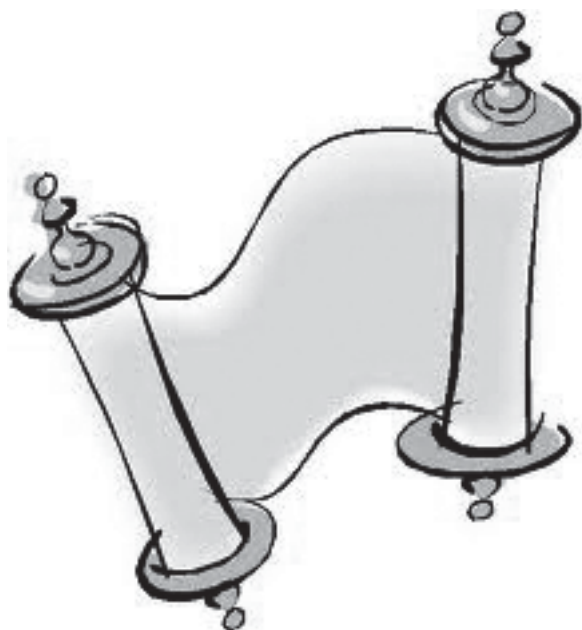


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Histories of Burma: A Source-based Approach to Myanmar's History provides an introduction to key history skills as well as providing a critical and reflective study of many aspects of history from the region.

Accompanying this book is the **Sourcebook**. You will need it for reading the sources, timelines, maps and other references mentioned in this book.

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■ A Buddha head surrounded by an overgrown tree in Ayutthaya, Thailand. The site was the scene of a famous Burmese invasion of the ancient city in 1767.

Introduction to: **Historians' Skills**

1. How and why do we study history?

People study history for many reasons. Before you start this module, consider why history matters to you. In your opinion, what are the most important reasons for studying history? Choose at least three and rank them in order of importance. These are what we will call “reasoning questions” - there are no right or wrong answers.

1. I study history...


- a. so that I can respect and be proud of my ethnic group or nation.
- b. so that I can learn about the perspectives of people from many backgrounds, and get along with them.
- c. so that I can memorise correct facts, names, places, and dates.
- d. so that I can think critically and form my own ideas about history.
- e. so that I can know for sure which facts are correct.
- f. so that I can compare many theories about history and understand the evidence for and against them.
- g. for some other reason (please explain).

2. Why did you choose these answers?

3. Think back the history classes you have had in school. What purposes did those classes have? Are they the same as the ones you chose as most important?



2. How do we approach history differently in this module?

Over the past century, history has mostly been taught in schools so that students can fulfill purposes A, C and E. In other words, history has been taught to promote nationalism, accuracy and certainty about the past. This is true all over the world, and it is true in Burma today, too [see  Document (D) 63]*. These purposes may be suitable in some situations, but this curriculum is different. We will focus more on purposes B, D, and F. In other words, we will emphasise empathy and reconciliation, critical thinking, and open-mindedness about the past.

In this module, we will ask you to study history in a way that might be different from what you are used to. Instead of memorising what someone else says about history, you will read historical documents and interpret evidence in order to form your own theories about history. In other words, we will ask you to be a historian.

Being a historian is challenging because many people have strong feelings about history. You might have different ideas about history from your classmates, teachers, family, or friends. This is OK. Historians often have different interpretations of the past.

These books are also set up in a different way from most textbooks. They contain mostly reference materials: Documents, a Timeline, Maps, and a Who's Who section. In addition, there are 10 chapters, or Themes, each of which addresses a major question in Burmese history. For instance, our question for this Theme is, "How and why do we study history?" We will direct you to documents and other information that can help you answer these questions, and we will explain some key concepts for each Theme that can help you understand it better. We organise history by Theme instead of chronologically (in the order that events happened) so that you can compare different ways that people in the past have dealt with important issues and decide which approaches have been most successful.

You can use these books in many different ways. You can study the reference materials with a class or by yourself, and you can complete some or all of the Themes, in any order you like. However, it is helpful to complete this unit, "Theme 0" before you begin any



others because in this unit we will teach you some skills that you can use as you study the rest of the module. Because we are using a new approach to studying history, we would like to know how it works out for you. Please contact us with questions and comments so that we can improve the module.

To help you compare our approach to Burmese** histories with other people's, we will ask you to read an explanation in the Documents section about why Gen. Khin Nyunt thinks history is important.

Types of Question

There are two different types of questions throughout these books:

Comprehension questions that have correct and incorrect answers, although in some cases you might have different ideas than we do about which answers are correct. If this happens, please let us know.

Reasoning questions are activities or exercises that help you use the material to form opinions, conclusions or new ideas.

* This is called a citation. Historians use citations to show readers where they found evidence for their theories so the readers can decide for themselves if they agree or not.

** When we say "Burmese," we mean any ethnic group that lives in Burma, not just Burmans. As we will learn, the word "Burmese" means different things to different people, and its meaning has changed throughout history.

Using your textbook

Throughout this module you will be directed to different resources (Documents, Timelines, Maps and Who's Who) in the following way:



'D' - a historical document. This can be found in the History Resource book in the Documents section.



T-1946 - 'T' represents a date or a period of history on the 'timeline'. You can find the specific dates in the Timelines section of the resource book.



M-4 - 'M' represents a map. You can find this in the Maps section of the resource book.



B - (name) - this is a person or organisation from history. It gives a brief summary of the person's accomplishments or the purpose of the organisation. This can be found in the 'Biographies' section of the History Resource Book

Factbox - this will display additional information related to an exercise. This includes profiles of people or organisations and other helpful facts.

6. The AFPFL: Why did it try to get independence through constitutional reform?

Read D38; B-AFPFL; B-Thin Pe, B-Mountbatten, B-BIA; and T-1946-1945; T-1942-1943; T-1944-1945; look at M3.

Comprehension

- Thakin Thain Pe argues that it is best to get independence by reforming the constitution because
 - fewer people will be injured or killed that way.
 - Burma does not have a strong enough army to fight a violent revolution.
 - after fascism is defeated, there will be no more need for violence or war.
 - the British will support the Burmese drive for independence only if they only use non-violent means.

Reasoning

- The other reasons listed in question 1 might have influenced Thakin Thain Pe, although he does not mention them. Explain.
- Have world events since the end of WW2 proved Thakin Thain Pe's argument correct or incorrect? Why?

Factbox

Anti-Fascist People's freedom league (AFPFL). Previously called the AFP. Aung San led demands for independence from Britain. After his death, Nu led this party, which controlled the parliament in the 1950s. In 1958 the AFPFL split into the Clean Faction (led by Nu) and the Stable Faction (led by Nyaung Uyein and Ba Swe).

Exercise Type - Comprehension - understanding the information in a text, or Reasoning - being able to analyse and interpret that information to form opinions, conclusions or make inferences.

Study the sources to the right and answer the questions.



D80



B-Khin Nyunt



T-40 million BCE

Comprehension

- General Khin Nyunt explains that if a nation has a long history**
 - it will never be enslaved.
 - its citizens will be more patriotic.
 - it is better than nations with short histories.
 - it will have a better government.
- General Khin Nyunt says that Myanmar's history has to be corrected because**
 - Burmese historians did not do a good job in the past.
 - the government has set social objectives related to history.
 - then the country will be more unified.
 - foreign historians have written incorrect histories.

3. General Khin Nyunt claims that Burmese historians

- have been collecting correct facts.
- have been patriotic.
- have worked together with foreign historians.

Reasoning

- Do you agree with General Khin Nyunt's three main points? Why or why not? Do you think most Burmese people agree with him?**
- There is a saying, "The winners write history." What does it mean? Do you think General Khin Nyunt would agree with this statement?**

3. How can you identify multiple perspectives?

Why do people have different perspectives on history? Because they have had different experiences and they have access to different information. This means that no-one can understand the entire world by themselves. However, if you read histories written by people from diverse backgrounds, you can understand a bigger picture.

Many factors affect people's perspectives on history, including their gender, age, ethnicity, social class, nationality, region, religion, political ideology, level of education and occupation. These characteristics and many others make up your identity or your idea about who you are. Over the course of your life, some characteristics (typical or usual qualities or features of something or someone) might start to seem more important, while others seem less important. For instance, if you are surrounded by people who are from a different ethnic group, preserving (saving something from being

destroyed or harmed) your own ethnicity might become more important to you. In this way, your identity can change over the course of your life.

Your identity influences your perspective and your perspective is like a pair of glasses through which you see events. Reading histories by people who are different from you is like putting on someone else's glasses; you might be able to see things in a new way. And you might find that your own perspective changes as a result.

In this module, you will read documents written by men and women; young and old; rich, poor, and middle class; Burmese and foreigners; urban and rural people; Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and animists; radicals and conservatives; soldiers, revolutionaries, monks, students, and many others. This variety of perspectives will help you to see that Burma has many histories, not only one.

- a. Ne Win
- b. Clement Atlee
- c. Ba U Gyi
- d. Aung San Suu Kyi

a



b



Comprehension

1. The main idea of the previous text is

- Understanding multiple perspectives can give you a more complete understanding of history.
- There is only one correct version of history.
- There are documents in this unit written by both urban and rural people.
- People who have had similar life experiences have similar perspectives on history.

Reasoning

- Answer the questions below for yourself. Then imagine that you have a friend whose answers are all different. For instance, if you are female, imagine you are male, etc. Decide on all the characteristics of this imaginary friend who is different from you in every way.

Question	You	Imaginary friend
a. Are you male or female? b. What is your ethnic group? c. How old are you? d. Are you rich, poor, or middle class? e. What country were you born in? f. Did you grow up in a city or a village? g. What is your religion? h. What kind of political system do you prefer? i. What job do you hope to have? j. Another characteristic not mentioned yet		

- Now, think of the 2010 elections in Burma. Write down three ways your perspective about this event would be different if you were this imaginary friend instead of yourself?
- Which of the characteristics that you listed for yourself above are the most important parts of your identity right now? Pick your top three, and explain why they are the most important.





4. How can you understand your own biases?

Just as people have different perspectives about history, almost everyone has biases, or preferences, for certain people or groups based on their past experiences. If your perspective on history is like a pair of glasses, your bias is like a pair of glasses that you cannot easily take off.

For instance, imagine a football game between Manchester United and Newcastle. The Manchester United fans and Newcastle fans are both biased in favour of their favorite team. When the referee calls a foul on a Newcastle player, the Newcastle fans are likely to think the referee is being unfair, while the Manchester United fans will agree with the referee. The two groups of fans are watching the same game, but they see it differently. The referee might prefer one team or another, but his job is to ignore his bias and judge the game in a neutral way.

Just like people have biases for and against certain sports teams, they also have biases for and against certain people and groups in history. And just like a referee tries to be

neutral in a sports match, as a historian you can try to reduce how much your biases affect your theories about history. The first step in doing this is to understand your own biases. Often, people are biased in favor of people who are similar to themselves, and they are biased against people who are different from them. They may also be biased in favour of a group that already has power and respect in their society, especially if they are part of that group. If they are outside the powerful and respected group, they may be biased against it.

One kind of bias is a stereotype; this means believing that all people in a group are the same based on your experiences with only a few of those people. Another kind of bias is a generalisation, which means thinking something is always true because it has been true in your experience. Having biases is normal and it is very difficult to get rid of them totally, but you can become aware of your biases so that you can be a better historian.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the text?
 - a. Referees try to be neutral.
 - b. Historians try to understand their biases so they can be more neutral.
 - c. Some historians have no biases at all.
 - d. A stereotype is one kind of bias.
2. Identify which statement expresses a bias; stereotype; generalisation; and neutral statement.
 - a. Women are not good at football.
 - b. Whenever people play football, someone gets injured.
 - c. Manchester United is the best football team.
 - d. Manchester United and Newcastle both have strengths and weaknesses as football teams.

Reasoning

1. Imagine you are a judge. You learn that one person has accused another person of stealing. Even before you hear their stories, you might be more likely to believe that one person was telling the truth depending on their age, ethnic group, gender, economic class, or some other factor. Look back at the list you made for Reasoning Question 1, Section 3 of this Theme (Page 7). Would you be biased towards a person with the characteristics you had, for a person with the characteristics of your imaginary friend, or would you be neutral? Go through points A-I and select the group/person you would be biased towards.
2. What did you learn about your biases by doing this activity? Do you think it is possible to have no biases at all? Why or why not?

“ There is a Burmese folktale that tells of a magic mirror in which a person sees only what he wishes to see. History is such a mirror; and a historian, however much he attempts to be objective and detached, often finds that he cannot overcome his human frailties of prejudice and preference. The reader may therefore find that this history of Burma gives too flattering a picture of Burmese people. ”

■ Maung Htin Aung

Factbox

Maung Htin Aung (1909-1978): Burman writer and historian, rector of Rangoon University from 1946-1958.

3. Do you agree with Maung Htin Aung's generalisation about historians? Why or why not? If you read his book, would you trust his theories about history? Why or why not?



5. How can you find biases in a text?

What will make your job as a historian so difficult is that not only do you have biases, but the people who wrote the historical documents you will be reading have biases, too. No history can be totally free of biases; even if it contains only correct facts, the author's biases influenced which facts they chose to include and which ones they decided to leave out. Still, you can decide how much you trust the information in a document based on how much of a bias you see. Just because an author is biased does not mean the information they include is false, but understanding their bias might cause you to trust their theories more or less.

Even before historians read a document, they often ask themselves, "Who wrote it? Why did they write it? What bias are they likely to have?" After they have predicted the author's bias, they try to read the text with open-mindedness. Then they can evaluate the bias and see if it matches their prediction.

The first step in evaluating bias is noticing if the author portrays certain people or groups in a positive, negative, or neutral way. The second

step is figuring out if the author systematically and consistently shows certain people and groups in a negative or positive way, or if the author gives balanced information by showing both positive and negative sides of people or groups. If the author only says negative things about a person, you might conclude that the author is biased against that person. However, if the author mentions the person's strengths and weaknesses, you might decide the author is staying neutral and giving a balanced explanation. You may also think the author is biased if you believe the information they include is incorrect.

When deciding if a text contains bias or not, sometimes it helps to imagine the document as a movie or novel. Is it clear who would be the villains and who would be the heroes? If so, the author might be biased towards the "heroes."

After reading the document carefully, you can go back and see whether the bias you predicted was correct. It depends on your judgment, and often there is no clear right or wrong answer.

Comprehension

1. Put these questions in the correct order you must ask to find bias in a text.

- "Does the author portray certain groups in a positive, negative, or neutral way?"
- "What bias is the author likely to have?"
- "Was I right about the bias I predicted that the author would have?"
- "Does the author portray certain groups in a positive or negative way systematically and consistently?"

Reasoning

1. What biases have you noticed in books or newspaper articles that you've read?

6. Practice finding Bias

Practise finding bias in a text by reading two different histories about the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War.
First, study the documents listed on the right.



D10



B-Bagyidaw



T-1752-1885



T-1824-1826



D11



B-Snodgrass



T-1858-1948



M3, M4

Comprehension

1. Predict the bias of D10: towards the Konbaung Kingdom, or the British Empire?
2. Predict the bias of D11: towards the Konbaung Kingdom, or the British Empire?
3. Read D10 and fill in the chart below.

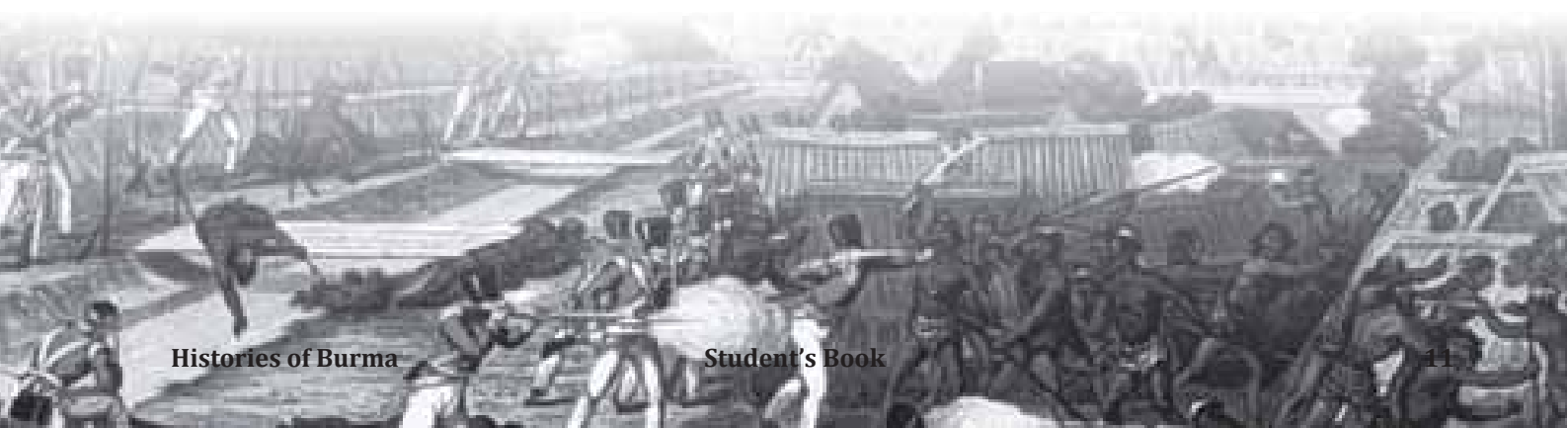
	British ("white strangers")	Burmese ("Lord of the Golden Palace")
What do they do or how are they described?		
Are they portrayed as positive, negative, or neutral?		
Is there bias towards or against them?		


