

Preface to the Third Edition

Since the first version of this bibliography was released in 2012, the outpouring of books, reports and other publications about Burma (Myanmar) that was noted in earlier editions has continued. Indeed, over the past few years it seems to have picked up in both pace and range, although not always in quality. As one observer bluntly put it a few years ago, “There is a vast quantity of literature on Burma/Myanmar, some of it quite unreadable”.¹ While many of these works have been posted online, and are only available in soft copy, most have been released in hard copy, and in English. Even if the print run was quite small, this has entitled them to a mention in this third and expanded edition. The newest works fall into a number of categories, which can easily be identified by comparing the contents pages above with those of earlier editions. Broadly speaking, they cover academic works, official reports, travelogues and tourist guides, books for the general reader, and older works that have been reprinted to meet a popular demand.

For example, the section on Burma’s politics and government continues to grow apace, a result at least in part of the close attention being paid to the country’s transition from a military dictatorship to a quasi-democratic administration. The advent of President Thein Sein’s reformist government in 2011 and the election of a National League for Democracy (NLD) government in 2015 prompted a surge of publications on the country’s rapidly changing political, economic and social landscape. There have also been several new books about Burma’s once revered opposition leader, Aung San

Suu Kyi, who is now the country's *de facto* head of state.² Given her government's failure to meet unrealistically high popular expectations, and her dramatic fall from grace in the eyes of the international community (due mainly to her disappointing response to the so-called "Rohingya question"), it can be expected that more publications on the Nobel Peace laureate and her turbulent time in office will appear over the next few years.³

Also, as Burma has opened up to foreign aid and investment, there has been an increase in the number of reports by governments, international organizations and consultants interested in Burma's political reforms, economic growth and social development.⁴ At the same time, a host of reports have been produced by human rights groups and bodies devoted to other causes, such as environmental protection. Most can be found online, but small numbers of hard copies have usually been produced for governments, donors and other interested parties. Many of these works provide useful summaries of past developments, current situations and future plans. They also enjoy the benefit of being published in a more timely fashion than many academic studies. That said, the increased access now available to Burma-watchers carries certain risks. Closer personal contacts with key players and a greater familiarity with local developments can result in deeper knowledge and more penetrating analyses of complex issues. However, they can also lead to narrower perspectives and a greater tendency towards personal bias.

There has been a marked increase in books written by, and for, foreign visitors to Burma, the number of which rose from some 310,000 in 2010 to nearly three million in 2017.⁵ Once again, these works are a mixed bag, reflecting what Penny Edwards has called the "overnight expert syndrome", which has "fed a rapid demand for books on contemporary Myanmar".⁶ One noteworthy trend has been the flood of travelogues and memoirs by tourists and temporary residents, on whom Burma has clearly made a strong impression. Many are rather shallow and descriptive, bringing to mind Rudyard Kipling's "Globe-trotter", "who 'does' kingdoms in days and writes books upon them in weeks".⁷ In keeping with most memoirs—and current travel brochures—about Burma, they often emphasize nostalgic and romantic themes.⁸ This trend is also seen in books of photographs, which tend to consist of clichéd shots of picturesque pagodas, smiling children and colourful ethnic minorities.⁹ That said, there are also some notable collections of high quality

images that record Burma's traditional culture, natural environment and colonial-era architecture, all of which are under threat.¹⁰

The number of English language novels about Burma is increasing. Once again, the quality is highly variable.¹¹ While there are some notable exceptions, the plots tend to be banal and rather predictable, with Burma serving simply as an exotic *locus dramaticus*. Another interesting development has been the publication of several graphic novels about Burma, including a number that look closely at the contemporary political scene. Most are high quality productions, with excellent illustrations, but not all have been listed in the bibliography as their texts are not in English.¹² There has also been an increase in the number of books about Burma intended for juvenile readers. They include introductions to Burma's geography and culture, and illustrated stories based on Burmese folk tales. There are also several short biographies of Aung San Suu Kyi that are aimed at children. Once again, this trend seems to reflect both the increased attention being paid to Burma in Western countries and the much larger number of people prompted to write about the place, for various reasons.

