

A Comparative Study of Two Administrative Systems of Myanmar: Dyarchy and 91 Departments Administration

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Abstract

This paper is a comparative study on the administrative systems of Myanmar during the colonial period. It attempts to provide the historical facts of the British administration between 1923 and 1942. It also traces "the Divide and Rule policy" practised by the British. It also discusses two administrative systems which in essence are the same types of colonial practice, not to grant the full self-government for Myanmar. It also contributes to the study of the colonial administration of Myanmar.

Keywords: Legislature, Executive, Parliament, Cabinet

Introduction

On 9 April, 1897, the Indian Governor General designated Myanmar as a province of India. After the Chief Commissioner of Myanmar, Federick William Richards Fryer, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Governor on 1 May 1897, the administrative transformation began in Myanmar. Sir Reginald Craddock, the Lieutenant Governor, drew up an administrative scheme which was called "Craddock Scheme" and announced for Myanmar on 17 December 1918. By this scheme, four boards were formed and a chairman was appointed by the Lieutenant Governor to administer these four boards. By this scheme, arrangement was made that the representatives of the Legislative Council must be officials, not elected by the people. A Legislative Council was formed to give advice to the Lieutenant Governor. It was composed of nine members, out of whom five persons were Englishmen. The chairman of the Legislative Council was the Lieutenant Governor. The members were entitled to discuss the issues of finance and administration but they had no other authority. The Legislative Council was not consulted or could not give any advice. Therefore, it was the sole responsibility to the Lieutenant Governor. The Legislative Council was just the body which was to confirm the arrangements of the government officials and Lieutenant Governor. Therefore, the majority of the people protested the scheme. So the British government granted Dyarchy administration to Myanmar.

Literature Review

"*Colonial Policy and Practice (1916)*" was written by J.S. Furnivall. It was a comparative study of Burma (Myanmar), Netherlands and India. In this book, Furnivall wrote the process and procedure of the British colonial rule. Likewise, Bamaw Tin Aung wrote the book named "*Koloni Khit Myanmar Naingan Thamaing (1964)*" (History of Myanmar under Colonial Rule). In his book, he pointed out "the Divide and Rule Policy" practised by the British. The book named "*Administration of Burma (2010)*" was written by Daw Mya Sein. She gave the facts that the British initiated the colonial plans in Myanmar. Furthermore, "A Modern History of Myanmar (1752–1948)" written by Dr. Than Tun was published in 2010. He attempted to grant new informations in relation to the colonial administration in the book. With reference to the above-mentioned books, this paper attempts to reveal the purpose of the British colonial administration.

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Aims

The aims of this paper are to provide the historical facts of the colonial administration between 1923 and 1942 and to compare two administrative systems of colonial rule: the Dyarchy and the 91 Departments Administration.

Data and Methods

In this paper, the data are collected from a variety of sources compiled by the local and foreign scholars. The comparative method is used for this research.

Research Questions

1. How different were the two administrative systems of colonial rule between 1923 and 1942?
2. Why did the British change from the Dyarchy rule to the 91 Departments administration?

Findings and Discussion

In 1923, a new political structure was created. So, Myanmar became a province of India administered by a Governor. By the Government of Burma Act 1921, the British government granted the Dyarchy administration to Myanmar. However, the Shan State and the hilly regions of Chin and Kachin were excluded from that administration. There were five reserved areas of frontier regions which were put under the direct control of the Governor. Mr. Lionel Curtis was the first initiator who introduced the administration of Dyarchy system into Myanmar. The Dyarchy administration was the joint administration between the Governor who was the representative of the British Government, and People's representatives. It started on 1 January 1923 and ended on 31 March 1937.

The Dyarchy was the result of Montagu Chelmsford proposals. The Montagu Chelmsford report suggested "A Rule of Two" or "Dyarchy" and it was executed in Indian provinces since 1921. At first Myanmar was left behind considering it still unfit for this little improvement even. However, after two years struggle, Myanmar got it with some modifications. The first tenure of joint government was started on 1 January 1923.

With the start of that administration, Myanmar was administered by the Governor. Under the Governor, there was the Legislative Council with 103 members and the Executive Council with four members. Among 103 members of the Legislative Council, twenty two were nominated members; two executive council ministers were nominees of the Governor; and seventy nine people's representatives were elected by votes. Among the seventy nine, peoples representatives included fifty eight Burmans, five Kayins, eight members of Indian representative, one member of Rangoon (Yangon) University representative, one member of European representative, one member of Anglo-Myanmar, one member of European Grocery Shop Association, one member of Chinese Mercantile Association, two members of European Chamber of Commerce and one member of Burman Trading Corporation.

