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Bringing Murderers to Justice in Late Colonial Burma

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ABSTRACT

For senior British officials in late colonial Burma, an important part of the explanation for the province's soaring murder rate was the reluctance and often outright refusal of Burmese witnesses to murder to engage with the police and courts in bringing killers to justice. That reluctance or refusal, it was said, substantially reduced the arrest and in particular the conviction rate in murder cases, thereby weakening the deterrent impact of the law. British officials explained the reluctance or refusal in terms of alleged weaknesses in the Burmese character and social organisation. In contrast, this paper argues that the Burmese had strong reasons for failing to engage, in that they could have little confidence that the colonial police and courts would in fact bring murderers to justice. Self-help justice, revenge-killing, was a far more certain path. The final section of the paper examines a number of measures considered or implemented by the British colonial administration in the 1920s and 1930s to curb the murder count, measures which in fact merely exposed the Burma administration's limited reach and indeed ambition in seeing murderers caught and convicted.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, Burma, a province of British India until 1937 and then a separated British colony, had a disturbing reputation for murder. Writing in the late 1940s, the scholar-official J. S. Furnivall noted that one Burma district, with a population of just half a million, had seen 87 murders in 1927, as many as Chicago with a population of three and a half million 'and world-wide notoriety for gangsters'.¹ '[T]he number of murders in the province is appalling', wrote the Inspector-General of Police in the report on Burma's police administration for that year, 1927.² In 1935, the murder rate was said to be 'little less than deplorable'.³

Through those years, Burma's colonial administration sought with real determination to understand these appalling, deplorable figures. A major part of that search took place in public, in the pages of the published annual

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Report on the Police Administration of Burma. The murder count and Burma's high level of violent crime more broadly drew comment in every single police administration report — indeed the Resolution on the 1919 report complained that some of the 'general causes of crime ... have been discussed almost *ad nauseam*' — and at times, notably at the beginning of the 1920s, the discussion, detailed and reflective, occupied many pages.⁴ One important understanding to emerge from the colonial administration's search was that witnesses to murder in late British Burma (as well as the family, friends, and neighbours of those murdered) were commonly reluctant or refused outright to engage with the police and courts in bringing the murderer to justice. As a result, both arrest and conviction rates for murder were low, thereby weakening, it could be argued, the deterrent impact of the law. The incidence of murder then soared.

The reluctance or refusal of witnesses to engage was often explained by senior British officials in terms of alleged failures in the character and behaviour of the Burmese. That thinking will be laid out in an early section of this paper. However, the paper's principal aim is to provide an alternative explanation. It will argue that Burmese witnesses to murder (and the victim's family, friends, and neighbours) were frequently reluctant or refused outright to engage because they had little confidence that the colonial police and colonial courts would bring the murderer, even when known to all, to justice. Moreover, the aggrieved could often secure justice — retribution — in other ways, out of sight of the colonial state. This argument is intended to advance understanding of late colonial Burma's exceptionally high murder rate. But it also, far more broadly, provides insight into the ambition and ability of the colonial state to achieve central components of modernity, that is law and order and the rule of law. First, however, it is important to report the figures for murder in Burma in the final decades of British rule.

Table 1. Burma: murder cases, 1905-39.

1905	351	1915	474	1925	863	1935	837
1906	327	1916	487	1926	864	1936	801
1907	317	1917	508	1927	801	1937	817
1908	358	1918	488	1928	899	1938	962
1909	371	1919	583	1929	794	1939	961
1910	439	1920	623	1930	885		
1911	453	1921	632	1931	1,216		
1912	530	1922	610	1932	1,015		
1913	449	1923	658	1933	738		
1914	437	1924	763	1934	811		

Source: extracted from *RPAB*, 1905 through to 1939. The figures are the 'total of true cases'. Prior to 1905, the figures were the 'total reported'.



Figure 1. Burma: murder cases, 1905-39. Source: [Table 1](#).

A Deplorable Murder Count

[Table 1](#) shows the official total of murder cases in Burma in each year from the mid-1900s through to the end of the 1930s. [Figure 1](#) presents this data in the form of a graph, for greater clarity.

These figures should be treated with caution. First it is important to note the dramatic spike in the figures for 1931 and 1932, and to explain that they reflected the circumstances of a major rebellion, the Saya San Rebellion, which erupted in the final days of 1930 and swept through the Lower Burma delta and into the Shan hills, for the rebels killed considerable numbers of headmen (as they raided villages to secure arms), government officials posted in isolated locations, Indian labourers and cattlemen, and those they suspected of being government spies. Second, the murder count above was, as noted in the table, the ‘total of true cases’. But this figure was substantially below that for murders being reported to the police. For example, in 1930 the total of murder cases ‘dealt with by the police’ — reported — was 1,077 but the total of true cases recorded was 885. Often there was a straight-forward explanation for the discrepancy. On investigating a reported murder, the police will have concluded that the deceased had not been murdered but had suffered a fatal accident, had died of natural causes, or had committed suicide. In brief, the report had been mistaken. However, often there was an unsound reason for the discrepancy. In cases of reported murder where it was impossible to identify and arrest the murderer, it would appear that frequently the police would declare the report to be false — whereas in fact it was true but the case could not be solved — in order to avoid recording too large a number of unsolved murder cases in the police statistical returns.⁵ In other words, the total of

true cases of murder given in the table above almost certainly involved a deliberate and significant under-counting by the police.

The figures that remain are still striking. At the end of the 1930s, the total of murders being committed in Burma each year was three times the total in the mid-1900s.⁶ Of course adjustment must be made for the growth in population over that period. In the mid-1930s, the administration's calculations indicated 36 murders per million of population in 1914 rising with barely a break to 69 per million in 1930, a doubling in the incidence of murder in a decade and a half.⁷ Finally from the table and figure, the rise in murders per year over the three and a half decades was sustained, with few marked reverses and indeed two major surges, in the first half of the 1920s and in the final years of the 1930s.

The murder rate in late colonial Burma was, according to the provincial administration, far above that in the other provinces of British India. Comparative figures for 1928, reproduced in [Table 2](#), show Burma's murder rate (61 per million of the population) as twice that in the second most murderous province in British India, the Punjab (32 per million), and three and a half times that of all Indian provinces excluding Burma (17 per million).

