BURMA (MYANMAR) ARMY IN MYANMAR STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE (1941 - 48)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the role of Myanmar Army in Myanmar struggle for independence during the British and Japanese occupation period. Ever Since the occupation of Myanmar by the British, the Myanmar were denied an opportunity to bear arms and serve in the military. The British never felt assured of Myanmar loyalty and thus in the years following the British occupation, the Myanmar were refused admittance to the armed forces despite unceasing public clamour for the raising of Myanmar units and formations. During World War I, a large number of Myanmar were recruited for overseas military service but they were only retained for the duration of the war and were soon after, demobilized. With the growing sense of nationalism, the Myanmar made constant and continuing endeavors, throughout the thirties to gain admittance to the armed forces but the British persisted in ignoring the demands of the Myanmar. Thus, the British Myanmar forces were practically devoid of anysort of national feature in their composition as well as in the purpose for which they were maintained. However, the British were eventually compelled to make a swing around in their policy when the menace of Japan was felt in the Far East. Accordingly, at the end of the thirties, the Myanmar were accepted in the services, but intense national spirit presented them from joining the forces to serve the British. When the invading Japanese Army overran the country in 1941-42, the Myanma Army which contained a large number of indigenous races and some few Myanmar were broken up and put to a rout. Mean while, in another quarter, the Burma Independence Army (BIA) was formed around the thirty comrades as a nucleus and it was this army which assumed the primary role in the liberation of the country from colonial rule. This army was the direct net-result of

Myanmar national aspirations and was destined to occupy a unique position as the forerunner of the present day Myanma Army. Under the Japanese, the Burma Independence Army was reorganized and redesignated several times but the basic ideals upon which it was created remained unchanged throughout the entire period. The Japanese had pledged to help Myanmar attain independence but as events turned out, the Myanmar were mortified to find that they had fallen victim to the duplicity of the Japanese. Thus, in keeping faith with the purpose of its birth, the Burma National Army, as it came to be known by then, rose in revolt in 1945 against the Japanese. The Myanmar Army sought a rapprochement with the British and secured a resounding victory in the expulsion of the Japanese. Under the able and astute Leadership of Aung San, the Myanmar Army became eventually national in both form and content on the eve of Independence in 1948.

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