In Dyarchy, the system had been exercised in election that the electoral circles were fixed with population of special regions. The right to vote was the system of family unit which each family can cast a vote. Any person who is 18 years old and above could vote in the election.

According to Dyarchy administration, the present Lieutenant Governor was promoted to the Governor. The first Governor of Burma (Myanmar) was Sir Harcourt Butler (1923-1937). The Governor was appointed by the Governor General of India in consultation with the Empress of England. The Governor ruled on behalf of the Governor General of India, who had to rule on behalf of the Empress of England. The term or tenure of the Governor's rule was five years. The Legislative Council was under the Governor of Burma (Myanmar). Above that council was also organized the Executive Council which comprised two ministers selected by the Legislative Council who ruled the departments of the transferred subjects and two ministers out of the governor-appointed officers, who ruled the special departments (Home Affairs and Finance Department). However, all the plans of the Legislative Council and the Executive Council could be confirmed only with the approval of the Governor, or be cancelled by the veto if the Governor did not approve it.

According to that Dyarchy, there were (102) departments in administration. Government's functions were divided into two groups, "one is real importance and another is lesser importance". Technically the first or the really important group was called "the Reserved Subjects" and the second was called "the Transferred Subjects". The Reserved Subjects were,

- (1) Law and order
- (2) Revenue and Finance
- (3) Irrigation and
- (4) Major bureaucracy in charge of general administration

The Transferred subjects were,

- (1) Local Government
- (2) Education
- (3) Public Health
- (4) Agriculture
- (5) Exercise
- (6) Public Works and
- (7) Forest

Two members who controlled the Reserved Subjects were only responsible to the Governor. Two Myanmar members of the Transferred Subjects were responsible to the Legislative Council. Members of the Reserved Subjects controlled the finance and had had the first claim on it for their own departments. So, members of the Transferred Subjects found it impossible to do large scale reforms involving heavy expenditure on education and public health, which were of vital importance in building a nation.

In Dyarchy, the central plain areas and the hilly tracts such as Chin, Kachin and Shan had been divided. Detached from the Legislative Council's authority, the Governor himself administered the hilly tracts on the grounds that these places were the less developed areas or the backward tracts. Moreover, among (79) elected members, (21) were allowed for Indians, Englishmen, Anglo-Burmans and Karen race separately. The Dyarchy still provided the division that on the one hand

British and Indian merchants enjoyed special privileges for election, but on the other the right to vote of the majority of people were restricted. Dyarchy was only a political deception of the British who did not want to grant the Autonomy. During that time, the administrative system that the people of Myanmar would like was Home Rule or Autonomy. One of the major events in Myanmar politics under the Dyarchy rule was the split of General Council of Burmese Association (G.C.B.A.). As a result of the Dyarchy administration, G.C.B.A., the most energetic champion of Myanmar nationalism, was split into a number of smaller groups. The Dyarchy can be regarded as the attempt to delay the Autonomy for Myanmar.

Since 1923, Myanmar was put under the Dyarchy administration, but in 1937, new administration was introduced in Myanmar by the Government of Burma Act (1935). It was started on 1 April 1937 and ended on 1 March 1942. It was the new administration aiming at the grant of more administrative powers to the Myanmar national races. Because the people's representatives could administer the 91 Departments, it was known as "91 Departments Administration".

On 1 April 1937, the British Government started 91 Departments Administration in Myanmar. Thereby the Dyarchy system came to an end in Myanmar. In that period, Myanmar was ceased to be a province of the India's Empire, and with that Myanmar was under the direct rule of the British Government.

In the structure of 91 Departments Administration, there were two chambers of Parliament: a Senate and a House of Representatives. The term of Senate was (7) years. The Senate had thirty six members of whom half were elected and half were nominated and it could be always overridden by the Lower House. The House of Representatives had 132 members who were all to be elected. The tenure of it was (5) years. The Cabinet had six to nine ministers appointed by the Governor. To help the Governor there were three consultant ministers. One consultant finance minister and one attorney general were directly appointed at the discretion of the Governor. The consultants had the right to discuss at both Chambers of Parliament and committees. However, they had no right to vote.