In addition to the soaring murder count, it is important to record the low rate of convictions for murder. That figure was of repeated concern to the administration in late colonial Burma. Thus in 1936 the Inspector-General of Police reported that in only half of murder cases was an accused being sent for trial and in only half of murder trials was the accused being found guilty.⁸ In other words, only one in four murderers was being caught and convicted. Moreover less than half those convicted of murder were being hanged. No one in British Burma, he concluded, need be deterred from committing murder by fear of being sent to the gallows — or indeed being caught and convicted — for the odds against being hanged were more than eight to one.⁹ The conviction rate may well have been still lower in cases of premeditated murder. As the Inspector-General of Police noted in his 1919 report, '[p]rovided that sufficient care is taken in the commission of the crime and ordinary luck accompanies the murderer, premeditated murder is a form of crime which in

Table 2. Murders in the Provinces of India, 1928.

	Murders	Murders per million of the population
Assam	60	8
Bengal	524	11
Bihar and Orissa	270	8
Bombay	450	23
Burma	801	61
Central Provinces	229	17
Madras	820	19
Punjab	668	32
United Provinces	803	18
All India Governors' Provinces, excl. Burma	3,824	17

Source: 'Burma crime statistics circulated by K. B. Harper, delegate to Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 23–30 January 1934', IOR M/1/88. The figure is for 'completed cases only'.

Burma can be committed with practically a certainty of escaping punishment'.¹⁰ That immunity could only contribute to the soaring murder count.

There is an important point to be inserted here about the interpretation of conviction rates. 'The best statistical test of criminal work [the criminal justice system] is the percentage of convictions in true cases', stated the Governor in Council in 1926.¹¹ A low conviction rate indicated failure. But in court, a low conviction rate could indicate a determination to adhere to the rule of law, to convict only when guilt had been established beyond reasonable doubt. Conversely, a high conviction rate might indicate a weakening of the rule of law — a willingness to accept forced confessions or uncorroborated hearsay evidence — a stacking of the system against the accused, resulting at times in an innocent man being convicted. In that event the police and judicial records would still show that the crime — be it murder — had been solved. A man had been convicted and sent to prison, transported for life, or hanged.

The Officials' Perspective

As was noted in the opening of this paper, senior British officials in late colonial Burma explained the low conviction rate for murder in large part in terms of the reluctance or outright refusal of witnesses to engage with the police and courts. This section will initially bring together some of the officials' evidence for reluctance and refusal, first with respect to the police and then with respect to the courts. A substantial investigation undertaken by senior police officers in Henzada District in 1926 provided considerable detail on over fifty murders and on several dacoit-gangs.¹² There were frequent references in the Henzada police files to the 'suppression of evidence', to a failure to report crime 'through fear of reprisals', and to the bribing of witnesses. Most of the murder cases in the Henzada 'murder zone' were declared 'undetected', but with the implication that at times the police had in fact identified the murderer — he had been detected — but were unable to secure the evidence that would lead to a conviction. In an earlier murder case in Henzada, in 1922, it was reported that the 'villagers suppressed all evidence as much as they could. The case [accused] was sent up [for trial] on the strength of the evidence of the deceased's mother who ... spoiled the case by retracting her statements before the court.'¹³ 'In a case in the Pegu District', the 1935 police administration report noted, 'the murderer gave himself up, and confessed to the crime, but could not be sent up for trial as his confession could not be corroborated! The villagers seemed to band together to save the culprit from himself.'¹⁴ In the same year, the Deputy Commissioner of Mergui, addressing a district durbar, complained that in several recent instances, 'a whole village, including the village headman himself, [had] deliberately suppressed evidence, in order to prevent the police from arresting criminals'.¹⁵ And as a final example, in mid-1940, the District Superintendent of Police in Henzada

reported on a murder at a village *pwé* (festival) in front of witnesses. None was prepared to give evidence and 'it was only when the village was threatened with a collective fine that witnesses became available.'¹⁶ (It might be added that the court rejected the witnesses' evidence, on the grounds that they were clearly unwilling and had come forward only to save the village from being fined.)

Not all witnesses to murder were reluctant to come forward. There were many, perhaps strongly angered or distressed by the events they had just seen, who eagerly provided a statement to the police or to a magistrate. However, when it came to the trial at a sessions court, in giving evidence they would often contradict their earlier statement or simply retract it.¹⁷ The 1922 Henzada murder case noted above illustrates the point. The accused had been sent for trial solely on the strength of statements made by the victim's mother to the police, statements which she then retracted when called to give her evidence before the sessions court. A further example comes from a murder trial in Tavoy in early 1930, recounted in his memoirs by A. J. S. White, at the time the District Commissioner. At a local cinema, a young Burmese Assistant Township Officer had shot and killed a commissaire who, to his annoyance, had insisted that he purchase a ticket to enter. Statements had been taken from witnesses by the District Superintendent of Police, and White himself had taken a statement from the victim as he lay dying in the hospital. When the case came to court, White recounted, 'the two main prosecution witnesses watered down their versions of what had happened' and moreover 'the defence had induced a number of witnesses to testify that ... the revolver [had gone] off by accident'.¹⁸ This was a highly unlikely story, recalled White, but the judge felt bound to acquit the accused.

Both the prosecution and the defence witnesses in the Tavoy murder trial were certainly present in the court but, in terms of bringing the murderer to justice, clearly did not engage with it. 'The criminal courts are filled with perjury and false evidence', noted Harold Fielding-Hall, a magistrate and judge in colonial Burma before the First World War.¹⁹ Or as a later magistrate recalled, 'perjury on one side or the other was so obvious that one felt justice was impossible to come by in many cases ...'²⁰ This theme was near-constantly reinforced in police administration reports through the 1920s and 1930s. According to the 1935 report, 'the traditional methods of defence adopted by the accused and their advisers [are] suborning the prosecution witnesses and hiring false witnesses of their own'.²¹ The 1936 report stated that 'bribery by the accused's party' was common, while the 1939 report added that witnesses could be bought for a few rupees and that village touts were 'always ready to act as agents to buy over prosecution witnesses'.²² In an article published in *The Burma Police Journal* in the late 1930s, a senior official wrote of a pleader 'who provided [the accused] with alibis, receivers, and a strong team of witnesses'.²³