4. Read D11 and fill in the chart below

	British ("Government of India")	Burmese ("Court of Ava")
What do they do or how are they described?		
Are they portrayed as positive, negative, or neutral?		
Is there bias towards or against them?		

Reasoning

1. Were you correct about the biases you predicted the texts would have? Did anything surprise you about the biases in the texts?
2. Is your own perspective on the Anglo-Burmese war more similar to D10 or D11? Why do you think that is the case?





■ The battle of Kemmendine 1824, during the First Anglo-Burmese War.

7. Facts, beliefs, and theories

After evaluating the bias of texts, historians need to differentiate between the facts, beliefs, and theories they contain. A fact is a piece of information that can be proven correct or incorrect. For instance, “The Anglo-Burmese war ended in 1826” is a correct fact; “The Anglo-Burmese War ended in 1926” is an incorrect fact.

A belief is a personal view about what is good or bad. Beliefs cannot be proven correct or incorrect, but there are some beliefs that are widely accepted within a community, while other beliefs are controversial. For instance, “General Mahabandula was brave” is a widely held belief among Burmese people. “General Mahabandula was a coward” is a controversial belief.

A theory is a guess about why or how things happened that can be supported or discredited (shown to be not true or good to trust) with evidence, but that cannot usually be proven definitely correct or incorrect. A theory about history is different from a hypothesis in science, because it is about the past, not the future. For instance, “The British won the First Anglo-Burmese War mostly because of their superior weapons” is a theory that could be supported or discredited by reading British and Burmese military records. We can call this theory well supported because there is a lot of evidence for it. On the other hand, “The British won the First Anglo-Burmese War because all the ordinary Burmese people helped them” is a poorly supported theory. It is easiest to discredit theories that make generalisations about people or situations using the words “always,” “all,”

“none,” or “never” because you only have to prove that one person or one situation does not fit the theory.

One important part of learning to think like a historian is accepting that people will always have different theories about the past because no one has all the evidence; new evidence is being discovered all the time. But even if you cannot say for sure which theory is correct, you can decide which theory you agree with most based on how much evidence you can find to support it. If you get new information later, you might change your mind.

Some statements are difficult to classify as fact, theory, or belief because they have qualities of all three. For instance: “In 1826, the great and noble British Empire defeated the cowardly Burmese because of their superior weapons.” It is a fact that the war ended in 1826, but the statement also theorises that the British won because of their superior weapons. The statement also includes the author’s beliefs that the British Empire was “great and noble” and the Burmese were “cowardly.” Even “facts” can be controversial and cause a lot of disagreement because people can strongly disagree about what words mean. For instance, the authors of D10 and D11 might not agree on what “defeat” means, so it would be hard for them to agree about whether the British defeated the Burmese in the war.



Comprehension

1. Which statements are facts, which are beliefs and which are theories?
Are they based on D10 or D11?
 - a. In 1825 and 1826, the British landed at Rangoon and took the palace.
 - b. King Bagyidaw was pious and had regard for life.
 - c. The Burmese were stubborn.
 - d. The treaty that ended the war was advantageous to India.
 - e. King Bagyidaw gave the British money because they had run out and were in distress.

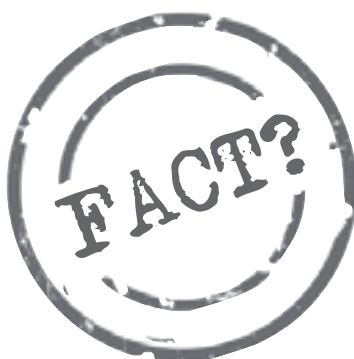
Factbox

Mahabandula, General (above) (1783-1825): Commander of Konbaung Kingdom's army, 1819-1825. Died in action during the *First Anglo-Burmese war*

Reasoning

1. Why do the authors of D10 and D11 have different theories about the war?
2. Based on your prior knowledge, which of the above statements do you accept more, d or e? Why?

■ British forces arriving in Mandalay (right) at the end of the third Anglo-Burmese war on the 28th November, 1885.



8. Primary sources: Finding evidence for a theory

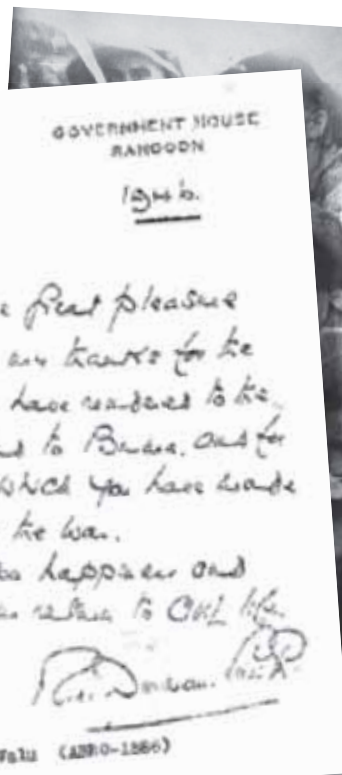
Once historians have separated facts from beliefs from theories, they check the accuracy of the facts and decide whether there is evidence to support the theories. Sometimes the author of the historical document they are reading provides evidence (facts or signs that can be used to show something is true) for his or her theories, but sometimes historians have to look for evidence in other sources. For instance, on page 13, the author of D10 does not provide much evidence for Statement e in the Comprehension Questions from “Facts, Beliefs, and Theories,” and the author of D11 does not provide much evidence for statement d.

If you wanted to find evidence for these theories, you would have to look at other sources of information. Historians rely on primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources were written or created by the people in the time and place the historian is studying, and they include first-hand accounts, treaties, constitutions, speeches, letters, and photos. If you are studying the Anglo-Burmese War, both D10 and D11 can be called primary

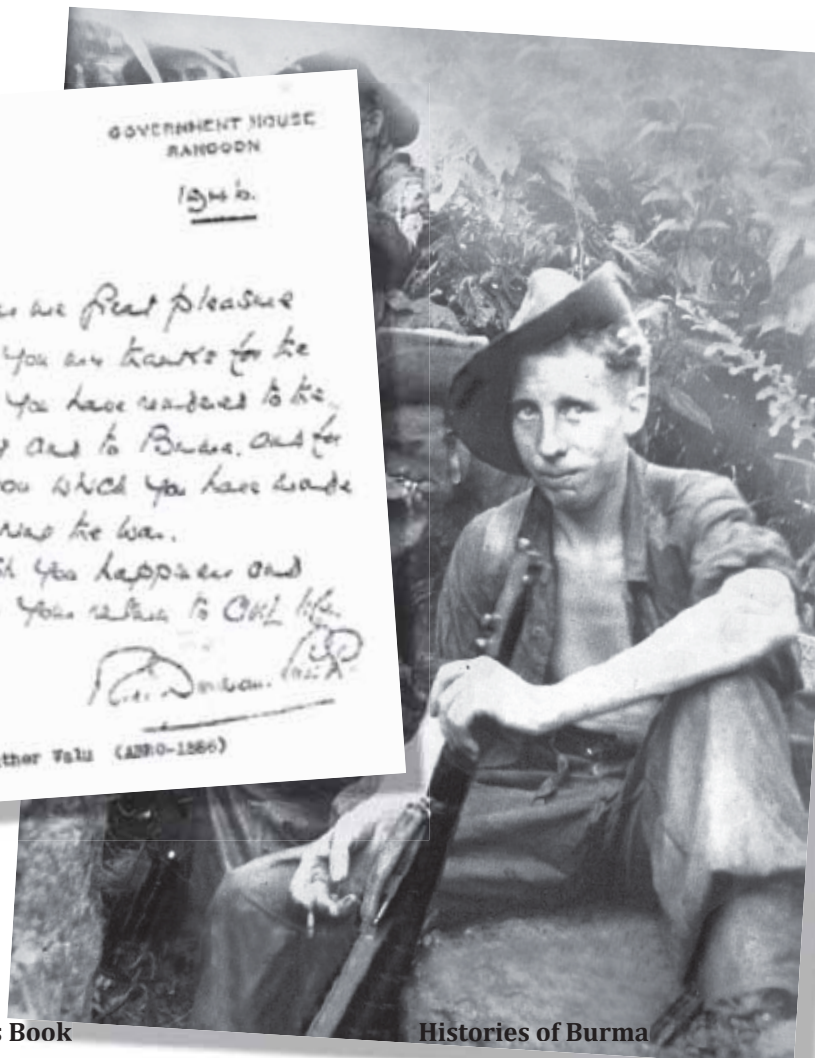
sources. Major Snodgrass, the author of D11, fought in the war. The scholars in the Konbaung court who wrote D10 may not have participated directly in the war, but they may have had first-hand knowledge of what was happening at that time.

Secondary sources are what historians write many years after events in which they did not participate. For instance, a school textbook’s history lesson about the Anglo-Burmese War written in 1975 would be a secondary source. Secondary sources present facts and theories about historical events based on the information in primary sources. Some sources are hard to classify as secondary or primary; for instance, if Major Snodgrass had written D11 in 1857, thirty years after the war had ended, then you might think he had forgotten some of what had happened and treat his book more as a secondary source.

The information in primary sources is not necessarily correct; their authors could be biased, lying, or misinformed. But their authors are one step closer to what really happened than the authors of secondary sources.



- The Burmese star medal. Given to British troops who served in the Burma during WW2
- A letter written to a British soldier, congratulating him on his service in the region
- A photo of British troops in Burma
- The History page of the BBC website that gives information regarding the WW2 campaign in Burma
- A British intelligence map showing the operations of UK troops in Burma during the Japanese occupation
- Prince Charles meeting Burma WW2 veterans



On the other hand, the historians who write secondary sources have the chance to gather and compare many primary sources, so they may understand a greater variety of perspectives on the event.

The Documents section of this module contains mostly primary sources, written by people who actually participated in events in Burma's history, so that you can form your own theories about the information they provide. Still, your job will not be easy. You have already seen that two people who witness the same event, such as the authors of D10 and D11, can have different perspectives about it.

Your next step is to find a primary source that is even closer to the event. D11 refers to the treaty that ended the war, which was called the Treaty of Yandabo (D9), which you will read in order to evaluate the theories in D10 and D11.

d



e



Comprehension

- Classify each of the documents below as **primary or secondary sources on the First Anglo-Burmese War or both**.
 - a letter from King Bagyidaw to the British King George IV, 1825
 - Dr. Than Tun's Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma, 1988
 - Dr. Maung Htin Aung's History of Burma, 1967
 - a diary written by a British soldier in the war, 1826
 - an article about the war written by a British journalist in London, 1826
- Read D9, decide if the statements below are **true, false or not stated by the treaty**.
 - The Burmese get to keep the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim.
 - The King of Ava has to pay 10 million rupees to the British as compensation for the money the British spent on the war.
 - The Arakan mountains will be the boundary between British India and the Burmese Kingdom of Ava.
 - The British promise never to take over any more Burmese land.
- Re-evaluate the theories from D10 and D11. What evidence did you find in D9 that supports or discredits these theories?
 - D11: "The treaty that ended the war was advantageous to India."
 - D10: "King Bagyidaw gave the British money because they had run out and were in distress."

Reasoning

- Based on the information in D9, do you believe D10's or D11's theories more strongly? Why?

f



9. Making inferences: The differences between stated and implied



Often, in order to find and evaluate evidence for a theory, historians need to differentiate between what their sources state directly and what they imply indirectly. Figuring out what is implied indirectly, or “reading between the lines,” is called making an inference. You already know the difference between direct and indirect messages from your own life; for instance, you might say “It’s getting late, I’m a little tired,” instead of directly telling your friend, “Leave my house, I want to go to sleep now.” Your friend will probably infer that you’d like them to leave.

The historical documents you will read also contain indirect messages. Certain words are clues to their underlying meaning. Sometimes authors imply rather than state what they mean because they think the meaning is already obvious, but sometimes they are presenting one-sided information in order to influence the reader to believe that groups or individuals are good or bad, powerful or weak, honest or dishonest. Some authors are not even aware of the implied meanings of what they write, because their biases prevent them from seeing things in a neutral way.

a. **D11: The British were stubborn**

b. **D11: The British won the war**

c. **D10: The Burmese were more powerful than the British**

d. **D11: The Burmese forced the British into having a war**

e. **D10: The Burmese could have stopped the British from advancing to Yandbao if they had wanted to**

f. **D10: The Burmese king was pious and generous**

Presenting one-sided information for political purposes is called propaganda. Political purposes include giving power to, taking power from, or maintaining the power of a certain group or person. It is important for historians to recognise propaganda because it often contains incorrect information and poorly supported theories.

Comprehension

1. **Study the statements at the bottom of the page. Which statements are stated? Which are implied?**
2. **Which of the points below is the main political message of D10?**
3. **Which of the points below is the main political message of D11?**

Reasoning

1. **Why would the author of D10 want to spread the political message in Question 2? Why would the author of D11 want to spread the message in Question 3?**
2. **Do you think D10 or D11 can be called propaganda? Why or why not?**

10. How can you analyse theories about cause and effect?

Many historical theories are about cause and effect. After reading all the sources you can find on a topic, you can make an educated guess about why events or processes occurred. Events usually have many causes, but your job will be to decide what the most important causes are. Often, each effect is also a cause of some other event, so you can link several causes and effects into a chain. Often, events have immediate causes which set them off, as well as several background causes which created the conditions for them to occur. They also have short-term effects which become clear right away, and long-term effects which emerge over time.

You may see chains of causation in your own life. For instance, "Because I had my family's support, I could study hard. Because I studied hard, I did well on the exam. Because I did well on the exam, no employer wanted to hire me."

The last link in that chain of causes and effects is not very plausible or likely to be true. Part of your job as a historian is to decide how plausible certain chains of cause and effect are so you can decide whether theories are well supported or not.



Comprehension

1. Think back to D10 and D11. Match the cause (on left) with the effect (on right).

Causes	Effects
1. Because the Burmese King did not want to harm the British...	a. the British were able to negotiate the Treaty of Yandabo, which was advantageous to the British and humiliating for the Burmese.
2. Because the British worked hard...	b. the British were forced into the war.
3. Because the Burmese were stubborn...	c. the Burmese King gave the British some money.
4. Because the British had run out of money and were in distress...	d. the Burmese King did not stop the British advance to Yandabo.

Reasoning

- Do you think any of the cause-effect pairs are plausible, according to your own assessment based on your prior knowledge and your reading of D9, D10, and D11? Which show the author's biases?
- D10 offers certain causes for c. and d. above. Can you think of any other plausible causes, based on your reading of D9? Fill them in below.
 - Because _____, the Burmese King gave the British some money.
 - Because _____, the Burmese King did not stop the British advance to Yandabo.

11. How can you assess continuity and change?



Theories about history also concern continuity and change. As you complete various Themes in this book, we will ask you to notice which conditions remained the same over time, and what kinds of changes occurred. Historians compare what happened at different times to find out which events represent major changes. In this way, they divide history into eras. For instance, some historians say the colonial era began in Burma in 1885, when the British annexed Upper Burma and deposed

Read D15; B-Thibaw; and T-1885.

King Thibaw. However, other historians say the colonial era began in 1826 when the Treaty of Yandabo was signed and the British took over Arakan and Tenasserim. In order to decide whether 1826 or 1885 represented a more important change in British-Burmese relations, you can compare documents from these two years.

Comprehension

- The main political message of D15 is**
 - the Burmese are more powerful than the British.
 - the British are more powerful than the Burmese.
 - the British and the Burmese are equally powerful.
 - neither the British nor the Burmese are powerful.
- According to D15, the relationship between the British and Burmese is**
 - the Burmese will surrender and give in to the British demands.
 - the Burmese will fight back against the British who are preparing to attack them.
 - the helpless Burmese ask for support from the British, who are more powerful.
 - the powerful Burmese expand into British territory.

