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“A Burmese Wonderland”: British World Mining and the Making of Colonial Burma

Author
Baillargeon, David

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"A Burmese Wonderland": British World Mining and the Making of Colonial Burma

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

David J. Baillargeon

Committee in charge:

Professor Erika Rappaport, Chair

Professor Adrienne Edgar

Professor Mary Hancock

Professor Mhoze Chikowero

June 2018

The dissertation of David J. Baillargeon is approved.

Mary Hancock

Adrienne Edgar

Mhoze Chikowero

Erika Rappaport, Committee Chair

June 2018

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Writing a dissertation is a long journey with many twists and turns. This dissertation was no exception. When I began this project, it was not a project at all. My previous work as a Masters student was focused on anti-slavery and abolition in Britain during the nineteenth century, and though I remained interested in issues surrounding humanitarianism and capitalism, I decided to start on a new path. Somehow, and serendipitously, those vague interests led me to study a small mining community in the Northern Shan States of British Burma. When I began, however, I was no expert in either the history of Burma or mining. Thanks to the help of so many over the past seven years, and the incredible guidance I received along the way, I was able to piece together the long history of these mines and the thousands of people who lived there, a feat I did not think possible in the beginning. For that help I am forever thankful.

First, I would like to thank all of my friends and colleagues in Santa Barbara for their incredible support since my arrival in California seven years ago. A special thanks to the University of California Santa Barbara History Department and the History Associates for their generous support of my research, as well as the many professors and staff members whose paths I crossed in my time here, including James Brooks, Manuel Covo, Elizabeth Depalma-Digeser, Sharon Farmer, Pekka Hämäläinen, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Lisa Jacobson, Terence Keel, Nelson Lichtenstein, Harold Marcuse, Alice O’Connor, Darcy Ritzau, Sherene Seikaly, and John Talbott. At UCSB, I was also lucky to have around me an incredible community of fellow graduate students whose endless support, encouragement, and most importantly, friendship, made this all possible. Thank you to Zamira Abman, Dimitri Akulov, Munther Al-Sabbagh, Paul Barba, Elijah Bender, Sasha Coles, Sienna Cordoba, Tim Daniels, Andrew Elrod, Andrew Esch, Joe Figliulo-Rosswurm, Brian Griffith, Jesse Halvorsen, Sarah Hanson-Kegerreis, Julie Johnson, Chris Kegerreis, Eric Massie, Ryan Minor, Laura Moore, Will Murphy, Tim Paulson, Joshua Rocha, Samir Sonti, Cody Stephens, Nick Treblehorn, Brian Tyrrell, and Jackson Warkentin. You all, in ways both large and small, made my experience at UCSB an amazing one, and I appreciate all of your love and support. Thank you to all of the students I’ve had the honor to work with since I began at UCSB. Your energy, curiosity, and great questions have undoubtedly made me a better scholar. Finally, I would like to thank my dissertation committee at UCSB, which consisted of Erika Rappaport, Adrienne Edgar, Mary Hancock, and Mhoze Chikowero. Although, since its inception, this project changed a number of times (sorry about that!), my committee remained encouraging and flexible throughout the process, and their support, feedback, and guidance was irreplaceable. Thank you all so much.

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their generous support, this dissertation would not have been possible. Thank you to Jon Connolly, Allegra Giovine, Laurence Goldman, Vanessa Rockel, and Amarjit Singh for your support while in London, as well as Mandy Sadan, who I was lucky enough to have as a mentor. Mandy's knowledge of the archive as well as her invaluable advice and guidance at a critical juncture of the project proved significant in the development of this dissertation, and I am forever grateful for her support. I would also like to thank the University of California Center for New Racial Studies - particularly Howard Winant, Paola Bacchetta, and Sunaina Maira - who awarded me a Dissertation Fellowship in 2014-2015. Finally, I would like to thank the Council for European Studies, who provided me with a Mellon Dissertation Completion Fellowship in 2016-2017, allowing me the much-needed time to finish writing this dissertation.

Thank you also to the many people who I met at conferences, research trips, and elsewhere along the way and whose feedback shaped the way this project developed. Thank you, in particular, to all of the members of the Burma Studies Group, who embraced my project from the beginning. Thank you especially to the organizers and participants of the Burma/Myanmar Research Forum hosted by Cornell University in 2015, which proved to be a turning point in my thoughts about this project. Among the many amazing Burma/Myanmar scholars, and in addition to those I mentioned above, special thanks to Jane Ferguson, Patrick McCormick, Alicia Turner, Courtney Wittekind, and Siew Han Yeo for your help and feedback. I would also like to thank Aung Soe Min, whose generosity and welcoming spirit has touched so many scholars who have passed through Yangon over the years. I have also been fortunate to meet many incredible scholars in the field of mining history, an area of study I knew little about before I began this dissertation. Thank you to the organizers of the International Mining History Congress in Linares, Spain in 2016 for introducing me to so many of these people (and, more generally, for an incredible trip), and I'd especially like to thank Roger Burt, Mel Davies, Jeremy Mouat, and Francesca Sanna for their advice and encouragement with this project. I would also like to thank Angela Woollacott at the Australian National University, who in welcoming me to Canberra and introducing me to the many other graduate students and scholars in the School of History at ANU, turned what I thought would be a lonely research trip to Australia into a very social one. Finally, I would like to thank Durba Ghosh, Elizabeth Elbourne, and the many participants of the "Cultures of Imperialism" workshop at NACBS in 2017. The important conversations we had in that workshop had a significant impact on how I ultimately framed this project, and in particular, how I now see the relationship between local, global, and imperial history. Thank you all for your support.

This project, of course, would also not have been possible without the important work of the many archivists and librarians around the world who helped me navigate the archive for this project. First, thank you to the UCSB library, especially the Interlibrary Loan staff, for all of the assistance over the years. Thank you to the archivists at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University as well as at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library – particularly Spencer Howard – in West Branch, Iowa for your guidance at a very early stage of this project. Thank you also to the archivists and librarians at the National Library of Australia, who helped a great deal with finding the many mining trade journals used in this dissertation. In the UK, thank you to the archivists at the British National Archives in Kew, the London Metropolitan Archives, and the archives at the London School of Economics. A very special thank you is reserved for the many archivists and librarians at the British Library –

particularly in the Newsroom and the Asian and African Studies Reading Room – who very patiently guided and assisted me at various stages of this project, including nearly every day during my fellowship year at the IHR. Your support is very much appreciated.

I've also been fortunate to have some incredible mentors since my undergraduate days. First, I would like to thank both Nicholas Draper and Catherine Hall at University College London, both of whom have had a major impact on my intellectual development and who continue to inspire me with their passion and commitment to the discipline of history. For Paul Deslandes, who served as my undergraduate advisor at the University of Vermont many years ago, no amount of thank yous could be enough. It was under Paul's direction that I first became interested in the topic of British history, and it's thanks to his constant encouragement and guidance over the past fifteen years (!) that I have been able to successfully navigate the world of academia. Paul, you are a gifted teacher, a thoughtful mentor, and a great friend – thank you for continuing to inspire me. Finally, Erika Rappaport has been my superhero over the past seven years. Besides being a gifted and rigorous scholar, Erika's mentorship, leadership, and friendship has made my time at UCSB an absolute joy, and it's difficult to express just how lucky I feel to have had a chance to work with her. Erika's continuous advocacy and support of my work has been incredible, and our many conversations – about tea, Burma, capitalism, empire, and many other topics – over the years have profoundly impacted my view of history. Erika, you are the best. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Outside of the academy, I would be remiss if I did not think the many members of my family who have provided immeasurable love and support over the years. Thank you to Sara, Jeff, Henry, and Samantha in Connecticut and Doug, Reni, Aaron, and Hannah in California for opening your homes to me at various times and for your continued support of this quirky journey I decided to embark on. Thank you to the Rathe clan in Washington for your endless encouragement. And thank you to my parents, Lorraine and David, for all of your help, love, and understanding over the years. In many ways, my love of literature and history started with you, and without your constant support and dedication, I would've never achieved this goal. Thank you all so much.

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VITA OF DAVID J. BAILLARGEON
June 2018

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Arts in History, University of Vermont, 2002
Master of Arts in Modern History, University College London, 2009
Doctor of Philosophy in History, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2018 (expected)

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT
University of California Santa Barbara, Writing Program, Teaching Assistant
Academic Writing (Fall 2017, Winter 2018, Spring 2018)

University of California Santa Barbara, Department of History, Instructor of Record
Twentieth Century Britain (Summer 2016)
Nineteenth Century Britain (Summer 2014)

University of California Santa Barbara, Department of History, Teaching Assistant
Survey of Middle Eastern History (Summer 2017, Winter 2013)
History of Western Civilization, 1715 to Present (Summer 2013, Spring 2013, Fall 2012, Summer 2012, Spring 2012)
History of Western Civilization, 1000-1715 (Winter 2012)
World History, 1700 to Present (Fall 2011)

PUBLICATIONS
"'The Great White Chief': Abolishing Slavery in British Burma, 1880-1935," Accepted for Publication at *Slavery & Abolition* (Accepted February 2018)

"A Burmese Wonderland: Race, Empire, and the Burma Corporation, 1907-1935," in *Global Raciality: Empire, Postcoloniality, Decoloniality*, edited by Paolo Bacchetta and Sunaina Maira. (Routledge, In Press 2018)

AWARDS
2018 – Richard K. Mayberry Award – UCSB History Associates fellowship for outstanding scholarship based on overall scholarly excellence

2017 – Frank and Amanda Clark Frost Prize – UCSB History Associates fellowship for best graduate student paper on the history of political economy

2016-2017 – Mellon Council for European Studies (CES) Dissertation Completion Fellowship

2016 – Dick Cook Memorial Fellowship – UCSB History Associates fellowship for outstanding graduate student in research, training, and service

2016 – John Coleman Award – UCSB History Associates fellowship for best graduate student paper on Cold War history, international history, or military history

2015-2016 – Graduate Humanities Research Assistant Fellowship, University of California-Santa Barbara

2014-2015 – Institute of Historical Research (IHR) Mellon Dissertation Fellowship

2014-2015 – University of California Center for New Racial Studies (UCCNRS) Dissertation Fellowship

2014-2015 – University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) Dissertation Fellowship (declined)

2014 – Humanities and Social Sciences Research Grant, University of California-Santa Barbara

2013-2014 – Graduate Opportunity Fellowship, University of California-Santa Barbara

2013 – Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship to conduct Burmese language training at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI), University of Wisconsin-Madison, Summer 2013

2009 - Honors Distinction for M.A. Dissertation at University College London, entitled "*How far does a close reading of a national newspaper such as The Times support the view that anti-slavery served to heal divisions over other issues in British society in the early 1830's?"*

FIELDS OF STUDY
The History of Modern Britain and the British Empire – Professor Erika Rappaport
Modern European History – Professor Adrienne Edgar
South and Southeast Asian History – Professor Mary Hancock
Colonialism and World History – Mhoze Chikowero

ABSTRACT

"A Burmese Wonderland": British World Mining and the Making of Colonial Burma

by

David J. Baillargeon

This dissertation, entitled *"A Burmese Wonderland": British World Mining and the Making of Colonial Burma*, focuses on the Burma Corporation, a transnational mining corporation founded by the future US President Herbert Hoover, whose operations were located in Burma's remote Northern Shan States. I argue that this company, which by the 1920s had become one of the largest industrial mining enterprises in the world, provides a unique vantage point to explore the complexity of Britain's Empire during the early twentieth century. Founded and managed by white foreigners from the United States, Canada, and Australia, and primarily staffed by migrant laborers from China and India, my dissertation asks how, over the course of three decades, an international commercial firm like the Burma Corporation was able to build a city on the edge of Britain's Empire and become an agent of the colonial state. Connected to Britain through a common racial and cultural heritage as well as a commitment to western models of political economy, I argue that foreign commercial agents and experts were crucial to Britain's colonial project in Burma, taking on the role of colonizer in areas where the state was weak. In doing so, my dissertation brings into question the character of colonial governance and the uniformity of the "British" Empire during this

period. It also shows how a supposedly British-operated mine in Burma became a symbol of imperial progressive civilization, obscuring the diverse racial, ethnic, and national actors who made the mine such a success.

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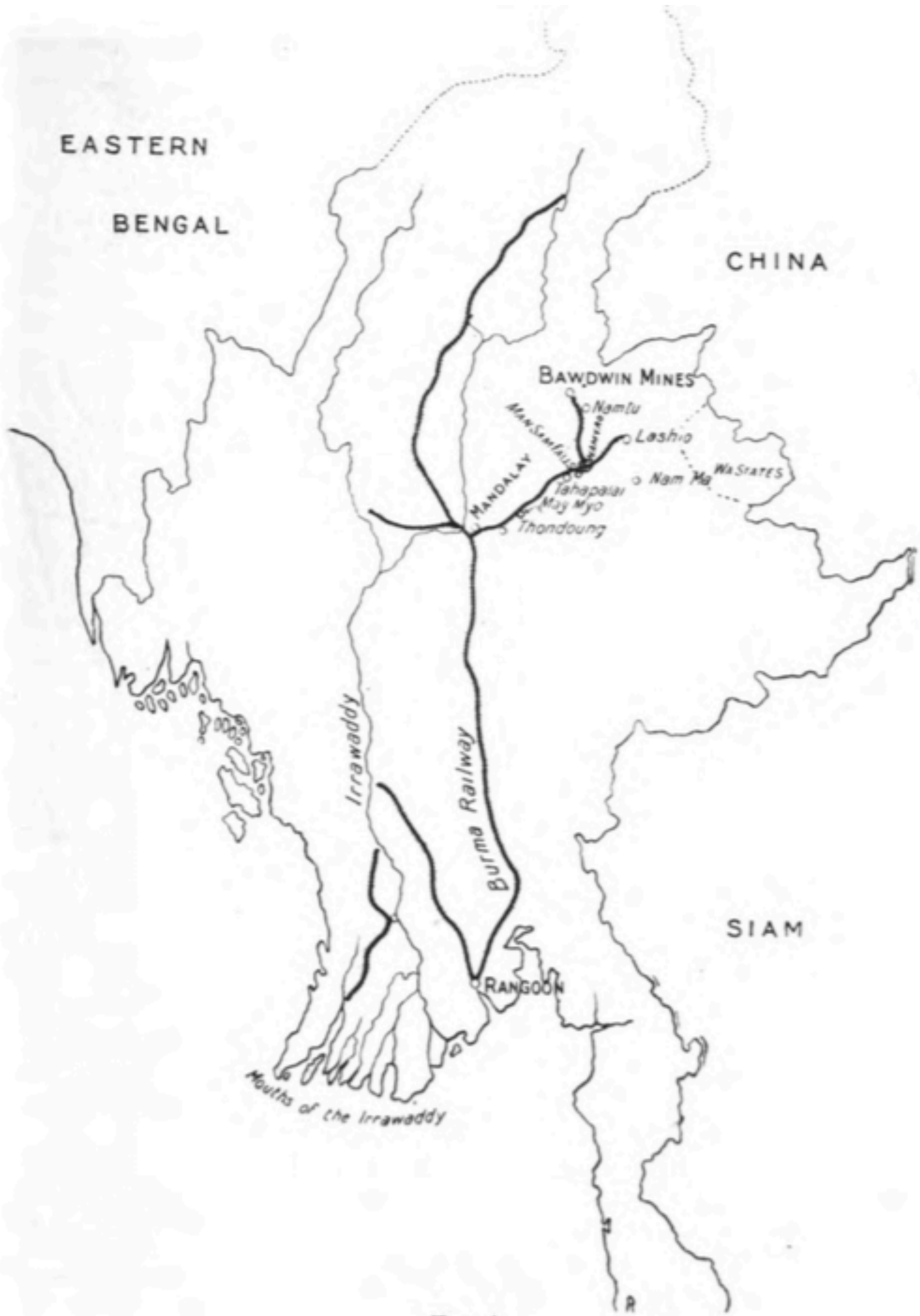

FIG. 4.
BURMA.
Scale—1 in. = 160 miles.

Figure 1. Map of Burma and the Bawdwin Mines

Introduction

This dissertation is about a place that, in the historical record, only barely exists. It is a story about how empire, capitalism, and governance became entangled over the late colonial period, and the ways in which a frontier location became a center of migration and export. It is the story of the capitalists who pushed forward development, the colonial officials who supported such expansion, as well as the thousands of laborers from South, Southeast, and East Asia who called the area home. It is the story of imperial men, global ideas, and local circumstances. This is the story of the Bawdwin mines in British Burma.

The Bawdwin mines are located in what during the colonial period was known as the Northern Shan States of British Burma. Incorporated as part of British India following the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886, the Northern Shan States was a loosely administered territory of separate states that the British ruled through the collaboration of local *Sawbwas* - or chiefs – during the colonial period. The mines were specifically situated within the state of Tawngpeng, home to a host of indigenous populations, including the Palaung and Shan ethnic groups. Although Chinese miners had occupied the site since as early as the fifteenth century, the mines were abandoned in the mid-nineteenth century and were largely unknown to British officials and businessmen following the annexation. This would change at the turn of the twentieth century. At this time, western capitalists – led by the engineer-turned-capitalist, Herbert Hoover –re-discovered the site at Bawdwin, ushering in a new era of western operations that gradually expanded over the late colonial period. By the 1920s, Bawdwin – owned and operated by the Burma Corporation - had become one of the largest industrial mining enterprises in the world, and its abundant silver-lead-zinc reserves were considered critical to British imperial security. As evidenced by Hoover's involvement in the enterprise, however, Bawdwin – as well as Namtu, the primary "city" servicing the area - was home to a diverse people from around the globe. In fact, and despite existing in "British Burma," the agents who financed, managed, and worked at the mines were often neither British nor Burmese. Founded and managed by men from places like the United States, Australia, and Canada, and primarily staffed by migrant labor from India, China, and Nepal, the mines were a heterogonous space of empire during the early twentieth century. They provide a critical lens through which to view the complexity of the British colonial project as well as the overlap between governance and capitalism at this time. This dissertation is the story of these agents.

Despite Bawdwin's significance to the economic success and security of Colonial Burma and the British Empire during the late colonial period, the mines have largely passed out of historical memory.[1] I believe this has occurred because of two reasons. First is the fragmented archival record. Unlike other major transnational mining firms from the period – such as Metallgesellschaft in Germany or Rio Tinto in Spain – there is no corporate archive or central repository for records related to the Burma Corporation.[2] Instead, the "archive" for

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[1] The Burma Corporation is rarely, if ever, mentioned in histories of Burma. For example, J.S. Furnivall, a former colonial official in Burma as well as the country's leading historian during the twentieth century, only briefly mentions the Corporation in his famous work of political economy, *Colonial Policy and Practice*. He wrongly notes that the company began its work in 1920. See J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (New York: New York University Press, 1948), 84. For one of the few studies that does examine the history of Bawdwin, albeit largely in reference to Herbert Hoover's role with the Burma Corporation, see George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer, 1874-1914* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), 412-425.
[2] The Metallgesellschaft and Rio Tinto archives are respectively located in Frankfurt, Germany and at the London Metropolitan Archives in London, England. Other significant mining sites and industrial companies from this period that also benefit from a central archival repository include, but are not limited to: materials related to Broken Hill at the

the company exists in fragments around the world, including in the United Kingdom, the United States, India, Australia, and Myanmar.[3] This uneven archival trail makes any study of the Burma Corporation difficult, particularly as records related to the mines are often buried in non-digitized, non-searchable collections, such as the *Rangoon Gazette* or the Proceedings records of the India Office at the British Library. Such an archival record, however, presents another dilemma. Because most materials related to the Burma Corporation are found in the colonial archive or the archives of western businessmen like Herbert Hoover, the stories of the non-elite agents at Bawdwin are difficult to find. This not only includes the engineers and experts who managed operations on the ground, but also the many thousands of workers whose labor made such a large operation possible.[4] In order to locate these voices, the historian is forced to "read against the grain" in the archive, piecing together fragments from colonial administrative documents, company records, and newspaper publications to craft a picture of how the mines operated during the early twentieth century.[5]

Outback Archives in the Broken Hill City Library in Western Australia, records related to the Anaconda mine Butte, Montana located in the Anaconda Collection at the American Heritage Center in Laramie, Wyoming, and the records of Tata Iron and Steel located at the Tata Central Archives in Maharashtra, India.

[3] This includes records held in the India Office Records collections at the British Library, the British National Archives at Kew, the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University, the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa, the Myanmar National Archives in Yangon, the National Archives of India in New Delhi, the University of Melbourne Archives, and the National Library of Australia in Canberra. For a study that interrogates the advantages and disadvantages of global history in view of the archive and the use of keyword-searchable online databases, see Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast," *American Historical Review* vol. 121 no. 2 (April 2016), 377-402.

[4] In lieu of using the racially-charged label of "non-white" or the problematic "native" or "indigenous" – considering very few of these workers were indigenous to the area of the mines – I will use the terms "unskilled" or "migrant" workers when discussing the thousands of laborers from South, Southeast, and East Asia in this dissertation.

[5] See Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For an excellent and wide

The second reason why I believe historians have not studied the Burma Corporation in a significant way is because its history does not fit neatly into older and newer historiographical narratives, questions, and boundaries. Like the archive for the project itself, the story of Bawdwin and Namtu is a global one. Although, as I argue in the dissertation, the company became more "British" and "Imperial" over the first three decades of operations, the mines – as well as the company town that was built around them – were a global colonial space that complicates many categories of historical analysis, including "colonizer," "colonized," "the nation," "the state," and the "corporation."[6] Through questioning these narratives, this dissertation takes a unique approach to studying Burma's history under colonial rule. Because many histories of Burma are focused around the legacies of empire in the "making" of the post-colonial nation-state of Myanmar, the story of Bawdwin – which did not retain its significance in the post-independence years - provides a very different glimpse into imperial state making and governance in Burma during the early twentieth century.[7] Even more importantly, however, is the fact that very few Burmese or Britons managed, worked at, or lived at the mines. While most histories of Burma are focused around either the ethnic Burman majority or the myriad indigenous ethnic groups who have called

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ranging discussion of the asymmetrical power dynamics present in the archive, see Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?," *The American Historical Review* vol. 117 no. 3 (June 2012), 772-793. For a history that deconstructs the colonial archive in reference to Burmese history, see Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

[6] We know, for example, that "empires" are global and diverse, but single colonies are often treated in isolation from such global currents. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[7] Some of the most important works that take this approach include Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael Charney, *A History of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitrii Aung-Thwin, *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformations* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

Burma home, the story of the Bawdwin mines - with its diverse workforce and primarily foreign population - presents a unique view of Burma in the early twentieth century.[8] It reveals how important multinational companies and workers were to the making of British Burma during the late colonial period.[9]

The history of Bawdwin and Namtu is significant for a variety of reasons. The story of the Burma Corporation provides an important lens through which to view the complexity of the British Empire and global capitalism during the modern period, as well as the ways in which the local, the provincial, the imperial, and the global all interacted at this time. Most importantly, however, the story of the mines needs to be told because of the relative silence about this region and the people who worked there. Although heritage-based projects have demonstrated the centrality of mining to the imagining of both a national and regional

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[8] A debate has emerged in recent years between scholars who assert the primacy of "Burman" history – or a history centered on Burma's largest ethnic population – and scholars more interested in the history of Burma's myriad ethnic minority communities. This debate became particularly marked following the publication of Michael and Maitrii Aung-Thwin's *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times* in 2012, which argues in favor of the former historical approach. For an overview of this controversy, see Jonathan Saha, "Book Review: A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformations," *South East Asia Research* vol. 22 no. 1 (March 2014), 151-154. For studies that focus less on the Burmese state and more directly on the history of ethnicity and ethnic politics in Burma, see Jane M. Ferguson, *Rocking in Shanland: Histories and Popular Culture Jams at the Thai-Burma Border* (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2008); James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a number of other recent studies that have situated Burma's history within a postcolonial perspective, focusing on notions of gender, race, and identity, see Chie Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011); Jonathan Saha, *Law, Disorder and the Colonial State: Corruption in Burma c. 1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

[9] For a study that focuses on British perspectives about Colonial Burma, see Stephen L. Keck, *British Burma in the New Century, 1895-1918* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

identity in places around the globe – such as, for example, Cornwall in England, Linares in Spain, or Broken Hill in Western Australia – the significance of Bawdwin and Namtu and the complicated questions it asks about nation, place, and identity have remained unstudied.[10] This project situates Bawdwin and Namtu in global history, while also incorporating the stories of the thousands of people who worked at, lived in, and perished at these mines.

The Local and The Global in Imperial History

In telling the story of the Bawdwin mines, this project contributes to a number of ongoing historiographical debates that pivot around questions related to space, place, and scale in historical writing.[11] Global history, in particular, has enjoyed a renaissance over the

[10] Mining "heritage" sites – which include museums, mine tours, and other public history initiatives – exist in a variety of locations around the globe. For studies that theorize and situate the significance of "heritage" sites in the national imagination, see John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (eds.), *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991); Wiendu Nuryanti, "Heritage and Postmodern Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* vol. 23 no. 2 (1996), 249-260. On the relationship between mining and tourism, see Michael Pretes, "Touring Mines and Mining Tourists," *Annals of Tourism Research* vol. 29 no. 2 (April 2002), 439-456; Natasha Vall, "Coal is Our Strife: Representing Mining Heritage in North East England," *Contemporary British History* vol. 32 no. 1 (2018), 101-120.

[11] For studies about space, place, and scale that have informed my own thinking about the subject, see Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1984); Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991); Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994); Richard White, "The Nationalization of Nature," *The Journal of American History* vol. 86 no. 3 (December 1999), 976-986; Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

past two decades.[12] Although scholars have long been attentive to global historical trends and transformations, a rising interest in theories about "globalization" within the social sciences – and the emergence of a new interdisciplinary field, global studies - has inspired fresh frameworks of analysis that take world history seriously.[13] This has included a renewed interest in comparative and transnational history, but even more significantly, the emergence of a profusion of large-scale, synthetic studies focused around the global movement of ideas, people, and commodities during the early modern and modern periods.[14] One recent trend, especially marked since the global recession of 2008, has involved a return to the economic and an increased focus on the role of global capitalism.[15] According to Sven Beckert in his

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[12] It has also inspired the writing of a litany of monographs, edited volumes, and essays about the contours of global history. See, for example, Maxine Berg (ed.), *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*: New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2014); Diego Olstein, *Thinking History Globally* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2014); Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
[13] On globalization and the discipline of history, see A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalisation in World History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002); Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era*. For a critique of globalization as a concept in historical analysis, see Frederick Cooper, "What is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian's Perspective," *African Affairs* vol. 100 no. 399 (April 2001), 189-213. See also the collection of essays by Felix Driver, Antoinette Burton, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Maxine Berg, and Iain A. Boal in *History Workshop Journal* vol. 64 no. 1 (Autumn 2007), 321-346.
[14] For a discussion of transnational history, see C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review* vol. 111 no. 5 (December 2006), 1441-1464. For a recent wide-ranging global comparative history, see Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c 800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For an example of large-scale synthetic global histories, see C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Jurgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). On global intellectual currents, see the essays in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (eds.), *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
[15] This approach has been particularly popular in the American historiography. See Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (London: Verso, 2012).

celebrated work, *Empire of Cotton*, the story of cotton "is also a story of the making and remaking of global capitalism and with it of the modern world."[16] Combining aspects of economic and political history alongside newer trends in social and cultural history, these studies – which some have labeled the "new history of capitalism" – have redefined how scholars study world history in the modern period.[17] Through their exploration of the relationship between political economy, culture, and globalization, as well as their focus on transnational and global connectivity, these works have reoriented the scale of historical analysis back to the global. In doing so, they have also introduced new questions about the role and theorizing of space and place in historical writing.[18]

This reorientation around the "global" over the last decade, however, has permeated many fields of history. This has certainly been the case in modern British and British imperial history.[19] While any study that tackles issues such as modernity or capitalism on a global scale has to, by necessity, grapple with the role of empire, the British imperial historiography has evolved to incorporate these larger-scale trends and narratives in an effort

[16] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), xi.

[17] For a discussion of this concept, see "Interchange: The History of Capitalism," *Journal of American History* vol. 101 no. 2 (September 2014), 503-536; Kenneth Lipartito, "Reassembling the Economic: New Departures in Historical Materialism," *The American Historical Review* vol. 121 no. 1 (February 2016), 101-139. For a study that examines the relationship between global capitalism, the British Empire, and consumer culture, see Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[18] For a study explicit about this point, see Antoinette Burton, "Not Even Remotely Global? Method and Scale in World History," *History Workshop Journal* vol. 64. no. 1 (Autumn 2007), 323-328.

[19] This has included studies that have recast domestic histories utilizing a global lens. See, for example, Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

to reexamine the nature and scale of Britain's global impact during the modern period.[20] In doing so, however, these scholars have utilized a variety of approaches. John Darwin, for example, has fused elements from a variety of older historiographical theories – such as those famously proposed by both Gallagher and Robinson and Cain and Hopkins – to reveal how a "British World-System" emerged and collapsed over the last two centuries.[21] Although Darwin's work – as well as that of some other British imperial historians - is rooted more firmly in political and economic history, the last two decades have also seen a proliferation of studies focused on the connections that bound the colonies, the metropole, and the wider world into a common community during the modern period from a social and cultural angle. From the litany of studies focused on the "British World" or "Greater Britain" to James Belich's theorizing of the "Anglo-World," these histories have demonstrated the strong relationships that existed between "British" or "Anglo" populations around the globe, as well as the ways that race, gender, and class informed the broader imperial project in the white settler colonies.[22]

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[20] For an overview of this historiography, see Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?," *The American Historical Review*; Simon J. Potter and Jonathan Saha, "Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* vol. 16 no. 1 (Spring 2015). For histories that examine the relationship between empire and global history, see John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise & Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 2007); Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empire's in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[21] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[22] This work initially emerged out of Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich,'s edited volume, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture, and Identity* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003). For a history of British World networks, see Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a history that explores institutional links within the British World, see Simon Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

Studies focusing on these global networks – whether economic, intellectual, social, or cultural – have demonstrated the complex and interconnected nature of life in the modern world, but they also reveal the instability of borders and boundaries. The notion of the nation-state, in particular, has undergone significant revision over the past few decades.[23] Building on the work of the Annales school of history from the early to mid-twentieth century, historians in a number of fields have reconsidered the nature of borders as historical markers of difference, instead focusing on the connections established between and across geographic regions over time.[24] In doing so, and eschewing the old nation-state or "area studies" model of historical examination, these historians have centered their work on different spaces of analysis.[25] This has included new histories and sub-fields focusing on the

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2003); Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850-1939* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2013). On "Greater Britain," see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). For a global account of settler communities and a theorizing of the "Anglo-World," see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also, Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

23 On the role of the nation-state in British imperial history, see Antoinette M. Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). See also Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

24 Although many scholars associated with the Annales school were interested in the role of geography and territoriality in history, particularly Lucien Febvre, the most influential example of this approach can be found in Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). For a history of the Annales School, see Andre Burguiere, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

25 Or, as Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen F. Siu, and Peter C. Perdue have recently argued in relation to area studies, "instead of viewing regions, cultures, and peoples as physically bounded units occupying continents and polities, we need to focus on multilayered, interactive processes that embrace both land and sea routes and incorporate political dynamics of empires, nation-states, neoliberal markets, and postsocialist global engagements at relevant historical junctures." See Peter C. Perdue, Helen F. Siu, and Eric Tagliacozzo, "Introduction:

"Indian Ocean World," the "Atlantic World," and the "Pacific World," as well as studies that explore how environmental or geographic features – such as mountains or plains – affect historical change.[26] These "connected histories" de-center the nation-state to reveal the entangled worlds that people and agents moved through during the early modern and modern periods, as well as the constructed and often fluid nature of borders and boundaries.[27]

The emergence of macro-level global histories has transformed how historians consider scale in historical analysis, but not all global histories have taken such a broad view.[28] Alongside these sweeping studies has arisen a renewed interest in local and microhistory, a subject that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s in Italy but that took on a

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Structuring Moments in Asian Connections," in *Asia Inside Out: Changing Times* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 6.

[26] Many histories have been written about and within these sub-fields. For pieces that have informed my own thinking about the Indian Ocean World, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Sunil S. Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015). For an overview of the "Atlantic World" historiography, see Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *The American Historical Review* vol. 111 no. 3 (June 2006), 741-757. On the "Pacific World," see Matt K. Matsuda, "The Pacific," *The American Historical Review* vol. 111 no. 3 (June 2006), 758-780; David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For studies that examine the role of geographical features as agents of social change – in this case, plains, mountains, and glaciers, respectively – see Pekka Hamalainen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *Journal of American History* vol. 90 no. 3 (December 2003), 833-862; Mark Carey, *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed.*

[27] On "Connected Histories," see Sanjay Subrahmanyan, "Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 31 no. 3 (July 1997), 735-762.

[28] One collection of essays explicitly concerned with the interaction between the global and local can be found in A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Global History: Interactions Between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

new life with the cultural turn in the 1980s and 1990s.[29] At this time, and following the lead of feminist scholars and academics associated with the Subaltern School, historians began to avoid the grand political and economic narratives of the older historiography in favor of an approach grounded in individual experience and the local.[30] This work inspired a paradigm shift in historical analysis. The new cultural history – and by extension, the so-called "new history of imperialism" – brought to the fore questions related to race, gender, and class in their studies, focusing on agents of history – i.e. the "subaltern" – whose voices had been hidden or written out of the historical record.[31] The local was critical to such an analysis. In focusing on the construction of identity and difference as well as the relationship between knowledge and power, these histories revealed how a diverse body of agents, ideas, and

[29] On the Italian microhistorians , see Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," *California Italian Studies* vol. 2 no. 1 (2011). For an early examination of local history in the British context, and a study that became immensely influential across historiographical boundaries, see E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

[30] For an excellent overview of the Subaltern movement that includes essays from both its advocates and critics, see Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000). For two more recent studies that provide expert insight into the relationship between the archive and subaltern history, see Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[31] On the "new imperial history," see Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Postcolonial Theory," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* vol. 24 no. 3 (1996), 345-363; Richard Price, "One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture," *Journal of British Studies* vol. 45 no. 3 (July 2006), 602-627; Stephen Howe (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009). For examples of this literature, see Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003). See also the essays in Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

institutions informed individual experience, whether in the empire or at home.[32] In doing so, they demonstrated how the local – and often the individual – mattered as a subject of history.

The work of cultural historians remains important in the broader historiography, but its focus has shifted in some ways over the past decade. It has, in a sense, become more "global." While earlier cultural histories often used the nation-state or, as in the area studies, a colony or region (i.e. "South Asia") as their sites of analysis, recent work has moved beyond these boundaries to examine the relationship between the local and the global across historical time.[33] Biography, in particular, has been a popular method to tell such stories.[34] From studies of families to those of individual agents, historians have demonstrated how, in the words of Linda Colley, ordinary people could be "informed and tormented by changes that were viewed at the time as transnational, and transcontinental, and even as pan-global, to an unprecedented degree."[35] Uncovering how the global informed and cut through individual lives, however, is only one way historians have treated these issues.[36] According to John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "global history can and should do more than lead us towards the study of

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[32] In their consideration of knowledge and power, these studies were deeply indebted to the work of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said. For a discussion of their influence, see Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?"
[33] See, for example, the essays in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds.), *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
[34] See, for example, David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For a non-British example, see Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
[35] Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), xxxii.
[36] Another is the "prosopographical" approach crafted and utilized in Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*.

connected worlds." In fact, a "close study of a global life drags us back necessarily to a deep, local history," or in other words, a "secret history" that is particular to a specific time and place. The local, in short, matters on its own terms. In order to tell these stories, Ghobrial advocates for a "global microhistory," or an approach that scrutinizes both the global and the local to reveal the complex web of subjective interactions that construct everyday experience. The "micro" – or the local, the personal, and the confessional – is critical to understanding any story of global lives, informing the ways in which people moved through space and time as well as the choices they may have made along the way.[37] As Michel Laguerre has noted, "local history *is* global history."[38] It's in the local that the global is experienced and given meaning, and conversely, where it most often fails, is reimagined, and transformed. This dissertation is the story of those reimaginings.

A Place-Based Global History

To tell the story of the Bawdwin mines and make sense of the complex history it reveals about the entanglement between empire, capitalism, and governance during the late colonial period, this dissertation utilizes a "placed-based" global historical approach. Through situating a study of empire in one particular place, I argue that historians can better understand how the colonial project and notions of colonial power could emerge, expand, and breakdown in the local setting over time. The local, I argue, is critical to our understanding of empire during the modern period. It allows us to better view how

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[37] John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory," *Past & Present* vol. 222 no. 1 (February 2014), 59.
[38] Emphasis added. See Michel S. Laguerre, *The Global Ethnopolis: Chinatown, Japantown, and Manilatown in American Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 70.

colonialism operated on the ground, as well as the ways in which events, people, and ideas could transform or be transformed by such a project. In doing so, this study demonstrates the significance of space and place in the making of the colonial project. While the center of analysis in this dissertation is the Bawdwin mine – beginning with the formation of the mineral deposit millions of years ago and ending with the nationalization of the mines in the post-colonial years – the project takes into account changes occurring at a number of different scales, including the provincial, the imperial, and the global level. Events and changes in places like Britain, India, China, Australia, the United States, and Europe all shaped the way that Bawdwin developed over the early twentieth century. The local, however, also mattered to how Bawdwin developed during this period: the global did not simply map onto life at the mines. Owing to Bawdwin's unique location in the Northern Shan States, as well as the distinctive conditions of colonial rule and administration in Burma, the mines developed in a particular way that made it different from other mining locations – as well as other colonial locations - around the globe. This included the way it was organized, the kinds of problems that the financiers, experts, and laborers associated with the mines faced, and perhaps most significantly, the types of people who decided to migrate to the region. I argue that it's only through a deep study of these different scales and their interactions that one can understand the story of Bawdwin: its development, its diverse population, and its significance to modern history. What follows is a case study in this approach.

In taking a place-based global historical approach, this dissertation borrows from a variety of theoretical and historiographical fields, including those of global, local, and imperial history. Following the work of the "new history of capitalism" and the recent globally oriented British imperial history, this dissertation examines how commodities, people, and ideas circulated around the world during the modern period, as well as the lasting connections established between and across boundaries at this time.[39] The project also contributes to the historiography of migration. While much recent work in British imperial history has focused on migration across the British or Anglo World as well as the Indian Ocean World, scholars have paid less attention to the scale and significance of inland migration, particularly in the nexus between South, Southeast, and East Asia.[40] Likewise, and although British World historians have revealed the important linkages between Britain and its settler colonies, less work has examined how those same connections and networks established in the settler empire affected life in the formal empire.[41] This project traces those connections across time, space, and empires to expose the expansiveness of the colonial project, along with ties that bound the metropole, the settler colonies, and the empire into a common network during the modern period.

A focus on the global and imperial networks that linked Bawdwin with the wider world demonstrates the interconnectedness of this site within broader global historical processes, but this dissertation also establishes the importance of the local and the micro as agents of change. Following the lead of historians such as Ghobrial, I argue that local conditions in the environs around Bawdwin, in the Northern Shan States, and Burma more

[39] See notes 16 and 19.
[40] See note 21 for examples of the "British World" literature. For an exception to this focus and for a study that examines inland migration in Asia, see Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2011).
[41] For an exception to this focus, see Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy (eds.), *Decentering Empire: Britain, India, and the Transcolonial World* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2006).

generally all influenced the way the mines developed during the early twentieth century.[42] In taking a place-based approach, however, this study differs in some ways from the work of other "global microhistories" and their emphasis on the biographical. Through centering this story on a particular piece of land, this dissertation contextualizes the history of the mines through a variety of historiographical lenses, including the environmental, the social, the cultural, the economic, and the political. This framework is deeply indebted to work in environmental history.[43] As Matthew Klingle has observed, "history is inseparable from place." Place is the "stuff of memories" and signifies "our sense of home," but in a more theoretical sense, it's also "a spot on a map, or perhaps territory, demarcated formally or informally and imbued with perceptions, some subtle and intangible, others seemingly obvious." Place, in short, is a social construct.[44] Just as the "nation" or the "global" are categories whose imaginings have shifted over time, so too are the ways in which a "spot on a map" is considered and given meaning.[45]

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[42] John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory."

[43] Alongside the studies referenced in note 24, additional environmental histories that have influenced my thinking on this issue include William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991); Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[44] Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 4. For other place-based urban histories that have influenced my thinking, see Brenda S.A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003); Prashant Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890-1920* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007); Jayde Lin Roberts, *Mapping Chinese Rangoon: Place and Nation Among the Sino-Burmese* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).

[45] Many scholars have written about and theorized the idea that the "nation" is a historical construct. For some of the more influential histories of this concept, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford:

A place, though, is also an assemblage.[46] As I argue in this dissertation, the "place" of Bawdwin was constantly in the making from the fifteenth century through the post-colonial years, shifting and changing alongside the world around it. Borrowing the language of post-colonial and borderlands theorists, hybridity defined Bawdwin.[47] Although located in "British Burma," the mines contained a heterogonous population hailing from across the globe, all of whom instilled their own meanings on this place through their cross-cultural interactions. Such hybridity, however, was not limited to the cultural and social sphere. As I argue in the dissertation, the mines also represented a hybrid political and institutional space

Stanford University Press, 1976); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Ronald Grigor Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations," *Journal of Modern History* vol. 73 no. 4 (December 2001), 862-896. See also the essays in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[46] For a theorizing of "assemblage," see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier, *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005). See also Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[47] For an overview of borderlands theory, see Pekka Hamalainen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *The Journal of American History* vol. 98 no. 2 (September 2011), 338-361. For works that have influenced my own thinking "on borderlands," see James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins*: *Slavery, Kinship and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Thomas Sizgorich, "Narrative and Community in Islamic Late Antiquity," *Past & Present* vol. 185 no. 1 (November 2004), 9-42; Willem van Schendel, *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (London: Anthem Press, 2005); Charles Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?," *The American Historical Review* vol. 112 no. 3 (June 2007), 787-799; Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008); James F. Brooks, *Mesa of Sorrows: A History of the Awat'ovi Massacre* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016). On hybridity, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

during the early twentieth century.[48] I argue that the story of the Burma Corporation reveals how, in certain parts of the empire, the colonial state required the assistance of non-state agents to consolidate power over its subjects. While on the surface it may appear that the company acted like a "state within a state," I instead argue that the Burma Corporation, in a long process that evolved over the early twentieth century, became an extra-governmental organization, acting not in place of but in concert with the British colonial administration in the Northern Shan States.[49] This relationship reveals how complicated state making was in the empire, demonstrating not only how weak the British colonial state could be but also how adaptable it was.[50] This story also establishes the growing significance of the transnational corporation during the interwar years, as well as how changes in the global economy at the time affected the relationship between colonialism, capitalism, and power on the ground.[51]

The story of the Bawdwin mines, I argue, reveals much about the nature of the British Empire during the modern period. It not only shows how global and imperial agents and

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[48] For studies that have influenced my thinking about hybridity and the "making" of the state, see Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, *The State as Cultural Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Patrick Joyce and Chandra Mukerji, "The State of Things: State History and Theory Reconfigured," *Theory and Society*, vol. 46 no. 1 (May 2017), 1-19. For a much older study about this idea, see Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908).
[49] On the idea of a corporate state, see Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Steven Press, *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).
[50] On the adaptability of the state, see Patrick Joyce and Chandra Mukerji, "The State of Things: State History and Theory Reconfigured."
[51] On the corporation during these years, see Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from the Colonial Era to 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); Mira Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974). For a more recent history that has examined the relationship between the corporation, American business interests, and the British Empire, see Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*.

events shaped the development of one of British India's more remote locations, but it also situates such changes in the particularities of the local. In doing so, I argue that a consideration of scale is critical to our understanding of empire. In order to understand how people, goods, and ideas circulated around the globe in the late colonial period as well as how colonial policy actually operated on the ground, the historian must take into account how such forces were embedded, reinforced, and reimagined in the local setting. As Richard White has observed, "the social space" of different scales "focuses attention on a set of relationships between people and things": "each scale reveals some things while masking others."[52] The history of Bawdwin embodies this. When approached through particular viewpoints – whether through the absentee financiers whose fame and fortunes were made or unmade at the mines, the foreign engineers who managed the site, or the thousands of laborers who worked there – the story of Bawdwin can emphasize particular things: the history of global capitalism, the history of economic development and expertise, the history of migration, the history of race and ethnicity, and so on.[53] When viewed as an assemblage, however, the mines reveal much more. They show just how complex the empire was during the early twentieth century, as well as the ways in which the global, the imperial, and the local interacted and transformed one another in the process. This dissertation is the story of that transformation.

Chapter Summaries

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[52] Richard White, "The Nationalization of Nature," 978.

[53] On the importance of narrative, see William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* vol. 78 no. 4 (March 1992), 1347-1376. For a study that interrogates multiple narratives and viewpoints in historical perspective, see Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*.

In telling this complex story about the history of Bawdwin and the Burma Corporation, the dissertation is divided into five body chapters and a short epilogue. Chapter One examines how British officials in London, India, and Burma debated the question of economic development in the colony during the late nineteenth century. In particular, the chapter focuses on debates surrounding railway construction and budgets in the colony, and how officials crafted a vision of Burma's economic and political future in response to these conversations. The chapter unpacks how and why Burma was administered "on the cheap," and the impact this would have on notions of governance and economic development during the twentieth century. This chapter provides critical context for later chapters, introducing and situating the political economy of British Burma within larger questions of imperial governance.

Chapter Two introduces the history of mining and economies of extraction. In particular, the chapter details the pre-colonial history of Bawdwin and Namtu, the site in which the mining deposit is located. The first half of the chapter takes an environmental approach to exploring the early history of the mine and its location geographically in the colony. The second half of the chapter then outlines the history of the mines under Shan and then Chinese occupation, the latter of which began in the fifteenth century. It argues that the mines operated akin to a company town long before the arrival of Herbert Hoover and western businessmen in the twentieth century. It highlights the regions centrality in the history of migration and South and East Asian interactions in this region of the world, while also decentering European narratives about Bawdwin and Namtu to demonstrate the long, complex history of the mining site.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five focus on life at Bawdwin and Namtu under western ownership in the early twentieth century. Chapter Three examines the early history of the Burma Corporation, roughly between 1900 and the beginning of the First World War. Thematically, it focuses on the network of financiers – such as Herbert Hoover, R. Tilden Smith, and Francis Govett – who pushed forward expansion at the mines as well as their struggles to develop the property. Chapter Four then examines development at Bawdwin and Namtu between 1914 and 1922, concentrating specifically on migration at the site. While the previous chapter examines the absentee business agents who financed the operations, this chapter zooms in to the mining site itself to tell the story of the many people who called the area home during the early twentieth century. In the first half of the chapter, I focus on foreign experts and engineers who managed the property, while in the second half, I discuss the thousands of workers who traveled to the mines from India, Nepal, and China. This chapter centers on a number of historiographical questions regarding migration and global history, including British World history, settler colonialism, the history of race and ethnicity, and the history of overland migration between South, Southeast, and East Asia.

Chapter Five details the period between 1923 and 1935 at Bawdwin and Namtu, focusing specifically on governance in the region. The first part of the chapter reveals the complicated relationship enjoyed between the company and the colonial state during the mines early years, and how this connection evolved over the first three decades of operations. It ends by discussing a 1934 border dispute between Britain and China that ended in violence, which was caused by a Burma Corporation expedition to the area to find additional mineral resource deposits. This chapter engages in recent historiographical and theoretical debates about the state, sovereignty, and governmentality, demonstrating how and why the corporation became an agent of the British colonial state during the early twentieth century. It also returns to some of the themes discussed in the second chapter about this location as a site of conflict and interaction between China and India. The dissertation then concludes with a short epilogue about the history of the mines after 1935, with an emphasis on the destruction of the mining operations during World War Two and their subsequent nationalization under Ne Win in the 1960s.

Chapter One: Occidental or Oriental: Business and Development in British Burma, 1870-1900

Introduction

On June 5th, 1930, the fiftieth annual Burma Dinner was held at the stylish Connaught Rooms in central London. Sir Robert Horne, a well-known Scottish businessman and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, presided over the event and began festivities with the yearly "prosperity to Burma" toast and speech. Horne touched on the many issues confronting Burma in 1930: the possibility of Burma's separation from India, the stagnation of trade due to the global economic depression, and the risk of democracy in the colonies. Commerce, though, was Horne's particular emphasis. After asserting that Burma's exceptional growth in the 1920s had balanced the current depression, Horne argued that "India has been transformed by British people and British capital," and that "we can talk of our exploitation of India with pride." Horne's pride was likely unsurprising for those members of the Burma community assembled in London. A Member of Parliament for Glasgow Hillhead since 1918, Horne was associated with Burma not through his political connections but through his commercial interests. Horne was, in fact, chairman of the Burma Corporation, one of the largest industrial mining operations in the globe, or as W.T. Howison of Steel Brothers and Company would label it in his reply, "one of the romances not only of Burma, but of the whole mining world." Horne thought that British commerce did not just line the pockets of the "bloated representatives of the people who have exploited Burma." Instead, the MP thought that commerce was crucial to the social, cultural, and moral development of the colony, asking "where would India have been but for British capital to develop her vast resources and set on foot her different schemes?” For Horne, commerce was crucial to good government in the colonies. And India, due to its success, was Britain’s “greatest monument” to those principles.[1]

Horne’s comments allude to the overlap between government and business in early twentieth century Burma and India, a point likely not lost on the other attendees of the Burma Dinner. The Burma Dinner itself was indicative of the entanglement between government and business during the colonial period. Founded in the 1870s by businessmen Edward Garnet Man and John Halliday and celebrated every July in London, the Burma Dinner symbolized the coming together of all colonial agents in British Burma, whether official, military, or religious. The 1930 dinner may have seen two commercial magnates - Robert Horne and W.T. Howison - take center stage, but the average year included speeches from a veritable who’s who of Burma expatriates from across the colonies history. In 1927, for instance, the *Rangoon Gazette* reported that over 250 people attended the Burma Dinner. That list included the new Governor Sir Charles Innes, former Governors Reginald Craddock, Sir Harvey Adamson, and Sir Hugh Barnes, as well as myriad representatives from the railway department, the army, the police, and the many large commercial firms operating in Burma, to name just a few. The former head of the Church of England in Burma, Archdeacon Cory, was also on hand, and quipped that “I suppose I must have married half the people in this room.” For the *Rangoon Gazette*, Cory’s “pardonable exaggeration” was more indicative of how those present at the dinner were “getting on” in years, as the

[1] *Rangoon Gazette*, 16 June 1930.

Archdeacon left during the first year of World War One. But after serving twenty years in the country, Cory had certainly presided over his fair share of weddings.[2]

The Burma Dinner provides a glimpse into the complex community of colonial agents that existed in British Burma, as well as the porous boundaries of the "state" during the colonial period.[3] Every year, agents from across the Burmese colonial hierarchy came together in Britain as members of a common community, united in their shared experiences and vision of the future. Agents of business, government, and religion were all represented in London, their connections established in the "Prosperity to Burma" toast that began every dinner. But while the speeches of Horne and Cory offer an indication as to how the Burma community had grown over the colonial period, this network was not merely created during the 1920s. Instead, this community was established during the nineteenth century as British forces gradually occupied and annexed Burma. These networks, which at the Burma Dinner were largely symbolic, were crucial to the creation and maintenance of order in the colony, where colonial budgets were often insufficient to properly develop the country. Burma, at the edge of the British Empire and officially a province within the Government of India, was considered a "backwater" in the greater imperial imagination, forcing the local government to lean on non-officials to finance and manage schemes to improve the colony.[4] This may have been normal by the time Robert Horne, chairman of the Burma Corporation, spoke in

[2] *Rangoon Gazette*, 4 July 1927.
[3] The colonial "dinner" has received little historiographical attention, despite its prevalence and significance during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. For a study that has examined one other dinner – the Assam Dinner – see, Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 222-224.
[4] This vision of Colonial Burma as a "backwater" was immortalized in George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1934).

1930, but in Burma, was indicative of a long conversation and collaboration between officials and non-officials in Burma.

In order to understand how the Burma Corporation became one of the "romances" of the mining world during the 1920s and 1930s, this chapter will go backwards in time to look at how officials and non-officials in Burma were fashioned into a common community during the late nineteenth century and how a unique but diverse colonial lobby in Burma emerged that aimed to push forward economic development at all costs. Although the Burma Corporation would not be established until after the turn of the twentieth century, I argue that these earlier developments were critical for allowing even the possibility of large-scale, industrial mining in the decades to come. Because development required both capital and labor in large doses, something the colonial state – saddled with a global depression and tight budgets - struggled to provide, colonial officials were forced to rely on private individuals and companies to fulfill their vision of development, a precedent set well before the Corporation was ever founded.[5] In doing so, this chapter will first zoom out to examine how explorers and officials visiting Burma saw the economic potential of the country during the nineteenth century, as well as how the colony developed over the period. The chapter will then examine a particular case study that was crucial to the economic development of Burma during the pre-annexation years: the expansion of a Burmese railway system. It was in the fierce debates around railway development between the 1870s and 1890s, I argue, that a vision of Burma's future was established, as well as the role of the British state in that future. A dialogue that contrasted the limitations of the colonial state with the benefices of private enterprise emerged during these years, which had a lasting impact on the expansion of

[5] On the global depression of the late nineteenth century, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 34-55.

economic interests in the region as well as the types of people who could sponsor development. The expansion of a railway system was critical to the fashioning of a new, "British" Burma, as well as the eventual emergence of one of the largest silver and zinc mines in the globe.

Occidental vs. Oriental

In March 1879, *The Daily News*, one of Britain's leading daily newspapers, published a series of articles entitled "Journeying in Burmah."[6] Written by special correspondent Archibald Forbes, perhaps Britain's most celebrated war correspondent at the time, the articles provide a narrative of Forbes' travels in Burma, where he became the first journalist to meet the newly crowned Burmese monarch, King Thebaw. Ostensibly similar to any travel account about Burma published during the nineteenth century, Forbes' articles were unique in that they were published at the same time, but written previous to, when Thebaw was rumored to have massacred dozens of family members and royal advisors at his palace in Mandalay. Forbes, who had visited the King in early February, was on his way elsewhere in the empire by the time word of the massacres reached Rangoon or London.[7] But by this time,

[6] There were five articles published in total, on the 25th of February, 20th of March, 22nd of March, 24th of March, and 25th of March in 1879. Forbes also published an article about Burma for *The Nineteenth Century*, Britain's premier monthly journal about world politics. See Archibald Forbes, "The Political Situation in Burmah," *The Nineteenth Century* (April 1879), 740-754.

[7] It should be noted that Forbes was a well-travelled man and no stranger to risk. During the 1870s, Forbes, in his capacity as a war correspondent, served alongside soldiers in Spain, Sudan, the Balkans, and Afghanistan. In 1880, while with Lord Chelmsford in South Africa during the Zulu War, Forbes famously rode nearly 300 miles on horseback in under three days to report the news of a British victory at Ulundi, beating the official dispatch rider. Roger T. Stearn, "Forbes, Archibald (1838–1900)," *Oxford Dictionary of National*

the narrative of Thebaw as a drunken, murderous despot was global news. *Reynold's Newspaper* reported that "over in Burmah another little pestilent monarch is gorging himself in blood in the approved fashion."[8] For *The Friend of India and Statesman*, Thebaw was "a bloodthirsty young savage" who occupied himself with "cock-fighting, elephant fights, and drinking."[9] Overnight, Thebaw became the embodiment of the Oriental despot, harkening back to the days of the Black Hole of Calcutta and the exploits of Lord Clive.[10] Forbes' narrative, which represented Thebaw as a promising young leader who held potential for British interests, became outdated even before publication, eclipsed by a more sensationalist account that covered the front pages of newspapers across Britain and that placed Burma and Britain on a collision course. Barely averted in 1879, war would arrive within the next six years.

Forbes' articles offer a special glimpse into Burma in the years preceding annexation. When Forbes visited Burma in 1879, the country was divided between Upper and Lower Burma. The British, following two military victories over the Burmese king in the 1820s and 1850s, ruled Lower Burma (also known as "British Burma"), which contained the countries emerging rice economy as well as the capital and port city of Rangoon. King Thebaw ruled the independent, sovereign nation of Upper Burma (also known as the "Kingdom of Ava," or more simply, "Burma") with its capital at Mandalay. In 1878, shortly before Forbes arrived in Mandalay, Thebaw had succeeded his father, King Mindon, who had ruled Burma since

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Biography (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, 2010) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9815, accessed 10 Nov 2015].

[8] *Reynold's Newspaper*, 2 March 1879.

[9] *Friend of India and Statesman*, 28 March 1879.

[10] Thomas Babington Macaulay, the historian and public official, most famously popularized these stories during the nineteenth century. See Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

the second Anglo-Burmese War of the 1850s.[11] Mindon, remembered as a great modernizer of Burma's political institutions and economy, had long enjoyed a tepid relationship with British officials, with diplomatic relations fluctuating in mood over the course of the mid-nineteenth century.[12] By the time Thebaw arrived on the throne, relations between Burma and Britain had soured. In 1875, following a dispute between British officials – led by Sir Robert Forsythe – and King Mindon over the Karenni States, the British Indian Government informed the Burmese Court that British agents, including the Resident in Mandalay, would no longer remove their shoes when in the presence of the King. Mindon, who thought that a concession to the British over the "shoe question" (as it would become called) would destroy his legitimacy, refused Forsythe's ultimatum and ended all official diplomatic relations between the two nations.[13] This policy would remain active until 1885, when British forces captured Mandalay, exiled the King to India, and incorporated the whole of Burma into the British Empire.[14]

Forbes' articles for *The Daily News* are fascinating not only for their timing, having been written in the short window of time between Thebaw's accession to the throne and the

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[11] For an in-depth account of Mindon's death and the complex reasons for Thibaw's succession to the throne, see James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman (eds.), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and Shan States*, vol. 1 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1900), 78-96.
[12] Mindon's role as a modernizer has been most fully explored in Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 104-129.
[13] The British Agent remained in Mandalay but no longer met with the King and was subject to many restrictions. Ibid. 140-142. For a more in-depth study of the "shoe question," see Charles Lee Keeton, *King Thebaw and the Ecological Rape of Burma: The Political and Commercial Struggle Between British India and French Indo-China in Burma, 1878-1886* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1974).
[14] The fullest treatment of the events leading up to the annexation can be found in A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Pagoda War: Lord Dufferin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Ava 1885-6* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972). For a history of these events from a contemporary of the period, see also Scott and Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and Shan States*, vol. 1, 97-115.

massacres in Mandalay, but also because of their comparative lens. Beginning in British India, passing through British Burma, and finishing in independent Burma, Forbes' narrative offers insights into how British voyeurs saw this region of the world during the 1870s, as well as how Upper Burma, under the rule of a sovereign King, was considered alongside British-controlled Lower Burma. Embedded within a rich prose that played off of Forbes' vast knowledge of colonial history and literature, the articles demonstrate how outsiders saw these contrasts even before Thebaw's atrocities. According to Forbes, "if we judge of the progress of a commercial place by the fair criterion of business results," then Rangoon "may hold its head up against many of the typical American cities." Despite having no commerce "worthy of the name" in 1852 when British forces conquered Lower Burma, Rangoon had become an imperial success story, with its ever-increasing imports and exports, public works, education, gaols, police, post-offices, law courts, and hospitals. Far from being a burden on the Indian treasury, Lower Burma was not only self-supporting but also provided a surplus to imperial coffers. In the previous year, Forbes noted, Burma had paid for all of its public programs while contributing a surplus of 860,000 lakhs of rupees to the imperial treasury. Yet for Forbes, "these figures cannot be truly appreciated unless they be read alongside the obvious, undeniable, and acknowledged prosperity and contentment of the native population."[15]

The prosperity and good cheer of Lower Burma and its inhabitants was contrasted sharply with what Forbes saw in Upper Burma. Upon leaving Thayetmyo, "the very outside edge of civilization," on his river voyage north to Mandalay, Forbes noticed that "the

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[15] *The Daily News*, 25 February 1879.

character of the country and the aspect of the people began to indicate a deterioration," which "continued and indeed was intensified" until the boat reached Mandalay. Forbes related that:

> The fertility of the soil is the same in Native as in British Burmah. The fat, alluvial loam that has only to be tickled with a hoe to laugh with a harvest is equally deep; but beyond the British confines the patches of tillage are few and far between. The villages become rarer; jungle closes in on either side down to the water's edge for miles; at the halting places there are few signs of commercial or agricultural activity. The people are swarthier, less vivacious, less plump. Their houses are more squalid, and their circumstances to the most cursory observer palpably worse. The text of misgovernment is writ large over the face of the whole country when once the British frontier is passed, and the frank independence of the native inhabitants – to me the most pleasing feature of British Burmah – gives places to a sullunness broken by fitful starts of forced merriment.[16]

For Forbes, Upper Burma was a backwards and dark land, a nightmare in comparison to the paradise of British controlled Lower Burma. Misgovernment, it was thought, had led to the mismanagement of Upper Burma's natural resources, and because of that, to the poverty and unhappiness of its people. Despotism was the ruling ideology in Upper Burma, a fact made clear even before Forbes made his way to the palace at Mandalay and met King Thebaw. The massacres that would occur only a few weeks later were in some ways inevitable, written in the faces of Upper Burma's occupants and in the emptiness of the its land.[17]

The contrasts that Forbes formulated in his travels to Burma reveal how ideas about economic development colored the way that Britons saw the world in the late nineteenth century. Historians have conceived of development in broad terms, but as Frederick Cooper

[16] *The Daily News*, 20 March 1879.