For senior British officials, a main reason for the rampant perjury in Burma's courts was the large-scale intimidation of witnesses. To act as a prosecution witness could certainly be dangerous. As the conviction rate in murder trials was low — in 1930, for example, just 54 per cent of those tried for murder were found guilty — prosecution witnesses ran the considerable risk that at the end of the trial, the accused would be free to take revenge on those who had testified against him.²⁴ Even in trials that ended in convictions, prosecution witnesses could face intimidation from the associates of the accused during the proceedings and retaliation after the verdict had been returned. In those circumstances, a prosecution witness called to give evidence in court would be wise to retract the statement he had earlier made to the police or to a magistrate, deliberately contradict it, or 'water down' his account. Furthermore, where murders were committed by hit-men, thugs hired by feuding landowners or directed by rival dacoit gangs, it might well be dangerous for the headman (indeed anyone) even to report the crime to the authorities, for that could bring severe retribution.²⁵ It was safer to say nothing. The intimidation of witnesses and relatives, to force them to change their evidence or, better still, to have no contact at all with the police and the courts, was vividly caught in an account of the Henzada 'murder zone' in the mid-1920s:

no one dare speak against the assassins. Even when a murderer was more or less caught red-handed, the relatives of the murdered person dare not come forward with a charge ... some idea of the dangers [witnesses] ran may be gauged from the startling fact that, on one occasion, a witness was chased by a gang member and slain right in front of the magistrate's bench at the Court House, while the magistrate was sitting.²⁶

Senior colonial officials advanced a number of further explanations for the failure of the Burmese to engage effectively with the police and the courts in bringing murderers to justice, explanations that drew on their understandings of the Burmese character and beliefs and of the nature of Burmese society. Of course, ingrained in the official mind right across British-ruled India was the view that the populace 'could not distinguish fact from fiction' — while, it might be added, the British themselves possessed a 'special relationship to the truth'.²⁷ But beyond that, the reasoning here was quite specific. For example, senior officials in the Burma administration pointed to the influence of Buddhism on the behaviour of Burmese witnesses before the police and the courts. In the 1935 police administration report, the Deputy Commissioner in Henzada, a Burman, noted 'the reluctance amongst the Buddhists to give evidence against a man in case such evidence should result in the man being hanged', a view confirmed in the same report by a second Burman officer, the District Superintendent of Police in Maubin: 'Villagers will not give information against any man whom they know is going to be hanged as they have religious scruples. The villagers' opinion is that what has been done

cannot be undone.²⁸ The Inspector-General of Police, Lieut.-Col. Wellborne, again in the 1935 report, wrote of the ‘feeling that one man has already met his death, why be a party to causing another death, a Buddhist religious scruple’, he added, ‘which it is difficult to combat’.²⁹ And then in the following year’s report, his successor, R. C. Morris, drew attention to the Buddhist-Burmese belief — the law of karma — that a murder victim had in fact ‘merited his death’, with the implication that, in the words of a later writer, the murderer was ‘merely the agent of [his victim’s] karma’.³⁰ In short, in these and indeed other respects, the Buddhist perspective on crime and punishment sat uneasily with the demands of Western criminal justice.³¹

Buddhist ‘religious scruples’ will have been reinforced by the presence of Burmese assessors at sessions courts, there to assist the judge in determining the facts in a case and to instruct him on local custom or practice.³² Assessors apparently took a close interest in cases in which a capital sentence was likely to follow conviction, often constituting themselves as advocates for the accused, confident that in saving a man from being hanged they would acquire religious merit.³³ In 1913 it was reported that the sessions judge in Prome had found summing up in murder trials practically useless, for ‘as soon as he started to sum up, the Assessors explained that they were satisfied of the accused’s innocence’.³⁴

Senior colonial officials drew attention to two alleged weaknesses in Burmese society to further explain the failure to engage effectively with the police and courts in murder cases. The first was a lack of public spiritedness, an absence of public opinion strongly condemning murder.³⁵ ‘It is strange but it is none the less a fact that the public take very little interest in murder cases’, noted the District Superintendent of Police in Pyapôn in the late 1920s.³⁶ Writing in the *Rangoon Times* in 1919, a senior official, S. G. Grantham, saw the absence of ‘healthy public opinion’ as reflecting a weak sense of community in rural Burma, as headmen, not elected but imposed, lacked authority. ‘Public opinion will arise when and where there is a community...’, he argued.³⁷ Some senior officials drew attention to the advanced state of public opinion in Western societies, ‘where every member of the public is willing to assist the police to effect the arrest of absconding criminals’, implying a deep-seated divide between East and West.³⁸

A deep divide was also evident in the second alleged weakness in the local society. In 1919, the Deputy Commissioner in Katha declared his ‘settled conviction’ that the colonial judicial system was simply ‘far too advanced for this primitive land’.³⁹ Five years later, the Inspector-General of Police, no less, reported ‘a general consensus of opinion that the judicial system in force in Burma is not suited to the country’.⁴⁰ The report of a government enquiry, published in 1923, into the recent increase in violent crime in Burma was explicit: ‘Our Indian legal system embodies an attempt to apply the principles gradually evolved by a people who have reached a comparatively high standard of truth,

conduct and public duty [the British] to a people with far more primitive standards [the Burmese]; and the result cannot yet be pronounced an outstanding success.⁴¹ This deep divide between East and West was a not uncommon theme in British India. A character in *Strangers in India* by Penderel Moon, a senior India administrator, published in 1944, put that view most strongly: ‘it is probably impossible for sophisticated people like ourselves to provide an appropriate criminal [justice] system for a peasant society, whose customs and outlook are so entirely different from our own.’⁴² I will return to this argument later.

An Absence of Trust

This paper proposes an alternative explanation. It is that witnesses to murder and the family and neighbours of murder victims were often reluctant or refused outright to engage with the colonial police and courts to bring the murderer to justice because, even when they did engage, the police and courts could not be trusted to produce a conviction. Murderers, known to all, walked free.