- D15 implies that the British are**
 - threatening and evil
 - kind
 - dutiful
 - neutral
- Now look back at D11 and answer questions 1-3 according to D11.**

Reasoning

- What are the continuities and changes you see in the attitudes of Burmese rulers toward the British between 1826 and 1885, as shown in D15 and D10?**
- Based on your prior knowledge of history, why do you think these changes in the attitude of Burmese rulers occurred?**

Review

1. Match the terms below with their definitions.


- multiple perspectives
- identity generalisation
- belief theory
- continuity
- secondary source inference
- changes cause **fact**
- effect** **evidence**
- stereotype primary source
- a. a guess about the causes or effects of an event that can be supported or discredited with evidence ____
- b. things that are different from one period of time to another ____
- c. different ideas that people have based on their experiences and the information they have ____
- d. a personal opinion about what is good or bad that may be widely accepted or controversial ____
- e. a source of information that you can use to support or discredit a theory ____
- f. what stays the same from one period of time to another ____
- g. a reason why an event happens ____
- h. a piece of information that can be proven correct or incorrect ____
- i. what results from an event ____
- j. a bias that claims that things always happen a certain way ____
- k. a guess you can make based on what someone implies indirectly ____
- l. a bias that states that a whole group of people are all the same ____
- m. your idea of who you are and the characteristics that are most important to you now ____
- n. a document written by historians many years after the event that they are studying ____
- o. something created by people in the time and place you are studying ____

2. How has completing this unit changed your perspective on studying history? How has it stayed the same?
3. Which of the concepts or skills taught in this theme did you know already? Which were new to you? Which are most difficult, and which are easiest?
4. What are your concerns about completing this module? What are you looking forward to most?




Theme

1



Rights and Responsibilities of Governments and Citizens



1. What has been the “social contract” between the rulers and the ruled?

Throughout history, there has been discussion about what governments should do for people and what people should do for governments in different ways. Citizens’ rights and duties have also changed over time along with ideas about economic class, social status, and religion. We can analyse these changes using an idea from political science, the “social contract.” According to this idea, the government has an informal agreement, or “social contract” with citizens.

In a social contract, citizens agree to give up some of their freedoms if the government provides them with security and other benefits. If the government does not fulfil its duties, citizens might rebel or leave the country. If the citizens do not fulfil their duties, the government might use its power to punish them. For instance, in many political systems, the government has the right to collect taxes, and the citizens have a duty to pay taxes. If they do not pay, the government may put them in jail or take away their property. In some political systems, the government has a responsibility to provide free education, and the citizens have the

right to receive it. If the government does not provide it, citizens may protest.

Even in ancient times, there were guidelines for how kings should interact with the people they ruled. They did not always follow these guidelines, so people sometimes rebelled. When the British colonised Burma, they wrote laws about what the government officials and people had to do. Some Burmese people were dissatisfied with these laws and tried to change or resist them. Likewise, some Burmese people protested when the Japanese did not respect their rights during World War II. The Burma Socialist Programme Party government tried to change the social contract to reflect socialist ideas, while the SPDC gave more rights to the military. Pro-democracy leaders want a different system in which people have more freedoms.

In this Theme you will analyse how the social contract in Burma has changed since ancient times, and you will have a chance to think about what type of social contract you would most like to live under.

Comprehension

1. The “social contract” is
 - a. a law about what the government can make citizens do.
 - b. an informal agreement about what the government should do for citizens and what citizens should do for the government.
 - c. an informal agreement about who should rule a country.
 - d. a law that says citizens must pay taxes.

Reasoning

1. In the table below list the five most important rights and responsibilities you think a government should have. Then list the five most important rights and responsibilities that citizens should have.

Government’s rights	Government’s responsibilities	Citizen’s rights	Citizen’s responsibilities

2. Do you think people living 100 or 1000 years ago would have given similar answers as you did? Why or why not? Why would the “social contract” change over time?

2. Ancient times: What responsibilities did kings have?

Read 📖 D2; and 🕒 T-320-550.

Comprehension

1. Some of the Ten Duties have similar meanings. Which ones?
 - a. (1) and ____
 - b. (8) and ____
 - c. (7), (5), and ____
 - d. (2) includes (6) and ____

Reasoning

1. Many kings fought wars in order to expand their kingdoms. Could they do this while also fulfilling their Ten Duties? Why or why not?

3. Ancient times: What rights did kings have?

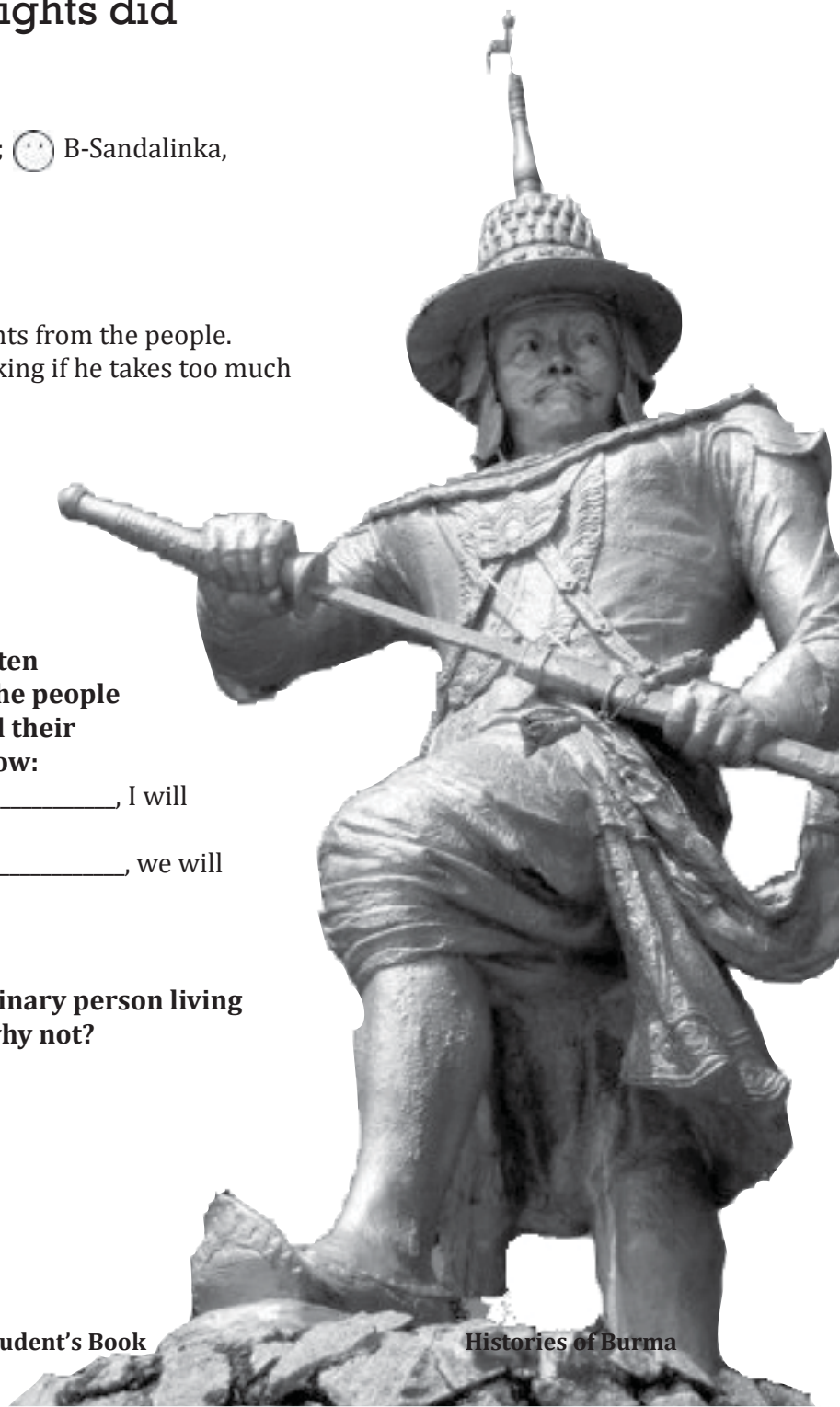
Read 📖 D6 - on taking profit from towns; 😊 B-Sandalinka, B-Alaunghpaya; and 🕒 T-1752-1885.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of this text?
 - a. The king can take as much as he wants from the people.
 - b. People might fight back against the king if he takes too much from them.
 - c. If the king picks fruit before it is ripe, it will not taste good.
 - d. If the king waits until the people have produced enough to take some for himself, the kingdom will be more peaceful.
2. Social contracts are not usually written down, but how would the king and the people living in his kingdom have explained their responsibilities? Use the format below:
 - King: "If the people agree to _____, I will _____."
 - People: "If the king agrees to _____, we will _____."

Reasoning

1. Would you have wanted to be an ordinary person living under this social contract? Why or why not?



4. Ancient times: What happened when rulers did not fulfil their responsibilities?

Read  D4 and  T-13th c.

Comprehension

1. List some things Prince Maung Myo did and explain which of the Ten Duties he failed to fulfil.

What Prince Maung Myo did	Which duty he did not fulfil
<i>Made his subjects cut firewood</i>	<i>(10) not to be oppressive</i>

Reasoning

1. In this text, the people got help from another prince to drive Maung Myo out of power. What other options do you think they had? Why did they choose to get help from another prince?
2. Describe an example from the past ten years when people have tried to get rid of a ruler who they felt was not doing a good job. Were they successful?

5. Colonial era: What laws did the British make?

Read  D17; and  T-1885, T-1885-1890

Comprehension

1. Put each of the points from the law into your own words.
 - 6.1.g *if a British official tells him to, the headman has to give food, supplies, and transportation to British soldiers and police in his area in exchange for some money.*
 - 6.1.h
 - 6.1.i
 - 9.1
 - 11.1

Reasoning

1. After this Act was passed, many Burmese people complained that it was too strict, but British officials said it was necessary for keeping law and order. Who do you agree with and why?
2. How do your biases or past experiences affect your answer to question 1?



6. Democracy: Is it possible for the people to have too much power?



Read D30; B-Thant; and T-1930s, T-1930-1931, T-1936, T-1946, T-1953-55.

Comprehension

1. The main idea of this text is
 - a. democracy is a good system because the people make all the decisions.
 - b. equality is an absurd dogma.
 - c. democracy is not a good system because people with the best qualifications should lead.
 - d. all people are equal.

Reasoning

1. Do you agree with U Thant's main idea? Why or why not?
2. How do you think events of the 1930s influenced U Thant's perspective?
3. What events of the 1950s might have caused the Guardian newspaper to re-print U Thant's 1936 essay in 1956?

7. The Anti-Fascist Organisation: What rights did it want from the Japanese rulers?

Read D39; B-AFO; and T-1942-1945, T-1944-1945.

Comprehension

1. Match the freedom with the way the AFO accuses the Japanese of violating it.

Freedom	Violation
1. Freedom of Religion	a. Spreading Japanese propaganda on the radio
2. Freedom of Speech	b. Using religious buildings as barracks
3. Economic Freedom	c. Suppressing peasants' groups
4. Freedom of Organisation	d. High tax rates

2. Which of these are resistance strategies that the AFO recommended?

- a. killing collaborators
- b. refusing to work for the Japanese
- c. stealing Japanese weapons
- d. hiding anything that could be used for transportation by the Japanese
- e. guerrilla warfare
- f. giving false information to the Japanese
- g. destroying Japanese religious shrines

Reasoning

1. Do you think the rights violations listed in Question 1 justify the resistance tactics in Question 2? Why or why not?
2. If you were alive in 1944, which of the resistance tactics would you have chosen and which would you have not chosen? Why?

8. The Revolutionary Council and Socialist Ideology:

How did they explain citizens' rights and governments' responsibilities?

Read 📖 D62; 🕒 B-BSPP, B-RC; and 🕒 T-1962.

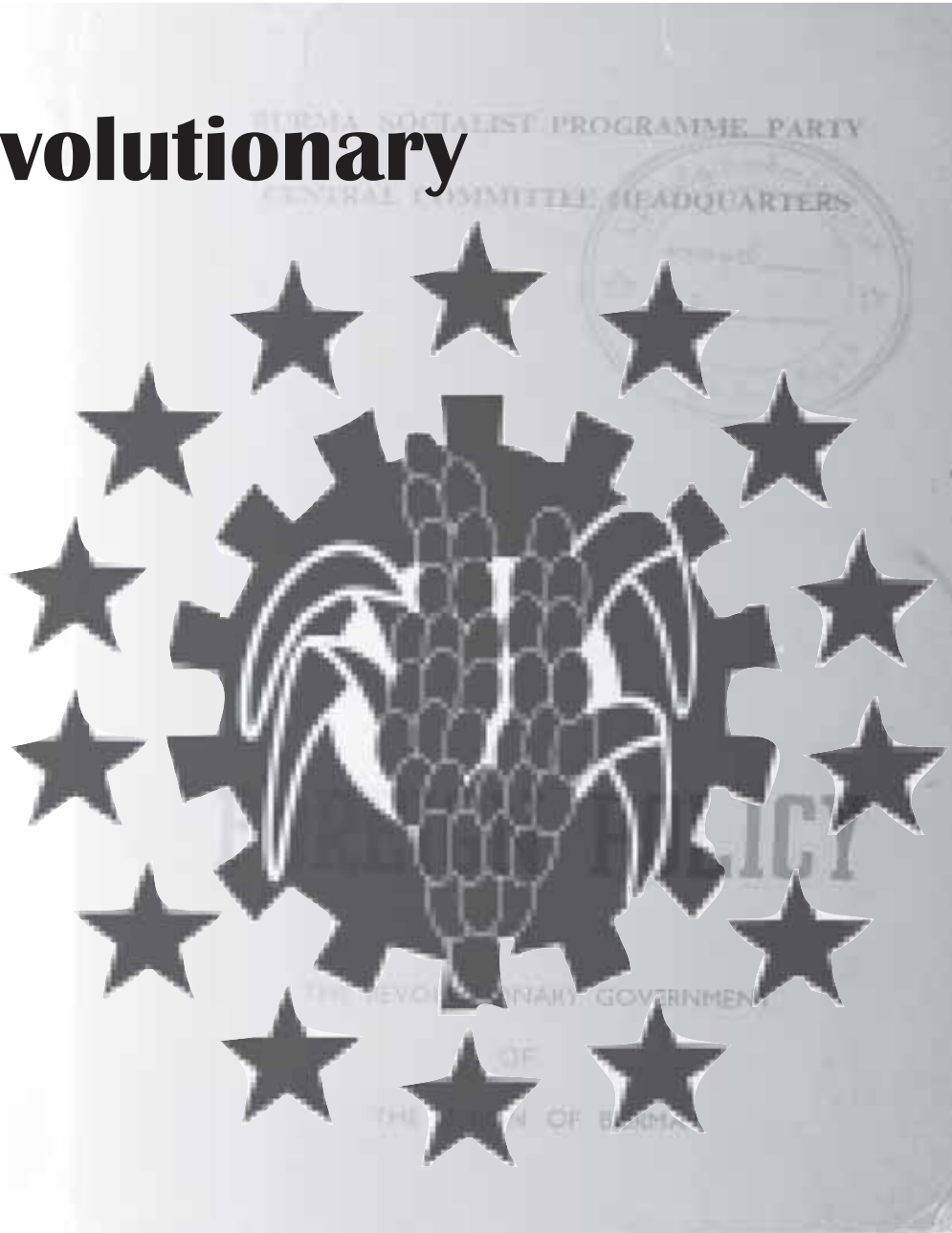
Comprehension

Choose the best answer below.

- In the socialist economy described in D62, people have the right to**
 - choose their leaders freely.
 - own businesses.
 - have their basic survival needs guaranteed.
 - speak out against the government.
 - all of the above.
 - none of the above.
- In the socialist economy described in D62, the government has the responsibility to**
 - control trade.
 - make sure people don't exploit each other.
 - control the production and distribution of goods.
 - all of the above.
 - none of the above.

Reasoning

- The social contract under the Revolutionary Council requires people to give up certain freedoms. In exchange, the government will take care of their basic survival needs. As a citizen, would you agree to this social contract? Why or why not?**





a

9. Pro-democracy leaders: What responsibilities and rights do they give to government and citizens?

Read D74; B-Aung San Su Kyi; T-1988.

Comprehension

b

1. According to Daw Suu Kyi, if governments do not keep law and order

- people will definitely become corrupt.
- people have to try very hard not to become corrupt.
- fair laws prevent corruption.
- there will be no corruption.

c

2. According to Daw Suu Kyi, as long as governments rule by force instead of doing what the people want them to do

- people will have to struggle to defend their human rights.
- people will continue to have revolutions.
- there will be interest groups.
- people will have rights that no one can take away.