Also worthy of note is the increasing number of references to Burma, and even the inclusion of separate chapters about Burma, in broader studies of the region, and of particular subjects. There was a time when—books about insurgencies in Southeast Asia aside—such wide-ranging surveys usually ignored Burma or only referred to it in passing. For decades, there was neither the interest nor the expertise available to give it closer attention. Even standard textbooks about the region lacked significant Burma-related content.¹³ This is no longer the case. For example, Anthony Reid's stimulating new history of Southeast Asia expertly folds critical aspects of Burma into his wider narrative of developments in the region.¹⁴ There is a useful chapter about Burma in *Khaki Capital*, a recent study of the political economy of armed forces in Southeast Asia.¹⁵ *The Everyday Political Economy of Southeast Asia*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2016, includes a chapter on trade union politics in Burma.¹⁶

As noted in earlier editions of this bibliography, there is a growing number of works written in English, or translated into English, by Burmese authors. Most major bookshops in Yangon now have a few shelves of memoirs, travel books and other works by local writers, doubtless encouraged by the influx of tourists, the easing of

restrictions on freedom of expression and, probably, the increased availability of modern printing equipment. These books tend to be produced by boutique publishing houses, and in small numbers, but together they offer new and interesting perspectives on aspects of Burmese politics and history.¹⁷ That said, the field is still quite narrow. One Western scholar visiting Burma wrote in 2015 that “I was surprised at how difficult it was to find translated contemporary literature by Burmese writers”.¹⁸ This echoed an earlier comment by the author Wendy Law-Yone, who noted in 2010 that “precious few [books in Burmese—novels especially] have been translated into English”.¹⁹ As the following checklist indicates, this situation is gradually improving, as local novelists, poets and artists gain wider recognition. One notable example of this trend is *Burma Storybook*, edited by Petr Lom and others.²⁰

All these developments must be counted as positive contributions to the broad field of Burma studies, but another is a cause for concern. It used to be common practice for the personal libraries of major figures in Burma studies to be purchased by institutions. The British Library, Cornell University, the University of Heidelberg and the National Library of Australia, among others, acquired excellent collections of books, manuscripts and ephemera from former officials, academics and others with close connections to Burma.²¹ Even before the country became fashionable in the West, there was a wish to preserve its scholarly and literary heritage. Albeit at a slower pace, this practice continued into the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, however, libraries, universities and research institutes seem to be increasingly reluctant to acquire hard copies of books, either to fill gaps in their collections or to keep them up to date. The reasons given for this attitude vary between institutions, but usually start with a lack of funds and insufficient shelf space. It would be a tragedy for Burma studies if existing collections were allowed to decline in value, or significant private libraries were broken up, simply because no institutions were willing or able to give them a home.²²

This edition of the bibliography, like those published in 2012 and 2015, only lists books, reports and monographs that have been published in English and in hard copy since 1988. For other works, including e-books, online publications, articles and short items, readers will need to look elsewhere. As stated in earlier prefaces, Michael Charney’s *Living Bibliography of Burma Studies* was not substantially updated after its 2004 iteration, and was formally

closed down in 2012.²³ While in need of increased financial support, the *Online Burma/Myanmar Library* (OB/ML), begun by the Burma Peace Foundation in 2001, is still functioning, thanks to the efforts of the indefatigable David Arnott.²⁴ Its database is organized into more than ninety categories and 3,000 sub-categories. They guide readers to about 35,000 links to individual documents and more than 10,000 websites or multiple documents. These in turn give access to potentially millions of other Burma-related documents.²⁵ Needless to say, the OB/ML includes a great many works not listed here, notably those found only online.

This edition of the bibliography follows much the same pattern as the earlier two. There are, however, a number of changes.