The annual *Report on the Police Administration of Burma* through these years was repeatedly critical of the police and their procedures. A common criticism was that the investigation of violent crime was often poorly conducted, the initial work being left to inefficient and frequently corrupt subordinates without direction from their superiors.⁴³ A government-appointed enquiry into bribery and corruption, publishing its report in 1941, estimated that not less than two-thirds of police inspectors were corrupt.⁴⁴ Even when a suspect was identified, it would frequently take the police weeks or even months to attempt an arrest, by which time the suspect had fled, never to be caught.⁴⁵ It was often said that the gathering and recording of evidence by the police was seriously flawed. In the 1897 report, the Commissioner in Akyab was scathing:

In the majority of cases the examination of witnesses is perfunctorily conducted and carelessly recorded. Cases in which witnesses repudiate the whole or parts of statements recorded as made by them in police diaries are so frequent as to be rather the rule than the exception, and are responsible for a large proportion of the acquittals and discharges ... important questions are often left unasked [by the police] or the replies to them not recorded ...⁴⁶

There was further criticism that the police were prone to send accused for trial with inadequately prepared papers, trusting that the prosecution lawyer and the magistrate would make good the defects.⁴⁷ In the 1937 police administration report, the Deputy Commissioner in Prome charged that in ‘some cases accused were sent up [for trial] with no evidence beyond the confession of a co-accused subsequently retracted ... one would not hang a dog on such evidence’.⁴⁸ As a final comment, the bribery and corruption enquiry report published in 1941 concluded that in some districts, under incompetent or dishonest leadership, police malpractice — concealing crime, letting off the guilty,

prosecuting the innocent — was ‘sufficiently frequent and scandalous ... to give some justification for the public distrust of the police’.⁴⁹

Turning to the courts, many of the magistrates, who in murder cases would hear committal proceedings, were said to be corrupt. In the mid-1920s the Deputy Commissioner in Bassein charged that the ‘corruption among a certain section of the Magistracy is a public scandal ... an investigating [police] officer [will know] that a perfectly good case is certain to fail in court because the Magistrate will be bribed’.⁵⁰ Again the bribery and corruption enquiry report was damning:

Magistrates and Judges not infrequently receive money in person, or through their wives or mistresses ... professional touts, clerks, servants, and village headmen are often used as intermediaries ... A common method of inviting bribes in criminal cases is to adjourn the case during its progress ... it is even more common, at the close of the case, to make repeated adjournments before pronouncing judgment ... We were told on good authority of a Magistrate who sent for the accused and showed [him] the text of the judgment which, unless [the Magistrate was] paid, he would pronounce on the morrow.⁵¹

But for murder witnesses, as well as for the families and neighbours of murder victims, the most fraught and disorientating engagement with the colonial criminal justice system — when there *was* engagement — took place in the session courts, where murder cases were tried. As was repeatedly noted in the annual police administration reports, months could elapse between the time a crime was witnessed, statements taken, and committal proceedings held, and the time the case came to trial, a delay that would cause prosecution witnesses to forget or misremember details in their evidence.⁵² Moreover, while waiting to be called into court, prosecution witnesses would often be approached by defence ‘advisers’, commonly retired subordinate officials or dismissed policemen, who would set to work to confuse them, leaving a witness ‘so hopelessly muddled up that their evidence is considered unsatisfactory and results in the accused being discharged or acquitted’.⁵³ Finally, under cross-examination by an agile defence lawyer, a prosecution witness, perhaps unfamiliar with the procedures of a colonial court, could easily be made to contradict his earlier statement, his own evidence in court, or the evidence being given by another prosecution witness.⁵⁴ In fact, Taw Sein Ko, a prolific writer in this period on Burma’s archaeology, religion, history, society, and law, argued that ordinary Burmese would be mystified by the procedures of the colonial court. In Asia, he suggested, a ‘man must be convicted out of his own mouth: circumstantial evidence, hair-splitting definitions, eye-witnesses, logical inferences etc., do not avail anything and are not necessary.’⁵⁵ And again: in the colonial court ‘there is too much logic, too much hair-splitting, too much anxiety not to convict an innocent person and give him the benefit of the doubt, too great a reliance on precedents and rulings ...’⁵⁶

It is important here not to slip into a crass stereotype, to see the faltering performance of the witness on the stand or the Burmese apparent mystification at the reliance on precedent or use of circumstantial evidence in terms of a backward peasant colliding with modernity. There is in fact ample evidence to argue that ‘ordinary rural folk’ well understood the procedures and language of the colonial court. As witnesses to murder, individuals may well have been reluctant to appear in court to give evidence. But this should not obscure the fact that, as Jonathan Saha has shown for colonial Burma, Radha Kumar for South India, and John Rogers for colonial Ceylon, outside that context, individuals and factions eagerly used the courts in order to pursue local feuds and to secure their interests against rivals.⁵⁷ In other words, the colonial criminal justice system was an important site for the pursuit of village politics. It then follows that were individuals or factions to use (misuse) the courts to those ends, it was essential that they be familiar with the court’s procedures and language. Interestingly, in his study of justice and society in colonial Ceylon, Rogers, noting first that in ‘colonial courts evidence had to be presented according to set procedures ... otherwise it was declared invalid’, reported that witnesses ‘often delivered their [evidence] according to a set speech ... a set pattern’, after being tutored by litigants, lawyers, and petition-drawers.⁵⁸

But in one critical respect — *the* critical respect — the processes of the colonial court were incomprehensible. The plain fact was that in many murder trials, the accused was being acquitted by the court when the prosecution witnesses, the victim’s family, friends, and neighbours, indeed the whole community as well as the police themselves knew for certain that he was guilty.⁵⁹ In his administration report for 1919, Burma’s Inspector-General of Police stated:

In the majority of ... cases [of premeditated murder] the police and the villagers know perfectly well who the culprit is and the latter cannot understand why he is not punished. They do not realize the high standard of evidence required by our sense of British justice. All they realize is that a man whom they know in their own minds to be guilty of the most serious crime that can be committed is left untouched or, if arrested and tried, is acquitted and frequently returns to seek reprisals on those who have been bold enough to give evidence against him. It is not surprising that, in future cases, evidence is not forthcoming or that the average Burman’s confidence in our criminal law is gradually decreasing, as I believe it to be.⁶⁰

The Inspector-General reinforced the point later in his report, after describing a robbery and murder that had taken place in Myaungmya District. ‘It is in cases like this where no reasonable person can have any doubt about the guilt of the suspected parties but where owing to the strictness of our legal procedure convictions cannot be obtained, that the relatives and friends of the murdered men, and the neighbours generally, must view with doubt the efficacy of our criminal administration.’⁶¹ And it was not only ordinary folk who struggled to understand why the murderer was not convicted. In 1923 the Inspector-General of

Police reported on a particular murder case: ‘On being sent up for trial, [the accused] was sentenced to death for the murder of [the] Constable, to six years’ rigorous imprisonment for stabbing another Head Constable, and to one year’s rigorous imprisonment for stabbing two other police-men and the Railway Jemadar [office sweeper], all of whom had interfered with his escape. On appeal to the High Court he was acquitted.’⁶²

An important part of the explanation for the low conviction rate, according to the annual police administration reports through the 1920s and 1930s, was that in murder cases, the courts demanded a high standard of evidence before they would convict. The courts would rarely convict on circumstantial evidence alone, although in many murder cases, that was the only prosecution evidence that could be obtained; in a murder case in Henzada in mid-1940 (noted above), the witness evidence was rejected by the court because it had been obtained under coercion; and in the murder case in Tavoy in 1930 (again noted above), the witness statements taken immediately at the scene by the District Superintendent of Police were not admissible as evidence.⁶³ Seeking not to convict the innocent — with village feuds creating so many false accusations sustained by false witnesses, miscarriages of justice were very likely — it was inevitable that the courts were allowing ‘clearly guilty’ murderers to walk free.

