

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D. C.



DISTRIBUTED
COUNTRY
SUBJECT

17 November 1944
Burma
Interrogation - General Conditions

DISSEMINATION NO. A-43537a
ORIGINAL REPORT NO. M-307 (supplement)
DATE OF REPORT 18 October 1944
EVALUATION F-3

CONFIRMATION
SUPPLEMENT
CORRECTION

SOURCE
SUB SOURCE

2
3 Burmese ricefarmers and traders

DATE OF INFORMATION Prior to September 1944
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NUMBER OF PAGES 6
ATTACHMENTS
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The following intelligence was derived from an interrogation at which other agencies were represented. Recipients are cautioned that the same information may appear in other forms in other reports.

CULTUREEthnological Information

1. The Talaings live on the western slope of the Tonnasserim hills. Most of the people in their villages are Talaings, although a few Burmese are also found there. There are no Karens living in these villages, but they frequently come from the eastern slope of the hills where they have their own villages to trade with the Talaings.
2. The Talaings are principally cultivators, and the chief crop is rice. They are also traders and there are some home industries such as basket weaving, umbrella making, etc. A special industry in their area, carried on both by Talaings and Burmese is making tortoise shell combs. The Talaings own most of the land and mills in the Tonnasserim area.
3. There seems to be no particular feeling either of friendship or animosity toward the Arakanese.
4. Burmese is the universal language, even among the Talaings. Talaing is only spoken when privacy is desired.
5. Talaing and Burmese villages have substantially the same form of administration, the headman system. The Japanese have made no changes in this organization.

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6. Almost all Talaings, like other Burmese, are Buddhists.

Health

7. Innoculations against cholera, plague and smallpox are supposed to be required by the health authorities, but the rule is apparently not enforced.

Recreation

8. Gambling is carried on in professional houses which pay for police protection. They are not patronized by the Japanese. The principal games played are kones, apowk knit-say (Burmese card games), Burmese dominoes, and Australian and Hollywood style (sic) poker. 5-card American poker is not played.
9. The Japanese soldiers use special Japanese brothels, and claim the women are Japanese. However, they do not speak Japanese, and the informants believe they are from Korea or Manchuria. There are some Burmese women in the brothels, mostly brought from other areas, but the Talaing informants state there are no Talaing women so employed.
10. Japanese soldiers and officers frequently attend the free open-air theaters. They do not ask for special seats or consideration but mingle with the crowd. On the other hand, they never pay at the indoor entertainments when a fee is charged, and no one dares to ask them to pay.

Propaganda

11. According to the informants virtually all Pongyis are strongly anti-Japanese, and are outspoken on this subject with their particular clients. Each Pongyi has a small group of 15 to 20 families who support him and look to him for spiritual guidance, particularly in the exposition of Buddhist doctrine. In this circle criticism of the Japanese is free and regular.
12. The Pongyis say that the Japanese cannot be Buddhists because they do not show respect for the holy places. They advise non-cooperation and especially non-intercourse with the Japanese. They say that the Bangkok-Thanyuayay railroad was constructed to provide an escape route for the Japanese when the time comes.
13. The belief that the Japanese will be driven out in December of this year has religious and superstitious support in a certain celestial phenomenon widely publicized by the Pongyis. According to this theory, the Friday star represents the Japanese. The star

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cut across the path of the moon from east to west on the day the Japanese entered Burma, which was at the first waning of the Tazaungmon moon, 1302, Burma era. The same star recrossed the moon from west to east on the 11th waning of the Tabung moon, 1305 Burma era (March-April 1944). The former indicated the exodus of the western people from east to west, the latter, their return from west to east in the near future. By other astrological prophecies, including one by a well-known former priest, the time of the Japanese exodus has been fixed as December of this year. These prophecies are widely known and believed in southern Burma.

14. The Burmese have a special word for a Japanese whose health is ruined by venereal disease contracted from a prostitute, "Ngahnanchowk", meaning the dried pencil fish, which loses its size in the drying process and shrinks to almost nothing.

COMMUNICATIONS

Postal Facilities

15. Local letter boxes are still in use in Rangoon, but not in other places in Burma visited by the informants. In these places, including Moulmein, Mudoon, Tavoy, etc., all mail must be posted in a single box in front of the post office. The informants believe this is a labor-saving measure.

ECONOMIC

Finance

16. The Burmese National Lottery is still in operation on a quarterly basis, as before the occupation.

MILITARY

Troop Dispositions

17. One of the informants has frequently talked to the approximately fifty Kachin troops stationed in Mergui. They live in a single house on the outskirts of the town. They are armed with British rifles and wear a red rising sun on the left breast. These troops appear to be very unhappy and all say they want to go home. They complained about the food and clothing and say it was better in the British Army. Some are former members of the Kachin Regulars of the Burmese Rifles who were captured in battle and conscripted by the Japanese, some are new recruits. Four or five have deserted.

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18. The Japanese officer of the Kachin troops does not live with them, but always accompanied any group going into town. He wears three stars over one line on his collar. (?Captain?)
19. Burmese and Talaings, but no Karens, are employed by the Japanese as laborers around Japanese military camps and installations. This is thought to be primarily because there are few Karens available in the locality.