The original title of the bibliography has been retained and, in all new and revised chapters, “Burma” rather than “Myanmar” has been used for the country’s name. This does not reflect its formal title, or current usage, even by die-hard critics of the 1989 name change, such as Aung San Suu Kyi.²⁶ However, “Burma” has been retained for this edition, simply for consistency. All titles of books and reports have been cited as they were published, including the use of both “Rangoon” and its 1989 replacement, “Yangon”. Some minor amendments have been made to the introduction, and David Steinberg has updated his foreword. The original acknowledgements page has been substantially revised to take account of contributions made by various Burma-watchers since the first edition of the bibliography was published six years ago. Also, a few individual entries carried forward from earlier editions have been amended. This has mainly been to correct errors and account for changed circumstances, such as the publication of new editions.

This is still a “select” bibliography in that it does not try to include all hard copy publications on Burma, or in all languages, but an effort has been made to make it more comprehensive. It now lists quite a number of works that, for various reasons, were left out of earlier editions. This is partly to provide a more rounded picture of Burma, but also to fill out some sections that readers felt were too thin. I have also relaxed my initial firm stance against reprints, books printed on demand and self-published works. The emphasis is still on original works produced by established publishing houses, governments and international organizations. However, an increasing number of older works on Burma are now being reprinted by reputable firms. To exclude them all would deprive readers of some useful sources on key subjects. The same consideration applies to

self-published books and works printed on demand, some of which deserve a mention. Pirated copies of foreign works, reprinted in Burma, have not been included.²⁷

There are now 2,133 works listed, compared with 928 in the first edition and 1,318 in the second edition. The much larger number has necessitated some structural changes. Instead of the twenty-nine chapters and forty-four sections found in the 2015 edition, there are now thirty-five chapters and seventy-two sections. For example, there are now separate chapters on the Second World War, Aung San Suu Kyi and the “Rohingya Question”, to account for the greater number of titles now listed in those categories. The chapter on politics and government is still the longest, and has been divided chronologically. New sections have been created to cover works published when Burma was under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and its nominal successor, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), after the paradigm shift from direct military rule to President Thein Sein’s “disciplined democracy” in 2011, and since the creation in 2016 of a semi-elected NLD administration under Aung San Suu Kyi. These categories are rather arbitrary in that they ignore the issues covered within each time frame, but it is hoped that such a device will help readers find particular works more easily. Sections have also been added to other chapters to make it easier for readers to find what they are looking for.

When I began this project in 2010, it was my intention personally to inspect, or at least to sight, every work listed in the bibliography, drawing on my own resources and those of the main libraries in Canberra and elsewhere. Given the large number of works cited in this latest edition, however, and the difficulty of accessing hard copies of every one, I have had to modify that aim. However, an effort has still been made to verify each entry, usually by cross-checking the details in more than one source. In the first edition, I was also determined to exclude works that were listed in publishers’ catalogues and on the websites of the major booksellers but had not yet been published. That resolution was slightly relaxed in the second edition, as I was keen to include a number of important works that I was reliably informed were close to commercial release. I have taken a similar approach here, although a few books currently listed on major websites have not been included because of uncertainty over their publication dates.²⁸

There are now three appendices. The first is a revised and updated essay on publications that readers may find helpful if they wish to

become more familiar with specific aspects of Burma, or if they are going there for the first time. Once again, it is a personal selection and would profitably be read in conjunction with the recommendations of other Burma-watchers with particular areas of expertise.²⁹ The second appendix lists a range of maps and charts of Burma that are currently available either through commercial outlets or from other suppliers. If the websites of major booksellers are any guide, the demand for maps has grown significantly in recent years as more people have visited Burma, either for business or pleasure.³⁰ The third appendix lists a selection of feature movies and documentary films made about the country and released in English. Some have had a greater impact than others, but in their own ways they have all added to the romance, mystery and allure of a country that, until thirty years ago, was relatively unknown.³¹ The extent to which they have added to a greater understanding of Burma's history, politics and culture, however, is debateable.