Thus witnesses to murder in late British-ruled Burma, as well as the family and neighbours of murder victims, clearly had strong reasons not to engage with the colonial state in its attempts to bring murderers to justice. To summarise: with a frequently inept and often corrupt police force, they could not be confident that the report of a murder would be acted upon efficiently or indeed at all. Then, threatened or bribed, the magistrate could dismiss the case at the committal proceedings. And if the case *did* come to trial in a sessions court, the prosecution witnesses knew that they would face cross-examination by agile defence lawyers determined to draw them into self-contradiction, intimidation on the part of associates of the accused, and the undermining of their evidence by lying witnesses put up by the defence. If the prosecution case survived all that, it could still fall on a legal technicality, a hair-splitting definition or a decision that uncorroborated circumstantial evidence was inadmissible. Given the dim prospects of securing a conviction, it was perhaps surprising that witnesses and relatives reported murder to the police and then persisted through the courts as often as they did, particularly as there was a further (and indeed direct) way for them to bring the murderer to justice. In 1935, the District Superintendent of Police, Tharrawaddy, reporting that ‘the relatives of the deceased [would commonly] shield the murderer by suppressing evidence’, explained: ‘they do not regard the procedure of police investigation and court trial as satisfactory, it being a point of honour with them to take the law into their own hands and have revenge in their own way’.⁶⁴ And he noted: ‘it is not a difficult thing to hire a man to murder your enemy ... the

usual fee for such murder is not more than Rs. 50'.⁶⁵ In brief, to attempt to bring a murderer to justice through the police and courts was likely to fail, and consequently, as one senior official noted, 'because there is no other way to redress their wrongs', many people took the law into their own hands.⁶⁶ A contract-killing was near-certain to succeed. However, from the perspective of the relatives of a murder victim, self-justice had one major disadvantage, in that it was likely to provoke retaliation from the associates of the murdered murderer — and then further revenge and retaliation. Indeed, Burma's soaring murder count through the 1920s and 1930s may well be explained in significant part by an escalation in revenge killings, the latter a consequence, of course, of the colonial state's frequent failure to provide justice to the victims of murder.

The Ambition and Reach of the Colonial State

As was noted in the opening paragraph of this paper, in 1927 the Inspector-General of Police described Burma's murder count as 'appalling', and in 1935 he described it as 'little less than deplorable'. These were painful statements, because to secure law and order was a central principle of colonial government. A soaring murder rate, decade after decade, undermined a core justification for the colonial presence in the eyes of those who ruled.

Colonial unease may have been assuaged, however, by putting responsibility for Burma's high murder count firmly on the Burmese. Thus in searching to understand the province's exceptional murder rate, senior officials commonly focused on alleged faults in the Burmese character. For example, in the 1921 police administration report, the District Superintendent of Police, Mandalay, maintained that '[j]ealousy, lack of self-restraint and gusts of ungovernable passion for which the Burman is notorious, spite, grudge and insults given during drunken brawls are the motives for the majority of the murders committed ...'⁶⁷ And, as earlier demonstrated in this paper, in seeking to understand the Burmese reluctance or refusal to engage with the police and courts in bringing murderers to justice (thereby weakening the deterrent force of the law), officials again focused on an alleged Burmese failure, a lack of public spiritedness, an absence of public opinion strongly condemning murder. It followed (in the colonial mind) that to bring down Burma's high murder rate must wait until the Burmese were capable of self-restraint and had created a strong sense of public spirit. As one District Superintendent of Police argued, '[t]he Public of Burma must pull themselves together and realise that they must cease to tolerate the crime conditions at present ruling in the country ... they must report all cases that do occur and render every possible assistance to the police.'⁶⁸

However, in this same period the Burma administration did consider (and on occasion pursue) three initiatives to bring down the province's murder rate. And a brief examination of those initiatives provides insight into the

ambition and reach of the colonial state in securing law and order. First, as noted earlier, through the 1920s and 1930s, the annual police administration reports repeatedly complained, in the words of the Deputy Commissioner, Pegu, in 1924, of 'the extraordinarily high standard of evidence required [by the courts] to obtain a conviction ...'⁶⁹ Clearly this was a call, particularly from the police, for the courts to be less demanding, to admit for example forced confessions or uncorroborated hearsay evidence. But the colonial government held firm, the Minister of Home Affairs (a Burmese, U Aye) pronouncing in late 1940 that 'nothing can and should be done to minimise the principle that the Crown must establish the case against the person on trial beyond all reasonable doubt. The maxim of British Jurisprudence has stood the test of time; and is one of great wisdom and fairness.'⁷⁰ But perhaps more significant here than the pronouncements of politicians were the attitudes of colonial Burma's judges. In his personal account of the last years of British rule in Burma, Robert Mole, a senior official recalled: 'Some British judges gave the impression of leaning over backwards to find grounds for acquitting an accused person, in their anxiety to ensure that he received a fair trial, and cases were frequently thrown out on some legal technicality.'⁷¹ In this context it is important to note the view of one India Office official at this time that subordinate judges and magistrates were confident that they would never be blamed for being lenient, for the judges of the High Court in Rangoon were 'fanatical in their attempts to maintain a [high] standard of justice.'⁷² There is little need to add that to demand a high standard of evidence had particular force in murder trials, as a miscarriage of justice could well see an innocent man go to the gallows.

That last observation leads to the second initiative, the increased commutation of death sentences for murder into life-terms, the increased exercise of clemency. Commutation of death sentences had previously been rare in British Burma but the final years of the 1930s saw a sudden, marked rise. In 1939 the High Court confirmed 67 death sentences but there were only 27 executions: in 1940 there were 71 confirmed capital sentences and just 31 executions.⁷³ The marked rise in the commutation of death sentences almost certainly reflected the establishment of responsible Burmese ministerial government from 1937. In his memoirs, F. S. V. Donnison recounts that, as the senior official in the Judicial Department in the late 1930s, he was required to advise his 'Burmese Minister to whom, as a Buddhist, all taking of life was wrong' on the exercise of his prerogative to commute sentences of death confirmed by the High Court.⁷⁴ Furthermore the Burmese ministers may well have been calculating that a more substantial commuting of death sentences would improve the conviction rate in murder cases and thereby reduce the murder count: for arguably prosecution witnesses would now be more willing to give evidence in court and sessions judges be less reluctant to convict if there was a marked possibility that a convicted murderer would later be shown clemency and would not hang.