[17] Forbes made this point clear upon arriving back in Rangoon and hearing of the massacres at the palace. In an addendum to his article on Burma in *The Nineteenth Century*, he wrote that "the act to European readers seems horrible; but it is in accordance with Burmese precedent, and simply indicates King Theebo's complete and whole-hearted retrogression to the absolute despotism of his predecessors. The reading from it is that the constitution is an utter dead letter, and that Independent Burmah has wholly relapsed – fallen back upon old lines." Archibald Forbes, "The Political Situation in Burmah," 754.

and Randall Packard have argued, it was with the crisis of colonial empires in the 1930s and 1940s that development became a widespread metropolitan concern in order to "reinvigorate and relegitimize empire as it was being challenged by nationalist movements, labor militance, and increased questioning of colonial rule."[18] Cooper and Packard's volume, along with a great deal of subsequent scholarship, has focused on the rise and impact of so-called "experts" during this period. Social scientists, international bodies like the World Bank and World Health Organization, and national policymakers all became enmeshed in a project to develop the Third World, connected through a common commitment to alleviate poverty through economic growth.[19] But as scholars have shown, experts and governments who saw development as a "partnership for progress" were actually representing a narrow set of interests that were often exploitative: knowledge and expertise generally flowed from the developed to the undeveloped world, and not vice versa.[20] As Cooper has argued, "development was something to be done *to* and *for* Africa, not with it."[21]

Historians have studied the impact of these "experts" on the late colonial and post-colonial world, with a marked emphasis on Africa, but have generally borrowed a similar

[18] Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, "Introduction," in eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 7.
[19] For a few works that explore the role of experts in the colonial world, see Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).
[20] Randall Packard, "Visions of Postwar Health and Development and Their Impact on Public Health Interventions in the Developing World," in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 93.
[21] Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept," in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 65.

historical framework and timeline in their discussions of the pre-development period.[22] Development scholars posit that although a nascent view regarding development existed in the mid-nineteenth century, it was not until Joseph Chamberlain became head of the Colonial Office in 1895 that the British state actively intervened in colonial outposts with a view towards development.[23] Chamberlain's efforts ushered in a period of intervention during the Edwardian years, but were halted when Britain became embroiled in World War One. Trusteeship, an idea that Frederick Lugard developed in Nigeria in the 1920s, replaced the Chamberlain system, and by the 1930s, policymakers, commercial interests, and social-science experts began to fully theorize a modern, metropolitan idea of development.[24]

Despite the strict periodization utilized in these studies, some scholars have argued that development has a much longer history in European thought. M.P. Cowen and R.W. Shenton, for instance, have argued that a "doctrine of development" emerged in Europe beginning in the late eighteenth century and was unique and separate from an idea of "progress." Tracing a lineage from Immanuel Kant and Auguste Comte to John Stuart Mill and J.H. Newman, Cowen and Shenton demonstrate how "progress," an idea that insinuated the slow and gradual improvement of society, was no longer seen as tenable during a chaotic

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[22] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch has called the period before the 1930s "predevelopmentalist development." See Cooper and Packard, *International Development and the Social Science,* 6-7.

[23] Michael Havinden and David Meredith have demonstrated how an early vision of development existed in the musings of an array of important Victorian officials and intellectuals, including Lord Palmerston, Charles Dilke, and John Seeley. See Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development: Britain and its Tropical Colonies, 1850-1960,* (London: Routledge, 1993), 45-52. For a discussion of Chamberlain's contribution to development theory, see Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, 86-90; Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 21-24. See also Stephen Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914 to 1940* (London: Frank Cass, 1984).

[24] Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development*, 140-159.

nineteenth century. Instead, these thinkers advanced a new positivist theory of development that hinged on the state and its representatives acting as trustees of development, which, it was thought, would lead to greater order.[25] In India, as in Britain, land was key to this development. Proper development could only be secured by trustees who both obtained the most efficient tenants to work the land and who did not abuse their power as landlords to overly tax the people. In contrast to the Orientalists who celebrated India's history as a "high civilization," utilitarians like James Mill argued that the *zemindari*, the land-holding elites of India, were corrupt, petty tyrants who had plundered the country and exploited the Indian poor. To combat this problem, Mill proposed to tax locals directly, reform the tax system scientifically in order to make it affordable, and to replace local superstition with law and order. In this way, indigenous poverty, which many officials considered a great danger, would be alleviated and replaced by a beneficent government that used public funds to invest in infrastructure that fostered the local population. This was the beginning of a "British administration."[26]

Forbes' comments during the 1870s demonstrate the idea that a sound economic policy and good government could alleviate suffering and promote prosperity was not exclusive to the twentieth century or to India. In Forbes' telling, British Burma was the embodiment of sound government, with its bustling metropolis of Rangoon, its active rice fields, and its happy population. Upper Burma, on the other hand, defined misgovernment and tyranny, where the land lay fallow, the people were unhappy, and where law and order were reliant on the whims of a despotic King. Even before Thebaw's massacres, Forbes saw

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[25] M.P. Cowen and R.W. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3-41.

[26] Ibid, 42-56.

the potential of annexation, noting that "there is no meat on the bones of Afghanistan, but Burmah is as fab as butter." For Forbes, annexing Upper Burma "would be solidly valuable" as it "affords an admirable vantage ground for taking the Chinese Empire in flank, and also for stimulating the traffic in gongs." Asking for a C.I.E. if his suggestion to Lord Beaconsfield was acted upon, the reporter's comments foreshadowed the next six years, when concerns over China and trade would be crucial to the invasion of Burma that would occur in 1885. Although he would never receive his knighthood, Forbes' remarks were symbolic of how Britons considered their own colonies as well as their frontiers during the late nineteenth century.

Finding Burma

In 1795, the Governor-General of India sent an Irish diplomat by the name of Michael Symes on a mission to Burma. Following King Bodawpaya's (the Burmese King) invasion and occupation of Arakan in 1784, which was situated along the border of British-administered Bengal, Symes was entrusted with the objective to establish friendly relations between the newly neighboring powers. Perhaps more importantly for British geopolitical interests, it was hoped that Symes' embassy would prevent French war vessels from using Burmese ports, a concern that had emerged in recent years.[27] While Symes was not the first European to visit Burma, as Portuguese and British merchants had long done business on Burma's coast, his mission represented the first British attempt to establish diplomatic

[27] John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 71.

relations between the two countries.[28] It also, in many ways, represented the first attempt by a European power to make Burma legible and known to western subjects. Symes' embassy included not only diplomats but also doctors, scientists, and mapmakers, with their comments and observations enshrined in Symes' subsequently published *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava*. According to Symes, there were "no countries on the habitable globe, where the arts of civilized life are understood, of which we have so limited knowledge, as of those that lie between the British possessions in India, and the Empire of China."[29] Symes' account, published in Britain in 1800, was meant to fix this absence of knowledge on the country. What followed was perhaps the first travel book on Burma ever published in English.

At once a history, ethnography, and travelogue, Symes' *Narrative* provided Britain's first glimpse into the lands that lie between British India and China. His account was also an optimistic one. For Symes, the Burmans:

> are certainly rising fast in the scale of Oriental nations; and, it is hoped, that a long respite from foreign wars, will give them leisure to improve their natural advantages. Knowledge increases with commerce; and as they are not shacked by any prejudice of casts, restricted to hereditary occupations, or forbidden from participating with strangers in every social bond, their advancement will, in all probability be rapid. At present, so far from being in a state of intellectual darkness, although they have not explored the depths of science, or reached to excellence in the finer arts, they yet have an undeniable claim to the character of a civilized, well instructed people. Their laws are wise, and pregnant with sound morality; their police is better regulated than in most European countries; their natural disposition is friendly, and hospitable to strangers; and their manners rather expressive of manly candour, than courteous dissimulation; the gradations of rank, and the respect due to station, are maintained with scrupulosity which never relaxes.[30]

[28] D.G.E. Hall, *Early English Intercourse with Burma, 1587-1743* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928).
[29] Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava, Sent by the Governor-General of India, in the Year 1795* (Edinburgh: Constable and Co., 1827), 1.
[30] Ibid, 123-4.

Despite these laudatory comments, Symes had his concerns as well. The diplomat also believed that "the feudal system, which cherishes ignorance, and renders man the property of man, still operates as a check to civilization and improvement." He argued that Burma's feudal nature was "a bar which gradually weakens, as their acquaintance with the customs and manners of other nations extends; and unless the rage of civil discord be again excited, or some foreign power impose an alien yoke, the Birmans bid fair to be a prosperous, wealthy, and enlightened people."[31] Little did Symes know, of course, that his country, Great Britain, would one day be that foreign power.

Symes' comments demonstrate that even though Europeans could hold Burma in high esteem socially and culturally, it was a sound political economy that ultimately determined the country's fate. These insights also reveal that British officials visiting Burma during this period had a very specific vision of the country based on European modes of political economy. The idea of a "feudal" Burma, which Symes saw as a hindrance to the country's improvement, was clearly modeled along a progressive scale of civilization.[32] With increased contact between Burma and the West, Symes thought that Burma's feudal character would gradually erode, as Burma's people became exposed to western modes of law and order, industry, and civility. Burma would emerge from darkness, just as European powers like

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[31] Ibid, 123.

[32] Such ideas about a "scale of civilization" were prominent during this period, particularly in the writings and philosophy of James Mill. See Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30.

Britain did during the previous few centuries. Despite this, this European vision of a "feudal" and backwards Burma would remain constant well into the twentieth century.[33]

The knowledge about Burma that circulated in British and British Indian official circles is crucial to an understanding of how Burma developed, and ultimately, to how a post-annexation consensus about development originated. Despite this, as the accounts of both Michael Symes and Archibald Forbes demonstrate, the existing narrative about Burma's potential for progress and development was in many ways ahistorical. For each traveller, writing in the 1790s and the 1870s respectively, the idea that traditional, pre-colonial Burma was economically backwards, "feudal," and static was assumed. This, of course, was not unique to Burma. In neighboring India, Orientalists had long advanced narratives that essentialized Indian society and history into western categories. European thinkers crafted a history of India that placed it in direct contrast to the enlightened west, whereby the west was seen as enlightened and progressive and the east as backwards and despotic. Prominent British thinkers from Mill in the early nineteenth century to Baden-Powell in the twentieth saw Indian history through this lens of "othering," and focused on the specific essential qualities they thought India was defined by for centuries, including caste, the village life, despotic rule, and Hinduism. It was through this "knowledge," crafted, expanded, and codified during the nineteenth century, that Britain consolidated their rule in India and displaced the local state.[34]

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[33] J.S. Furnivall, a colonial official in Burma during the early twentieth century and later its most prominent historian, wrote at length about Burma's "feudal" history. See J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (New York: New York University Press, 1948); J.S. Furnivall, *An Introduction to the Political Economy of Burma* (Rangoon: Burma Book Club, 1931).
[34] On a theory "Orientalism" and a history of the Orientalists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

The Orientalist discourses that circulated about India were echoed in Burma during the nineteenth century, especially regarding Burma's place among the nations of the world. John Crawfurd, for instance, who negotiated with the King of Ava following the first Anglo-Burmese War in the 1820s, noted how the Burmans were "greatly inferior to the Hindoos in civilization, and even more so to the Chinese." Crawfurd, who had spent his earlier years as a colonial official in Singapore, argued that Burma was more like its eastern counterparts than its western ones, particularly because of the "comparative absence of religious or political bigotry and freedom from unsocial customs."[35] For Henry Yule, a famous Orientalist who was Britain's agent to Burma following the Second Anglo-Burmese War in the 1850s, Burma was not the "magnificent and civilised empire" that Symes had described in the 1790s.[36] Instead, constant warring and devastation had marked the country's history for centuries, and it was clear that "the Burmans have not long emerged from barbarism."[37] Crawfurd and Yule's accounts, both filled with long descriptions of drunk, despotic kings and savage tribes that occupied a fertile and remote landscape, affirmed Burma's progress on the stadial path towards civilization. Similar to the cultural tropes that James Mill and Henry Maine elucidated about India during the early nineteenth century, Crawfurd and Yule's accounts would provide a basis for subsequent thinking about Burma later in the century.[38] It was

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See also, Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*; Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[35] John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava, in the Year 1827* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 373.

[36] Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855, with Notices of the Country, Government, and People* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858), 211.

[37] Ibid, 208.

[38] Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

Yule, in fact, who Archibald Forbes read to learn about Burmese history before his remarks about the country in the 1870s.[39]

These early travelers helped to create an essentialized narrative about Burma that, while repeating the kinds of Orientalist discourses prevalent India, were also keen to point out the inherent disparities between Burma and its neighbor on a cultural and social level. Officials and visitors pointed out how Burma was distinct from India because of the colony's unique geography, the prevalence of Buddhism in the country, the absence of caste, the diversity of ethnic groups, the availability of education, as well as the specific nature of Burmese cultural values. As the *Rangoon Gazette* would argue in 1887, just following Burma's annexation, India and Burma were geographically and ethnologically "as distinct and separate as any two countries can be." Reiterating the kinds of statements that Crawfurd and Yule made in the early to mid-nineteenth century, the newspaper believed that "enlightenment, civilization, and progress have here only to fight against the same indolence and apathy that they encounter in European countries, and not at all against an iron system of caste or a fanatical religious orthodoxy."[40] While the newspaper used these statements to argue for the legal separation of the two countries, an idea that would remain current in some circles until the colonies were separated in 1937, they demonstrate how Orientalist discourses were not wholesale transferred from India. Instead, essentializing descriptions about the country and its population were reconsidered and transformed in the Burmese context. Britain might have absorbed Burma as a province within the Indian government, but for those in the new colony, a distinct interest group had emerged which recognized the uniqueness of their situation.

[39] Forbes called Yule's book an "admirable volume." *The Daily News*, 20 March 1879.
[40] *Rangoon Gazette*, 21 December 1887.

Although it was widely recognized by those who had an intimate knowledge of Burma that the country was culturally and socially different than India, those who promoted British trade in Burma utilized these peculiarities to argue for colonial expansion in the region. According to one commentator in the 1880s, the Orientalist and annexation advocate William Ferguson Beatson Laurie, Burma contained "a people free from religious and caste prejudices" that was "more fond of 'personal comfort and adornment' than either Hindus and Mahomedans," and who were consequently "more ready and eager in the pursuit of civilised commerce than their more apathetic neighbours."[41] Deploying the same kind of binary vision of Upper and Lower Burma that Forbes alluded to in the 1870s, Laurie believed that the population of Lower Burma was "a thousand times safer and happier than ever before," and that Upper Burma must have a "deeply felt yearning for British rule or protection" because of that.[42] Laurie longed for "the development of Free Trade" in places like Burma and China, a fact that would be "brought about by the steady law of progress."[43] For Arthur Phayre, Burma's influential Chief Commissioner during the 1860s, Burma's population was "industrious and energetic, longing for free trade, and possessing a marvellous capacity for travelling as petty traders."[44] It was thought that Burma was uniquely prepared for economic development, borne out of the cultural and racial makeup of its population. All Burma required was more capital and infrastructure to help develop those needs.

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[41] William Ferguson Beatson Laurie, *Ashé Pyee, The Super Country; Or, the Great Attractions of Burma to British Enterprise and Commerce* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1882), 101.
[42] Ibid, 69.
[43] Ibid, 105.
[44] Quoted in Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chrysê, Being the Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through the South China Border Lands from Canton to Mandalay*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribner, Welford, & Co., 1883), 213.

Burma's Nineteenth Century

The observations that Michael Symes and other explorers made about Burma's natural resources and political economy during the nineteenth century foretold the interests that British officials would have about the country in the coming century. Rice, teak, and mineral resources were are all crucial to the colonial imagining of Burma during this period, when over the course of six decades, British forces gradually invaded, carved up, and occupied the country. What Symes revealed to a European audience for the first time in 1795 – a fertile country filled with gold and precious stones – was, by the 1880s, common knowledge for those Britons familiar with the country. The knowledge that was gained over this period proved crucial to the ultimate decision to annex the country, with the belief that spoils of war would far outpace any expenditure that the British Indian government might spend on militarily intervening. But in order to make sense of this imagining, it is first necessary to situate Burma's political and economic history during this turbulent period.

Burma underwent a great political transformation during the nineteenth century. Having had only occasional and limited interactions with European merchants and traders when Symes visited the country in the 1790s, Burma was thrust onto the international stage during the 1820s. In 1824, following the Burmese Empire's invasion of Manipur and Assam in Northeastern India and areas of Chittagong in British Bengal, Britain declared war on Burma. The war would last for two years and become one of the most expensive operations in the history of British colonial warfare.[45] Britain's victory was assured with the Treaty of Yandabo, signed in February 1826, which ceded territories such as Manipur, Arakan, and

[45] These events are summarized succinctly in Richard Gott, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London: Verso, 2011), 244-250.

Tenasserim to British control, as well as creating a commercial and diplomatic treaty between the two nations. It also forced Burma to pay an indemnity of one million pounds to the British government, a substantial sum of money at the time. The arrival of a British Resident to the Burmese Crown as well as the loss of territory would remain a humiliating reminder to Burma of their own defeat.[46]

Although relative peace and stability would prevail over the next couple of decades, tensions between Britain and Burma would again erupt during the 1850s. In 1852, Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, sent Commodore George Lambert to Burma to negotiate terms related to the existing commercial and political treaties between the two countries. The Burmese King ceded to Britain's demands, but the explosive Lambert instead blockaded the port at Rangoon and seized King Pagan's royal ship. The subsequent war, later named the Second Anglo-Burmese War, proved controversial in Britain but ended in quick fashion following the occupation of Rangoon, Bassein, Pegu, and Prome by British forces in the later months of 1852. Britain annexed the province of Pegu, which contained the major port city of Rangoon, and renamed the province Lower Burma.[47] The war would ultimately spark a palace revolution in the Burmese capital, when King Pagan was overthrown by his half brother, King Mindon Min. Mindon would remain in power until his death in 1878, after which Thebaw, his son, would ascend to the throne. Thebaw would be Burma's last king.

It was with the accession of Pegu Province – i.e. Lower Burma - in the 1850s that British economic interests in Burma hardened and expanded, transforming the country dramatically. Lower Burma's commercial success was largely the product of advancements

[46] On the war and the Treaty of Yandabo, see Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: The Cresset Press, 1962), 83-121.
[47] Ibid, 122-153.

in the rice industry. According to Michael Adas, the growth of the rice industry in the Burma Delta during the last half of the nineteenth century was "one of the most impressive examples of sustained economic growth under the aegis of a European colonial regime." Rice paddy exported from Lower Burma went from 162,000 tons in 1855 to 2,000,000 tons in 1905-6. The area under cultivation increased from around 700,000 to nearly 6,000,000 acres, while population went from around one million people in 1852 to over four million in 1901.[48] This massive agricultural expansion was made possible not only by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which created a direct market for Burmese rice in Europe, but also by the large-scale migration of people from around the area of Lower Burma.[49] Migrants moved from within Burma's borders as well as from outside of them, drawn to Lower Burma's rice fields for a variety of reasons. This included a large Indian migrant community who went to Burma beginning in the 1870s and took on a variety of different roles, including laborers, money lenders, and bureaucrats within the colonial state.[50] In all, the expansion of the rice industry under the auspices of British colonial authorities significantly altered the landscape and fortunes of Lower Burma, replacing the traditional subsistence agricultural system that previously existed with an export-based, mono-culture economy.[51] As the Chief

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[48] Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852-1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 58.
[49] John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma,* 157.
[50] Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta*, 90-95. See also Usha Mahajani, *The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya* (Bombay: Vora & Co., 1960); Nalini Ranjan Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma: The Rise and Decline of an Immigrant Community* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
[51] Historians have thoroughly explored the impact that this transformation in political economy had, with varying degrees of opinion as to how the "traditional" and the "modern" overlapped or was subverted during the process. For the key texts on the Burma rice industry, see J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 84-98; Cheng Siok-Hwa, *The Rice Industry of Burma, 1852-1940* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968); Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta*. For a recent history that explores rice cultivation in the late colonial period, see

Commissioner of Burma, Ashley Eden, would remark in 1874, "it is the rice produce and the rice exports that have made, and maintain, the prosperity of the Province."[52]

Rice production was crucial to the economic success of British Burma during the late nineteenth century but agriculture was not the only industry that British authorities sought to develop. Cotton, dye materials, tea, and oil were all exported in small amounts during the 1870s, although oil was the only commodity that developed into a full industry during the late nineteenth century.[53] Teak was the second largest export from Burma during this period, its industry developing gradually over the whole of the colonial period.[54] Large family run businesses such as Steel Brothers, Bulloch Brothers, and the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, which was owned by the Wallace Brothers, became important commercial players in Burma and represented the first generation of businessmen in the colony.[55] These companies, most of which had their center of operations in Rangoon, were active throughout the country, including in areas outside the jurisdiction of the British colonial state. The

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Ian Brown, *A Colonial Economy in Crisis: Burma's Rice Cultivators and the World Depression of the 1930s* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).

[52] Quoted in Maung Shein, *Burma's Transport and Foreign Trade in Relation to the Economic Development of the Country (1885-1914)* (Rangoon: Department of Economics University of Rangoon, 1964), 23.

[53] J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 551. The oil industry will be discussed later in the dissertation, but for a history of the Burmese oil industry during the colonial period, see Marilyn V. Longmuir, *Oil in Burma: The Extraction of "Earth-Oil" to 1914* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001). See also, T.A.B. Corley, *A History of the Burmah Oil Company, 1886-1924* (London: Heinemann, 1983).

[54] Furnivall notes that in 1841, teak made up around half the value of local products exported, giving rise to a large shipbuilding industry in the early colonial capital of Moulmein. Over 100 ships were built in Moulmein between 1830 and the wars of the 1850s. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 45.

[55] Raymond Bryant has written a comprehensive history of the teak industry during this period. See Raymond L. Bryant, *The Political Ecology of Forestry in Burma 1824-1994* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996). For a history of the Wallace Brothers and the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, see A.C. Pointon, *Wallace Brothers* (Oxford: University Press Oxford, 1974).

Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, for instance, was headquartered in Rangoon but had long-standing agreements with the King of Burma to exploit teak forests in Upper Burma, the Shan States, and in the Karenni States. Even when diplomatic relation between the British and Burmese waned, the company retained its interests in Upper Burma, negotiating contracts with the King.[56] This relationship would eventually lead to – or at least provide the excuse for - war in 1885. After King Thebaw decided to levy an exorbitant fine on the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, arguing that the company had illegally sent timber south without paying customs to the Burmese Court, the company successfully lobbied the British government to intervene in Upper Burma.[57] Although historians have demonstrated that there were many reasons for the invasion of 1885, not least French intrigues at the Burmese Court, the teak dispute provided the immediate spark for hostilities.[58]

Ashley Eden and the Development of Burma's Railway System

Resources like teak and oil were significant to Burma's history during the mid to late nineteenth century, but the development of Burma's economy would not have been successful without the expansion of transportation technology in the country. Previous to railway construction in Burma, inland transportation was completely reliant on water transport on the Irrawaddy, which itself was not developed until well after the second Anglo-

[56] Contracts between the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation and the King of Burma are held at the London Metropolitan Archives in the UK.
[57] A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Pagoda War*, 72-74.
[58] The role that the rivalry between France and Britain played during the annexation has been explored in myriad histories of the colonial period. For a discussion of these relations and their impact on the annexation, see Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, 222-228, 296-298.

Burmese War. In 1864, the Irrawaddy Flotilla and Steam Navigation Company, founded by the Scotsman Todd Findlay, brokered a deal with the British Burma government to provide steamer services on the river. This deal came as a result of a commercial treaty enacted between British Burma and independent Burma in 1862, when it was agreed that the two countries would protect foreign agents – particularly traders – who entered their respective territories and that fixed trade duties. The British, particularly interested in the trade to China, were also allowed to send a survey mission through Upper Burma into Yunnan. Led by Arthur Phayre, Burma's first Chief Commissioner, the British government believed that contracting out to a private company would cut down costs and provide a more efficient service on the Irrawaddy, and Findlay's bid was accepted.[59] The 1862 Treaty would later be revised in 1867, reducing the duties that British agents had to pay on both imports and exports. It was at this time that regular steamer services began operating between Lower and Upper Burma, launching a weekly service from Rangoon to Mandalay and a monthly service to Bhamo on the Chinese border. These routes would be expanded in the 1870s to account for increased traffic.[60]

Steam navigation on the Irrawaddy provided a new outlet for trade between Upper and Lower Burma but the construction of railways dramatically altered the economic potential of the colony. Despite this, development proceeded slowly in the pre-annexation years. In 1877, the first railway in Burma – called the Rangoon and Irrawaddy Valley State Railway - was opened and connected Rangoon with Prome and totaled 161 miles of rail.[61]

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[59] Ibid, 175-6.
[60] Maung Shein, *Burma's Transport and Foreign Trade*, 29.
[61] Ibid, 42. See also, British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, P/795, Public Works Department, Burma, December 1876. Extension of R. & I.V.S. Railway from Prome to Allan-myo (hereafter "Proceedings").

Another railway that linked Rangoon and Toungoo, which at the time was located on the border of Upper Burma, was completed in 1885, just months before the British invasion. This line reduced travel time to the frontier from around twenty-five days to only a half-day, marking a significant improvement in Anglo-Indian defense capabilities.[62] Called the Rangoon and Sittang Valley State Railway and totaling 166 miles, the addition of this railway meant that on the eve of annexation, British Burma had a total of 333 miles of railway constructed in the country.[63] Following the war, the Rangoon and Sittang Valley State Railway would be extended another 220 miles to Mandalay, connecting the territories of Upper and Lower Burma through an overland rail service for the first time.[64] Even still, and despite its profound importance to British interests in Burma, railway construction would remain a fraught enterprise in the colony, tied up with debates over development, budgets, and progress on India's eastern frontier.

As Furnivall would later comment in the 1940s, "colonial rule is often judged by its achievements in respect of public works," and that colonial powers, "in justifying their claim to exercise to dominion, point to such things as proof of their beneficent activities."[65] This was certainly the case in Burma. Railways had a transformative effect on the country, allowing not only for the faster transit of goods and people but also the increased visibility of Europeans and their technologies to local colonized populations. But the construction of railways also pointed to the solidity of British rule in the colony. As early as 1873, when

[62] Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 78. See also Proceedings, P/1449, Public Works Department, Burma, February 1880. Rangoon and Sittang Valley State Railway.
[63] Maung Shein, *Burma's Transport and Foreign Trade*, 41, 44.
[64] This section was called the "Toungoo-Mandalay Railway." Ibid, 44. On the idea of this railway as a "peace-building" enterprise, see Proceedings, P/2664A, Public Works Department, Upper Burma, August 1886. Toungoo-Mandalay Railway.
[65] Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 319.

dialogue about the first railway in the country was underway, Burma's Chief Commissioner, Ashley Eden, noted that the railway's "chief effect morally will be in the idea conveyed to the minds of the mass of the population of the permanency of our occupation of the country." At a time when "silly rumours floated about" of Britain's intentions to restore their territories back to the Burmese Crown, the railway would dispel such notions. Because the Toungoo Railway would bring communications to the Burmese frontier, it was also thought that the railway would have significant political benefits. Through the "free interchange of ideas and communications between our own territories and Upper Burma," Eden thought, the railway would benefit both countries. And with the added efficiency the railway would provide for the movement of police and troops, it also meant Britain could keep a closer eye on its neighbors to the north in case of any disturbances.[66]

The social and political motives for railway construction that Eden described in the 1870s provide insight into how British officials stationed in Burma saw development in the colony. In considering the estimated cost of constructing the Rangoon-Prome Railway, Eden's Officiating Chief Engineer and Secretary, W.S. Oliphant, noted that despite high costs, or an estimated 704,000 to 735,000 pounds, the railway would prove remunerative. According to Oliphant, in speaking on behalf of Chief Commissioner Eden, all estimates:

> may turn out fallacious however moderately they may be framed, but as bearing upon a young country like Burma which has hitherto progressed and is still progressing with such rapid strides as regards population, trade and material wealth, with, it may be said, hundreds of thousands of acres of good land available for cultivation and other natural resources only waiting to be developed by means of increased population and facilities of communication, it is almost impossible to over-estimate the advantages likely to accrue from

[66] Proceedings, P/11, Railways, Burma, March 1873. Note by Colonel W.S. Oliphant, R.E., Officiating Chief Engineer, on revised plans and estimate of the Rangoon and Prome Railway.

> the construction of a railway, although the immediate money returns may not be so great as anticipated.[67]

For Eden and his local officials, the construction of a railway symbolized progress for the colony, both economically and socially. A railway would not only improve the economic prospects of the colony but it would also, in turn, filter down to colonized populations and improve their material and social well being. The railway was an ameliorative device as well as it was a technological one.

This idea about the railway's civilizing capacity, though, was attached to another vision that became prominent in British Burma during the 1870s and would remain so for much of the colonial period: the belief that if developed properly and treated fairly by the British Indian Government, Burma's capacity to grow was limitless. For the Chief Commissioner, criticisms of the railway based on financial concerns were founded on "a very fallacious view of the real question at issue." Eden instead argued that the question in Burma was "not to provide means of transport for such trade as now exists," but "rather to endeavour by a judicious outlay to stimulate and develop the trade of a young and rising province by means of a Railway, and to increase our production by the facilities of transport which that Railway will afford." The sum of money that the Government of India were to afford was not designed to support existing traffic, but "for creating fresh traffic and all we have to do is to shew that there is sufficient existing traffic to warrant the belief, that with increased facilities that traffic will increase proportionately and pay a fair return while this

[67] Ibid.

development is going on."[68] The goal was not to provide an infrastructure for Burma as it was, but instead, for a vision of what it could be in the future.

Eden's comments about railway development demonstrate how a specific, Anglo-Burmese set of interests emerged during the pre-annexation years, and how these interests existed in isolation from those originating in Calcutta or London. This was particularly the case regarding budgetary concerns. What the Chief Commissioner's office was considering in its support of the Rangoon-Prome Railway was the financial estimates and remunerative potential of the railway, not merely for Burma but for the greater imperial good. For Eden:

> taking into consideration the large annual surplus withdrawn from this Province for the General Administration of the Empire and the fact that this surplus is likely to increase annually, Mr. Eden has no hesitation in affirming that British Burma has a very strong moral claim to the return of a portion of the very large amount it has contributed to the Imperial Exchequer during the last ten years, for the construction of a line of railway in connection with its principal seaport town possessing a trade, of European importance, and for the success of which an incontestable guarantee is afforded, by an advance in population and material wealth, during the last decade, almost unparalleled in the history of British India.

In addition, it was pointed out that "the tax payers of Burma contribute their share annually to the funds set apart for meeting the interest on the Guaranteed and State Railways but receive nothing whatever in return." Providing a surplus to the imperial coffers as well as containing a population of tax-payers who deserved to see the fruits of their public contributions, Eden argued that it was time for the Government of India "to sanction this

[68] Proceedings, P/11, Railways, Burma, January 1874. Minute by the Hon'ble Ashley Eden, Chief Commissioner of British Burma, on the proposed Rangoon and Prome Railway.

important work immediately." If not, he noted, Eden hoped that a private company might fulfill such needs.[69]

After the Indian Government sanctioned the construction of the Rangoon-Prome railway in 1874, Eden continued to lobby for the expansion of communications. When a private company, the Burma Company Limited, petitioned the government to construct a light railway from Rangoon to Toungoo, Eden urged the government to take control. In Eden's opinion, by "opening out the fine valley of the Sittang to settlement and cultivation, Government, as landlord of the whole country, would reap all the direct and indirect advantages resulting from the construction of a Railway," including land tax that would be acquired from the newly cultivated land, capitation tax on those who would move there, customs duties on exports and imports from Europe, and "advantages in a military and administrative point of view." Because transit times would go down, trade with the Karenne and Shan States would also be developed, and the country around China and Laos would be opened up by land for the first time.[70] Although Eden once again threatened that a private enterprise could be utilized if state funds were not forthcoming, the government responded that "the Government of India is opposed to any private enterprise to construct railways in India." Instead, the Indian Government noted that there was "good reason" to construct a railway and that they would send a survey.[71]

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[69] Proceedings, P/11, Railways, Burma, March 1873. Note by Colonel W.S. Oliphant, R.E., Officiating Chief Engineer, on revised plans and estimate of the Rangoon and Prome Railway.
[70] Proceedings, P/11, Railways, Burma, January 1874. Minute by the Hon'ble Ashley Eden, Chief Commissioner of British Burma, on the proposed Rangoon and Prome Railway.
[71] Proceedings, P/11, Railways, Burma, September 1874. From Colonel Drummond, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India to Eden, 17 August 1874.

These debates over railway construction highlight the precarious position British Burma found itself in during the pre-annexation years. Although visitors to the country noted how different Burma was from India economically, socially, and culturally, Lower Burma during this time was officially a province within the Government of India.[72] Because of this, Burma was subject to Indian legislation, contributed to an Indian central budget, and most often, was ruled by officials trained or previously stationed in India itself. Railways lines, along with any kind of public expenditure, required approval from Indian authorities, regardless of scale. Railway construction was an expensive and time-intensive activity, requiring vast sums of fixed capital, cheap labor, and safe, dependable routes. In order for construction plans to be accepted, it required faith on the part of the Indian Government. Because Burma was only just developing economically as a province, British officials in Burma had to persuade their superiors in Calcutta and London that a railway would itself bring progress and growth where none had existed thus far. Because of that, official government correspondence about railways from the period reads much like a travel brochure meant to lure explorers with promises of vast riches: investing in Burma's future meant investing in the Empire's future. The goal of Anglo-Burmese officials was to make that investment seem like a sure thing.

The Anglo-Burmese Lobby

[72] Following the annexation of 1886, when Upper and Lower Burma were combined and re-named Burma or British Burma, the country would remain a province of India. This would be the case until 1937, when a separate Government of Burma was created.

By the 1880s, Indians officials had warmed to the vision that Anglo-Burmese officials and businessmen promoted regarding railways and development in the colony. In his Administrative Report on railways in 1881, Colonel W.S. Trevor, Director General of Railways in India, noted how India had opened 9,235 miles of railway to traffic at the time, and that following Lord Lawrence's proposals in 1869 to extend railways, it was widely believed in the colony that railway construction was "a necessity towards the development of the resources of India." Speaking on Burma, Trevor argued that the proposed Sittang Valley Line, which had vexed Burma's Chief Commissioner Ashley Eden in the 1870s, would "open up a land-locked country, at present thinly peopled it is true, but possessing indefinite capabilities of development." Burma, which at the time contained only 161 of the 9,235 miles of railway said to be active in India, would finally emerge from the isolation in which officials there found themselves. For local officials, this would have been great news.[73]

Trevor's comments, though, did not hold up in official policy. Construction on the Toungoo line would not begin for another four years, around the time British and Indian troops invaded and annexed Upper Burma. In the interim, battles between Anglo-Burmese officials, European businessmen in Burma, and the Government of India would wage on about economic development in the colony. These disputes would color the eventual decision to invade and annex the country, as well as the post-annexation consensus about how to structure finances in the new colony. These interests – whether local, imperial, or commercial – were all limited by conditions on the ground in Burma, as well as the urgency through

[73] British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, IOR/V/24/3532, India Railway Board. Administrative Report on Railways in India for 1880-81 by Colonel W.S. Trevor, V.C., R.E., Director General of Railways.

which each party negotiated. And, just as it did in the 1870s, these efforts once again revolved around the extension of railways.

In 1881, at the same time that Trevor was commenting positively on the prospects of the Toungoo line, local businessmen in Burma became highly involved in negotiations to expand the railway system. In April 1881, Leon Hernandez, head of the firm L. Hernandez and Co., petitioned the government along with Sir Charles Forbes and Co. to form a company to construct the railway.[74] A few months later, in January 1882, another proposal led by Strang Steel of London and John Muir of Glasgow, two of Burma's most important businessmen at the time, was sent to the Chief Commissioner asking to take over and complete Burma's railway system.[75] While Hernandez's petition was quickly dismissed, officials in Burma considered Steel and Muir's proposal carefully, likely owing to the stature and reputation of the petitioners in the Anglo-Indian community.[76] W. Strang Steel's firm, Steel Brothers, was one of the largest mill owners and rice exporters in Burma, and held a place of prominence in Burma's Chamber of Commerce.[77] John Muir, on the other hand, was best known in India, where his firm Finlay, Muir and Co. was heavily involved in the tea and

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[74] Proceedings, P/1597, Public Works Department, Burma, May 1881. Proposal to Construct the R. & S.V.S. Railway by Private Enterprise.
[75] Proceedings, P/1804, Public Works Department, Burma, January 1882. Proposals for taking over and conducting Railways in Burma by private enterprise.
[76] It should be noted that Leon Hernandez was also highly involved in Burma's commercial community at the time. In 1882, for instance, Hernandez acted as Consul for Belgium and Vice-Consul for France in Burma, despite having offices also located in London. *Thacker's Indian Directory*, 1882, 777.
[77] The archives for Steel Brothers Limited are held at the London Metropolitan Archives in the UK.

cotton industry.[78] Together, these were two of the principal names in the Anglo-Indian merchant community during the late nineteenth century.

Ultimately, though, local commercial interests in Burma were far more interested, as a whole, to lobby the government to expand railways using state funds. The Rangoon Chamber of Commerce represented these local interests, actively petitioning the British colonial government to reform the colony to secure their commercial welfare. These petitions were particularly marked in the years preceding the annexation of 1886. In 1884, for instance, the Chamber of Commerce petitioned the government numerous times about their vision of development and the need for Public Works.[79] In one Special Meeting called on February 29th, 1884, W.Q. Rowett, one of Burma's leading rice merchants, pointed out "the injustice with which this province is treated in being made to contribute over a crore of rupees annually towards the imperial revenue, while the crying needs of the province are left unsupplied for want of funds," believing that the colony's ill-treatment by the Government of India was potential grounds for separation. The Chamber responded by creating a special sub-committee to fight the curtailment of local funds, arguing "that a much larger proportion of the revenue should be spent in the province." For the Committee, "the natural

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[78] Finlay, Muir and Co., originally a subsidiary of James Finlay & Co. Ltd., was domiciled in Calcutta beginning in the 1870s. Archives for this firm are held at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. See *James Finlay & Company Limited: Manufacturers and East India Merchants, 1750-1950* (Glasgow: Jackson Son & Company, 1951).
[79] The committee at the time included representatives from Burma's most important businesses, including: J.G. Dickson, the chair of the Chamber of Commerce and partner for Gladstone, Wyllie, and Co., merchants; G.J. Swann, the general manager of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company,; J.G. Schultze, a partner in Schumacher, B. and Co., rice merchants and mill owners; P. Koop, a partner in the Mohr Brothers and Co., rice mill owners; C.W. Robinson, agent for Bulloch Brothers and Co., rice merchants; J. Stuart, partner of Stuart, Punch, and Co., merchants; S.G. Jones, a managing director for the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation, teak merchants; J. Thompson, from Arbuthnot, Gillanders and Co., merchants. *Thacker's Indian Directory*, 1884.

development of the country is retarded by the insufficiency of its means of intercommunication," with "one of the chiefs wants of the province is numerous feeder roads for the railways already in existence, and a further development of the railway system."[80] In the opinion of government, local merchants were "strongly and clearly"…"in favour of Burma railways being retained as State lines."[81]

A few weeks later, Chief Commissioner Charles Bernard spoke to the Chamber of Commerce about budgets in Burma. While Bernard tried to assure the Chamber that nothing would go unfinished and left to waste because of reducing the budget, "at the same time," it was noted, "the Chief Commissioner would submit that he entirely agrees in the view taken by the Chamber that the progress of the province will be retarded and its prosperity jeopardised by a great and continued reduction in the grant for public works." Bernard, while agreeing with the Chamber, also had to remain politic in his statements, owing to his position as Chief Commissioner. Speaking to the Chamber, Bernard observed that "the Government of India are most fully aware of the circumstances of Burma, namely, that the province contributes a larger taxation and a larger net surplus per head of the population than any other province of India." Bernard further noted "that until recent years very little was spent on roads and communications in Burma; that wages and the cost of work are two or three times as high in Burma as in other provinces; that the prosperity of the province depends mainly on the rice-merchants and the trade they have created and maintain," and furthermore, "that for the due progress of that prosperity the extension of improved roads and means of

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[80] Proceedings, P/2186, Public Works Department, Burma, March 1884. Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, held on Friday, the 29th February 1884.
[81] Proceedings, P/2432, Public Works Department, Burma, May 1885. From Colonel A.M. Lang, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, British Burma, Public Works Department (Railway), to the Secretary to the Government of India, Public Works Department, Simla.

communication are most necessary." Even still, Bernard understood that if the Indian government remained reluctant to help Burma, particularly in regard to the Bassein-Henzada railway that was in preparation to be built, he "hope[d] that private capitalists might be found who believe in the paying capacities of Burma, and who would undertake the Bassein-Henzada line, and perhaps other lines, if only a temporary and limited guarantee were given upon the capital." Privatization, seen as undesirable by top Anglo-Burmese officials only a decade before, began to look appealing for those in power on the eve of annexation.[82]

Railways were considered crucial to the eventual expansion of economic interests in the country, but railway extension was not only of interest to those businessmen operating in Burma itself. The rhetoric about Burma's capacity for economic and social progress influenced another group of lobbyists who proved influential in the ultimate decision to annex the country: the China-Burma railway interest group. Two agents led this movement: Archibald Colquhoun, a colonial official in Burma who on occasion reported for *The Times*, as well as the former official, Holt Hallett. Beginning in the early 1880s but stretching until the early 1900s, these two promoters utilized knowledge that they gained as colonial officials to lobby the government for the construction of a railway to open up the "great undeveloped markets" that existed in Southwestern China.[83] Although early visitors to the country – from the explorers Dr. Richardson and Captain McLeod in the 1830s to the influential Chief Commissioner, Sir Arthur Phayre, in the 1860s - noted Burma's potential importance as a route to Chinese markets, it was in this later moment that economic development in Burma

[82] Proceedings, P/2186, Public Works Department, Burma, March 1884. Public Works provincial finances and railway extension in British Burma.
[83] Holt S. Hallett, *A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1890), viii.

became a discussion worthy of comment in British metropolitan circles.[84] From the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to the confines of Whitehall, conversations about Colquhoun and Hallett's scheme would have a lasting effect on development in the country, despite their ultimate failure.

It was in the 1880s that Colquhoun and Hallett began to pressure government agents to help survey and finance a railway through Burma to China. Colquhoun, who began his career as an engineer in Burma and would later become Britain's first administrator in Southern Rhodesia in the 1890s, first outlined his proposals in his two-volume book, *Across Chryse*, which outlined his travels through Yunnan in Southwestern China, Siam, and the Shan States in Burma.[85] These schemes would be lent support in other books that Colquhoun published, including *Amongst the Shans* in 1885 and in *Overland to China* in 1900, as well as in articles published in the mainstream press back in Britain. Colquhoun believed that a railway to China, along with neighboring Siam, would accomplish a variety of tasks, including a check to French interests in Siam and the opening up of Chinese markets to British merchants.[86] These ideas found favor among the commercial community back in Britain. Between 1883 and 1890, Colqhoun and Hallet toured throughout Britain to spark interest in their schemes, speaking at a variety of locations including at the London,

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[84] On Richardson and MacLeod, see Volker Grabowsky and Andrew Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Diplomatic Missions to Tai States in 1837* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003). For Phayre, see Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma Including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan* (London: Trubner and Company, 1884).
[85] Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chrysê.*
[86] See Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Amongst the Shans* (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1885); Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Overland to China* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1900); Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Dan to Beersheba: Work and Travel in Four Continents* (London: W. Heinemann, 1908).

Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds Chambers of Commerce.[87] Drawn by the prospects of an untapped market in Southwest China that awaited the goods of an industrial Britain, these groups petitioned the government to allow for the expansion of railways in Burma. For these metropolitan interests, Burma was considered a bridge to Southeast and East Asia, an intermediate point between the British Indian Empire and the large population centers to the east. In doing so, railway construction in Burma became more than just a local concern, but one that inspired the commercial community back in Britain to look beyond the empire's frontiers.

Colqohoun and Hallett, though, were doing more than just publishing their views and hoping that the onslaught of public opinion would sway the government to intervene. Privately, the two former officials were actively lobbying top government officials in Britain to support their schemes, including the Secretary of State for India, Randolph Churchill. In July 1885, as British administrators were considering the occupation and annexation of Burma, Colquhoun sent Churchill a full report on his railway scheme, statements that Churchill was "much impressed" with.[88] In the report, however, it was noted that the Government of India was reluctant to build such a railway owing to a "want of money," with early estimates reaching as high as 1,000,000 pounds sterling to construct the railway.[89] Despite this, as late as September 1885, Churchill was still pushing Lord Dufferin, the

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[87] For some examples of these speeches, see Holt S. Hallett, *Address upon Burmah: Our Gate to the Markets of Western and Central China: Treating with the Proposed Connection of Burmah with China by Railway* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1887); Archibald R. Colquhoun and Holt S. Hallett, *Report on the Railway Connexion of Burmah and China* (London: Allen, Scott, & Co., 1888).
[88] British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, Lord Dufferin Papers, MSS. EUR F.130/3, Lord Randolph Churchill to Dufferin, 28 August 1885 (hereafter "Dufferin Papers").
[89] University of Cambridge, Manuscripts and University Archives, Papers of Lord Randolph Churchill, Cambridge, Add. MS 9248/6.

Viceroy of India and the architect of Burma's later invasion, to push forward such a scheme. "Am I wrong in supposing," Churchill wrote, "that it might be worth your while to spend a good deal of money now on all those various methods of railway and telegraph development which might have for their result the doubling and trebling of trade between India and China?"[90] As a number of British Chamber's of Commerce pressed Churchill privately, and with the weight of a re-election campaign waging against John Bright, the Secretary of State for India saw in Burma an opportunity to boost his public credibility and continue his political career. In October 1885, Churchill publically announced that he supported invading and annexing Upper Burma, arguing that the "Burmah enterprise will be a most remunerative investment."[91] But while the official could find solace in the invasion of Burma that would occur in the ensuing months, his time to celebrate would be short lived. By the end of 1885, Churchill was out of a job.[92]

Colquhoun and Hallett's scheme to connect British India with China through a railway would ultimately not come to fruition. The British occupation not only proved to be more costly than the Indian government had hoped, but a counter-insurgency campaign in the hills of Burma that followed annexation redirected the attention of administrators to more pressing concerns.[93] Even still, Colquhoun and Hallett's vision of a railway through Burma

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[90] Dufferin Papers, F.130/3, Churchill to Dufferin, 16 September 1885. Churchill also added that he "should like to see the eyes of the Government of India turned to the East more than the West, and a larger and bolder policy towards China, Siam, and Burmah recommended by the Indian Government than has been the case hitherto."
[91] Dufferin Papers, F.130/3, Churchill to Dufferin, 27 October 1885.
[92] For a biography of Churchill, see R.F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill, A Political Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
[93] See Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912). For a critique of Crosthwaite's idea of "pacification," see Michael Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order Without Meaning," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 16 no. 2 (September 1985), 245-261.

demonstrates how officials and businessmen saw the country of Burma and its potential for development during this critical period, whether in Britain, India, or Burma. Aside from the idea that the opening up of China would benefit the commercial community across the British World, an enticing prospect for the various Chambers of Commerce back in Britain, Colquhoun and Hallett also alluded to a variety of local interests in British Burma that would remain significant in the minds of officials and businessmen for the next few decades. Chief among these concerns was a desire to increase the population of Burma. Colquhoun, in outlining his proposals for the railway, observed that "the great want of Burma is population," adding that "not Indian immigration, but Chinese and Shan should be looked for." It was only through a railway, he argued, that immigration would be encouraged "by creating a safe thoroughfare, and reducing the time-distance."[94] The key to Burma's future lay in immigration and railway development, an idea that would have found much support within official and commercial circles in Burma.

Populating Burma

Some in the Burmese commercial community supported Colquhoun and Hallett's railway scheme, but it was the idea that railway development would spark immigration that captured the imaginations of British officials in Burma. As early as 1873, when railways were first being considered for the colony, the issue of population – or a perceived lack of population in the colony – became a prominent concern for officials. Colonel Oliphant, the Chief Engineer for British Burma, argued that the colony was "still progressing with such

[94] Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chrysê*, 237.

rapid strides as regards population," and that "hundreds of thousands of acres of good land available for cultivation and other natural resources [are] only waiting to be developed by means of increased population and facilities of communication."[95] In 1874, Chief Commissioner Ashley Eden observed that with Burma's "population increasing year by year in a remarkable manner," railways were crucial to the advancement of the colony and would only entice more migrants to move to Burma.[96] More than just passengers whose fares would pay for the lines, Burmese and other minority communities were seen as necessary to the occupation of the country and the success of development. British officials saw railways as a way to fill in the map of Burma, a country whose lands were considered rich and fallow and vast, but also a country that officials thought of as being vastly under populated. Railways, it was thought, would fix such a problem, bringing migratory populations into contact with these untouched reserves that simply awaited exploitation. This was the vision that Colquhoun touched on when advocating for the Burma-China railway, as well as the idea that would lay the groundwork for the later development of the mines at Bawdwin in the Northern Shan States.[97]

The idea that Burma was an under-populated colony and that this posed a threat to economic development remained current throughout the colonial period. In the mid-nineteenth century, British Indian officials and members of the commercial community were particularly keen to recruit laborers to Burma's rice fields, which at the time had a low

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[95] Proceedings, P/11, Public Works Department, Burma, March 1873. Note by Colonel W.S. Oliphant, R.E., Officiating Chief Engineer, British Burma, on revised plans and estimate of the Rangoon and Prome Railway.
[96] Proceedings, P/11, Public Works Department, Burma, January 1874. Minute by the Hon'ble Ashley Eden, Chief Commissioner of British Burma, on the proposed Rangoon and Prome Railway.
[97] Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chrysê.*

population density and large tracts of unoccupied land. Efforts by the colonial state to develop the region over the late nineteenth century, though, sparked a massive transformation in the colony's demography. Between 1850 and 1900, the population of lower Burma exploded, going from around one million to over four million inhabitants. Over this time, Burma became, in many ways, unrecognizable from its pre-colonial past. With the expansion of credit systems in the region designed to expand economic growth, great numbers of migrants came to lower Burma to enjoy the benefits of this transformation, including from China, India, and Upper Burma. In doing so, the racial makeup of Burma, as well as its class system, changed dramatically. The rice industry fashioned a new hierarchy within Burma, with landlords, cultivator-owners, tenants, landless agricultural laborers, and nonagricultural landlords – such as shopkeepers and moneylenders - all emerging as new categories within the social structure. These categories, though, were in many respects racialized. Indians, in particular, took on roles within the colonial bureaucracy that remained off-limits to the Burman ethnic majority. They also became the primary moneylenders in the system of credit that expanded at the time, a fact that would spark racial hostility and resentment from among the Burman population for years to come.[98]

This demographic transformation has been immortalized in the Burma historiography by what J.S. Furnivall, a former colonial official in Burma and perhaps its most formidable mid-century historian, has called the "plural society." Furnivall's plural society, most memorably discussed in his 1948 work *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, posited that Burma, similar to other "tropical" colonies like Java and Malaya, had a "medley of peoples" who "mix but do not combine." Unlike nations

[98] These changes are outlined in Michael Adas, *The Burma Delta,* 58-82.

outside of the tropics that may have plural features but share a common tradition of western culture, these disparate populations "holds by [their] own religion, [their] own culture and language, and [their] own ideas and ways," only meeting in the marketplace to buy and sell goods.[99] India was insulated from these changes due to the stability of the caste system.[100] But Burma could be seen as the embodiment of this racialized society, with Burmans, the ethnic majority in Burma, coexisting separately with large populations of Europeans, Indians, Chinese, and hundreds of ethnic minority groups native to Burma, many of whom spoke their own languages. Furnivall argued that the plural society, whether it existed in British, American, French, or Spanish tropical colonies was primarily an economic arrangement, unleashed by the forces of capitalism that had been "set free to remould the social order."[101] Although a simple formula on the surface, Furnivall was actually outlining his own complex theory of how tropical colonies developed within the capitalist system, how free trade policies led to a form of uneven development, and most importantly to his Fabian leanings, how social dislocation and disintegration accompanied colonization. As an economic argument, Furnivall's insights can be seen as a precursor to the modernization and dependency theorists of the mid-twentieth century, although at the time, as historian Julie Pham has recently demonstrated, Furnivall's contradicting paternalism and critique of the colonial system fell squarely, albeit sometimes unevenly, within existing Fabian socialist ideology.[102] But even with recent historical research that has questioned some of Furnivall's motivations, or probed his knowledge of pre-colonial Burmese society, his theory of plural

[99] J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice,* 304.
[100] Ibid, 308.
[101] Ibid, 306.
[102] Julie Pham, "J.S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the 'Plural Society' in Burma," *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 39 no. 2 (2005), 321-348.

society is still seen as a major intellectual contribution to the theorization of imperial policy during the late colonial period.[103]

Furnivall's theory of the "plural society" has demonstrated how the emergence and expansion of a capitalist vision by British officials in Burma caused a major - and destructive – demographic change in the colony that would have grave consequences in the early twentieth century. However, while these changes in British Burma's social system were especially marked in the rice industry and within the bureaucracy of the colonial government, they were inspired, in large part, by the widespread belief that Burma was under-populated, an idea that impacted development throughout the colony. In the 1860s, the official William Beatson Ferguson Laurie outlined these theories in his treatise, "Sparseness of Population and Health of the Indigenous Races." Laurie's treatise observed that a variety of issues had caused Burma to be under-populated, including child mortality and a lack of advanced medical care. Laurie's article, though, is particularly revealing in the quotations he compiled about population from important British officials in Burma at the time. Colonel Fytche, for instance, had thought that population had decreased dramatically in the pre-colonial years owing to constant internecine warfare among the Burmese, who he considered to be a "robust race." British law and order, he thought, had not only stabilized lower Burma but had caused the population to double, "which does not by any means compare unfavourably with the

[103] Neil A. Englehart, for instance, has argued that Furnivall underestimated the staying power of traditional Burmese institutions in colonial society. He has also pointed out that pre-colonial Burmese society was more monetized and commercialized than Furnivall surmised. See Neil A. Englehart, "Liberal Leviathan or Imperial Outpost? J.S. Furnivall and Colonial Rule in Burma," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 45 no. 4 (2011), 759-790.

increase of either any European or Asiatic race we are acquainted with."[104] For Arthur Phayre, Chief Commissioner at the time, "increase appears to be an established fact," noting that population had risen from both immigration and natural causes owing to the beneficence of British rule.[105] Others, though, thought the answer to under population was even simpler. The *Rangoon Times*, another of Burma's popular English-language daily newspapers, argued that "the land is cultivated because there were men to cultivate it, and not because the land was good." "In proof of this," the newspaper continued, "look to the fertile wilds of Australia, America, and Africa, also of our colony Burma – hence so much land is cultivated in China because there are so many men in the country, and so little is cultivated in Burma because the population is so small."[106] An enlightened western rule may have improved the lives of the existing population and in the future entice industrious outsiders to migrate to Burma, but in the end, strength would come in numbers.

It was this discussion about a perceived lack of population that spurred lobbying efforts to expand Burma's railway system and, in doing so, induce the Indian government to provide more capital for Burma's development. A. Rivers Thompson, the Officiating Chief Commissioner of Burma in 1877, believed that the completion of Burma's first railway had already and would continue to "give a large impulse to immigration" - particularly from the Shan population – as well as "increased impulse to the wider development of natural

[104] William Beatson Ferguson Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1885), 332. See also William Beatson Ferguson Laurie, *Papers on Burmah* (London: Wilkins, 1870), 32-47.
[105] William Beatson Ferguson Laurie, *Our Burmese Wars*, 337.
[106] Quoted in Ibid, 343.

resources."[107] Colonel Trevor, Burma's Officiating Chief Engineer, observed that while "a great portion of the country traversed by the Railway is at present waste, though fertile and rich in resources," it "wants only population and means of transport for its produce to some market, to be brought under cultivation."[108] In considering the construction of a light rail between Rangoon and Toungoo, Chief Commissioner Ashley Eden likewise thought that by "opening out the fine valley of the Sittang to settlement and cultivation, Government, as landlord of the whole country, would reap all the direct and indirect advantages resulting from the construction of a Railway." This included money from a land tax that would be acquired from the newly cultivated land, a capitation tax on those who would move there, customs duties on exports and on consumption of imports from Europe, and "advantages in a military and administrative point of view."[109] Building railways not only benefited the existing population in Burma by allowing them freedom to travel and sell their wares, but it also meant that the colonial state could benefit from the development of lands around the railway through taxation. For officials in Burma like Eden, those in the Indian government who focused on Burma's sparse population and uncultivated lands as a reason to not invest in the colony were missing the point: constructing railways would itself fix the population issue in Burma, luring migrants from across Burma's frontiers to develop those lands left fallow.

[107] Proceedings, P/795, Public Works Department, Burma, April 1877. Minute by A. Rivers Thompson, Esq., Officiating Chief Commissioner, British Burma, on the probable remunerative prospects of the Rangoon and Irrawaddy Valley State Railway.
[108] Proceedings, P/795, Public Works Department, Burma, March 1877. Note by Lieutenant Colonel W.S. Trevor, V.C., R.E., Officiating Chief Engineer, British Burma, Public Works Department, on the probable paying prospects of the Rangoon & Irrawaddy Valley State Railway.
[109] Proceedings, P/795, Public Works Department, Burma, August 1878. Note by Lieut. Col. E.J.L. Twynam, Officiating Chief Engineer, British Burma on the project for a line of Railway between Rangoon and Toungoo, to be called the Rangoon and Sittang Valley State Railway.

Privatizing Burma

Railway development in Burma during the late nineteenth century gradually encompassed large areas of the country within a network that ended in the port city and colonial capital of Rangoon, where commodities extracted in the colony would be sent to the rest of the world. What began as a single rail service in the 1870s that connected Rangoon with Upper and Lower Burma's border area soon became the foundation to a much larger system. Following Upper Burma's annexation in the 1880s, the Rangoon railway was extended to Mandalay, linking Lower and Upper Burma by rail for the first time. While these expansions compressed space and time in the colony, they were not without controversy. As the previous sections have demonstrated, debates between Anglo-Burmese and Anglo-Indian officials about railway development in Burma were fierce, with budgets and concerns over population and traffic preventing the rapid increase of development in the colony. By the 1890s, these debates would take on both familiar and new forms, as officials in British Burma became increasingly disillusioned with the slow pace of state-funded development and sought new ways to spark progress in the colony. It was in the 1890s that the British government in Burma looked to new sources of capital to aid the colony, looking outside of India's boundaries to infuse the colony with a new spirit of entrepreneurship that was legitimized, in part, by Britain's commitment to free enterprise and free trade. While these changes would impact all areas of Burma's economic development, it was to Burma's frontier areas, including the Shan States, where officials began to turn their attention. Without the transformations that occurred during this period, it is unlikely that Herbert

Hoover and his associates would have ever been able to develop the site at Bawdwin in the early twentieth century.

Just before and following the annexation of Upper Burma, the colony saw a surge of interest among capitalists in the West. As the capital city of Rangoon grew larger and Mandalay – formerly outside of British jurisdiction - became the center of British commerce in Upper Burma, outsiders saw in Burma an untouched wealth of resources that were ready to be exploited. Colquhoun and Hallett, in particular, saw the possibility of annexation as a means to promote their own scheme to build a railway to China, and countless newspaper articles appeared back in Britain during this time that discussed such an opportunity. These articles were often sensationalized, with titles such as "The Best Unopened Market in the World," and descriptions of Burma's many natural resources were placed in full view of the investing capitalist who might have ventured to read the paper.[110] Major newspapers, including the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *St. James's Gazette*, *The Graphic*, the *Indian Daily News*, and the *Manchester Guardian* all had a rush of articles about Burma between 1885 and 1886, outlining Burma's future economic potential alongside their ruminations on the despotic King Thebaw and the need to keep India's northeast frontier safe and secure.[111] With its "brave, loyal, and desirable subjects," it was thought that Burma's frontier regions offered unlimited wealth to the shrewd investor willing to invest his capital in a formerly begotten land. As the British official in Burma, James G. Scott, would say during this time,

[110] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 February 1885.
[111] For a sample of these articles, see the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 February 1885, 15 October 1885, 31 August 1886; *The Standard*, 1 January 1886; *St. James's Gazette*, 5 January 1886, 2 January 1886, 1 January 1886, 12 December 1885, 7 November 1885; *The Graphic*, 23 May 1885, 31 October 1885, 14 November 1885; the *Indian Daily News*, 31 December 1885, 10 November 1885, 30 October 1885; the *Manchester Guardian*, 3 November 1885, 18 November 1885, 30 October 1885.

"everything conspires to show that Burma is the most valuable addition to our empire made for many years."[112]

The efforts of Colquhoun and Hallett to find support and capital for the China-Burma railway scheme were at times herculean, but ultimately, economic development in Burma proceeded slowly. By the late 1890s, the major businesses operating in Burma – including Steel Brothers, Bulloch Brothers, and the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation - remained the same as during the pre-annexation period, with rice and teak remaining the premiere export commodities. The one exception was the Burma Ruby Mines Company Limited, located in the Mogok, Upper Burma. Following intense - and to some, perhaps crooked - negotiations with the Indian government in the years following annexation, the Rothschilds came to control the mines and, with much fanfare, floated the company on the London Stock Exchange during the late 1880s. Although the mines would not prove remunerative over the long term, this business attracted the attention of many in Burma, India, and Britain who saw rubies and precious stones as a symbol of Burma's untapped wealth.[113]

The initial rush of interest about economic development in Burma during the annexation years may not have advanced into material progress as swiftly as those in the colony might have hoped, but the 1890s did see a major shift in how development would proceed. In the realm of administration, business interests began to take on an increasingly important official role. In 1897, the Chief Commissioner was given a new title – Lieutenant Governor – and provided a Legislative Council that had nine nominated members, including

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[112] Quoted in *St. James's Gazette*, 31 March 1886. See also, James George Scott, *Burma: As It Was, As It Is, and As It Will Be* (London: George Redway, 1886).
[113] The story of the Burma Ruby Mines Company Limited and other efforts to develop the natural resources of Burma will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. For a history of Burma Ruby Mines, see Robert Vicat Turrell, "Conquest and Concession: The Case of the Burma Ruby Mines," *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 22 no. 1 (February 1988), 141-163.

five non-officials, some of whom were part of the business community. In 1909, the council was enlarged to fifteen members, including nine non-official members, one of whom was elected directly by the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce.[114] These moves to reform and decentralize the colonial government were thought to be for "administrative convenience rather than of constitutional progress."[115] For J.S. Furnivall, these changes ushered in the replacement of a laissez-faire policy to one marked by efficiency. Furnivall also believed that it reflected the "the preponderance of capitalist interests in the direction of affairs" and their "growing importance in the economic life of Burma." It would not be until 1923 that political development began to trump the move towards economic development.[116]

Political decentralization during this period was accompanied by the privatization of public works. In 1896, after a protracted debate that, as earlier sections of this chapter noted began in the 1870s, the Rothschilds formed a company to take over management of the Burma State Railways with a capital of £2 million. The new company was named the Burma Railways Company. The Rothschilds, whose interests in Indian railways had begun as early as the 1830s, saw railway development in Burma as an opportunity to expand development in an area that the colonial state was reluctant to invest in, despite the failure of their venture with the Burma Ruby Mines Company.[117] In Burma, the change was met with a mixed reception among businessmen. As rumors of the sale were discussed within Rangoon circles in July 1896, the Chamber of Commerce petitioned the government to make the terms of the sale public "so that those largely interested in carrying arrangements of the country may have

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114 J.S. Furnivall, Colonial Practice and Policy, 72-3.
115 F. Burton Leach, *The Future of Burma* (Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1936), 15.
116 J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Practice and Policy*, 72
117 For a history of the Rothschilds investments in Indian railways, see Stuart Sweeney, "Indian Railroading: Floating Railway Companies in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Economic History Review,* vol. 62 no. 1 (August 2009), 57-79.

an opportunity of seeing that the trade will not be unduly effected by what appears to be the granting of a strict monopoly to a private syndicate."[118] Rangoon's businessmen, who had been lobbying the government to take over the lines themselves for decades, were likely annoyed that an outsider like the Rothschilds, unfamiliar with Burma's needs and holding too much power for their tastes, would be allowed to take over an enterprise seen as critical to the advancement of their interests and profits.[119] In response, the government notified the Chamber of Commerce that it was "not the first time that a State Railway has been handed over to a private company, and the authorities are not likely to give any private company such unreserved powers that the public will be at its mercy," adding that "this was only to be expected."[120] On September 1st, 1896, the Burma Railways Company, with the support of government, took control of Burma's railway system on a contract set for twenty-five years. Its chairman was Sir Auckland Colvin, former Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Provinces and Oudh in India.[121]

Debates about railway expansion and budgets in the colony remained heated during this period but reveal that the anxieties of the 1880s had somewhat subsided. In 1893, with the government still unwilling to sell the Burma State Railways to a private enterprise, one local in Burma noted that while there were plenty of reasons for and against the privatization of this colony's railways, the Indian government's response had been misleading: the lack of railway extension in Burma was not the result of "want of pluck and enterprise" but instead

118 Quoted in Josef Silverstein, "Politics and Railroads in Burma and India," *Journal of Southeast Asian History,* vol. 5 no. 1 (March 1964), 20.
119 William Strang Steel and Co. and Finlay, Muir and Co. had, once again, attempted to purchase the Burma State Railways in the early 1890s but were rebuffed by Lord Kimberley in the Indian government as well as the local government in Burma. *Rangoon Gazette*, 4 August 1893.
120 *Rangoon Gazette*, 17 July 1896.
121 *Rangoon Gazette*, 24 July 1896.

to the "dog-in-the-manger spirit of the Government of India" who was "in a chronic struggle with an unfavourable budget."[122] Despite this, when the Viceroy of India, Lord Lansdowne, visited Burma in November 1893, it was acknowledged by the mainstream press as well as the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce that Burma had been treated more liberally after the annexation. "Revenue was taken away in sums out of all proportion to the small province" during the pre-annexation years, the *Rangoon Gazette* argued, but considering all the "accessories of civilised government" that were expanded in the intervening years – including jails, hospitals, school, and most importantly, roads and railways – it could not be said that Burma had been treated illiberally.[123] The newspaper, however, was already behind the times: in September, the Indian government had agreed to negotiate the future of India's railways, opening up the possibility of privatizing public works in Burma.[124] While the paper remained cautious about such a proposal, believing that privatization would lead to the formation of "railway kings" bent on personal aggrandizement like in America, their opinion did not represent the views of the state or for many in the business community.[125] Almost exactly three years later, Burma's railways would be handed over to a private firm, where it would remain for next three decades.