It is perhaps worth repeating that the main aim of this checklist is to provide academics, officials, students and members of the general public with an easily accessible list of works on Burma produced in hard copy, and in English, since the 1988 uprising. It includes a wide range of publications, covering many subjects, in an attempt to provide readers with the broadest choice possible. However, the inclusion of a particular work does not signify an endorsement of it or agreement with any of the opinions expressed in it. Once again, the watchwords of this checklist have been comprehensiveness and balance. No attempt has been made to exclude a work because of its perceived failure to meet criteria such as quality or political correctness. As Paul Duguid once remarked, albeit in a different context, an eclectic collection like this resembles "a church jumble-sale bookstall, where gems and duds are blessed alike by the vicar because all have been donated".³² As always, it is for the reader to decide on the quality and value of each title.

Brisbane
May 2018

Notes

1. Richard Cockett, *Blood, Dreams and Gold: The Changing Face of Burma* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 259.
2. Under the terms of the 2008 constitution, she is unable to become president of the country. See Andrew Selth, *Aung San Suu Kyi and the*

- Politics of Personality*, Regional Outlook no. 55 (Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2017).
3. Already in the publishing pipeline are Hans-Bernd Zollner and Rodion Ebbighausen, *The Daughter: A Political Biography of Aung San Suu Kyi* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2018); and Poppy Macpherson, *The Shadows of Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi and the Persecution of the Rohingya* (London: I.B. Taurus, forthcoming).
 4. See, for example, “Myanmar Governance Discussion Paper Series”, *The Asia Foundation*, <https://asiafoundation.org/tag/myanmar-governance-discussion-paper-series>; and “Myanmar: Publications and Documents”, *Asian Development Bank*, <https://www.adb.org/countries/myanmar/publications>.
 5. Htoo Thant, “Tourist Arrivals Rise 22pc in 8 Months”, *Myanmar Times*, 10 October 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/tourist-arrivals-rise-22pc-8-months.html>.
 6. Penny Edwards, “Truth to Power”, *Mekong Review* 1, no. 4 (August–October 2016), p. 9.
 7. Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1909), p. 3.
 8. For an interesting discussion of this phenomenon, see Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 204–7.
 9. Steven Heller, “Isolated from the World for Sixty Years”, *The Atlantic*, 6 April 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/04/a-rare-glimpse-into-burma/390567/>.
 10. See, for example, David Lazar, *Myanmar: Luminous Journey* (Bangkok: The author, 2016); and P.J. Heijmans, *Relics of Rangoon* (Yangon: Inya Media, 2016).
 11. See Kyi May Kaung and John Feffer, “Out of Burma”, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 11 July 2007, http://fpif.org/out_of_burma/.
 12. Most have been produced by French and Belgian publishers. For a brief discussion of this genre, see Andrew Selth, “Graphic Novels Chart Myanmar’s History”, *Nikkei Asian Review*, 1 April 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Graphic-novels-chart-Myanmar-s-history?page=1>.
 13. For example, the six-man writing team responsible for the first edition of the joint volume *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1971) did not include a Burma expert. This was rectified for the second (1987) edition by the recruitment of Robert H. Taylor.
 14. Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).
 15. Marco Bunte, “The Military-NLD Coalition in Myanmar: Military Guardianship and its Economic Foundations”, in Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitookiat (eds.), *Khaki Capital: The Political Economy of the Military in Southeast Asia* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2017).