And third, to bring down the province's murder rate (indeed serious crime in all forms), the colonial administration sought through the first decades of the twentieth century to improve the effectiveness of Burma's police. Although the reform of the police had many aspects, it is sufficient here to focus on just two or three, the broader aim again being to provide insight into the ambition and reach of the colonial state in securing law and order. A major challenge in the reform was to improve the quality of recruits into the rank-and-file, for early in the century it appears to have been distressingly low. In 1919 the Inspector-General of Police recorded that District Superintendents were reporting that 'owing to the dearth of recruits they have not only been obliged to enlist undesirables but have had to mitigate punishments for fear of further reducing their depleted forces'.⁷⁵ During a recent tour in Amherst, Thatôn and Pegu, the Inspector-General had been 'shocked to see the bad specimens that had been enlisted and on making enquiries [had] found it was literally a case of "take what you can get or go without"'.⁷⁶

Recruitment was difficult in part because the accommodation provided for the rank-and-file was often extremely poor, a potent disincentive as nearly all the men were either married or had other relatives dependent on them, but also because a division between the rank-and-file and higher grades, introduced in the first decade of the century, deprived the former of almost all prospect of ever rising above the position of head constable.⁷⁷ With little prospect of promotion, understandably few Burmese of strong character and ability would join the rank-and-file. But the crucial factor explaining poor recruitment was low pay. In his annual report for 1916, the Inspector-General noted that in nearly every district, police constables were paid less than coolies.⁷⁸ As a result, a Chief Commissioner of Burma had noted several decades earlier, 'the police was a kind of refuge for the destitute, and those men only enlisted who were too weak or idle for coolie work ...'⁷⁹

In late 1923, after several years, it is important to note, that had seen a marked rise in the murder count, the colonial administration appointed a committee under the Chief Secretary to enquire into the strength, pay, and accommodation of the police, as well as the organisation of the force, and to make recommendations 'with a view to securing the maximum possible efficiency at the minimum possible cost'.⁸⁰ It was now recognised that the police force 'was underpaid, unduly dispersed, and insufficiently trained'.⁸¹ The Chief Secretary's committee, reporting in mid-1924, recommended a significant increase in pay, and to judge from the police administration reports from the later 1920s and into the 1930s, recruitment into the force now improved. 'A better class of recruit is being attracted in most districts, and the standard of education, conduct, training, and morale is rising', noted the resolution on the report for 1927.⁸² Recruits now saw the police as 'a lifelong career and not as a stop-gap between more lucrative and congenial forms of employment'.⁸³ One measure of rising standards was a sharp fall in illiteracy in the

police. At the end of the nineteenth century, around one-fifth of the men in the force had been classed as illiterate.⁸⁴ In 1938, just 191 men in a force of almost thirteen thousand were reported to be illiterate.⁸⁵

The colonial administration sought to increase the effectiveness of Burma's police in further ways. Until the early 1890s, the rank-and-file received no preparatory training, being placed on duty immediately they enlisted. But in 1892 the Chief Commissioner ordered the establishment of a police training school in every district.⁸⁶ Then in 1906 a Provincial Police Training School for the training of the senior ranks was opened at Toungoo, although within a few years it was relocated in Mandalay.⁸⁷ And following repeated complaints over many years that the force had too few experienced detectives, eventually a detective training school was opened in 1926, led by a principal deputed from Bengal.⁸⁸ The mid-1890s saw the publication in both English and Burmese of a new *Burma Police Manual* (revised editions were published from 1899 through to 1940), which set down the orders and regulations governing the conduct of the police in carrying out their duties.⁸⁹

In this same period the Burma police adopted modern techniques in the identification and tracking of criminals. In March 1899, Edward Henry, Inspector-General of the Bengal Police who had recently created, together with two Indian sub-inspectors, a practical and effective system of finger-print classification came to Rangoon to instruct local police officers in taking finger impressions and in classification and registration.⁹⁰ From there, selected officers in each district were given instruction in taking finger-prints, and in time a specialist Finger Print Bureau was established. The bureau's work was confined almost entirely to the identification of individuals under arrest and establishing, from the ever-expanding collection of finger-prints taken of convicts in jail, whether they had previous convictions. Only rarely was it possible for the police to use finger-prints found at the scene to establish who had committed the crime.⁹¹ Finally, through these decades the police sought to keep known criminals under surveillance, by compiling registers of former convicts now released back in society and, more broadly, notorious bad characters, and distributing the details to local authorities. However, over time the registers came to be swamped by the names of petty criminals, each supposedly kept under observation, with the result that police surveillance of the really dangerous was ineffective.⁹² From the mid-1920s police surveillance was tightened — the registers were cleaned — and at the end of the 1930s, one District Superintendent of Police was reporting that the surveillance of criminals and potential criminals was now 'the most important side of police work'.⁹³

By the late 1930s the Burma police was clearly a more professional force than it had been at, say, the beginning of the 1890s, in part through improvement in the quality of recruits into the rank-and-file (admittedly from a markedly low level) and by the provision of training, both initial and subsequently more advanced. It is critical to note, however, that through these decades, Burma's

colonial government aimed to strengthen the force at as low a cost as possible. The instruction to the Chief Secretary's committee in late 1923, quoted earlier, was explicit: it was to make recommendations with respect to the strength, pay, accommodation, and organisation of the police 'with a view to securing the maximum possible efficiency at the minimum possible cost'. That instruction — with respect to cost but perhaps not efficiency — was followed. The increase in police pay in the mid-1920s was accompanied by substantial cuts in the police establishment. In late 1924 and into 1925, 160 police stations and 94 outposts were closed, while the sanctioned number of head constables was reduced by 1,966 and of constables by 612.⁹⁴ In fact the colonial administration quickly realised that these cuts were too severe — in Pyapôn, a notoriously criminal district, seven out of the eleven police stations had been closed — and in certain districts the cuts were rapidly, although only partially, restored.⁹⁵ In 1920–21, the total strength of the civil police had been approaching sixteen thousand. In 1925–26 it was a little under thirteen thousand, and from the following year through to the mid-1930s (with the exception of two years early in the decade) it was held remarkably stable at just over thirteen thousand.⁹⁶

The aim of the authorities here, asserted the Inspector-General of Police in his 1925 report, was to create 'a smaller but better paid (and therefore more efficient) force'.⁹⁷ And yet this was a period, through the 1920s and 1930s, that brought ever more severe pressures on the Burma police — soaring violent crime and growing political protest and labour unrest — that arguably called for a larger not smaller force, of course still better paid. That the British colonial administration, nevertheless, did not increase the police establishment or indeed expenditure on the police in this period — the housing provided for most of the force 'is still disgraceful', reported the Inspector-General in 1935 — can be said to reflect its determination to reduce costs to a minimum.⁹⁸ But behind that determination lay some interesting reasoning.