Reasoning

1. Which of Daw Suu Kyi's points above do you agree or disagree with? Why?

d

10. The 2008 Constitution: What are the rights and responsibilities of government and citizens?

Read D90- Chapters I, VIII; and T-2003, T-2008.

Comprehension

Put these points from the Constitution in your own words.

1. The government's goal is to:

- Chap. I, 6a: *stop the country from falling apart*
 6b:
 6c:
 6d:
 6e:
 6f:

2. Citizens' rights are:

- Chap. VIII, 354:
 354a:
 354b:
 354c:
 354d:

3. The government does not have to respect the rights listed above if:

- Chap. I, 40c:
 Chap. VIII, 381:
 Chap. VIII, 382:

- U Win Tin
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
- U Tin Oo
- Daw Phyu Phyu Tin

Review

1. According to each of the people or groups below, list one important right the people have, and one responsibility the government has.

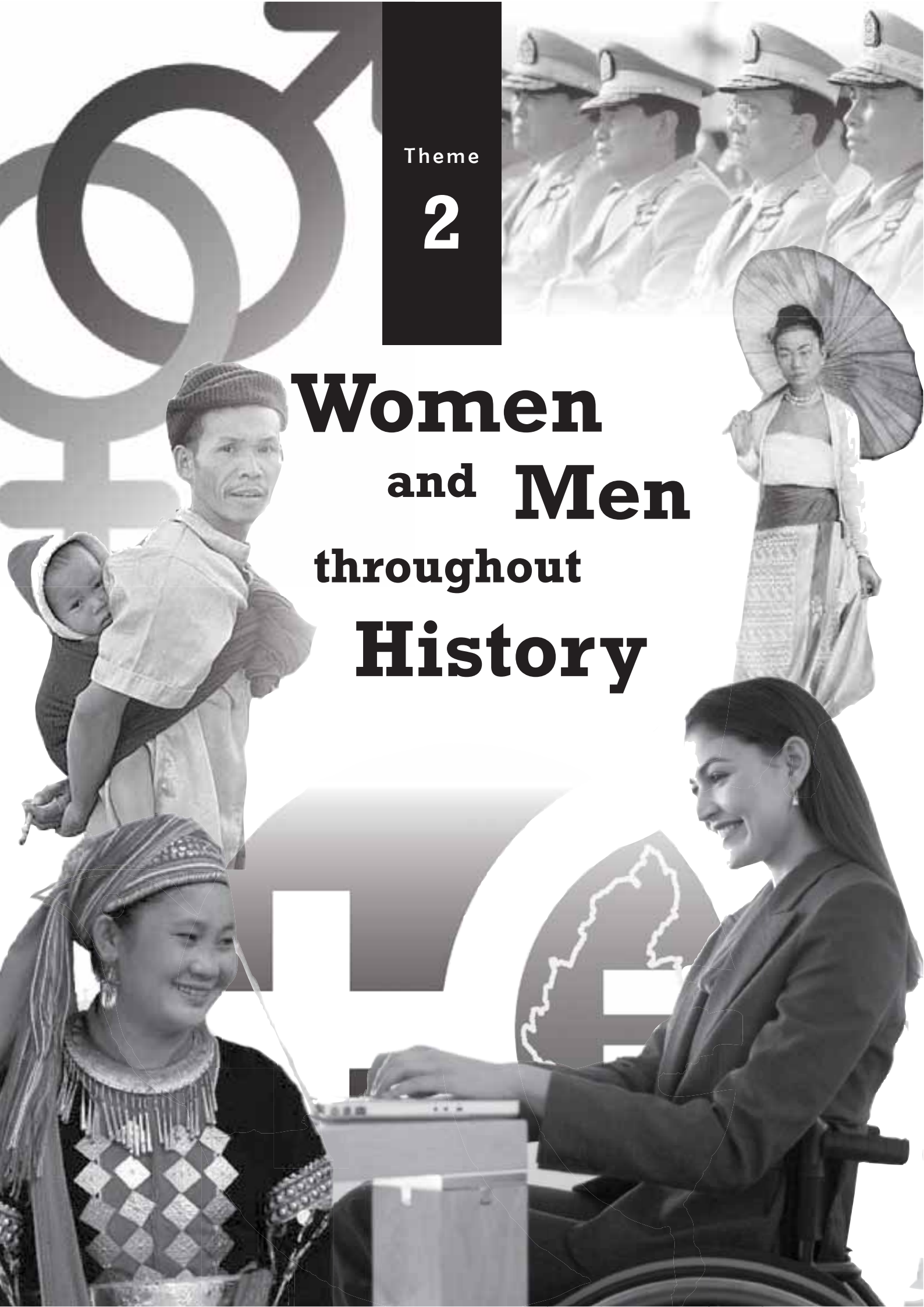
	Government's responsibility	People's rights
D2: Kings who follow the Ten Duties		
D6: Shin Sandalinka		
D4: Shan villagers		
D17: British Government		
D30: U Thant		
D36: Wun thar nu organisations		
D39: AFO		
D62: Revolutionary Council		
D74: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi		
D90: Authors of 2008 Constitution		

2. Which of the people or groups above do you agree with most about the social contract? Which do you agree with least? Why?
3. You studied the social contract in political systems of monarchy (D2, D6, D4), colonialism (D17), military occupation (D39), socialist dictatorship (D62) and democracy (D30, D74, D90). How is the social contract intended to work in each of these systems?
4. Re-read D2. Do you think it could serve as a guideline for rulers today? Why or why not? What duties are outdated, and which are still appropriate?
5. During which period do you think ordinary people faced the most difficulties: ancient times, (D2, D6, D4), the colonial era (D17, D36) the Japanese occupation (D39), the BSPP era (D62) or SPDC/SLORC era (D74, D90)? Why?
6. How has completing this unit changed your perspective on government's and people's rights and responsibilities? How has it stayed the same?

Theme

2

Women and Men throughout History



1. How have ideas about gender affected history?

The physical differences between men and women can be called “biological sex.” Gender, on the other hand, is an idea about how people should act based on their biological sex. For instance, the gender role for women in Burma, like in many societies, often involves staying home and caring for children while men participate in political or military activities. Thus gender roles influence both men and women. This unit will focus on women in particular because history books often leave them out.

One reason women are left out of history books is because of sexism, the belief that women are not as capable or valuable as men. Sexism has made it more difficult for women to get into the positions of power that usually cause people to be included in traditional history books.

Furthermore, historians’ sexism has caused them to write less about the women who do manage to attain positions of power. Not only are most history books about men, but they are also mostly written by men. All over the world, men have traditionally had more access to education and thus more

opportunity to express their perspectives on history. As we have already discussed, all historians are biased in some way, and many historians have stereotypes about women. This does not necessarily mean that they don’t like women; it can mean that they simply don’t see women as important or powerful in the same way men are.

Therefore, in this unit, we will make a special effort to include information about women’s lives that has been left out of previous histories of Burma. We will also examine continuities and changes in gender roles from ancient times to the present. Although there have been female leaders since ancient times, in some cases gender roles restricted women’s activities. In particular, there have been controversies over who Burmese women should or should not marry and have children with. Today, women face special difficulties under the current regime.

In this unit, you will have a chance to learn more about women’s role in Burma’s histories. You can also think about the gender roles that influence your life today, and learn about how they have changed over time.



■ **The Gender Symbols** (above) are commonly used symbols that identify organisms as male or female. They were first used in the 18th century but have since become internationally recognised symbols for gender.

Comprehension

1. Match each term with its definition.

- biological sex
 - sexism
 - gender
- the belief that women are not as capable or valuable as men
 - physical differences between men and women
 - ideas about how people should behave based on their sex.

2. According to the passage above, women have not appeared as much as men in histories of Burma because

- women didn’t do many important things.
- sexism caused women’s contributions not to be valued by society and by historians.
- female historians have not wanted to discuss the accomplishments of women.
- most male historians don’t like women.

Reasoning

- Name the most important ten men and ten women in Burma’s history.
- Was it easier to come up with the names of ten men or ten women? Why?
- What common issues do women face because of their biological sex? What common issues do women face because of gender roles?
- How do you think your life would be different in terms of education, career plans, and family responsibilities if you were of the opposite sex? Do you think most of these differences would be due to sex (biological differences) or gender (ideas about how men and women should act)?

2. What were gender roles in the past?

Read  D7




Comprehension

1. Label each trait as a male or female responsibility, according to the text.
 - a. supporting relations and spouse's relations _____
 - b. trying to get more money _____
 - c. being a good cook, weaver and housekeeper _____
 - d. obedience to spouse's commands _____
 - e. looking after cattle _____

Reasoning

1. Do your own skills match up with those connected to your sex in this text? What does this show about continuity and change in gender roles since ancient times?

3. Ancient kingdoms: What were women's roles in politics?

Read  D5- about Tayashwehti cutting his hair like a Mon;  B-Tabinshwehti, B-Kala; and  T-1486-1762.




Comprehension

1. King Tabinshwehti takes which of the following actions to please his Mon wife?
 - a. cuts his hair in Mon style
 - b. eats Mon food
 - c. follows Mon customs
 - d. all of the above

Reasoning

1. Do you think the Mon woman wanted to marry King Tabinshwehti? Why or why not?
2. How could historians find out the answer to this question?
3. This passage provides some evidence that in ancient times, marriage helped to create alliances between kingdoms or ethnic groups. Did this give women power, or show their lack of power?

4. Anglo-Burmese Wars: How did women participate?

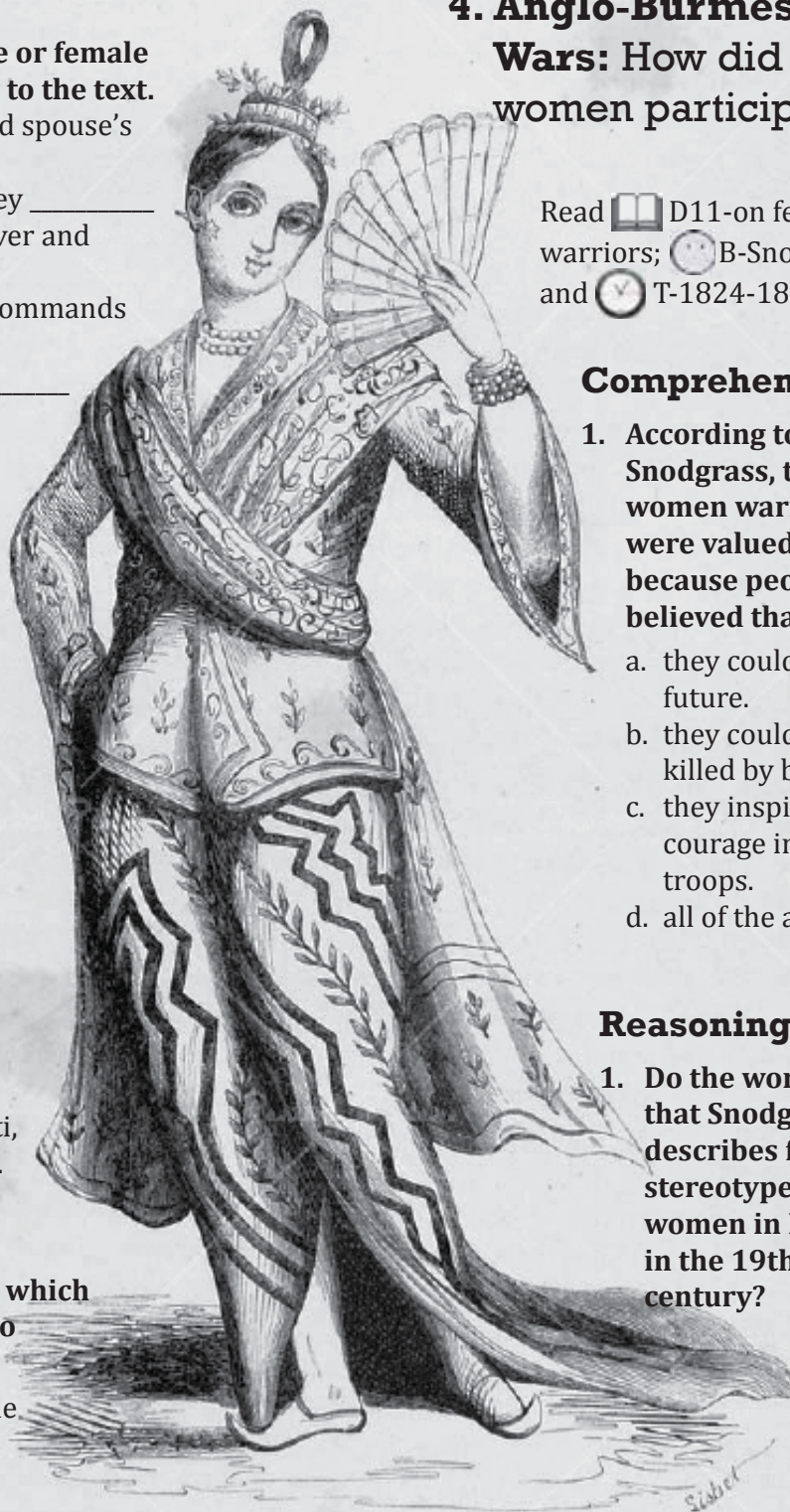
Read  D11-on female warriors;  B-Snodgrass; and  T-1824-1826.

Comprehension

1. According to Snodgrass, the women warriors were valued because people believed that
 - a. they could see the future.
 - b. they could not be killed by bullets.
 - c. they inspired courage in the troops.
 - d. all of the above.

Reasoning

1. Do the women that Snodgrass describes fit your stereotype of women in Burma in the 19th century?



Noble Burmese.
(Asia.)

5. Colonial era: Why did marriage become a political issue?



Read D27, D34; and T-19th c.

Comprehension

- The message of this cartoon is that
 - Burmese girls are lucky if they find British husbands.
 - Burmese girls will meet with misfortune if they become involved with British men.
 - British women are jealous of Burmese women.
 - all of the above.
- The main argument offered for why Burmese women should not marry Indian men in D34 is that
 - Indian men are cruel.
 - Burmese men are better providers.
 - the purity of the Burmese race and culture will be lost.
 - their children will have trouble finding spouses.

Reasoning

- If Burmese men wanted to marry Indian women, do you think they would have faced the same kind of criticism as Burmese women did for marrying Indian men? Why or why not?
- Do you think Burmese women who got involved with British men raised their own status, or lowered it?
- Do you think male cartoonists and journalists like the ones who created these documents should criticise women's decisions about who they marry? Why or why not?

6. Women's rights in the colonial era: How did they compare to other women in the region?

Read  D29;  B-Mya Sein; and  T-1928-1935.

Comprehension

- Which of these statements are facts, beliefs or theories?
 - The literacy rate among Burmese women is higher than that of Indian women.
 - Burmese women are more independent than Indian women because they have had the freedom to participate in the economy.
 - Burma should get independence from Britain.
 - Burmese women do not practice purdah.
 - The fact that Burmese women do not practice purdah proves that they have higher status than Indian women.
- Which of the three points above are implied?



■ Mya Sein (above) attending a meeting in 1931

- What reasons would Daw Mya Sein have to exaggerate about the freedoms women had at the Burma Roundtable Conference?
- How does the status of Burmese women compare to women in other countries today? Describe a country where you think women have lower status, and one where you think they have higher status.

Reasoning

- Daw Mya Sein explains the way women in colonial Burma had high status. Can you think of any ways that they might have faced discrimination?

7. The anti-colonial struggle: How did women participate?

Read  D36- on the amyothami kounmari athin;  B-Ba Khine, B-May, B-Ottama; and  T-1919.

Comprehension

- What evidence does U Ba Khine provide for his statement that Burmese women were patriotic? List two main ideas and a supporting example for each one.
 - _____; for example, _____.
 - _____; for example, _____.

Reasoning

- How do you think the Kounmaris' activities fit into traditional gender roles? How did they break out of these traditional gender roles?

8. Colonial Era Fashion:

How did it show changing gender roles?



Look at  D32.

Comprehension

1. Fill in the chart to show the differences in the older and younger women's clothing:

	Older women	Younger women
shoes		
hair		
clothes		
accessories		

2. This cartoon illustrates

- older women's surprise and disapproval of young women's fashions.
- older women's jealousy of the new freedoms that young women had.
- young women's desire to keep the traditions of the older generation.
- young women's participation in the nationalist movement.

Reasoning

- Do most Burmese women today dress more traditionally, or in newer fashions? Why do they make these choices?
- Do you think most Burmese elders are more concerned with their boys' or their girls' clothing choices? Why? Is this a kind of bias?
- Do you think the cartoonist was sympathetic to the old woman's disapproval, or to the young woman's fashion choices?