Conclusion

[122] *Rangoon Gazette*, 4 August 1893.
[123] *Rangoon Gazette*, 25 November 1893.
[124] According to the *Rangoon Gazette*, "the main inducements offered are the free use of land and of State surveys, the provision of rolling stock and the maintenance of new lines by the main line administrations, the carriage of stores and materials over the State lines at favourable rates, and assistance from the main lines' earnings towards ensuring a 4 per cent dividend." *Rangoon Gazette,* 23 September 1893. For the full terms of the Government of India's proposals, see *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 September 1893.
[125] *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 September 1893.

The construction of Burma's railway system during the late nineteenth century was critical to the social, political, and economic development of the colony for years to come. Despite not existing at all until the early 1870s, by the turn of the twentieth century Burma had become an integrated province, with railways and roads stretching for hundreds of miles across the colony's expansive geography. Debates over railways were heated during the late nineteenth century and provided local colonial officials and businessmen in Burma an opportunity to imagine and relate their own vision of the colony's future to those in Britain and India. While these visions could at times contrast, they most often remained in concert with one another. With a common belief that development could be attained through privatization and that population scarcity could be fixed through promoting migration to the colony, a distinct Anglo-Burmese lobby of colonizers was fashioned over this period, binding those in administration with Burma's powerful commercial community. For J.S. Furnivall, this period of Burma's history can be seen as one of "efficiency": the British Burma government's hands-off approach was replaced with a model focused around economic development and the efficient management and administration of the colony through decentralization. With the arrival of the twentieth century, these efforts would continue to evolve and expand, bringing the British colonial state and its apparatus closer to the area of the country that the Burma Corporation would soon occupy. It was on the road to the Northern Shan States – or rather the railway – that Hoover's dreams of silver and other riches would be paved.

Chapter Two: The Road to the Northern Shan States: Bawdwin and Mineral Resource Development in Burma, c. 1000-1900

Introduction

In September 1907, a young American mining engineer accompanied by his wife, sister-in-law, and two children – one of whom was only two months old – set sail from London, England for Southeast Asia. Arriving in Rangoon, the capital of British Burma, in October, the family quickly travelled north to Mandalay, the former seat of the Burmese King and the last capital of a sovereign, independent Burma. On business and not on holiday, the young engineer left his family in the safe confines of dusty Mandalay and traveled east towards the mountains. There, in the remote jungles of the Northern Shan States, the engineer would for the first time inspect the area that would become, over the next few decades, one of the largest mining operations in the world. It was also the mine that, ultimately, would make his fortune. His name was Herbert Hoover, the future President of the United States.[1]

Well before Hoover made his name in politics he was a man of business. A graduate of Stanford's first class in 1898 where he studied geology, Hoover subsequently went to Western Australia and was employed by the well-known mining firm, Bewick, Moreing and Company. Following the success of a number of mining enterprises that occurred under Hoover's watch during his first few years, the young engineer became a partner in Bewick,

[1] Many biographies of Herbert Hoover have been published since his time as President, but the most thorough study of his early years can be found in George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer 1874-1914* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983). For Hoover's experiences in Burma, see 412-425.

Moreing and his interests, along with his firms, broadened. From 1901 to 1907, Hoover would scour the globe searching for new mining possibilities, including China, where he was an eyewitness to the Siege of Tientsin. In 1908, owing to his success as well as the onset of ill health, Hoover left Bewick, Moreing and set off on his own. According to Herbert Hoover's official biographer, George Nash, by the outbreak of World War One in 1914, Hoover, "by any standard, was a success." His mines could be found across the globe, from Australia, Burma, and Russia in the East, to Latin America and the United States in the West. Director of eighteen mining and financial companies with a total authorized share capital of more than $55,000,000, Hoover was one of the most successful mining financiers in the world.[2]

Despite Hoover's vast experience as a mining engineer, promoter, and financier during the early twentieth century, what the American found in Burma was unique. Although mineral deposits were often found in remote and inhospitable locations, including Western Australia where Hoover made his name, Bawdwin was especially isolated. Located at the edge of Britain's Empire in the Northern Shan States, a semi-independent region of Burma where only a few British officials had found themselves since the annexation of 1886, Bawdwin was largely cut off from the colonial state. Instead of the British Government, a *Sawbwa*, or local chief, administered the area around the mines, which were located only 40 miles from the Chinese border.[3] Unlike Australia, or even Canada or South Africa, Burma

[2] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 568.
[3] For a history of the Shan States during this period, see James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 1 vol. 1 (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1900), 187-330; Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation* (Ithaca: Dept. of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1965); Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State: From its Origins to 1962* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009).

was also not a settler society. Officially a province of India during the early colonial period, Burma was considered a colonial backwater with a debilitating climate; it was where officials ended up, not where they aspired to be.[4] On top of this, the area around Bawdwin was cut off from communications. Although a railway was built through the Northern Shan States during the 1890s, the connection remained 50 miles distant from the mining camp.[5] To get to Bawdwin, one had to travel 130 miles by rail from Mandalay to Hsipaw and then another 50 miles on horseback through mountainous terrain and "dripping jungle," as Hoover described it, to the mines.[6] Once at the mines, a new set of dangers awaited: monsoon rains, tropical disease, and tigers. Hoover would learn of these perils first hand. While out exploring the old Chinese workings at the mining site, Hoover entered a tunnel and discovered the fresh tracks of a tiger. Backing out safely, the financier christened the tunnel, "Tiger Tunnel," a name that remained for the lifetime of the mining enterprise.[7] Although much would change at Bawdwin over the coming decades, this was what the engineer was faced with in 1907.

What sent a young American mining engineer to one of the most remote spaces on the globe was very simple: to strike it rich. Hoover, who by 1907 had been in the mining industry for nearly a decade and was rumored to be one of the best mine assessors in the world, was in Burma because of the potential of what he had heard. Word of mouth was all he had to go on, having never been to Burma himself. But a journey to the jungles of Northeastern Burma was not the easiest feat at the time. Although no stranger to long sea

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[4] See, for example, George Orwell's *Burmese Days*.
[5] For the first mention of the railway in the colonial archive, see Proceedings, P/7807, Department of Commerce and Industry, Burma, November 1908. Construction of the Burma Mines Railway.
[6] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure 1874-1920* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 93.
[7] See Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 415.

voyages or inhospitable mining camps, Bawdwin was another story. Located in as remote a territory as existed in the British Empire at the time, the trip for Hoover and his family lasted almost exactly three months, most of which was spent in transit.[8] For a budding financier about to break ties with the company that had made him rich, and who at the time controlled a number of large industrial mining enterprises, the trip to Burma must have represented a significant gamble for Hoover.[9] In short, it needed to pay off.

For mining engineers searching for new opportunities at the turn of the twentieth century, information was crucial to success, and Hoover, of course, was no exception. The engineer's trip to Burma marked an important occasion in the mine's history but Bawdwin's story did not begin there. The legend of vast silver mines in the jungles of Burma had been known for many years. Since British officials began visiting Burma at the end of the eighteenth century, they wrote extensively about the legend of these mines, as well as the potential of other mineral deposits across the country. This chapter will explore this earlier history of Bawdwin and its environs during the years preceding Hoover's trip. I argue that while Hoover and his men helped develop these mines during the early twentieth century, the mines at Bawdwin had a rich history that pre-dated the incursion of British and American capitalists during the colonial period, and that the mines were well known by British officials

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[8] According to the Hoover's calendar from the period, the family left London via the Suez Canal on September 18th 1907 and returned to London on December 17th. The family did not arrive in Rangoon until October 12th, then continued to Mandalay on October 17th, to Penang on November 10th, Rangoon again on November 22nd, and then set sail from Colombo on November 24th. Based on these travel dates and locations, it is likely that Herbert Hoover only had time to spend a handful of days at the mines. It was only the second trip Hoover took in 1907, the first being a solo journey to Australia. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter "HHPL"), Lou Hoover Subject File, Trips: Alaska-Intiedt, Brian, 1931. Box 182. Subject File: Trips. Travels and Residences of HH and LHH, 1895-1929.

[9] Hoover retired from Bewick, Moreing on 30 June 1908, less than a year after his trip to Burma. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 381.

long before Hoover and his associates "discovered" them. Likewise, although Bawdwin would become the largest industrial mining operation in Burma during the twentieth century, the development of the mines was part of a wider effort among capitalists to develop Upper Burma's many natural resources, including oil, jade, amber, and gold. This chapter demonstrates how in the years following the annexation, the Shan States of Burma became critical to the plans of the colonial government to efficiently develop Burma's economy and resources, beginning with the expansion of the colony's railway system through the Northern Shan States. Borrowing the language that colonial officials utilized during the nineteenth century to push forward the expansion of Burma's railway system, the Anglo-Burmese lobby saw the economic development of the Shan States as critical to the success of the colony as a whole, despite the fact that the region remained completely undeveloped at the time of annexation. Ultimately, it was their vision of a bountiful and developed Shan States of the future that Hoover and his contacts would be able to seize upon in the early twentieth century to legitimize their industrial operations.

A Land of Contrasts

Long before American businessmen or Chinese laborers worked the slag heaps at Bawdwin, the discovery of the mines was made possible by what had occurred naturally millions of years ago. The mineral deposits at Bawdwin were formed sometime during the late Cambrian or early Ordovician geologic eras, or around 500 million years ago. At this time, when the land that became Burma was under the ocean, eruptions of magma from the sea floor created a layer of rhyolite tuff – or igneous, volcanic rock – that had passed through vents stretching to the earth's crust. Hot solutions from the crust containing lead, zinc, silver, and copper sulphides rose to the surface through these vents – which according to geologists were extremely crushed and shattered - and caused a metasomatic replacement of the rhyolite tuff, depositing the sulphides into the rock.[10] Galena, the main ore of lead and one of the primary sources of silver, would over time replace the feldspar in the tuffs, with zinc-blende veins branching off.[11] This would lay the foundation for what would become one of the largest zinc-lead-silver deposits on earth.

The mines are located in a geographic area that geologists refer to as the Shan Hills or the Shan Plateau. Formed millions of years ago during the Mesozoic Era, the Shan Plateau rises abruptly from the area east of Mandalay, occupying the entire region stretching to China, Thailand, and Laos to the east and to the tip of Tenasserim in the south.[12] It averages over 3,000 feet in elevation. Burma's largest waterway, the Irrawaddy River, bounds the hills on their western edge and the Mekong River, which begins on the Tibetan plateau, separates Burma on the east. Through the middle of the hills passes the Salween River. Geologically, this region contains the majority of Burma's mineral resources. The western edge of the plateau near Mandalay consists primarily of crystalline gneisses and schists while the eastern section contains a variety of Paleozoic rocks, particularly limestone. Large wolfram and tin deposits were formed along the southern coast in what became the colonial towns of Mergui

[10] M.H. Loveman, "The Geology of the Bawdwin Mines, Burma, Asia," in *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers,* vol. 56 (1917), 191.
[11] H.L. Chhibber, *The Mineral Resources of Burma* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1934), 143.
[12] The following geographical descriptions are taken from L. Dudley Stamp's, "Some Notes on the Economic Geography of Burma," *The Geographical Teacher*, vol. 12 no. 3 (Autumn 1923), 177-190. Stamp was a Professor of Geography and Geology at the University of Rangoon during the late colonial period and wrote extensively about both British and Burmese geography.

and Tavoy, and coal of good quality could be found in the Liassic rocks near Kalaw in the Southern Shan States. North of Mandalay, in what would become the town of Mogok, Burma's famous ruby mines could be found, and even further north, mines of jadeite and amber.

The Shan Plateau exists in great contrast to the rest of Burma. Estimated during the colonial period to be over 260,000 square miles, or roughly twice the size of the British Isles, Burma's geography varies greatly within its modern boundaries. On the western edge of the country lies the Arakan Yoma, a stretch of hills that separates the modern day territory of Burma with Assam in eastern India. Linking up with the eastern end of the Himalayas, this mountainous region has a peak elevation of over 10,000 feet, and like the Shan Plateau, contains a core of old gneisses. Owing to its harsh climate and inaccessibility, this region has been sparsely populated. During the colonial period, the Arakan Yoma also proved to be a formidable natural barrier, separating India from Burma and creating a constant problem for colonial officials who sought to link the two provinces by railway.

In the center of the country, between both the Shan Hills and the Arakan Yoma, lies the Irrawaddy Valley. This region is defined by the Irrawaddy River, which divides the country into east and west, and originates from the confluence of the N'Mai and Mali rivers in the Himalayan Mountains. The river flows north to south before emptying in the Andaman Sea. It is in the fertile Irrawaddy Valley that most of Burma's population has lived since Tibeto-Burman settlers migrated to Burma in the second century BCE, and where the majority of Burma's population still lives today. In the south, where the Irrawaddy River breaks apart into the Irrawaddy Delta before depositing into the Andaman Sea, the climate is warm and moist. This area is particularly suited for wet rice agriculture, which had been produced on a small-scale for centuries but emerged on an industrial scale during the colonial period. The Delta also contains Burma's most populated city, Rangoon, which was Burma's capital during the colonial period. The central region of the Valley, on the other hand, is known for its dry climate. In this area, called the dry zone, there is significantly less rainfall than elsewhere in Burma, and the land consists primarily of flat alluvial plains. It is in this area of Burma that the country's famous oil wells are located, along with the last pre-colonial capital, Mandalay. Further north, the Irrawaddy River climbs eastward towards China and ever closer to the foothills of the Himalayas. It is here that the Valley, along with bustling commercial traffic that has marked the Irrawaddy in modern times, comes to a close.

Although the climate varies considerably when moving from north to south within the Irrawaddy Valley, Burma, as a whole, has a tropical monsoon climate. This is due to the monsoon wind that blows inland half the year and out to sea during the other half. Typically, the hot dry season runs from March to May, the rainy season from May to October, and the cool season from November to February.[13] Despite the unique climate of the dry zone, where the annual rainfall is less than 40 inches, the rest of Burma receives heavy rain annually, with coastal areas collecting up to 200 inches yearly. Temperatures, of course, vary as well. In the Irrawaddy Valley, both in the dry zone and the more humid Delta region, the average high temperature can reach well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit from March to May. The Arakan Yoma and Shan Plateau, on the other hand, are much cooler, with averages varying based on elevation.

Moving in all directions, then, one finds great variety in Burma's geography, geology, and climate. Shifting from east to west, one passes from rolling hills to flat alluvial plains to

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[13] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 1-2.

high mountains. One would also find variation traveling south to north on the Irrawaddy, moving from the moist paddy fields near Rangoon to the dry, desert-like climate near Mandalay and finally to the cool, mountainous terrain in the far north. Surrounded by mountains on the western, northern, and eastern borders as well as the sea to the south, Burma is also geographically isolated. For a traveler like Hoover, who had searched for mineral resources across the globe but had spent little time in the tropics, these contrasts must have been marked. From London to Rangoon, Rangoon to Mandalay, and Mandalay to the Northern Shan States, Hoover would have passed through a host of landscapes and climates, shifting with nearly every change of transportation. But it was in the Northern Shan States, in the area around Bawdwin, that was Hoover's ultimate destination. It was there where, according to Hoover, "I was to experience again the clash of Occidental engineering with Oriental civilization."[14]

Mining on the Shan Plateau

The administrative and geographic area known in the colonial period as the Northern Shan States was in a region that had long been occupied by the Shan people. Scholarly opinion is divided on when the Shan arrived in northeastern Burma, but ancient chronicles show that Shan migrants occupied the area around Bawdwin at least a thousand years ago.[15] The Shan belong to the Tai ethnic group, who today reside in many places across Southeast

[14] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 90.
[15] The Shan are mentioned in Burmese chronicles as early as the reign of the Burmese King Anawrahta, between 1044 and 1077 A.D., when the ancient kingdom of Pagan was at its height. The many academic theories that surround Shan migration are outlined in Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation,* 15-47.

Asia, including Burma, southwestern China, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Hainan, and Assam. In Burma, though, the Shan lived in a precarious position between 1000 and 1800, occupying the Shan Plateau in the borderlands between Siam, China, and the lands ruled by the Burmese King. This region, despite its remoteness during the colonial years, was the center of geopolitical intrigues during the ancient period owing to its location, and the Shan became embroiled in the affairs of the state. After the Shan assisted in the Mongol invasion of Pagan in 1287, for instance, the Emperor Kublai Khan installed the Shan as rulers of Upper Burma, where they would remain in power until the mid sixteenth century.[16] During this time, known as the Shan Period, Ava became the capital of Upper Burma and the Shan States to the east became divided among various Shan *Sawbwas* – or chiefs – for the first time.[17] These *Sawbwas* battled with one another throughout the pre-colonial period, vying for power within the state. In 1527, a collection of these states, led by the *Sawbwa* of Mong Yang, invaded Ava and took control of the country. In 1555, however, the Burman King Bayinnaung, operating from Pegu in the south, conquered Ava in the north, and gradually annexed the Shan States, bringing them within the administrative control of the lowland state.[18]

The Shan States throughout this time were a collection of geographically bounded principalities ruled by their own *Sawbwas*, which included the states of Hsipaw, Mogaung, and Hsenwi, among others. While these Shan chiefs remained nominally independent

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[16] This rule, though, was always nominal, with the Shan at times paying tribute to the Chinese crown and at other times acting independently. See Ibid, 47-8.
[17] Sao Saimong Mangrai argues that the Shan sawbwas remained divided during this period, constantly warring, and that this "rendered the various sawbwas incapable of consolidating into one powerful kingdom which might have changed the course of Burma's history." Ibid, 50.
[18] Ibid, 50-1.

throughout the Shan Period, the arrival of Bayinnaung's troops ushered in a change in administration. From the mid-sixteenth century, the chiefs were required to speak an oath of allegiance to the Burman crown, as well as pay tribute in the form of goods and manpower in return for their continued independence. The loyalty of the Shan chiefs, though, was in many ways symbolic, and the Burman state found it difficult to enforce their policies in the Shan States. This would change with the accession of Alaungpaya of the Konbaung Dynasty in the late eighteenth century. According to the colonial official James G. Scott, "from that time the Tai were never free from Burman interference," and the "power and prosperity of the Tai principalities steadily declined."[19] One significant change was the appointment of *Sawbwas*. What before had been a procedure based solely on heredity became a state-sanctioned activity, with the government in Ava appointing leaders based ostensibly on the wishes of the people and the previous ruler.[20] In order to weaken the States and make them more reliant on the support of the crown, though, the Burman state fostered feuds between the various *Sawbwas* and created animosities between rivals who aspired to become chief. In time, this infighting led to the disturbance of entire areas of the Shan States, leading to widespread crime and the abandonment of once thriving villages.[21] Alaungpaya's policies, however, would remain in force until the British annexed the region in 1886.

[19] James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 1 vol. 1, 280-282.
[20] Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, 58.
[21] James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman (eds.), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 1 vol. 1, 280-282.

Figure 2: Namtu before the Burma Corporation era. Source: J.D. Hoffman, "The Bawdwin Mines," *Mining Magazine* (March 1916).

The mines at Bawdwin existed in the Shan State of Tawngpeng, also known as Loi Long, which was situated between the much larger states of North Hsenwi, Mongmit, and Hsipaw. The Namtu river, for which the mining settlement "Namtu" would be named, passed through the center of the state from north to south, with land beyond the east bank having a comparatively level countryside as opposed to the hilly features that define the western edge. The elevation of the tract reached as high as seven thousand feet, and the area was primarily known as a tea producer. Tawngpeng was founded in 1753, although ancient records show that the area was settled as early as 1083 A.D.[22] Its capital was known as Namhsan. The Palaung, an ethnic minority with Mon-Khmer origin, ruled Tawngpeng for centuries before

[22] James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman (eds.), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 2 vol. 3, (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1900), 250-1.

the British arrived, although Shan, Kachin, Lihsaw, and Chinese people were also resident in the state.[23] History about the region is sparse, but according to J.G. Scott, the Chinese utilized the area as a base for their army to invade Burma and the Shan States during the pre-colonial period, although it is unknown if they were driven from the plains or chose the region owing to its cool climate. During the Konbaung period, Tawngpeng was known as an upstart state, often rebelling against the Burman crown. In the time of King Mindon during the mid-nineteenth century, two *Sawbwas* from Tawngpeng, including Hkun Kyan who was appointed by the Burman government, were killed for defying the crown. When the invading British visited the area in 1887, the *Sawbwa* – at this time Hkun Hkam Mong - refused to meet with the British party and even organized an attack that proved unsuccessful. In wake of these transgressions, his son, Hkam Tan Mong, was appointed *Sawbwa* and submitted peacefully to the British in March 1888.[24]

The mines existed in Shan and Palaung territory during the pre-colonial period but the area around Bawdwin, as well as the mine itself, had a host of other occupants who were drawn to the area owing to the wealth of silver known to exist there. The Chinese, in particular, had been mining the iron ore deposits at Bawdwin for centuries, and American and European geologists and engineers who visited Bawdwin in the early twentieth century provided a variety of estimates about when the Chinese began mining in the area. According

[23] Tawngpeng was the only Shan State ruled by the Palaung. According to J.G. Scott, the total population of Tawngpeng at the turn of the twentieth century was around 17,000. There were around 2,000 Palaung households, around 1,000 Shan, around 350 Kachin, 40 Lihsaw, and 14 Chinese. The *Imperial Gazetteer of India* placed the population closer to 23,000, with the Palaung having around 16,000 people and the Shan around 5,000. James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman (eds.), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 2 vol. 3, 255; *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. 23 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908), 268.

[24] This history is outlined in James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman (eds.), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 2 vol. 3, 254.

to one early visitor, C.H. Henniker, work at the mines had commenced a thousand years earlier and that the amount of material extracted "must have run into millions of tons."[25] Despite this, later accounts thought the site had been settled much later. Malcolm Maclaren, a well-known mining engineer who was hired by Hoover to report on the mines prospects in 1913, came to the conclusion that the Chinese founded the mines in 1412, after an inscription was discovered at the site in 1906. Burma's government archaeologist at the time, Taw Sein Ko, translated the inscription to read that work at Bawdwin commenced in the ninth year of the Emperor Ch'ingtsou (Yonglo) of the Ming Dynasty, or the western year of 1412. According to Maclaren, while the Shan governed this region from at least the fifth century through the thirteenth century, the invasion of Chinese forces in 1343 likely saw the area surrounding Bawdwin fall under the control of the Chinese Empire, where it would have been part of China's far western frontier. Following a subsequent invasion in 1582, Maclaren believed that the Chinese had officially taken control of the area around Bawdwin and that "the mines were worked from the 15th century exclusively by the Chinese."[26]

Although Maclaren and other European engineers estimated that the iron ore of Bawdwin was first exploited in 1412, recent historical work, however, has demonstrated that work at the mining site could have begun as early as the twelfth century. Historian Robert Wicks has demonstrated that it was during the Pagan era, specifically during the late twelfth century under the reign of King Alaungsithu, that silver became considered a measure of value in Burmese society, which coincided with the discovery of silver deposits throughout the country. Bawdwin was a critical source of this silver, and for Wicks, was the most likely

[25] C.H. Henniker, "Mining Exploration in Upper Burma," *The Institution of Mining and Metallurgy: Bulletin No. 7* (London: The Institution of Mining and Metallurgy, 1906), 7.
[26] HHPL, Herbert Hoover Pre-Commerce Files, Subject:Mining, Burma Mines Reports. "Burma Mines, LTD.," Report by Malcolm Maclaren, April, 1913.

reason why Alaungsithu established a military post at nearby Inle Lake.[27] During this period, between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, so-called "Shan shell money" – or silver ingots from the Bawdwin mines - was known to have circulated in Southwest China, Thailand, and the Lao States, potentially reaching as far as Bengal in the west. John Deyell has estimated that between Bawdwin and another nearby silver mine in Shweli, the Shan could have extracted nearly 1000 kg of silver annually during this early period, providing an immense amount of silver for the regional market.[28] Henry Yule, the nineteenth century Orientalist and British administrator, noted in his translations of Marco Polo that the famous explorer likely came across this silver while visiting "Zardandan" – or southwest Yunnan – during the late thirteenth century, although Polo was not aware of that fact.[29] In any case, early records indicate that Bawdwin was likely a site of economic activity for at least two centuries before the arrival of the Chinese.

The circulation of Shan silver throughout Burma, China, and eastern India between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries suggests that Bawdwin was a significant mining operation during the Pagan period, but as the Chinese inscription found at the mine revealed, the Ming Dynasty took control of the site in 1412. Maclaren's assertion that the area likely fell under Chinese suzerainty during the pre-colonial period, however, has been proven false in the archival record. Instead, Chinese sources indicate that the Bawdwin mines remained outside of the Chinese empire's jurisdiction during the medieval and early modern period, unlike

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[27] Robert S. Wicks, *Money, Markets, and Trade in Early Southeast Asia: The Development of Indigenous Monetary Systems to AD 1400* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1992), 132-134.
[28] John Deyell, "The China Connection: Problems of Silver Supply in Medieval Bengal," in J.F. Richards (ed.), *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern Worlds* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), 222-225.
[29] Henry Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, The Venetian, Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1871), 77.

other critical silver mines located within neighboring Yunnan. The mines at Bawdwin represented an extra-territorial site of economic activity for the Chinese Empire, who was attempting to expand their economy during this period. What resulted was the creation of a Chinese city in the mountains of Burma between the early fifteenth and the late nineteenth centuries, all of which centered around the iron ore deposits at what was known as the "Old Silver Mines."

"The Old Silver Mines"

As the previous section demonstrates, Bawdwin was located in a precarious geographic position during the pre-colonial era. Located in the mountains of the Shan Plateau and far from the cosmopolitan population centers of Burma or China, the area around Bawdwin was a contested territory where Chinese, Burmese, Shan, Palaung, and Kachin groups all vied for power. This fact was memorialized in the many names by which the mines were referred to. The name "Bawdwin" is a Burmese term, with "baw" translating to silver and "dwin" meaning "mine" or "well." The mines were also known in Burma as "Bawdwingyi," or "The Great Silver Mines." In China, the mines were known as "Lao Yin Chang," or the "Old Silver Mines," but at times were also called the Bolong or Dashan mines. Located only about fifty miles south of the Chinese Province of Yunnan, the mines at Bawdwin were critical to the Chinese silver trade during the pre-colonial period, with some later visitors estimating that over 20,000 Chinese laborers worked the mines at a given time.[30] Long before any European or American were to "discover" the "Great Silver Mines" of Bawdwin, there were the days of the "Old Silver Mines" of Lao Yin Chang.

Today, scholars would refer to the kind of contact zone that existed at Bawdwin as a borderlands region, or a place where no one state power could establish hegemony and where boundaries – whether geographic, cultural, or religious - remained fluid.[31] But while many different groups sought to control the area around the mines in the area known during the colonial period as Tawngpeng, the mines themselves represented a unique space that was distinct, in some ways, from the land around it. Although Shan, Palaung, and Kachin groups ostensibly ruled the area surrounding the mine during the pre-colonial period, Chinese miners occupied and governed the mine itself, creating a "company town" long before the rise of such a phenomenon in the western world. This company town was part of a nexus of other Chinese-run industrial mining operations that existed across the Burma-China frontier. In many ways, however, Bawdwin was also unique. Similar to how it would be governed under American and European mining experts in the early twentieth century, Bawdwin during the Chinese-era represented an extra-governmental and extra-imperial site of economic activity in the highlands of Burma, where a bustling city of migrants thrived long before the expansion of European capitalism into Southeast Asia.

The archival record regarding pre-colonial Bawdwin is sparse, but it is possible to reconstruct part of the mine's Chinese history through comparing European engineering reports about the site with the fragments of early records that are available about the region. As the Chinese inscription found at the mine demonstrated, the Chinese first moved into the

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[30] Allan B. Calhoun, "The Bawdwin Mine, in Burma," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 113 no. 25 (24 June 1922), 1084.
[31] See note 46 of the Introduction for an overview of the borderlands historiography.

area known as Bawdwin around 1412, a fact that has been reinforced in Ming dynasty records.[32] The Yongle Emperor was in control of China during this time, and between 1402 and 1424, he was known to have emphasized economic growth and the expansion of Chinese interests into areas of Southeast Asia, including Burma.[33] This period saw the use of coinage emerge in both China and Southeast Asia, owing to the deposits of copper, tin, and silver that were found in the region.[34] Chinese copper coins, in particular, became the basis for other monetary systems throughout Southeast Asia, and as historian Anthony Reid has argued, it was during this period that Southeast Asia's "Age of Commerce" first emerged. With increased contact and migration between China and neighboring powers, goods from Southeast Asia found a market in China for the first time, and China's sphere of influence expanded rapidly.[35] By 1412, these expanding interests would lead Chinese miners to the area around Bawdwin.

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[32] Anthony Reid, "Chinese on the Mining Frontier in Southeast Asia," in Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang (eds.), *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 24.

[33] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680: Volume Two Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 12.

[34] Along with Reid's *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, see the essays in Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang (eds.), *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[35] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, 12 and 95-97.

Figure 3: Old Chinese blast furnace at Bawdwin. Source: Allan B. Calhoun, "The Bawdwin Mine, in Burma," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 113 no. 25 (24 June 1922), 1087.

Little is known about Bawdwin's early years under Chinese occupation, but it is clear that by the eighteenth century, the site had become very important for Chinese economic interests. According to Anthony Reid, the eighteenth century in China saw a large population boom in the country, "stimulating an increase in the demand for silver, gold, copper, and lead currency to fuel the expanding economy." The area around Yunnan, in China's southwest, became the focal point for the mining industry, and it is estimated that 300,000 Han miners were active in the area in 1750, with the number rising to nearly 500,000 by 1800.[36] Bawdwin, though important, was one of many other silver mines in the region, most of which were found on the Chinese side of the border. The Maolong mines in Yunnan, the Dulong

[36] Reid, "Chinese on the Mining Frontier in Southeast Asia," 24. On the long history of Yunnan, see Bin Yang, *Between Winds and Clouds: The Making of Yunnan (Second Century BCE-Twentieth Century CE)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

mines in the area between Yunnan and Annam, and the Songxing mines in present-day Vietnam were are all massive industrial mining operations during this period, with each mine having an estimated population of over 10,000 miners during the peak of activities in the eighteenth century.[37] These mines, worked primarily by Han Chinese, provided silver to both the local economy and the Qing government, and later visitors to the region estimated that millions of tons of silver were excavated to support China's economy during the early modern period.[38]

Bawdwin was different than other large mining enterprises, however, because of its unique geographical location outside of the boundaries of the Qing Empire's territory. Although western engineers and geologists who first visited Bawdwin in the early twentieth century assumed that the mines had fallen under Chinese suzerainty during this early period, recent work in Chinese archives have shown that this was likely not the case. In 1769, for instance, the historian and Chinese official, Zhao Yi, related that "the Dashan mine beyond the Yunnan borders in Burma is highly productive," but that "since the locals do not practice smelting, they let the Chinese undertake the mining, contending themselves with collecting special taxes." Zhao Yi also noted that "altogether some forty thousand" Chinese miners were active at the mines, mostly hailing from the provinces of Jiangxi and Hubei. Other historians of the time reinforced this view, noting that unlike other large frontier mining enterprises at locations such as Maolong, Bawdwin was significant but remained outside of Chinese territory at the height of its production during the eighteenth century. Even with

[37] Yang Yuda, "Silver Mines in Frontier Zones: Chinese Mining Communities Along the Southwestern Borders of the Qing Empire," in Nanny Kim and Keiko Nagase-Reimer (eds.), *Mining, Monies, and Culture in Early Modern Societies: East Asian and Global Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 93.
[38] C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands,* 168; Yang Yuda, "Silver Mines in Frontier Zones," 96-97.

porous frontier boundaries in the mountains between Yunnan and northeast Burma, it was clear that while Bawdwin itself was occupied and operated by Chinese miners, the territory around it remained independent of Chinese control. Bawdwin was not part of China's extended imperial control, but instead, existed as a "company town" in foreign territory.[39]

Recent historical work on the border areas between Burma and China has provided context for Bawdwin's significance during the pre-colonial era, but most of what historians know today about the mine's early history has primarily come from reports that western experts wrote in the early twentieth century when first visiting the area. These narratives were based on the archaeological remains left at the site when western engineers and geologists began to arrive at Bawdwin. Alongside the Chinese inscription that noted the commencement of mining at Bawdwin, early visitors to the mines also discovered a vast network of buildings and roads that suggested a large Chinese presence in the region.[40] The Chinese inhabitants left many remnants of their occupation, including twelve to fourteen miles of fortifications along the north and north-west edge of the mining complex, which were said to be fifteen feet wide and ten feet deep. Allan B. Calhoun, a mine superintendent in the 1920s, believed that the fortifications indicated that the mines were used as a penal settlement for the Chinese government, and later Shan-Chinese workers at the mines reportedly told Calhoun that soldiers would have been used on one side to keep the prisoners

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[39] These materials are quoted and contextualized in Yang Yuda, "Silver Mines in Frontier Zones," 95-97. Yang Yuda has also noted that because of Bawdin remained outside of the Qing Empire's jurisdiction, it was not subject to taxation in the same manner as other mines in China. See Ibid, 98.

[40] According to Taw Sein Ko, the area around Bawdwin likely housed upwards of 20,000 Chinese laborers in the pre-colonial period but Maclaren thought this number to be too high. HHPL, Herbert Hoover Pre-Commerce Files, Subject:Mining, Burma Mines Reports. "Burma Mines, LTD.," Report by Malcolm Maclaren, April, 1913.

in while soldiers on the outside would repel "attacks from wild marauding native tribes."[41] For some other European visitors, these facts demonstrated that Chinese slaves worked the mines, an idea that was often reported on during the early days of European prospecting at the site.[42]

Along with buildings and fortifications, a stone-paved road was also found near the mines, and connected a number of abandoned dwellings in the valley and on the hillsides. Perhaps most suggestive of a large Chinese presence during the pre-colonial period, however, was the existence of temples and gravesites. According to Malcolm Maclaren, who provided the most comprehensive report on Bawdwin's pre-colonial history, along with a number of "well built temples" that existed around Bawdwin, hundreds or even thousands of Chinese gravesites were "scattered on every hillside overlooking the valley." The Chinese presence would later be memorialized in the naming of one of the mine's primary prospecting sites, the "Dead Chinaman Tunnel," after the remains of Chinese laborers were found in one of the mines shafts during the early years of the Burma Mines Limited.[43] In any case, between the dwellings, roads, temples, and gravesites that European experts found when visiting Bawdwin in the early twentieth century, it was certain that a considerable Chinese colony existed in the area in the years before the arrival of British colonialism. As one Australian

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[41] Ibid; Allan B. Calhoun, "The Bawdwin Mine, in Burma," 1089.

[42] R.G. Hall, a Resident Manager of the mines in the 1920s, would later write that "the presence of manacles on skeletons, and other evidences" that were later found "indicate[s] that convicts or slaves might have been employed." R.G. Hall, "Burma and the Bawdwin Mines," *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* vol. 115 no. 14 (7 April 1923), 619. In private company reports, Allan B. Colquhoun would also noted "a time when slave or convict labour was employed" at the mines. See British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, IOR/L/PS/12/2240, Wa States: Burma Corporation Expedition.

[43] HHPL, Herbert Hoover Pre-Commerce Files, Subject:Mining, Burma Mines Reports. "Burma Mines, LTD.," Report by Malcolm Maclaren, April, 1913.

mine employee in the 1920s would say, "the whole settlement was worked as a republic" during the Chinese era.[44] More than just a mine, Bawdwin was a small city.

Figure 4: Old Chinese village at Bawdwin. Source: M.H. Loveman, "The Geology of the Bawdwin Mines, Burma, Asia," in *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers,* vol. 56 (1917), 175.

The relics of a large Chinese settlement at Bawdwin were an indication of the mine's ancient heritage, but for early European engineers who visited the site, the significance of the mine as an economic operation during the Chinese era was made most clear on the surface of the large ore body itself. When European first visited the mines, they noted the extensive presence of Chinese workings on the surface of the area's mineral deposits, which included

[44] *Barrier Miner*, 7 July 1921.

hundreds of adits, bamboo shafting, and blast furnaces built into the rock. Calhoun estimated that upwards of twelve to fourteen miles of ancient adits were discovered at the site, although much of the excavation work occurred near the surface owing to limited drilling and drainage technology. Despite this, many early geologists who visited the mines – including Calhoun, the mine's superintendent during the 1920s - were amazed by the early Chinese methods of smelting the ore, which were said to "compare favorabl[y] with modern smelting practices." The Chinese, however, did not utilize all of the minerals at the large deposit, instead focusing their efforts exclusively on extracting silver as opposed to the myriad other minerals present in the ore, such as lead and zinc.[45] Ultimately, the remains of these other minerals would be discarded in slag heaps along the banks of the Namtu River, where they would later be discovered by American and European engineers and geologists keen on extracting minerals of all types for consumption on the global market.

The western experts who visited Bawdwin in the early twentieth century may have been astonished both by the longevity of the Chinese presence in the region and their industrial capacity, but as recent historical evidence has shown, their hypotheses were not always correct. Despite later historical reports on the mines, Bawdwin was likely first mined in the previous two centuries before the Chinese occupation in 1412, and perhaps more importantly, recent archival work has shown that the mines remained outside of Qing territory even at the height of its use in the Chinese era. Similarly, although some experts thought that Chinese miners must have used forced or coerced labor to extract minerals from the site at Bawdwin, recent work has shown that the fortifications found at the mine did not necessarily mean that slave labor was utilized. The presence of militias and troops at Chinese

[45] Allan B. Calhoun, "The Bawdwin Mine, in Burma," 1089-1090.

mining centers was very common in the region, owing largely to the fact that local indigenous populations who were at times hostile surrounded the mines. The mines could also serve as the first line of defense for invading armies. In 1777, for instance, the Chinese emperor ordered the invasion of Burma to defeat the newly installed Kongbaung dynasty, but as Burmese troops moved into Yunnan, the militia at the Maolong mine fought back and killed up to six hundred Burmese troops.[46] In a region far from state control and between two expanding imperial powers, the mines were in a fragile position that required armed protection in order to secure their mineral bounties. Fortifications discovered at Bawdwin were most likely the result of these security measures, and not evidence that slave labor was widespread in mining activities at the site.

Western experts who wrote about Bawdwin's history during the early twentieth century may not have understood how security was critical to the mine's success throughout the Chinese era, but they did believe that the mine's tenuous position led to the site's abandonment sometime during the 1860s. Their opinions on why the mine was abandoned, however, were divided. For J. Coggin Brown, an assistant superintendent for the Geological Survey of India, the mine was deserted "as a direct result of the great Mahomaden rebellion in Yunnan" in 1868, known as the Panthay Rebellion, which lasted for nearly a decade.[47] According to Calhoun, though, the mine was likely closed for a number of overlapping reasons. While the Panthay Rebellion made "life and property insecure" in the region and blocked the trade route to China, local Kachin tribes – considered "a war-like mountain race"

[46] Yang Yuda, "Silver Mines in Frontier Zones," 104.
[47] J. Coggin Brown, "Geology and Ore Deposits of the Bawdwin Mines," *Records of the Geological Survey of India*, vol. 48 (1918), 126. Malcolm Maclaren, it should be noted, also argued in support of this theory. See HHPL, Herbert Hoover Pre-Commerce Files, Subject: Mining, Burma Mines Reports. "Burma Mines, LTD.," Report by Malcolm Maclaren, April, 1913.

– were thought to have taken advantage of the turmoil and raided the mine. The "most important" reason for Calhoun, however, was "the difficulty of operating the mine on account of water, poor ventilation, and entire lack of machinery." For Calhoun, how Chinese miners were able to navigate the mines adits and ventilate the shafts was "inconceivable to one who does not know the Chinaman," and must have led to the loss of many laborers lives. More problematic than contingent local disturbances was the inferiority of Chinese technology, a dubious claim considering the durability of Chinese efforts at Bawdwin since the early fifteenth century.[48]

Despite the variety of hypotheses that western experts had about Bawdwin's abandonment, the destabilization of the region between Yunnan and Burma that resulted from the Panthay Rebellion remains the most likely reason for why Chinese miners left the mine. As research on frontier mining in this region has shown, Bawdwin was part of a network of other mining enterprises throughout the greater Yunnan region that supplied silver to the Chinese government. With tensions erupting in the region in the 1850s, including violence at the mines in Maolong, Shiyang, and Talang between 1855 and 1856, well-established trade routes and migrations paths that had served the region for centuries were suddenly closed off.[49] The frontier area between Burma and China was sent into chaos during this time. Refugees flooded into Burma from China in order to evade the violence at home, and many locals in Burma's border areas who were dependent on cross-border trade

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[48] Allan B. Calhoun, "The Bawdwin Mine, in Burma," 1084.
[49] David G. Atwill, *The Chinese Sultanate: Islam, Ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856-1873* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 84-87 and 106.

were sent into an acute poverty.[50] Bawdwin, located only fifty miles from the Chinese border in contested territory, would have been at the center of these issues. Insecure trade routes and widespread violence would have made it nearly impossible for the mine's managers to maintain its workforce or to safely move silver across the mountains back to China. Local groups like the Kachin might have exploited such weaknesses to raid the mine at this time, but the disruption of the region's trade and migration networks would have already isolated Bawdwin from China's interior during this period.

As these stories demonstrate, what Hoover and his engineers discovered at the turn of the twentieth century was not an untapped wealth of minerals buried deep in the ground, but instead, an ancient silver mine that had been systematically worked for centuries. But while the claims that European geologists made about the Chinese presence at Bawdwin were at times accurate, recent scholarly work on mining in southwest China during the early modern period has revealed that Bawdwin's history was far more dynamic than later visitors assumed. The mine was part of a much larger network of mining sites in the Chinese periphery during this period that were critical to China's economy. Geographically situated on the frontier of two of Asia's great powers during this period, Bawdwin was a contested space where state power often broke down and where a small city blossomed between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Although there were of course many differences between the Chinese Bawdwin and the European Bawdwin, the mine's Chinese occupation foreshadows some of the same problems that Hoover and his associates would face during the early twentieth century, and demonstrate how important place, geography, and

[50] Mandy Sadan shows how some Kachin, though, actually benefitted from the changes during this time. Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145-6.

environment could be in influencing and re-shaping the economic and political visions crafted by the colonial capitalist classes.

Bawdwin in the Nineteenth Century

The tale of a swashbuckling young mining engineer from the United States who braved the Burmese jungle and evaded tigers in a quest for riches appears straight out of Victorian adventure novel, but it is perhaps more accurate to say that Hoover's discovery during the early twentieth century was no discovery at all.[51] Shan and Chinese miners had been extracting silver from the site at Bawdwin since as early as the twelfth century, and it was clear that the region had hosted a large Chinese population as recently as a few decades previous to Hoover's arrival. Even more problematic to Hoover's tale of adventure, however, was the fact that Bawdwin was well known among Europeans in Burma since as early as the late eighteenth century, when Britain's first colonial diplomats began to arrive in Southeast Asia to catalog Burma's flora and fauna and broker trade agreements between the British and Burmese Empire's. Bawdwin, which went by a variety of names in European circles during the nineteenth century, was referenced in nearly all British travelogues during this period, and these early texts provide a great deal of interesting material about the mine and how it operated before the founding of the Burma Mines Limited. They also demonstrate how minerals and natural resources were critical to the British imagining of Burma and the Shan States throughout the nineteenth century, providing insight into how western capitalists were ultimately able to develop this remote region of the Northern Shan States.

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[51] For a study that examines these tropes in Victorian literature, see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

The first reference to Bawdwin in the European record occurred in 1795, when Michael Symes, a British diplomat, visited the region to broker a trade agreement between the two powers. In describing a kingdom that "abounds in minerals," Symes noted that "six days journey from Bamoo [Bhamo], near the frontiers of China, there are mines of gold and silver, called Badouem."[52] Symes did not mention the role of Chinese miners in the region, but did observe that an "extensive trade" was carried on between Ava and Yunnan, which included the movement of silver, lac, and precious stones south from China.[53] Symes was especially interested in the movement of capital throughout the region. According to Symes, while the "Birmans, like the Chinese, have no coin," bullion in silver and lead were the "current monies of the country," with weight and purity being the standard of value. The most common money in circulation was known as a "tackal" or a "kiat," which weighed "ten penny-weights ten grains and three-fourths," and which had a variety of subdivisions. It was noted that "scrupulous" and expert "natives" weighed the money with scales and weights fashioned in the capital, "where they are stamped, and afterwards circulated throughout the empire. Local Burmese bankers, known as "Pymon," were thought to be "a class of people very numerous," and it was said that every merchant in the country had his own bankers that worked on commission for holding and assaying the metals that circulated in commercial circles.[54] How much of this silver came from Bawdwin is unknown, but it is clear that silver

[52] Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava, Sent by the Governor-General of India, in the Year 1795* (Edinburgh: Constable and Co., 1827), 324.
[53] Ibid, 325.
[54] Ibid, 326.

and other minerals were critical to economic life in Burma long before the arrival of European capitalism.[55]

Subsequent comments about Burma from visiting British diplomats confirmed Symes' views and demonstrate that silver and silver mining was of great significance to the region. These statements became particularly prominent in the 1820s and 1830s, once the British presence in the region became more permanent and diplomats and explorers began to investigate the lands around their new territories. In the 1820s, for instance, the diplomat John Crawfurd visited the Court of Ava following the first Anglo-Burmese War and learned of the great mining potential of the region. Although Bawdwin remained unnamed, Crawfurd did note that "some Chinese at Ava, who had visited the silver mines, informed me, that these were rented to Chinese contractors, who employed about one thousand of their own countrymen as miners" and "pa[id] a fixed duty for rent to the King of Ava by two half-yearly instalments of forty-eight viss, or four thousand eight hundred ticals, about six hundred pounds sterling."[56] Crawfurd found the amount of Chinese migrants in Burma "to be trifling as a whole," but did note that around three thousand lived in the region surrounding the Burmese capital and that "some are engaged in working the silver-mines within the

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[55] Hiram Cox, a British diplomat who visited Burma in 1796, noted similar issues related to the assaying of silver in the region. In his work, alongside extended and constant complaints about the assaying of silver and his inability to "get a proper assay," Cox noted that "a silver mine has been discovered by a Chinese a little above Mheghoon, which they say yields forty in a hundred; but what the expense of working fusing is I could not learn." "Mheghoon" is presumably the area of Mandalay, and though it's possible that Bawdwin is the mine in question, the location of the mine he described is unclear. Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire, and More Particularly at the Court of Amarapoorah* (London: John Warren and G and W.B. Whittaker, 1821), 179 and 234.

[56] John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava, in the Year 1827* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 427.

dominion of Ava."[57] These comments demonstrate not only that Chinese miners at Bawdwin represented a large proportion of the total Chinese migrant population as a whole, but also that the mines – at least in the 1820s – were firmly part of the Burmese Empire's sphere of influence. With over one thousand pounds sterling per year in royalties making their way into the Burmese King's coffers, the mines at Bawdwin, despite their foreign proprietorship, would have been immensely profitable for the Burmese crown.

A number of reports from the 1830s reinforced Crawfurd's statements and demonstrate how Bawdwin had become part of the imperial imagining of Burma's frontier areas during the early colonial period. In 1835, Robert Boileau Pemberton, an official with the Indian government, visited Burma and described the mine at length. Pemberton noted the presence of "several considerable Shan towns, of which we have scarcely any knowledge beyond that of their names," around which were located "those mines of the precious stones and metals for which Ava has acquired so great a degree of celebrity, of which those of Boduen, Kyatpen, and Momeit are the principal." Pemberton commented that "Boduen is about 54 geographical miles in a south-easterly direction from Bhumo [Bhamo], and is said by Buchanan to be held by the Chinese, until a decisive engagement was fought in its vicinity in the reign of Zeenbrushaen, (who governed Ava from 1769, until 1780) which gave the Burmahs permanent possession of these mines of gold, silver, and copper." Pemberton added that "when Symes was in Ava, a Burmese officer of the rank of Myoothoogree resided at Boduen, having under him a custom-house and a small military guard."[58] Although some of what Pemberton related was likely untrue – including the fact that the Burmese operated the

[57] Ibid, 471.
[58] R. Boileua Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India with an Appendix, and Maps* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1835), 141.

mines since the mid-eighteenth century or that they produced both gold and copper – his statements do demonstrate how despite a lack of knowledge about the frontier area between Burma and China, a myth-story and narrative about the mines had begun to develop within British official circles. This would only be added to with a number of expeditions to the area in the late 1830s.

While much of the early knowledge about Bawdwin that existed in the European record was based on local information and rumors heard at the capital, a number of official missions were sent to Burma's Shan or Tai States during the mid to late 1830s that discussed the mine. The most important of these expeditions occurred in 1837, when Dr. David Richardson and Captain William Couperus McLeod became the first British officials to visit the area that would become known as the Shan States. Their narrative, punctuated with reports on the region's myriad inhabitants and their own cross-cultural encounters, also focused a great deal on the presence of natural resources in the region, as well as the trade networks that existed there. Bawdwin was featured prominently in these accounts. In one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the mine before European settlement, Captain McLeod related in his journal that:

> the Bau-dwen or silver mines in the Muang Lem territory are very productive: they are worked by Chinese who are generally employed by the villagers, who, in a body, pay 1 viss 12 ½ ticals, monthly for the exclusive working of the mine, be the quantity obtained what it may. The mine is said to be very deep and running to a considerable distance under a hill; many deaths are caused by parts falling in. The ore is melted in the common Burmese mode: the white soft powdery substance found adhering to the cover of the furnace in which the ore is smelted, is collected and sold for three times its weight in silver, it is considered good for sore eyes. Lead is also obtained and is sent

> back to China and is there made use of to cover houses; the price is 2 ½ ticals for 75 viss.[59]

Although it is unclear whether McLeod visited the mines in person, his sketch of the mines and their operations provides the most in-depth account of the site during the early colonial period.

Thus, the legend of Bawdwin's great silver reserves circulated in British official circles from the very beginning of the colonial period, long before the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886. As the colonial period continued on, however, British interest in the region only increased. In the 1850s, following the annexation of Lower Burma to Britain, Captain Henry Yule journeyed in Burma's north and discussed the many mines of gold, silver, and copper that existed in the area, particularly focusing on the "silver-mine worked by Chinese" that travellers in the country had told him about. Yule believed that the mine was most likely "Bau-dwen" which was "so much spoken of in Burma" but that he thought "to be now within the territory of Kaingma."[60] In the 1860s, another explorer, Clement Williams, noted the existence of mines in Burman-Shan territory that "yield a rich argentiferous lead, from which the silver can be readily extracted," and that were "formerly worked by the Chinese" but that had "for some time" been left unworked owing to "the oppression of the Burmese superintendents."[61] Despite the long-standing presence of Bawdwin in the European record,

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[59] Volker Grabowsky and Andrew Turton, *The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Diplomatic Missions to Tai States in 1837* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), 390-1.
[60] Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855, with Notices of the Country, Government, and People* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858), 308.
[61] Clement Williams, *Through Burman to Western China: Being Notes of a Journey in 1863 to Establish the practicability of a Trade-Route Between the Irawaddi and the Yang-Tse-Kiang* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1868), 86.

these accounts show how limited British knowledge remained following the Second Anglo-Burmese War.

Williams and Yule's descriptions of Bawdwin demonstrate how British officials still knew little about the area surrounding the mine, but in the 1860s, another expedition was sent to the Shan States that provided a more accurate portrait of the region. Following the disruption of trade between China and Burma in consequence of the Panthay Rebellion in Yunnan, Sir Arthur Phayre, the first Commissioner of British Burma, ordered an enquiry and official visit to the Shan States in order to ascertain how to revive trade in the region. Phayre and his associates visited Bawdwin during the expedition. Although it was said that the mines had "not been worked for some years on account of the disturbances in the country," Alexander Bowers, Phayre's assistant, took the opportunity of their visit to discuss the possibility of developing the mine using European technology. According to Bowers:

> that [the mines] gave a good yield, may be doubted from the fact that their working was on the most insignificant scale. A number of small holes big enough only to admit a man on his hands and knees, perforate the side of a hill, these holes run in about sixty feet, and this is what is called the Baudwan silver mines, the area does not extend over more than ten acres altogether. The place is now grown over with jungle and grass, but under proper management and in the hands of a good Engineer, there is little doubt that it could be made remunerative.[62]

It would not be until the arrival of Herbert Hoover in the twentieth century that Bowers' prediction would come to fruition, but it had become clear among British officials by the 1860s that the Shan States were an alluring prospect for the enterprising western businessman. Phayre's visit to Bawdwin, however, would remain the last by a western agent until the turn of the twentieth century.

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[62] A. Bowers, *Bhamo Expedition. Report on the Practicability of Re-Opening the Trade Route, Between Burma and Western China* (Rangoon: American Mission Press, 1869), 36.

As this section demonstrates, the silver mines at Bawdwin were a constant presence in official reports and travelogues about Upper Burma during the pre-annexation period, well before the onset of western mining operations in the early twentieth century. Early reports about Bawdwin sought to piece together the mine's significance locally and provide a more general overview of the region's people, lands, and resources. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, this project shifted. By the 1860s, and with a growing British presence in the region, the early mission to catalog information about the mine was replaced with a more marked concern about the future development of the site using European manpower and technology. Bowers comments demonstrate how the remunerative potential of the mine had become of interest to British officials, something that was also proven true elsewhere. Although rice agriculture in Lower Burma began to emerge as a significant economic project during this same period, European imperialists – British and non-British – thought Upper Burma's abundant reserves of petroleum, precious stones, and metals held vast potential if exploited using advanced western technology. European businessmen and officials saw Upper Burma, and especially the Shan States, as a lost El Dorado, overflowing with riches and wealth for the entrepreneur lucky enough to win a prospecting license. Bawdwin, although known to be significant, was only one component of that imagined world, and ironically, British officials largely forgot the silver mines during the latter half of the century and focused instead on other natural resources like rubies and oil. Despite this, a broad economic project regarding mineral resource development was fashioned among competing western agents during this period, one that colored the eventual annexation of Burma and the settlement of Burma's northern territory. Although Bawdwin would momentarily fade from view during the post-annexation years, with a boom of interest in the

Shan States and the building of a railway into the territory surrounding the mines, Bawdwin's fall from favor would not last very long.

Mineral Resource Development in Upper Burma

Rice agriculture and teak extraction were important industries in Burma during the early colonial period, but while those industries remained important in the late nineteenth century, an imperial interest in mineral resource development also surged in Burma during the years surrounding the annexation of Upper Burma. What had once been an area of general interest for British officials had become one of economic interest, and as Bowers comments on Bawdwin demonstrate, colonial administrators began to see in Burma's north an opportunity for development and profit. These changes became particularly marked in the 1870s and 1880s, when British officials became concerned that other European powers were attempting to subvert their authority in the region, especially over mineral prospecting licenses.[63] Initially, British interests were limited to existing industries in Upper Burma, such as oil and ruby mining. By the 1890s, however, and with the British occupation of Upper Burma, these interests expanded to more remote areas of the country, including the Shan States. Although Bawdwin and its history was not discussed as prominently in European circles during these years, efforts to recruit foreign capital and develop the region did have an impact on the ultimate decision to build a railway through the Northern Shan States, a choice that would prove critical for the later establishment of a large industrial mining operation at

[63] For a history of the economic rivalry between Britain and France in Colonial Burma, see Anthony Webster, "Business and Empire: A Reassessment of the British Conquest of Burma in 1885," *The Historical Journal* vol. 43 no. 4 (2000), 1003-1025.

the silver mines. Regardless, the debates of the late nineteenth century about mineral resource development demonstrate how critical these industries were to British interests in the region, as well as how the Shan States, where Bawdwin was located, became seen as a lost El Dorado.

Early ethnographic and travel accounts about Burma from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were replete with descriptions of vast mineral reserves in Burma's independent territories, but it was in the late nineteenth century that European agents first sought to take over locally operated concessions. By 1878, according to historian Maung Htin Aung, "the British merchants of Rangoon had turned their attention to the oil fields, the forests, and the ruby mines of Upper Burma, and now they wanted the Kingdom for its economic wealth and potential," and not just a "back-door to the fabled China trade."[64] This process began with oil. Local merchants in Burma had extracted petroleum, found in the area known as Yenangyaung in Upper Burma, since as early as the thirteenth century.[65] Oil concessions were considered hereditary and passed down from male to male or female to female, and around twenty-four families owned hand-dug wells during the era of the Kongbaung Dynasty, or during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[66] During the reign of King Mindon, however, the monarchy, which technically owned the land on which the concessions were held, declared oil a monopoly of the state after local vendors began selling and exporting the commodity to European merchants in Rangoon. Although the new monopoly provided valuable revenues for the crown, it also sparked resentment among those in the European trading community who preferred the previous trading arrangements and

[64] Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma,* 52.
[65] Marilyn V. Longmuir, *Oil in Burma: The Extraction of "Earth-Oil" to 1914* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001), 6.
[66] Ibid, 35.

sought to overturn monarchical control. By the eve of the Third Anglo-Burmese War, these tensions had reached their peak.[67]

Between the Second and Third Anglo-Burmese Wars, the world witnessed an oil boom that made western ownership of Yenangyaung's oil concessions particularly appealing for businessmen in Lower Burma.[68] In 1871, James Galbraith founded the Rangoon Oil Company, but after only a few unsuccessful years, David Cargill took control of the company's operations in 1876. Cargill, like many of Rangoon's most prominent merchants at the time, was a wealthy Scottish businessman. Through connections forged in Rangoon's small commercial community, Cargill began a partnership with Kirkman Finlay, another Scot who had experience in the oil industry, and together they created a new firm, Finlay, Fleming & Co., which would control Burma's oil supply for decades to come.[69] Problems, however, remained. The King's monopoly remained in place even after the succession of King Thebaw in 1878, and Finlay, Fleming & Co. became leading voices from within Rangoon's commercial community to advocate for the British annexation of Upper Burma in order to secure more liberal trade arrangements.[70] When the British ultimatum to King Thebaw was finally given in October 1885, it took Cargill and his firm only ten days to apply to take over the concessions at Yenangyaung.[71] By the early months of 1886, the Rangoon Oil Company was reformed as the Burmah Oil Company Limited, and with Finlay, Fleming & Co.,

[67] Ibid, 69-71.
[68] Aside from Longmuir's in-depth study of Burma's oil concessions, for a history of the companies involved in this industry, see also T.A.B. Corley, *A History of the Burmah Oil Company, 1886-1966*, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1983 and 1988).
[69] Marilyn V. Longmuir, *Oil in Burma*, 72-74.
[70] These lobbying efforts were discussed in Chapter One.
[71] Marilyn V. Longmuir, *Oil in Burma*, 84-5.

remaining as its directors, became one of the largest and most significant industrial operations in British Burma during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Historian Marilyn Longmuir has argued that among the many companies who had interests in Upper Burma, “Cargill’s Rangoon Oil Company had the most to gain from annexation.”[72] One other industry that played a role in the annexation of Burma, though, was ruby mining. Ruby mining, like oil, had been a profitable and significant industry in Burma long before European encroachments into Burma. The primary site for ruby mining was located in Mogok, which was originally located in the Shan States but was taken by the King of Burma in 1637 owing to the precious stones known to exist there. Although the deposits – originally worked by Shan miners - were known in European circles from as early as the fifteenth century, it was in the Burmese era that mining operations expanded and that Mogok rubies became renowned across the region.[73] In the late nineteenth century, however, European businessmen became particularly interested in the ruby mines, despite the fact that they were protected under a monopoly from the King of Burma. In the early 1880s, French and Italian speculators negotiated a number of deals with King Thebaw to exploit the ruby mines, all of which fell through but that inspired anxiety in British officials regarding their influence in Burma’s north.[74] With growing concerns about French economic influence in Upper Burma and the long-standing dissatisfaction with Thebaw’s use of royal monopolies, the British commercial community lobbied the government incessantly to occupy and annex

[72] She notes that the one exception would have been the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation, a teak business that was in part directly responsible for the annexation of Upper Burma in 1885. Ibid, 85.
[73] James George Scott and J.P. Hardiman (eds.), *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States: In Five Volumes* pt. 1 vol. 2 (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1900), 218.
[74] These negotiations are outlined in Charles Lee Keeton, *King Thebaw and the Ecological Rape of Burma: The Political and Commercial Struggle Between British India and French Indo-China in Burma, 1878-1886* (Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1974), 165-166.