16. Nicholas Henry, “Everyday Agents of Change: Trade Unions in Myanmar”, in Juanita Elias and Lena Rethel (eds.), *The Everyday Political Economy of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
17. See, for example, Thant Thaw Kaung, “Publication Trends in Myanmar and Reading Promotion Efforts”, presentation given at the School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, Canberra, 28 February 2017.
18. Ellen Wiles, *Saffron Shadows and Salvaged Scripts: Literary Life in Myanmar under Censorship and in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), pp. 2–3.
19. “The Best Books on Her Own Burma”, recommended by Wendy Law-Yone, *Five Books*, 1 December 2010, <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/wendy-law-yone-on-her-own-burma/>.
20. Petr Lom et al. (eds.), *Burma Storybook*, introduction by Emma Larkin, translations by Maung Tha Noe, Maung Day, Zeyar Lynn, Pandora, Kenneth Wong, Zaw Tun and Khun Cho, photographs by Dana Lixenberg (Amsterdam: ZINdoc: 2017). See also Melis Alemdar, “Petr Lom’s ‘Burma Storybook’ Captures Poetry on Film”, *TRT World*, 15 May 2017, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/petr-lom-s-burma-storybook-captures-poetry-on-film-7035>.
21. See, for example, Patricia Herbert, “The Making of a Collection: Burmese Manuscripts in the British Library”, *British Library Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1989), pp. 59–70, <https://www.bl.uk/ebj/1989/articles/pdf/article5.pdf>; and Andrew Gosling, “Burma and Beyond”, *National Library of Australia News*, October 1996, pp. 3–5, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/131760/20120120-0944/www.nla.gov.au/pub/nlanews/1996/oct96/story-1.pdf>.
22. For a brief discussion of this problem, see Andrew Selth, “The Wisdom in the Literature”, *New Mandala*, 21 March 2017, <http://www.newmandala.org/the-wisdom-in-the-literature/>.
23. M.W. Charney, “The Bibliography of Burma (Myanmar) Research: The Secondary Literature (2004 Revision)”, *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, Bibliographic Supplement (Winter 2004), http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/6241/1/Bibliography_of_secondary_literature--2004.pdf.
24. “Online Burma/Myanmar Library”, <http://www.burmalibrary.org/>. See also M.D. Alicias, “Online Burma/Myanmar Library: A Gateway to Burma/Myanmar”, *Asian Politics and Policy* 4, no. 4 (October 2012), pp. 591–93.
25. The library is an invaluable resource but relies on donations to survive. Anyone wishing to assist can contact David Arnott by email at burmalibrary@gmail.com.
26. Questioned about the official name of the country soon after her party took office in 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi stated her continuing preference for the colonial-era term, but said that both “Burma” and “Myanmar” were acceptable. See Andrew Selth, “More Name Games in Burma/

- Myanmar”, *The Interpreter*, 10 August 2016, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/more-name-games-burmayanmar>.
27. For an interesting discussion of this phenomenon, see Mandy Sadan, “Knowledge, Piracy and Academic Development in Myanmar (Part I)”, *Tea Circle*, 30 November 2017, <https://teacircleoxford.com/2017/11/30/knowledge-piracy-and-academic-development-in-myanmar-part-i/>; and Mandy Sadan, “Knowledge, Piracy and Academic Development in Myanmar (Part II)”, *Tea Circle*, 1 December 2017, <https://teacircleoxford.com/2017/12/01/knowledge-piracy-and-academic-development-in-myanmar-part-ii/>.
 28. These include Sean Turnell, *Burma’s Economic Renaissance* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, forthcoming); Helen James, *Myanmar’s Strategic Choices* (London: Routledge, forthcoming); Rohan Gunaratna et al., *The Rohingya Crisis* (London, World Scientific Europe, forthcoming); and Irene Slegt and Simon Long, *Myanmar: A Burmese People’s Story* (London: Zed Books, forthcoming).
 29. See for example, “The Best Books on Burma”, recommended by Emma Larkin, *Five Books*, n.d., <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/emma-larkin-on-burma/>; “The Best Books on Understanding the Burmese Economy”, recommended by Sean Turnell, *Five Books*, n.d., <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/sean-turnell-burmese-economy/>; and “The Best Books on Describing Burma”, recommended by Sue Arnold, *Five Books*, n.d., <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/sue-arnold-on-describing-burma/>.
 30. This subject is discussed in Andrew Selth, “Journeys without Maps in Myanmar”, *New Mandala*, 12 September 2016, <http://www.newmandala.org/journeys-without-maps-myanmar/>.
 31. Andrew Selth, “Burma, Hollywood and the Politics of Entertainment”, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 23, no. 3 (June 2009), pp. 321–34; and Andrew Selth, “Burma-Watching on Film”, *The Interpreter*, blog of the Lowy Institute, Sydney, 30 November 2010, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2010/11/30/Burma-watching-on-film.aspx>.
 32. Paul Duguid, “PG Tips”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 June 2004, quoted in Stuart Kells, *The Library: A Catalogue of Wonders* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017), pp. 270–71.