9. Buddhism: What is the position of women?

Read the following passage:

“There is no doubt in our minds. Spiritually, a man is higher than a woman. This is just not an abstract idea belonging to religious philosophy. Conviction of it enter[s] our very bones.”

■ Mi Mi Khaing. 1984. *The World of Burmese Women*. London: Zed Books, p. 16.

Comprehension

1. According to Mi Mi Khaing, Burmese women
 - a. agree with religious philosophers that they are spiritually higher than men.
 - b. disagree with religious philosophers who say that their bones are inferior to men's.
 - c. agree with religious philosophers that they are spiritually lower than men.
 - d. disagree with religious philosophers who say that they are spiritually lower than men.

Reasoning


1. Mi Mi Khaing is discussing Buddhism, but there are gender inequalities in many religions. Can you think of any examples of how women have different roles than men in Buddhism or other religions?
2. Do you agree with Mi Mi Khaing that all Burmese people believe that women are spiritually lower than men? What do you think about this issue?

Factbox

Mi Mi Khaing: (1916-1990) Mon scholar and author. Founded and directed Kambawza College in Taunggyi.



10. Women politicians: How would Burma be different if they ruled?

Read  D92; and  B-Zipporah Sein (above)

Comprehension

1. Naw Zipporah Sein's main argument is that
 - a. women are innocent victims of war.
 - b. women can help solve the problem of war.
 - c. women have been most affected by war.
 - d. women make better decisions than men.

Reasoning

1. Do you agree there would be less violent conflict if more women were in power? What evidence can you provide for and against this argument?

■ Zipporah Sein, Naw (1955-): Karen political leader, activist for women's rights, General Secretary of the KNU 2008-present.

11. Female political prisoners: What difficulties have they faced?

Read  D84;  B-Khin Mar Gyi; B-Aung San Suu Kyi; and  T-2000.

Comprehension

1. Of the different kinds of suffering involved in prison life, which does Dr. Khin Mar Gyi imply was most difficult for her?
 - a. She could not sleep well.
 - b. It was very cold.
 - c. The food was not sufficient.
 - d. She had to be separated from her children.

Reasoning

1. In what ways were Dr. Khin Mar Gyi's problems in prison specific to women? Which ones did both men and women prisoners face?
2. What other problems might women prisoners face because of their sex or their gender? What problems might male prisoners face that female prisoners did not?

12. Government-supported women's organisations in Burma: What positions do they take?

Read  D85; and  B-MWAF, B-ILO;  T-2000s

Comprehension

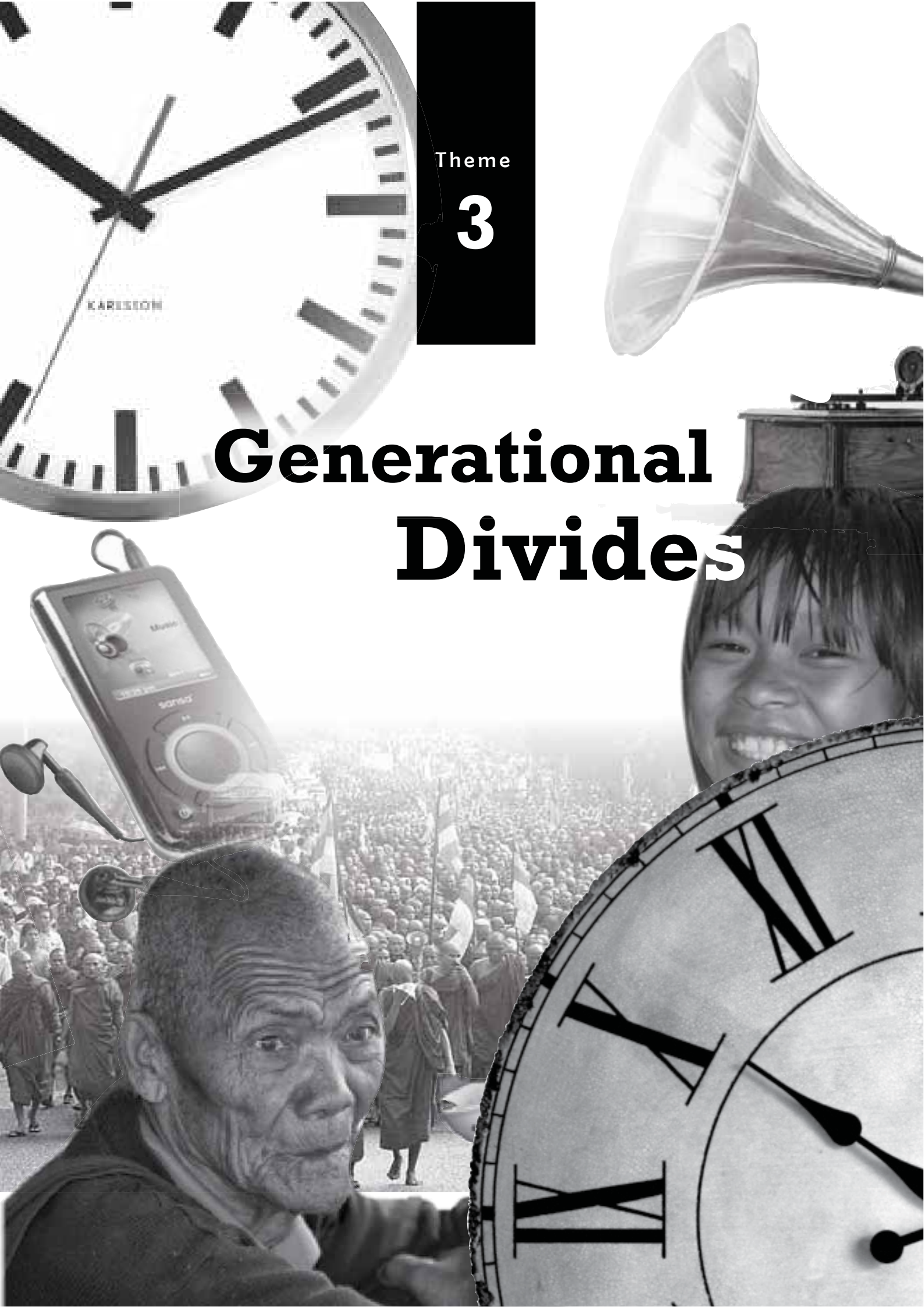
1. MWAF implies that the ILO should
 - a. continue pressuring the government to stop using forced labour.
 - b. collaborate with exiled dissident groups to bring political change to Burma.
 - c. focus more on women's issues.
 - d. stop interfering and allow the government to maintain peace.

Reasoning

1. How do you think Zipporah Sein would respond to MWAF's report?
2. Do you think there is anything Zipporah Sein and MWAF could agree or collaborate on?
3. Why do you think MWAF and Zipporah Sein have such different perspectives?
4. Which perspective is closer to your own, and why?

Review

1. Use examples from the documents to show two ways that gender roles have changed over time, and two ways that gender roles have remained the same. On the whole, do you think gender roles have shown more changes or continuities since ancient times?
2. Use the documents to describe two examples of sexism from Burmese history. Then describe two situations from the documents in which men and women were considered of equal competence and value.
3. Has this unit helped you understand more about the perspective of the opposite sex, or the perspective of your own sex? Why?
4. How has completing this unit changed your perspective on gender roles? How has it stayed the same?



Theme

3

Generational Divides

1. How have youth and elders competed for power?

Throughout Burmese history, youth and elders have approached social and political problems differently. These differences in perspective can be called the “generational divide.” Sometimes youth and elders have managed to bridge this divide and work together, while in other situations they have used different strategies or have disagreed with each other about the most effective approach.

Many Burmese people follow a long tradition of respecting elders and following their guidance. Some people see this as a positive trait that helps society to remain stable and enables the younger generation to benefit from the wisdom of people with much more life experience. However, other people may feel that this tradition of respecting elders can lead young people to follow older people’s advice without thinking for themselves. New ideas might not be heard.

Youth and elders differ not only in their perspectives, but also in the power that they have. This is because of differences in where they are in their life cycle, or the series of events that people in a society usually go through- for instance, school, work, marriage, family, caring for older relatives, becoming a leader in the community. Elders may have higher social status; they may have had a chance to

accumulate more money; and it may be easier for them to become leaders. However, young people often have a better understanding of new technologies, greater physical power, and fewer family responsibilities. Sometimes these different kinds of power balance each other out, and at other times one group has more influence than the other.

The relationship between youth and elders has showed change and continuity through history. There is evidence that the tradition of respecting elders began in ancient times. This tradition remained important in Burma from the colonial era to the present, but young people participated actively in politics. They helped to lead protests against the British, the BSPP, and SLORC/SPDC. But in some cases, elders have tried to indoctrinate youth (convince them to believe an ideology).

Since many of you who are using this unit may be young, you may find that you naturally sympathise with the youth perspective. But the interesting thing about the generational divide is that most people end up on both sides of it during their lifetime; today’s youth will become tomorrow’s elders, and you may find yourself later in life taking positions that you opposed when you were younger.

In this Theme, you will have a chance to learn about both perspectives as you consider how youth and elders have collaborated and come into conflict throughout Burmese histories. You can also think about when “youth” ends, when life as an “elder” begins, and what happens in between. You can track how the meaning of these terms has changed over time along with culture and society.



■ Karen Youth Organisation
a youth development and
support group for Karen people

Comprehension

1. The generational divide means that

- youth and elders always disagree.
- youth should follow elders’ guidance.
- youth and elders may have different perspectives on society and politics.
- youth and elders always cooperate in harmony to achieve shared goals.


2. Match these terms with their definitions: generational divide, indoctrinate, life cycle

- the series of events that happen in most people’s lives
- the difference between youths’ and elders’ perspectives
- to try to make people believe one ideology

Reasoning

- Think of some controversial issues in your community. Are youth and elders’ perspectives on them different or similar?
- Define “youth,” “elder,” and “middle age.” What occurs in each life stage? Which group are you part of now?

2. Ancient times: How did traditions of respecting elders begin?

Read  D3;  B-Rajakumar, B-Kyansittha; and  T-849-1287.

Comprehension

1. Prince Rajakumar honours his father by
 - a. taking the throne in his place.
 - b. conquering new lands.
 - c. bringing three villages of slaves back to the capital.
 - d. having a golden Buddha image made and placing it in a pagoda.

Reasoning

1. Do you admire Prince Rajakumar's actions, or do you think he should have done something else with his wealth, such as start his own kingdom? Why?
2. What kinds of things do Burmese children today do to honour their parents? How are their actions similar to or different from Rajakumar's?

3. The 1920 student movement: How did students become a political force in the colonial era?

Read  D24;  B-Ba U; and  T-1920.

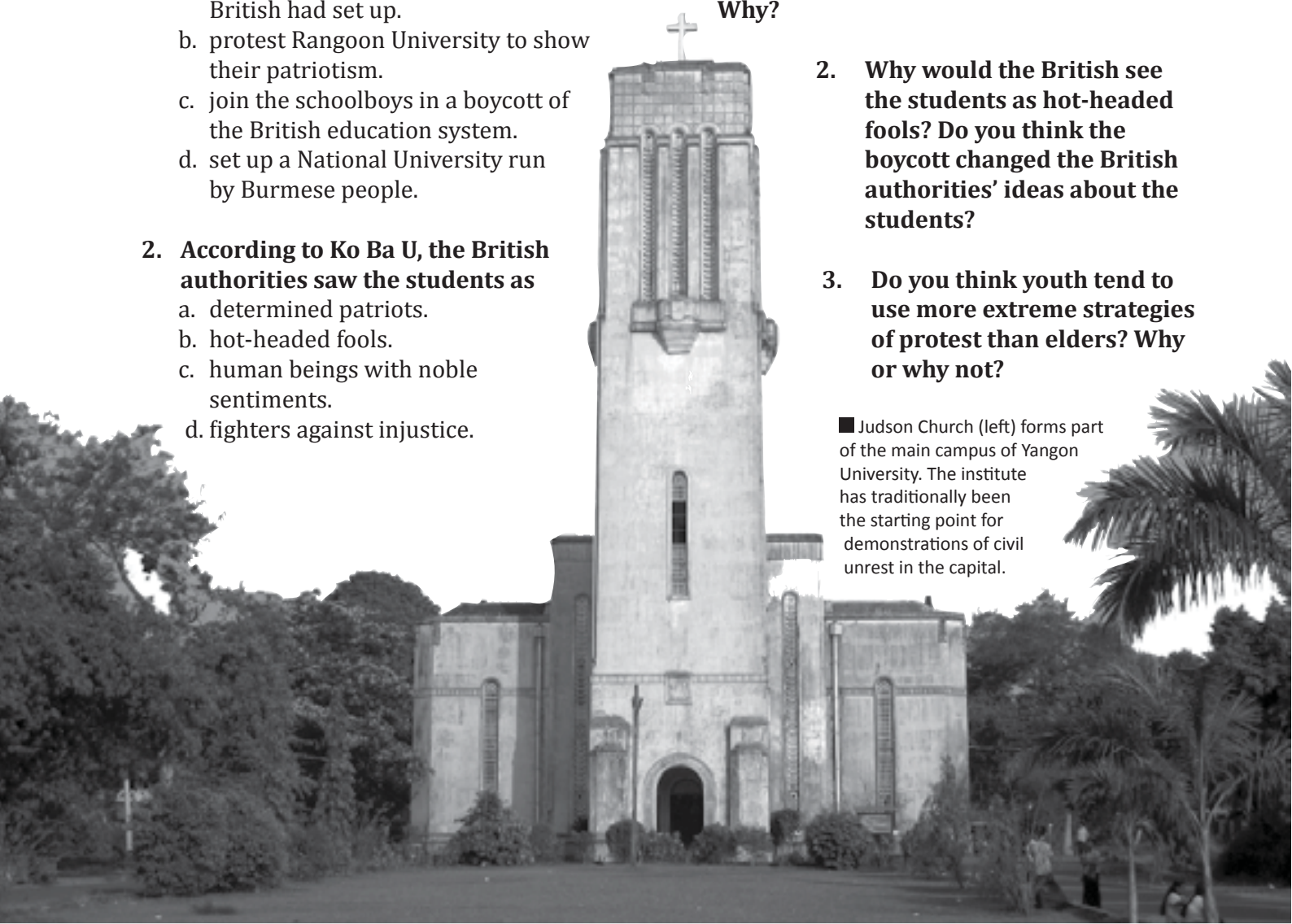
Comprehension

1. According to Ko Ba U, at first elder Burmese people wanted the students to
 - a. accept Rangoon University which the British had set up.
 - b. protest Rangoon University to show their patriotism.
 - c. join the schoolboys in a boycott of the British education system.
 - d. set up a National University run by Burmese people.
2. According to Ko Ba U, the British authorities saw the students as
 - a. determined patriots.
 - b. hot-headed fools.
 - c. human beings with noble sentiments.
 - d. fighters against injustice.

Reasoning

1. Do you think Burmese elders' or British authorities' opposition to the student movement affected the students more? Why?
2. Why would the British see the students as hot-headed fools? Do you think the boycott changed the British authorities' ideas about the students?
3. Do you think youth tend to use more extreme strategies of protest than elders? Why or why not?

■ Judson Church (left) forms part of the main campus of Yangon University. The institute has traditionally been the starting point for demonstrations of civil unrest in the capital.



4. Anti-colonial struggle: How did youth and elders' strategies differ?

Read  D36;  B-U Ba Khine; and  T-1910s.




Comprehension

1. Why did the elders call the young men “potential prisoners”?
 - a. to honour the youth for the sacrifices they were willing to make for their country.
 - b. because they could get in trouble for challenging the police commissioner.
 - c. because some went to jail over the shoe question.
 - d. to show that they were willing to go to prison to support the youths' actions.
2. According to U Ba Khine, how did the youth in 1938 see U Ba Pe and U Hla Pe?
 - a. as opportunists who lacked determination.
 - b. as heroes who had paved the way for their movement.
 - c. as wise uncles who could advise them on tactics against the British.
 - d. as extremists who had gone too far in opposing the British.

Reasoning

1. Do you think U Ba Khine is correct that each generation becomes critical of their elders? Give examples from the present day.

5. Lanzin Youth: How were students indoctrinated in the BSPP era?

Read  D79;  B-Lanzin Youth, B-BSPP; and  T-1962.

Comprehension


1. This Lanzin Youth member explains that the organisation was designed to
 - a. train youth to follow orders, but it did not work on him.
 - b. train youth to think for themselves, and that is why he felt superior to his classmates.
 - c. train youth to follow orders, and in his case it succeeded.
 - d. train youth to be arrogant and feel superior to their classmates.