According to 91 Departments Administration, with the exception of the hilly tracts or backward tracts, 132 members of Parliament elected for the House of Representatives were as follows:

**Members of Parliament elected for the House of Representatives and
Ethnic Group Numbers¹**

Myanmar Representatives	91
Kayin Representatives	12
Indian Representatives	8
Anglo-Myanmar Representatives	2
European Representatives	3
Indian Workers' Representatives	2
Myanmar Workers Representatives	2
Myanmar Traders' Association Representative	1

¹ Mya Han, 2010, 46

Members of Parliament elected for the House of Representatives and Ethnic Group Numbers¹

Indian Traders' Association Representatives	2
Chattiya Association Representative	1
European Chamber of Commerce Representatives	5
European Trading Association of Yangon Representative	1
Chinese Traders' Association Representative	1
Yangon University Representatives	1
Total	132

In the 91 Departments administration, (7) important departments such as defence, finance, foreign affairs and etc; were put under the control of the Governor. The people's representatives had no authority to deal with the important issues. The Governor controlled the important departments and he had the veto power to annul the resolutions of both Chambers. Moreover, he could dismantle the People's Parliament and Cabinet. He could issue emergency acts and he could administer the country as he desired. Therefore, Senate and House of Representatives were just for show and the real power was in the hands of the Governor. In reality, the Governor was the person who represented the British government or who obeyed the order of the British government. The power was not in the hands of Myanmar people, but in the hands of British government and British Parliament.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the British had to grant the Dyarchy to Myanmar by the Government of Burma Act (1921) on account of the protest of the people of Myanmar to the Craddock Scheme. The Dyarchy was the new administrative system aiming at the grant of more administrative powers to the people of Myanmar. It means the government by two independent authorities, the officialdom and the people's representatives and it goes without saying that the people has only a minor share in the policy making. There was only a small change in administrative system. The importance of the change was not the change in itself but paving the way for bigger changes. Apart from the fact that people's representatives had only experienced in administration, they had no real political authority. Dyarchy was an alteration to administration in order to deceive the Bureaucracy into the Parliamentary system. Thus, in 1937, the new administration was introduced in Myanmar by the Government of Burma Act (1935). It was the administration aiming at the grant of more administrative powers to the Myanmar national races. As the people's representatives could administer the 91 Departments, it was called "91 Departments Administration". In that administrative system, the Governor, who still possessed the veto power, could yet rule the country as he desired. Hilly tracts or backward tracts such as Shan, Kachin, Chin and Karenni, also known as the Excluded Areas, and other areas were still divided. The 91 Departments administration was not advantageous to the nation and nationalities except it gave ministerial positions to the political leaders. It only gave Myanmar the administrative experiences and procedures. Hilly tracts or backward tracts such as Shan, Kachin, Chin and Karenni, also known as the Excluded Areas, and other areas were still divided. The 91 Departments administration was not advantageous

to the nation and nationalities except it gave ministerial positions to the political leaders. It only gave Myanmar the administrative experiences and procedures. It was grander than the Dyarchy system in appearance. However, the 91 Departments Administration was in essence not much different from the Dyarchy Administration. It can be regarded as the attempt of the British to delay the full self government for Myanmar.

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Books in Myanmar

စစ်ကိုင်းဟန်တင်၊ (၂၀၁၂)၊ *မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်မှတ်တမ်း*၊ သုံးတွဲပေါင်းချုပ်၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ပြည်သူ့ အာဏာစာအုပ်တိုက်။

ဗန်းမော်တင်အောင်၊ (၁၉၆၄)၊ *ကိုလိုနီခေတ် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသမိုင်း*၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ပြည်သူ့အလင်းစာပေ။

မြဟန်၊ ဦး၊ (၂၀၁၀)၊ *ကိုလိုနီခေတ် မြန်မာ့သမိုင်းအဘိဓာန်*၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ ယုံကြည်ချက်စာပေ၊ စတုတ္ထအကြိမ်။

မြင့်သိန်း၊ ဦး၊ (၂၀၀၆)၊ *ပြောင်းလဲလာသောမြန်မာနိုင်ငံ အုပ်ချုပ်ပုံစနစ်အမျိုးမျိုး*၊ ရန်ကုန်၊ အင်ကြင်းဦးပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ပထမအကြိမ်။

သန်းဝင်းလှိုင်၊ (၂၀၀၉)၊ *၂၀ ရာစု မြန်မာ့သမိုင်းကို ပြောပြနေသော နေ့ရက်များ (၁၉၀၀ မှ ၁၉၉၉ ထိ)*၊ ပုဇွန်တောင်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ကံကော်ဝတ်ရည်စာပေ၊ ပထမအကြိမ်။