Upper Burma. For those in the commercial community, a British annexation would not only protect their own trade interests in Lower Burma, but also provide access to natural resources and commodities that had remained protected from outside interests in Upper Burma, including rubies. Similar to what happened in the oil industry, when annexation arrived in January 1886, myriad commercial firms immediately applied for control of the ruby mines in Mogok. In the end, a company formed by the Rothschild's took control of the concession after protracted, and perhaps shady, negotiations.[75]

Historians remain divided about why Britain ultimately decided to annex Upper Burma, but the cases of oil extraction and ruby mining demonstrate how mineral resource development became significant to British interests in Burma during the late nineteenth century.[76] Although these industries were of interest to British and other European businessmen earlier in the century, it was in the 1870s and 1880s that western agents began the process of colonizing Burmese industries, which in time would come with support from the colonial state.[77] With the arrival of direct colonial governance in Upper Burma, however,

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[75] See Robert Vicat Turrell, "Conquest and Concession: The Case of the Burma Ruby Mines," *Modern Asian Studies* vol. 22 no. 1 (February 1988), 141-163.
[76] According to Robert Vicat Turrell, evidence "suggests that Upper Burma was annexed for British commerce." The case of the ruby mines demonstrates how the ending of royal monopolies and the opening up of Burma's mineral wealth was significant in the decision to occupy the country, particularly for the Secretary of State for India at the time, Lord Randolph Churchill. Others, however, have disagreed with this assessment, focusing instead on a host of other reasons, including geopolitical concerns or, as Anthony Webster argues, the role of "gentlemanly capitalists." See Robert Vicat Turrell, "Conquest and Concession: The Case of the Burma Ruby Mines"; Anthony Webster, "Business and Empire: A Reassessment of the British Conquest of Burma in 1885." See also, Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in Southeast Asia, 1770-1890* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998).
[77] This, of course, echoes European efforts to colonize Africa during this same period. For an overview of how commerce and governance overlapped in the so-called "Scramble for Africa," as well as the role that individuals and companies played in this process, see Steven

British businessmen began to expand their vision into the more remote spaces of the country, hoping to strike it rich with resources such as jade, amber, and silver. While the oil fields and ruby mines were located close to the Burmese capital of Mandalay and were established industries still active at the time annexation, these other resources were largely hidden away in border regions such as the Hukong Valley or the Shan States, which had only limited contact with the west until the colonial occupation and had been outside of the Burmese state's official jurisdiction. In the 1890s, this would change. At the same time that British officers and surveying teams began to catalog and explore Burma's border regions, commercial agents saw an opportunity to secure and exploit the area's natural resources, sparking a "mineral deposit rush" in the country's more remote areas. This was aided, in part, by the construction of a railway through Burma's Northern Shan States, which would ultimately provide the infrastructure necessary for the development of a large industrial mining operation at Bawdwin.

The Northern Shan States Railway

As evidenced in the previous chapter, concerns over railway construction in Burma were integral to how British officials imagined economic development in the colony. In the 1870s and 1880s, British officials and commercial elites sparred over the expansion of Burma's railway system, leading in time to the construction of two railways in the colony, including one that would connect the metropolitan centers of Rangoon and Mandalay following annexation. Railway development, it was thought, would lead to a transformation

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Press, *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

in Burma's economy, not only through moving people and commodities throughout the vast interior of the country, but also in opening up the markets between South, Southeast Asia, and East Asia as well as bringing the supposed marvels of modern technology to a "backwards" land. Railway debates, which were most animated in the years prior to annexation, would continue, however, into the 1890s. During this period, colonial officials and commercial discovered that Burma's frontier regions – earlier thought to be simply a path to larger markets across the border – contained rich mineral resource deposits. With prospecting licenses around Mandalay getting bought up by major firms like the Rothschild's following Upper Burma's annexation, speculators turned their attention to these other areas of the country in order to strike it rich. By the late 1890s, this frenzy of interest – along with a continued focus on connecting Burma with China by rail - culminated in the construction of the Northern Shan States railway, linking Bhamo in Burma's northeast with the colonial capital of Rangoon. Although the mines at Bawdwin did not play into these debates, the expansion of the railway system into the Northern Shan States would provide a critical link between the region and the global marketplace, ultimately allowing for the expansion of industrial operations at Bawdwin in the early twentieth century.

The Shan States began to attract the attention of western businessmen during the 1880s, particularly following the annexation of Upper Burma. Archibald Colquhoun and Holt Hallett, the primary architects of the Burma-China railway scheme, saw the development of the Shan States as central to their plan of opening up the market between Burma and China through rail services, the construction of which would have to pass through the Northern Shan States. More than just a way station, however, Colquhoun and Hallett argued that the Shan States offered a great opportunity for colonial interests, including a source of cheap and reliable labor, untapped agricultural wealth, and rich mineral resource reserves.[78] Colquhoun, in particular, noted that while Yunnan offered an abundance of mining prospecting sites that remained undeveloped, the "Shan countries to the south are as rich in minerals as Yünnan itself" and that there "is now no suzerain power to prevent their being worked." "There is no doubt," Colquhoun continued, "that the opening up of these states will be far more profitable than Eastern Yünnan could ever be," adding that for "the pioneer in commerce," the Shan States and Western Yunnan offered endless opportunities.[79] These opportunities, however, would have to wait in the years following Britain's occupation of the region.

Despite existing within the territorial unit of Burma on British maps, the Shan States presented a problem for British officials following the annexation of 1886. On Burma's eastern frontier with China and Siam, the Shan States were not an easily legible extension of Burma, but instead, a collection of unique states that had a diverse ethnic population and that each had their own historical relationships with both the Burmese and Chinese states. Some states, for instance, had long-standing agreements to levy tributes to the Burmese crown in return for government protection, while other states either remained hostile to the Burmese government or were linked politically to China.[80] Although British officials had visited the region throughout the pre-colonial period, information regarding the Shan States was limited, and following the annexation, the government began a process of accumulating knowledge

[78] See Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chrysê, Being the Narrative of a Journey of Exploration through the South China Border Lands from Canton to Mandalay*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribner, Welford, & Co., 1883), 236-7. See also, Holt S. Hallett, *Address upon Burmah: Our Gate to the Markets of Western and Central China: Treating with the Proposed Connection of Burmah with China by Railway* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1887); Archibald R. Colquhoun and Holt S. Hallett, *Report on the Railway Connexion of Burmah and China* (London: Allen, Scott, & Co., 1888).
[79] Archibald R. Colquhoun, *Across Chrysê,* vol. 2, 46.
[80] See note 3.

about the area in order to construct an official policy. In the months following Britain's occupation of Upper Burma, a number of armed expeditions were sent to the Shan States in order to gather information about the area.[81] This process was stalled, however, owing to the outbreak of hostilities in the region. With the British military occupying Mandalay and its surrounding areas, many Burmese loyal to the exiled crown fled to the Shan States in order to organize a counter-insurgency campaign, a process that many local Shan chiefs aided because of their desire to remain independent. The hostilities, which would continue for over three years, convinced British officials that in order to maintain peace on the Indian Empire's geopolitically important border with China, they would have to uphold existing agreements between the Shan States and the government, which included the limited interference of outside powers.[82] The "pacification" of the Shan States, as the future Chief Commissioner Charles Crosthwaite labeled it, was a significant moment for the voicing of the Shan States' self-determination, and allowed for a nominal independence from British occupation until the late colonial period.[83] Even at the peak of violence in the region, however, British officials had begun the process of elucidating the economic viability of the Shan States, along with its future as a colony.

In 1886, and within days of the British annexation of Upper Burma, the colonial administration began to craft a plan to economically develop their new territories. On January

[81] See, for example, British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, Proceedings, P/2664A, Foreign Department, Upper Burma, October 1886. Expedition to the Shan States; Proceedings, P/2664A, Foreign Department, Upper Burma, December 1886. Report upon the subject of the proposed Military and Political Expedition into the Shan States; Proceedings, P/2888, Foreign Department, Burma, May 1887. Forms of Sanad to be Granted to the Sawbwas or Myosas of Shan States; Proceedings, P/3118, Home, Burma, July 1888. Note on the state of Upper Burma during the past 18 months.
[82] These events are summarized in Sao Saimong Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*.
[83] Charles Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912).

2nd 1886, the government considered proposals to construct a railway to Mandalay – thought to be the center at "which produce will be sold, exchanged, and distributed throughout the whole of Upper Burma" - and by September, officials had already mapped and estimated the path of a 222 mile railway connecting Mandalay with Rangoon.[84] In 1887, and with construction on the Mandalay line already proceeding apace, officials also began to explore the possibility of extending the railway system through the Mu Valley to the north of Mandalay. Along with "open[ing] out a large tract of fertile country" filled with "rich paddy plains" and "rich forests," officials were attracted to the region because "it would reach the headquarters of the large India-rubber and jade stone trade and an important distributing centre of salt, all of which are trades known to be capable of great development." Charles Crosthwaite, the new Chief Commissioner of Burma, urged the Government of India of the "great importance of opening out the newly acquired territory in Upper Burma with good means of communication," adding that he was "certain that the provision of easy access to all part of it will do more towards its speedy settlement than anything else."[85] With British forces only beginning to establish their presence in Upper Burma, railways would not only prove remunerative for the administration, but they would also ensure the solidity of British rule in the undeveloped north. Before long, this vision would expand to the east of Mandalay and into the Shan States, where a violent struggle between British and indigenous forces continued to wage on.

The movement to expand Burma's railway system into the Shan States began in October 1889, when the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, Lieutenant-Colonel W.G.

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[84] Proceedings, P/2661, Public Works Department, British Burma, September 1886. Toungoo-Mandalay Railway.
[85] Proceedings, P/2885, Public Works Department, Upper Burma, February 1887. Construction of roads, &c., in Upper Burma.

Cumming, sent a letter to the home government pressing them to consider such an opportunity. Cumming, who had been engaged in “pacification” efforts in the region, thought that building a railway to Kunlon Ferry – situated on the border with China - would fulfill Colquhoun and Hallett’s vision of connecting Burma with China, and would ensure “that British merchandise would then command the market of Southern China.” Even more importantly, however, were the economic advantages a railway would bestow on the Shan States. Because a railway would put an end to the “anarchy” that had existed in the region since Thebaw’s reign, Cumming thought, “the people and their riches will rapidly increase,” particularly as the region was “universally” known to contain ‘excellent land” and was “capable of producing almost any crop.” Furthermore, a railway would also allow for the permanent British occupation of Shan lands, which would be politically advantageous to the administration. Noting that “at present the extremities of the Empire” were weak, and understanding that it is “not impossible” that “direct administration of the Shan country may be forced upon us,” Cumming considered a railway to be expedient for political, social, and economic purposes.[86] With “dacoits” still fighting British forces across the Shan States, a railway would calm tensions and persuade locals of the beneficence of British rule.

The British administration quickly acted on Cumming’s recommendations, and over the ensuing months, officials began preparations for the construction of a railway linking Mandalay with Kunlon Ferry. In December, only two months after Cumming’s proposal, a survey party was sent to the region to estimate the cost and path of the Shan States railway,

[86] Proceedings, P/3355, Public Works Department, October 1889. Letter from Cumming Burma-China Railway and relationship to administering the Shan States.

with support from the new Superintendent of the Shan States, A.H. Hildebrand.[87] The following cold season, F.R. Bagley, the Executive Engineer of the Shan Hills Survey Division, submitted his full report on the potential railway to the Chief Commissioner after travelling through the area, and outlined in detail his proposal to build the 235-mile railway as soon as possible.[88] Similar to what had occurred during the 1870s, however, officials with the Government of India balked at such an outlay of capital. In September 1890, the Indian government informed Charles Crosthwaite that all work on the Shan States railway should be postponed "for two or three years" owing to a lack of capital, incensing Burma's Chief Commissioner. Crosthwaite, in response, hoped that such a decision "may be re-considered," arguing that the matter "is one which not only greatly concerns the development of trade and the economical and efficient administration of the Shan country, but also materially affects the safety of the frontier." More than just an issue "of mere departmental convenience," the need for a railway through the Shan States was said to be critical to "the future prosperity of Burma."[89] Nevertheless, the construction of a railway would wait until the late 1890s.

Like the railway debates of the 1870s, the lobbying efforts of Anglo-Burmese officials to expand Burma's railway system in the Shan States during the 1890s became centered on the regions economic potential. Critical to these efforts was knowledge accumulation. Beginning in the late 1880s, the British administration in Burma appointed two superintendents to the Shan States – A.H. Hildebrand in the Southern Shan States and J.G. Scott in the Northern Shan States – who were tasked not only with assuaging relations

[87] Proceedings, P/3359, Foreign Department, Burma, December 1889. Lieutenant Daly's proposed cold weather operations in 1889-90
[88] Proceedings, P/3579, Public Works Department, Burma, August 1890. Preliminary report on the Shan Hills Railway Survey
[89] Proceedings, P/3579, Public Works Department, Burma, September 1890. Shan Hills Railway Survey.

between local Shan leaders and the British state and collecting tributes, but who were also engaged in cataloging information about the area's people and natural resources. This included conducting agricultural experiments in order to determine if and how industries like wheat production and sheep and cattle grazing might work in a climate more amenable to that which existed in Lower Burma.[90] J.G. Scott, in particular, became well known throughout the colony, particularly owing to his travels in the Wa States along the Chinese border and his regularly published accounts of life in the Shan States.[91] Scott, who also represented the British government in border negotiations with both the Siamese and Chinese during this period, would later publish an account of the Shan States, the *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States*, at the turn of the century.[92] The *Gazetteer*, published in five volumes and with the assistance of J.P. Hardiman, became the de-facto British narrative of the region, providing detailed knowledge about the area's cultural, social, political, and geological life that would inform imperial public policy in the Shan States until Burmese independence. Under Scott and Hildebrand, British knowledge about the area would increase

[90] For examples of these agricultural experiments, see Proceedings, P/4046, Political Department, Burma, September 1892. Weekly reports by Hildebrand and Scott, plus an order on slavery among Kachin; Proceedings, P/4485, Revenue and Agricultural Department, Burma, January 1894. Review of the report on the Revenue Administration of Burma, 1892-3; *Rangoon Gazette*, 15 October 1892.

[91] For biographies of Scott, see G.E. Mitton, *Scott of the Shan Hills* (London: John Murray, 1936); Andrew Marshall, *The Trouser People: A Story of Burma in the Shadow of the Empire* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2002). Scott also published regularly in a number of newspapers and journals in Britain throughout his career, including *St. James's Gazette* and Archibald Colquhoun's *United Empire*. See, for just a few examples, *St. James's* Gazette, 14 January 1886; *St. James's Gazette,* 26 February 1886; James George Scott, "Burma the Cinderella," in Archibald R. Colquhoun (ed.), *United Empire: The Royal Colonial Institute Journal* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1912), 28-40. On Scott's expedition to the Wa States, see Proceedings, P/4280, Political Department, Burma, August 1893. Confidential: Report on an Expedition to Manglun and the Wild Wa country by J.G. Scott.

[92] On Scott's involvement with the Burma-China Boundary Commission, as well as a summary of the border dispute, see Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London: The Cresset Press, 1962), 455-517.

dramatically, ushering in a period of commercial interest in the region that would later propel the western "discovery" of Bawdwin at the end of the century.

Although efforts to build a railway through the region had stalled in 1890, Scott and Hildebrand's reports provided a new base of knowledge about the region that Anglo-Burmese lobbyists could lean on with their petitions to the government. Beginning in the mid-1890s, efforts to expand the railway system into the Northern Shan States was renewed, but that used a new language focusing on the region's economic viability as opposed to its relationship with the markets of China. In December 1893, the *Rangoon Gazette* published two editorials arguing that "it is not the transfrontier trade that should be our chief objective" but that "our main object in the Kunlon railway should be the local trade."[93] This belief was reinforced in official circles. In 1894, British Burma's Financial Commissioner noted that the establishment of railway communication and a "very large reduction in cost of transit" would "operate to greatly increase the volume of the present outward and inward trade" between Mandalay and the Shan States. The construction, however, would have to rely on a variety of important developments in the region, which included the creation of a hill station along the line at Maymyo, an expansion in trade by "European enterprise directed towards stock and sheep raising," as well as "the production of minerals."[94] In 1895, these plans would be sanctioned. With multiple proposals on the table, including Colquhoun and Hallett's line through the Southern Shan States and Bagley's to Kunlon Ferry, the Secretary of State for India sided with the latter, demonstrating the importance that government saw in the opening

[93] This was in response to the Viceroy of India's argument that the line was not tenable because shipping goods to and from China would not prove remunerative in the long term. *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 December 1893; *Rangoon Gazette,* 9 December 1893.
[94] Proceedings, P/4483, Public Works Department, Burma, September 1894. On the Mandalay-Kunlon Railway

out of the Shan States. Although “critics” would “no doubt, find fault” with the decision, the *Rangoon Gazette* argued, “the Shan Hills railway will run its whole length through British territory, through a country that every traveller describes as highly fertile,” and that has a “healthy climate.”[95] With the Colquhoun-Hallett scheme considered “at an end,” administrators could focus on establishing the viability of the line, which included the formation of Maymyo as a British hill station as well as the construction of a bridge to span the length of the Gokteik Gorge in the far north.[96] The news would also inspire a surge of interest regarding the region’s mineral resources, an industry that would grow rapidly over the ensuing decade.

The Mining “Boom”

The construction of the Northern Shan States railway at the turn of the twentieth century allowed for the development of western operations at Bawdwin, but the mines “discovery” was part of a much larger mineral resources rush that occurred during the 1890s and early 1900s. With operations at the ruby mines in Mogok and the oil fields at Yenangyaung continuing to develop in the post-annexation years and garnering global attention, prospectors became intrigued by the possibility of “untouched” mineral reserves on the Burma frontier. Large-scale mining, however, required much more than fertile land and mule tracks to support operations; vast sums of capital, manpower, and dependable rail services were all necessary to develop a profitable business, something that was an

95 *Rangoon Gazette*, 26 October 1895.
96 *Rangoon Gazette*, 7 December 1895. On the plans for Maymyo, see Proceedings, P/4884, Public Works Department, Burma, 1896. Hill Station. On the Gokteik Viaduct, see *From Steelton to Mandalay* (Steelton, Pa.: The Pennsylvania Steel Company, 1902).

impossibility in the region until the approval of the Northern Shan States railway.[97] With the railway's announcement, as well as optimistic reports about the geology of the region, speculators – both local and foreign – began to descend on the Shan States during this period in order to strike it rich. These efforts would bring Bawdwin, largely forgotten since the 1850s, back into the public conversation, and lead to the western re-discovery of the lead-silver-zinc deposits at that site.

Descriptions of Bawdwin during the pre-colonial period demonstrate how Anglo visitors to Upper Burma were interested in the region's mineral reserves, but it was not until the 1890s – following annexation - that scientific experts began to investigate the presence of natural resources in the Shan States.[98] Dr. Fritz Noetling, a paleontologist with the Geological Survey of India, led a number of geological expeditions to Upper Burma during this period and popularized the region's resources in his publications on coal, jade, and petroleum.[99] Noetling also submitted regular reports on the mineral resources of the Northern Shan States to the government at this time, outlining the geological significance of the region's coal, ruby, and tourmaline deposits, as well as his recommendations on how these resources ought to be exploited.[100] His work was reinforced in the popular press, where a concern with mineral resource development became marked throughout the 1890s.

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[97] The next chapter will examine the business of large-scale industrial mining in more detail.

[98] This happened much earlier in Lower Burma, particularly through the works of Dr. Thomas Oldham in the 1850s and William Theobald in the 1870s. Both worked for the Geological Survey of India.

[99] For examples, see Fritz Noetling, "Report on the oil fields of Twingoung and Beme, Burma," *Records Geological Survey of India,* vol. 22 (1891), 75-136; Fritz Noetling, "Report on the Coal Fields in the Northern Shan States," *Records Geological Survey of India,* vol. 24 (1891), 99-119; Fritz Noetling, "Preliminary Report on the Economic Resources of the Amber and Jade Mines in Upper Burma," *Records Geological Survey of India,* vol. 25 (1892), 131-135.

[100] Proceedings, P/3814, Revenue and Agricultural Department, March 1891. Dr. Noetling's notes on the mineral resources of the Northern Shan States.

According to a writer from the *Indian Empire* in 1891, “the first subject to have occupied the attention of capitalists and speculators” following the annexation “ should have been the mineral resources of the country.” Owing, however, to the fact that there was a “want of enterprise on the part of capitalists,” and “because of their want of knowledge of the country,” the paper observed that Burma remained “practically undeveloped.” “Until a great expansion of railroads is carried out,” the paper continued, “mining speculation” would “not make good headway.”[101] The *Rangoon Gazette*, however, disagreed, believing that Upper Burma would be developed in due time. The paper argued that “as the country becomes better known,” capitalists would be more willing to risk vast sums of capital to introduce mining operations in the region. The paper was particularly cautious about “swarms of needy adventurers from almost every country in Europe” descending on Burma, such as in the gold rushes in California or Australia, which promoted “lawlessness” and would prove a disaster in the colony. Instead, the *Gazette* argued that “in India, Government could not tolerate a mining camp of the colonial pattern,” believing that mineral resource development in Burma would have to first proceed through “the working by means of companies” and not through a rush of those in the “’digger’ class.” Considering that mineral resource development in California and Australia was non-existent “when they had been only five years in the possession of men of the Anglo-Saxon race,” Burma was in fact “far ahead of them.”[102]

The debates about developing Upper Burma’s mineral resources, along with the project to accumulate knowledge about the region, would, as the *Rangoon Gazette* had predicted, gradually inspire capitalists begin prospecting in the area. Chinese prospectors began this process, which began in earnest at the beginning of the 1890s with leases granted

[101] Reprinted in the *Rangoon Gazette*, 12 February 1891.
[102] *Rangoon Gazette*, 13 February 1891.

to mine the ruby and tourmaline deposits in the Shan State of Thibaw. Under the recommendations of both the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, Lieutenant Daly, as well as the *Sawbwa* of Thibaw, the government decided that “the right of working these mines could be readily and profitably disposed of to Chinese capitalists,” particularly because there was no market for the commodities in Europe.[103] Chinese businessmen would continue acquiring prospecting licenses during the ensuing years. In 1891 and 1892, the colonial government granted another Chinese merchant, Saw Hoe Shoke, the lease to the Bawzaing iron ore deposits in the Southern Shan States. The lease, however, was controversial. Existing in the Shan State of Ngwegunhmu, which according to Hildebrand had “*nothing* but what comes from ‘the mines,’” the lease to Saw Hoe Shoke threatened to interfere “with the income which the Ngwegunhmu and his people derive from the mines.” The government would grant Saw Hoe Shoke the Bawzaing lease under the stipulation that he employ the local miners, but the incident brought into question the relationship between the government and the *Sawbwas* of the Shan States in regards to mineral resource development in their territory.[104] These questions would become critical to the expansion of western colonial commercial interests in the Shan States over the subsequent decade.

The debates concerning Saw Hoe Shoke’s prospecting license between 1891 and 1892 reveal the legal, social, and economic dynamics at play between the Sawbwas and the colonial government in the post-annexation years. As mentioned earlier, the British had envisioned the Shan States to be ruled similar to the Princely States in India: quasi-independent territories governed by a local chief but that still firmly existed within the

[103] Proceedings, P/3581, Revenue and Agricultural Department (Minerals), Burma, September 1890. Existence of ruby mines at Namsaka in the Shan State of Mainglon.
[104] Proceedings, P/4042, Revenue and Agricultural Department, Burma, June 1892. Proposed lease of the Bawzaing lead mines in the Southern Shan States to Saw Hoe Shoke.

sovereign territory of the British Empire. This unique administrative agreement was enshrined in a sanad – a form of contract - between the Chief Commissioner of Burma and the Sawbwas of the Shan States, and that circulated and was signed by most Shan leaders in the years following the British pacification campaign in the region. The sanad outlined in writing the relationship that would be maintained between the British government and the Shan States, including the fact that Shan *Sawbwas* would administer "in all matters whether civil, criminal, revenue," that they could with "the approval of the Chief Commissioner" nominate their own successors, and that stipulated contractually the amount of tribute each state would pay to the government. The ability for Shan leaders to administer their own territory, however, was restricted in regard to natural resources. According to Paragraph 3, Article 2 of the sanad, "the Government reserves to itself the proprietary right in all forests, mines, and minerals," adding that "if you are permitted to work or let on lease any mine or mines in your State, you shall pay such royalty on all metals, precious stones, and other minerals in --- as the Governor-General in Council may from time to time direct." In short, although Shan Sawbwas were permitted to administer their own population in civil, criminal, or economic matters, the British colonial government had the "proprietary right" to all mineral resources in the Shan States, and fully controlled the prospecting licenses offered to work those sites.[105]

The decision among colonial officials to grant the Bawzaing lease to Saw Hoe Shoke was controversial not because of the prospector in question, but because the *Sawbwa* of Ngwegunhmu was one of the only Shan leaders who had not signed the sanad.[106] Although the government ultimately decided to force Saw Hoe Shoke to employ local laborers from the

[105] A copy of the Sanad can be found in Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

area as a gesture to the Ngwegunhmu, the incident is not only important for revealing the supposed "philanthropic" motives of some British officials, but also because it established the official policy of government in regards to mining concessions. According to the Revenue Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, the "Government has always maintained its right to minerals in the Shan States," and there was no reason "why it should not continue to assert this right to the full" in the future. Royalties from mining would be credited entirely to the colonial government, and if Shan *Sawbwas* did profit from mining enterprises within their territory, then they would be forced to pay a higher rate of tribute. Furthermore, the "principle laid down would be that the position of a Chief, with reference to mines in his State, is simply that of a private person," meaning that if a mine were discovered in a Sawbwa's state, "Government would deal with it under the mining rules and would lease the mine either to a stranger, as it has done in the case of the Bawzaing lead mines, or to the Chief of the State." If leased to the Sawbwa, he would be subject to paying royalties to the government "in the same way as if he were a private person." The sanad, therefore, established that all mining sites – and as part of the stipulation, forest products – were the suzerain territory of the British government.[107]

Although the Bawzaing lease incident did not garner much public attention, for British officials, these events created a legal precedent about the ownership of mineral resources in the Shan States. Over the next decade, as more information regarding mineral deposits in the region became publically known, the granting of mining licenses increased dramatically. Speculators flocked to Upper Burma in the late 1890s, and by the turn of the century, European companies dominated the industry, seeking silver, gold, copper,

[107] Proceedings, P/4277, Revenue and Agricultural Department, Burma, October 1893. Right of Imperial to revenue from minerals in the Shan States.

petroleum, and coal. This was especially the case in the Northern Shan States, where by 1904, British companies like Burma Exploration Syndicate competed with German companies like Diekmann Brothers to secure mining privileges from the government.[108] By 1905, the Rangoon Gazette warned that a mining "'boom' is being prepared," owing largely to "flowery descriptions" that appear "from time to time designed to show the vast potential wealth that is now lying hid in the country, and will one day dazzle the eyes of the world."[109] Only a year later, Herbert Hoover would begin his trek through the "dripping jungles" of the Northern Shan States on his way to the iron ore deposits at Bawdwin.

Conclusion

In 1886, just months after the occupation of Upper Burma, the British colonial government issued a detailed report regarding their official policy on the administration of the Shan States. The report, filled with ethnographic details about the local populations and their historical relations with both the Burman and Chinese states, also contained information about the agricultural and geological condition of the territories, much of which was inaccurate. In discussing Kaingma, a Shan State thought to have been under Chinese influence as late as 1855, the report noted the presence of "the great silver mine," known as "Baudwengyi," that was "formerly laid down on the maps as on the west of the Salween near Toungbaing."[110] Shortly thereafter, a chemical engineer for the colonial government, R.

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[108] Proceedings, P/6981, Revenue and Agriculture, Burma, February 1905. Return of Mineral Concessions

[109] *Rangoon Gazette*, 5 June 1905.

[110] Proceedings, P/2664A, Foreign Department, Upper Burma, December 1886. Report upon the subject of the proposed Military and Political Expedition into the Shan States.

Romanis, travelled throughout the territory as a convoy to British military forces to report on the presence of mineral resources. Alongside notations about the well-known ruby mines and oil wells in the country, Romanis noted that large deposits of coal, marble, gold, jade, platinum, and other minerals existed in Upper Burma, reinforcing earlier reports about the region. Silver and lead, Romanis reported, were present in the Shan States, but that "the great silver mine at Bawdwingyi is now flooded and not worked."[111] Bawdwin, a thriving industrial site from as early as the fifteenth century, had been largely forgotten in European circles, occupying only the margins of official documents at the same time that experts were inspecting and cataloging the area surrounding it.

Bawdwin's fate, however, would change at the turn of the century. Although government geologists and political officers had ignored the mining site in the post-annexation years, happenstance would lure European visitors to the mines before long. In 1889, a young officer in the Public Works Department, A.C. Martin, heard rumors about the Bawdwin mine while visiting Mandalay. In 1890, Martin confirmed these rumors after a Yunnanese contractor brought him a sample of the slag heaps from Bawdwin. Around the same time, and while doing work on the Mandalay Canal, the British officer met a number of Palaung travellers who wore silver ornaments and threads, and upon questioning, provided Martin with the route to Bawdwin. Martin soon visited the mines with a Palaung local who "took part in the last raid which the Kachins made on the Chinese at Bawdwin," but when he returned to Rangoon and told other merchants about the site, Martin was shocked to find that "no one believed in the existence of such rich deposits." After returning to the site and

[111] Proceedings, P/2662, Foreign Department, British Burma, March 1886. Report and Journal of the Burma Expedition by the Chemical Engineer, British Burma.

bringing back a sample of the ore, Martin met with A. Sarkies of the Strand Hotel in Rangoon, who along with his brother, applied for and was granted a prospecting license at the site in 1898.[112] It was these partners who would begin the era of European development at Bawdwin, a project that before long would bring in a series of other foreign engineers and financiers hoping to strike it rich in the Northern Shan States of Burma.

[112] *Rangoon Gazette*, 4 December 1916.

Chapter Three: 1 London Wall: Finance, Capital, and British World Mining Networks in Colonial Burma, 1902-1919

In 1931, William Faro Inc. published a book entitled *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover Under Two Flags*. Written by John Hamill, the book opens with a black and white photograph focusing on a party of well-groomed, mustachioed men outfitted in matching tuxedos. Amidst the tables strewn with flowers and wine bottles, and with the British and Australian flags conspicuously displayed above them, sits a young man near the very back of the room who stares directly into the camera, his presence made clear only by the "x" located on his shoulder. Appearing half the age of his counterparts assembled in the room, the caption reads "X marks Mr. Hoover Dining with Australian friends, Under the Union Jack." Although a simple photograph, Mr. Hoover was, of course, no common man: this was Herbert Hoover, the 31st President of the United States, who had been elected to office three years previously in 1928. Taken in London at the Council of West Australian Mineowners banquet in 1906, the photograph was a reminder of Hoover's past as a man of business and as a tycoon of the mining world, a position he enjoyed before his entry into politics.[1] But more importantly for Hamill, the picture was symbolic of Hoover's duplicity. Neither the "great humanitarian" nor the "savior of Europe" that his allies labeled him as, Hoover was instead a foreigner – a British citizen at that - who had made his fortune through corruption, bribery, and inhumane acts.[2] For Hamill, Hoover had crafted an image of himself that was at odds with the facts, going so far as to destroy evidence across the globe to cover up his shadowy

[1] John Hamill, *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover Under Two Flags* (New York: William Faro, Inc., 1931).
[2] These superlatives are quoted in Ibid, 10. For a later example of this laudatory literature, see Mildred Houghton Comfort, *Herbert Hoover, Humanitarian* (Minneapolis: T.S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1960).

past deeds. What follows, in twenty-three chapters, is a forceful indictment of Hoover's career, one that, as the author and the photograph suggests, occurred "under two flags."

Figure 5: Frontispiece for John Hamill's *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover Under Two Flags* (New York: William Faro, Inc., 1931)

Hamill's book, along with a spate of other smear books about Hoover that were published around the time, played off anxieties that Americans had during the depression that sought to find culpability for the country's economic woes.[3] For these authors, Hoover was to

[3] Aside from Hamill's account, there were three other books that openly questioned Hoover's past. See John Knox, *The Great Mistake* (Washington, D.C.: National Foundation Press, Inc., 1930); James J. O'Brien, *Hoover's Millions and How He Made Them* (New York: James. J.

blame, a narrative proven by his unscrupulous past as a mine speculator. Hoover had made a career of deception, and his later foray into American politics was simply an extension of his cunning ways. But beyond the stories of stock manipulation and labor disputes that color Hamill's account lay an even more sinister Hoover that threatened the whole of American life: the un-American Hoover. The British Hoover. Said to be a "stranger in his own country," Hoover, in Hamill's account, was really a man of empire.[4] Traveling across the globe in search of riches, from Australia and South Africa to Burma and Nigeria, Hoover represented not only the interests of the wealthier classes but of Britain, the country he had called home for nearly two decades.[5] As a Representative from Texas, A. Jack McElmore, would say on the floor of the House during Hoover's days as food administrator, "no eastern potentate ever exercised greater autocratic powers than those now being exercised by My. Herbert C. Hoover, of Red House, Thornton Street, London, England."[6] More than a crook and a shady businessman, Hoover was an enemy serving a foreign power.[7]

The narratives that Hamill and his cronies spun about Hoover's past offer a glimpse into the entangled networks of agents that pushed forward development in the early twentieth

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O'Brien Publishing Co., 1932); Walter W. Liggett, *The Rise of Herbert Hoover* (New York: The H.K. Fly Company, 1932). Hoover commissioned a response to these books, found in Herbert Corey, *The Truth About Hoover* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932). The materials used for Corey's book, as well as the official response to the "smear" books, can be found at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter "HHPL"), "Misrepresentations" files.

[4] John Hamill, *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover*, 5.

[5] The Communist League of America thought that Hamill's book proved Hoover was a perfect representative of the capitalist class and Wall Street. See Albert Glotzer, "Book Review of The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover," in *The Militant* vol. 5 no. 15 (April 1932), 4.

[6] Quoted in Hamill, *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover*, 7.

[7] Hamill also argued that aside from being un-American himself, Hoover actively attempted to subvert the United States through his appointment of British nationals to positions of governmental authority. Edgar Rickard, former editor of *Mining Magazine* and a long-time business associate of Hoover's, for example, was appointed to be Hoover's assistant as head of the U.S. Food Administration. Rickard was a British citizen. Ibid, 364-366.

century mining world.[8] Although used as evidence of Hoover's unfaithfulness during his time as President, the story of a young American entrepreneur working for a British company in a British colony would not have been uncommon at the turn of the century. Hoover's story was only atypical in that he was successful. Engineers, prospectors, and financiers came from across the globe to test their luck in the boom or bust world of mining speculation, particularly from areas of the British World such as Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These agents, hoping to strike it rich on their own, failed more often than not, frequently taking up positions as mine laborers instead.[9] Some did strike it rich, only to have their empires crumble during harder times.[10]

[8] Until recently, historians had largely accepted the view that the smear books were illegitimate works that did not hold up to scrutiny. This was, of course, the official narrative that Hoover and his team pushed forward during the 1930s. Recent work, however, has shown that there was some truth to the allegations that Hamill and others reported on during the time, particularly in regard to unscrupulous business dealings and stock manipulation. For an example of earlier works that supported Hoover's case, see Patrick G. O'Brien and Philip T. Rosen, "Hoover and the Historians: The Reconstruction of a President," in Mark M. Dodge, ed., Herbert *Hoover and the Historians* (West Branch, Iowa: Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association, 1989), 39-85; Rosanne Sizer, "Herbert Hoover and the Smear Books, 1930-1932," *Annals of Iowa*, 47 (1984), 343-361. For a recent revisionist work that looks at Hoover's time in Australia and China and finds that his past was more compromised, see Jeremy Mouat and Ian Phimister, "The Engineering of Herbert Hoover," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 77 no. 4 (November 2008), 553-584.

[9] Carroll Pursell, "Herbert Hoover and the Transnational Lives of Engineers," in *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-Present*, eds. Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, Angela Woollacott (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 109-120.

[10] One famous example of this was the English financier, Whitaker Wright, who made a fortune during the mining boom of the 1890s, only to commit suicide after being sentenced for fraud. Hoover and Bewick, Moreing would later capitalize on Wright's misfortunes, taking over a number of the deceased mining magnate's properties. See Jeremy Mouat, "Whitaker White, Speculative Finance, and the London Mining Boom of the 1890s," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870-1945: Entrepreneurship, High Finance, Politics and Territorial Expansion*, ed. Raymond E. Dumett (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 127-149. See also George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer,* 229-230.

Even so, mining at the turn of the twentieth century was a cosmopolitan business, binding agents from across the Anglo world into a common network. Herbert Hoover, who started as an employee of the British firm Bewick, Moreing and Co., and whose commercial interests took him across the globe, was a central part of this community for nearly two decades. Beginning with his work in Western Australia, Hoover learned to utilize these networks to his advantage, becoming attached to a particular group of engineers and financiers whose assistance allowed him to build a small mining empire of his own. Multinational and including some of the top names in finance and engineering in the world, Hoover's network demonstrates how national boundaries could often break down in the corporate world, even in a period that historians often point to as one of unbridled nationalism.[11] Instead, these networks were predicated on other shared values, including a shared culture of capitalism, a shared "Anglo" heritage, a shared whiteness, and a shared language. British World historians have demonstrated how these values – especially race, culture, and language – could bind disparate agents in the colonial settler societies, but they have not studied how these connections impacted the ways in which non-settler colonial regions might have developed.[12] British World capitalists, of course, did not limit their gaze

[11] Many historians have shown how an ideology of nationalism arose during the late nineteenth century and became central to western life in the years before World War I. As this section will make clear, nationalism or a feeling of national identity could emerge at particular times with important consequences, but in some cases, the culture of business trumped national allegiances. For a few studies that look at nationalism before WWI, see E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*; Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); James Joll and Gordon Martel, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006).
[12] British World history has become a major sub-set of British imperial history in recent years, ushered in by Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich's edited volume, *The British World*. For a study that looks at the British World through the lens of commerce and globalization,

to only those places closest to home. These were global agents with global aspirations, and this was certainly true of those in the mining industry.[13] By the 1920s, in fact, the largest Anglo-owned and operated mine in the world was not located in the deserts of Western Australia or in the mountains of British Columbia: it was found in Burma. Founded by Herbert Hoover and owned and operated by a succession of Americans, Britons, and Australians, the mines in Burma, located at the very edge of Britain's empire, provide an excellent example of how far those networks could travel.

This chapter will focus on the earliest years of the Burma Corporation's mining enterprises in the Northern Shan States of Burma. While subsequent chapters will look more closely at how the mines developed as well as the personnel who called the mines home, this chapter will zoom out and analyze the financiers and entrepreneurs whose grand ambitions sparked the rapid industrial development of the Bawdwin mine during the early twentieth century. In doing so, I argue that foreign capitalists were critical to the making of the British Empire during the early twentieth century. American, Australian, and British financiers were

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see Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*. For a history that focuses more on race and racial networks, see Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire Vol. 1: The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a more global study of the British World, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth.* For an intellectual history of the commonwealth and the idea of a "Greater Britain," see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain.* For a study that explores the utility of "Britishness" in the context of British World studies, see Saul Dubow, "How British was the British World? The Case of South Africa," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* vol. 37 no. 1 (March 2009), 1-27. For a history of networks in the British World and imperial globetrotting, see Alan Lester and David Lambert (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[13] As historian Raymond E. Dummet has said, "some of the most colorful episodes in the entire 500 year expansion of capitalism from Western Europe and the eastern seaboard of North America to Africa, to Latin America, to Australasia and especially to the western United States, Canada, and Alaska centered on the great ore discoveries and the searching for mining riches." Raymond E. Dumett, "Introduction," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870-1945: Entrepreneurship, High Finance, Politics and Territorial Expansion*, ed. Raymond E. Dumett (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 1.

all intimately involved in the development of Bawdwin in this period, bound together through their connections in a British World mining network that stretched across the globe. As this chapter demonstrates, however, these networks were not permanent. While American agents like Hoover enjoyed certain privileges within the British Empire's free trade system at the start of the century, these relationships – which de-emphasized national identity in favor of a common racial heritage and economic worldview - would change with the arrival of war in 1914. Concerned with the German penetration of the British economy, British officials began to reconsider their long-standing commitment to private enterprise during the war, particularly in the mining industry. Deposits like those at Bawdwin, which by the end of the war was one of the top producing lead-silver-zinc mines in the globe, became imperative to British national security during this period, forcing British statesmen and colonial officials to abandon free trade and secure British control.

The Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Company

In December 1902, the Great Eastern Mining Company was registered in London and given a prospecting license to exploit the silver and other minerals present at Bawdwin. The company had an initial nominal capital of £50,000. A.C. Martin, who had learned of the site in the late 1890s while working as a Public Works official, was a founding director of the company, alongside other Rangoon and London-based entrepreneurs such as the Sarkies Brothers, the Kindersley Brothers, and Louis Sterne.[14] Sterne, an American who had made his fortune in railways and land speculation, learned of the property through M.F.

[14] British National Archives at Kew (hereafter "NA"), 31/10106/75693.

Kindersley, a former British military officer in India who had become active in mining during his retirement.[15] In January 1903, Sterne visited Burma and, alongside Kindersley, went to the mining site at Bawdwin. Following a trip "fraught with difficulties," Sterne noted on his arrival at Bawdwin the "enormous heaps of concentrates, or slag," that dotted the landscape, as well as the "old [Chinese] workings" that were left unexplored. According to Sterne, it was during this visit that both himself and Kindersley named a variety of encampments in the area, including the "Tiger Camp."[16] No stranger to vanity, the American also named the small tributary of the Namtu river that passed through the mining area after himself, as well as the valley in which the mines were located: these became known as "Sterne River" and "Sterne Valley." These names, along with Sterne's legend, would remain for the lifetime of the European occupation of the mine.[17]

The Great Eastern Mining Company's license permitted company engineers to develop the mining site at Bawdwin, but at the time of Sterne's visit, the company was chiefly concerned with exploiting the large slag heaps that Chinese miners had left on the site. The slag heaps were formed because Chinese miners, primarily interested in the silver content of the ore, allowed the rest of the minerals to form into large slags after smelting, some of which were washed away downstream. When Martin and his associates arrived at Bawdwin, the slag heaps were "scattered over a distance of some three miles up the valley of

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[15] It is unclear how Sterne and Kindersley met, but it is likely they crossed paths either while in London or on-board a ship.
[16] Louis Sterne, *Seventy Years of an Active Life* (London: Chiswick Press, 1912), 161. At the time of Sterne's visit, the Mandalay-Lashio railway line remained incomplete, forcing the two investors to alight in Hsipaw. According to Sterne, the two could only accomplish around twenty miles a day on horseback, and were accompanied by "some fifty pack-mules, and one Chinaman to every four mules as driver."
[17] Ibid, 162. Sterne would return to Bawdwin two years later with Lord Herschell, a Liberal politician from Britain. Ibid, 165.

the Sterne River," and early estimates showed that there was at least 110,000 tons of slag at mines, with potentially 5,000 to 15,000 more. The scale of the ore deposit at Bawdwin, however, remained entirely unknown.[18] Understanding the potential wealth that lay underneath the earth, and having limited capital to develop the site, the Great Eastern Mining Company entered in December 1903 into an agreement with another firm, Share Guarantee Trust Limited, in order to raise additional funds for the construction of a light railway from Bawdwin to the Burma Railways line to Mandalay. In doing so, and within only two years of its founding, the Great Eastern Mining Company became beholden to interests that lay far beyond the shores of Burma.[19]

R. Tilden Smith, an Australian mining agent who had interests in both Western Australia and Rhodesia, founded Share Guarantee Trust Limited in October 1903. His deal with the Great Eastern Mining Company became one of the Australian's first investments as chairman of the new company.[20] As part of the agreement, Smith's company was tasked with delivering a smelter, rails, and other equipment to the mines in order for the company to begin work on the company light rail, a development considered critical to the operations future. Before long, however, a rift emerged between Tilden Smith and the director's of the Great Eastern Mining Company. After Tilden Smith allegedly sent the wrong equipment from Australia to Burma and development stalled, the director's of the Great Eastern Mining Company decided it was expedient to invite a representative from another firm, Bewick,

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[18] Proceedings, P/7247, Department of Commerce and Industry (Revenue), Burma, December 1906. Lease of Bawdwingyi Mines to the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Co., Ltd.
[19] Caroline J. Ansell, *Richard Tilden Smith: A Man of Vision* (Brisbane: Caroline J. Ansell, 2012), 38-39.
[20] Ibid.

Moreing, and Company, to the property in order to report on its prospects.[21] In December 1904, Kindersley, Sterne, and another shareholder, Joseph Kincaid, advanced the £1,500 necessary to pay for the consulting services, believing it their duty, and not Tilden Smith's, to bear the expense.[22] A few months later, C.S. Herzig, a well-known American mining engineer employed by Bewick, Moreing, arrived at Bawdwin to report on the mines future prospects. Between the estimates of both Herzig and Messrs. Sulman and Picard, engineers for the Great Eastern Mining Company, it was believed that Chinese miners had extracted "at least 4,000,000 tons of material" at the site but were limited because of their technology.[23] In particular, the engineers believed that despite over 300 old openings on top of the ore body, Chinese miners were unable to mine below the water level, leaving a large, intact body of sulphide ore below. With initial samples showing a remarkably high percentage of silver, lead, zinc, and copper in the ore, optimism about the riches that might lie beneath the earth's surface remained high.[24]

The deal between the Great Eastern Mining Company and Share Guarantee Trust Limited ushered in the first phase of European development at Bawdwin, but it was with Herzig's arrival that the future of the operation would be transformed. In 1906, the Great Eastern Mining Company was reconstructed and renamed the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Company Limited, with its headquarters in London. While R. Tilden Smith of

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[21] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 413.
[22] NA, 31/10106/75693.
[23] Proceedings, P/7247, Department of Commerce and Industry (Revenue), Burma, December 1906. Lease of Bawdwingyi Mines to the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Co., Ltd. Sulman and Picard were the proprietors of Mineral Separation, Limited, a London firm that specialized in flotation milling. Dawn Bunyak, "To Float or Sink: A Brief History of Flotation Milling," *Mining History Journal,* 7 (2000), 38.
[24] Proceedings, P/7247, Department of Commerce and Industry (Revenue), Burma, December 1906. Lease of Bawdwingyi Mines to the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Co., Ltd.

Share Guarantee Trust joined Sterne, Joseph Kincaid, and Kindersley as Director's of the company, Bewick, Moreing, and Company, Herzig's employers, became the mine's managers and held a position on the board as well.[25] Founded in London in the 1880s by Thomas B. Bewick and Algernon Moreing, Bewick, Moreing, and Company was one of the most important mining consortiums in the world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - particularly in Western Australia - and was known for its leadership and innovation in mining management.[26] In 1904, the company managed twenty mines in Western Australia alone, employing a workforce over seventy-five trained engineers, many of whom were recruited from the United States.[27] Herzig, himself a graduate of the Columbia School of Mines in New York, was one of the many American engineers on Bewick, Moreing's staff.[28] The most important American at Bewick, Moreing, however, was Herzig's boss, a young mining engineer from Iowa who had become a partner in the company in only four short years, and who also became Bewick, Moreing's voice on the board of the Burma Mines and Railway Smelting Company. His was name was Herbert Hoover.

The Arrival of Herbert Hoover

[25] See Ibid; NA, 31/17692/87848.
[26] Moreing, an Australian, was a civil engineer who began his career as an apprentice to Bewick's father, Thomas J. Bewick, in the 1880s. Aside from its many interests in South Africa, Bewick, Moreing managed mines in South Africa and the United States during the 1880s and 1890s, and Moreing acted as president of the London-based Institution of Mining and Metallurgy. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 224.
[27] Richard Hartley, "Bewick Moreing in Western Australian Gold Mining 1897-1904: Management Policies & Goldfields Responses," *Labour History,* No. 65 (November, 1993), 1; Roger Burt, "Innovation or Imitation?: Technological Dependency in the American Nonferrous Mining Industry," *Technology and Culture,* vol. 41 no. 2 (April, 2000), 340.
[28] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 312.

Herbert Hoover's career as a mining engineer began in the 1890s. Born in West Branch, Iowa to a Quaker family, Hoover later enrolled at Stanford University in 1891 and graduated with a degree in geology in 1895. Upon graduation, Hoover began working under the apprenticeship of the famous American geologist, Waldemar Lindgren, in the United States. After enjoying some success working under the engineer, Louis Janin, Hoover's well-known employers connected the young geologist with a representative from the British firm, Bewick, Moreing and Company, one of Western Australia's leading mining companies. Concerned about Hoover's youth, Bewick, Moreing was initially reluctant to hire the engineer, but after Hoover reportedly grew a beard to suggest his experience, the company hired him in 1897. First sent to London to meet with one of the firm's senior partner's, Algernon Moreing, Hoover would disembark in Albany, Western Australia, on May 13th, 1897. The young engineer was only twenty-three years old.[29]

Upon arriving in Australia, Hoover quickly made his name. Within months of his arrival, Hoover visited the Sons of Gwalia mine in Western Australia and convinced his superiors in Bewick, Moreing to purchase the property from an investment group headed by William Pritchard Morgan, known as the "Welsh gold king." Hoover was quickly appointed superintendent of the mine, and following the site's rapid development and success, the young engineer became widely praised in the mining community for his evaluation, organizational skills, and embrace of new technologies.[30] Bewick, Moreing, and Company, however, was not content to keep Hoover in Australia for long. In 1898, Algernon Moreing visited China and was impressed by the country's mineral wealth, most of which remained closed off to western investors. Moreing, pleased with Hoover's work with Sons of Gwalia,

[29] These events are outlined in Ibid, 46-53.
[30] Ibid, 52-87.

recommended the engineer to represent Bewick, Moreing in China, where he was tasked to both advise local companies exploiting coal near Tientsin, as well as to assist in the construction of a port at Chinwangtao to allow for the export of Chinese coal.[31] Before leaving for China, though, and in a ceremony held in Monterey, California, Hoover married his long-time fiancée, Lou Henry, whom he had met at Stanford University while they both studied geology. The next day, bride and groom set sail for China.[32]

Hoover's tenure in China, at once successful and controversial for the engineer, would become a legendary moment in the engineer's early life, but it was also during this period that Hoover would find some independent accomplishment. In 1901, following the retirement of Thomas Bewick, Hoover was brought in as a senior partner in Bewick, Moreing, and Company, at only twenty-seven years old. Despite his promotion, however, Hoover also began to explore opportunities outside of the firm during this time. According to Hoover's biographer, George H. Nash, by 1904 Hoover had already crafted a strategy to exit Bewick, Moreing. As Herbert and Lou Henry's family grew and his relationship with Algernon Moreing became heated, Hoover longed for a more sedentary life where he could apply his skills to financing mining ventures from a distance. Hoover also began to experience ill health during this period, which he blamed, in part, on his contracting of malaria while visiting the Bawdwin mines in 1907.[33] In June 1908, and citing his poor health, Hoover retired from Bewick, Moreing, and Company and sold his shares in the company to the American W.J. Loring, who became a new partner in the firm. As part of his resignation, and to protect the firm from competition, Hoover was also forced to sign a contract that

[31] Ibid, 82-3.
[32] Ibid, 87.
[33] Ibid 379-380.

prevented him from working in Great Britain or the British Empire for ten years without the consent of Bewick, Moreing.[34] Even still, Hoover was now free to act on his own. Using both the knowledge and connections he established in Western Australia with Bewick, Moreing, and using his home at Red House in London as a base, Hoover would go on to become one of the world's best known mining engineers and financiers over the ensuing decade. By 1914 and the outbreak of World War I, Hoover was director of eighteen mining and financial companies –from Australia and Russia in the east to Latin America and the United States in the west - with a total authorized share capital of more than $55,000,000.[35] It was Hoover's interest in a little known silver-lead-zinc mine in the Northern Shan States of Burma, however, that would ultimately prove to be the financier's greatest investment in the post-Bewick, Moreing years, and that would provide him with a small fortune before his entry into the American political scene.

Hoover, as previously noted, visited Bawdwin in 1907, but he learned of the mineral reserves in Burma a number of years beforehand. In his memoirs, Hoover recounted that he met a director of the Great Eastern Mining Company while ship-bound in 1904, and who told him of the large mineral deposits at Bawdwin and the financial troubles the company was experiencing at the time.[36] Hoover, still a young director of Bewick, Moreing, and Company, sent Herzig as a representative of the company to inspect the mines, after which it became clear that the ore was rich in mineral concentration and, importantly, largely untouched.[37]

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[34] Ibid, 381.
[35] Ibid, 568.
[36] Sterne, the most well-traveled director of the company, does not mention Hoover in his own memoirs, but they were published years before Hoover's entry in politics. Hoover presumably either met Sterne or M.F. Kindersley, who was also involved in a variety of other mining enterprises across the globe. Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 90-91.
[37] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 413-414.

This led to Bewick, Moreing's direct involvement in the operations, sanctioned with the founding of the Burma Mines and Railway Smelting Company Limited in 1906. The agreement brought together the three major parties that would remain involved in Bawdwin's development for the ensuing decade: the Great Eastern Mining Company, the Share Guarantee Trust Limited, and engineers associated with Bewick, Moreing, and Company. This amalgamation, however, was largely symbolic. R. Tilden Smith and Herbert Hoover became the leading forces behind the mining operations, holding the majority of shares and directing the path that development would take. Tilden Smith and Hoover, though, did not maintain an analogous view on how to proceed with development, creating tensions at the operations for the entirety of Hoover's involvement with the mines.

The Making of the Burma Corporation

With the founding of the Burma Mines and Railway Smelting Company Limited – renamed simply the "Burma Mines, Limited" in 1908 – R. Tilden Smith and Herbert Hoover became the primary shareholders of the operation at Bawdwin. Even with Tilden Smith's involvement, however, both Hoover and his former firm, Bewick, Moreing, and Company, were in charge of managing the mine's development. This included recruiting capital to develop the property and finding experts to oversee operations. In 1906, when Hoover, Bewick, Moreing, and their team of financiers and engineers became associated with the mine, the area around Bawdwin was entirely undeveloped and unprepared for large-scale industrial mining. Without a smelter, an existing labor force, or a railway, the new team was tasked with developing the region in the hopes that a large ore deposit might exist under

Chinese workings that dotted the surface. By the time of Hoover's lone visit to Bawdwin in 1907, however, some progress had already been made. A new smelter in Mandalay had been constructed and work was underway on a company-built railway. J.H. Curle, a journalist who accompanied Hoover on the trip, thought that despite the slow progress of the railway's construction, "the Burma Mines Railway & Smelting Co. ought to be a successful venture." In any case, Curle noted, "it is certainly a deeply interesting one."[38]

Figure 6: The Burma Mines Railway. Source: J.D. Hoffman, "The Bawdwin Mines," *Mining Magazine* (March 1916).

[38] J.H. Curle, "Recent Mining Wanderings in Burma, Chile, and Bolivia," *Mining and Scientific Press* (27 June 1908).

Early mine managers echoed Curle's optimistic statements regarding Bawdwin's potential but many problems remained.[39] First, the company built railway was slow in development, owing both to a shortage in local labor as well as a lack of capital. Early estimates about the cost of the railway were proven wrong, and according to Curle, it took the company an additional year to raise the additional £40,000 necessary to build the line.[40] Initially having to use mules to transport ore directly to the government railway line, the company rail was finally completed in December 1909, when the final section between Tiger Camp and Bawdwin was opened to traffic.[41] With the line completed, however, another problem arose. Although the company's 2-foot gauge rail and the Mandalay smelter were designed to carry and produce up to 200 tons of ore daily, the government rail was only equipped to transport 90 tons.[42] With Mandalay and the company smelter some 250 miles distant, company managers became convinced that production could only increase if the smelter were re-located to the region around the mine. Namtu, a village near Bawdwin, was selected to house the smelter, which was successfully re-located in 1911.[43] Even still, businessmen associated with the mine were concerned. With little progress on prospecting

[39] See the 1908 report by W.J. Loring and the 1909 report by Gerard Lovell in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Mines Ltd. file.
[40] J.H. Curle, "Recent Mining Wanderings in Burma, Chile, and Bolivia."
[41] On the use of mules as transport, see India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library (hereafter "IOR"), V/10/518, Report on the Administration of Burma for the Year 1908-09. On the opening of the rail line, see IOR/V/10/518, Report on the Administration of Burma for the Year 1909-10. W.J Loring also reported that 100 mules were being used to transport the ore. See HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Mines Ltd. file.
[42] J.H. Curle, "Recent Mining Wanderings in Burma, Chile, and Bolivia." W.J. Loring estimated that in 1909, only 150 tons of ore could be transported via the company-built railway, owing to a need for two more locomotives. See HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Mines Ltd. file.
[43] Despite the move, production actually dipped at the mines in 1911, only to recover the following year. See the 1911 report in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Mines Ltd. file.

beneath the Chinese workings and knowing that the slag heaps would be eventually exhausted, it was unclear whether or not the tremendous outlay of fixed capital at the site would prove remunerative.[44] With both managers and labor at the mines growing restless due to irregular payments, it became clear that a fresh infusion of capital was required to rescue the troubled operation.[45] For this to occur, however, a considerable reorganization of the company would have to be undertaken.

By 1911, the fate of the Burma Mines Limited hinged on the success of two different but related issues: whether or not company engineers could discover an ore body beneath the old Chinese workings as well as how the company would financially proceed with development. Owing to the fact that Herzig's early evaluations about the cost of development were grossly underestimated, the company was mired in debt during the early years of operation, leading to a slowdown in growth and, at times, a stoppage in wages.[46] Some director's of the company – including Hoover and his long-time partner, the British stockbroker, F.A. Govett - understood that in order for engineers to develop the mine, which included sinking shafts and investing in drainage equipment to prospect below the Chinese workings, a great deal more money was required. Recruiting capital, however, remained a delicate question. At the same time the Hoover group was pushing to expand the company's capital reserves, R. Tilden Smith was fiercely opposed to such a measure, believing that any additional outside capital would weaken his own control of the company. In February 1913,

[44] In 1908, it was estimated that the company had spent over £221,000 on fixed capital at the site, three times what Herzig had estimated in 1905. See Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 416; the 1908 report in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Mines Ltd. file.
[45] See letter from Gerard Lovell to W.J. Loring, 19 September 1912, at Hoover Institution Archives (hereafter "Hoover Institution"), William Joseph Loring Papers, Box No. 2 Accession No. 97077.
[46] Ibid.

as Hoover pressed for a new syndicate to be formed to develop the mine, tensions between the two financiers would reach their zenith.[47] In a note to his colleague, the American mining financier Arthur Chester Beatty, Hoover noted that "Mr. Tilden Smith has now refused point blank to do anything," adding that "I dislike very much to be a Director on a company involving such perfectly wicked mismanagement but I think I shall have to continue, simply because of the opportunity that it will afford when the reorganisation arrives."[48] By May, however, all had changed. In that month, engineers broke through the so-called "Chinaman tunnel" – named for the skeletons of Chinese miners that early European prospectors found at the site – and discovered a massive ore body beneath the earth. According to Hoover, the find was one of the ten most important discovered in the world to that point during the twentieth century. Hoover had finally found his prize.[49]

Following the discovery of ore beneath the Chinese workings, Hoover and Tilden Smith moved quickly to secure additional funds to support the expansion of development at the mines. In 1913, the two financiers founded the Intercontinental Trust, Limited, which had a capital of £100,000, and that was used to loan money to the indebted Burma Mines Limited.[50] Hoover's aspiration for a full reorganization, however, would come to fruition only months later. In October 1913, Hoover and Tilden Smith announced the founding of the Burma Corporation, with an authorized capital of £750,000 and with Hoover as the firm's director. Tilden Smith became the company's leading shareholder, with additional large

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[47] These debates are summarized in Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer,* 419-420.
[48] London School of Economics and Political Science Archives (hereafter "LSE"), Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, Herbert Hoover to Arthur Chester Beatty, 18 February 1913.
[49] See Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer,* 420-421.
[50] See British National Archives (hereafter "NA"), Board of Trade records (hereafter "BT"), 31/21260/127366.

blocks of shares being held by the Hoover and Govett operation, Lake View and Oroya Exploration, as well as Hoover himself.[51] By May 1914, the new Burma Corporation had acquired most of the Burma Mines Limited shares, and a new technical committee was formed that incorporated many of Hoover's post-Bewick, Moreing associates, including his brother, Theodore Hoover. Using his contacts with other American financiers, Hoover also founded the Bawdwin Syndicate, with an authorized capital of £150,000, and that was used to supply working capital for development. With the management and capital firmly now in Hoover's control, the company announced ambitious plans to expand operations, which included the building of a new concentration plant, a hydroelectric plant, and the improvement of the company railway. Hoover and his team also broadcasted plans to build a new tunnel, known as Tiger Tunnel, which would be cut into the mountain side and travel over one mile to the ore body, 500 feet below the Chinamen Tunnel.[52] What had started as a struggling joint venture between the Great Eastern Mining Company, Tilden Smith, and Bewick, Moreing, and Company had become a large-scale industrial mining operation, bringing modern technology and the apparatuses of the colonial state to the very edge of the British Empire. It's leader, however, was not the typical model of an imperial nation-builder. Instead, the success of the Bawdwin operation was dependent on an American mining financier living thousand of miles away from Burma in the City of London, and whose success in the British Empire would soon propel him into a life in American politics.

Mining and Empire

[51] This would become £1,000,000 by April 1914. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 422.
[52] Ibid, 423.

The founding of the Burma Corporation was a significant moment for the history of industrial development in the colony, but the arrival of foreign businessmen in the Northern Shan States was part of a larger global movement in the early twentieth century situated around mining and imperial expansion. Mining, as seen in the pre-colonial history of Bawdwin, was an ancient industry with roots stretching back into Roman times. Modern mining, however, was primarily associated with changes in technology that occurred during industrialization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the new demands for natural resources that mechanization required.[53] Minerals such as coal, silver, tin, copper, lead, and zinc allowed for the growth of industry and the invention of modern conveniences, including electricity, the telegraph, and the railway. Initially, these industries were domestic. In Britain, the center of industrialization during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the local availability of coal and other resources like tin and copper helped fuel industrial and economic growth.[54] Developments in the Cornish tin and copper industries during the mid-nineteenth century, in particular, have become symbolic of the advances in modern mining during this period, wherein a new class of educated and skilled engineers and miners used

[53] For an overview of the mining historiography, see Raymond E. Dumett, "Introduction," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870-1945*, 1-42.