Terrain

20. There are 5 or 6 very good wells with plenty of water at Malizayatselk on Tavoy Island. There are several 10' wells on King Island, where there is rock and gravel underneath the top soil. There is ample water on the small islands north of Tavoy Island. Water on the mainland here is not fit for drinking.

POLITICAL
Emozy Administration

21. The Japanese in south Burma make no distinction in their treatment of Burmese and Talaings. However, they leave the Karens strictly alone, as they feel them to be too wild to control.
22. One of the informants related the following incident, in which he took part, as an example of the prevalence of official corruption. During the rice season June-1943 to February-1944, he cultivated 400 acres belonging to his mother. In April, 1943, the township officer (myo-oke), under Japanese orders, called a meeting of all landowners in the moving picture theater at Mudon. The same thing is alleged to have happened in Bilugyun and Ye townships.
23. The meeting was addressed by two Japanese officers, with collar insignia of three stars over three lines (?colonels?). They spoke through a Burmese interpreter, who announced that Japan needed paddy for the prosecution of the war, and that each landowner would have to help, by each land owner selling a total of three baskets of rice per acre cultivated, to the Japanese for Rs. 2 per basket. The market price was Rs. 9 per basket.
24. One or two of the landowners present politely suggested that the quoted price was too low, but the interpreter said that when the Japanese entered Burma the price of a basket of rice was 12 to 14 annas, so the price fixed was fair. That ended the meeting.

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25. Method of collation was as follows: the township officer gave the order for collection to the headmen, who passed it on to the landowners. The landowner delivered the number of baskets to a mill which milled it into rice, and put it in gunny sacks supplied by the Japanese. The mill owner had to submit a list of the amounts delivered by each landowner to the township officer and a Japanese agent (a native) collected the rice from the mill.
 26. This collection would have required the informant and his mother to sell 1200 baskets, worth Rs. 10,800 for Rs. 2,400, so he decided to evade it. The township official, a Sino-Burmese, a personal friend of the informant, was approached by the informant, and told of his desire to evade the impost, and his willingness to pay for assistance. The official suggested the informant file a petition claiming crop failure, and pay him R. 1 per basket of which collection was waived. The informant delivered 600 baskets to the mill and paid the official Rs. 600, through the head clerk, with whom the official was seen to divide it. The official told the informant he had made Rs. 4-5000 in a similar manner. The informant told him he would be killed by the Japanese if he were discovered, but the official laughed and said "What do those idiots know about graft?" The informant did not appear to criticize these activities, but to admire the official's skill.
- Police
27. In September 1943 the officer commanding the Japanese Military Police Post at Thanbyazayat was also the Intelligence officer at the post. When he toured the town on duty he wore Burmese civilian clothes, but was always recognized by the Japanese soldiers and the Burmese. He was thought to be very powerful and was greatly feared in the town. He appeared to be about 30 years of age.
 28. The Burmese said that persons haled before him did not come out alive but the informant could give no specific examples. He was courteous in his handling of civilian complaints. On one occasion a drunken Japanese soldier assaulted a friend of the informant, and the friend reported the incident to the officer, was politely questioned and released, though he did not learn whether there was any action taken.
 29. A friend told the informant that he had to report his arrival at Mergui to the headman, the reasons for this rule being that there were supposed to be many Allied spies at large in the Mergui area. The rule was generally respected and the informant did not know the penalties for non-compliance.
 30. Japanese soldiers do not pay on street cars and busses but have been trained to say "thank-you" in Burmese or, according to the informant "sank-oo" in English.

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Atrocities

31. About six months after the Japanese occupation a Talaing-Burmese friend of the informant was arrested in Mudon by the Japanese, as it was well known he had talked freely against them. He was taken to Moulmein and kept there for about a year, during which time nothing was heard about him. At the end of the year he was released, and returned home, looking thin and sick. He was restricted to Mudon for six months, and had to report to the headman once a week. His house had been searched during his absence, but nothing was found. He would not talk until the restrictions were lifted, after which he told the informant that he had been beaten and hung up by his ankles. He urged the informant not to talk publicly against the Japanese, nor to keep anti-Japanese literature.

Resistance

32. Both Talaings and Burmese dislike the Japanese equally and intensely, and the informants have seen members of both races passing small packets of food to Allied prisoners of war.
33. The guerillas referred to in A-43537 are said to be Indians, Karens and white men. The informants have had no actual contact with them. Access for trade and other purposes to Papua is via the Salween River, although there is an overland route from Bilun. The guerillas are not bandits and people speak well of them. The informants do not believe Talaings or Burmese could join this group, but only Karen-speaking Karens. The guerillas, they said, would not trust Burmese or Talaings.

Domestic Administration

34. All government offices were given a holiday on the Emperor's birthday. The Japanese soldiers in the vicinity got drunk, but none of the Burmese paid any attention to the day, and there was no other observance.

The informants were three Talaing ricefarmer-traders. A being very intelligent, observant and cooperative, the others less observant and intelligent, and tending to follow the lead of A in giving responses.

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