Reasoning

1. Do you think you would have been successfully indoctrinated by Lanzin Youth if you were living in the BSPP era? Why or why not?
2. Who is trying to indoctrinate Burmese youth today? What methods do they use? Are they successful? Why or why not?



6. The U Thant affair: How did students protest the BSPP?

Read  D86;  B-Henry Soe Win; B-U Thant; and  T-1974.

Comprehension

1. The students wanted to
 - a. bury U Thant in a mausoleum.
 - b. criticise the government.
 - c. express feelings they had been keeping silent.
 - d. all of the above.
2. This document shows how
 - a. elders supported the students' actions.
 - b. elders opposed the students' actions.
 - c. youth asked for help from elders but did not receive it.
 - d. youth refused to take the advice of elders.

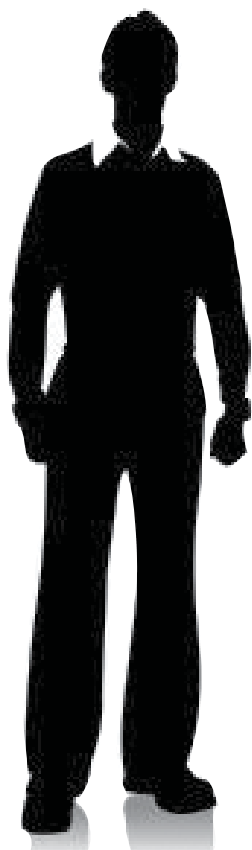


Reasoning

1. Why do you think the old lady mentioned in this document wanted to help build the mausoleum? What had she seen in her lifetime that the students had not?
2. Why do you think that in this case, youth and elders were able to collaborate successfully?
3. Henry Soe Win seems to have published this story more than 30 years after he participated in this demonstration. Do you think his memory is reliable? Why or why not? How might his bias have influenced the way he wants to remember or report events?

7. 1988 protests: How did youth become involved?

Read  D69;  B-Aung Gyi, B-Ne Win; and  T-1988



Comprehension

1. Which of these statements are true according to Brig.-Gen. Aung Gyi?
 - a. U Ne Win is likely to try to cover up the police's violence.
 - b. The crowd was totally non-violent.
 - c. Girls as young as 10 were killed by police.
 - d. The students burned the police station.
2. Which of the statements above are implied rather than stated directly?

Reasoning

1. Brig-Gen. Aung Gyi's open letters played an important role in letting people know about the demonstrations in 1988. Why do you think people paid attention to his letters?
2. This letter describes children as young as 10 participating in political demonstrations. What age do you think is appropriate for youth to become involved in politics, and why?



8. 1988 protests: How did youth and elders try to bridge the generational divide?

Read  D71; and  B-Aung San Suu Kyi.

Comprehension

1. Match Daw Suu's claims (a-c) with the evidence or details she provides to support them (1-3).

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. "Young people are frank and free from deviousness." ____ | 1. "Some students have asked me which politicians are standing behind me." |
| b. "There is a sort of gulf between the older and younger generations." ____ | 2. "Should these politicians try to obtain positions of political power I promise in front of this assembly of people that I myself will not hesitate to denounce them." |
| c. "What I am trying to do is to help achieve the democratic system of government which the people want." ____ | 3. "There is the feeling that the older and younger generations are quite apart from each other." |

Reasoning

1. Why do you think some students did not trust veteran politicians? Do you think they were right not to trust them? Why?
2. Daw Suu Kyi wanted to bridge the gap between the older and younger generation. Do you think this is possible? From what you know of the 1988 demonstrations, was this effort successful?

9. 1988 protests: What strategies did youths use to oppose the military regime?

Read  D73; and  B-Aung San Suu Kyi.




Comprehension

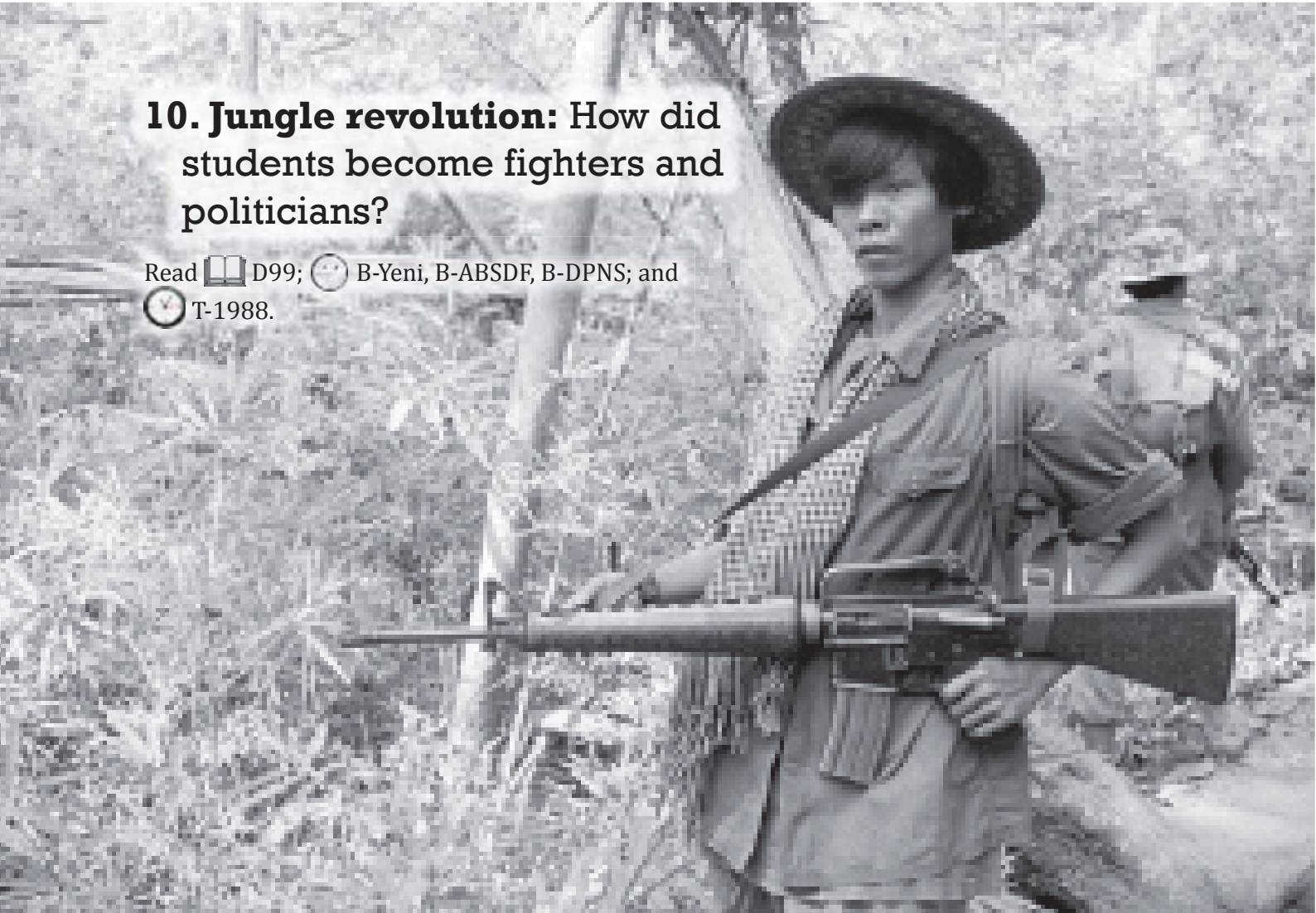
1. What does Ko Min Ko Naing mean when he says, "Physically, I might be dead, but many more Min Ko Naings would appear to take my place."?
 - a. If he dies, other people will take on the name "Min Ko Naing."
 - b. If he dies, other young people will continue to fight the dictatorship.
 - c. If he dies, kings will rule Burma again as they did in the past.
 - d. If he dies, someone else will move into his house.
2. Ko Min Ko Naing's attitude toward older politicians is
 - a. very supportive.
 - b. openly hostile.
 - c. neutral.
 - d. guarded.

Reasoning

1. Why do you think Ko Min Ko Naing did not express total support for older politicians? How do you think the older politicians felt about his position?
2. Do you find Ko Min Ko Naing's statement in Question 1 sad, inspiring, or do you have some other feeling about it? Why?
3. Now, Ko Min Ko Naing is almost fifty years old and he has spent about half of his life in prison. How do you think his perspective has changed since he gave this interview when he was 26?

10. Jungle revolution: How did students become fighters and politicians?

Read  D99;  B-Yeni, B-ABSDF, B-DPNS; and  T-1988.



Comprehension

1. According to Ko Yeni, in the jungle the students realized that they
 - a. could do things much more skillfully than the local people.
 - b. had many weaknesses and needed help to continue their struggle.
 - c. should give up because they would never succeed in defeating the military regime.
 - d. should have stayed back in Burma.

Reasoning

1. Do you think young people tend to be over-confident or lack confidence? How could these traits have influenced the struggle against the military regime?
2. Ko Yeni eventually moved to Thailand and became a journalist for *The Irrawaddy*, the magazine that published his story. How do you think the generation of young people who became journalists in exile in the past ten or twenty years have influenced the movements for political change in Burma?



Factbox

All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), formed in 1988 by leaders including Moe Thee Zun, opposes the military dictatorship and supports human rights both through armed struggle and political means.

■ (above) An ABSDF soldier.
(right) The patch and insignia of the ABSDF, worn by soldiers.



11. Resettled refugees: How will the next generation of Burmese people born in exile be different from their parents?

Read  D98; and  T-2007.

Comprehension

1. According to the resettled refugees, in what ways will their children experience a different life than they did?
 - a. It will be more difficult for the children to adapt to cold weather.
 - b. The children will have the chance to live in a society where the government helps the people.
 - c. The children will not have as much experience with machines as their parents did.
 - d. The children are likely have easier lives than their parents had.



■ Jo Kae and Daisi's family (above) were resettled to the UK. Their story is explored in the documentary film 'Moving to Mars'. This ethnic Karen family, after many years living in refugee camps in Thailand, were eventually resettled to the city of Sheffield, in northern England (below).

Reasoning

1. When the children mentioned in this story grow up, do you think they will have an identity as Karen, Burmese, Irish, all of these, or part of some other group? Why?
2. Technologies such as Facebook, blogs, chatting, and Skype enable Burmese youth who have access to the internet to communicate with each other whether they are inside Burma, living as refugees or migrants, or resettled in third countries. What are the effects of this ability to communicate on your life or the lives of other young people?



Review

1. How has the tradition of respecting elders that is shown by Prince Rajakumar in D3 changed over the years? In what situations have youth honoured their elders, and in what situations have they challenged their elders? Look especially at D24, D32, D73 and D86.
2. Name five important Burmese leaders who are alive today. How old are they? Do you believe that younger leaders should be given a chance to lead or should older leaders keep their positions? Why? Explain your answers using examples from the documents or your previous knowledge.
3. In what ways did young people contribute special skills and strengths to political movements described in these documents? In what ways did they display weaknesses that may have resulted from their youth? Re-read D24, D73 and D99.
4. How did the elders in these documents view youth? Do you think these attitudes helped elders and youths to work together toward common goals? Why or why not? Look especially at D32, D36, D86, D69 and D71.
5. Do you believe that youth or elders have held more power throughout Burmese history? Reread D79 and D73 and think about the balance of power between young and old.
6. How has completing this unit changed your ideas about the generational divide? How have they stayed the same?





Theme

4

**Class Divisions,
Economic
Ideologies
and the
Rural-urban
Divide**

1. How has socioeconomic status affected people's opportunities?

Throughout history, people's socioeconomic status, or class, has affected their opportunities in life. Class and socioeconomic status describe a person's position in society based on how much money and possessions people have already (wealth), how much money they make by working (income), how much others respect their job or qualifications (status), and their level of education.

Classes have changed over time. For example, in ancient kingdoms in Burma, people were born into one of four classes: rulers, educated people, wealthy businesspeople, and common people. At that time, there was not much class mobility; you could not change your class easily. Since the 20th century, peasants and workers have formed a lower class, while middle class people included professionals such as doctors, teachers, and civil servants. Upper classes included people in business or politics. Today, class mobility is more common. Even if your parents were peasants, if you succeed in school you might become an engineer. Therefore, your socioeconomic status can change over the course of your life as you gain education or change jobs.

However, some people think that the class system is unfair because the upper class exploits the lower class. These people want to reduce income inequality, the gap between the rich and the poor. People started to feel this way especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, when industrialisation happened and some people got very rich (see T-18th and 19th c.). In countries that were colonised, like Burma, many native people became upset that the Europeans were using natural resources and labour from their colonies to make money for themselves.

These issues caused Karl Marx (above), a 19th century German philosopher, to criticise the capitalist system. Capitalism is an economic system in which people own property and compete for money. Marx thought that this system hurt workers and peasants. He suggested a communist system in which people

owned what they produced and shared it with others. He thought a revolution was necessary to create society that did not have any class divisions.

Marx's ideas became popular in Burma in the early 20th century. Many Burmese nationalists were communists or socialists. Socialism is a less extreme system than communism, in which governments organise the people to own property and work together. After Burma got independence, its parliamentary government used some socialist principles, but communists rebelled against the government.

In the worldwide Cold War between capitalist and communist countries in the mid-20th century (see T-1949-1985), Burma stayed neutral.

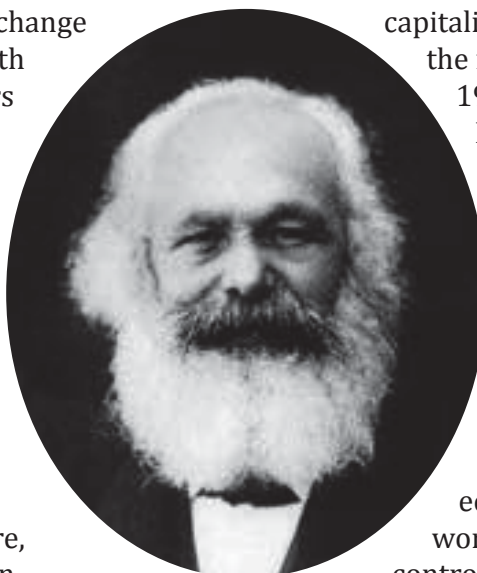
In 1962, the BSPP started a socialist economy that was controlled by the government. In the 1980s, Burma stopped being socialist and began allowing international free trade and capitalism. Today, Burma is experiencing the effects of economic globalisation; when the national

economy becomes part of the world economy. Globalisation is controversial because foreign trade

makes the country wealthier, but upper class people often get more of this money than poor people.

Another factor that affects socio-economic status is the rural-urban divide, or the difference in opportunities between people who live in the countryside and in cities. There are poor people both in cities and in the countryside, but rural poor and urban poor may have different problems. Rural farmers may fall into debt to landlords and have trouble paying taxes; they might not have health, education, and communication systems that exist in cities. On the other hand, urban poor people may suffer from crowded conditions and unemployment. All of these problems have occurred in Burma over the years.

In this unit, you will have a chance to compare different economic systems that have been used in Burma and consider which ones have worked best.



Comprehension

1. Match each term (below) with its definition (right).

class mobility
socio-economic status
communism
capitalism
socialism
economic globalisation
rural-urban divide
income inequality

- a. joining of national and world economies
- b. social and economic group depending on your income, wealth, education, and status
- c. being able to move from one class to another
- d. society without class divisions in which everyone owns and shares what they produce
- e. government controls sharing of wealth and labour
- f. differences between people who live in cities and in the countryside
- g. economic system of private ownership and competition for wealth
- h. the difference between how much money rich people and poor people have

2. Karl Marx was a

- a. communist
- b. capitalist
- c. socialist
- d. globalist

Reasoning

1. Describe the socio-economic classes in your community. How do you know who is lower class, middle class, and upper class? Which class do you think you are a part of? Why?
2. Which economic system do you prefer, capitalism, socialism, or communism? Why?
3. Are you from a rural area or an urban area? How do you think that influenced the opportunities you have had in your life?
4. Do you think class mobility is easy or difficult in your community? What evidence do you have to support your theory?
5. Is there much income inequality in your community? What are the causes and effects of this income inequality?