[54] For a recent examination of the industrial revolution and role of British coal and other mineral resources, see Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective.* For other important studies of industrialization that have looked also examined the significance of mining and mining technologies, see Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914* (London: Methuen, 1969); Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures: Industry, Innovation, and Work in Britain, 1700-1820* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985); Christine MacLeod, *Inventing the Industrial Revolution: The English Patent System, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

novel technologies like the steam engine to make the extractive process more efficient.[55] With the discovery of large mineral resource deposits in places like Western Australia, South Africa, and the North American west in the mid to late nineteenth century, however, mining became both a global industry and a cultural phenomenon. With the City of London as its financial center and the British Empire as one of its primary theater's, mining became one of the world's most dynamic industries during the modern period, bringing together a vast network of skilled engineers and financiers from across the British World.[56]

Advances in technology improved the efficiency and practicality of mining during the nineteenth century, but the industrial revolution would have a wide-ranging impact on mining as a business. One major change was related to scale. Although the British Empire already existed as an entity well before the onset of industrialization, the inventions of the steam engine and the railway dramatically compressed space and time during the nineteenth century, making it easier to quickly and cheaply transport commodities across the globe.[57] Mineral deposits, often found in rugged and remote regions far from metropolitan centers, were suddenly more accessible to the speculator, allowing anyone with a pick, an axe, and

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[55] See, for example, Denys Bradford Barton, *A History of Copper Mining in Cornwall and Devon* (Truro: Barton, 1968); Bryan Earl, *Cornish Mining: The Techniques of Metal Mining in the West of England, Past and Present* (Truro: Barton, 1968); Roger Burt, *Cornish Mining; Essays on the Organisation of Cornish Mines and the Cornish Mining Economy* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1969). On the importance of the Cornish pumping engine, see Alessandro Nuvolari, "Collective Invention During the British Industrial Revolution: The Case of the Cornish Pumping Engine," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* vol. 28 no. 3 (May 2004), 347-363.

[56] Cornish miners, for instance, traveled widely during this period, bringing with them specialized expertise in new mining technologies. See Gill Burke, "The Cornish Diaspora of the Nineteenth Century," in *International Labour Migration: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Sheila Marks and Peter Richardson (London: Temple Smith, 1984), 57-75; John Rowe, *The Hard Rock Men: Cornish Immigrants and the North American Mining Frontier* (Liverpool: University Press, 1974).

[57] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

some ambition to trek to previously inaccessible locations on the "frontier" and hopefully strike it rich.[58] The prospector or the panhandler, though, was only one element of that process. As the nineteenth century wore on, the mining industry became an increasingly organized and efficient business. With an increase in demand for mining products and through the rise of finance capital in places like London and New York, mining became a lucrative industry that could turn the shrewd, crafty, and oftentimes-lucky (or unlucky) investor into a sensation (or a laughing stock) nearly overnight.[59]

Mining historians have focused on myriad aspects of the industry – whether technological, economic, social, or cultural – but one major emphasis has been on the role that finance capital played in the expansion of the mining industry during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins in their influential "gentlemanly capitalism" thesis, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the rise of a new financial elite in the "City" of London who exerted great influence in the British Empire and beyond, and who impacted the path of imperial expansion through institutions like banking and stock trading.[60] Mining, although not a focus of Cain and Hopkins' study, was indicative of this change. Because mining required such a large outlay of capital and organization in order to be profitable, individuals and small family companies – such as the Great Eastern Mining Company in Burma, for instance - began to be gradually replaced with

[58] For an excellent overview of this process, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963).
[59] See the essays in Raymond E. Dumett (ed.), *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870-1945: Entrepreneurship, High Finance, Politics and Territorial Expansion* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), for examples of the boom or bust nature of mining during this period.
[60] P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993). See also, Raymond E. Dumett (ed.), *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire* (London: Longman, 1999).

large companies and syndicates by the late nineteenth century.[61] To be successful, these companies not only had to diversify their holdings in order to obviate risk, but they also had to build connections with metropolitan elites in order to recruit capital for their often-risky ventures. This need for money placed the City, Britain's financial capital and the home of large investment firms like the Rothschild's, at the center of the mining world. Between 1880 and 1913, an estimated 8,408 mining companies were registered in Britain alone, and British-owned companies accounted for large shares of global metalliferous ore production – including around sixty per cent of the world's gold - by the turn of the twentieth century.[62] British manpower and technical expertise, however, was also influential. According to historian Clark Spence, miners from Cornwall could be found across the globe during the nineteenth century, forming "the backbone of practical mine management" in the United States, and who were "foremost in promoting, inspecting, and publicizing western mines through British periodicals."[63] British influence in mining, in short, was felt across the world.

The significance of British capital and expertise to mining has been reinforced throughout the historiography, but work on both the empire and recently on transnational global business networks have shown how complicated this process was during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, discussions about the importance of Britain as the center of the global economy invariably run up against questions regarding the overlap between empire and capitalism during the modern period, something that has been reflected

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[61] Raymond E. Dumett has argued that this process was "inevitable." See Raymond E. Dumett, "Introduction," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870-1945*, 15.
[62] Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "Overseas Investment and the Professional Advance of British Metal Mining Engineers, 1851-1914," *Economic History Review*, vol. 42 no. 1 (February 1989), 64.
[63] Clark C. Spence, *British Investments and the American Mining Frontier, 1860-1901* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 13.

and often debated within both the imperial and mining historiographies. For some, and following the work of J.A. Hobson published at the turn of the twentieth century, a need among British capitalists to expand their markets and invest surplus capital led to the intensification of imperial expansion during the nineteenth century, a process that mining was heavily engaged in.[64] In the mid-twentieth century, however, Gallagher and Robinson questioned Hobson's "push" thesis and famously argued that metropolitan economic interests did not spur imperial expansion, but instead, peripheral events in the empire itself were the driving force. Instead of Lancashire textile merchants or greedy mining financiers in London leading the way, Gallagher and Robinson made the "man-on-the-spot" the protagonist of the imperial zeitgeist, whose decisions and personalities could often be the difference between whether or not a distant location was colonized. For Gallagher and Robinson, colonization was often a last resort. Because a colonial administration was expensive and business might in fact be more profitable without the interference of British officials, occupation was only useful when security or returns were at risk. In short, colonization was not always in the best interests of the British businessman or the British market and could not have been the only reason for imperial expansion.[65]

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[64] In speaking of the colonization of South Africa, for instance, Hobson argued that imperialism "hands over these races to the economic exploitation of white colonists who will use them as 'live tools' and their lands as repositories of mining or other profitable treasure." J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1902), 260.

[65] This theory was made most famous in John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* vol. 6 no. 1 (1953), 1-15. See also John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961). For an overview of Gallagher and Robinson's theory and the controversy that surrounded its publication, see the essays in William Roger Louis (ed.), *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976).

Scholars have continued to debate the merits of Hobson, Gallagher and Robinson, and Cain and Hopkins' theories regarding the interaction between empire and capitalism, and recent historical work has been cognizant of the complicated nature of imperial expansion and development during the modern period. Historian John Darwin, combining the arguments of Gallagher and Robinson with those of Cain and Hopkins, has argued that the empire should not be seen as a uniform entity but instead as a "world system" that was constantly evolving during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and that both metropolitan and peripheral concerns drove expansion.[66] Another recent trend has been to emphasize the global or transnational nature of the empire, as well as the history of migration within it.[67] This new "British World" focus has been especially fruitful for showing the strong links maintained between metropolitan Britain and Britain's white settler colonies, including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa.[68] The new historiography has demonstrated how critical cultural links could be in the fashioning of empire, and the ways in which categories like class, language, and especially race could bind those in Britain with British settlers elsewhere in the world. While some of these links were more institutional in nature, such as in education or within the press, they were often commercial.[69] Because the British economy was so intertwined with imperial and global events during the modern period, entrepreneurs and businessmen had to ascribe to a set of shared values in order for business to remain seamless and profitable.[70] Personal connections and networks, so critical

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[66] John Darwin, *The Empire Project*.
[67] For an overview of these trends, see Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns?"
[68] For the first study to identify and examine the British World, see Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (eds.), *The British World*.
[69] On education, see Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*. For the press, see Simon Potter, *News and the British World*.
[70] See, for example, Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire.*

to commercial growth during this time, was made possible through these shared values, which included a cultural heritage centered in Britain, the use of the English language, a commitment to free trade and classical economics, and significantly, a common belief in white racial supremacy. This "cultural economy," as the historians Magee and Thompson have argued, connected agents from across the British World into a common community, whether in London, New York, Melbourne, or the Cape Colony.[71] Mining was no exception to this phenomenon.

Mining historians have regularly engaged with debates about the entanglement between empire and capitalism during the modern period, but recent work has highlighted the transnational and global nature of mining networks. While some historians have continued to place considerable stock in the "gentlemanly capitalism" thesis and have written often about the financiers based in London who impacted mining development, other historians have qualified such an argument by noting that local capital – such as in South Africa or the American west – could and did still impact mining development in its environs, even with the involvement of so-called gentlemanly capitalists.[72] Likewise, and in consideration of the new global trend in imperial history, historians have shown how mining in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century included a diverse set of national characters, hailing from across the British World. Mining brought together agents from places like the Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and other British settler colonies into a common network, forging a community of geologists, engineers, and managerial experts who had a significant role within the British Empire and whose values and paths often overlapped. Connections made between

[71] See Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation,* 14.
[72] Raymond E. Dumett, "Introduction," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870-1945*, 13-14.

these agents could occur in a variety of places and in myriad capacities, whether through financial dealings in the City of London, on ships traveled to visit prospecting sites across the world, or on the ground at the mines themselves.[73] But while British World historians have primarily focused on the links between Britain and its settler colonies, these connections could and did impact economic development elsewhere in the empire. In Burma, thousands of miles from the stock exchanges of London or the gold mines of Coolgardie, one such network of British World agents would soon find itself the leaders of a large silver-lead-zinc ore mine in the mountains of the Northern Shan States.

Mining, Nation, and the Free-Standing Company

The story of Hoover and Tilden Smith opens up a variety of insights about the relationship between the British Empire and global capitalism during the early twentieth century, as well as how far British World business networks could travel in the pursuit of power and profit. The two financiers, one American and one Australian, became the face of the operations at Bawdwin before 1920, despite neither having spent any substantial time in Burma nor having any connections with the colonial apparatus in Rangoon. Although an American, Herbert Hoover was in many ways the personification of Cain and Hopkins' gentlemanly capitalist. Eschewing his earlier work of prospecting and managing mines in some of the world's most remote locations, Hoover's retirement from Bewick, Moreing led the young engineer to engage in a career in mining investment, and before long, he was

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[73] See, for example, Stephen Tufnell, "Engineering Inter-Imperialism: American Miners and the Transformation of Global Mining, 1871-1910," *Journal of Global History*, vol. 10 no. 1 (March 2015), 53-76; R.A. Buchanan, "The Diaspora of British Engineering," *Technology and Culture,* vol. 23 no. 3 (July 1986), 501-524.

known as one of the world's leading mining financiers. Hailing from humble beginnings in the American Midwest, by the time of his involvement with the Burma mines, Hoover had become one of the nouveau riche. With offices in the City, and using his estate – known as Red House - in London as a base of operations for both himself and his growing family, the former Stanford graduate began work on building his own mining empire, the success of which would eventually lead him into the political arena.[74] Hoover would find his triumph through an involvement with many different mining ventures around the world, but it was the Bawdwin mine that proved to be his most prized accomplishment. To be successful, however, Hoover had to rely on a large team of engineers, managers, and financiers to help develop his property, a fact that brought the British World deep into the interior of the Indian Empire.

British World agents affected the development of Bawdwin during the early twentieth century at two different but interrelated scales: financially and managerially. In both realms, the period between 1906 - with the founding of the Burma Mines and Railway Smelting Company – and 1923 – when Tilden Smith sold his shares in the Burma Corporation – saw the mines operated through what historian Mira Wilkins has labeled the "free-standing company."[75] Developed during the nineteenth century, the free-standing company was an early effort to streamline management and develop an efficient and profitable business plan,

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[74] On Red House, see Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 500-503.
[75] See Mira Wilkins, "The Free-Standing Company, 1870-1914: An Important Type of British Foreign Direct Investment," *The Economic History Review* vol. 41 no. 2 (May 1988), 259-282; Mira Wilkins, "Defining a Firm: History and Theory," in Peter Hertner and Geoffrey Jones (eds.), *Multinationals: Theory and History* (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), 80-95. See also Geoffrey Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals: British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Leslie Hannah, *The Rise of the Corporate Economy: The British Experience* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

replacing the sort of "gold rush" mentality of individual prospecting. Unlike the later multinationals, who used foreign direct investment in other countries, free-standing companies were most often floated and based in Great Britain, consisted of a board of directors of "well-known men," and used the existing British service sector - including banks, trading companies, and mining engineers - to recruit capital and contract out professional services to oversee operations.[76] In the United States, free-standing companies were pervasive during the nineteenth century, leading to a heavy involvement of British capital in the development of mining operations in the American West.[77] These companies, however, existed around the world. Hundreds of British-owned companies – including Hoover's employer, Bewick, Moreing, and Company - actively prospected and operated mines in Western Australia and other British settler colonies during the modern period, using the same free-standing company model employed in the United States.[78] Although many of these firms proved unsuccessful, it created a new era in mine management that brought the engineer and investment banker into a common community and foreshadowed the rise of major multinational mining companies – such as the American Metal Company, the Rio Tinto Company, or Metallgesellschaft in Germany – during the early twentieth century.

For Herbert Hoover, a foreign national, the structure of the free-standing company secured a number of advantages, especially within the British Empire. Although ostensibly a "free trade" empire, national identity could matter when in reference to the investment of

[76] For an overview of the structure of these firms, see Mira Wilkins, ""The Free-Standing Company, 1870-1914," 261-264.
[77] Mira Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 161-163.
[78] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended.*

capital and the ownership of companies within the empire.[79] In 1902, for instance, the role of American corporations within Burma became a controversial subject following the arrival of Standard Oil in the colony. Standard Oil, an American-based transnational corporation, was interested in the oil wells at Yenangyaung, which to that time had been one of the colony's most profitable businesses and was run through a free-standing company based out of Glasgow: the Burmah Oil Company.[80] In 1902, and after years of discussing Burma as a new field of investment and production, Standard Oil applied to the Anglo-Burmese government to acquire oil concessions in Yenangyaung under a subsidiary, the Colonial Oil Company. In response, the local government rejected Standard Oil's proposal, and subsequently banned the foreign ownership of oil wells in Burma, citing a belief that Standard Oil would try and monopolize production and damage the local industry. Trying by all means to secure the concessions, Standard Oil re-applied to the government using a British subsidiary, the Anglo-American Oil Company, and sent their leading lobbyist, William Herbert Libby, to both London and Rangoon to negotiate directly with local oil well owners, hoping to undercut the government. The ploy, however, did not work. In a last ditch effort, Standard Oil representatives approached the director of the Burmah Oil Company, James Finlay, seeking to form a combination between the two companies, but those exertions were firmly rebuffed. Standard Oil, in the end, was kept out of the colony.[81]

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[79] For an overview of Britain's commitment to free trade during this period, see Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*.
[80] For a history of the Burmah Oil Company, see Marilyn V. Longmuir, *Oil in Burma*; T.A.B. Corley, *A History of the Burmah Oil Company*.
[81] For a summary of these events from the perspective of Standard Oil, see Ralph W. Hidy and Muriel E. Hidy, *Pioneering in Big Business 1882-1911* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 499-501.

The Standard Oil controversy became a popular news topic throughout India and Burma between 1902 and 1903, bringing to light questions about the relationship between nation, capital, and economic development in the empire. Dubbed "The Invaders" by the Indian press, Standard Oil was considered to be a bullying, monopolizing, foreign aggressor whose actions could stymie British industry. According to the *Times of India*, though Libby argued that "a large amount of fresh capital into the [oil] industry would benefit the province and the people," it was "the duty of Government to give reasonable protection to existing interests possessed by their own subjects."[82] Libby, however, was speaking about more than just economic development. According to Libby, the decision of the Anglo-Burmese government to deny their application "seems in conflict with the spirit of the International treaties between Great Britain and the United States, and in contradistinction with the innumerable industrial affairs which are being daily progressed by subjects of Great Britain and citizens of the United States, respectively, in the possessions of the other, and with the commercial freedom which Anglo-American treaties and Anglo-American amity emphasizes." In rejecting the application, the Anglo-Burmese government was rejecting international commercial agreements between the two countries, a fact made worse when considering the "large investments in the United Kingdom" that Standard Oil subsidiaries – in this case, the Anglo-American Oil Company – had made.[83] This appeal, convincing to some in the industry, was not as warmly received in Britain or within the Empire.[84] While the

[82] Quoted in *Rangoon Gazette*, 17 November 1902.
[83] Quoted in *Rangoon Gazette*, 21 November 1902.
[84] *The Petroleum Industrial and Technical Review*, a trade journal, was one of the few voices that lent their support to Standard Oil, arguing that the incident proved how British manufacturers and traders lacked "individual assurance," and were too self-conscious of the supposed "demi-god of commerce" that they perceived the Americans to be. *Rangoon Gazette*, 1 December 1902.

St. James's Gazette offered the Indian Government "congratulat[ions] on its perspicacity" in the matter, the *Daily Mail* noted that the government was "unquestionably" justified "in taking steps to protect its subjects against such a monopoly." Taking it a step further, the *Daily Chronicle* argued that although Standard Oil had appealed to the "international question" as a strategy to convince the government to hand over the concessions, the government had luckily refused their overtures. "And if the Indian Government does not stand firm," the newspaper concluded, "then farewell to the British oil industry in Burma."[85]

As the debates about railway construction in chapter one showed, Anglo-Burmese officials were concerned about the lack of outside capital investment in Burma throughout the colonial period. What made the Standard Oil situation unique, however, was that the corporation was attempting to take over – at least in the opinion of the Indian Government and the Burmah Oil Company - an industry that was already thriving under British control. The government, along with local business interests, were not necessarily concerned that foreign capital should be kept out of the colony, but instead that the corporation – who were so unscrupulous, they argued, that Standard Oil was not always welcome even in their own country – would out compete local producers and monopolize a British imperial industry. This was seen not only as a threat to Anglo-Burmese commercial interests, but to the imperial economy as a whole. For Libby and Standard Oil, though, the situation was an affront to civilized commerce. When the Government of India issued an order in October 1902 saying that the sale of oil-bearing lands in Burma had to first approved by government, Libby declared that the policy was "aimed at American interests and apparently crosses the

[85] Quoted in *Rangoon Gazette*, 8 December 1902.

frontier of discrimination to enter the area of tyranny and persecution."[86] For the Petroleum and Industrial and Technical Review, "differential treatment of foreigners is so rare under the British flag" that the government's decision to deny Standard Oil a concession must be the result of authorities "safeguard[ing] the interests of the monopolists [i.e. the Burmah Oil Company] in possession." In doing so, the Indian Government had sullied the "principles of international commerce" and sacrificed the "tradition and equity" that existed between the "dependent" commercial "communities" of the United States and Britain.[87]

In 1904, and in response to the Standard Oil controversy, the Secretary of State for India declared that oil concessions in India "should be granted only to British subjects and companies," believing that it would both protect the Indian consumer and provide a secure supply of fuel for the British Navy.[88] The Standard Oil incident, though, was not indicative of how British officials in Burma saw economic development across the colony. This was the case even under the umbrella of "mining," in which the oil industry was administratively housed. In the mining of metals, a capital and labor-intensive business that required developers to shoulder great risk, British officials were more amenable to foreign capital, particularly if provincial or colonial sources of capital were not forthcoming. In 1910, these questions were laid out plainly in the proceedings of the Anglo-Burmese government. In Tavoy, a district known for its tin production, the Deputy Commissioner of Tavoy, Colonel Green, refused the application of an American prospector, owing, reputedly, to his nationality. After the American consul in Rangoon petitioned the local government, arguing

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86 *The Petroleum Industrial and Technical Review*, 29 November 1902.
87 *The Petroleum Industrial and Technical Review*, 15 November 1902.
88 *Summary of the Administration of Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor General of India, in the Department of Revenue & Agriculture* (Simla: Government Central Branch Press, 1905), 101.

that a German firm had recently been granted a mining license elsewhere in Burma, the government issued a circular supporting the American miner. In the circular, it was noted that "the Lieutenant-Governor does not share Colonel Green's view and that no objection will ordinarily be raised to granting mining concessions to persons who are not British subjects provided that they are otherwise eligible." While the government had the "right to refuse concessions to any person, Trust, or Syndicate of any nationality whose methods are regarded as objectionable," particularly "with reference to concessions related to oil," there was no law prohibiting the working of mining sites in Burma by a foreign interest.[89] These policies would change with the onset of World War I, but in the early days of the Burma Mines Limited, foreign investment remained a legal, government-sanctioned activity.

Financing Bawdwin

The Anglo-Burmese government's support of foreign companies and foreign commercial interests in Burma during the early twentieth century would have provided enough leverage for Herbert Hoover to legally invest in the local economy, but Hoover also represented a somewhat unique case. Under the protection of the free-standing company, which was a British company, and utilizing his connections in the Australian mining world, Hoover's ventures in Burma were not those of an ordinary American engineer or investor, but instead, a transnational agent whose national identity during this period was somewhat

[89] Proceedings, P/8367, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, November 1910. Rejection of Khoo Zun Nee's application for a prospecting license owing to Mr. Wickersham, an American, being interested in the venture.

blurry.[90] During Hoover's tenure as President, his enemies would have been excused for thinking he had become a British citizen during his time in the mining industry. Not only did Hoover live primarily in Britain or the Commonwealth for nearly twenty years, but he had also forged deep connections with the financial, professional, and political elite across the British Empire.[91] Hoover floated easily between the commercial worlds of London and New York or the mining centers of South Africa and Western Australia during this period, building a mining empire from his home in London. The connections Hoover made at this time were critical to his success as a financier-engineer, linking him with a vast network of bankers, stockbrokers, and scientific experts who hailed from across the British World. Hoover became the leader of a particular British World business network during this period, which he had assembled throughout his career and that was centered at 1 London Wall in the City. It was from London that Hoover oversaw his many mining ventures around the globe, including the founding of the Burma Corporation.

The financial and professional networks that Hoover utilized in the Burma Corporation venture came from two distinct phases of the engineer's career: first, from connections he made while employed by Bewick, Moreing, and Company in Western Australia, and second, from an American group of professionals he leaned on during his post-Bewick, Moreing years. Within the first group, no one was a more important ally for Hoover during this period than Francis Algernon Govett. Govett, who was educated at Oxford, was the son of a prominent London stockbroker. After becoming a senior partner in his father's firm – Govett and Sons – following university, Govett became a well-known figure in the

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[90] See Carroll Pursell, "Herbert Hoover and the Transnational Lives of Engineers."
[91] Hoover left London for the United States in April 1917. George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Humanitarian, 1914-1917* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), 361.

mining world during the boom of the 1890s, particularly after he successfully reorganized two important gold mining companies, Lake View Consols, Limited and the Ivanhoe Gold Corporation, in Western Australia. In December 1901, Govett traveled to Australia to visit his new mining enterprises, and en route, met the young Herbert Hoover, who at that time was a leading engineer for Bewick, Moreing, and Company. Looking to completely restructure the management of his gold mines and impressed with the young engineer, Govett appointed Bewick, Moreing, and Company consulting engineers to the Ivanhoe Gold Corporation as well as mine managers of Lake View Consols. As George Nash has noted, the alliance started "more than a decade of close personal collaboration" between Hoover and Govett, long outlasting Hoover's relationship with Bewick, Moreing.[92]

When Hoover - still a representative of Bewick, Moreing, and Company – became involved in the operations at Bawdwin in 1906, Govett was one of the first investors in the new enterprise as well as a member of the board of directors. In order to raise the £100,000 necessary for working capital, the company issued £150,000 in debenture shares. While the Share Guarantee Trust purchased £25,000 of debentures, Govett's brokerage purchased £30,000 and Lake View Consols bought £20,000.[93] Govett and Lake View Consols however, would only continue solidifying their stake in the company through subsequent reorganizations.[94] With the founding of the Burma Corporation in 1913, Govett's interest became even more marked. Lake View Consols – renamed the Lake View and Oroya

[92] Hoover and Govett also became joint managing director's of the Zinc Corporation at Broken Hill, in Western Australia, in 1908. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 230. For background on Govett, see Peter Richardson, "Collins House Financiers W.L. Baillieu, Lionel Robinson and Francis Govett," in *Australian Financiers: Biographical Essays*, eds. R.T. Appleyard and C.B. Schedvin (Melbourne: Reserve Bank of Australia, 1988), 226-253.
[93] See Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 414.
[94] Ibid, 417.

Exploration company – purchased 92,908 shares of the new firm, with Hoover owning 38,511 shares himself. The Intercontinental Trust, which Hoover and Tilden Smith owned 40% of, purchased 112,782 shares. Tilden Smith himself purchased 189,263 shares, and the Share Guarantee Trust Limited, Tilden Smith's company, purchased an additional 47,575.[95] Hoover, through the proxy of various other British free-standing companies, then, was able to secure a great deal of capital for the enterprise, which with the discovery of ore beneath Bawdwin, was destined to only rise in value. Through the investment of these companies, however, it was unclear how much Hoover had at stake during the firm's early days, and the level of his involvement in the company. Regardless of Hoover's nationality, for all intensive purposes, the Burma Corporation was a British company.

The shareholding lists of the Burma Corporation demonstrate how opaque the ownership of mining companies could be during the early twentieth century, and in particular, how complicated the capital holdings of the Burma Corporation were at the time. Hundreds of shareholders became involved in the Burma Corporation, the Intercontinental Trust, and other Bawdwin-related firms during this period, from spinsters and mining engineers to large companies and City elites. In the months following the initial flotation of the Burma Corporation on the London Stock Exchange, the Intercontinental Trust as well as Francis Govett continued to purchase large blocks of shares in the company.[96] A number of other prominent names and firms, however, also became associated with the mine. Leslie Urquhart, the Scottish mining financier who had partnered with Hoover to develop mines in Russia, became involved in the Intercontinental Trust in 1913 and through that firm,

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[95] Govett personally invested in only 3,069 shares. His firm invested 304. NA, BT 31/21753/131501.
[96] By January 1915, the Intercontinental Trust owned 174,326 shares. NA, BT 31/21753/131501.

purchased a small block of shares in the Burma Corporation.[97] Large multinational firms were also involved, including the Metallgesallschaft in Germany, who loaned the Burma Corporation £50,000 and by 1914, secured a place on the Board of Director's through its representative Eduard Heberlein.[98] Alongside local commercial interests, including the Sarkies brothers and A.C. Martin, shareholders of the Burma Corporation and its many companies represented a global community of investors, all of whom hoped to secure great wealth through the promising mining venture. As was common with other free-standing companies of the time, though, these investors – particularly the small investor – would either lose their money or have to wait a significant amount of time to benefit from their investment. It was not until the mid 1920s, long after Hoover sold off his own shares of the company, that the Burma Corporation would pay dividends to its shareholders.[99]

Govett's involvement in the financing of the Burma Corporation provided Hoover with a critical ally on the Burma Corporation's board of director's during the firms early years. Govett, a well-known stockbroker, was connected to a variety of significant commercial figures across the British World during this period, both in the City of London and within the greater British World mining community. This included the likes of William Lawrence Baillieu, a famous Australian businessman who helped develop the Zinc Corporation alongside Hoover and Govett, as well as the brothers Lionel and W.S. Robinson, the latter of whom would come to chair the Burma Corporation in the 1920s. Govett's

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[97] See both NA, BT 31/21753/131501 and NA, BT 31/21260/127366.
[98] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, Arthur Chester Beatty to Galen Stone, 15 December 1914.
[99] Beatty and his brother, Gedney, for example, grew impatient and sold off a large block of their shares in the Burma Corporation in 1923. See LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, Gedney to Arthur Chester Beatty, 26 March 1923. On the eventual paying out of dividends, see the shareholders report in *Rangoon Gazette*, 3 January 1927.

support for the development of Bawdwin not only provided Hoover with additional capital to finance his schemes - which was often funneled through Govett's Lake View and Oroya Exploration company - but it also gave Hoover more clout in his dealings with R. Tilden Smith.[100] Govett, however, was not the only major financial figure who became involved in Hoover's network. Around 1912, when Hoover became committed to the idea that the mines needed a complete financial overhaul in order to be successful, the former engineer recruited a host of other British World mining agents to his cause, particularly in the United States. Although Hoover was technically an independent businessman during this time, his offices at 1 London Wall became the center of a transatlantic network of financiers and engineers during this period. These agents became involved in the Burma business in a variety of capacities and held shares in the myriad companies that represented the interests of the Burma Mines Limited, both during and after Hoover's tenure with the firm. This network, though unsuccessful in some of their aims, ultimately had a large impact on the development of Bawdwin in the years around World War I. Hoover's network demonstrates how complex the aims of commercial communities could be in the British Empire during the early twentieth century, and the ways in which imperial expansion and a search for profits could overlap during this time.

1 London Wall

According to Herbert Hoover in his memoirs, the years between 1908 and 1914 were the peak of his success as an engineer and manager of mines. "I created no formal firm and

[100] See Peter Richardson, "Collins House Financiers W.L. Baillieu, Lionel Robinson and Francis Govett."

had no partners in a legal sense," Hoover noted, but with a team of young experts – many of whom came from the United States – Hoover opened offices across the globe, including in New York, London, and San Francisco. For Hoover, his "happy shop" - which included the engineer from New Zealand, John Agnew (the "Chief of Staff"), as well as the Americans Gilman Brown, Dean Mitchell, Amor Kuehn, and his own brother, Theodore Hoover – was drawn to the business for the "sheer joy of creating productive enterprises, of giving jobs to men and women, of fighting against the whims of nature and of correcting the perversities and the incompetence of men." Profiling his team as "engineering doctors" healing "sick concerns," Hoover's business interests expanded greatly during this period.[101] Bawdwin was one of the leading speculative properties in Hoover's global portfolio. Although engineers had yet to prove the mine until 1913, when the "Chinaman" lode was discovered beneath the old workings, that event as well as his convincing of R. Tilden Smith to restructure the company pushed forward a new phase of operations. With the reorganization of the company's finances in 1913, Hoover was trying to both restructure the company to assure greater profits for himself, as well as to eliminate the presence of his former firm, Bewick, Moreing, and Company, from the enterprise. It was in that year, with the founding of the Burma Corporation, that Hoover achieved this goal, transforming the managerial regime at Bawdwin and solidifying his role as the leading figure of the operation. To do so, however, Hoover had to rely on a new cast of financiers and engineers, many of whom he became connected to in his post-Bewick years. Based out of the City, Hoover's new team developed Bawdwin before and during World War I. Hoover's network brought in both Americans and agents from across the British World mining establishment during this time, demonstrating

[101] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 99-100.

how global his connections had become by the end of World War I, and also how important non-Britons were to the economic development of the British Empire, even during a period when national identities and allegiance were heightened.

Alongside figures like Govett who were committed to his plans well before the formation of the Burma Corporation in 1913, Hoover recruited a variety of well-established financiers to his cause in the years before World War I. Arthur Chester Beatty, an American, was critical to establishing these links. Beatty, born in New York City, found his success as an employee of the Guggenheims as well as with the famous American mining engineer John Hays Hammond, whose exploits in South Africa became well known around the turn of the century.[102] After finding success under the tutelage of the Guggenheims, Beatty left the firm in 1908 and began working with the famous Boston-based bankers Charles Hayden and Galen Stone to prospect and develop a variety of properties in the American west, including the Ray copper mines.[103] Working primarily in New York, Beatty came to the attention of Herbert Hoover around this period. Hoover visited the fellow American in 1909 to discuss business opportunities elsewhere in the world. Beatty, who had become interested in the large mineral deposits at the Kyshtim estate in Russia, told Hoover of the proposition, and the two agreed to gather additional information and work together on the project in the future. In the meantime, tragedy would strike Beatty and his young family. In 1911, Beatty's wife, Ninette, died at the age of thirty-one from typhoid fever. Fearing his health, Beatty's

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[102] John Hays Hammond, as an associate of Cecil Rhodes in South Africa, was famously part of the Johannesburg Reform Committee, which tried – and failed - to overthrow the South African government in 1885-1886 in what became known as the Jameson Raid. After leaving South Africa, Hammond remained active in mining ventures throughout California and Mexico, and like Hoover, later became involved in politics. See John Hays Hammond, *Autobiography of John Hays Hammond* (New York: Ferrar and Rinehart Inc., 1935).
[103] A.J. Wilson, *The Life & Times of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty* (London: Cadogan Publications, 1985), 118-119.

doctors encouraged the engineer to take time abroad in order to rest, and after making contact with his friend Hoover in London, Beatty decided to make the trek across the Atlantic. On April 23, 1911, Arthur, his brother Gedney, and his children disembarked in the United Kingdom. Beatty remained a resident of the British Isles for the remainder of his life.[104]

Shortly after arriving in London, Beatty set up his own offices at 1 London Wall, a floor above his friend Herbert Hoover's. The two former engineers quickly bonded, and in 1912, travelled together to Siberia to check on their copper prospects in Kyshtim. Russia would prove a success for both men, as well as for the Scotsman Leslie Urquhart, who had initially told Beatty about the property. Using imported American technology, as well as engineers and metallurgists sent from Butte, Montana, Kyshtim quickly proved remunerative, remaining so until both Hoover and Beatty sold their shares in the company shortly before the Russian Revolution. According to Beatty's biographer, the Kyshtim trip "did much to cement the friendship" between the two former engineers, and while both men still desired to remain independent, they also agreed to cooperate on other mining prospects in the future.[105] Beatty, with his many connections in the United States, and Hoover, with his own network of financiers and engineers in Britain and Australia, represented a global force in the mining world. Over the next few years, Beatty and Hoover's would collaborate on a number of mining ventures, sharing information, personnel, and capital. In 1912, the same year that Hoover and Beatty visited Russia, Beatty became involved in another of Hoover's projects in

[104] Ibid, 123-127.
[105] Ibid, 130-131. On Leslie Urquhart, see K.H. Kennedy, *Mining Tsar: The Life and Times of Leslie Urquhart* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

the east. That project, which he considered to be “one of the best mines that has been discovered in recent years,” was at Bawdwin.[106]

Beatty became involved in the operations at Bawdwin soon after reaching London. In 1912, Beatty invested in shares of the Burma Mines Limited, the Mawchi Tin and Wolfram Mines, Limited, as well as the newly founded Burma Trust.[107] According to Hoover, the Burma Trust, founded in 1912, consisted “largely” of the “Kyshtim crowd,” and was created as a “private finance company” – like Lake View and Oroya - to finance development at a variety of properties in Burma.[108] Using his connections in New York, Beatty also helped Hoover recruit engineers at this time, including a mutual acquaintance of both, the American Amor Frederick Kuehn. Initially working under Hoover and Beatty in 1910, when he was sent to Siberia to report on developments at Kyshtim, Kuehn became one of Hoover’s primary consulting engineers for the rest of his mining career.[109] Upon arriving back in London and hoping to find work with Beatty in the United States, Kuehn learned that little work awaited him back home. Having few options, Hoover employed Kuehn on a temporary basis to conduct office work for his firm, Lake View and Oroya. Kuehn, however, preferred

[106] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, Arthur Chester Beatty to Galen Stone, 15 December 1914.
[107] The Mawchi Tin and Wolfram Mines, Limited, was a joint venture between the Hoover team and the Southern Shan States Syndicate, led by H.F. Hornby and other British business interests in Rangoon. LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/129, A.F. Kuehn to Arthur Chester Beatty, 9 March 1912.
[108] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/129, Herbert Hoover to Arthur Chester Beatty, 12 March 1912.
[109] Kuehn had visited Siberia on behalf of Hoover and his associates as early as 1910, but by 1911, had little contracted work. See LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/179, E.L. Gruver to A.F. Kuehn, 25 October 1910 and Arthur Chester Beatty to A.F. Kuehn, 3 March 1913.

field-work.[110] By the end of 1911, it was decided that Beatty would pay Kuehn a yearly salary, and that along with overseeing Beatty's affairs in London, the engineer would work for Hoover as well.[111] Before long, and with the operations at Bawdwin continuing to languish – at least as far as Hoover was concerned – under the guidance of Bewick, Moreing, and Company, Hoover and Beatty decided to send Kuehn to Burma and report on the mines prospects and offer his recommendations as to how develop should proceed. In 1912, Kuehn visited Bawdwin, the first of many visits the engineer would make to the property over the next six years.[112]

Kuehn's visit to Burma and the proposals he made about the Bawdwin mine represented a shift in how Hoover and his new associates saw the future of the mine, as well as their role in its development. Although Hoover had long wanted to restructure the company, Kuehn's critical judgments about Bewick, Moreing, and Company at Bawdwin only reinforced the chairman's viewpoint. According to Kuehn, Bawdwin's problems in 1912 and early 1913 were the result of both a "labour shortage induced by unpaid pay rolls" at the mines, as well as a "power shortage which is indirectly caused by lack of finances." Kuehn laid the blame for these problems "entirely against the General Managers, who are supplied with practically all the data they call for, but who probably do not grasp the situation after all."[113] Kuehn was especially critical of the American engineer W.J. Loring, who had taken over Hoover's partnership in Bewick, Moreing and who had overseen

[110] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/179, Arthur Chester Beatty to A.F. Kuehn, 9 January 1911.
[111] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/179, Arthur Chester Beatty to A.F. Kuehn, 6 November 1911.
[112] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/179, A.F. Kuehn to E.L. Gruver, 7 October 1911.
[113] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, A.F. Kuehn to Arthur Chester Beatty, 16 January 1913.

operations at Bawdwin on a number of occasions during the Burma Mines Limited's early years.[114] Kuehn believed that until the company was properly managed and "amply financed," Beatty and his associates should not invest more capital in the operations, as "we do not know what we are buying into." Kuehn concluded that while the "property looks exceptionally promising as a lead-silver prospect," to "make the most of the situation the company should be financed so that a first class management may push development with all possible speed."[115] For Hoover, Beatty, and Kuehn, this meant a full reorganization of the mines finances as well as a change in management, which they would oversee.

Between Kuehn's statements at the start of 1913 and the end of the year, much would change regarding Bawdwin's financial situation. In February 1913, the Intercontinental Trust was founded under the direction of both Hoover and Tilden Smith. In October 1913, the Burma Corporation was created, completely restructuring the financial standing of the mine and ousting Bewick, Moreing, and Company from the management of mining operations. While Beatty was only tangentially involved in these negotiations, he was, however, highly involved in the formation of another firm, the Bawdwin Syndicate. This Syndicate, founded in 1914, was created to provide working capital for expanding mining operations at Bawdwin, and which immediately purchased 100,000 shares in the Burma Corporation.[116] Although Hoover and Beatty were the leading figures of the Bawdwin Syndicate, the firm also brought in representatives of the Consolidated Mines Selection Company Limited, a

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[114] Writing to Beatty, Kuehn said that "The Company have been having trouble with their smelter, for a reason which is not clear to me; and from a conversation with Mr. Loring, of Bewick, Moreing & Co., I understand not clear to him." Kuehn added that he was "not over sanguine at the present management." LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, A.F. Kuehn to Arthur Chester Beatty, 1 January 1913.

[115] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, A.F. Kuehn to Arthur Chester Beatty, 16 January 1913.

[116] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 422.

large London-based firm involved in South African gold mining.[117] The Consolidated Mines Selection Company, which was housed near Hoover and Beatty's offices in London at 5 London Wall, was led by Julius Wetzlar – who became a director of the Bawdwin Syndicate - as well as other major figures in South African gold mining, such as Walter McDermott and R.J. Frecheville.[118] Wetzlar, a former German national, had met Hoover, Govett, and Beatty through their joint involvement in the Granville Mining Company in 1911, located in the Klondike.[119] Wetzlar and his firm became deeply involved in the Burma business during this period, holding large financial interests in both the Burma Corporation and the Bawdwin Syndicate, and later, a position on the board of director's of the Burma Corporation itself.[120] Between Govett, Beatty, Kuehn, and the Consolidated Mines Selection Company, there was a diverse set of interests and opinions involved in the Bawdwin enterprise during this period of reform, stretching around the British World mining community but centered firmly in the City of London.

With the reorganization of Bawdwin's finances in 1913, a new era began in the development of the mine. Operating under a new management team and no longer plagued by a lack of capital, production at Bawdwin would increase – albeit in fits and starts – over the next decade, becoming one of the largest industrial mining operations in the world by the

[117] This firm would later be incorporated within Ernest Oppenheimer's famous mining conglomerate, the Anglo-American Corporation, in the 1920s. See Duncan Innes, *Anglo American and the Rise of Modern South Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1984), 90.
[118] NA, BT 31/22225/135345.
[119] Kuehn would work as a consultant for Wetzlar and Frecheville in Mexico, and Kuehn became close friends with Wetzlar during his early years in London. See LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/179, A.F. Kuehn to Arthur Chester Beatty, 13 April 1913 and A.F. Kuehn to Arthur Chester Beatty, 23 November 1912.
[120] Walter McDermott became a director of the company in November 1915 and remained so until the company's official headquarters moved to India in 1919. Through other interests, he remained involved in the business, however, through the 1920s. NA, BT 31/21753/131501.

1920s. The reorganization generated more than just increased production, though. With fresh sources of capital entering the business, Bawdwin became a truly international concern. Prominent Americans, Britons, and Australians all owned large shares in the company during this period, as well as multinational firms from places like Germany and Denmark. But while these global investments were not a problem in time of peace, they would soon become cause consternation in official circles. Less than a year after the founding of the Burma Corporation, war would break out in Europe. Metalliferous ores found at Bawdwin like iron, copper, and zinc would become critical to British national and imperial security during this period, making both the ownership of the mine as well as the company's business partnerships important to British interests as a whole. With the onset of war, national identity and national allegiance suddenly mattered, a fact that would take on particular importance for those Americans like Herbert Hoover who controlled the mine's fate.

The War

The onset of World War I in July 1914, as it did elsewhere across the globe, ushered in a number of significant changes at Bawdwin. In the immediate sense, the war had a major impact on production at the mines. Not only were established trade routes disrupted that impacted the supply of important industrial materials like coke at the mine, but the war also altered the contractual partnerships that the Burma Corporation maintained with other companies.[121] This was especially the case in regard to zinc. Although a smelter was built at

[121] Coke was an important source of energy at Bawdwin and at other mines around the world during this period. During the war, the Indian government lowered subsidies on coke to allow

Bawdwin to treat the silver and lead deposits at the mine (which were then shipped either to neighboring India or back to Europe), zinc smelting relied on a different metallurgical process that was not available in Burma or in the British Empire at the time. Instead, and until 1914, the company sold their zinc concentrates to German firms – including the Metallgesellschaft - that largely held a monopoly on the industry during the early twentieth century. With the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and Germany, however, trading with the enemy – particularly raw materials critical to an industrial war effort – became illegal, forcing the company to look elsewhere for customers. Over the next decade, the "zinc problem" would force government officials and businessmen in Britain, India, Australia, and elsewhere in the empire to consider the creation of an imperial zinc smelting industry.[122] In the meantime, and though the company by 1916 had become "free from any German influence of any sort or kind," zinc production at Bawdwin would come to a standstill.[123]

While the instant affects of war could be seen in the production of lead, silver, and zinc concentrates at the mines, the war also induced many changes within the financial holdings and ownership of the firm. Although Hoover's desire to reorganize the Bawdwin venture became successful with the founding of the Burma Corporation in 1913, the widening of his financial network during this period brought new interests to the company who thought that the reorganization did not go far enough. In 1914, and shortly after the outbreak of war in Europe, Arthur Chester Beatty lobbied his powerful contacts in the United

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the company to acquire the materials at a reasonable cost. LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, 1918 Director's Report.

[122] This issue became important to the subsequent ownership of the Burma Corporation during the 1920s, and will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five. For a general history of the British zinc smelting industry, see E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1968).

[123] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, 1916 Director's Report.

States – particularly the Boston-based bankers, Charles Hayden and Galen Stone - to prepare for an American takeover of the company "within the next few months or soon after the General peace is declared."[124] Believing that the mine's value would only increase in the future, Beatty hoped to secure as much of the business as possible, and sought to build a coalition of American investors and businessmen to support his goal. Aside from Hayden and Stone, this included prominent New York businessmen such as Lucius Mayer, Lindon W. Bates, Samuel Untermyer, and unsuccessfully, his old friend John Hays Hammond.[125] Hayden, however, was hesitant. Owing to Tilden Smith's large stake in the company, Hayden was concerned that they "would not have a very strong voice in the property, or rather, not as strong as they are accustomed to having."[126] Beatty, though, was undeterred. Writing in December 1914, Beatty urged Hayden that it was "a very opportune time to get control of this business," and that he would see "about getting an option on a substantial block of the stock" and "control of the Company."[127] Beatty, sensing the war would soon be over, believed that he "could arrange to have the Burma Corporation turned into an American Company and domiciled in New York," and that Hayden and Stone could select their own consulting engineer and "have practical control of the business."[128]

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[124] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/, Arthur Chester Beatty to Charles Hayden, 24 August 1914.

[125] Hammond, much to Hoover and Beatty's chagrin, refused to invest in the company. See LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/127, E.L. Gruver Memorandum, 27 May 1914.

[126] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, E.L. Gruver to Arthur Chester Beatty, 1 October 1914.

[127] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, Arthur Chester Beatty to Charles Hayden, 15 December 1914.

[128] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, Arthur Chester Beatty to Galen Stone, 15 December 1914.

Despite Beatty's best efforts to fully Americanize the venture, progress was slow. The war, which Beatty thought would end within months, instead continued on for years, making it difficult for the American to recruit more capital from his fellow associates in the United States. At the outbreak of hostilities, for instance, the British government passed legislation restricting the sale of securities to people outside of Britain, impacting the ability of American businessmen to buy stocks on the London Stock Exchange.[129] Even with these obstructions, though, Beatty continued his exertions. In 1915, Beatty convinced Hayden and Stone to send out their own engineer – the American, Allen H. Rogers - to inspect the Burma property, who considered the mine to be "a marvel."[130] By the end of 1916, however, Beatty had made little progress with his American contacts. According to Galen Stone, although "the mines look like a perfect bonanza," much work remained to be done on both an engineering and financial level. "If control of this property could be had in this country," Stone commented, "it would make a very interesting and very satisfactory piece of business," developing "values for the owners very much faster than is likely to be the case dependent upon the English market for some years to come." Stone noted that "Mr. [Tilden] Smith is still as tenacious a holder as ever, and that "unless a clear majority of all holdings could be procured for ownership over here," then it was not worthwhile trying to create an American block of investors to take over the company."[131] Even with Hayden and Stone's support,

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[129] In order to subvert this policy, American investors would send money to a proxy company or resident in London – such as the Equitable Trust Company – who would then purchase the securities under their own name. LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/125, Arthur Chester Beatty to Galen Stone, 18 October 1916.

[130] Rogers, however, was disappointed with the company's progress in properly treating the ore, as well as in recruiting labor for the mine. LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/125, E.L. Gruver to Arthur Chester Beatty, 5 August 1915.

[131] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, Galen Stone to Arthur Chester Beatty, 27 December 1916.

though, Beatty's plans to create an American-owned Burma Corporation would have run up against official British policy during these years, which restricted the foreign ownership of companies in the British Empire. While these policies would only affect German commercial links with the empire during the early years of war, they would come to have an impact on all foreigners by the end of the war in 1918.

With World War I raging in Europe, officials in Britain and elsewhere in the Empire began to reassess the policies of free trade that were hallmarks of the British state since the 1840s. Germany's "peaceful penetration" of the British economy before the war became a leading concern of British statesmen at the time, who saw the free trade system as a way for enemies like the Germans to secure market advantages, a fact made clear by shortages of materials in Britain like dyes and zinc during the war.[132] The war made it clear how far German companies had advanced within the Britain's economic sphere of influence, including large firms like Metallgesellschaft, who had monopolies on industries considered critical to national security.[133] In 1914, the Trading with the Enemy Act was passed in Britain, making it illegal for Britons and British companies to conduct business with enemy interests both at home and abroad. In Burma, British officials worked quickly to liquidate German business interests in the colony, which had become particularly entrenched in the rice industry.[134] Dealing with the commercial interests from allied countries, though, represented a more complex question. In June 1916, the "Economic Conference of the Allies" was held in Paris, which discussed the relationship between national security and foreign investment in regard to a number of important industries, including mining and the

[132] Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 244.
[133] See E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 16-18.
[134] Proceedings, P/CONF/15, Confidential Files, 1916, Home (Political) Department, Burma, December 1916. The Enemy Trading Ordinance, 1916, Action taken under.

granting of mining leases in allied countries and their empires. British officials, while eager to expel all German interests from its commercial sphere, were less enthusiastic to expel all foreign business interests from the empire. In the domain of mining, officials thought that refusing to grant mining leases to aliens might "reduce competition and to some extent consequently reduce the quantity of mineral development" in the colonies, impeding the industry as a whole. Reluctant to abandon the tenants of free trade, officials at the time wondered how to strike a balance between embracing private enterprise in prospecting and mining while also controlling the industry to "enable Government to safeguard national interests."[135] With so much foreign capital present in the colonies, these questions became critical to debates about free trade and private enterprise during the period, as well as how Britain could fashion a new economic order within the empire in the post-war years.

Within months of the Paris conference in 1916, officials in Britain decided that in order to protect national interests, the foreign ownership of companies in Britain and the British Empire – whether enemy or not – had to be stopped, particularly in the mining industry. In May 1916, the Board of Trade circulated a memo to the Indian government asking them not only to prevent or remove "any enemy influences already established" in the mining industry, but also to "obtain information as to the most effective means of securing and safeguarding control in British interests in cases in which mineral concessions are held by companies registered in this country but having a proportion of foreign (though not enemy) directors and shareholders." In India, and under the direction of the Secretary for State, Austen Chamberlain, it was decreed that the Indian government, in cases where an existing company was under foreign control, would "pressure" the company "to adopt a form

[135] Proceedings, P/CONF/15, Confidential Files, 1916, Home (Political) Department, Burma, December 1916. Commercial problems to be dealt with after the war.

of Articles of Association providing for permanent British control."[136] By 1917, these policies were officially adopted by the Indian government. In January 1917, the Mining Rules of 1913 were amended to include a clause that made it illegal to grant prospecting licenses to non-British subjects, or to companies whose director's were not exclusively British.[137] These new policies still allowed foreign nationals to work in the British Empire, but they also made it clear that in the realm of finance and the control of natural resources, British national interests were paramount. At least in the mining world, gone were the days of free trade.

The decision to limit the foreign ownership of companies in the British Empire during World War I would come to have a significant impact on the Burma Corporation. Although registered as a free-standing company in London, by the start of World War I, the Corporation was dominated by a variety of foreign commercial interests, including Herbert Hoover, who remained the largest shareholder of the company aside from R. Tilden Smith. This period, however, brought many changes for Hoover. At the outbreak of war, Hoover became chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), a humanitarian organization created to alleviate the food crisis in Belgium. Focusing on his new duties in London, Hoover began selling off the many shares he held in mining properties across the globe during this period, including in Australia, Russia, and the United States. Hoover's success would ultimately see the former engineer leave the United Kingdom in 1917 and become the head of the U.S. Food Administration under President Woodrow Wilson,

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[136] Proceedings, P/CONF/39, Confidential Files, Department of Commerce and Industry, India, September 1918. Policy of the Government of India in regard to the grant of mineral concessions.
[137] Proceedings, P/10148, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, December 1917. Revised Mining Rules of 1913.

effectively ending his career in the mining industry. Burma, however, remained an exception. Until the end of the war, Hoover would fight to retain his interest in the Burma Corporation despite new public policies limiting his involvement. Unfortunately for Hoover, though, his exertions would not be successful. After years of lobbying the British government to allow him to remain a shareholder and director of the company - which included writing letters to the State Department to intervene on his behalf - Hoover would finally resign as director of the Burma Corporation in 1919.[138] He would sell his shares to R. Tilden Smith for a profit estimated at between 2.5 to 3.5 million dollars.[139] Hoover, who had operated freely and lived within the British Empire for over two decades, had suddenly reached the limits of his ability to operate "under two flags." Less than a decade later, he would become the President of the United States.

Conclusion

Hoover may have sold his shares in the Burma Corporation in 1919, but many of Hoover's associates remained associated with the operations at Bawdwin into the 1920s. This included not only Arthur Chester Beatty, who would later become a British citizen, but also

[138] In 1917, for instance, and following the advice of Chamberlain's office to pressure existing firms to purge in India of foreign ownership, the Indian government declined an application from Tilden Smith's National Smelting Company for a prospecting license in the Northern Shan States under the principal basis "outstanding" to secure "permanent British control of Burma Corporation and Burma mines." Proceedings, P/CONF/39, Confidential Files, Department of Commerce and Industry, India, March 1918. Application of the National Smelting Co. for a prospecting license in the Northern Shan States – withdrawn. For a summary of these events and Hoover's letter to the State Department, see George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Master of Emergencies, 1917-1918* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 433-436.
[139] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Master of Emergencies*, 439.

his long-time associates, F.A. Govett and John Agnew, who would continue financing the enterprise long after Hoover's departure. Just as important as the financiers who helped develop the property from a distance, however, were the many engineers and laborers who occupied the mines during the early twentieth century, and whose work transformed the operation on a day-to-day basis. White engineers from Australia and the United States were critical to how Bawdwin functioned during this period, many of whom would only stay in the area for months at a time, but others who remained at the site for many years. The bulk of the labor at Bawdwin, though, was not recruited from the gold mines of Coolgardie or the copper mines in Butte, Montana. Instead, the majority of inhabitants at Bawdwin had traveled from Burma, India, China, and Nepal in order to find work during the cool season. Bawdwin, which from 1903 until the 1920s transformed into a small city, became both a source of opportunity for these travelers as well as an oppressive industrial machine, where they faced racial discrimination, dangerous work, and at times, violence. As the next chapter will demonstrate, Bawdwin's residents were critical to the mine's evolution and success, and their story reveals how race, capitalism, and nation converged in the Northern Shan States during the early twentieth century to help build one of the largest mining operations in the world.

Chapter Four: "The Commonwealth of Namtu": Race, Labor, and Capitalism at the Bawdwin Mines, 1906-1922

Introduction

In March 1928, the new Governor of Burma, Sir Charles Innes, visited Bawdwin and Namtu as part of his first annual tour of the Northern Shan States. On his arrival, the "Asiatic Employees and Contractors of the Burma Corporation" issued an address to the Governor, welcoming him and his wife, Lady Innes, to Namtu, as well as thanking him for meeting their "representatives and elders." In the address, which was presented in English but translated into nine different languages spoken at the mines, it was said that Bawdwin and Namtu should be "a source of pleasant pride" for the Governor, where he could "find nestled together in this bosom of the Shan Hills a cosmopolitan population comprising of Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Burmans, Shans, the Chinese and the various denominations of the Indian community" who were present at the mines.[1] Continuing on, the address noted that it should gratify Innes to know "that against the diversity of caste, colour and creed of the constituents of this cosmopolitan population stands in bold relief, the unity of their interests with the Burma Corporation, and in striking contrast with the din and disturbance of the clang and whirl of machinery of this great industrial camp, there abides the peace and harmony of these people – a peace uninterrupted by party factions and unmarred by political agitations." With "no grievances to recite" nor "cause to represent," the statement concluded with an assurance that the labor force at Bawdwin and Namtu was loyal to the Burma Corporation and "blessed" with a "quiet-happiness." For the officials visiting the mines with Innes, it was

[1] The languages were Shan, Burmese, Chinese, Gurmuki, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali, Oori, and Gurkha. British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, IOR/V/26/670/25, Labour in India Royal (Whitley) Commission 1929-1931: Evidence Vol. 10 Burma. London, 1931. (hereafter "Whitley Commission").

reported that “nowhere in India are relations between masters and men and peoples of such diverse races and creeds as are collected at Namtu, more cordial or more beneficial to the common good.”[2] The mines, which by this time employed thousands of laborers annually, were for British officials a success story in industrialization, devoid of the political and racial hostilities that marked other such enterprises both in the empire and at home. For Innes, the mines proved the “romance of industry,” and he wished that “India would learn from Namtu that a spirit of toleration and compromise is the surest antidote to communal strife.”[3]

These comments, which represented a clear piece of commercial propaganda, demonstrate the utopian vision that some colonial officials had regarding industrial development in the empire, but they also reveal how colonial notions about race and labor were embedded in such ideas. Mining, of course, was a labor-intensive industry. Despite Herbert Hoover or R. Tilden Smith’s significant role in recruiting capital and directing the affairs of Bawdwin, these financiers rarely – if ever - visited the mines themselves. They were, in a sense, absentee landlords, directing operations, trading stocks, and quarreling with one another from the safety of their homes in London or Melbourne. Instead, Hoover, Tilden Smith, and the other absentee directors of the company had to rely on thousands of skilled and unskilled laborers at the mines, many of whom had traveled hundreds – or even thousands - of miles to find employment and who often risked their lives on a daily basis, both above and beneath the earth. These employees took a variety of roles at the mines, whether in management, policing, forestry, or as unskilled manual laborers, which represented the bulk of the workforce at Bawdwin and Namtu. While management and engineers at the mines were recruited from other British World mining communities around

[2] Ibid.
[3] *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 April 1928.

the globe, including the United States, Britain, and Australia, workers from Burma, Nepal, India, and China filled positions lower in the labor hierarchy, often temporarily during the cold season. These employees were critical to the development of Bawdwin and Namtu throughout the early twentieth century, allowing for the expansion of mining operations on a day-to-day basis.

While the previous chapter explored the broader British World community of financiers who impacted Bawdwin's development from afar, this chapter tells the story of the many people who lived and worked at Bawdwin and Namtu during the early twentieth century. In doing so, I argue that race and a theory of racial difference were critical to how the mines operated during this period, demonstrating how companies could both borrow and subvert existing imperial power structures to accomplish their goals. Corporate leaders utilized a hierarchy of racial difference that simultaneously collapsed national and ideological differences among the "colonizer," linking British officials with white non-British managers and overseers, while at the same time reinforcing a hierarchy of racialized workers among the "colonized," much like the plantation system in India.[4] In many ways, this racial organizational system became the primary category operating at the mines, where other boundaries – religious, cultural, and national – remained fluid. I argue that, ultimately, race became the defining category that organized difference at the mines, linking and dividing the networks of people who occupied that space.

To tell this story, this chapter will look at the different communities of people who inhabited and worked at the mines during the early twentieth century. It will begin by summarizing events and development at the mines until 1923, when R. Tilden Smith – the

[4] On race and labor within the plantation system in India, see Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 205-233.

last link from the mine’s earliest years - sold his shares in the company to a large, multinational firm based in Australia. The chapter will then look closely at the engineers and management team who lived and worked at Bawdwin, as well as the company town they established deep in the Indian Empire. The chapter will then explore how management at the mines utilized racial theories and a racialized labor hierarchy - ideas crafted both in the British Empire and in Burma itself - to categorize and recruit labor for mining operations. In doing so, this chapter will analyze the different communities of people from around the South, Southeast, and East Asian nexus who labored at the mines, as well as the reasons they migrated there and the conditions they were faced with. Finally, this chapter will look at the various reforms that occurred at Bawdwin and Namtu around 1920, which had a dramatic affect on how large scale industrial mining was practiced in the region as well as how company officials approached the labor question. I argue that while Bawdwin and Namtu remained largely independent from British colonial state regulation in its early years, by the 1920s, and owing to frequent “labor shortages” and resistance from among migrant workers, the company was forced to ameliorate working conditions at the mines, which had become infamous in the region for its violence and danger. Despite the rosy pronouncements made to Governor Innes in 1928, Bawdwin and Namtu were not a “romance of industry” or a utopian model of industrial contentment. The Burma Corporation’s success and evolution during the early twentieth century had less to do with enlightened management or absentee financiers, and more with the actions and opposition of migrant workers who had traveled from across India, Nepal, and China to work at the mines. This chapter, ultimately, is the story of their resistance.

The Tilden Smith Era

When Herbert Hoover left his position on the board of directors of the Burma Corporation in 1919 and sold his remaining shares of the company, his departure signaled a major shift in how the firm would be managed in the post-war years. In the realm of finance, Hoover's parting saw the end of American dominance in the company's affairs.[5] With new restrictions on the foreign ownership of mining enterprises within the British Empire, Americans could no longer hold a majority shareholding interest in a company or a seat on the board of directors, a policy that would continue through decolonization.[6] R. Tilden Smith, the Australian financier who first became involved with the Bawdwin enterprise in 1903, became the leader of the Burma Corporation during this period. Hoover's influence, however, could not be easily erased. Although Tilden Smith and his Share Guarantee Trust became the leading shareholders of the business, Hoover's long-time associates F.A. Govett and John Agnew each held a position on the company's board of directors, while also owning a large block of company shares. Hoover's friends at the Consolidated Mines Selection Company also remained involved in the business, including Herbert Guedalla and Walter McDermott, both of whom held a position on the board of director's into the 1920s. These Hoover connections would ultimately outlast both the future president and Tilden Smith's involvement with the company, with Govett staying in the firm until his death in 1926. In the

[5] Some American businessmen, including Arthur Chester Beatty, continued to invest in the Burma Corporation into the 1920s, albeit on a small scale. Beatty was unsuccessful, however, in floating the company on the New York Stock Exchange, or in creating a block of American voters large enough to influence development, despite his efforts at the start of World War One. See Chapter Three, footnote 99.
[6] By November 1919, 929,045 shares of the Burma Corporation were registered in the United Kingdom. NA, 31/21753/131501

meantime, however, Tilden Smith remained the leading figure at the Burma Corporation in the post-Hoover years, overseeing a period of rapid change that would culminate with his withdrawal from the company in 1923.[7]

R. Tilden Smith was a key figure in the Burma mines venture from its inception as a European company, but World War One ushered in a series of changes to the British mining industry that the financier was able to parlay with his existing interests with the company. Primary to these changes was the new understanding in British official circles that Britain needed to develop its own zinc smelting industry and end its reliance on German smelters, a problem that became acute during the war. Germany dominated the zinc smelting industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and zinc concentrates found in the British Empire – including those found at Bawdwin and at Govett's Zinc Corporation in Western Australia – were sent to Germany in the pre-war years in order to be processed. With the outbreak of war, however, these existing economic arrangements came to a halt. Zinc, which was an important mineral in the manufacturing of munitions, became critical to national security, and trade between Britain and Germany was outlawed. Britain began importing zinc from the United States during this period, but while this provided some relief, the amount of zinc imports never reached the volume they had with Germany before the war.[8] By 1916, and in order to spark production in the stagnating zinc industry, British officials and businessmen began discussing plans to create a zinc smelting industry based in Britain to process concentrates found in the empire. While these proposals would not be realized until after the war, they involved a number of agents involved with the Burma Corporation, including both

[7] On the various changes within the Board of Directors, see Ibid.
[8] Zinc imports from the United States grew from 4,670 tons in 1913 to a peak of 51,000 tons in 1917, but British imports of zinc overall fell from 145,000 tons in 1913 to 53,000 tons in 1916. E.J. Cocks and B Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 22.