As noted earlier, in understanding the province's exceptional murder rate, senior officials commonly focused on alleged faults in the Burmese character, the '[j]ealousy, lack of self-restraint and gusts of ungovernable passion for which the Burman is notorious, spite, grudge and insults given during drunken brawls ...' And in explaining the low conviction rate for murder, the failure to bring murderers to justice, officials again focused on Burmese faults, here their reluctance or outright refusal to engage with the colonial police and courts. In other words, senior officials saw that bringing murderers to justice and bringing down the murder rate were to a large extent beyond the reach of the colonial state, no matter the resources it might commit to the task.⁹⁹ It is likely that the colonial state's ambitions were further reined back by the fact that the victims of Burma's soaring murder count, not only those murdered but also family and neighbours as well as murderers hanged or imprisoned for life, were overwhelmingly Burmese. European victims were extremely rare. In other words, the British administration may well have

condemned the appalling, deplorable murder rate: but looking beyond the rhetoric, bringing the murderer to justice and bringing down the murder count was not a particularly high priority. Indeed even within policing itself, the priority may well have lain elsewhere. In his study of violence and colonial order in the European empires between the wars, Martin Thomas saw an *economic* imperative in colonial policing, arguing that ‘the forces of colonial order were ultimately geared to the protection of commercial interest ...’¹⁰⁰ And crucially in this context, that imperative, long implicit in the colonial experience, ‘became nakedly transparent as a consequence of the [1930s] depression’ and its weakening of the export sectors on which colonial budgets had long relied.

Notes

1. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 138, fn. 4.
2. *RPAB 1927*, 33.
3. *RPAB 1935*, 28.
4. *RPAB 1919*, Res. 2.
5. This observation was made with respect to the reporting of all forms of serious crime, not only murder, in [Burma] National Planning Commission, *A Study of the Social and Economic History of Burma ... Part VIb*, 104. The author of the study was J. S. Furnivall.
6. The years covered in the table end in 1939 because this was the last year before the Japanese invasion for which the *Report on the Police Administration of Burma*, the source for these figures, was published. However, in late 1940 the Secretary in the Home Department of the Government of Burma estimated that the total number of murders in that year would probably exceed 1,500: ‘Extract from Home Secretary’s letter for 1st half of December 1940, dated 23 December 1940’, British Library, India Office Records [henceforth IOR] M/3/419.
7. ‘Burma crime statistics circulated by K. B. Harper, delegate to Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 23–30 January 1934’, IOR M/1/88.
8. *RPAB 1936*, 34.
9. At times, the odds may have been still longer. In the two years 1924 and 1925, there were a total of 1,937 cases of murder. Only 411 (21 per cent) ended in conviction, while only 155 individuals were hanged. Thus just eight per cent of murderers went to the gallows. Four out of five murderers escaped justice altogether. Police Department: Resolution by His Excellency the Governor in Council, 8 August 1926, IOR L/PJ/6/1928, File 2732.
10. *RPAB 1919*, 17.
11. Police Department: Resolution by His Excellency the Governor in Council, 8 August 1926, IOR L/PJ/6/1928, File 2732.
12. District Superintendent of Police, Henzada, ‘History of murder zone in Henzada District’, no date but [September] 1926, National Archives of Myanmar [henceforth NAM], 1/15 (A) 149, 1P.19, 1926.
13. Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Henzada, to District Superintendent of Police, Henzada, 19 May 1926, NAM, 1/15 (A) 150, 1P.21, 1926.
14. *RPAB 1935*, 29.
15. *Rangoon Gazette Weekly Budget*, 11 March 1935.

16. 'Report dated the 16th July 1940, of the District Superintendent of Police, Henzada, on murder in the Henzada District', IOR M/3/419.
17. *RPAB 1926*, 37.
18. White, *The Burma of 'AJ'*, 155.
19. Quoted in Taw Sein Ko, *Burmese Sketches*, 111.
20. Papers of Sir John Clague, Autobiographical fragments, 4, IOR Mss Eur E252/72.
21. *RPAB 1935*, 30.
22. *RPAB 1936*, 34; *RPAB 1939*, 24.
23. Stanford, 'Luzoya', 273.
24. *RPAB 1930*, 26.
25. *RPAB 1935*, 29; *RPAB 1926*, 37.
26. Bigg-Wither, 'Cleaning up Burma's Murder Zone', 715, 716-17. Bigg-Wither identified neither the location of the 'murder zone' or the period of time to which he was referring. Both were identified in 'Report dated the 16th July 1940, of the District Superintendent of Police, Henzada, on murder in the Henzada District', IOR M/3/419.
27. Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India*, 24; Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, 131.
28. *RPAB 1935*, 30, 29.
29. *RPAB 1935*, 28.
30. *RPAB 1936*, 34; Spiro, *Buddhism and Society*, 46.
31. See for example Harvey, 'Buddhist Perspectives on Crime and Punishment'.
32. When a trial in a district sessions court was to be held with assessors, the judge selected two or more from a list prepared by the Collector of the men in that district qualified by their education and character to serve in that position. In the trial itself, after the judge had summed up the prosecution and defence evidence, each assessor was required to state his opinion, although the judge could ignore those opinions if he wished: Code of Criminal Procedure, 1861, chap. 23, reproduced in Prinsep, *The Code of Criminal Procedure*; Ireland, *The Province of Burma*, 193-95; Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India*, 79, 143.
33. *Criminal Justice Report of British Burma*, 20-21.
34. *RACJB 1913*, 11.
35. *RPAB 1935*, 30; *RPAB 1929*, 43.
36. *RPAB 1928*, 36.
37. Grantham, *Studies in the History of Tharrawaddy*, 61.
38. *RPAB 1927*, 56.
39. *RPAB 1919*, 9.
40. *RPAB 1924*, 13.
41. *Report of the Crime Enquiry Committee*, 16.
42. Moon, *Strangers in India*, 54.
43. *RPAB 1900*, Res. 5.
44. *Report of the Bribery and Corruption Enquiry Committee*, 18.
45. *RPAB 1935*, 28, 44-45.
46. *RPAB 1897*, 23.
47. *RPAB 1935*, 22.
48. *RPAB 1937*, 27.
49. *Report of the Bribery and Corruption Enquiry Committee*, 17.
50. *RPAB 1924*, 14. In George Orwell's *Burmese Days*, U Po Kyin, the Sub-divisional Magistrate of Kyauktada, is defined by his corruption and scheming.
51. *Report of the Bribery and Corruption Enquiry Committee*, 11.