2. Ancient kingdoms: What did different classes do?

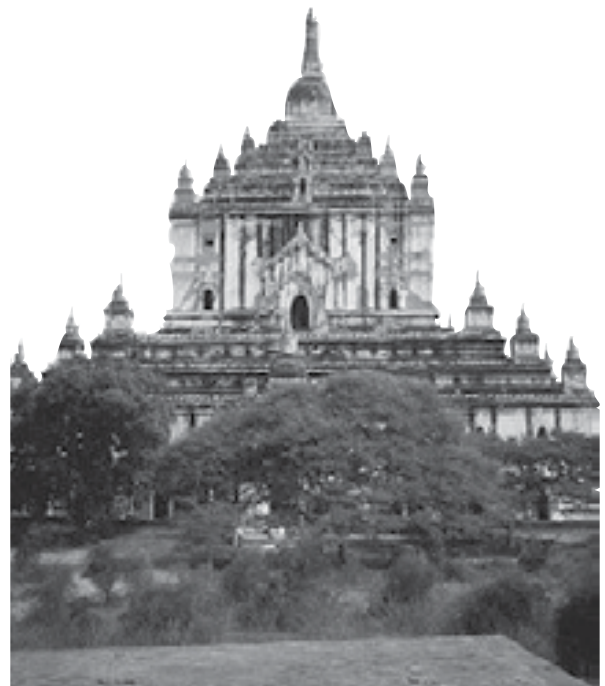
Read  D6-on taking profit from towns;  B-Sandalinka, B-Alaunghpaya; and  T-1752-1885

Comprehension

1. Which of the following groups are NOT one of the four classes of people who live in the kingdom?
 - a. ordinary people.
 - b. wealthy business people.
 - c. soldiers.
 - d. educated people.

Reasoning

1. Although Shin Sandalinka does not mention slaves as one of the four classes of inhabitants, there were slaves in the kingdom. Why do you think they did not have to give the king some of what they produced?
2. Do you think people from different classes had perspectives on giving some of what they produced to the king? Why or why not?



■ Htilominlo Temple Bagan. built by King Nantaungmya in 1218

3. Urbanisation and international trade: How did they affect people's lives in the 18th century?

Read  D8, D19, D20;  B-Sangermano; and  T-17th c.

Comprehension

1. Look at photos D19 and D20. Which of the goods that Sangermano mentions can you find in these photos?

Rangoon:

Jungle village:

Reasoning

1. What do you think were the benefits and negative effects of international trade for residents of Rangoon?
2. What do you think were the benefits and negative effects of international trade for residents of the jungle village?





4. 1300 Revolution: Why did workers protest capitalism in the colonial era?

Read D35; B-Dobama Asiayone, B-Burmah Oil Company; and T-1936 T-1938.

Comprehension

1. Infer which changes the strikers would be likely to support and which ones they wouldn't.
 - a. Changing to a communist economy.
 - b. The British leaving Burma.
 - c. The British passing a law saying that newspapers could not talk about the strike.
 - d. Oilfield bosses promising to increase their wages slowly over the course of ten years.

Reasoning

1. Students from the Dobama Asiayone introduced communist ideas to the oilfield workers. Do you think this was helpful to the workers? Why or why not?
2. The Burmah Oil Corporation (BOC) employed Burmese workers to extract oil that the BOC then sold for its own profit. Who are the “rightful owners” of natural resources - the British company who bought the rights to the oil, the Burmese people who live in the area, the Burmese workers, all Burmese people, or another?

■ An example of an oilfield in Burma, operated by the now-defunct Burmah Oil Company

5. The Saya San rebellion: Why did peasants want land reform in the colonial era?

Read D31; B-Chettyars; and T-1930s, T-1930-31.

Comprehension

1. According to the Committee, land reform is necessary because
 - a. Burman peasants are unhappy because they lost control of their land to mostly Chettyar landlords.
 - b. the capitalist system is wrong, the government should own all the land.
 - c. the British want to own all the land themselves.
 - d. the Chettyars should have the right to own the land that they farm.

Reasoning

1. In the Saya San rebellion, peasants got angry at Chettyar landowners for taking over their land. They also protested against the British for raising taxes. But they did not protest the capitalist system under which these things were occurring. Do you think it is easier for people to get angry at a group of people rather than an economic system? Why or why not?
2. Do you think farmers should always have the right to own their land? Or should landlords be allowed to own land and rent it out to farmers? Why?

6. Class divisions: How were they shown in the media in the colonial era?

Look at  D32.

Comprehension

1. What are the signs that the two women might be of different classes or socioeconomic backgrounds?

Reasoning

1. Do you think the cartoonist wanted us to think the women in the cartoon are of different socioeconomic classes, or just that they choose to dress differently? Why?
2. In what ways do Burmese people of different socioeconomic groups differ in dress and lifestyle today?

7. Indo-Burmese riots: How did socio-economic status play a role?

Read  D37;  B-Collis, B-Gandhi; and  T-1930s.

Comprehension

1. According to Collis, how did upper-class Burmans and Burman workers act differently during the riots?
 - a. Upper-class Burmans led the killings of Indians, while workers followed their lead.
 - b. Upper-class Burmans tried to protect the Indians while workers tried to kill them.
 - c. Upper-class Burmans hid in their houses while workers bravely faced the Indians.
 - d. Upper-class Burmans tried to negotiate with the workers' bosses while workers rioted.

Reasoning

1. Do you think Collis is biased toward upper-class Burmans or Burman workers? What experiences do you think he had that would have caused his biases?
2. Who do you think had more in common, the Burman workers and the upper-class Burmans, or the Burman and Indian workers? Why?

8. Communist revolutionaries: How did they want to help the poor?

Read  D52;  B-Ba Tin; and  T-1946, T-1947.

Comprehension

1. Which statements are Thakin Ba Tin's demands?
 - a. Give free health care to all Burmese citizens.
 - b. Redistribute land to the peasants.
 - c. The government should control international trade.
 - d. Foreign companies should have full rights to operate in Burma.
 - e. Pay back debt to British immediately.

Reasoning

1. What would have been the positive and negative effects of carrying out Thakin Ba Tin's plan?

9. Rural-urban divide: How were opportunities different in the city and countryside?

Read  D54.




Comprehension

1. Are these statements true or false?
 - a. Overall, the most common occupation was farming.
 - b. Jobs in service were more common in rural areas.
 - c. Jobs in manufacturing were more common in cities.
 - d. Rural women who didn't farm probably worked in commerce.

Reasoning

1. Based on this chart, did people in rural and urban areas have equal job opportunities? Explain.
2. Which people shown in the chart do you think were lower class? Middle class? Upper class?
3. How do you think this table would be different if the census was re-taken today? Why?

10. The civil war: How did it affect the economy?

Read  D57;  B-Kodaw Hmaing, B-Soe, B-Than Tun, B-Po Kun, B-Nu, B-Aung San, B-Ba Swe, B-Kyaw Nyein, B-Ba Choe; and  T-1946 T-1958, T-1963.

Comprehension

1. According to the Finance Minister, resources destroyed in the civil war
 - a. will be easy to get back because the government has already defeated the insurgents.
 - b. will be difficult to get back because new financial and human resources will be required.
 - c. will be difficult to get back because the government is not willing to fight against the insurgents.
 - d. will be easy to get back because the government has made a strong economic plan.

Reasoning

1. Do you think the civil war damaged the urban or rural economy more? Why?
2. The communists were fighting to help the poor, yet civil war may have made the poor even poorer. How do you think the communists explained their decision to continue to fight?



■ Thakin Kodaw Hmaing (1876 – 1964). An influential Burmese poet, writer and political leader.

11. BSPP: How did it plan to build a socialist society?

Read  D62;  B-BSPP, B-RC; and  T-1962.

Comprehension

1. Complete the chart contrasting parliamentary democracy and socialism, according to the Revolutionary Council .

Parliamentary democracy	Socialism
Some businesses are privately owned	
Rich people exploit poor people	
People must provide their own food and shelter	
People have private property	

Reasoning

1. Do you think the socialist society the RC describes is possible to create? Why or why not?
2. What would be the benefits and negative effects of this system?

12. Armed resistance groups: How do they get money?

Read  D83;  B-Zahkung Ting Ying, B-NDA-Kachin; and  T-1994.

Comprehension

1. Chairman Zahkung Ting Ying explains that the NDA-Kachin sells the trees in order to
 - a. develop the region the way the government should have done.
 - b. further the cause of getting an independent Kachin homeland.
 - c. preserve the natural environment of Kachin state.
 - d. prevent the SPDC from making a profit from the Kachins' natural resources in the future.



Reasoning

1. Do you agree with Chairman Zahkung Ting Ying's reasons for selling the timber? Why or why not? What else could the NDA-Kachin do to develop the region?
2. Have you heard of other ways that armed resistance groups get money? What are they? Is selling timber better or worse than these other ways?
3. Some armed struggle groups have been accused of fighting for wealth rather than for freedom. Do you think an armed resistance group can or should do both at the same time?
4. Do the problems Chairman Zahkung Ting Ying describes only happen in rural areas? Why or why not?

13. Globalisation: How has it affected Burma's economy?

Read  D88; and  T-1988-SLORC.

Comprehension

1. With which countries did all trade (imports and exports) increase between 2001 and 2006?
2. With which countries did trade decrease between 2001 and 2006?
3. With which countries did trade stay about the same between 2001 and 2006?

Reasoning

1. What are the positive and negative effects of international trade on lower and middle class Burmese people?
2. What are the positive and negative effects of international trade on upper class Burmese people?
3. Trade with the US went down because the US put sanctions on Burma to protest the government's human rights abuses. Do you support this idea?

14. The 2007 demonstrations: What were the economic factors?

Read  D89;  B-ABMA and  T-2007

Comprehension

1. Classify the monks' demands (1-4) as economic, political, or social.
2. According to the ABMA, the protests were first sparked by
 - a. the SPDC's mistreatment of monks.
 - b. the aggression of the USDA.
 - c. the imprisonment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
 - d. fuel price increases.

Reasoning

1. Some people disagreed about whether the 2007 protests were primarily about economic issues or about political issues. Which do you think were most important in causing the protests?

15. The End of Economic Sanctions: What were the EU's concerns?

Read  D104; and  T-2013



Comprehension

1. The EU mentions several concerns they have. Which one is NOT included ?
 - a. The Kachin conflict
 - b. The conflict between Rakhine and Rohingya
 - c. political prisoners.
 - d. The 2008 Constitution

Reasoning

1. Do you think 2013 was the right time for the EU to end economic sanctions on Burma? Why or why not?
2. The EU mentioned several concerns they had about the situation in Burma. Do you think this list was appropriate? What would you add or take out?

16. Global migration: How has it affected Burmese people's socio-economic status?

Read  D98; and  T-2007.

Comprehension


1. What evidence can you find in the refugees' stories that shows that they were lower class when they lived in Burma and in the refugee camp?

Reasoning

1. Do you think resettled refugees have better socioeconomic status and class mobility in their new countries than in Burma? Explain.
2. Have you heard much about Burmese people who have resettled in foreign countries sending money back to relatives and friends in Burma? Could it reduce income inequality in Burma?

Review

1. How have classes changed throughout Burma's histories? How have they stayed the same? Use D6, D32, D37 and D54 especially to answer.
2. How have economic conditions caused people to oppose the government throughout Burmese history? Use D31, D35, D52, and D89 to answer.
3. What do you think have been the main obstacles to Burma's economic development throughout history? Give examples from the documents, especially D57, D83, and D91.
4. Do you think that capitalism, socialism, or communism has been best for Burmese people in the past? Explain your choices using D35, D52, D62, and D91.
5. Would you rather have lived in an urban or rural area in the colonial era (D19, D20, D31)? The parliamentary era (D54, D57)? The SLORC/SPDC era (D83)? Why?
6. How has completing this unit changed your perspective on class and economic issues? How has it stayed the same?

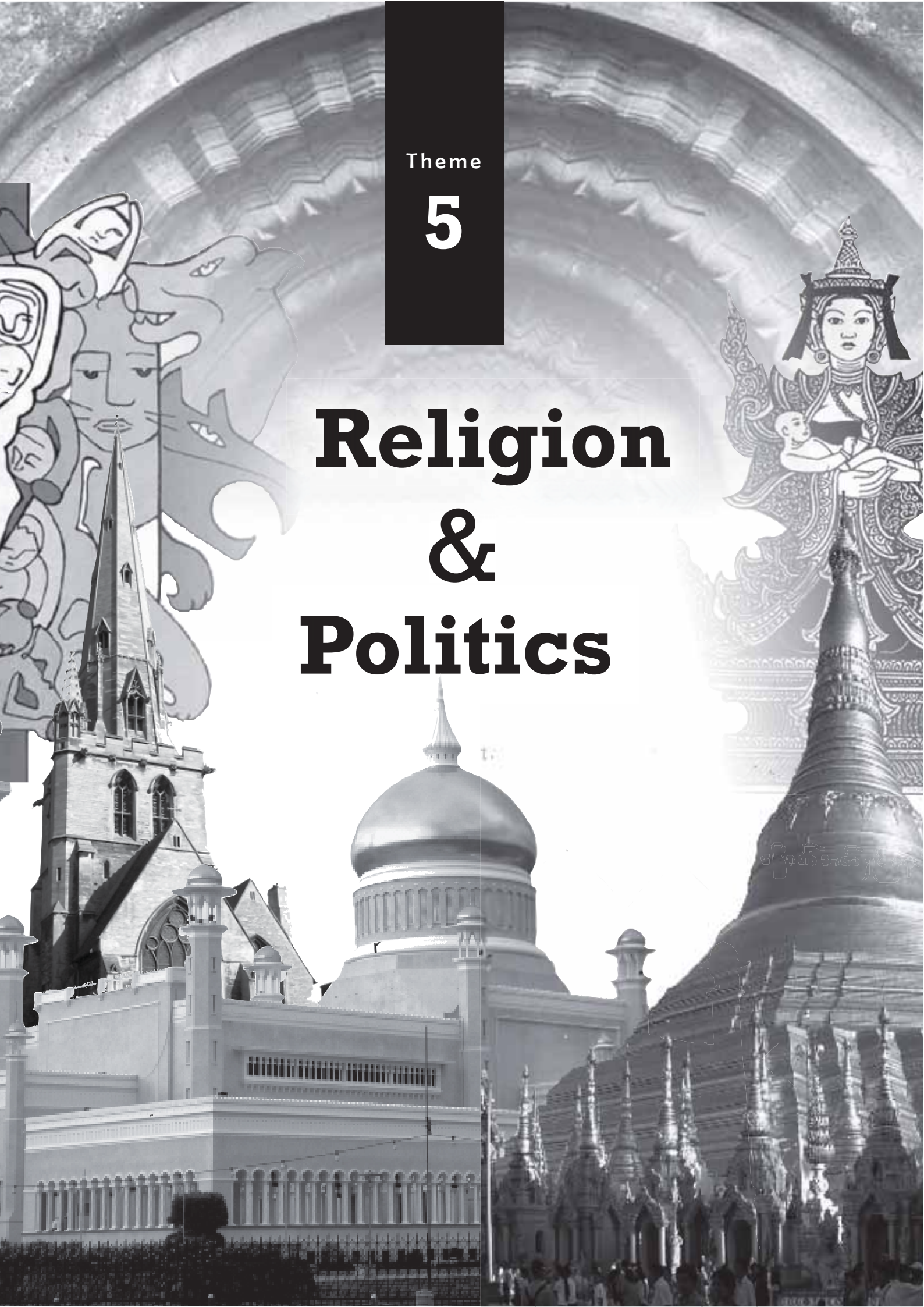


■ This map shows the main areas where refugees from Burma resettle. They usually go via Thailand, India or Malaysia.

Theme

5

Religion & Politics



1. How have spiritual beliefs affected society?

Over the years, people in Burma have practised a variety of religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, animism and Hinduism. Some people, especially those who have communist beliefs, might not have practiced any religion at all. Religion can be broadly organised into two categories. Organised religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Bhuddism, have clearly defined guidelines and goals for how to best live your life. They also have some form of leadership or hierarchy and include specific religious sites. Non-organised religions, such as animism (the worship of animal or nature spirits), have a general belief system, but are not represented by leaders or specific guidelines. Animism is the most ancient religion. Many elements of it have mixed with other religions that people started to practise later. Organised religions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism were practised in Burma since ancient times, while Christianity was brought by missionaries in the 19th century.

Because most people in Burma are Buddhist, some Burmese and foreigners have called Burma a “Buddhist country.” Burmese people who practise other religions usually don’t like this. In particular, there have been conflicts about how religion should affect the government.

Around the world, there are different relationships between government and religion. One option is to have a secular state that does not favour any particular religion. In a secular state, religion is a private matter that should not become part of public life. Another option is for the government to encourage religious pluralism, or the freedom to practise any religion. On the other hand, the government can choose one religion to support; this is called



■ Ayatollah Khamenei (above) is the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He leads a theocratic system of government whereby the rules of Islam dictate the government’s domestic and international policy.

state-sponsored religion. In this case, people may support the government because they believe in that religion. A more extreme option is to have a theocracy, in which the rulers are spiritual leaders who rule according to religious laws.

Burmese people have tried these different options throughout history. In Burma, religion has not only played a role in government, but also in opposition to governments; Burmese people opposed the colonial, parliamentary, and military governments for religious reasons. In this unit you will have a chance to examine how religion and politics have mixed during Burma’s histories.