F.A. Govett and R. Tilden Smith, who had competing visions for an imperial scheme. These differences would become heightened during the war, as intra-company rivals became competitors in the broader world of the British mining industry.[9]

R. Tilden Smith became involved in efforts to create a British zinc smelting industry in 1916. Prior to this, a number of British World mining agents had proposed to create an "imperial" zinc smelting industry, particularly in Australia, where much of the British Empire's zinc was found. Francis Govett, chairman of the Zinc Corporation in Australia as well as a fellow director of the Burma Corporation with Tilden Smith, was one of the first such agents to propose an imperial smelting scheme, an idea he regularly discussed in Zinc Corporation meetings as early as 1914. Govett's plans, however, were not amenable to the British government at the time. Speaking in 1916, Govett noted that in order to accomplish such a complicated task, his firm required an assurance from the government that the industry "be protected by bounty and by preferential tariff" in order to insure against "German competition in trade when the war is done."[10] The government had other plans, though. In September 1916, R. Tilden Smith sent a proposal to the British government to create a zinc smelting plant in Avonmouth, England, which he projected could smelt upwards of 100,000 tons of zinc yearly. Noting that Tilden Smith had "command of Burmese ore concentrates," the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Munitions in Britain approved the Australian's proposal in 1917, providing a £500,000 government loan to the Australian's

[9] For a summary of these events, see Ibid, 25.
[10] Quoted in Ibid, 29.

newly formed National Smelting Company as part of the agreement. These efforts would inaugurate the creation of a British zinc smelting industry.[11]

According to historians E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, Tilden Smith's proposal was accepted in favor of Govett's because of three primary reasons. Not only was Tilden Smith "prepared to agree to a larger measure of Government control" than Govett was, he also maintained a leading interest in the Burma Corporation – which held one of the largest reserves of zinc in the British Empire – as well as in the Swansea Vale Spelter Works in Wales.[12] Tilden Smith acquired Swansea Vale - which was one of Britain's only zinc works before World War One - in 1915, after the previous owners, the German company Aron Hirsch & Sohn, were forced to sell the enterprise owing to the Trading with the Enemy Act.[13] Although production at Swansea was limited when Tilden Smith purchased the firm, his goal was to send Burmese and Australian zinc to the refinery and intensify output dramatically over the course of the war.[14] This idea also colored Tilden Smith's decision to propose the plant at Avonmouth. While the government had initially hoped to build a large-scale zinc smelter at Queen's Ferry in Britain, Tilden Smith convinced them that the Avonmouth site could have the capacity to smelt up to 100,000 tons of zinc per year, dwarfing the original estimates. In order to receive government money, however, the National Smelting Company was required to provide management at the smelting works, and to "prevent alien or other improper influence being exercised in the management" at all costs.[15] Tilden Smith became

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[11] *History of the Ministry of Munitions: Volume VII The Control of Materials Part I Review of Commercial Control* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), 37.
[12] E.J. Cocks and B Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 30.
[13] Caroline J. Ansell, *Richard Tilden Smith*, 81.
[14] When Tilden Smith took control of the company, zinc output was limited to only around 500 tons per annum, which he hoped to increase to 25,000 tons. Ibid, 81.
[15] *History of the Ministry of Munitions*, 37-40.

the primary shareholder of the operation – owning 499,997 of the 500,000 shares – and was joined on the board of directors by Samuel Magennis, who was also a director of the Burma Corporation, as well as F.C. Heley, Richard's brother Jack Tilden Smith, and P.E. Marmion, the managing director of the Swansea Vale Works.[16] Marmion would later become the longest serving general manager in the history of the Bawdwin mines.

Tilden Smith's ambitious plans at Swansea and Avonmouth improved his position as a leading figure in the nascent British zinc smelting industry, but his strategy clashed with the opinions of his colleagues in the Burma Corporation. Shortly after Tilden Smith's plans were announced, Govett wrote to Beatty that Tilden Smith was trying "to make Burma one of the subsidiaries of [the] gigantic octopus" that he was "struggling to make in metals," making their position "almost impossible." Govett thought that "the only possible way out of the difficulty will be for one snake to swallow the other," and because he didn't "think that Smith is very anxious to be swallowed," he suggested to Beatty that "we must stand together" and sell their block of interests, including those of Hoover and Lake View.[17] Beatty, however, demurred. Because "it is not possible to sell zinc ores at the present time," Beatty responded, he recommended "holding out" as long as possible, and forcing Tilden Smith to "fall in line with the present policy of the Company."[18] In 1917, the debate between Tilden Smith and the American contingent came to a climax. In July, a shareholders meeting was held in London, where it was thought that Tilden Smith would introduce a motion to enter into a contract with the Swansea Vale smelting works for zinc concentrates, despite the

[16] E.J. Cocks and B Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 40.
[17] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/153, F.A. Govett to Arthur Chester Beatty, 21 June 1917.
[18] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/153, Arthur Chester Beatty to Francis Govett, 24 August 1917.

fact that Hoover and his associates did "not wish to tie up with any smelting concern at the present moment." Hoover, who was unable to attend the meeting owing to his non-commercial duties, sent a flurry of messages to the American shareholders of the company to "vote en bloc" against Tilden Smith's plans, whether in person or though the proxy of either John Agnew, Govett, or the new chairman of the company, Trevredyn Wynne.[19] The meeting, however, went off "quietly."[20] Whether Tilden Smith understood the level of opposition to his plans or was concerned about the tenability of Swansea Vale to service a large volume of zinc concentrates is unknown, but with the passing of the disagreement, the Hoover group was able to push forward with its own development plans. That plan was to build a zinc smelting plant in India itself, in order to service the needs of the Bawdwin operation.

The Burma Corporation's plans to erect a zinc smelting works in India began to be considered as early as 1916. In that year, the new chairman of the company, Treverdyn Wynne, a former Indian official, sent a proposal to the Government of India about the possibility of opening zinc works in India, an idea the government found appealing. Wynne argued that owing to the expansion of industry in India during the war, as well as its cheap labor and plentiful coal, the region would be well suited to house a zinc smelter. The Tata Iron & Steel Company, India's largest industrial enterprise, was also amenable to such a proposal, and were "prepared to enter into a long-term contract with the zinc works for spelter and acid," which would assist their own enterprise in the manufacturing of brass and

[19] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, E.L. Gruver to Galen Stone, 13 July 1917.
[20] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB126, John Agnew to E.L. Gruver, 7 August 1917.

galvanized iron.[21] For their part, the government agreed to loan the Burma Corporation £200,000 in order to assist with the construction of zinc works.[22] With widespread support, the company began moving forward with their Indian plans, and in 1918 hired L.J. Mayreis, a Stanford graduate, to oversee operations.[23] In 1920, the Burma Corporation relocated its headquarters from London to Rangoon, a move the mining press considered "judicious" owing to the company's new arrangements with both the Government of India and Tata & Sons, but that Tilden Smith publically opposed.[24] Like Tilden Smith's plans with Swansea Vale, though, the venture would soon disintegrate. By 1921, the government, owing to "financial considerations," was forced to withdraw its loan to the company. Tata Iron and Steel, which had agreed to become a partner in the enterprise, likewise revoked its commitment, citing a desire "to limit its participation."[25] Without sufficient capital, the company was forced to abandon its zinc-smelting project in India, dealing a blow to company representatives like Wynne and Govett who hoped to expand operations and avoid a further reliance on Tilden Smith's metal "octopus." The Australian, however, was not prepared for such a deal anyways. With construction at the Avonmouth plant languishing, by the early 1920s Tilden Smith was on the edge of financial ruin. In 1923, and following protracted and complicated negotiations necessitated by his primary creditor, Lloyd's Bank, Tilden Smith agreed to sell his shares in both the Swansea Vale enterprise as well as the

[21] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, 1918 Director's Report.
[22] British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, IOR/L/E/7/1213, File 667, Burma Corporation.
[23] *Mining Magazine*, December 1918
[24] Tilden Smith, at a meeting of the shareholders of the company in 1920, was said to have "raised considerable opposition" to the deal, calling for a poll among the shareholders to vote down the agreement. By the subsequent meeting, however, the financier had withdrawn his protest. *Mining Magazine*, September 1919; *Mining Magazine*, August 1920; *Mining Magazine*, September 1920.
[25] IOR/L/E/7/1213, File 667, Burma Corporation.

Burma Corporation to the National Smelting Company, owned by some of the leading figures in the global metal trade. This would begin a new "imperial" era of the Burma Corporation.[26]

Important changes in the global metal industry as well as contentious negotiations within the Burma Corporation marked the post-war years, but this period also saw a dramatic expansion in production at Bawdwin and Namtu. Between 1917 and 1922, the new chairman of the company, P.E. Marmion, reported that the amount of lead and silver produced by the mine went up 131 and 75 percent respectively, from around 17,000 tons of refined lead to about 40,000, and from around 1.5 million ounces of refined silver to over 4 million. For the year 1921, the Burma Corporation mines produced slightly more than one-fifth of the total lead and slightly less than one-sixth of the total silver produced within the British Empire. It also accounted for over one-thirteenth of the total value of the whole of the exports from Burma, or Rs. 2,55,41,879, a staggering number for a country known primarily for its rice economy. To account for this progress, the mines also saw a large increase in its workforce. When the Governor of Burma, Harcourt Butler, visited Bawdwin and Namtu in 1923, the *Rangoon Gazette* reported that the mining complex had over 20,000 employees.[27] Labeled the "Commonwealth of Namtu," the mines had become a dynamic nexus of global mining, where white skilled workers from across the British World worked alongside unskilled

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[26] These events are summarized in E.J. Cocks and B Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 43-54.

[27] For these statistics, see *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 April 1923. A full analysis regarding the number of employees at the mines does not exist until the Whitley Commission's report of 1930, which demonstrates that employment numbers fluctuated a great deal depending on the year and the season. For instance, in January 1930 there were 19,844 employees while in September 1930 there were 16,064. For the year 1925, the only other year that is referenced in the report, there were a total of 12,183 employees at the mines. This makes the conclusion that there were 20,000 employees at the mines suspect and likely an exaggeration. See Whitley Commission.

workers recruited from South, Southeast, and East Asia.[28] Labor, however, and particularly an inability to maintain a large workforce at the mines, remained a vexing problem for mine managers during the early twentieth century, at times impeding schemes to expand mining operations. This "labor question," just as much as irascible ownership or global wars, was critical to how the mines developed during this period, and demonstrates just how complicated the British colonial experience could be at this time.

Engineers and Management at Bawdwin

As discussed in the previous chapter, capitalist agents from across the globe were active in the British Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in the mining industry. Americans, Australians, and Britons were all bound into a common financial network during this time, collaborating on projects both within and outside of the empire. In the realm of finance, the free-standing company could translate into great wealth for the "well-known directors" at the top of the pyramid, but as evidenced in the staggering numbers of mining companies registered in London during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, they most often failed. Alongside the Bawdwin enterprise, leading agents involved in the Burma Mines Limited – including Kindersley, Bewick, Moreing, and Company, as well as Tilden Smith - all had numerous other companies in Burma floated on the London Stock Exchange during this period, and all of which proved unsuccessful.[29]

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[28] *Rangoon Gazette*, 7 November 1921.
[29] These companies included the Burma Mines Development and Agency, the Mawchi Tin and Wolfram Mines, the Southern Shan States Syndicate, and the Mohochang Exploration Company. This information is compiled from the *Mining Manual* between the years 1907-1919.

Success was precarious. Without sound leadership, a team of experienced engineers, and adequate capital to develop a property, a prospecting site might never become a large-scale and profitable industrial mining enterprise, particularly in remote areas without an existing infrastructure. Owing to the structure of the free-standing company, success was also dependent on trust.[30] With so much power in the hands of individual absentee financiers and leaders, the skillset of engineers on the ground as well as their management skills had a major impact on a property's prospects. These experts were critical to the success of a venture, regardless of how well connected or experienced their team of "gentlemanly capitalists" was.

The free-standing company transformed mining finance and management during the nineteenth century, but it also obscured how national agents could operate in the professional world. Despite being domiciled in London, these companies contained a diverse group of national agents, whether in finance, management, or engineering. As some historians have noted, the success of mining companies around the globe often relied on British capital but not exclusively so: local investors could and did have an impact on mining development.[31] The same, however, could be said of expertise and manpower. Although Cornish miners were renowned for their technical skills, and by the late nineteenth century could be found as far as from Cornwall as Australia or Colorado, mining booms in white, settler regions brought with it the emergence of a new class of skilled engineers.[32] In the United States, and at the same time that mining became a major industry in the American West, engineering

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[30] On the free-standing company, see Chapter Three, footnote 75.
[31] Raymond E. Dumett, "Introduction," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire,* 13-14.
[32] See Chapter Three, footnote 56 on Cornish miners. See also Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "Overseas Investment and the Professional Advance of British Metal Mining Engineers, 1851-1914."

programs – such as the Columbia School of Mines, founded in 1867 – emerged to develop a homegrown class of technical experts in an industry that was rapidly expanding. These experts often found work within their own country but could also travel abroad to make a decent wage. By the turn of the twentieth century, these engineers – including the Stanford-educated Hoover – were found around the globe, and bound into tight-knit networks based not on national identity, but on their connections, their skills and trustworthiness, and the relationship they maintained with the board of directors.[33] Bewick, Moreing, and Company, for instance, had seventy-five technical-school-trained personnel in 1904, forty-six that were Australian and twenty-two who were American.[34] Although based in Britain, Bewick, Moreing, and Company's staff of American and Australian engineers was symbolic of the transnational nature of mining organization during this period, as well as strong connections maintained between the professional and financial fields in the British World.

In the context of Bawdwin, the presence of British World miners was marked throughout the western ownership of the mines, even through changes in managerial regimes. White, skilled engineers were recruited from across the United States, Canada, and Australia to fill positions at the top of the mines' labor hierarchy, including jobs as mine manager, superintendent, metallurgists, foremen, and shift bosses. Starting in 1905 and until the creation of the Burma Corporation in 1913, Hoover's former firm, Bewick, Moreing, and Company, was in charge of management at Bawdwin, bringing in their own team of experts to oversee operations. This would change, however, with the creation of the Burma Corporation and the reorganization of the company's finances in 1913. With this move,

[33] Stephen Tufnell, "Engineering Inter-Imperialism: American Miners and the Transformation of Global Mining, 1871-1910," 56-57.
[34] Roger Burt, "Innovation or Imitation? Technological Dependency in the American Nonferrous Mining Industry," 340.

Hoover was not only trying to restructure the company to assure greater profits for himself, but he was also trying to eliminate the presence of Bewick, Moreing, and Company from the enterprise, whom he thought had mismanaged the operations and not pursued development aggressively enough.[35] This idea – that management under previous ownership regimes was unsound and required a new team of experts - would remain extant throughout the boom period of the mines. With every new ownership group in charge at Bawdwin and Namtu, a rotating cast of managers and engineers were brought to the region to oversee day-to-day operations, including under R. Tilden Smith in the post-war years and the W.S. Robinson group in the 1920s. Although a few engineers managed to stay at the mines through successive regimes, most experts remained in Burma for only a few years at a time, sometimes returning but oftentimes not. Even still, a variety of similarities exist between the many management groups who operated at Bawdwin and Namtu, including where they were recruited from as well as why they ultimately decided to leave.

[35] On Hoover's distrust of Bewick, Moreing, and Company in reference to the Bawdwin, see Chapter Three, footnote 114.

Figure 7: W.J. Lakeland, M.W. Morris, Mrs. Loring, Gerard Lovell, and Mrs. Lovell arrive at Bawdwin. Source: T.A. Rickard, "W.J. Loring: A Californian Engineer," *Mining and Scientific Press* (3 November 1917), 645.

British World engineers took on a variety of positions at Bawdwin and Namtu during the early twentieth century, but none was more important than the mine manager. The mine manager oversaw all operations at the mines – including issues involving metallurgy, development, and personnel – and reported directly to the company's chairman and board of directors. Because of the significance of their role, mine managers were often the most experienced engineers at Bawdwin and Namtu, having already made their name at other mining ventures across the British World. In the mines early years, a succession of mine managers spent time in Burma, including the Americans C.D. Clark and Arthur Oberlander, as well as the Australian engineer, Gerard Lovell.[36] Hired by Bewick, Moreing and

[36] The American W.J. Loring, who had become one of Bewick, Moreing, and Company's leading figures during this period, also visited the mines regularly during this period, acting

Company, these managers had spent a great deal of time at leading mining operations around the globe, including in Arizona, Utah, California, and Western Australia.[37] This trend of British World mine managers, though, would continue following the change in management that occurred in 1913. In that year, and following a protracted period of recruitment undertaken by Arthur Chester Beatty, C.H. Macnutt, a Canadian engineer, would take over at Bawdwin and Namtu, a position he would hold until 1916.[38] Following Macnutt, a number of Americans became mine managers at Bawdwin and Namtu, including T.E. Mitchell and R.G. Hall.[39] Hall was a particularly prominent engineer during this period, having made his name

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at times like a mine manager. When Hoover left Bewick, Moreing, Loring took his fellow Americans position on the board of directors, and would remain involved with the company until after World War One. For a history of Loring, see Ronald H. Limbaugh, "'There is a Game Against Us': W.J. Loring's Troubled Years as Bewick-Moreing Company's General Manager and Partner in Western Australia, 1905-1912," *Journal of Australasian Mining History,* vol. 2 (September 2004), 90-114. Ephemera from Loring's time in Burma are also present in the archival record, both at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University and in the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa.

[37] Previous to their time at Bawdwin, Clark worked for the Arizona Copper Company, Oberlander was employed at the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) mines in Murray, Utah, and Lovell was the superintendent at the Great Fitzroy Copper Mine in Victoria, Australia. On Clark, see *Mining and Scientific Press*, 14 July 1906. For Oberlander, see *Salt Lake Tribune*, 2 January 1912. For Lovell, see *Australian Mining and Engineering Review*, 5 May 1909.

[38] Beatty recruited widely in the United States during this period, particularly at leading engineering programs, such as the Columbia School of Mines. A.F. Kuehn, one of Hoover and Beatty's closest engineering consultants and a member of the Technical Committee, became manager for an interim period in 1913, before Macnutt was hired. Kuehn, however, was not convinced of Macnutt's suitability for the position, writing in May 1914 that while the acting manager was "all right," he was hoping to find "a broader gauged man" in the near future. Macnutt would leave the company in 1916, following a period of ill health. LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, A.F. Kuehn to Lucius Mayer, 23 May 1914.

[39] Mitchell, like Macnutt, left Burma in 1918 following an illness. He was previously an assistant general superintendent at the Anaconda Copper Mining Company in Butte, Montana. See *Salt Lake Mining Review*, 30 June 1914; *Mining Magazine*, September 1918.

in Colorado at the turn of the twentieth century.[40] Like those before him, his stay, however, would remain short. In 1921, Percy Marmion, who had directed Tilden Smith's zinc operation at Swansea Vale, was installed as the mine manager at Namtu and Bawdwin, becoming the first resident of the United Kingdom to take the position. Marmion would also become the longest tenured mine manager in the company's history, remaining at the mines into the 1930s and becoming the face of the operations under W.S. Robinson's ownership group.[41]

The Burma Corporation brought in leading engineers from across the mining world to supervise operations at Bawdwin and Namtu, but manager was not only position that white engineers filled at the mines. Below mine manager, a variety of positions at both Bawdwin and Namtu required skilled engineers, including as superintendents, metallurgists, and foremen. Like the cast of managers who were employed at the mines between 1903 and 1921, these engineers came from around the world, particularly the United States and Australia. In 1908, for instance, C.D. Clark – an American – managed the mines, but two Australians, W. Newberry and W.J. Lakeland, were employed as superintendent during his tenure with the company.[42] By the post-war years, and with the company employing a much larger workforce, the numbers of foreign engineers grew. In 1918, it was reported that thirty-one men and seven "married women" from the United States were living at the Burma

[40] Hall also regularly published articles in trade journals about zinc production. See *Mining Magazine*, September 1918; R.G. Hall, "Some Economic Factors in the Production of Electrolytic Zinc," *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, no. 129, September 1917, 1287-1302.
[41] *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 27 August 1921. On Percy Marmion, see also E.J. Cocks and B Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*.
[42] Lakeland replaced Newberry as superintendent in 1908, after the latter engineer left the company to become an assistant superintendent with Golden Links Limited in Kalgoorlie, Australia. *The Australian Mining Standard*, 12 August 1908.

Mines.[43] Australians had also taken up positions at the mines in large numbers. By 1920, eight members of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy were in residence at Bawdwin or Namtu.[44] This included J.W. Moule, a well-known figure in the Australian mining world who would become the assistant mine manager of Bawdwin in the 1920s.[45] Though common in mining towns in places like Western Australia and South Africa, visitors to the mines in Burma found the presence of foreign engineers in the colony a visible and peculiar quality. One whimsical journalist who visited the mines in 1918 likened himself to Gulliver visiting Brobdingnag, where he saw amid drilling and blasting "great gaunt Americans, seven feet high," and where hospitality is American "so your leg muscles are continuously being exercised."[46] In 1921, another visiting journalist noted his surprise that "geographically few of them are Europeans; they are mostly men from Broken Hill and the mines and manufactories of America." Located in the borderlands between South, Southeast, and East Asia, Anglo-Burmese administrators and journalists alike marveled at the cosmopolitan nature of the mining enterprise at Bawdwin and Namtu and its unusual medley

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[43] In total, 386 Americans were registered in the colony. *Rangoon Gazette*, 29 July 1918.
[44] No census data regarding Australians living at the mines is available, but it is clear that many more Australians were employed at Bawdwin and Namtu by this time, as not all engineers would have been members of the Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. In the United States, for instance, in 1920, the *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers* listed twelve engineers at the mines, which included both Americans and Australians. As census data has revealed, however, nearly forty Americans were living at the mines in 1918, dwarfing the number of American registered through the American Institute of Mining Engineers. See *Proceedings of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy*, 31 December 1920, xxv-xlvii.; *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, September 1918.
[45] Moule was a superintendent at the Mount Morgan Company and later the mine manager at the Pernatty copper mines in Australia, before he went to Burma. In 1922, Moule published a study about the Bawdwin mines. See *Mining Magazine*, January 1916, 40; J.W. Moule, "Burma Corporation Ltd.," *Proceedings of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy*, no. 46, 1922, 82-84.
[46] *Rangoon Gazette*, 9 September 1918.

of peoples, labeling the operation "the Commonwealth of Namtu."[47] Similar to how the mines operated in the pre-colonial period under Chinese occupation, by the 1920s, Bawdwin and Namtu had become a company town, bringing in settlers from across the Anglo world to one of the most remote locations in the Indian Empire.

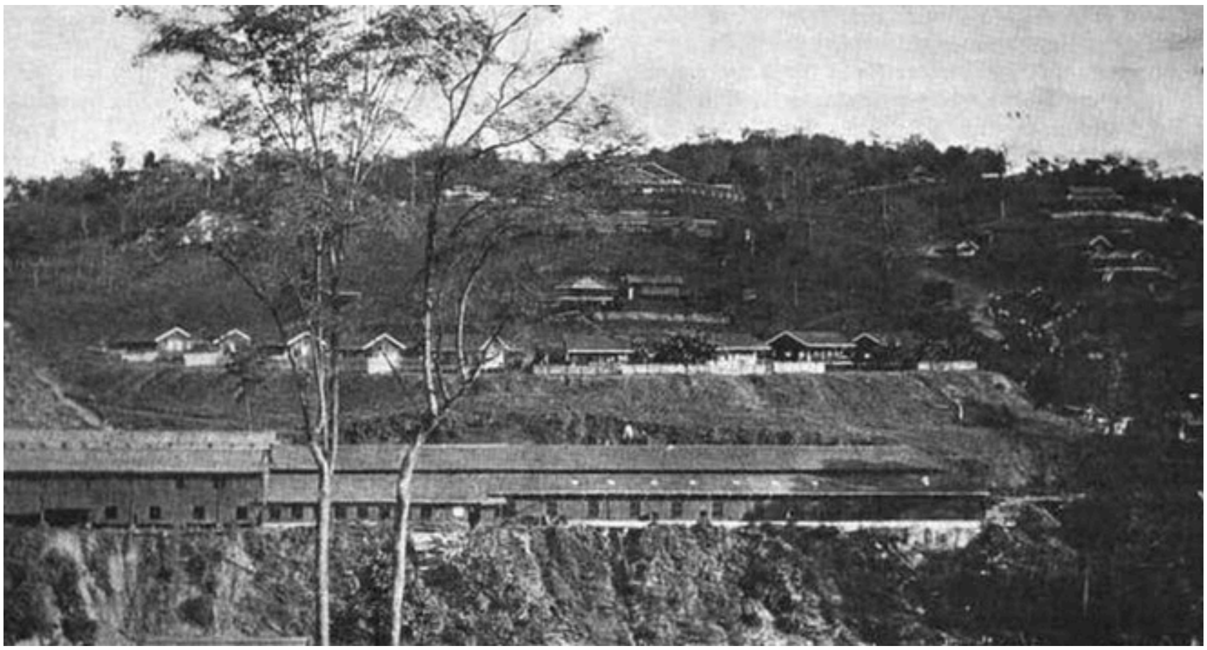

Figure 8: "European" Residences at Namtu. Source: A.B. Parsons, "Operations of the Burma Mines, Ltd.," *Engineering and Mining Journal* vol. 107 no. 6 (8 February 1919), 259.

A British World Settler Colony?

By the start of the 1920s, Bawdwin and Namtu had developed into one of the world's largest industrial mining operations. From the time that Herbert Hoover visited the mines in 1907 and the accession of P.E. Marmion as mine manager in 1921, the mines had expanded exponentially, whether in the production of ore, the building of infrastructure, or the number of people employed at the site. Although the bulk of Bawdwin's workforce was unskilled labor from China and India, a large community of white, British World engineers also lived

[47] *Rangoon Gazette*, 7 November 1921.

at Bawdwin and Namtu during this period. This was reflected in the events and structures present at the mines. Alongside local celebrations held for holidays like Anzac Day in Australia, the mines had a European Club, a rugby and football team, a horse-racing track, as well as separate living barracks for "Europeans" at both Bawdwin and Namtu.[48] The mining site also contained many of the conveniences of a modern city. With a company store, a hospital, schools, post offices, and a railway stop connecting with Mandalay and Rangoon, the mines were an anomaly in the Northern Shan States of Burma, which remained only loosely administered by the British administration.[49] Like its more famous counterparts in the western world, such as Broken Hill in Western Australia or Anaconda in Montana, by the 1920s, the enterprise at Bawdwin and Namtu had become a self-sufficient mining town.[50] Unlike these other sites, however, Bawdwin and Namtu were not located in the "settler" empire, but in Colonial Burma, thousands of miles from the imperial center in London.

The rapid turnover in mine managers at Bawdwin and Namtu would perhaps indicate that few engineers remained on site for extended periods of time, but that was not true of all British World employees. Instead, and despite a limited archival record involving company employees, it is clear that a number of engineers made the Northern Shan States their home during the first three decades of European operations, and who raised a family in the mines' environs. Arthur Oberlander, an American from Utah, was one of those engineers. In 1911,

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[48] On many of these leisure activities and institutions (including the celebration of Anzac Day), see the series of articles published by the *Rangoon Gazette* on 30 April 1923. On the creation of the football team, see *Rangoon Gazette*, 8 June 1925. On rugby, see *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 May 1927.
[49] See the *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 April 1923.
[50] For a history of Broken Hill, see O.H. Woodward, *A Review of the Broken Hill Lead-Silver-Zinc Industry* (Melbourne: Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1952); Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rise of Broken Hill* (Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia, 1968). On Anaconda's "Company Town," see Laurie Mercier, *Anaconda: Labor, Community, and Culture in Montana's Smelter City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

Bewick, Moreing, and Company recruited Oberlander while he was working at the American Smelting and Refining Company mines in Murray, Utah. Oberlander, who was twenty-four years old at the time, left Utah for Burma in 1911, and in the mines early years, he was employed in a variety of capacities, including as superintendent and mine manager.[51] Unlike many other figures associated with the mines, though, Oberlander remained at Bawdwin and Namtu through the 1930s, working under the ownership regimes of Hoover, Tilden Smith, and W.S. Robinson. Oberlander, owing to his time at the mines as well as the important positions he held, became associated with many developments at Bawdwin and Namtu during this period. This included the creation of the Mandalay smelter, the building of a company railway, his work training and organizing migrant laborers (for which he was called the "Smelter Nat"), and for building the first house in Namtu.[52] Most importantly, though, was Oberlander's work as a company – and at times, colonial - representative. In 1913, Oberlander visited the unadministered Wa territories on the border of China for the first time, and would return to the region often over the next two decades to advise the local Wa chiefs on mineral deposits in their territory. In the 1930s, Oberlander assisted in brokering a deal between the Wa and the British colonial administration to prospect minerals in the area, an event that would cause an international incident between Britain and China over contested

[51] On Oberlander's early life, see *Ogden Evening Standard*, 2 January 1912; *Salt Lake Tribune,* 2 January 1912; *Gunnison Valley News*, 14 April 1926.

[52] *The Times* summarized Oberlander's life in an obituary published on 20 July 1939. His name, however, is also prominent the archival record. For a letter referencing Oberlander's work in the early years of western operations, see Hoover Institution, Gerard Lovell to W.J. Loring, 19 September 1912. On some of Oberlander's activities as an agent of the firm, see Proceedings, P/10148, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), December 1917, Application of the Mohochaung Exploration Company for renewal of prospecting lease. For Oberlander's later work, see his interview in the Whitley Commission.

border territory.[53] Even with these more adventurous duties, though, Oberlander was also a family man. In 1922, he married an Irish woman, Miss Mai Dalton Hart, who lived with the engineer in Namtu. She survived him following his death at the age of fifty-seven in 1939.[54]

The period of time Oberlander lived at Namtu and Bawdwin – which lasted from 1911 until sometime in the mid-1930s – was uncommon for miners at the site, but it was not unique. A number of mining engineers were present at the mines for extended periods of time, and like Oberlander, maintained both a professional and family life while domiciled there. As highlighted in the previous section, at least seven "married women" from the United States lived at the mining complex in 1918.[55] Two other engineers, E.H. Greig and Frank Espie, also lived with their families at Bawdwin and Namtu for a considerable period of time. Greig, who was born in Scotland but raised in Australia, began his career working at both the Oroya Brownhill Company and Lake View Consuls in Kalgoorlie, under the direction of Francis Govett. In 1911, Bewick, Moreing, and Company hired Greig as a surveyor, and by 1912, the young engineer moved to Burma to take up a position at the mines.[56] In 1913, Greig married Miss Francis Chapple of Kalgoorlie, and the couple resided with in Burma until his retirement in 1932.[57]

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[53] See British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, IOR/L/PS/12/2240, Coll 9/10 Wa States: Burma Corporation Expedition (hereafter "Wa States Expedition"). These events will be examined in Chapter Five.

[54] Although few archival sources about Oberlander's family life exist, genealogical research has shown that the engineer's story is perhaps more complicated than his obituary reveals. According to research completed by his great-granddaughter, Oberlander married a Shan woman and had a child before meeting his future wife, Mai Dalton Hart. See http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/INDIA/2007-03/1174717693.

[55] *Rangoon Gazette*, 29 July 1918.

[56] *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, no. 141, September 1918, xxxviii.

[57] In 1932, it was reported that Greig and his wife were returning from Burma and would "probably make their homes in Australia" on their return. *Perth Mail*, 3 November 1932. See also *Barrier Miner*, 21 October 1913.

Frank Espie, another Australian, had a similar story, at least in his early years. Espie, born in Adelaide, attended the South Australian School of Mines, after which he was employed at Broken Hill. In 1914, the Burma Corporation hired Espie as a surveyor, beginning a long a decorated career with the company.[58] Espie married an Australian woman in 1915, and the pair would have three children while living in the Northern Shan States.[59] Unlike Greig, though, Espie remained at the mines until the outbreak of World War Two, a period of nearly thirty years. In the 1930s, Espie became mine manager, but in 1942, he was forced to lead the evacuation of Bawdwin and Namtu when Japanese forces invaded Upper Burma. To prevent the Japanese army from securing the critical mineral reserves at Bawdwin and Namtu, Espie organized the destruction of company property in April 1942. In a famous event, he then led the evacuation of dozens of mining engineers and their families on foot from Burma to China and India, a grueling trek that lasted twenty-five days. In 1943, Espie returned to Australia with his wife, where he would stay for the remainder of his life.[60]

The stories of Oberlander, Greig, and Espie all demonstrate that alongside the industrial work happening at Bawdwin and Namtu, there also existed a community of white migrants who called the mining complex home during the early twentieth century. Their experiences, however, were not necessarily typical of all engineers and their families. One major problem for some engineers was the distance between Burma and their own point of origin. During World War I, for instance, Arthur Chester Beatty and A.F. Kuehn had a

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[58] *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, no. 141, September, 1918, xxxvii.
[59] *Observer*, 14 August 1915; Gilbert M. Ralph, "Espie, Frank Fancett (1890–1962)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/espie-frank-fancett-10126/text17875, published first in hardcopy 1996, accessed online 11 February 2017.
[60] Espie wrote a letter to his wife describing these events in May 1942, after arriving in Calcutta. National Library of Australia, "Letter from F.F. Espie: Calcutta, India, to Mrs. Espie, May 1942," MS 9644.

difficult time recruiting American engineers to work at the mines, owing primarily to their distance from the United States. In 1917, one potential recruit, R.A. Conrad of New York, was forthright in his response to Beatty overtures, saying that he was "afraid the location in India is too far away for me, and that I would want to come home shortly after arriving there."[61] The war made these issues even more acute. During the war, it became difficult for American engineers to bring their families to London – through which new hires would often pass before traveling on to Burma - after the British government issued a new policy limiting the travel of foreign women in British territory.[62] Many American engineers did make it to Burma during this period, though. At the same time the British government was attempting to remove Herbert Hoover from the Burma Corporation's board of directors because of his nationality, additional American engineers were approved to travel to Burma for work. In 1916, for example, A.F. Kuehn asked the government of Burma if there "would be any objection to employing Americans" at the mines owing to "Britishers" being "unobtainable during the war." The government responded that they "would raise no objection during the continuance of war," allowing the company to continue their recruitment efforts in the

[61] Conrad was also unemployed at the time, and asked E.L. Gruver, Beatty's assistant, to write "if you hear of anything in the states, where living conditions are fairly good." LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, R.A. Conrad to E.L. Gruver, 4 October 1917.

[62] This policy affected travel to the United Kingdom but not the colonies. In June 1917, for instance, an engineer from the firm Bradley, Bruff & Labarthe in San Francisco, Degenhardt, was hired by the Burma Corporation to build a new 1,000-ton mill at Bawdwin. Although he planned on bringing his wife, he was told by the British government that "women [were] not allowed to travel except [for] special reasons," forcing him to travel directly to Burma instead of passing through London. This policy affected not only new engineers traveling to Britain, but also established company officials like A.F. Kuehn, whose wife was unable to travel to London during the war and had to remain in New York. See LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/126, Degenhardt to E.L. Gruver, 9 June 1917; E.L. Gruver to Degenhardt, 9 May 1917.

mining centers of the United States.[63] Americans might no longer be able own mining properties in the British Empire, but they could still work there.

Figure 9: The Namtu Club. Source: "Lead Smelting at Namtu, Burma," *Engineering and Mining Journal* vol. 104 no. 1 (7 July 1917), 25.

Whether or not American or Australian engineers could travel and live in Burma during the early twentieth century, a variety of issues prevented the company from maintaining a stable white workforce in the colony. Health and climate were paramount among those concerns. Malaria, in particular, was known to be rampant at the mines, alongside other ailments such as relapsing fever, beriberi, and venereal disease.[64] Herbert Hoover, who only visited the mines once in 1907, was himself stricken with malaria while in Burma, and at least two mine managers during World War One were forced to resign their

[63] Proceedings, P/9901, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, October 1916, Statement of Matters of Routine.
[64] J.P. Cullen, "Medical and Sanitary Work with the Burma Corporation," *The Lancet*, 29 December 1923, 1426.

position owing to ill health.[65] Concerns among white engineers about the debilitating affect of Burma's climate were widespread, however, throughout the mines western occupation. In 1913, for instance, A.F. Kuehn noted that "the climatic conditions" at the mine's smelter in Namtu were "not healthy," owing primarily to poor sanitation and the prevalence of malaria. In discussing the potential recruitment of an American engineer who wished to bring his family, Kuehn advised him not to "take his wife and little child to that country at present." If it meant the engineer couldn't take the job, though, Kuehn recommended that he could "make some arrangements to house his family at a distance of about twelve miles from the mine up in the mountains where the climate is very healthy."[66] Other engineers at the mines reinforced such views. In 1914, T.E. Mitchell, an American, reported to Kuehn that while the climate at Bawdwin and Namtu was "not bad," it was "enervating and rather debilitating" and "has a vitality reducing effect upon the white man." Mitchell reported that since his arrival, four engineers had been diagnosed with malaria, including the Australian E.H. Greig, who was forced out of work for four weeks.[67] The construction of a hospital in Namtu in 1923 would later address such problems, but for white workers at the mines, as well as prospective employees from the Anglo World, the risk of disease for either themselves or their family remained a significant factor in their decision to remain on site.[68]

[65] Hoover subsequently used his contraction of malaria as an excuse to resign from Bewick, Moreing and Company later that year. As mentioned earlier, both C.H. Macnutt and T.E. Mitchell also left the company owing to ill-health during the war. George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer*, 416.
[66] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, A.F. Kuehn to Mayer, 25 March 1913.
[67] LSE, Selection Trust Archives, SELECTION TRUST/ACB/128, T.E. Mitchell to A.F. Kuehn, 25 October 1914.
[68] The hospital, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, had eight doctors and could hold up to eighty-four patients. J.P. Cullen, "Medical and Sanitary Work with the Burma Corporation," 1426-1427.

Burma's climate and a concern about tropical disease had an important impact on the lives of white workers at Bawdwin and Namtu, but as the comments from Kuehn and Mitchell reveal, white settlers were concerned about more than just hygiene. Similar to elsewhere in the colonial world, anxieties about race and gender were pervasive among workers at the mines, coloring the ways in which white settlers saw the environment around them. Although some workers like Oberlander or Espie were comfortable raising a family at the mines, many others were not. In 1912, for example, Gerard Lovell, the mine manager at the time, wrote a lengthy letter to W.J. Loring of Bewick, Moreing and Company about the drawbacks of life at the mines. For Lovell, the mines were a "most interesting proposition" but "£1500 a year in Australia is worth more than even £2500 a year in this country and I shall be very glad to get away as soon as ever you will let me." Although Lovell was present at Bawdwin during its troubled early years, his comments reveal the classic orientalist position that the empire was no place for European white women and children. Lovell noted how "in spite of the many attractions of the local beauties which seem quite irresistible to most of the men here – married or otherwise," he was "horribly old-fashioned" and missed his wife. The letter concluded that the Northern Shan States were "an impossible place in which to bring up a white family," making it unbearable for him to remain in Burma for much longer.[69] Lovell's comments demonstrate how gender, heterosexuality, and race structured the intimate colonial encounter, and created imperial power structures. While it is uncertain whether or not Lovell ever had relations with indigenous women, in his letter

[69] Hoover Institution, Gerard Lovell to W.J. Loring, 19 September 1912.

Lovell was trying to assert racial difference and maintain the sense that the empire was governed by white men, whether from US, Australia, or Britain.[70]

Lovell, Mitchell, and Kuehn's comments about Burma's "enervating" climate and its unsuitability for white workers and their families speak to anxieties about race, gender, and sexuality that were pervasive in western culture during the early twentieth century. In speaking of the degenerative qualities of Burma's climate for white workers and their families, Mitchell and Kuehn were speaking to a well-established discourse in the west about the relationship between race and climate, which theorized that whites – owing to their innate racial characteristics – were not suited for tropical weather.[71] This was also the case in regards to family life. Lovell's remark that the Northern Shan States were an "impossible place in which to bring up a white family" would have struck home to many whites that lived in the tropics during this period.[72] In other tropical colonies, including India, historians have shown that the intimacy of the encounter between colonizer and colonized led to a variety of anxieties among white colonial officials, particularly involving the relationship between race, sexuality, and family.[73] Orientalist discourses about the "over-sexed" colonized made white

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[70] The intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality has been explored in many colonial histories. For an excellent early example of this literature that is focused on British India, see Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793-1905* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).
[71] See, for example, Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 48-49; Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 246-258.
[72] Hoover Institution, Gerard Lovell to W.J. Loring, 19 September 1912.
[73] On India, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History*; Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Indrani Sen, *Woman and Empire: Representations in the Writings*

settlers and officials in the tropics fear that sexual violence that could be committed against white women, or that white women had to be protected from the backwardness and degeneracy of the colonies.[74] Men also had to be protected, however. Whether in the figure of the sallow, hookah-smoking Anglo-Indian “Nabob” or the sexually promiscuous colonial official, narratives abounded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries about the corrupting influence of tropical colonies, which could debase even the most civilized and guarded Anglo-Saxon.[75] As Lovell, Mitchell, and Kuehn’s comments all demonstrate, however, these concerns were not restricted to the British colonial official. At Bawdwin and Namtu, and far from the more benign climate and “civilized” settler life of mining communities in the United States or Australia, foreign engineers echoed fears about the colonial experience that were common in British administrative circles during the modern period, particularly in regards to race and labor. This shared colonial worldview between British officials and foreign non-officials was vital to how the mines developed over the early twentieth century, binding the state and the corporate into a common community, and allowing for the expansion of mining operations in the remote Northern Shan States.

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of British India, 1858-1900 (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002); Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*; Indrani Sen, *Gendered Transactions: The White Woman in Colonial India, c. 1820-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

[74] See, for example, Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge, 1971), 136-137; Jock McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902-1935* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[75] On these tropes in literature, see Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. On issues involving prostitution, masculinity, and sexual violence in India, see Philippa Levine, “Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 4 no. 4 (April 1994), 579-602; Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Stephen Legg, *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire: Scale, Governmentalities, and Interwar India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

Race and British World Mining

The confluence of American, Australian, and British agents in British Burma opens up a variety of insights about the nature of empire during the early twentieth century. The Burma Corporation's holdings highlight the role that white foreigners played in the development and management of large industrial enterprises in the British Empire, although it is also possible that Americans were far more involved in the British Empire than historians have thus far shown. During a period of economic and social crisis at home in Britain and nationalist opposition in India and elsewhere within the Empire, British officials found it necessary to rely on their "allies," and especially American capital and expertise, to help them maintain control and make their empire profitable. Foreshadowing the rise of development as an international concern, as well as indicative of a new globalized world during the early twentieth century, the Burma Corporation's story provides an interesting counterpoint to studies that assume Britain's empire was strictly "British." Non-Britons may not have "made" Britain's empire, but they most certainly impacted it.[76]

But while the Burma Corporation's story may appear unique, the intellectual currents and economic and political structures that legitimized foreign investment in Upper Burma were not. The early twentieth century saw a widespread acceptance in Anglo-American

[76] A few recent histories have explored the role of Americans in the British Empire during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly experts. See Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History,* vol. 88 no. 4 (March 2002), 1315-1353; David Arnold, "Globalization and Contingent Colonialism: Towards a Transnational History of "British" India," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History,* 16, no. 2 (2015); Stephen Tufnell, "Engineering Inter-Imperialism: American Miners and the Transformation of Global Mining, 1871-1910."

circles of a theory of racial hierarchy and difference, which had been fashioned and transformed over the previous century. White Anglo-Saxons, these theories surmised, were considered the most advanced and civilized race in the world while other races and cultures lagged behind on a scale of civilization.[77] Ethnography, which emerged in the late nineteenth century as a new field of study, became crucial to the colonial project. In cataloging, codifying, and essentializing foreign cultures, ethnographers produced knowledge that, for those in power, legitimized colonial rule and created a racial hierarchy used to divide and better manage colonized populations.[78] As Catherine Hall has argued, "marking differences was a way of classifying, of categorising, of making hierarchies, of constructing boundaries for the body politic and the body social," whether in terms of race, class, or gender.[79] These categories, though, were never fixed. According to Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "the otherness of colonised persons was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had

[77] Racial theorizing emerged in the eighteenth century during the Enlightenment but became hardened in the nineteenth century, owing in part to conversations about the abolition of slavery and colonial rule. Two distinct approaches emerged among intellectuals to create a racial hierarchy during this time. One strand, known as polygenism, used a "scientific" approach to argue that different racial groups were biologically different, and represented different sub-species of man. Another more popular strand, which focused on environment and culture, used a Christian worldview to argue that the races were biologically from the same family tree, but that over time they had become developmentally different on a scale of civilization. It was this idea of a hierarchy of development that Darwin wrote about in his work *Descent of Man*, but that would become grafted to scientific theories of race in the Social Darwinist and Eugenics movements at the turn of the twentieth century. For a history of the evolving notions of race, see Peter Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Terence D. Keel, "Religion, Polygenism and the Early Science of Human Origins," *History of the Human Sciences,* vol. 26 no. 2 (April 2013), 3-32.

[78] Many studies explore the importance of the ethnographic project to colonialism, particularly in the British Empire. For a history of anthropology and the ethnological project, see George H. Stocking, *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888-1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995). For a study that situates the ethnographical project in relation to knowledge and power in India, see Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind.*

[79] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects,* 17.

to be defined and maintained." Colonial powers may have tried to create an unchanging "grammar of difference" to legitimize and bolster their control, but identity was a shifting and evasive idea, always liable to change.[80]

The British World community at Bawdwin and Namtu demonstrates how important foreign agents were to the making of the British Empire during early twentieth century, but it also shows how important race was in bridging difference between colonial agents, particularly regarding national identity. When in 1928, the Chairman of the Burma Corporation, Sir Robert Horne, related his "pride that the organisation had been built up mainly by men of his own race," he was alluding to the common ground forged between Britons and white non-Britons in the empire owing to their shared "whiteness."[81] This discourse on "whiteness," which was constructed in opposition to the racialized "other," was crucial to establishing power structures and difference on the colonial frontier.[82] As the historian Bill Schwarz has argued, "it was first and foremost on the frontier that whiteness happened," and where concerns about the transgression of racial boundaries and the blurring of racial categories were at their most heightened.[83] Like all "grammars of difference," though, whiteness was not a fixed category.[84] As Schwarz has pointed out, the frontier was also a place where "race was both most actively played out and where it was at its most

[80] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3-4.
[81] *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 April 1928.
[82] For a foundational study on whiteness but in the context of the United States, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).
[83] Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1,* 113.
[84] On "grammars of difference," see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," 7.

ambivalent." The colonial encounter on the frontier was an intimate encounter, where in order to "master the native," colonial agents were placed in a compromised position that hinged on the flexibility of identity. In order to maintain power but not "go native," colonizers had to both identify with their colonized subjects while simultaneously preserving an absolute, white racial identity. Theories of difference were critical to the construction and elaboration of power structures in the colonies, but on the local level, could never be stable.[85]

The instability of racial categories may have represented the reality of the colonial experience, but the idea that white agents from across the British World shared more than they differed was prevalent during this period. In Burma itself, the *Rangoon Gazette* noted that close relations between Britain and the United States at the start of the twentieth century was not only the result of "a common race and language, and to a great extent, a common law and common political institutions," but also "greater intercommunication and incessant interchange of ideas."[86] Burma itself had long been a site where Americans and Britons worked together to benefit their own causes as well as those of the province. As early as 1817, American Baptists had arrived in Burma to educate and convert local Burman and indigenous groups, and they remained in the country until well after the colonial period.[87] Americans could also be found prospecting at the oil fields in Yenangyaung, a location that piqued the interest of Standard Oil executives at the turn of the century and that as late 1918,

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[85] Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1,* 118.
[86] *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 May 1904. For a study that discusses the transmission of ideas between Britain and the United States during this period, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1998). For a study that discusses the idea of a "Greater Britain," see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain.*
[87] For a short history of these missionaries, see Edmund F. Merriam, *A History of American Baptist Missions* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1900).

was home to more Americans than anywhere else in the colony.[88] The imprint of Americans in the Northern Shan States could be seen even before reaching Namtu and Bawdwin. To get to the mines in the first place, a traveler was required to pass over the famous Gokteik Viadcut, the tallest bridge in the world at the time, built by and using components from the Pennsylvania Steel Company at the end of the nineteenth century.[89] To pass over the bridge, one also likely needed to travel on a locomotive imported from America.[90]

The presence of American agents could be seen and felt across Burma during the colonial period, but at the mines in Namtu and Bawdwin, racial identity was paramount to national identity. Although anxieties about race may have been endemic to the settler experience, race was less a malleable construct than a category and tool to organize labor roles and power structures at the mines. At the top of the labor hierarchy at Bawdwin and Namtu, for instance, was the category of "European." Despite the fact that few Europeans actually worked at the mines, the "European" constituted all white workers the Burma Corporation employed, including Australians, Americans, Britons, and Italians. "Europeans," who were housed separately from "native" workers, took on the most important day-to-day roles at Bawdwin and Namtu, from mine manager and superintendent to surveyors, metallurgists, and shift supervisors. This categorization – "European" being shorthand for "white" - reflected a wider belief in the mining world about the importance of race in organizing labor, as well as the supremacy of white workers.[91] As historian Stephen Tufnell

[88] *Rangoon Gazette*, 17 November 1902; *Rangoon Gazette*, 29 July 1918.
[89] *From Steelton to Mandalay.*
[90] *Rangoon Gazette*, 22 July 1901.
[91] David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch have argued that an idea of "whiteness as management" arose during the nineteenth and twentieth century in the United States, and have shown how race management was as critical to labor organization as class. Herbert Hoover is one example that Roediger and Esch cite. See David R. Roediger and Elizabeth D.

had demonstrated, race was central to the fashioning of Anglo-American networks in the mining world, as well as in mine management.[92] In his 1909 book *Principles of Mining*, for instance, Herbert Hoover undertook a comparison between "working labor of a low mental order, such as Asiatics and negroes, with those achieved by American or Australian miners," and found "with confidence" that "one white man equals from two to three of the colored races," even in the most simple of tasks.[93] This idea of Anglo-Saxon unity and superiority was significant in the fashioning of British World business and engineering networks, where a shared whiteness and cultural heritage could trump other forms of self-identification.

The shared "whiteness" of British World engineers at Bawdwin and Namtu may have bound disparate national agents into a common community, but white experts represented only a small minority of workers who lived and labored at the mines. As Bill Schwarz has argued, whiteness was "only comprehensible in relation to the variety of forms which are deemed to be 'not white,'" a fact that would have been particularly evident at Bawdwin and Namtu.[94] Although the number of white engineers at Bawdwin and Namtu likely only reached around one hundred workers even at the peak of operations, thousands of migrant laborers called Bawdwin and Namtu home during the early twentieth century. These unskilled workers were critical to the expansion of operations at the mines, and questions about the availability and lack of local labor constantly plagued company officials who hoped to increase production. Race, though, played a different role in the recruitment of

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Esch, *The Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[92] Tufnell made this point in regards to South Africa. Stephen Tufnell, "Engineering Inter-Imperialism: American Miners and the Transformation of Global Mining, 1871-1910."

[93] Herbert Hoover, *Principles of Mining Valuation, Organization and Administration; Copper, Gold, Lead, Silver, Tin, and Zinc* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1909), 163.

[94] Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1,* 55.

migrant workers. Unlike for Anglo World agents, whose common whiteness bound them into a community and flattened other forms of identity, different ethnic groups who worked at the mines were organized and recruited according to their supposed racial characteristics, creating a labor hierarchy at the mines based exclusively on race. The unskilled workers at Bawdwin and Namtu, however, came from outside the colony, traveling from places like China, India, and Nepal to find work at the mines. Because of this, and despite its location in British Burma, the mines were neither "British" nor "Burmese." Instead, the mines were a hybrid space, demonstrating the complex ways in which race, capitalism, and empire interacted during the early twentieth century.

Race and the Plural Society in British Burma

The national identity of white engineers may have been flexible in the mining world during the early twentieth century, but there were limitations to this fluidity. This was certainly the case for migrant workers, a fact reflected in the makeup of Burma's social hierarchy during the colonial period. As discussed in Chapter One, Burma contained what the former colonial official J.S. Furnivall labeled a "plural society." Furnivall's theorizing of the "plural society" – which posited that different ethnic groups in the colony "mix but do not combine" - was based on his observations of colonial society in Burma during the early twentieth century.[95] His ideas, however, touched on a much wider belief in the colonial world about the inherent separateness of different racial groups and the racialization of labor roles. At the Indian tea plantations, for instance, particular ethnic groups were employed for

[95] J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice,* 304.

specific tasks, based exclusively on what was seen as the engrained racial characteristics of the group in question.[96]

This was also true, however, in the mining world. In the gold mining centers of Ghana at the turn of the twentieth century, black laborers were recruited from certain ethnic and regional backgrounds to fill specific job roles at the mines, a fact mirrored in South Africa.[97] In many areas of the United States, a strict racial hierarchy also marked mining activities. Migrant workers from places like Mexico, China, and Japan were employed across the mining world in the United States, but confined to specific occupations based on essentialized racial characteristics.[98] The recruitment and employment of migrant workers in settler societies, however, could often be controversial. Although Chinese laborers were considered "industrious" and suited for mining work, their arrival in locations like the Western United States, Australia, and South Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was met with disapproval from white settlers and miners. Mining companies, who supported Chinese migration as a source of cheap labor, became entangled in a bitter dispute with both colonial governments and labor unions throughout the modern period, who thought that Chinese workers would both drive down wages and destabilize the racial harmony that

[96] Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden,* 205-233.
[97] Historian Raymond Dumett has shown that despite racialized views positing that Fante and Asante workers "avoided mining and disliked working underground," Asantes made up fifty-one percent and Fante's twenty-two percent of underground workers for the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation in 1911. Raymond E. Dumett, *Imperialism, Economic Development and Social Change in West Africa* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2013), 479-480.
[98] See Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (South Bend: Notre Dame University Press, 1979); Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Andrew Scott Johnston, *Mercury and the Making of California: Mining, Landscape, and Race, 1840-1890* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2013).

existed in white settler communities.[99] These debates, often referred to popularly as the "labor question" or the "native question," created constant strife in mining communities in both the British Empire and beyond, pitting management against workers in a struggle as much about race and racial purity as about production and profitability. Chinese workers may have offered mining companies an opportunity to drive up profits, but for white workers, they represented a grave threat to the existing racialized labor hierarchy.[100]

Unlike in Western Australia, Britain, or the United States, white laborers at Bawdwin and Namtu were overwhelmingly in the minority. Because there were neither enough white workers in Burma nor enough Anglo World agents willing to travel to the colony, anxieties about the use of migrant labor at the mines were not a concern for company officials. Instead, the Burma Corporation had to rely on laborers who traveled from the nexus between South, Southeast, and East Asia in order to find work at the mines, and who represented the majority of workers. Like elsewhere in the Anglo World mining community, though, race played a significant role in the organization of labor roles. The mines at Bawdwin and Namtu functioned within a hierarchy that positioned white overseers – "Europeans" – in charge of operations, followed by mixed race Anglo-Indian shift bosses and Indian supervisors.

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[99] Rachel K. Bright, *Chinese Labour in South Africa, 1902-10: Race, Violence, and Global Spectacle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8-21.

[100] On the controversy surrounding Chinese migrant workers in mining communities, see Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, "'We Cast About for a Remedy': Chinese Labor and African Opposition in the Gold Coast, 1874-1914," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 34 no. 2 (2001), 365-384; Mark Kanazawa, "Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California," *The Journal of Economic History* vol. 65 no. 3 (September 2005), 779-805; John Higginson, "Privileging the Machine: American Engineers, Indentured Chinese and White Workers in South Africa's Deep-Level Gold Mines, 1902-1907," *International Review of Social History* vol. 52 no. 1 (April 2007), 1-34. On labor unions and anti-Chinese racism at Broken Hill, see Sarah Gregson, "Defending Internationalism in Interwar Broken Hill," *Labour History* no. 86 (May 2004), 115-136.

Contracted laborers from places like Nepal, India, and China provided the bulk of manual labor at the mines, and a variety of ethnic groups, including local Shan people, were utilized for non-mining tasks such as forestry and railway work. Burmans, however, were largely absent at Bawdwin and Namtu, despite being the largest ethnic group in the colony. According to Arthur Oberlander, "the number of Burmans who are employed in occupations that entail hard work is negligible because the Burman does not generally take to that type of work."[101] These views were echoed in official parlance. For Harcourt Butler, reflecting on his time as Governor during the previous two decades, "the Burmans have as yet shown no industrial capacity," and because of that, wealth in Burma remained in the hands of the British, Indians, and Chinese.[102] By 1930, Burmans only represented 7.3% of the workforce at Namtu and Bawdwin, as compared to 67.2% Indian and Nepalese, 7.25% Shan, and 14.4% Chinese.[103] Despite being labeled a "Burmese Wonderland," the mines, in large part, had no Burmans.

As Oberlander and Butler's comments suggest, the absence of Burmans at Bawdwin and Namtu was not an accident. Anglo-Americans in Burma, whether company representatives or colonial administrators, shared a common belief in the essentialized qualities of particular racial ethnic groups in the colony. Burmans, in their theorizing, were not racially and culturally equipped to work in the mines, and in the stadial model of racial theory, were less developed than other races, such as Indians or Chinese. Race and ethnicity was tied to a variety of cultural and biological typologies, including temperament,

[101] This breakdown of labor roles and Oberlander's interview is found in the Whitley Commission.
[102] Harcourt Butler, "Burma and Its Problems," *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 10 no. 4 (July 1932), 654.
[103] Whitley Commission.

masculinity, or a resolve to work. At Bawdwin and Namtu, mine managers used these typologies to craft a hierarchy of labor, recruiting workers from particular racial groups and ethnicities who were thought to be "industrious," and excluding other groups entirely.[104] In his memoirs, Herbert Hoover would later ruminate on the ideas that governed this racial hierarchy. He argued that the Chinese were a "peaceful commercial people" but "temperamentally ill-adapted to compete with militaristic races," that the Shan could accomplish hard work but were limited because of local religious superstitions, that the Burmese were "the only truly happy and cheerful race in all of Asia," and that whites should manage because "our inventions and machinery came out of our racial instincts and qualities."[105] Mine management, both during and after Hoover's time with the Burma Corporation, used these ideas relating racial qualities and work ethic to recruit laborers from specific areas near Burma, particularly China and India. In 1930, the Royal Commission on Labour reported that the "principal areas" from which the Burma Corporation's labor was recruited from were the contiguous Chinese province of Yunnan, the districts of Gharwal and Orissa, the Chinese Shan States, the Punjab, and the Madras Presidency.[106] These workers, who often traveled hundreds of miles to work at the mines, were the foundation of the mining enterprise at Bawdwin and Namtu, from the earliest days of mining operations until the invasion of Japanese troops during World War Two.

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[104] These racialized notions were famously applied to recruitment of soldiers for the Indian army under British colonial rule. See, for example, David E. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Heather Streets-Salter, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
[105] Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 67; 95; 91; 70.
[106] Whitley Commission.

The Burma Corporation recruited and organized unskilled labor at the mines using a racialized hierarchy, but the laborers who traveled to and worked at Bawdwin and Namtu during the early twentieth century did so for a variety of reasons. While the company preferred specific ethnic and racial groups, their efforts to recruit labor were dependent on many variables impacting the region, including economic and social displacement, the weather and environment, as well as working conditions at the mines. These variables, which could shift on a yearly or even monthly basis, were often out of the company's control, leading to a constant concern among company officials of a "labor shortage" at the mines. Like the white engineers who would often only stay at the mines for a short period of time, most of the labor force at Bawdwin and Namtu was migratory as opposed to permanent, taking up resident in the Northern Shan States for only a few months of the year before returning home. This problem remained acute throughout the first three decades of the mines operations. Even as late as 1930, when the mines and their environs' had developed into a self-sustained city, only 744 of the 16,064 workers had lived at Bawdwin and Namtu for more than ten years, while 7,780 workers had been on the site for less than three years.[107] Like for management at the mines, Namtu and Bawdwin were transitive spaces in which labor passed through, but for the most part, did not reside in. Instead, the mines represented a nexus of migration between South, Southeast, and East Asia.

Migration in the Borderlands of Burma

[107] The number of employees also fluctuated drastically throughout the year. In January 1930, for instance, the mines were said to have 19,844 employees, which by September 1930, had dwindled to 16,064. See the Whitley Commission.

According to the historian Sunil Amrith, "migration is central to the cultural history of modern Asia."[108] In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, thousands – if not millions – of migrants traveled across the South, Southeast, and East Asian regions, ending up as far away as Africa, Mauritius, or the West Indies in order to build a new home or find work on a seasonal basis. The reasons for this migration, however, have remained a dividing question for scholars. According to Jan Breman, European colonial coercion was primarily responsible for the large flow of migrants during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which forced local Asian populations into new forms of bondage in the colonial workforce.[109] Other historians, however, have argued that migrants often retained a "margin of freedom" in their decision to migrate, and did not move exclusively because of imperial intervention.[110] While, for instance, the British colonial state could – and often did – force Indian or other colonized populations to take on specific kinds of employment in new places, migrants could also be drawn to specific occupations and locations owing to familial or cultural connections, and not exclusively because of the coercive powers of the colonial state. These "push" and "pull" forces both impacted the decision of migrants to uproot their families and travel to a new home during the modern period, demonstrating that alongside colonial violence and displacement, colonized populations did retain some agency in their decision to migrate. This mixture between imperial coercion and indigenous agency defined the history of migration in Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, moving populations across the globe and transforming the social and cultural makeup of the colonies in the process. Burma, of course, was no exception to these changes.

[108] Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, 10.
[109] Jan Breman, *Labour Migration and Rural Transformation in Colonial Asia* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1990).
[110] Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia,* 10.

Historians of Burma, and following the lead of J.S. Furnivall, have demonstrated that Burma underwent a dramatic transformation during the colonial period in regard to its cultural and ethnic character. One avenue through which this occurred was the rice industry. While rice had been grown in Burma previous to British occupation, the industry expanded significantly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, making Burma the world's leading producer of rice by the 1930s.[111] With this growth, however, came economic and social change. Because Burmans were racialized as strictly agricultural workers, the British government and imperial companies recruited Indians – who were considered a more advanced and civilized race - to fill positions in Burma as money lenders, civil servants, and police officers, creating a racial divide in the colony.[112] As historian Jonathan Saha has argued, for most Burmese people during the colonial period, it was Indians, first and foremost, who represented the colonial state.[113] Because Indians were hired to represent the British colonial state in day-to-day affairs, such as in law enforcement or in the justice system, Indians became the embodiment of the new colonial order in the colony, despite representing a small minority of the overall population.[114] Indian migration, though, was also an unstable force. Mirroring the ways in which labor passed through Bawdwin and Namtu during the early twentieth century, most Indians in Burma stayed in the colony for short

[111] See, for example, Michael Adas, *The Burma River Delta.*
[112] For histories that explore the specifics of this migration, see Nalini Ranjan Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma,* Usha Mahajani, *The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya.*
[113] Jonathan Saha, *Law, Disorder and the Colonial State.*
[114] In 1911, for instance, 3.5% of the population in Burma was from India, while in 1931 – the peak of Indian migration – it was at 5.4%. Nalini Ranjan Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma,* 22.

periods of time and were largely used as seasonal labor.[115] Although these numbers would change during the early twentieth century – between 1901 and 1931, for example, the number of Indians in Burma who were born in India itself went from 86.9% to 72.4% - Burma remained a hub of migratory activity throughout the late colonial period, bringing hundreds of thousands of Indian migrants into and out of the colony annually.[116] These migrants, hailing from across India and coming from a variety of racial and religious backgrounds, transformed the nature and image of Burmese society, particularly in urban centers. In 1931, for instance, around 27.5% of the total population of the capital Rangoon consisted of Indian migrants. Indians, though, could be found across the colony. This included the large industrial mining operation in Burma's north, located near the Chinese border at Bawdwin and Namtu.[117]

[115] Chakravarti argues that at least 50% of the Indian migrants considered permanent in the census were likely only seasonal residents in Burma. This means that permanent Indian residents in Burma likely hovered between 3-4% of the total population of the colony even as late as 1930. Ibid, 27.