52. *RPAB 1922*, 25; *RPAB 1917*, 9. It is recognised that the account of the failures of court procedures provided in this paragraph draws primarily on the annual reports on police administration and that it was possibly in the interest of the police to be strongly critical of the courts. But unfortunately it would appear that the Rangoon administration did not send reports on individual trials or other court materials back to London (where they would now be held as part of the India Office Records) except the materials relating to the prosecution of the Hsaya San rebels: IOR L/PJ/6/2022-2024.
53. *RPAB 1918*, 16.
54. Fielding-Hall, *The Passing of Empire*, 269.
55. Taw Sein Ko, *Burmese Sketches*, 137.
56. Taw Sein Ko, *Burmese Sketches*, 114.
57. Saha, *Law, Disorder and the Colonial State*; Kumar, 'Policing Everyday Life'; Rogers, *Crime, Justice and Society in Colonial Sri Lanka*. In colonial Ceylon, Rogers calculates, 'over one-half of all men appeared in a criminal court as a defendant, complainant or witness every year' (61).
58. Rogers, *Crime, Justice and Society in Colonial Sri Lanka*, 72, 73.
59. In the late 1910s, the Deputy Commissioner in Thayetmyo stated his belief that '90 per cent of the men who come up for trial in important cases are the right men', *RPAB 1917*, 12. And yet, as noted earlier, in only half of murder trials was the accused found guilty.
60. *RPAB 1919*, 17.
61. *RPAB 1919*, 22.
62. *RPAB 1923*, 42-43.
63. *RPAB 1926*, 37; 'Report dated the 16th July 1940, of the District Superintendent of Police, Henzada, on murder in the Henzada District', IOR M/3/419; White, *The Burma of 'AJ'*, 155. With respect to that last example, in 1926, the Rangoon High Court, citing the Code of Criminal Procedure, ruled that no statement made to a police officer during the investigation of a case was admissible in court: *Nga Po Chon v. King Emperor*, *Indian Law Reports, Rangoon Series*, vol. 4, 1926, 356. To be admissible, a statement had to be made under oath, in practice before a magistrate.
64. *RPAB 1935*, 29.
65. *RPAB 1935*, 29.
66. A hand-written, untitled, undated note included in the papers of Sir John Clague: other papers from Clague's period of office in Rangoon as Secretary to various Government departments, IOR Mss Eur E252/20.
67. *RPAB 1921*, 28.
68. Orr, 'Crime and Public Opinion', 189.
69. *RPAB 1924*, 14.
70. 'Minute dated the 9th December 1940, by the Hon'ble Minister of Home Affairs', IOR M/3/419.
71. Mole, *The Temple Bells are Calling*, 285.
72. 'Past defects in the working of Burma Government Departments', [no author, no date], IOR Mss Eur F161/71. The official was being highly critical of the High Court. The quotation in full: 'Blinded by ignorance of conditions in the country and fanatical in their attempts to maintain a standard of justice which is not compatible with the east, the High Court has been one of the greatest obstacles in the path of attempts to reduce the crime incidence in Burma.' This is again the argument that the demand for a high standard of evidence, in other words leniency towards the accused, was allowing crime rates to soar.

73. *RACJB 1939*, 4; *RACJB 1940*, 4. The figures for executions are from the annual *Report on the Prison Administration of Burma*. The *Rangoon Gazette* [21 April 1941: IOR M/3/419] published figures for the number of death sentences commuted in each year between 1936 and 1940. The sharp rise in the final two years is striking: 9 in 1938 but 46 in 1939 and 48 in 1940.
74. Donnison, *Last of the Guardians*, 198-99.
75. *RPAB 1919*, 2.
76. *RPAB 1919*, 2.
77. *RPAB 1915*, 2; *RPAB 1912*, Res. 1.
78. *RPAB 1916*, 2.
79. Griffiths, *To Guard my People*, 198.
80. *RPAB 1926*, Res. 1.
81. Government of Burma, Home and Political Department, to Government of India, Home Department, 30 January 1926, IOR L/PJ/6/1913, File 3044.
82. *RPAB 1927*, Res. 2.
83. *RPAB 1931*, 5.
84. *RPAB 1897*, Res. 2. That figure apparently included Indian constables who, while literate in their own language, were ignorant of Burmese.
85. *RPAB 1938*, 12. The majority of the 191 illiterate men were either Indian or Kachin.
86. *RPAB 1892*, Res. 2.
87. *RAB 1906-07*, 15.
88. *RPAB 1926*, 77.
89. *RAB* various years from the mid-1890s through to 1940.
90. *RPAB 1899*, 41. For the career of Edward Henry and his work in India, see Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj*, 121, 133-46.
91. *RPAB 1923*, 37.
92. *RPAB 1924*, 45.
93. *RPAB 1939*, 57.
94. *RPAB 1925*, 4, 12, 13. In addition, the Military Police establishment was reduced by over three thousand.
95. *RPAB 1928*, Res. 2.
96. Figures from *RAB*, various years from 1920-21. See also Lalita Hingkanonta Hanwong, *Policing in Colonial Burma*, 19.
97. *RPAB 1925*, 12.
98. *RPAB 1935*, 15. Expenditure on the civil police was increased modestly in the mid-1920s (reflecting the increase in police pay) and was then held remarkably stable (with the exception of one, possibly two years early in the decade) through to at least the mid-1930s: *RAB*, various years from 1920-21.
99. This point was brutally made by a Deputy Inspector-General of Police in 1927. Noting the soaring murder count, he added: 'I am only thankful that the police force can share no responsibility for this, as the prevention of murder is a matter entirely beyond their control': *RPAB 1927*, 33.
100. Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order*, 326.

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