Comprehension

1. Match the word with its definition.

a. secularism	1. protection of the freedom to practise any religion
b. religious pluralism	2. keeping religion separate from society and politics
c. state-sponsored religion	3. a government controlled by leaders claiming to rule as a representation of a deity
d. theocracy	4. when a government chooses one religion to support

2. Which of these statements are true according to the text?

- a. Most people in Burma are Buddhist.
- b. Burma is a Buddhist country.
- c. Animism was the first religion to be practised.
- d. Muslims only recently came to Burma.
- e. There has been religious discrimination in Burma.

Reasoning

- 1. Which of the statements in Question 2 do you agree with? Which do you disagree with? Why?
- 2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option described in Question 1?
- 3. Which of the options described in Question 1 do you think the government should take toward religion in Burma? Why?

2. Animism: What did people believe before organised religion?

Read  D1 and  T-3000-1000 BC.

Comprehension

- 1. Based on this *hta*, Karen animists in ancient times probably
 - a. built pagodas and respected monks.
 - b. respected nature, ancestors, and spirits.
 - c. believed in Jesus Christ and built churches.
 - d. had no spiritual beliefs at all.

Reasoning

- 1. Because animism was practised for many centuries before other religions were organised, some animist beliefs can still be seen in the way Burmese people practise Buddhism, Christianity, and other religions today. Can you think of any examples that show how animism influences spiritual beliefs today?
- 2. Later in history, both Burmese and non-Burmese people tried to convert animists to other religions, especially Christianity and Buddhism. Do you think that trying to convert animists to other religions is a kind of discrimination against them? Why or why not?



3. Ancient kingdoms: How did Buddhism affect government?

Read  D3;  B-Rajakumar, B-Kyansittha; and  T-849-1287.

Comprehension

1. Which statement summarises this document?

- Rajakumar made a Buddha image and pagoda in his father's honour and donated slaves to care for it.
- Kyansittha built a cave pagoda in honour of his wife.
- Three villages of slaves donated their labour to help build a Buddha image for Kyansittha.
- Rajakumar let the slaves go free so that his father would recover from his illness.

Reasoning

- How do you think practising Buddhism helped kings build up their power?
- Royal families supported Buddhism by building pagodas and making Buddha images as Rajakumar did, but they also did things that seem to go against Buddhist precepts, such as having wars to capture religious relics and using slave labour. Do you think these ancient kings were good Buddhists? Why or why not?

4. Christian missionaries: How did they build relationships with Burmese people?

Read  D14, D21;  B-Carson, and  T-19th c.

Comprehension

- These two documents imply that colonised people who convert to Christianity would be
 - more likely to rebel against the British government.
 - less likely to have conflicts with members of their own ethnic group.
 - more likely to live peacefully with people of other religions.
 - less likely to oppose the British government.

Reasoning

- Do you think that Burmese Christians were more likely to have close relationships with British colonisers? In your experience, do Burmese Christians have closer relationships with Western foreigners today?



5. The shoe question: Why Buddhists opposed British colonisers?

Read  D23, D36- on the shoe question;  B-Ba Khine, B-Ba Gale, B-YMBA; and  T-1910s.

Comprehension

1. According to these documents, how did the British offend Buddhists?

- By visiting pagodas.
- By trying to convert them to Christianity.
- By forcing Burmese people to carry British people on their shoulders.
- By wearing their shoes in pagodas.

Reasoning

1. What political goal do you think British colonisers were trying to achieve by refusing to take off their shoes when they entered pagodas? Did they achieve their goals?



6. 1947 Constitution: What did it say about religion?

Read  D46- Rights of Freedom;  B-Chan Htoon;  T-1947-Constitution.

Comprehension

1. Decide if each statement is true or false according to the Constitution.

- All religions except Buddhism will be outlawed.
- Only Buddhists can be civil servants.
- The government cannot discriminate against anyone because of their religion.
- The majority of citizens are Buddhist.

Reasoning

1. What do you think it means to “acknowledge the special position” of Buddhism? What would be the practical effects of this position?

2. Does this constitution show religious pluralism, state-sponsored religion, or both? Why?

7. Burmese Muslim Organisation: How did it work with other groups to get independence for Burma?

Read  D42;  B-Razak, B-AFPFL, B-BMO, B-BNA; and  T-1945-1948.

Comprehension

1. Decide if these statements are true or false according to U Razak.
 - a. Burman Muslims joined the BNA so they could be sure they would be represented in the post-war government.
 - b. The BMO agreed to work together with the AFPFL.
 - c. It was the British divide and rule policy that caused Muslims to be separated from other Burmans in the past.
 - d. No Burman Muslims were fluent in Burmese.

Reasoning

1. Do you think U Razak was too optimistic in his view that the past tensions between Burman Muslims and Burmese of other religions had been resolved? Why or why not?
2. Did you have any stereotypes about Muslim people? Did reading this document change those stereotypes? Why or why not?

8. Civil war: Why did some Muslims rebel?

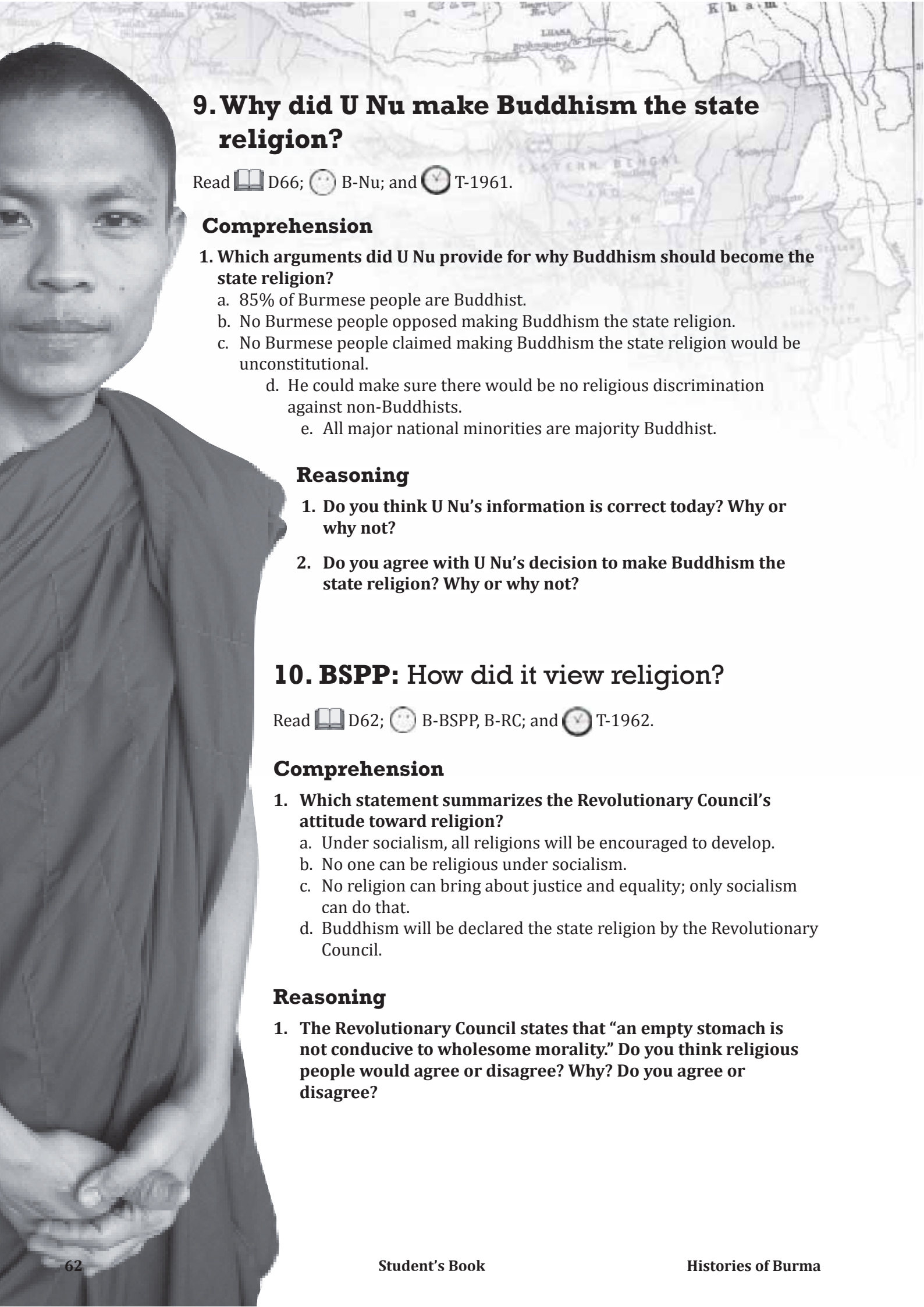
Read  D50;  B-Mujahid Party;  T-1946.

Comprehension

1. Which demands did the Mujahid make?
 - a. A homeland.
 - b. The right to speak and teach Urdu.
 - c. That no Buddhists should live in Arakan State.
 - d. Legal status for the Mujahid Party.
 - e. That Islam should be recognized as the national religion of Burma.

Reasoning

1. How is the BMO's political strategy in D42 different from the Mujahid Party's? \
2. Why do you think people from the same religion had such different perspectives on politics?



9. Why did U Nu make Buddhism the state religion?

Read D66; B-Nu; and T-1961.

Comprehension

1. Which arguments did U Nu provide for why Buddhism should become the state religion?
 - a. 85% of Burmese people are Buddhist.
 - b. No Burmese people opposed making Buddhism the state religion.
 - c. No Burmese people claimed making Buddhism the state religion would be unconstitutional.
 - d. He could make sure there would be no religious discrimination against non-Buddhists.
 - e. All major national minorities are majority Buddhist.

Reasoning

1. Do you think U Nu's information is correct today? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree with U Nu's decision to make Buddhism the state religion? Why or why not?

10. BSPP: How did it view religion?

Read D62; B-BSPP, B-RC; and T-1962.

Comprehension

1. Which statement summarizes the Revolutionary Council's attitude toward religion?
 - a. Under socialism, all religions will be encouraged to develop.
 - b. No one can be religious under socialism.
 - c. No religion can bring about justice and equality; only socialism can do that.
 - d. Buddhism will be declared the state religion by the Revolutionary Council.

Reasoning

1. The Revolutionary Council states that "an empty stomach is not conducive to wholesome morality." Do you think religious people would agree or disagree? Why? Do you agree or disagree?

11. The KNU-DKBA split: How has religion divided opposition groups?



■ (above) KNLA - Karen National Liberation Army troops. The armed wing of the KNU. (right) DKBA soldiers.



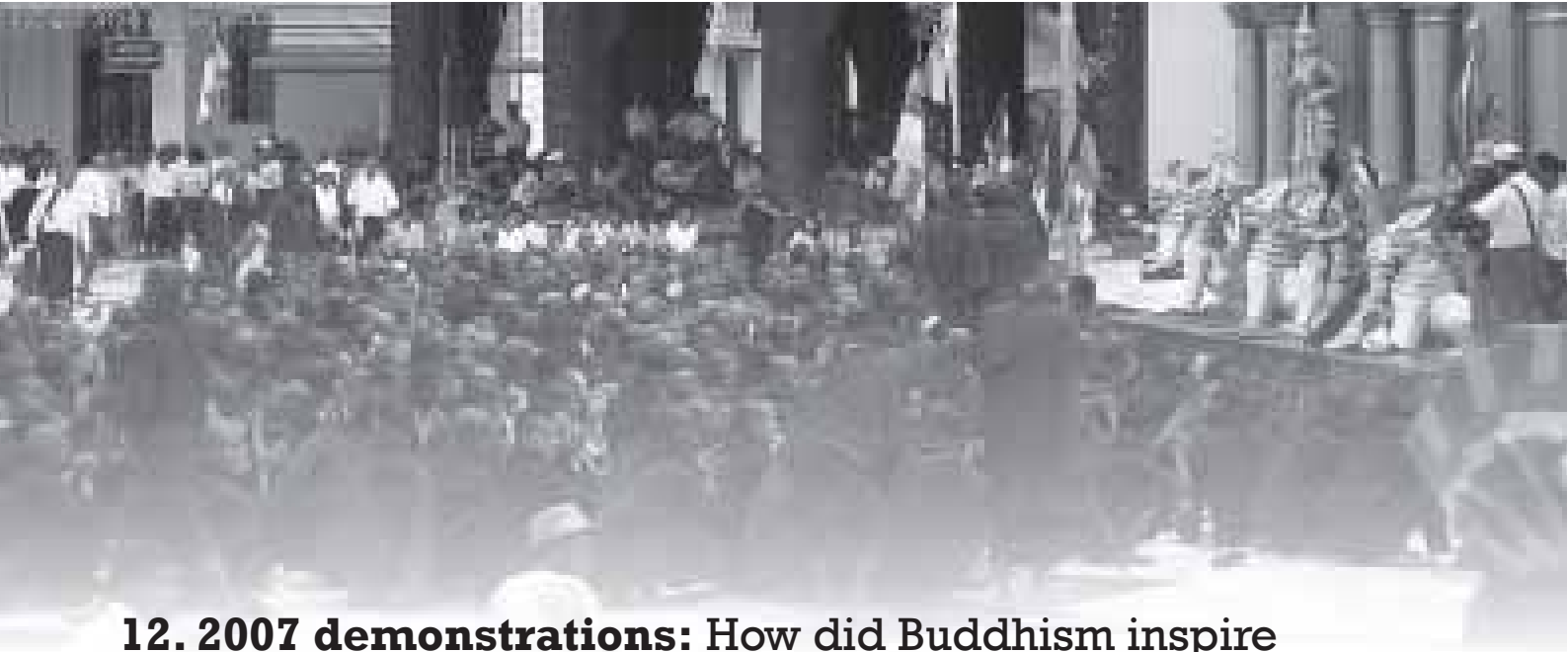
Read D77; B-Mya; B-Thuzana, B-KNU, B-DKBA; and T-1994-1995.

Comprehension

1. Bo Mya says that the KNU should
 - a. unite with the SPDC against the Buddhist Karens.
 - b. give the Buddhists what they want so that the SPDC does not succeed in dividing Karens.
 - c. make the KNU a Christian-only organisation.
 - d. attack the Buddhists at Thumwehta.

Reasoning

1. Despite Bo Mya's instructions, the DKBA split away from the KNU. Do you think all political organisations that contain people of different religions will break apart? What evidence do you have to support your position?



12. 2007 demonstrations: How did Buddhism inspire opposition to the SPDC?

Read D89; B-ABMA, B-USDA; and T-2007

Comprehension

1. Which of these ABMA protest tactics were used by the monks?
 - a. Marching in the streets.
 - b. Boycotting the SPDC.
 - c. Starting an armed struggle.
 - d. Demanding that fuel prices be lowered.
 - e. Working for national reconciliation.

Reasoning

1. The ABMA joins a long tradition of politically active Burmese monks, including U Ottama and U Wisara. However, some people think monks should not become involved in politics. What are the advantages and disadvantages of their involvement?

13. The SPDC: How did it support Buddhism?

Read D101; B-SPDC, B-Than Shwe and T-1990s-2000s.

Comprehension

1. The main idea of this passage is that
 - a. Gen. Than Shwe enjoys strolling in pagodas.
 - b. Gen. Than Shwe's wife usually accompanies him on pilgrimages.
 - c. Gen. Than Shwe is a devout Buddhist.
 - d. Gen. Than Shwe has lots of money to donate.



Reasoning

1. This type of article appears frequently in state newspapers. Why would the SPDC want to convey the main idea described above?

Review

1. Are the following people or groups supporters of theocracy, religious pluralism, secularism, or state-sponsored religion: Prince Rajakumar (D3), U Nu (D66), Mujahid Party (D50), U Razak (D42), BSPP (D62), Bo Mya (D77), Gen. Than Shwe (D101). Explain your answer using the documents.
2. Imagine a meeting between the following people. What advice would they have for each other on the relationship between religion and politics?
 - a. U Razak (D42) and the Mujahid Party (D50).
 - b. U Nu (D66) and Mrs. Carson (D21).
 - c. Prince Rajakumar (D3) and Gen. Than Shwe (D101).
 - d. the BSPP (D62) and the ABMA (D89).
3. In Burma, has religion usually made people support the government or oppose it? Use examples from the documents, especially D21, D66, D89, D36 and D50.
4. The 1947 Constitution guaranteed freedom from discrimination to people of all religions, but gave a special place to Buddhism. How would you rewrite that section of the Constitution to protect the rights of people of all religions in Burma?
5. How has completing this unit changed your perspective on the relationship between religion and politics? How has it stayed the same?