[116] Ibid, 23.

[117] In 1931, according to the Indian census, 3.4% of the population of the Northern Shan States was Indian. These Indians, presumably, were almost all working at Bawdwin and Namtu. Ibid, xiii.

Figure 10: Migrant Workers at Namtu. Source: S. Myron Zandmer, *The Burma Corporation* (PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1923).

Unskilled workers migrated to Bawdwin and Namtu for a variety of reasons during the early twentieth century, but both "push" and "pull" factors influenced their decision. In the realm of "push" factors, one significant reason that certain groups traveled to the mines was a racially encoded recruitment program undertaken by the Burma Corporation management team. Although laborers at the mines had traveled from a variety of places, one thing these groups all shared was a belief in European circles that they were the best-suited "races" for hard labor. "Ghurkas" from Nepal and Garhwali's from the north of India were both seen as "martial races" by the British, who sought their services not only for hard labor in the colonies, but also for service in the military.[118] Labor from Yunnan in neighboring

[118] A summary of these perspectives can be found in Lieutenant-General George Fletcher MacMunn's famous work *The Martial Races of India* (London: Sampson Low, Marston &

China was also utilized at the mines. These laborers, however, were not recruited from among the many indigenous ethnic groups who practiced swidden agriculture in the Yunnan highlands, but instead from the Han Chinese population in Yunnan who practiced rice agriculture.[119] Han Chinese, as evidenced in their recruitment elsewhere in the colonial mining world, were thought to be "industrious" and suited for mining work, and the proximity of China to the mines would have made Chinese workers easier to recruit.[120] Even though a labor "shortage" was thought to have existed at the mines during the first two decades of operations, that shortage mostly meant a dearth of workers from these specific ethnic groups, and not the plentiful Burman, Shan, and other indigenous peoples who lived close to the mines but who were deemed unsuitable for mining work.[121] Because company officials thought that racial characteristics determined labor roles, it meant they had to look to afar for their workforce, limiting the expansion of the labor force at Bawdwin and Namtu.

The racial dynamics of labor recruitment at Bawdwin and Namtu demonstrate how colonial biases could shape migration in South and Southeast Asia, but other factors affected why migrants would have traveled to the Northern Shan States for work. One important cause of migration, and one that straddled the gray area between "push" and "pull" factors, was economic and social dislocation caused by colonialism. In locations like Nepal,

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Co., 1933). On "Gurkha's," see 184-200. On "Garhwali's," see 284-288. See also Tejimala Gurung, "The Making of Gurkhas as a 'Martial Race' in Colonial India: Theory and Practice," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* vol. 75 (2014), 520-529.

[119] For a study that explores swidden agriculturalists in the Yunnan highlands, see Yin Shaoting, *People and Forests: Yunnan Swidden Agriculture in Human-Ecological Perspective,* trans. Magnus Fiskesjo (Kunming: Yunnan Education Publishing House, 2001).

[120] See note 100 for literature on this subject.

[121] Madhavi Kale has revealed how a "new orthodoxy about labor shortage" emerged in the British Empire in the post-emancipation era to legitimize the indentured labor system and other "new slaveries." See Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire: Capital, Slavery, and Indian Indentured Labor Migration to the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 38.

Garhwal, Bihar, and Orissa, all located in India's far north, the arrival of British colonialism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries created immense changes in the social, cultural, and economic makeup of the region. The traditional salt and weaving economy of Orissa, for instance, was destroyed with the arrival of British imperial control in the nineteenth century, forcing locals into an agriculturally based system that would have grave consequences for the population. A series of famines in the late nineteenth century crippled the region, and by the early twentieth century, these changes, as J.K. Samal has argued, led to the "progressive deterioration of the economic conditions of the peasantry."[122] These disastrous changes, however, were not unique to Orissa. In Garhwal, which was the primary recruiting grounds for the Burma Corporation, the British occupation transformed the local economy and social hierarchy, using a policy of divide and rule in order to implement administrative reforms. Alongside abolishing the slave trade in the region, the British implemented new rules on land revenue and forestry, infuriating locals who had relied on the trade in wood products for centuries.[123] Like in Orissa, Garhwal during the British occupation also became a primarily agricultural province, which in times of scarcity, could be devastating for the local population, such as during the series of famines that struck the region between 1877 and 1908.[124] These devastating changes inspired many people in

[122] J.K. Samal, *Economy of Colonial Orissa, 1866-1947* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000), 188.
[123] Ajay Singh Rawat, *Gahrwal Himalayas, a Historical Survey: Political and Administrative History of Garhwal, 1815-1947* (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1983).
[124] Agriculture supported 89% of the population during the colonial period. While a serious famine struck the region in 1877, this was followed by a number of other famines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including another major one in 1908. As Mike Davis has argued in his work, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, these famines were caused by a host of reasons, including an El Niño weather system that was exacerbated through colonial free trade policies. See Ajay Singh Rawat, *Gahrwal Himalaya: A Study in Historical Perspective*

Garhwal and Orissa to become involved in political resistance movements during the early twentieth century, making the north of India a center of anti-colonial opposition at that time.[125] They also caused many locals to migrate elsewhere in the empire in order to find work and flee the poverty and scarcity felt at home. Bawdwin and Namtu became one of the centers of that migration.

The economic dislocation that accompanied colonial rule in Northern India created the conditions for a large-scale emigration from the region, but migrants were not moving to Bawdwin and Namtu for exclusively imperial reasons. Although migrants from India and Nepal represented the largest percentage of laborers at the mines, many workers traveled to the Burma Corporation's mines from Southwest China during the early twentieth century as well. These workers, primarily recruited from the paddy fields of Yunnan, took on important roles at the mines throughout the companies operations, particularly during its early years. Unlike their Indian colleagues, though, Chinese laborers were not drawn to Bawdwin and Namtu because of colonial dislocation. Instead, Chinese laborers worked at Bawdwin and Namtu exclusively during the cold season in order to supplement their regular income growing rice, the season for which would end in October and begin again the following year in March.[126] These agricultural cycles were important to work at Bawdwin and Namtu, creating a seasonal supply of labor that annually altered the Burma Corporation's plans for development. Because more labor was available during the cold season, production would

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(New Delhi: Indus Publishing Co., 2002), 87; 241; Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001).

[125] See Ajay Singh Rawat, *Gahrwal Himalayas, a Historical Survey,* 160-206; J.K. Samal, *History of Modern Orissa* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Pimited, 1989), 116-180.

[126] See the Whitley Commission. See also, George Babcock Cressey, *China's Geographic Foundations: A Survey of the Land and its People* (New York: MacGraw-Hill Book Company, 1934), 375.

increase during those months, only to stagnate during the warmer months when Chinese laborers returned home. Although this production cycle constantly frustrated company officials, the use of mining work to complement agricultural work was actually very common in the mining world.[127] At mines in places as diverse as West Africa or Sardinia, mining work was often a secondary form of employment for laborers during this period, representing an opportunity for agricultural workers to make a wage while their crops lay fallow.[128] Bawdwin and Namtu, located close to the Chinese border, symbolized this kind of prospect for Chinese agriculturalists, who did not have to travel far in order find work and who never planned on settling at the mines for long. For these workers, the mines were strictly an economic opportunity, not a final destination.

Archival records also suggest that familial or local connections also played an important role in the migration of workers to Bawdwin and Namtu, although the company provided contradictory reports about their own recruitment efforts. According to company officials, although a maistry system of contracting was in place for certain positions at the mines, the company did not actively recruit labor, except in times of immense scarcity.[129] Instead, workers learned of Bawdwin and Namtu through "friends and relatives," who would also fund their travel to the mines and feed them while they awaited employment. This included workers from Orissa, Nepal, and Almora, all of whom had to travel great distances in order to arrive at the mines, and who sent home nearly two-thirds of their daily income –

[127] For a summary of this issue, see A.B. Parsons, "Operations of the Burma Mines, Ltd.," 260-261.
[128] See, for example, Raymond E. Dumett, *El Dorado in West Africa: The Gold-Mining Frontier, African Labor, and Colonial Capitalism in the Gold Coast, 1875-1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), 79.
[129] All workers at Bawdwin and Namtu worked through a contractor, who often lived in Namtu and operated as a middle-man between workers and the company. See the Whitley Commission.

which was three lakhs – to their families in the form of remittances.[130] Chinese workers were also hired through a contractor, but according to the company, were not recruited "from their homes" and instead were "engaged locally," arriving in December for seasonal work. The reports that the company did not engage in recruitment efforts, however, were not entirely true. Although by the 1930s the company could rely on friends and relatives of workers to recruit new labor, this was the result of earlier recruitment efforts to find suitable labor at the mines, particularly from India and Nepal. According to Burma Corporation officials, after the company had success with a team of "Gurkha" workers in the mines early days, they sent one worker to Almora with his expenses paid in order "to recruit all the men that he could." After this initial period of recruitment, it was reported that the mines had "a system of coolies coming of their own free will," and the annual workforce turnover became more stable. Expeditions were also sent to China during this period, but owing to the limitations of the agricultural cycle, the company decided to rely more heavily on Indian and Nepalese workers. Because of this, the workforce went from around 75% Chinese and 25% Indian to around 68% Nepalese by the 1930s.[131]

As the previous section indicates, workers traveled to Namtu and Bawdwin for a variety of reasons during the early twentieth century. Both "push" and "pull" factors had an impact on the decision of workers to travel to the Northern Shan States, although the social and economic dislocation caused by British colonialism was likely the most important reason for this migration. Migration, however, was only component of the story of why unskilled

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[130] According to officials in 1930, "the new men who come from Almora and Nepal are brought here by friends working in the mine who finance them. A little while ago some of our men said to me that they had brought men here and were feeding them, that they wanted work." Whitley Commission.

[131] This information was provided in the interviews undertaken during the Labour Royal Commission on Labour in India. See Whitley Commission.

workers decided to travel – or not to travel - such far distances to find work at the mines. Burma Corporation management constantly complained of a “labor shortage” at Bawdwin and Namtu during the early twentieth century, a fact that remained important into the 1920s. Although the company would blame Chinese seasonal labor for their issues securing labor, it is clear that many factors played into the decision of migrant workers not to travel to the mines in order to find employment during this period. Although company officials presented the mines as a hospitable and “cheerful” place to work, those statements belie the reality of how mining work was undertaken on a day-to-day basis, and the dangers that confronted its workforce. As the next section will demonstrate, agricultural cycles were not the only reason why the company had difficulty maintaining a strong and stable workforce, despite their statements to the contrary. Instead, migrant workers found that the mines were a dangerous industrial operation, and not the appealing industrial wonderland that company officials thought it might be.

Figure 11: The bazaar at Namtu. Source: R.G. Hall, "Burma and the Bawdwin Mines," *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* vol. 115 no. 14 (7 April 1923), 618.

The "Labor Shortage" Question

Labor shortage was a persistent problem at Bawdwin and Namtu, but while social and environmental concerns in the region affected the migration of Indian, Chinese, and Nepalese workers to the Northern Shan States, working conditions at the mines also impacted the dearth of labor. Like any major industrial mining sites around the globe during this period, the mines were a dangerous place. With thousands of unskilled laborers toiling both above and beneath the earth and working with unforgiving industrial machinery, accidental deaths were common at the mines and occurred in large numbers throughout the early twentieth century. Disease was also prevalent at the mines. Although white engineers constantly complained of Burma's inhospitable climate and its enervating influence on the white psyche, tropical disease affected migrant workers in far greater numbers than white workers. These problems, alongside issues like widespread crime at the mines as well as insufficient wages, all had a significant impact on whether or not unskilled workers decided to travel to or stay at the mines. Withholding labor became a form of social protest among workers at Bawdwin and Namtu, who with time were able to force the company to ameliorate conditions at the mines for its migrant labor force. While these issues would not be permanently solved, they did lead to a variety of improvements at Bawdwin and Namtu by the 1920s, particularly in the areas of crime, sanitation, and healthcare. Although it's unlikely that the mines were the kind of "contented community" that government and company officials celebrated in the late 1920s, Bawdwin and Namtu had become a more humane place to work by this period. I argue that this progress, however, was largely the result of resistance from among the unskilled labor force.

A number of issues affected worker satisfaction at the Burma Corporation's mines, but none were more significant or long lasting than the threat of disease. In 1912, a cholera epidemic broke out at the mines that caused at least fifty deaths in Namtu alone. Official reports noted that the death toll was likely even higher, with bodies "found and buried in the jungle which were not entered in the official returns."[132] Cholera was accompanied by the presence of malaria, lead poisoning, and other disease as well.[133] In 1919, an influenza outbreak caused disruption at the mines, resulting in a "serious shortage in the supply of seasonal coolies" at the mines.[134] In 1920, another epidemic – this time of "relapsing fever" – befell Bawdwin and Namtu, leading to the death of a number of Chinese workers and forcing a sharp rebuke from government officials. The Superintendent of the Northern Shan States reported that it was "doubtful" the disease would have broken out if "on the establishment of the Camp, the Burma Corporation had inaugurated an efficient medical service, which is so necessary when larger numbers of coolies are collected in one spot." To combat the problem, and similar to the outbreak of cholera in 1912, the Burma Corporation, in concert with government, set up quarantines in the region surrounding the mines.[135] The company also

[132] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1913.
[133] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1917.
[134] The Superintendent of the Northern Shan States reported that the company was only able to hire 2,000 workers during the epidemic, as opposed to the 5,000 to 10,000 normal workers. IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1919.
[135] The use of quarantines echoes the utilization of "concentration camps" elsewhere in the British Empire at this time. See Aidan Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876-1903* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

began a new policy of forced hygiene, forcing workers to undergo lice inspections and to take "regular baths."[136] Instances of malaria, however, were considered on a case-to-case basis, even though cases and deaths resulting from the disease far outnumbered those of the "epidemic" variety. In 1922 alone, the hospital at Namtu reported 17,687 cases of malaria among migrant workers, with one hundred deaths. Conversely, only twenty-two Europeans were admitted for malaria.[137] Malaria was a constant threat at the mines, and more likely than not, would have afflicted almost all workers who traveled to Bawdwin and Namtu.

Accidental deaths were also a problem at Bawdwin and Namtu throughout the first three decades of western ownership, although many accidents went unreported. In 1920, the Indian Factories Act of 1911 was applied to the Northern Shan States for the first time, forcing the Burma Corporation to officially report any notices of accident or disease that occurred on company premises.[138] In 1920 alone, it was reported that seven fatal accidents occurred at the mines, as well as six serious accidents, and thirty-four minor accidents.[139] These numbers, however, would remain high throughout the 1920s. In 1924, eleven of the thirty-two fatal accidents in the colony occurred at the mines, causing great consternation for the inspector of factories. Although in 1923 the inspector had blamed the high number of

[136] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1921.

[137] J.P. Cullen, "Medical and Sanitary Work with the Burma Corporation," 1426.

[138] The Indian Factories Act, which was initially drafted in 1881 and replaced in 1911, applied to all industrial undertakings in the colony, including in rice, timber, and mining. It came into force in Burma in 1912, but not the Shan States until 1920. IOR/V/24/1655, Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act, 1911, in Burma for the Year 1912.

[139] These numbers far exceeded any other location in the colony, with only Rangoon matching the number of fatal accidents at seven. In total, the colony in 1920 had 20 fatal accidents, 135 serious accidents, and 302 minor accidents. Bawdwin and Namtu, therefore, had 35% of the total fatal accidents in the colony. IOR/V/24/1655, Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act, 1911, in Burma for the Year 1920.

accidents on “the extreme carelessness of the Chinese workpeople at Namtu” who “pay no attention to orders,” by 1924, and with fatalities only increasing, he was forced to concede that the company must reform its safety policies.[140] The conditions at the mines may have been “exceptional,” the inspector reported, “but the number is nevertheless disquieting, and it is up to the Corporation to spare no efforts to reduce the yearly toll which their operations take on human life.”[141] With the mines reporting nearly a third of all fatal accidents in the colony, it’s little wonder why the mines were not always the most enticing place to work.

The statistics on fatal accidents at Bawdwin and Namtu reveal the immense danger of mining work during the early twentieth century, but they also obscure the brutality of the incidents. Fatal mining accidents were gruesome affairs, and reports from the Inspector of Factories were often candid about the cause of death. In 1922, for instance, of the seven fatal accidents reported at the mines, deaths were caused from a variety of issues, including burns from overflowing slag, deaths from falling, runaway trucks, and electric shock.[142] In 1923, a surfeit of grisly deaths – twelve in total – was reported at Bawdwin and Namtu. While one worker died owing to his “clothing catching on fire” when adjusting the water flow on a blast furnace, another died from burns after “slipping into a pot of molten slag.” Accidents involving locomotives and trucks striking workers were also common at the mines, alongside, as happened in 1923, workers being “buried under earth.”[143] These accidents, both brutal and common, made Bawdwin and Namtu the most dangerous place to work in Burma

140 IOR/V/24/1655, Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act, 1911, in Burma for the Year 1923.
141 IOR/V/24/1655, Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act, 1911, in Burma for the Year 1924.
142 IOR/V/24/1655, Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act, 1911, in Burma for the Year 1922.
143 IOR/V/24/1655, Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act, 1911, in Burma for the Year 1923.

during the early twentieth century, a fact that would not have gone unnoticed to the thousands of workers and their families who traveled to – and conversely, decided not to - during this period. Between disease and accidental deaths, the mines were certainly no "romance of industry."

Factors other than disease and death, however, were also important in dissuading workers to stay at Bawdwin and Namtu. One was crime. In 1915, it was reported that Namtu and Bawdwin contained a "heterogeneous collection of bad characters" and criminals looking to profit from chaotic conditions.[144] Petty crime, including the theft of silver, firewood, and industrial equipment, was common at Bawdwin and Namtu, as well as in the area surrounding the mines. In 1916-1917 alone, 160 petty theft cases were heard at the government civil police office in Namtu, and reports of theft and robbery remained common into the 1920s.'[145] Murder, though, was the most threatening danger at the mines. Murders occurred on an annual basis on or near the premises of Bawdwin and Namtu throughout the early twentieth century, forcing the company and colonial government to expand the police force and court system in the region.[146] Between 1915 and 1918, at least eight murders occurred in the vicinity of the mines, with reasons ranging from domestic disputes and robbery to contractual negotiations. In 1917, for instance, it was reported that an incident where "Chinese cooly-*gaungs* were murdered by their coolies" occurred in Namtu,

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[144] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1915/

[145] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1917.

[146] The use of policing and courts near Bawdwin and Namtu will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five.

presumably over contracts about mining work and wages. [147] The reasons for violent crime, however, were not always clear. In 1921, for instance, officials reported two cases where "unknown Chinese were robbed or murdered in the vicinity of Namtu, but there was no clue as to their assailants."[148] While some violent crimes were prosecuted in court and led to convictions, many remained unsolved, owing in part to the mines' proximity to the remote borderland region between Burma and China where suspects could flee.[149] With a rapidly growing population in the region, as well as ever-increasing production at the mines, the Burma Corporation and the government equally struggled to maintain a stable and safe environment for its employees. Chaos, in turn, became endemic.

The racialized labor hierarchy utilized at the mines, as well as the high wages workers received owing to the labor shortage, also led to divisions both within the workforce and between the company and government throughout the first two decades of mining operations. In 1914-15, government officials complained that the mines "offer payment greatly in excess of that offered by a Government or Railway Department and the effect of the competition on the discipline of labour is bad." Unskilled laborers were said to receive up to two rupees per day, which greatly exceeded that of other unskilled occupations in the country. This issue created problems for the Public Works Department, causing "Uriya coolies" to ask much more for their services than government officials thought they should, but it also meant problems maintaining racial stratification at the mines. Indian police officers, key to

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[147] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1917. The number of homicides at Bawdwin is compiled from the reports from 1915-1916, 1916-1917, 1917-1918.
[148] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1922.
[149] In 1915-1916, for example, it was reported that one accused murderer had escaped to China. IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1916.

maintaining peace at the rapidly developing mines, became difficult to recruit, owing to the fact that "the policeman is at a disadvantage as compared with other people of his own class of life."[150] In 1915-1916, for instance, three new police officers, all pensioned sepoys of the Indian Army, left the force because the "high rate of wages prevailing at Namtu" caused them to be dissatisfied.[151] With unskilled laborers from China making the same wages as policemen from India, racial and class harmony would remain fraught at the mines.

Despite the "contented" and unified community that company and government officials celebrated in the 1920s, the variety of languages and culture at Bawdwin and Namtu also became a problem at the mines. In 1922, E.P. Matthewson, an American engineer who visited the mines, admitted that "treatment of the coolies has not been ideal." Burma Corporation managers claimed that the problem was that "shift-bosses under whom they work rarely know the languages of the coolies, and do not understand their accustomed requirements as regards food and amusements."[152] Food was a particularly divisive question. Although the company store did sell items such as rice, the store did not stock other important foods such as fish and vegetables. Indians and Anglo-Indians were said to frequent the store, but other ethnic groups, whether local Shan or Chinese workers, were instead forced to bring their own food stores to the mines, or more commonly, frequent the local bazaar in Namtu.[153] By the mid-1920's, however, things would begin to change. It was during this time that a period of reform began at the mines, instigated by the inability of the Burma Corporation to maintain a stable migrant workforce. Although the Corporation would

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[150] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1915.
[151] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1916.
[152] *Mining Magazine*, April 1922, 199.
[153] See the Whitley Commission.

publically glorify their own program to ameliorate conditions at the mines for its unskilled workforce, it was really through the resistance of local and migrant workers who withdrew their labor over the course of two decades that progress was achieved. Whether or not Bawdwin and Namtu ever truly became a "contented community," as company officials labeled it, the mines did become a better and more humane place to work in the 1920s. The success of this program, however, lay with the people.

Conclusion

The labor scarcity problem was manifest throughout the first two decades of operations, but changes in the early 1920s transformed the community at Bawdwin and Namtu. Following the 1919 and 1920 outbreaks of influenza and relapsing fever, the company began construction on a more modern hospital that would be completed in 1923. The hospital, which had eight doctors on staff and could hold up to eighty-four patients, was accompanied by the construction of a quarantine hospital five miles outside of Namtu, which could be used – and destroyed – in case of another epidemic. The water supply at Bawdwin and Namtu, considered the culprit for malaria on the grounds, was also remedied in 1923 and 1924, making the water "free from any risk of contamination."[154] Hygiene and housing were particular areas of reform at the mines. In 1922, the general manager, P.E. Marmion, reported that "many improvements were made for the housing and care of employees at Bawdwin and Tiger Camp, including cooly lines, clerks' quarters, bungalows, clubs for Europeans and Asiatics, children's garden, footpaths, bakery, dhobis' quarters, new hospitals and

[154] J.P. Cullen, "Medical and Sanitary Work with the Burma Corporation," 1426.

dispensaries and medical officers' quarters."[155] The issue of crime was also addressed. In 1921, a Special Corporation Force at Namtu was created to enlarge the police force near the mines, and in 1922, the Burma Criminal Law Amendment Act was applied to the Northern Shan States.[156] With both the application of the Indian Factories Act as well as the Burma Criminal Law Amendment Act, the colonial state became more involved and attentive to issues at Bawdwin and Namtu, allowing for the closer regulation and policing of activities at the mines. By 1924, and with most reforms in place, the company became confident enough to assert that the labor shortage problem had been "effectually overcome."[157] With better amenities and a more compassionate approach to the needs of migrant workers, the mines suddenly became a more livable environment, inducing workers to stay on site.

The reforms of the early 1920s reflected a new style of management at Bawdwin and Namtu in regards to its workforce, but that supervision was not necessarily devoid of issues. The rise of a regulatory environment at the mines began a new phase of policing hygiene and the bodies of migrant workers, replicating a form of colonial rule that was common elsewhere in tropical colonies. This period also began a closer entanglement between the corporate and the state at Namtu and Bawdwin. As the mines grew in scale and the area around Namtu became one of Burma's larger cities, the state began to step in more forcefully to regulate industrial activities at the mines, including workforce recruitment, labor policies, and law and order. The distinctions between the Burma Corporation and the colonial state began to blur during this period, not only because of these new regulations, but also because

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155 IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1922.
156 IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1921; IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year ended the 30th June 1922.
157 Whitley Commission.

of a new “imperial” ownership team took control of the mines, led by the Australian financier, W.S. Robinson. The 1920s ushered in a new phase of operations at Bawdwin and Namtu that transformed the enterprise across all levels. While the mines in the days of Hoover could have been considered a British World settler community, by the mid to late 1920s, they had become a more imperial space that was increasingly significant to the national security of Britain and its empire. After years of development, the 1920s also saw the peak of the mines operating as a form of what Michel Foucault has termed “governmentality.” This next chapter will explore these important changes.

Chapter Five: "'A Burmese Wonderland': Corporate Governance at Bawdwin and Namtu, 1900-1935"

Introduction

In April 1923, a delegation of British imperial officials and journalists descended on the mining settlements of Namtu and Bawdwin to celebrate the opening of new works at the mines. The guests discovered one of the largest silver-zinc-lead mines in the world, commodities critical to Britain's place in the global economy.[1] These visitors described a bustling and vibrant location, operated and developed by the Burma Corporation, where over 20,000 Asian and European employees at one of the more remote locations in British-administered Burma. According to a special correspondent from the leading Burmese newspaper, the *Rangoon Gazette,* the mines were a "Burmese Wonderland – a material wonderland – a wonderland of marvellous industry and organisation. It is a place unique in Burma's vast interior, a centre of industry much larger than any other in the Province, the hub of a small universe where there is no cessation or prolonged halt in the operations carried on, a place where the hand of man is hourly bringing forth valuable ore from the earth – it is an area as much alive as the country for hundreds of miles around it is dead." For Sir Harcourt Butler, the Governor of the Province who was on hand to open the new flue at the mine, "the opening up of a flourishing town in the middle of a jungle not only provides a large amount of well-paid employment, but is of great educational advantage to the

[1] E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain.*

countryside for many miles. It stimulates ideas, excites curiosity, and generally opens the mind."[2]

The admiring language that British officials and reporters used to describe Bawdwin and Namtu in the 1920s demonstrates not only how dramatically the operations had developed since the turn of the twentieth century, but also how the mines had become an emblem of effective administration in the colony. While the previous two chapters analyzed the myriad agents who helped develop the mining properties at Bawdwin and Namtu, this chapter will look more closely at the ways in which the mines became an extension of the colonial state during the early twentieth century. In particular, this chapter analyzes how Bawdwin and Namtu developed into an industrial "city" during this period, and how that city evolved to incorporate apparatuses typically reserved for the colonial state. To do so, this chapter utilizes and explores Foucault's concept of "governmentality." This theory examines how the state was not always experienced through direct public policy, but was instead confronted through societal structures such as railways, post offices, public health, prisons, and education.[3] For colonial subjects, particularly in the more remote spaces of the globe, government may have never been experienced directly. In the Northern Shan States, which the British government only administered indirectly beginning with the annexation of 1886, locals may have never had contact with government officials or with apparatuses of the state. With the development of Namtu and Bawdwin, that would, of course, change. At the mines,

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[2] *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 April 1923.
[3] On Foucault's ideas about governmentality, see Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two Lectures By and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104; Michel Foucault and Michael Senellart (ed.), *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

which developed to have its own railway, police force, courts, hospitals, and schools, the state was experienced through the lens of a private company. While this allowed the mines to become self-sufficient and to operate akin to a "company town," Bawdwin and Namtu were also unique. Located at the edge of British India, the mines show how globalized, multi-national corporations could themselves act as a state - or an extra-governmental organization - in the empire, and how companies could both borrow and subvert imperial power structures and ideologies to buttress their profit-making schemes.

In exploring these themes, this chapter will first look at how the mines developed during their early years, and the tepid relationship that existed between colonial and company officials at that time. The chapter will then discuss the 1920s at Bawdwin and Namtu, a transformative period that saw the mines pass from R. Tilden Smith's ownership to a new "imperial" group headed by the Australian financier, W.S. Robinson. It was at this time that the mines became the "Burmese Wonderland" that journalists celebrated in Burmese newspapers, and when the boundaries between the colonial state and the corporation became increasingly unclear. Lastly, the chapter will look at the early 1930s, when following a joint government-company expedition to discover new ore deposits near the Chinese border, an incident occurred that nearly started an armed conflict between Britain and China over contested land. This incident, which was supported by top leaders both in India and Britain, demonstrates not only how significant the Burma Corporation's mines had become to the British Empire's economy and security, but also how the company had itself become a state agent, led in part through the new chairman of the company, Sir Robert Horne, who previously worked as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Britain. Through analyzing these events, this chapter shows how a corporate empire was able to grow on the edge of British

India during the late colonial period, and the ways in which the interests of the state and the corporation could merge in order to secure the Empire's economic and political security. In doing so, I argue that the mines represented a unique space of empire during the early twentieth century, bringing into question the hegemonic power of the colonial state at this time.

The Making of Bawdwin and Namtu

Western capitalists and mining engineers who arrived at Bawdwin at the turn of the twentieth century may have imagined the Northern Shan States as a remote and wild landscape that awaited the civilizing influence of modern technology, but the reality was far more complicated. Despite its location on the frontier near China, the British colonial government ruled the Northern Shan States using a hybrid, indirect system of governance following the annexation of 1886. In this system, a local *Sawbwa*, or chief, was in charge of law and order in his state, while a British superintendent was stationed in the region to maintain peace and, importantly for the British, to ensure the proper and timely collection of taxes. Although the presence of British officers in both the Northern and Southern Shan States was minimal, often representing only a handful of administrators, the territory was, in the view of the colonial government, sovereign British territory. Any company hoping to do business in the Northern Shan States, therefore, had to interact with two layers of governance - the *Sawbwa* as well as the British imperial government - who had jurisdiction over particular components of life in the region. The role of the state was often "in the making" throughout the colonial period in the Shan States, but an infrastructure of governance existed in the environs around Bawdwin during the lifetime of western operations at the mines.[4]

Considerable ambiguity marked the nature of governance in the Shan States during the early twentieth century, but as mentioned previously, this was not true of mineral resource development. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British government passed legislation making all mineral resources in Burma and the Shan States the suzerain territory of the British colonial government. Mineral sites like Bawdwin, irrespective of location, were considered the legal property of the British Empire, and all prospects required the approval of the Anglo-Burmese government in order to be worked.[5] Securing a lease, though, was only one way in which a company was beholden to the colonial government. In return for the granting of a mining lease, companies were required to pay royalties to the Government of India, which included both fixed royalties on working the site as well as any profits gained from production. Owing to the large-scale industrial nature of the enterprise, mining companies were also liable to additional taxes and supervision from the colonial administration. The use of colonial railways – necessary to ship large amounts of slag for export – was taxed at fixed rates, and the use of raw materials for energy – particularly from forest products – was regulated through governmental oversight.[6] Increasing production, however, brought with it a litany of additional supervision. With the building of infrastructure in a region – which for a large-scale operation like Bawdwin meant the construction of a company railway, smelters, processing mills, living barracks, and other

[4] This history was outlined in Chapter Two.
[5] See, for example, Proceedings, P/4277, Revenue and Agricultural Department, Burma, October 1893. Right of Imperial to revenue from minerals in the Shan States.
[6] On these various taxes and royalties, see Proceedings, P/8086, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, July 1909. Question as to the procedure which may be adopted to check the collection of rents and royalties.

required mining machineries – a company only became more integrated within the colonial state apparatus, requiring more land and, because of that, leases in order to increase the productive capacity of the mines. At a place like Bawdwin, distant from the railway and in an area almost entirely undeveloped, this need for infrastructure was only heightened.

When the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Company was founded in 1907, the firm – previously under the ownership of the Great Eastern Mining Company – was immediately bound to the colonial state through a variety of leases. The lease at Bawdwin, which initially consisted of about four square miles of land, was the most important of these contracts, but in order to make the expansion of production possible, the company needed the support of government to build both a company smelter in Mandalay – which required its own lease – as well as a company railway.[7] The construction of a railway, in particular, represented a significant moment in the fashioning of a relationship between the company and the state. Although the Burma Railways Company ostensibly operated all railway lines in Colonial Burma, the government was unwilling to invest state capital into the creation of a railway to Bawdwin, which was still unproven at this time and was situated in an undesirable area for a railway. The Great Eastern Mining Company secured permission from the government to build a railway to Manpwi, but owing to a lack of capital, had to abandon the project.[8] The arrival of Tilden Smith and Hoover, though, would usher in a new phase of development. Beginning in 1907 with the restructuring of the company, the firm re-doubled efforts to build the railway, bringing them in close contact with the *Sawbwa* of Tawngpeng,

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[7] The lease would be expanded in 1908 to include sixteen square miles. IOR/V/10/518, Report on the Administration of Burma for the Year 1907-1908.
[8] Proceedings, P/7247, Department of Commerce and Industry, Burma, December 1906. Lease of Bawdwingyi to the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Co. Ltd.

through whose lands the railway passed and who, for a fee, provided labor for the company.[9] The construction of the railway, however, was fraught with difficulties. Owing to the many geographic obstacles that were in the railway's path, poor weather, as well as problems maintaining a suitable labor force, the project languished for a number of years.[10] By 1910, though, the fifty-one mile railway – which operated on a narrow gauge, unlike the Northern Shan States railway – linking Bawdwin to Manpwi was finally completed.[11] The railway would connect Bawdwin to Mandalay and Rangoon, bringing the mines' products directly to the global marketplace for the first time.

The building of the Burma Mines Railway – as it was labeled – represented one of the only instances in British Burma's history where private capital was used to complete a large-scale infrastructure project in the colony, but the railway's construction was important for a number of reasons. First, and according to company officials, the railway was not only important for the development of the mining site but also for Burma as a whole. Echoing the kinds of rhetoric the government employed in regard to railway development in the nineteenth century, in 1915, R. Tilden Smith argued that the building of the railway led to the creation of stores along the railway route that made it possible for people to settle "on the

[9] According to Hoover in his memoirs, "we asked if he [the Sawbwa] could induce his hill tribes to work at building the railway. He said he had just such powers. In cooperation with the British superintendent, we arranged wage scales with him and with the adjoining state. These wages were above any standard the jungle had ever known – and the first money thousands had ever had. We arranged to have the Sawbwa recruit the labor at a small sum per man per day. We proposed to build the line in Asiatic fashion without machinery but with picks, shovels, and baskets to carry the dirt. The Sawbwa produced more than 20,000 workers. His revenues jumped sensationally." Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 94.
[10] Alongside constructing the railway, the company was also forced to build a number of bridges, including a 134-foot bridge crossing the Namtu River. *Rangoon Gazette*, 12 October 1908.
[11] IOR/ V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year 1910-11.

land with commodities upon advantageous conditions, and from which the Company derives no profit." "In process of time," Tilden Smith added, "it is fair to anticipate that the products of the district of the Northern Shan States will increase beyond the local consumption," with the railway bringing the surplus of products to "British markets" for sale.[12] Because of this, the Lashio branch of the railway system – criticized in some circles as having been hastily constructed without view to its economic benefit - would become "a highly profitable investment" for the colonial government, allowing for the expansion of mining operations at Bawdwin while also contributing to the material benefit of the people of Burma.[13] For Tilden Smith, the consequences of increased employment in the Northern Shan States – which the financier estimated could be as high as 100,000 people – "would release the Empire from the responsibilities of the poverty of the people," bringing enlightenment to a land "where before our advent there was but a jungle." More than just a means to shuttle Bawdwin's ore to the rest of the world, company officials thought that the railway was as beneficial to the colonial state and the population of Burma as it was to the Burma Corporation.[14]

Tilden Smith's comments about the Burma Corporation's railway demonstrate how company officials framed the utility of their enterprise to colonial administrators, but the railway was beneficial to the state for reasons that were not always about the social uplift of Burma's population. Most importantly for the colonial state, the railway – which linked with the colony's railway system at Manpwi - provided income in the form of carriage rates, while

[12] See the Burma Corporation Ltd. Shareholders Meeting report from 1915 in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Corp Ltd. File.
[13] The *Rangoon Gazette*, for example, labeled the Northern Shan States railway as an "egregious" and "specious personal project" that had resulted in "failure." See *Rangoon Gazette*, 16 February 1914.
[14] See the Burma Corporation Ltd. Shareholders Meeting report from 1915 in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Corp Ltd. File.

also allowing the government to track the amount of ore being produced at Bawdwin. Tracking ore meant tracking royalties, a fact that was only broached around 1909 when it became clear that industrial mining had emerged as an important industry in the colony.[15] While the company was forced to pay a fixed half-yearly royalty to the government – which in the mines early years was Rs. 1,248 – they were also required to pay the government a royalty of two-and-a-half percent on any net profits the company made.[16] These royalties, however, were a point of contention between the government and the Burma Corporation during the firms early years. Gerard Lovell, who was mine manager when these issues came up in 1910, argued that because the company was not yet making a profit but reinvesting all capital back into the enterprise, it felt that the government's policy to tax ore produced rather than profits reported at year end was unfair, a point also made by the Burma Chamber of Commerce.[17] The government, in turn, acquiesced to the company's demands. Believing that the company "is doing much to develop a poor and sparsely inhabited tract" using their own capital, the colonial administration decided to only tax profits made at year end, alongside the

[15] The questions of royalties arose beginning in 1909, when the government reported that "no procedure [was] laid down for supervising the extraction of royalty from areas covered by prospecting licenses or mining leases." In regard to the Bawdwin operation, the government commented that railway "way-bills" were the only way in which they were able to track the amount of ore being shipped from the mines, a "not altogether satisfactory arrangement." Proceedings, P/8086, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, July 1909. Question as to the procedure which may be adopted to check the collection of rents and royalties.

[16] Proceedings, P/8367, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, November 1910. Question of the method of assessment to be adopted in charging royalty from the Burma Mines, Limited, on their mines at Bawdwingyi in the Northern Shan States.

[17] Proceedings, P/8367, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, May 1910. Revision of the rules governing the grant of Mining Concessions in British India.

twice-yearly fixed royalty.[18] These policies would stay in place throughout the early years of operations, but the debate about royalties would color the association between the Burma Corporation and the colonial government well into the 1930s.

The issue of royalties also arose in regard to forest products used at the mines. The company imported coke from India and Britain during this period, but other energy sources, particularly coal, were difficult to obtain in the region. As a replacement, the company was forced to rely on timber products, both for railroad ties to construct the company railway and, more importantly, as an energy source for smelting. Although the area directly surrounding Bawdwin was bereft of wood products – the result of centuries of mining during the Chinese occupation of the site – the company hired local Shan, Palaung, and Kachin villagers to cut wood from the adjoining region.[19] The need for wood products would, however, bring the company into conflict with the colonial government. Because forests were under the protection of the state, the clear-cutting of forests frustrated colonial officials who were keen on conservation.[20] To account for the growing operations at Bawdwin, in 1911 the government increased the forest establishment near the mines by one forester and two forest guards. These forestry agents, alongside the Forest Divisional Officer already present in the region, were added to prevent the "destruction of forests in the neighbourhood of the

[18] Proceedings, P/8367, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, November 1910. Question of the method of assessment to be adopted in charging royalty from the Burma Mines, Limited, on their mines at Bawdwingyi in the Northern Shan States.
[19] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1912.
[20] Rule 25, which enforced government policies on forest conservation and outlined royalties paid to the administration for forest products, was instituted in the Shan States of Hsipaw, North Hsenwi, and Tawngpeng by 1910. IOR/ V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year 1910-11.

premises of the Burma Mines Limited."[21] In 1912, it was reported that unless additional forest agents could be sent to the Bawdwin area, "there will be at the present rate of felling no forests left to reserve" in four years, and that the "careless" actions of the company had created "a great wastage from fire and other causes."[22] These problems, however, would remain in the coming years. In 1917, W. Beatson, the forest ranger in charge of the region around Bawdwin, reported that eleven fires occurred in the fire-protected area near the mines that destroyed 1,840 acres of forest, all of which could be "attributed directly or indirectly to negligence of Company's men."[23] Even with the company paying large royalties to fell timber in the area, the company's destruction of forests in the Northern Shan States tempered the good relationship enjoyed between the corporation and the colonial government during these years. It would continue to do so into the 1920s.[24]

The balance between a discourse about the utopian virtues of mining development and more material concerns regarding taxes and profits reveal the kinds of issues that both linked the government and company and caused them to come into conflict during the mines early years. As the expansion of government foresters into the area around Bawdwin during this period shows, however, the relationship between the two parties was also noticeable on the ground, a fact that only grew more visible with time. One way this occurred was through policing. As early as 1908, the colonial administration found it necessary to expand the

[21] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1912.
[22] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1913.
[23] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1917.
[24] In 1911-1912 alone, for instance, the government collected Rs. 6,357 in royalties from the company's cutting of timber. IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1912.

police force in the Northern Shan States in order to deal with the increased population around Bawdwin. In 1908, for instance, the government built a new police station at Namtu, increasing the number of Government Civil Police officers in the area from seventy-four to eighty-eight.[25] In addition to the Civil Police, a Tawngpeng State Police unit also existed in the area, which by 1912 had expanded to forty-four officers.[26] The size of these forces would only grow in the ensuing years. By 1913, and "with a view to securing more efficient police control in or near the premises of the Burma Mines Company at Namtu," the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States reported that the Government Civil Police had continued to expand, reaching a total of 112 officers of all ranks.[27] A variety of parties were enlisted to finance this increase. According to reports, while the government paid for the expansion of the police, the Sawbwas of both Tawngpeng and North Hsenwi also paid a fixed fee of Rs. 4,650 to maintain the force. The company, for their part, was in charge of building both stations and living quarters for the officers, a task they were not always timely in completing.[28] Even still, a coalition between the colonial government, the company, and the local Sawbwas was crafted with the expansion of the police force in the Northern Shan States, linking the three parties from the earliest days of the Burma Corporation's operations.

[25] V/10/518, Report on the Administration of Burma for the Year 1908-09.
[26] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1912.
[27] This meant that with the addition of the Tawngpeng State Police, there were over 150 police officer stationed in the vicinity of the mines by 1913.
[28] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1913. For complaints from the local government about the company's tardiness in building living barracks and new police stations, see IOR/ V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States, for the year 1910-11; IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1914.

The growth of the police force at Bawdwin and Namtu demonstrates how the reach of the state expanded in the Northern Shan States during these years, but a number of problems also existed. One issue was police recruitment. Although the police ostensibly acted as representatives of the colonial state, most police officers near the mines were taken from the local community, including from the Shan, Palaung, and Kachin populations. In 1914, it was reported that the recruitment of Shan officers had become more difficult, owing to the fact that the "Namtu Police post is a most unpopular one" and locals did not want to be transferred to that location. The inability to keep local officers – who were discouraged because of the rampant crime in the area near the mines – led the colonial government to increase salaries to Rs. 2 for agents stationed at Namtu.[29] Salaries, though, were also an issue. Because wages for laborers were high during this period owing to the "labor shortage" at the mines, police officers were making wages comparable to mine workers, and officers felt they were "at a disadvantage as compared with other people of his own class of life."[30] In 1916, for instance, one head constable and four constables from Jhelum in India were recruited to the Tawngpeng State Police. Upon arriving at the mines and noticing the "high rate of wages prevailing at Namtu," three officers quickly resigned.[31] By 1917, and as problems persisted within the police force, a government official, Major L.E.L. Burne, was sent to the mines in order to prepare a new "police scheme" for the premises of the Burma Mines Company. According to government reports, though, the proposals were not acted upon, chiefly owing

[29] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1914.
[30] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1915.
[31] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1916.

to the “unwillingness of the Company to bear the extra cost involved.”[32] With both the government and the company having their own issues in regards to budgets and finance, conversations about how the area around the mines should be governed remained tense between the two parties. This would only increase in intensity as the company’s operations grew during the ensuing years.

Constructing Bawdwin and Namtu

Despite the variety of issues that tempered the good relationship enjoyed between the colonial government and the Burma Corporation, the settlement and mining operations at Bawdwin and Namtu progressed rapidly during the early years of operations. On the eve of World War I, the mines would have been nearly unrecognizable for those who had visited the area in the nineteenth century. With a large and diverse workforce occupying the site, a company-built railway, a plethora of modern industrial machinery, living quarters for its employees, and a local police force, the mines had become a small metropolis in the remote border region close to China. What made this development perhaps most surprising is that by this time, engineers at the mines had only just uncovered the large ore body waiting beneath the ground at Bawdwin. This discovery, which occurred in May 1913, would alter the mines fate dramatically. Over the next decade, and as great sums of capital were invested into the mining operations, production boomed at Bawdwin and Namtu. This period gave rise to a new phase of development that would force the Burma Corporation to more directly address

[32] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1917; IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1918.

the concerns of the colonial government, whether in the building of infrastructure to aid industrial expansion, the need for better sanitation for mine workers, or in the need to secure a market for metals produced at the mines. By the 1920s, the operations at Bawdwin and Namtu had transformed into one of the largest mining enterprises in the globe. For this to occur, however, the company required the backing of the Anglo-Burmese government, which lent critical support to the Burma Corporation's expansionary plans in the Northern Shan States during this period.

A number of important changes occurred at Bawdwin and Namtu between 1913 and 1918 that significantly altered the fate of the Burma Corporation's enterprise. The discovery of the large silver-lead-zinc deposit beneath the Chinaman Tunnel in 1913 ushered in these changes, proving the site's worth to investors as well as colonial officials hopeful for large-scale industrial development in the colony.[33] With the reorganization of the Burma Mines Limited in 1914, which led to creation of the Burma Corporation, large amounts of additional capital were devoted to the enterprise, allowing the company to expand all aspects of the operations. In 1914, the company announced plans to spend £250,000 over the next two and a half years in order to increase production to "300,000 tons of ore annually." To do so, the company proposed an ambitious expansion plan, which included the excavation of the Tiger Tunnel, the widening and improvement of the company railway, the installation of a hydro-electric power plant, as well as the erection of a new concentration mill.[34]

[33] On the discovery of the ore body, see Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer,* 420-421.
[34] IOR/V/10/532, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1914.

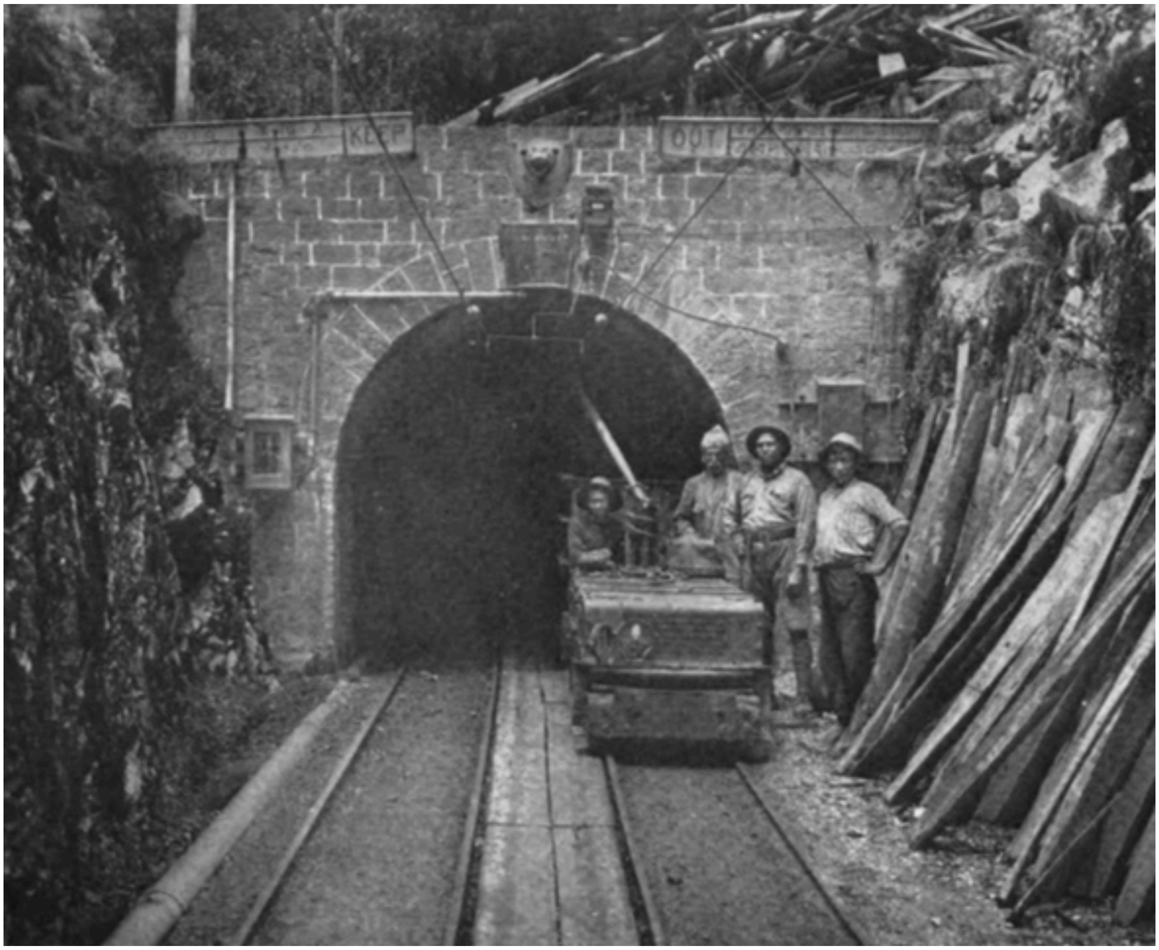

Figure 12: The Entrance to the Tiger Tunnel. Source: Allan B. Calhoun, "The Bawdwin Mine, in Burma," *Engineering and Mining Journal*, vol. 113 no. 25 (24 June 1922), 1085.

The creation of the Tiger Tunnel, in particular, had a significant impact on operations. Built 500 feet below the Chinaman Tunnel, the Tiger Tunnel – which was over 7,000 feet in length, or around one and a quarter miles - was constructed to connect the Bawdwin ore deposit directly with the Namtu smelter, as well as to provide better drainage and ventilation for the mines.[35] The company began construction on the Tiger Tunnel in April 1914, and by 1917, the tunnel was declared open. In February 1917, the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, Sir Harcourt Butler, unveiled the tunnel following a ceremony at the mines. In an address at the opening, Butler professed how "proud [he was] to have such a fine mining property in the

[35] *Mining Magazine*, August 1916.

province," adding that the tunnel would allow the mines to "prosper and add to the name and fame of Burma, besides contributing to the prosperity of large numbers of people."[36] For Butler, the Tiger Tunnel was not only proof of the company's technical advancement, but also of the ameliorating properties that large-scale industry and modern technologies could have for the colony as a whole. His opinions about the operation would remain favorable in the ensuing years.

Butler's comments show how the colonial government began to see the development of Bawdwin and Namtu as a positive force for the colony, but the Tiger Tunnel was not the only major infrastructure project the Burma Corporation completed during this period. Alongside the building of new living quarters and mills at the site, as well as the constant improvement of the company railway, the Burma Corporation also constructed a hydroelectric power plant during this time, a major venture that required both the backing of the colonial administration and the local *Sawbwas*. Unlike the boring of the Tiger Tunnel or the building of other company buildings on site, the construction of a hydroelectric power plant was unique because it required additional land outside of the premises set aside on the company lease. In 1913, the company sent a proposal to the government to build a power plant above Mansam Falls, located between Hsipaw and Lashio along the Nam Yao River, some fifty miles distant from Bawdwin. In petitioning the government, the Burma Corporation argued that owing to both the high costs of attaining oil for the mines, as well as the issue of deforestation around Bawdwin and Namtu, energy costs at the mines were excessively high, forcing the company to slow production.[37] H.A. Thornton, the

[36] *Rangoon Gazette*, 12 February 1917.
[37] The Resident Manager at Namtu reported that the company had been spending approximately Rs. 1,26,750 per year on fuel costs at the mines. Proceedings, P/9120,

Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, found the company's proposal to be a "sound one," and believed that the high costs of fuel and, in particular, the "very great and permanent damage being done to the forests" near the mines were worthy reasons to grant a license to the company. Thornton's primary concern with allowing the company to build the plant was the possibility that "the beauty of the landscape at and near the Falls may be spoiled." This "sentimental" reason, however, did not "override the practical benefit which will be secured both to the Government and the Company," and Thornton recommended the government to issue an approval to the firm. The Lieutenant-Governor agreed with Thornton, but with an added caveat. Because waterways in the Shan States were not under the same rules that applied to mineral resources, the company had to consult with the "Sawbwas of the States concerned" regarding the "terms on which the water rights and land required in connection therewith should be leased to the Company." Once that had been completed, along with surveying and building estimates, the company could apply to the local government for permission to the use the falls.[38]

The colonial administration may have supported the Burma Corporation's proposal to build a hydroelectric power plant at Mansam Falls, but the project brings into relief the difficulties of state-making in the Northern Shan States during this period. Unlike the Tiger Tunnel, which was built quickly between 1914 and 1917, the Mansam Falls project languished in development for years before it was finally completed in the early 1920s. Although the government supported the scheme, the company was unable to strike a deal with the local *Sawbwas* – in this case, from Hsipaw and the North Hsenwi States - in regard

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Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, January 1913. Application of the Burma Mines, Limited, for permission to use water from the Nam-Yao river for electric power.

[38] Ibid.

to royalties, a matter the colonial administration was unable to solve.[39] Believing that the *Sawbwas* were asking for too much in the way of royalties, the company tabled the project, instead proposing alternate schemes over the next few years. In 1919, for instance, the company proposed to block an area of the Nam Yao river and build a large lake in the region to "fill the shortage of the food supply" around Namtu. The government, however, argued that the scheme was really designed to "construct a huge lake which might supply the power for a big hydroelectric scheme" and denied the request, citing that "the conflict between the interests of the Company and the permanent population will necessitate careful very consideration of the problems involved before any decision ought to be taken."[40] In May 1920, however, the company's original plan was finally approved. Under the supervision of a government officer, the Burma Mines Limited and the *Sawbwas* of Hsipaw and the North Hsenwi States signed a lease that gave the company permission to the build a hydroelectric power plant at Mansam Falls, solving the royalties' issue that had plagued negotiations since

[39] Proceedings, P/9901, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, December 1916. Application of the Burma Mines Ltd for permission to use water.
[40] In 1921, the scheme was revisited, with similar results. According to the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, "a proposal, first made two years ago and revived this year, to dam the gorge of the Namyao river above the Mongyang and so convert the upper Namyao valley into a reservoir, for the purpose of ensuring a sufficient flow of water during the hot months at the Mansam Falls hydro-electric power station, was dropped when it was pointed out that the project would involve, *inter alia*, the submersion of all the best land in the Mongyaw Circle, one of the chief paddy-producing and trading centres of North Hsenwi State, and the displacement of three hundred and fifty cultivating households. Apart from this, limestone country would not seem to be very suitable for the making of artificial lakes. The one proposed was to have had a perimeter of two hundred and ten miles!" IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1918; IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1922.

1913.[41] By September 1920, the plant was completed, not only providing a new and significant source of energy for the mines operations, but also extending the reach of the company well beyond Bawdwin's location in Tawngpeng.[42]

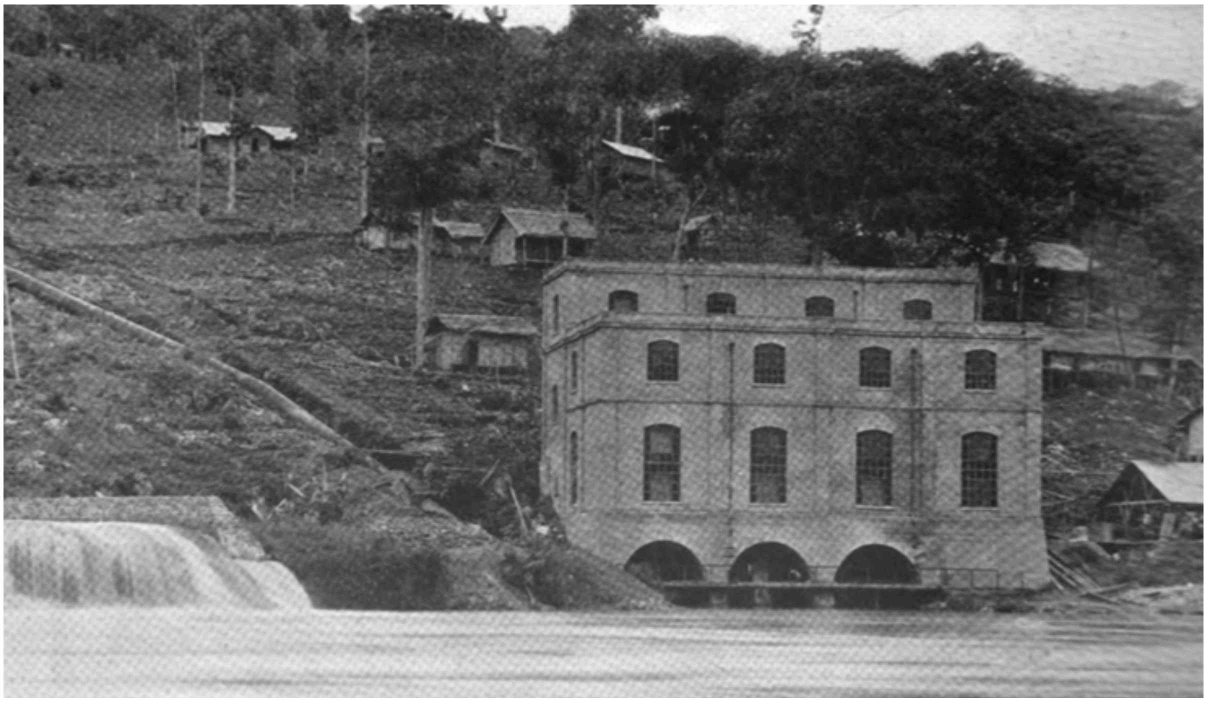

Figure 13: The Mansam Falls Power Plant. Source: R.G. Hall, "Transportation, Power, and Mining at Bawdwin," *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* vol. 115 no. 15 (14 April 1923), 664.

The Mansam Falls project demonstrates how difficult it could be for the company to expand its operations, but it also reveals how different layers of governance impacted the firm's plans. Owing to the unique nature of administration in the Northern Shan States during this period, the Burma Corporation was forced to deal with a variety of agents in order to approve their development schemes, including both the colonial government and local *Sawbwas*. The *Sawbwas*, in particular, frustrated company officials. With the Mansam Falls proposal in limbo and the company paying steep taxes to the local *Sawbwas* – estimated in

[41] Proceedings, P/10810, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, May 1920. Burma Mines Limited, application for permission to use the Nam-yao river.
[42] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1921.

May 1916 to be around Rs. 27,000 a half year – the company petitioned the government to reform the administration of the area around the mines and to take firmer control. The government, however, was reluctant to take such a step. H.A. Thornton, the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States during this time, responded that he "would deprecate any proposals" to "withdraw the tract in which the Company is operating from the jurisdiction of the *Sawbwas*," which would "not only be unjust, but impolitic to the highest degree." Instead, Thornton recommended that an Assistant Superintendent, who would live on site at Namtu, should replace the Adviser to Tawngpeng, who had been sent to the mines to deal with company business fifteen to twenty days a month. Although Thornton understood that it was an undesirable time to add "to the cost of administration in the Northern Shan States," the company was on "so large a scale" that the government could not wait until the end of the war. "The control of the tract in which it operates is so rapidly becoming more and more difficult," Thornton noted, "that the establishment which was barely sufficient to administer the States before the Company was heard of is absolutely inadequate now."[43] A few months later, in December 1916, the government approved Thornton's proposal, and the first Assistant Superintendent at Namtu, Mr. Kiernander, took up his post at the mines.[44] This position, which would further entangle the interests of the company and the colonial government, would remain in place until decolonization.

The appointment of a permanent government official at Namtu in 1916 demonstrates how the colonial administration began to take responsibility for the changes occurring at the mines during the war, but the relationship between the company and state grew in a number

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[43] Proceedings, P/9907, Political Department, Burma, July 1916. Appointment of an Assistant Superintendent to be stationed at Namtu in the Northern Shan States.
[44] Proceedings, P/9907, Political Department, Burma, December 1916. Appointment of an Assistant Superintendent at Namtu in the Northern Shan States

of ways during this period. One important way was through personnel changes. Although a few figures in British colonial circles had been loosely involved with the operations at Bawdwin and Namtu over the years, the board of directors had remained exclusively in the hands of agents associated with either Hoover or Tilden Smith until the war began.[45] Between 1915 and 1916, however, the company appointed two officials active in Burma and India – Sir Hugh Barnes, the former Lieutenant Governor of Burma, as well as Sir Trevredyn Wynne, former President of the Railway Board of India – to its Board of Directors. Wynne, in particular, became an important addition to the Burma Corporation's management team, and the company saw his appointment as an important step in building better relations between the firm and the government. In 1915, for example, Tilden Smith announced Wynne's selection to the directorate – alongside Walter McDermott and Sir Arthur Lawley, a former Governor of Western Australia, Madras, and the Transvaal – by saying that "these gentlemen joined the Board to enable the Company to get the very best possible advice as to our relations with the Government" and so that the firm "may serve the Empire to the greatest possible extent." It was thought that Wynne, owing to his experience with the Indian Railway Board, would be in an especially strong position to "harmonise your [the investors] interests with those of the economic and financial requirements of the country."[46] The role of Wynne would prove significant. Alongside lobbying the Government of India to assist the

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[45] The former Lieutenant-Governor of Burma, Frederic Fryer, for instance, was a trustee of the Burma Mines and Smelting Company Limited when it was founded in 1907. See Proceedings, P/7247, Department of Commerce and Industry (Revenue), Burma, December 1906. Lease of Bawdwingyi to the Burma Mines Railway and Smelting Co. Ltd.

[46] See the Burma Corporation Ltd. Shareholders Meeting report from 1915 in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Corp Ltd. File. Alongside his railway interests, Wynne also became a non-executive director of the British Petroleum Company during this time, which was affiliated with Cargill's Burmah Oil Company. See James Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume Two, The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16.

company in the improvement of the railway system in Burma, Wynne was also active promoting the company's interests in Britain, such as the lowering of taxes on mining ventures in the British Empire.[47] Wynne would become Chairman of the Burma Corporation following World War One, a position he would hold into the 1920s when the company became domiciled in India.[48] In doing so, Wynne would provide a bridge between the ownership groups of Hoover, Tilden Smith, and W.S. Robinson, the latter of which would bring the company more firmly into the orbit of the British Empire.

Wynne's appointment reveals how the company began to look outside of British World mining networks for its leadership during this period, but his involvement also signaled that the firm was not on entirely sound terms with the government. At the same time Wynne was appointed director of the Burma Corporation, the company was in the midst of a litany of negotiations with the Governments of India, Burma, and Britain regarding issues such as taxes, royalties, and the global metal trade. In 1915, at the same meeting in which Wynne was announced as a Director of the Burma Corporation, Tilden Smith discussed at length the need to secure "liberal" assistance from the colonial government, noting that the company was "not merely a money-making concern" but was instead critical "to the district in particular and the Empire in general." The company was particularly incensed at what was considered undue government taxation as well as the lack of support provided by government agents, especially the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States. According to Tilden Smith, the company's inabilities to secure permission from the government to build a hydroelectric power plant demonstrated that while the colonial administration was concerned

[47] On Wynne's involvement with railways, see Proceedings, P/11380, Finance and Revenue Department (Railways), March 1924. Tahapalai-Namtu Railway Project. On Wynne representing the Burma Corporation in London, see *Mining Magazine*, September 1916.
[48] See *Mining and Scientific Press*, 17 December 1921.

with securing "the uttermost farthing," they should be focusing on "the advantages we have brought to the district" and try to help the firm. Tilden Smith added that although the company was "quite desirous of assisting in the development of the district and its administration charges," they were "doing more than is legally required of us in improving the condition of employees and the population of the country in which we are carrying on our operations." Wynne, for his part, agreed with Tilden Smith, adding that he felt "fairly confident" that the government would extend their assistance to the company."[49]

Although colonial officials like Sir Harcourt Butler publically celebrated the Burma Corporation's mining enterprise in the Northern Shan States during World War One, Tilden Smith and Wynne's comments demonstrate that problems remained between the government and the company. Private records from the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States during this period reveal a variety of complaints levied against the firm, including rampant crime at the mines, poor sanitation, and continued objections about deforestation. With the mines growing rapidly, both in production and in population, the government became increasingly involved in the area, whether through police enforcement, the creation of government courts at Bawdwin and Namtu, or restrictive government legislation. While company management filed grievances against the colonial government for excessive taxation and unfair treatment, the government was at the same time spending more money than ever in the Northern Shan States in order to maintain order and offset the fallout that accompanied the swift growth of a large-scale industrial enterprise in the region, a transformation they were not prepared for. In 1918, C.M. Webb, the Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor, discussed these changes, revealing the problems that had arisen in the Shan States owing to Bawdwin and Namtu's

[49] See the Burma Corporation Ltd. Shareholders Meeting report from 1915 in HHPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Subject: Mining, Burma Corp Ltd. File.

rapid advancement. According to Webb, "the invasion, by the railway and by mineral enterprise, of wild tracts inhabited by people hitherto living under a very primitive administrative system, has produced an amalgam of progress and backwardness furnishing violent contracts and needing most careful adjustment." Webb saw three entangled issues at work in the Northern Shan States: the need to appease the Sawbwas, the want for economic development in the area, and a desire to secure the administrative and financial progress of the region that wouldn't involve "an unfair demand upon the resources of the tax-payer of Burma proper." With progress came responsibility, a fact the government was not necessarily prepared for during the mines early years.[50]

Whether or not they were prepared, however, the Burma Corporation and the colonial government became ensnared in a common project to develop the Northern Shan States during this period. Despite their different goals and concerns, company and government officials both understood the importance of supporting and expanding Bawdwin and Namtu's industrial capacities in the region, which continued to develop into the 1920s. It was during this period, though, when the interests of both company and state would merge even further. With R. Tilden Smith's withdrawal from the Burma Corporation in 1923, a new set of participants became involved in the company's operations, and who would lead the firm until the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942. These new agents – which were led by the Australian mining financier, W.S. Robinson and the Scottish businessman Sir Robert Horne – transformed Bawdwin and Namtu, making the mines the center of an innovative plan to develop a British imperial zinc smelting industry. It was at this time that the mines became a more "imperial" space, despite the continued significance of its foreign-born labor force. It

[50] IOR/V/10/533, Report on the Administration of the Shan and Karenni States for the Year Ended the 30th June 1918.

was also a time when the boundaries between the company and the state became their most unclear, and when a hybrid form of corporate-state governance was utilized to police the area's occupants as well as to push the interests of the British Empire closer to its borders.

W.S. Robinson and the "Imperial" Zinc Smelting Industry

In 1923, R. Tilden Smith sold his controlling interest in the National Smelting Company to an amalgamation of financial agents, headed by the Australian mining investor, W.S. Robinson.[51] The deal included Tilden Smith's shares in the Burma Corporation as well as his holdings at Swansea Vale, Avonmouth, and in Kent. The change of ownership occurred for a litany of reasons. Owing both to his lack of success with the Swansea Vale project as well as the large debts he had incurred with his primary creditor, Lloyd's Bank, Tilden Smith was by the 1920s in a financially precarious position.[52] In 1922, and following pressure from Parliament, the British government withdrew their support of the Swansea Vale venture, citing the lack of need for the immediate manufacture of war munitions and because construction at the site remained incomplete.[53] Lloyd's Bank, concerned with Tilden Smith's solvency, forced the reluctant financier to enter negotiations with a public firm for the buyout of his mining interests.[54] In December 1923, a deal was struck between Tilden

[51] The purchase price of the interests sold and acquired was 2.3 million pounds. *Barrier Miner*, 7 December 1923.
[52] E.J. Cocks and B. Walters also note that a drop in zinc prices and a more general economic downturn during the 1920s helped lead to Tilden Smith's financial predicament. See E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 48.
[53] The British government had invested £500,000 in Swansea Vale by the time they withdrew their support. Ibid, 42.
[54] According to Robinson in his memoirs, when he was summoned to enter the negotiations regarding Tilden Smith's holdings, "it became clear to me that the sponsors of the proposal

Smith, Lloyd's Bank, and a union of British zinc smelting companies – which included the Zinc Corporation, the British Metal Corporation, and the steel firm Baldwins Limited – to take over the Australian's interests, with W.S. Robinson as the managing director.[55] Tilden Smith, who had been one of the Burma Corporation's leading figures for nearly two decades, was suddenly on the outside looking in.[56] He passed away suddenly from a heart attack only six years later at the age of sixty-four.[57]

Tilden Smith's financial plight provided the impetus for the National Smelting Company's takeover, but a variety of other factors impacted the decision to recruit a new ownership group. One was purely financial. Because Lloyd's Bank would have lost the money on their loans if the National Smelting Company were liquidated, it benefitted the bank to find new purveyors who could take over Tilden Smith's existing contract. Interest among the British Empire's mining magnates also influenced the decision to conserve the company. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a number of British World mining financiers lobbied the British government to jumpstart zinc smelting production in the United Kingdom during World War One in an effort to supplant the supremacy of German smelters. This included Hoover's former partner Francis Govett as well as W.S. Robinson, whose zinc smelting schemes were both rejected in favor of Tilden Smith's during the war. Although this

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were Lloyds Bank which had lent heavily to Tilden Smith." Geoffrey Blainey (ed.), *If I Remember Rightly: The Memoirs of W.S. Robinson 1876-1963* (Melbourne, F.W. Cheshire, 1967), 122.

[55] For a more detailed account of these negotiations, see E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 45-54; Geoffrey Blainey (ed.), *If I Remember Rightly*, 121-123.

[56] Tilden Smith, as part of the deal, retained some of his shares in the Burma Corporation. S.C. Magennis, Tilden Smith's longtime associate, would represent the financier on the board of directors at the National Smelting Company following the change in ownership. See E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 53.

[57] Caroline J. Ansell, *Richard Tilden Smith*, 148.

state of affairs particularly frustrated Govett, these outside parties were suddenly presented with an opportunity to revitalize the project while it languished under Tilden Smith's leadership in the early 1920s. The selling point for Govett and Robinson, however, was not simply Tilden Smith's smelting works in Britain. According to Lord Chandos, one of W.S. Robinson's associates and who was present for the 1923 negotiations, the team was interested not only in Tilden Smith's Swansea Vale and Avonmouth ventures, but also his 4,000,000 shares and "carrying virtual control" of the Burma Corporation. The "great zinc-lead mine east of Mandalay," as Lord Chandos called it, was critical to Robinson and Govett's decision.[58]

Although Lloyd's Bank negotiated with a variety of outside agents – including both an American and German firm – regarding the takeover of Tilden Smith's mining interests, the decision was ultimately made to keep the enterprise within the British Empire.[59] In doing so, the deal brought together some of the British World's most important mining agents, who were tasked with saving the nascent British zinc smelting industry. This goal became clear immediately following the buyout of Tilden Smith's assets. Alongside the new managing director, W.S. Robinson, a number of the empire's most important financial minds found a place in the reformed National Smelting Company's board of director's. This included Sir Cecil Budd and Lord Chandos from the British Metal Corporation, S.C Magennis, Lord Baillieu of the Zinc Corporation, Sir John Roper Wright and Sir John Davies of Baldwins steel, and Sir Robert Horne, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer and a director at Lloyd's

[58] Speaking of Tilden Smith, Lord Chandos called him "a man of great imagination and vision, but with grandiose ideas, who was apt to regard figures as a matter of opinion." Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: Readers Union, 1964), 130.
[59] On these negotiations, see E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 45-54.

Bank.[60] By 1926, a number of other important figures in the British manufacturing scene would join the board, including R.G. Perry of the National Sulphuric Acid Association, Lord Wargrave of W. & H.M. Goulding, and Francis Govett's son, John Govett.[61] No longer simply a Tilden Smith venture, the National Smelting Company – which would be renamed the Imperial Smelting Corporation in 1929 – became Britain's new hope to develop a domestic and imperial zinc smelting operation.[62] It also became the ownership group that would oversee the development and expansion of operations at Bawdwin and Namtu over the next two decades.

Following the takeover of the National Smelting Company, a number of changes occurred at Bawdwin and Namtu that would affect the Burma venture into the 1940s. One major change involved the movement of the Burma Corporation's base of operations out of Rangoon, where it had been domiciled since 1919. At a shareholder's meeting in December 1925, it was announced that owing to the fact that most shareholder's of the firm resided in Britain, and because it had been difficult maintaining a "board of any permanence in Rangoon," the firm was permanently moving its board to London. Although a Rangoon-based advisory committee remained in place, the Burma Corporation affectively once again became a British company.[63] Because of these changes, Sir Trevredyn Wynne, the acting Chairman of the Burma Corporation, resigned his post, and was replaced with Francis

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[60] Sir Cecil Budd, alongside his involvement with the British Metal Corporation, was also the Chairman of the London Metal Exchange. Baillieu represented both W.S. Robinson and F.A. Govett on the board, who could not attend the initial meeting in December 1923. See Cocks and Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 46, 53.
[61] E.J. Cocks and B. Walters, *A History of the Zinc Smelting Industry in Britain*, 53-54.
[62] The new Imperial Smelting Corporation had a nominal capital of £7,500,000. See *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1929.
[63] *Rangoon Gazette*, 28 December 1925. See also *Rangoon Gazette*, 4 January 1926.

Govett. Govett's tenure, however, would remain short. In October 1926, and following a period of ill health, Govett passed away at the age of sixty-eight.[64]

Upon his death, Govett would have surely been pleased with the transformations that had occurred under his watch with the Burma Corporation. In the first and last major speech he gave as Chairman of the company, Govett spoke proudly of the new deal crafted between the empire's major mining enterprises, a partnership he had long envisioned. In praising both W.S. Robinson and W.L. Ballieau for their tireless work in promoting the new scheme, Govett noted that "the formation of the National Smelting Company was something like the coping stone of the movement of British Co-operation, in which it is plainly worked out for us, the Burma Corporation, to take our part." Arguing against the notion that the scheme was an "amalgamation" of the empire's existing firms, Govett claimed that the deal would instead establish a "working alliance between the Companies" in an effort to supplant German supremacy and allow Britain to operate independently from foreign reliance and intervention. Quoting Cecil Rhodes, Govett summed up his opinions by saying that "our politics are in a nutshell; that our whole business is the receipt of raw material working it up into the manufactured article, and its ultimate distribution over the world, and we shall be great only so long as we keep our Empire." As much as the Empire needed business, it was also clear that businessmen like Govett needed the Empire.[65]

Govett's death symbolized the passing of the Burma Corporation's "old guard" – with its triumvirate of Hoover, Tilden Smith, and Govett - from the company's management, but the direction of the firm was set in place well before that time. In 1925, and with the Burma Corporation's move to London, the company overhauled its board of director's, bringing in

[64] *The Times*, 28 October 1926.
[65] *Rangoon Gazette*, 4 January 1926.

many of the figures that would continue to lead the operation until World War Two.[66] This included some agents who had long been associated with the company - such as Govett and Arthur Chester Beatty – but also a number of new partners, including Sir Robert Horne, Sir Henry Strakosch, and Sir Cecil Budd.[67] Well connected in both financial and governmental circles, these new members reveal how integrated with the mining operations had and would become in the imperial world during the 1920s. Strakosch, for instance, was an Austrian-born British businessman, who had interests in mining, banking, and government. At the same time that Strakosch was added to the Burma Corporation's board of director's, he acted as chairman of the South African mining house, the Union Corporation, and was also a member of the Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance.[68] Sir Cecil Budd similarly saddled the worlds of business and governance. The heir of a Welsh copper smelting company, Budd acted as both the Chairman of the London Metal Exchange and the Ministry of Munition's chief adviser on metals during the early twentieth century. By the time of his involvement with the Burma Corporation, Budd had become the director of the British Metal Corporation, an organization he helped found to challenge German supremacy in the metal

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[66] This change was announced to shareholders in December 1925, when it was also reported that Sir Trevredyn Wynne had resigned as Chairman. See *Rangoon Gazette*, 28 December 1925.

[67] *The Register*, 13 February 1925.

[68] Strakosch would later serve on Council of India during the 1930s, and was Secretary of State for India between 1937 and 1942. C.E. Temperley, "Strakosch, Sir Henry Edouard (1871-1943)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, 2004) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-36343, accessed 7 June 2018].

markets and that, he argued, represented the spirit of "imperial patriotism."[69] These were, without a doubt, some of the principal figures in British mining during the interwar years.

Perhaps most important to the Burma Corporation's development, however, were the twin influences of W.S. Robinson and Robert Horne. William Sydney (W.S.) Robinson was born in Melbourne in the 1870s. Initially drawn to the publishing industry – Robinson's father, Anthony, was a financial journalist – Robinson became involved in mining after his older brother, Lionel, invited him to join his London-based stockbroking firm around the turn of the twentieth century. During World War One, and at the same time his brother began to relinquish some of his duties with the company, W.S.'s career as a mining magnate took off. Leaning on connections his brother had crafted over the previous two decades, which included close relationships with the mining magnate W.L. Bailleiu as well as Herbert Hoover and Francis Govett, Robinson became one of the leading mining financiers in Australia at the time. Robinson also became an important figure in government, advising Australia's Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, on mining matters and helping lead the reorganization of the British Empire's metal market during the inter-war years.[70] Involved in mining companies across Australia, including Broken Hill and the Zinc Corporation, Robinson became involved in the Burma Corporation in 1923 at the urging of Francis Govett, who asked him to reform the company's Board of Directors and institute a new management scheme at the property. Robinson became joint managing director of the company at this time, dealing with the company's "financial and commercial affairs" while

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[69] S.J. Ball, "The German Octopus: The British Metal Corporation and the Next War, 1914-1939," *Enterprise & Society,* vol. 5 no. 3 (September 2004), 459-461.
[70] See Peter Richardson, "Robinson, William Sydney (1876-1963)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University (first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* MUP, 1988) [http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/robinson-william-sydney-8247, accessed 10 June 2018]

Percy Marmion, the Burma Corporation's long-time manager who Robinson had known since "boyhood," was tasked with the management of the mine and smelter.[71] Robinson would retain this role until the outbreak of World War Two.

Sir Robert Horne was the other prominent figure at the Burma Corporation during the 1920s and 1930s. Originally a lecturer in philosophy and later a lawyer, Horne – who was born in Scotland – first became involved in politics during World War I, when he occupied a number of minor roles in government. Following the war, Horne, running as a Conservative, was elected MP for Hillhead, Glasgow, after which he quickly settled in as a major figure in Lloyd George's coalition government. Serving in a variety of capacities during his time in politics – including Minister of Labour, the president of the Board of Trade, as well as Chancellor of the Exchequer – Horne would later eschew government following Bonar Law's election in 1922 and turn his attention to business. Over the next two decades, Horne would chair, direct, or sit on the board of some of Britain and the Empire's most important commercial ventures. This included the Suez Canal Company, Lloyds Bank, the Great Western Railway Company, and in the realm of mining, Baldwins Ltd, the Zinc Corporation, the National Smelting Company, and the Imperial Smelting Corporation.[72] These interests would eventually lead Horne to Burma. In 1926, and following the death of Francis Govett, his friend W.S. Robinson, who considered "Bertie" to be "one of Scotland's greatest sons and Britain's most worthy citizens," made Horne chairman of the Burma Corporation.[73] Until

[71] Geoffrey Blainey (ed.), *If I Remember Rightly,* 132-133.
[72] *The Times*, 4 September 1940. See also, Philip Williamson, "Horne, Robert Stevenson, Viscount Horne of Slamannan (1871-1940)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. 2011) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33991?rskey=SGh6Vr&result=5, accessed 10 June 2018]
[73] Geoffrey Blainey (ed.), *If I Remember Rightly*, 135-136.

his death in 1940, Horne would act as the public face of the company, giving speeches to shareholders, speaking with the press, and using his myriad connections in government to promote the company's agenda.[74] Horne's tenure, along with that of his friend W.S. Robinson, would bring great changes to the mining site in the Northern Shan States during the 1920s and 1930s, transforming the nature and scale of operations in the post-Hoover years.

Corporate Governance at Bawdwin and Namtu

The involvement of W.S. Robinson, Robert Horne, and their numerous associates in both the mining world and government ushered in a new era of operations at Bawdwin and Namtu. No longer a struggling venture, by the 1920s, the company had become a great success. Around the time that Robinson took control of the company, the Burma Corporation finally paid its first dividends to shareholders, some of whom had invested in the firm nearly two decades earlier.[75] The total output of the mines also grew dramatically during this period. While in 1917 the company sent to market around 1.5 million ounces of silver and seventeen thousand tons of lead annually, by 1926, the mining site produced over five million ounces of silver, over fifty thousand tons of lead, thirty three thousand tons of zinc concentrate, and around ten thousand ton of copper a year. When the Governor of Burma, Sir Harcourt Butler, visited Bawdwin and Namtu in May 1926, it was noted that the "approximately one and three-quarter million sterling" in "new wealth" had been created "as a result of the activities

[74] For examples of these speeches, see *Rangoon Gazette*, 16 March 1925; *Rangoon* Gazette, 3 January 1927; Rangoon *Gazette*, 16 June 1930.
[75] See the shareholders report in *Rangoon Gazette*, 3 January 1927.

of the Corporation," and that "many" in Burma were "benefiting" as a result. For Harcourt Butler, the mines had not only added "to the wealth of Burma" but also "to the wealth of the world." Noting the leadership of the "very distinguished lawyer, industrialist and statesmen Sir Robert Horne" under whose guise the mines had prospered, Butler considered Bawdwin and Namtu to be "one of the assets of the Empire."[76] In a colony known less for its industrial achievements than its agricultural production, by the 1920s, the Burma Corporation had become a symbol of success in Burma, celebrated by members of the press, company management, and colonial officials alike. The mines had become, as the *Rangoon Gazette* labeled them, "Burma's Industrial Wonderland."[77]

The comments that officials like Harcourt Butler made about the Burma Corporation demonstrate how the boundaries between the corporation and the colonial state became increasingly unclear as the mining enterprise expanded in the 1920s. With its new Board of Directors and management team that included some of the most important figures in British imperial finance at the time, and as the company continued to take on duties typically reserved for government, the Burma Corporation became a hybrid body that operated in the margins between the state and private enterprise. This fact, however, did not seem to concern colonial officials. While Butler argued that "it is not always realised that Burma owes the main part of its development to the great firms and companies which have sunk… sums of capital" into the province, the Burma Corporation's feats demonstrated how "without these firms and companies Burma would still be a backward country instead of the progressive country that she is with a world-wide reputation and fame."[78] Butler's successor as Governor,

[76] *Rangoon Gazette*, 23 May 1927.
[77] *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 April 1923.
[78] *Rangoon Gazette*, 23 May 1927

Sir Charles Innes, similarly spoke of the significance of private capital to Burma's development. Visiting Bawdwin and Namtu in 1928, Innes noted that while he "heard many objections raised to the introduction of foreign capital into India" while serving in the Indian Assembly, he wished that such critics "could be with me here to-day and could see for themselves the benefits of the application of capital, whether foreign or otherwise, to the development of an Eastern country." Innes noted "how intimately the prosperity of the Northern Shan States is linked up with the continued existence and prosperity of the mines," and argued that any detractors who visited the mines "would find not merely a great mining property" but also "a happy, contented, well-cared for labour force."[79] For both Butler and Innes, the mines demonstrated the progressive capacities of private industry, a fact that both celebrated the company's achievements while also acknowledging the limitations of government.[80]

As earlier sections of this dissertation have demonstrated, these conversations about economic development between colonial officials, businessmen, and members of the public existed in Burma since the nineteenth century. In a colony where both manpower and public funds for development were limited, the government required the services of outside bodies to extend the reach of the state, particularly in areas outside of governmental control. This was, of course, not unique to Burma. In other regions of the empire, and as many historians have revealed, colonial officials were often forced to rule their territories "on the cheap."[81]

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[79] *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 April 1928

[80] It should be noted that while colonial officials espoused such views publically, the reality on the ground - as demonstrated in Chapter Four – was far starker.

[81] This idea was made famous in Gallagher and Robinson's work, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," in which they argued that indirect rule was preferable for colonial administrators owing to the high cost of occupation. Occupation, for Gallagher and Robinson, was only used as a last resort, and in the case of the colonization of Africa in the late nineteenth

The use of a so-called "indirect rule" was one way colonial officials accomplished this. As Frederick Lugard would famously argue in his 1922 treatise, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, the colonial project had two primary objectives: the extraction of wealth from colonized territories and the social uplift of colonized populations.[82] In order to accomplish these tasks, colonial officials recruited and utilized local collaborators – most often existing elites or marginalized groups within local colonized populations - to buttress rule in their territories.[83] In Burma, for example, and because very few British officials were present in the colony, the colonial government used Indians to populate the lower levels of the colonial administrative hierarchy, in part because British racial theories at the time regarded Indians as being higher on the scale of civilization than Burmans.[84] These "divide and rule" policies would ultimately prove disastrous, leading to increased tension and violence between ethnic groups in the colonies, a legacy that has remained in the post-colonial world.[85]

The use of collaboration was not the only strategy that colonial powers used to rule their territories "on the cheap," however. In recent decades, and utilizing the theories of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, scholars have reexamined the role that power played in

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century, was the result of strategic peripheral concerns and not profits. See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade."

[82] Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 617.

[83] See Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in Roger Owen and Robert B. Sutcliffe (eds.), *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1972), 117-142.

[84] For studies that specifically examine ethnicity in Burma, see Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books, 1991); Michael Fredholm, *Burma: Ethnicity and Insurgency* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993).

[85] One well-known example of ethnic violence between Burmese and Indians occurred in Rangoon in 1930. For a summary of these events and their legacy, See Nalini Ranjan Chakravarti, *The Indian Minority in Burma,* 132-137.

controlling populations around the globe during the modern period, whether in the colonies or in the imperial metropole. Using Foucault's concept of governmentality, which the philosopher loosely defined as the "art of government," scholars have located how subjects and citizens could experience the state in myriad ways and not only through coercive, authoritative control.[86] Government, in this model, is not merely symbolized by politicians and courts and other more material apparatuses of the state. Instead, as Nikolas Rose has argued, it's the "assemblage of diverse forces (legal, architectural, professional, administrative, financial, judgemental), techniques (notation, computation, calculation, examination, evaluation), devices (surveys and charts, systems of training, building forms) that promise to regulate decisions and actions of individuals, groups, organisations in relation to authoritative criteria." Governmentality is a "kind of intellectual machinery," designed to make subjects and citizens think, act, and define themselves in a way that mirrors the rationality of the liberal state.[87] In doing so, governmentality makes it so that power can be felt at many levels in a liberal society, policing the bodies of its population – or compelling people to police themselves - without requiring direct force.[88]

A theory of governmentality has made scholars more attentive to the ways in which people experienced the state and state power. Instead of a monolithic and centralizing institution, the state is now seen as a diffuse body that people interacted with in a variety of capacities and on a variety of levels. According to Patrick Joyce and Chandra Mukerji, the

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[86] See Michel Foucault, "Governmentality."
[87] Nikolas Rose, "Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Societies," in Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborn, and Nikolas Rose (eds), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 41-42; Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom,* 3.
[88] Or, as Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes have argued, "liberalism seeks to produce certain outcomes through dynamics in society and the economy themselves rather than by state activity." Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, *The State as Cultural Practice*, 50.

state should be seen as "not as a thing but as a shape-shifting assemblage of people and things." Instead of being a "totalizing system," the state retains its power because "it is multi-sited, material, and technical," and is constantly adapting.[89] In Burma, where there were few British officials and limited budgets to develop the country, the power of the state could be felt in ways that were not always obvious: through observing the hulking colonial buildings in Rangoon, through riding on the railways that snaked the length of the country, or through visiting the western-style schools and hospitals that dotted the landscape. Critical to this conception, though, is the fact that the state was constantly evolving based on the environment and the ways that people in that environment communicated with it. Joyce and Mukerji are particularly interested in the materiality of the state and how the state is built *in habitus* through the interaction between its subjects and the material artifacts of state power. While these material objects could be more obvious, such as law courts and roads, they could also appear more benign, such as territoriality or paperwork.[90] These "assemblages" all had an impact on how people experienced, reacted to, and resisted the state, as well as how, in turn, the state evolved over the modern period.

These observations – mainly that the modern state is an assemblage of people, ideas, and things that changes over time – provides a counterpoint to studies that see the state as a centralizing, all-powerful force.[91] They do not, however, examine the role that businesses might have played in state building, an idea that another group of historians have started to

[89]Patrick Joyce and Chandra Mukerji, "The State of Things," 15. See also, Patrick Joyce, "History and Governmentality," *Analise Social* vol. 49 no. 212 (2014), 752-756.
[90] Joyce and Mukerji, "The State of Things," 1-19. See also Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*.
[91] Joyce and Mukerji are particularly critical, for example, of James C. Scott's idea that the modern state is the material outcome of centralized planning. Joyce and Mukerji, "The State of Things," 2. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

consider. Philip Stern, for example, has argued that while historians have often situated the East India Company as being "state-*like*, *semi*-sovereign" and "*quasi*-governmental," the corporation was actually a "body politic on its own terms" that acted as "an early modern form of government."[92] Such analysis has also been extended to the mid to late nineteenth century. The historian Steven Press has demonstrated that loopholes in international law regarding claims of sovereignty allowed for the emergence of both personal and corporate rule in vast areas of Africa, leading to the so-called "Scramble for Africa."[93] For both Stern and Press, companies – as well as individuals, in some cases – could themselves act as the state, colonizing and controlling large areas of foreign land outside the purview of normal governmental activity.[94] Instead of merely acting as extra-governmental bodies, Stern and Press locate their "company" states as virtual replacements for the state. Not only did the East India Company or the Free State of the Congo fulfill duties normally reserved for government, but they also, critically, asserted "sovereign" rights over foreign territory. For both scholars, it was this evolving notion of sovereignty – and, in particular, its legal basis in the form of treaties, contracts, and charters – that allowed for non-governmental bodies to consolidate authority and become colonial powers in their own right. Sovereignty, in this model, meant statehood, something that could be established by anyone who signed a treaty saying they legally "owned" a piece of territory. Sovereignty and statehood were ideas that could be bought and sold as if they were commodities at market.

[92] Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State,* 6.
[93] Steven Press, *Rogue Empires.*
[94] Press, for example, locates the origin of such "Rogue Empires" in Borneo, where James Brooke established a personal fiefdom in the mid-nineteenth century. Steven Press, *Rogue Empires*, 11-51.

Such insights into the relationship between colonialism, the state, and sovereignty reveal how non-governmental bodies could assume state power at particular historical moments and, in essence, argue against Max Weber's famous statement that states have a monopoly on violence.[95] Holding sovereignty over a territory, however, was not the only way that businesses could take on the role of the state. In the realm of governmentality, state power could spring from a variety of directions, whether through the construction of railway systems, the building of hospitals to institute hygienic standards, or the supervision of behavior through western style courts or police forces. The government, though, did not always hold a monopoly on such systems of surveillance and control. As the story of the Burma Corporation demonstrates, businesses and transnational corporations could also fill this role in society, ceding sovereignty to the state while still taking on state-like qualities. Lending credibility to Joyce and Mukerji's observations about state power, the growth of Bawdwin and Namtu reveals just how amorphous the state could be during the late colonial period, adapting and changing depending on conditions at the local, provincial, imperial, or global level.[96] The fact that nearly all of the workforce at Bawdwin and Namtu – whether the white foreign management team or the thousands of workers who hailed from India, Nepal, and China – were "foreign" only highlights how flexible such systems of governance were at the time. Located in the indirectly administered Northern Shan States, the Burma Corporation's mining enterprise demonstrates how blurry the boundary between the state and the transnational corporation could be during the early twentieth century, particularly in the empire's more remote spaces. It also uncovers the changing relationship between empire,

[95] For a summary of Weber's insights into violence and statehood, see H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 78.
[96] Joyce and Mukerji, "The State of Things."

governance, and capitalism during interwar years, foreshadowing the kinds of conversations that would take place about economic development only a few decades later.

"A Burmese Wonderland"

It was in 1923, and at the same time that W.S Robinson's new ownership group and management team was taking over the operations at Bawdwin and Namtu, that the *Rangoon Gazette* proclaimed the mines to be a "Burmese Wonderland."[97] The mines by this time were sending large volumes of lead, zinc, and silver to market in Asia and beyond. The role of the company in Burma, however, was always changing. As operations expanded so did the company's impact in the colony, a process that continuously influenced the relationship between the Burma Corporation, the British colonial state, and the local inhabitants of the Northern Shan States. In an administrative capacity, the company became, over time, increasingly embedded within the state. This occurred at a variety of levels, including through the construction of infrastructure like railways and power plants, its building of hospitals and schools, its policing of the region, and in its increasingly imperially-minded ownership team. By the 1920s and 1930s, when the mines were at their productive apex, the company in many ways acted as a wing of the colonial government, despite not holding legal sovereignty over the mines' environs. Nevertheless, acting as an agent of the state meant more than just building hospitals and railways or asserting claims of sovereignty. Alongside these more material and visible manifestations of the state existed a cultural and utopian idea, shared by company and government officials alike, that the Burma Corporation had the

[97] *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 April 1923.

ability to civilize what they saw as a backwards and unstable borderland region. This vision, a vision of the "Burmese Wonderland," was extant from the earliest days of industrial operations, coloring the ways in which the mines developed over the early twentieth century. It also reveals how, when viewed at the local level, seemingly stable categories – including "colonizer," "colonized," "the state," "government," and "the corporation" – could break down in the colonial setting, providing a more nuanced insight into the relationship between empire, capitalism, and power in the modern period.

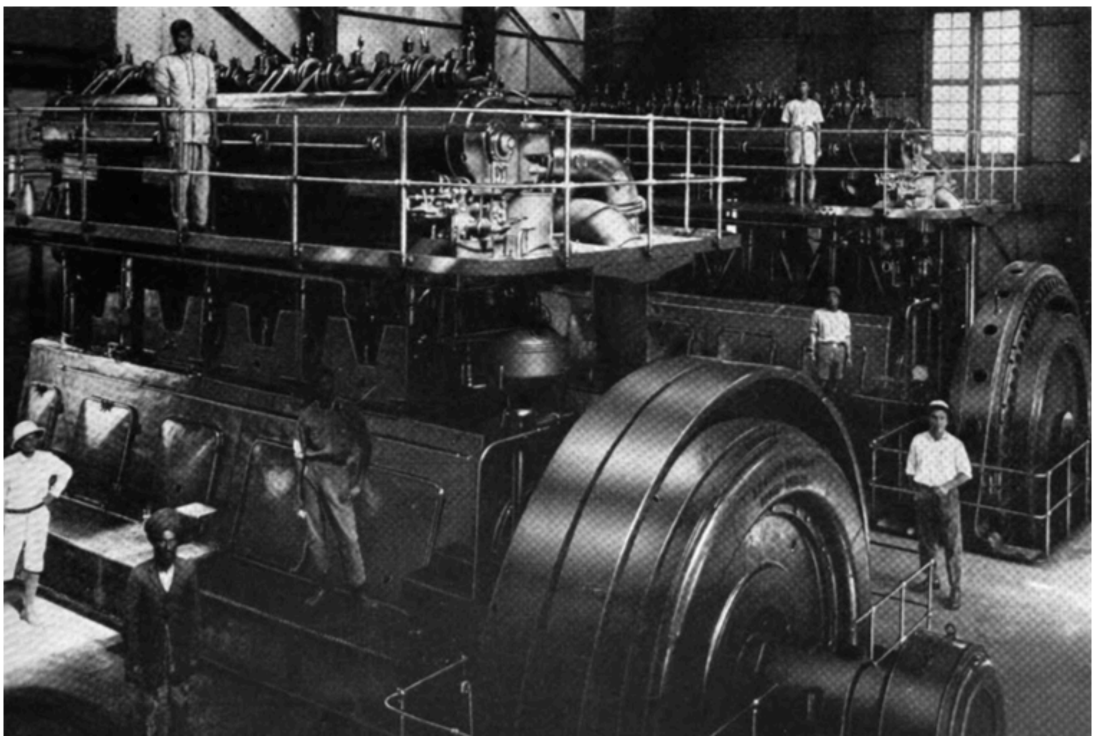

Figure 14: Diesel-Engine Power Plant. Source: R.G. Hall, "Transportation, Power, and Mining at Bawdwin," *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press* vol. 115 no. 15 (14 April 1923), 663.

A narrative about Bawdwin and Namtu's civilizing capacity emerged in the Burma Corporation's initial years. In 1910, and as the company was petitioning the government to lower royalty rates for the firm, the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, Hugh Thornton, noted that although the Company "does not, of course, profess to be a philanthropic one there can be no doubt that it has done and is doing much to develop a poor and sparsely inhabited tract in pursuit of its own legitimate profits."[98] Company officials agreed with such an assessment. After Herbert Hoover's past was criticized in muckraking books during his time as President, with one critic alleging that "Chinese coolies were dropping dead at Hoover's mines in Burma when a handful of rice would have saved them," Republican partisans responded by arguing that these Chinese workers were simply fleeing from "war and famine in China" and searching for what they knew to be an "earthly paradise."[99] Hoover himself wrote in his memoirs that the Burmese mines "gave a living directly and indirectly to over 100,000 Chinese, Shans and Indians of many dialects – a better living than ever before in their lives, with some of the gadgets of mechanized civilization thrown in," demonstrating that the Corporation's commitment to constructing "houses, towns, hospitals, schools, and recreation grounds" was socially progressive for the colony.[100] For E.P. Mathewson, a one time associate of Hoover who later became Director at the University of Arizona College of Mines, Hoover's "constructive genius" and "humanity" was proven by the fact "that starting with absolute jungle amidst wholly uncivilized races Mr. Hoover built up with American methods and machinery a great industry wages were established which lifted standards of living five times above those which these people had lived before housing schools sanitation hospitals and other civilized influences were introduced to a people who had never participated or witnessed or heard of such institutions

[98] Proceedings, P/8367, Department of Commerce and Industry (Mines and Minerals), Burma, November 1910. Question of the method of assessment to be adopted in charging royalty from the Burma Mines, Limited, on their mines at Bawdwingyi in the Northern Shan States.
[99] Herbert Corey, *The Truth About Hoover,* 135. For a recent history that discusses these books and paints a more revisionist account of Hoover and his mining career, see Jeremy Mouat and Ian Phimister, "The Engineering of Herbert Hoover."
[100] Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*, 101.

before."[101] For Hoover and his supporters, the Bawdwin mines promoted a healthier, more prosperous, more civilized population in Upper Burma, demonstrating the utopian potentials of industrial mining in the colonial world.

Figure 15: Smelting Plant at Namtu. Source: A.B. Parsons, "Operations of the Burma Mines, Ltd.," *Engineering and Mining Journal* vol. 107 no. 6 (8 February 1919), 257.

It was not until World War II, however, that such views about the firm became commonplace in the public imagination. In 1917, the same year that Harcourt Butler presided over the opening of the Tiger Tunnel, journalists from Rangoon began to write at length about the Burma Corporation's enterprise in the Northern Shan States. In that year, a correspondent from the *Rangoon Gazette* registered his "wonder and surprise" upon arriving at the mining complex, noting how he reached "by what all calculations ought to be the heart of a wild, unhealthy and uninviting jungle camp" only to find himself "in an up-to-date

[101] Western Union from E.P. Mathewson to Edgar Rickard, 10 October 1928, in HHPL, Misrepresentations Subject File, Box 4, "Campaigns of 1928 Hoover and Chinese Labor."

mining town with all the conveniences of home." Not only did the journalist discover all the machineries one might expect in the "mills in England or America," but he was also astonished to find "fine residences and offices, clubs, hospital, an up-to-date water-supply, telephones, tennis courts, reading-rooms, and white faces at almost every corner and turn," giving him the "impression of order, business and thrift."[102] In 1918, another visitor from the *Rangoon Gazette* echoed such sentiments. Likening the mines to an "excellent moral tonic" and a "colliery town in a Welsh mountain setting," the journalist noted that while most people conceive of lead mines as a "death trap," he instead found "great giants who are the picture of health." Observing the cosmopolitan workforce, such as the "great gaunt Americans" who were "seven feet high" or the "men of half a dozen nationalities who work at the furnaces," the author believed that the mines were a "treasure chamber in the rocks," far outshining other industrial locations in the colony. "Yenangyaung, Tavoy and Mogok impress you," the journalist wrote, but "Namtu bowls you over."[103]

Such exaggerated pieces celebrating the works at Bawdwin and Namtu emerged during the war years, but it was in the 1920s that the mines and their supposed utopian and civilizing tendencies became a fixture in the press. While in 1923 the Rangoon Gazette would proclaim Bawdwin and Namtu to be "Burma Industrial Wonderland," the mines were labeled with a variety of superlatives at the time, including the "Commonwealth of Namtu," a "romance of industry," or, in reference to the supposed "racial harmony" at the mines, a "vigorous community."[104] It was during this period that leading British officials like Harcourt Butler and Charles Innes visited the mines on a nearly annual basis, bringing with them a

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[102] *Rangoon Gazette*, 14 May 1917.
[103] *Rangoon Gazette*, 9 September 1918.
[104] *Rangoon Gazette*, 7 November 1921; *Rangoon Gazette*, 5 December 1921; *Rangoon Gazette*, 30 April 1923; *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 April 1928.

cadre of journalists and bureaucrats who continued to broadcast the narrative that the Burma Corporation's operations were an example of good governance in the colony. Harcourt Butler, in his fourth and final visit to the mines as governor, encapsulated these views in a speech to company management in 1927. According to Butler, "it is not always realised that Burma owes the main part of its development to the great firms and companies which have sunk… sums of capital and which have undertaken great responsibilities in different parts of the province." "Without these firms and companies," Butler continued, "Burma would still be a backward country instead of the progressive country that she is with a world-wide reputation and fame." For Butler, not only had the company improved its production and profits since his first visit ten years earlier, but he also believed that the company had "steadily improved the conditions of life of your people, their housing, their sanitation, their medical treatment," and "their education." Butler observed that the company had "converted a barren basin into a green and smiling valley," and that they had brought "prosperity to thousands of people." It was, in Butler's view, a "magnificent enterprise."[105]

Others in Burma agreed with Butler's assessment. After visiting Bawdwin and Namtu in 1929, the Chief Inspector of Mines in India not only spoke positively of the "thoroughness of the organisation of labour" at the mining site, but he also admired the many modern conveniences that the company had introduced to the region. This included medical inspection sites, a hospital, bazaars, a "good water supply," houses built on "modern principles," schools, roads, as well as "amusements" such as clubs and "football grounds" for its employees.[106] The Burma Corporation capitalized on and reinforced such views. When the new Governor of Burma, Hugh Lansdown Stephenson, visited Bawdwin and Namtu in 1934

[105] *Rangoon Gazette*, 23 May 1927.
[106] *Rangoon Gazette*, 11 March 1929.

with his wife, the company welcomed the official with a statement from the "Asiatic Employees of the Burma Corporation" that played on such sentiments. According to the address, while the world had been racked with insecurity owing to the global economic depression, "it [was] a matter of grateful pride and exultation" that "this mining citadel, under the protective wings of the Burma Corporation – the paterfamilias of us all – continues with unabated zeal and care to sustain in peace and comfort thousands of families." "Ever anxious and mindful to provide us with all urban amenities and raise gradually the standard of our living," the statement continued, "the Burma Corporation has spared neither pains nor money for the furtherance of our welfare in all possible ways as is manifest in our houses and water-supply, our roads and drainage system, our hospitals and sanitary arrangements, the existence of several sporting grounds and Race-course and last, but not least, the generous assistance towards the erection of religious edifices, picturesquely dotted around the town."[107] Labeling the mines at Bawdwin and Namtu a "romance in mining," Stephenson argued that the corporation was "proof that the interests of capital and labour are not fundamentally opposed," and concluded that "Namtu will continue to be a busy centre of prosperous industry and of contented workers" well into the future.[108]

Such statements about the civilizing force of the Burma Corporation's mining operations may have been extent in the public imagination throughout the late colonial period, but the reality was far starker. As revealed in the previous chapter, laborers faced a litany of problems while working at the mines, including crime, disease, and a high likelihood of being involved an often-fatal workplace accident. These issues, of course, did not simply disappear. In the mid-1920s, Bawdwin was struck with a series of fires

[107] *Rangoon Gazette*, 2 April 1934.
[108] *Rangoon Gazette*, 26 March 1934.

underground in the mines, a disaster that stunted production for over two years.[109] Contradicting the auspicious statements about a "contented" workforce at the mines, at least one major strike broke out at Bawdwin and Namtu during the early 1930s. In June 1931, the *Rangoon Gazette* reported that "a grave labour riot" had broken out at Namtu after "thousands of labourers" went on strike to protest a reduction in wages and the cutting down of working hours. Fearing that the "men would raid the mines and destroy the plant," a force of Civil and Military police – led by Captain Gribble, the Assistant Superintendent of the Northern Shan States – opened fire on the crowd, killing one protestor and wounding three more. Although journalists reported that order was restored at the mines, it was only after a company official reached a settlement with workers to restore their normal working hours.[110] The event would go unmentioned in the company's year-end report.[111]

While it's certain that the narrative about the Burma Corporation's civilizing and harmonious virtues were fanciful, it was a fiction that remained until the outbreak of World War II. Throughout the 1930s, journalists, government officials, and company agents continued to report on the merits of the mining enterprise, including its diverse and happy workforce, its modern sanitation and living arrangements, and the array of amenities and leisure activities that made the site a "Burmese Wonderland." The mines even inspired the literary imagination. In 1930, a poem, simply entitled "Namtu," was published in the *Rangoon Gazette*, summarizing the utopian narrative that had grown up around Bawdwin and Namtu:

[109] It should be noted, however, that the company did not publically report any deaths resulting from these fires. See *Rangoon Gazette*, 3 January 1927; *Rangoon Gazette,* 25 January 1928. The Australian press also reported on these events. See *The Argus*, 31 March 1925.
[110] *Rangoon Gazette*, 16 June 1931.
[111] *Rangoon Gazette*, 21 December 1931.

Here peace and plenty reign supreme
Money flows in perennial stream
Men of varying castes and creeds
Alike have ample for their needs[112]

For these agents, not only was the Burma Corporation a business designed to make profits, but it was also a company that inspired good governance in the colony and that enjoyed a harmonious relationship with its large and diverse workforce as well as the colonial administration. The idea that the company was an extension of the state, however, was not only built through myth making in the public imagination. In the early 1930s, an event would occur in Burma's remote borderland region, known as the Wa States, that would demonstrate just how close the interests of the company and the government had become. This event, which would lead to an international incident worthy of press attention back in Britain, establishes how powerful the Burma Corporation was by the 1930s, as well as its role as an extra-governmental entity.

Sir Robert Horne and the "China Incident"

In the early 1930s, Burma Corporation officials feared that the large iron ore deposit at Bawdwin was soon to be exhausted. Although production had proceeded apace since the opening of the deposit in 1913, company geologists estimated that the mine had "a positive

[112] *Rangoon Gazette*, 24 February 1930.

life of no more than about 12 years."[113] Alarmed at such an eventuality, and anxious about the fate of the firm, the Burma Corporation began searching for alternative venues of mineral resource extraction in the colony. Company agents had scoured Burma since the earliest days of the Burma Corporation looking for such mineral sites, but the firm felt most confident about a particular deposit, known as the Pang Long mine. Located in the Wa States, close to the border of China, the mine was thought to be part of the same network of Chinese silver mines as Bawdwin during the early modern period. In 1920, Arthur Oberlander, acting as agent of the Burma Corporation, visited the region, finding large slag heaps at the site that rivaled those of Bawdwin's during the early years of western operations. The company applied to the government for a prospecting license over the deposit but was rejected, although the application was kept on record and the company given priority over the site in the future. By the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, circumstances had changed. After an American prospector determined that the mines were located some six and a half miles east of the Pang Long mine in a place called Lufang, and after his own prospecting application was rejected, the Burma Corporation renewed their interest in the region. Before long, the company would petition the government once again to send an expedition to the region in order to determine the long-term economic viability of the iron ore deposit. This time it would work.

Although the colonial government was reluctant to send an expeditionary force to Pang Long and Lufang in 1920 because they were concerned that doing so would bring about the costly administration of the region, the close connections established between company

[113] "Application from the Burma Corporation Limited to examine the possibilities of mining development in unadministered territory in the Northern Wa States." See Wa States Expedition.

and government officials by the 1930s forced them to reconsider.[114] In March 1933, Sir Robert Horne, the chairman of the company, wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, imploring him to approve a company expedition to the Wa States. According to Horne, and alluding to the dire warnings of company geologists about Bawdwin's fate, "the Corporation supplies so substantial an amount of revenue to the tax-gatherer, to the Railways and to the Docks, that the cessation of its activities within any near period would disastrously injure the prospects of Burma's financial stability."[115] Officials in Burma agreed with Horne's proposals. Charles Innes, the outgoing Governor, believed that on account of Bawdwin's possible exhaustion, "action is urgent," adding that he was "quite clear that the mineral deposits in [the Wa States] are of the greatest value and that from the point of view of Burma it would be a great advantage to have the district administered."[116] Sir Hugh Lansdown Stephenson, the incoming Governor, also approved. Arguing that the Burma Corporation was "a good deal more than merely a commercial concern," Stephenson wrote to Hoare that he "welcome[d] a survey on the part of the Burma Corporation with the intention of working the mines if the survey proves satisfactory." While such an expedition might require the administration of the area, Stephenson thought the occupation could be "light," consisting largely of a military police force. Considering Burma was "bankrupt," Stephenson mused, a large-scale administration in the region was impossible.[117]

Aside from the potential costs of administering the Wa States, there was one other major obstacle for the colonial government: the mines were located in contested territory.

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Letter from Robert Horne to Samuel Hoare, 21 March 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.
[116] Letter from Sir F. Stewart to S.A., 26 April 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.
[117] Letter from Hugh Lansdown Stephenson to Samuel Hoare, 27 June 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.

Situated along the border of the Wa States, which British officials considered to be sovereign British territory despite being outside of colonial administrative control, the deposits were located precariously close to an area that Chinese nationals had claimed since the colonization of Upper Burma in the late nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1890s, British officials – led by the famous official-cum-ethnographer, James George Scott, also known as Shwe Yoe – set up a series of commissions with Chinese commissioners to solidify the border region between China and Burma. Although the British made specific claims to the area, with the British border thereafter being known as the "Scott Line," Chinese officials did not accept the British proposals and created their own border, known as the Liu Chen line. The mines, however, were situated in this matrix of contested territoriality. Although it was thought that the Pang Long mine and Lufang were far enough west to be in solidly British territory, the reach of Chinese claims remained unclear. British officials were aware that any incursions into the region – particularly in an effort to extract highly valued mineral resources – could spark conflict with the Chinese government.[118]

The government, though, ultimately decided that an expedition to the region was worth the risk. After soliciting the opinions of a variety of experts on the Wa States and the China question, including the former Superintendent of the Northern Shan States and future historian of Burma, G.E. Harvey, Hugh Stephenson determined that although the Chinese may lay claim to the region, "they are in our territory and, if we are ever going to stand on the treaty all, it is desirable that we should take definite steps to assert our rights."[119] The Secretary of State for India agreed. Writing to Robert Horne, Hoare said that the company

[118] On the Burma-China Boundary Commission and border dispute, see Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma,* 455-517.
[119] Letter from Hugh Lansdown Stephenson to Samuel Hoare, 27 June 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.

could send an expedition to the Pang Long mine, which although in a contested area, "lie[s] to the west of the most extreme Chinese claim in this neighbourhood."[120] Horne assented to the proposal, including Hoare and Stephenson's demand that the company help finance the expedition. Horne stipulated, though, that the Burma Corporation would pay a maximum of two lakhs, in view that "if the Burma Corporation enters upon a new enterprise of this kind, it will entail an immense expenditure on the part of the Corporation." Considering that the company had been "very substantial contributors to the revenue and general economic life of Burma in past years," Horne considered such an investment to be only fair.[121] The financial burden of the scheme would remain in conflict between the company and government, but the expedition was approved to move forward.

One issue, however, remained: the makeup of the expedition. The colonial government, despite assenting to the scheme, was reluctant to send a state force to the region without first making contact with the inhabitants of the Wa States, believing that doing otherwise could endanger peace. Instead, the administration proposed that Arthur Oberlander, the American engineer who had worked for the Burma Corporation since before World War One, act as agent of the government and issue "propaganda" to the Pang Long *Sawbwa*, whom he had met during his previous visit to the area in 1920.[122] This propaganda,

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[120] According to Hoare, "I ought to add that if by any chance the Corporation have in view, not the Panglong mines, but other mines which are believed to exist at a considerable distance from the latter in the eastern and southern (page 4) parts of these States, quite different considerations would arise, as the surveying of these eastern mines would probably be impossible without first bringing the whole country under some measure of administration, and this in turn would involve an attempt to settle the frontier question with China. I am afraid that all our past experience shows that such an attempt would entail years of negotiation, and offer small prospect of success in the end." Letter from Samuel Hoare to Robert Horne, 11 August 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.
[121] Robert Horne to Samuel Hoare, 31 August 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.
[122] Minute Paper, "The Panglong Mines", found in Wa States Expedition.

which would be issued before the expedition arrived, would state that the colonial government had "decided to investigate these mines, and are sending an expedition for this purpose under a Government officer, who will discuss all matters with the Chiefs, and that the Government have no intention of interfering with the authority of the Chiefs in their own tribes."[123] Following such overtures, which would include an exchange of gifts between Oberlander and the Pang Long *Sawbwa*, the party would arrive in Pang Long to determine the economic potential of the mineral deposit.[124] Both the government and the company consented to the plan and the expedition moved forward.

The party – led by the engineer Archibald Colquhoun and consisting of geologists and engineers from the Burma Corporation, one column of 100 military police, a number of medical and sanitary workers, as well as a civil officer and his men – left Namtu on January 13th, 1934. G.E. Barton, an intelligence officer with experience in the region, also joined the expedition en route.[125] Around the 21st of January, the company arrived in Pang Long and Lufang.[126] Their dreams of proving the region's mineral wealth, however, were soon crushed. According to Colquhoun in his final report, "these old workings are of no economic importance or value to the Burma Corporation," adding that while some minerals were present, the Chinese had "prospected the area very thoroughly."[127] Despite being disappointed, A.T.W. Paine from the Burma Corporation also felt "rightly tempered by the

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[123] J.C. Walton to A.T.W. Paine, 27 November 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.
[124] Hugh Lansdown Stephenson to J.C. Walton, 26 November 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.
[125] Archibald Colquhoun's "Report of Examination on Old Chinese Workings at Lufang, Wa States," found in Wa States Expedition.
[126] IOR/L/PS/12/2245, Coll 9/17 Wa States: Burma Corporation Expedition; Chinese Aggression; Delimitation of Burmo-Chinese Frontier.
[127] Archibald Colquhoun's "Report of Examination on Old Chinese Workings at Lufang, Wa States," found in Wa States Expedition.

knowledge that neither the Government nor the Corporation could indefinitely have declined the duty to investigate new ground of such reputed promise." "The interest they both have in the maintenance of the great industry, still solely dependent upon the finite ore reserves of the Bawdwin mine," he argued, "makes it imperative to investigate every possibility of increasing those resources which create employment and prosperity so far beyond the confines of the Shan States." For the Burma Corporation, the fact that the company and government were conterminously engaged in a project to develop Burma was a hopeful sign for the colony's future. And, at the very least, "if the expedition leads to the definition of a more stable and satisfactory frontier, it will not have been entirely barren of results."[128]

The frontier, though, did remain in question. Although the company left the area immediately after making estimates at the site, knowledge of the "British" presence in the region made its way across the border. According to a British government report, "exaggerated and incorrect reports of the proceedings and intentions of the expedition led to considerable agitation in Yunnan."[129] In the opinion of the Chinese Consul, the expedition – and along with it, an armed British police force - had occupied territory within the Liu Chen line, violating the country's sovereignty.[130] In June 1934, and after a considerable force of Chinese troops had amassed along the border, skirmishes broke out between the British military police and Chinese forces, leading to the death of around ninety Chinese troops and the wounding of one British soldier.[131] Although Hoare would note privately that by the end of June things "were quieting down," the British Cabinet in London met to discuss the matter

[128] A.T.W. Paine to J.C. Walton, 10 August 1934, found in Wa States Expedition.
[129] IOR/L/PS/12/2245, Coll 9/17 Wa States: Burma Corporation Expedition; Chinese Aggression; Delimitation of Burmo-Chinese Frontier.
[130] *The Times*, 2 July 1934.
[131] *The Times*, 29 June 1934.

and the event made international news.[132] The border question would continue to vex colonial administrators into the 1940s, right until the invasion of Japanese forces during World War Two and the end of British rule.

Conclusion

The incident along the Chinese border may have eventually led to a relative peace between the British and Chinese governments, but the event reveals how close the interests of the British state and the company had become by the 1930s. When the Governor of Burma, Hugh Lansdown Stephenson, noted how the Burma Corporation was "a good deal more than merely a commercial concern," he was not speaking facetiously.[133] As this chapter demonstrates, the company was seen a model of good governance in the colony, not only profiting and bolstering the economy of British Burma but also acting as an agent of social development in the Northern Shan States. The company, however, was not simply a state within a state, as tempting as it might be to label it as such. Instead, the company should be seen as an extra-governmental entity, simultaneously acting outside the state as a private actor but also firmly within state interests, expanding the reach of the colonial administration as it became a center of migration and industry at the nexus between South, Southeast, and East Asia. This process of integration between state and private interests, though, was uneven

[132] The *Soviet and White Russian Press*, for example, in an article entitled "The English Imperialists in Yunnan," noted how the "natives" of the region had been "incited by the English" to invade its neighboring territories in order to secure the "numerous silver and gold fields" located there. See British Library, India Office Papers and Public Records, Sir Samuel Hoare Papers, E240/15, Samuel Hoare to Hugh Lansdown Stephenson, 22 June 1934; *Soviet and White Russian Press*, 6 April 1934.
[133] Hugh Lansdown Stephenson to Samuel Hoare, 27 June 1933, found in Wa States Expedition.

and complex. Although some ideas about the mining enterprise remained static in the public imagination, such as the marvels of the "Burmese Wonderland," the relationship between the state and the company evolved over the early twentieth century. The company and government may have battled over issues like budgets, royalties, and foreign ownership in the mines early days, but by the 1930s, the colonial administration was willing to risk war in order to secure the interests of its prized firm, going so far as to send an American engineer to the contested Wa States as an agent of the state. The story of the Burma Corporation demonstrates just how significant transnational corporations were to the project of state making in the colonial world. It also show how complex the British Empire could be during the late colonial period, as well as the important role that supposedly non-state agents played on the ground.

Epilogue

Following the China border incident, the Burma Corporation experienced a period of success at Bawdwin and Namtu. Although the global metal trade – and the silver trade, in particular – had slumped with the economic depression of the early 1930s, by the mid-1930s, the market had largely recovered. After the passing of the Silver Purchase Act in the United States in 1934, the price of silver rebounded, ushering in what Percy Marmion labeled a "phenomenal period" at the mines.[1] In 1935, Marmion announced that salaries and wages at the mines, which had been reduced in 1931 owing to the economic downturn, were "restored to their former level." He also announced ambitious plans to expand the scale of operations at Bawdwin and Namtu.[2] Speaking to shareholders at the company's offices on Strand Road, Marmion – who by this time had ascended to the position of Vice-Chairman and Joint Managing Director of the firm – declared that "you may rest assured that no effort will be spared to keep the Corporation in the forefront of the great metal producers in the world." It was, by all accounts, an optimistic time.[3]

Marmion's confidence, however, proved fleeting. By the start of 1939, and with the threat of war yet again looming in Europe, the chairman became anxious about the "war machine" emerging "in the industrial life of every country," as well as the impact that a new conflict would have on the firm's business.[4] His concerns were prescient. In 1940, Marmion

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[1] *Rangoon Gazette*, 23 December 1935. On the Silver Purchase Act of 1934, see John A. Brennan, *Silver and the First New Deal* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969).
[2] This included the production of gold for the first time, which was found in small percentages in Bawdwin's ore. *Rangoon Gazette*, 23 December 1935.
[3] Sir John Cherry, in his response, noted that Marmion's speech contained "distinct gleams of light." Ibid.
[4] *The Times*, 5 January 1939.

noted that the war had forced the company to adapt to "entirely new conditions." The British government - instead of private traders - became the "greatest buyer" of the company's metals, the Ministry of Supply replaced the London Metal Exchange as the regulatory body that set prices, and shipping routes transformed overnight. Even more important was the loss in trade. Because the firm could no longer sell to "enemy or adjacent neutral countries," the Burma Corporation was forced to look for "alternative markets" for the sale of "certain" products."[5] Even still, production at Bawdwin and Namtu continued apace. Although the company struggled to find a market for its zinc products, the sustained demand for lead and silver in Britain remained strong into the 1940s.[6] These circumstances, however, soon changed.

On April 25th, 1942, the Burma Corporation was forced to evacuate its employees from the environs of Bawdwin and Namtu. With the Japanese army already occupying Rangoon and reports circulating that soldiers were advancing into the Shan States, company management, for purposes of national and imperial security, destroyed the mining equipment at Bawdwin and Namtu, including the smelter, the main concentration plant, sections of the rail line, and the Mansam Falls power plant.[7] Frank Espie, the mine manager who had worked at Bawdwin since World War I, led an exodus of 150 to 160 employees – including the remaining "Anglo-Indian" women and children – out of Namtu, making their way first to Hsenwi and then Namkham over the next few days. The party then enjoyed a "slice of luck." On April 28th, the American Volunteer Group airlifted "all of the women and children, clerks

[5] Marmion noted that "our revenue is more than ever dependent upon our primary productions, lead and silver," which the firm sold exclusively to the British government. *The Times*, 19 January 1940.
[6] *The Times*, 19 January 1942.
[7] For a full account of the equipment destroyed, see NA, BT228/59. See also *The Times*, 6 May 1942.

and men over 45" from the area to safety. Following an attack by Japanese bombers, however, the "fit and able bodied" men were left in Namkham, from where they would begin a long journey westward. Over the next month, Espie and members of his management team – whether on foot, by boat, or on lorry trucks – slowly made their way to Calcutta, where they would eventually find the remaining members of the Bawdwin staff. What became of Bawdwin's migrant workers, though, is largely unknown. Espie reported that on May 2nd, while near Bhamo, he was told by "some Bawdwin people" that "nearly a thousand coolies with their families" were due in Namkham the next day, but following another Japanese assault on the area, he was forced to flee. Whether or not Bawdwin and Namtu ever contained the "contented community" that officials and journalists so often exclaimed, it was clear that at least in times of war, the lives of its migrant workforce were not the leading priority for company management.[8]

Much would change at Bawdwin and Namtu after World War II. Although the Burma Corporation remained the proprietor of the mining site, the large-scale destruction of property at the mines created complications for management. Not only did the company have to rebuild decade's worth of mining equipment and facilities – with, much to their chagrin, only limited reimbursement from the colonial government or the insurance companies - but it had also lost its permanent workforce.[9] In addition, by January 1948, Burma was an independent nation. While this would not have a detrimental affect on the company in the years immediately following independence, with the founding of the Burma Socialist Programme Party under General Ne Win in 1962, the political landscape in Burma changed

[8] National Library of Australia, "Letter from F.F. Espie: Calcutta, India, to Mrs. Espie, May 1942," MS 9644.
[9] See the collection of documents in NA, BT 228/59 and NA, Foreign Office ("FO") 643/3.

dramatically.[10] In 1963, the London press reported that "all commerce and industry" in Burma, including the rice industry, was to be "entirely nationalised" by the Burmese government.[11] Then, on January 18th, 1965, Burma's state-owned radio announced that the government had officially nationalized the Burma Corporation, ending nearly six decades of western ownership at the mines.[12] The "Burmese Wonderland" was finally Burmese.

Although the Bawdwin mine would never regain its prominence as one of the world's leading sources of lead, silver, and zinc in the post-World War II period, the story of the mines is an important one. At its peak in the 1920s and 1930s, the mine was critical to both the Burmese colonial economy and British imperial commercial interests, and more broadly, it represented one of the most significant mining operations in the global metal trade. Most importantly, however, the enterprise at Bawdwin and Namtu was symbolic of the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of the British Empire during the early twentieth century. Although many at the time viewed the mines in terms of their remoteness, the mines were actually a center of activity, where thousands of people lived, worked, and perished over the course of five centuries. The story of these people – whether absentee American financiers, Anglo world mining experts, or most prominently, migrant laborers from South, Southeast, and East Asia – is really the story of Bawdwin and Namtu. This dissertation is only the first step in remembering their history.

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[10] For a summary of Ne Win's rule, see Ian Holliday, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 46-56. For an overview of Ne Win's economic agenda and impact, see Ian Brown, *Burma's Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 131-175.
[11] *The Times*, 18 March 1963.
[12] *The Financial Times*, 19 January 1965.

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