

# Military Competition between Allied Forces and Japan: A Case Study on Mandalay Campaign in Myanmar (1942-1945)

Thin Thin Aye\*

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the military competition between Allied Forces and Japan in Mandalay, and the situation of Mandalay during the Second World War. Mandalay is located in upper Myanmar and the center of the communications between lower and upper Myanmar. The British occupied Mandalay in the end of 1885. Since that time the princes and his followers attacked the British. In 1930s, Myanmar nationalists joined with the Japanese fought for British. In 1942, due to Myanmar fell under Japan, Allied forces left for Myanmar. In 1945, Allied Forces tried to reoccupy Myanmar. On 17 May 1945, after the fall of Mandalay, the Japanese retreated from Myanmar. The campaign between the Allied Forces and Japan in Myanmar was ended. In this paper examines military competition of Allied Forces and Japan in Mandalay, and the situation of Mandalay during the Second World War.

**Keywords:** Japanese Forces, Allied Forces, Myanmar Nationalist Movement, Mandalay

## Introduction

This paper discusses the military competition between Allied Forces and Japan in Mandalay, and the situation of Mandalay during the Second World War. Mandalay, ancient royal city was founded in upper Myanmar by King Mindon in 1853. It is the center of the communications between lower and upper Myanmar. The British occupied Mandalay in the end of 1885. The princes and his followers attacked the British since at that time. In 1930s, the Myanmar people opposed the British by public rallies, demonstrations and strikes. Myanmar nationalists joined with the Japanese fought for British. On 8 December 1941, the Japanese took matters into their own hands and invaded Myanmar. Japanese troops, composed mostly of disgruntled Myanmar nationals who fashioned themselves an army of liberation, determined to expel the British from their homeland, advanced on Yangon, Lashio, and Mandalay. The Allied Forces left Mandalay on 29 April 1942. Mandalay fell under the Japanese on 1 May 1942.

With the Japanese holding central Myanmar, China was cut off from the West-and Western supplies. In early 1944, British General William J. Slim, Commander of the 14th Army, led an offensive against the Japanese that broke a siege at Imphal. By mid-December, buoyed by his success, Slim launched an offensive against Meikhtila, east of the Irrawaddy River and a key communication post between Yangon and Mandalay. A strategy of misdirection was employed, with one corps headed toward Mandalay even as Slim's immediate objective was Meikhtila. With the Japanese preoccupied with the first corps, a second corps took Meikhtila on 3 March 1945, and Mandalay fell on the 20 March. The 14th Army controlled a significant swath of central Myanmar. Yangon fell in May, returning Myanmar to British hands.

To study the Myanmar history, the British occupied Myanmar in 1885, the Japanese occupied in 1942, the British reoccupied in 1945. In these wars were brought about military competitions between Allied forces and Japanese forces. It can be found that these military competitions were usually ended in Mandalay. That was why it is said that Mandalay campaign was decisive campaign.

## Research Question and Research Objective

Based on this understanding and using data obtained in Myanmar, this paper will examine military competition of Allied Forces and Japan in Mandalay and the situation of Mandalay during the Second World War. In analyzing the defeat and victory of Allied Forces, the paper focuses on their sequences. Revealing the sequence and the factors behind the event is very important for the following two reasons. First, by examining why Allied forces collapsed in Mandalay campaign in 1942, how the Allied Forces reoccupied Mandalay in 1945, Myanmar's attitude towards Allied forces becomes much clearer than when focusing on a single specific strategy. Second, by identifying the background reasons for the sequence, it will be able to illustrate the situation of Mandalay during World War II and the nationalism of Myanmar.

There were many historical records written in English such as The Campaign in Burma (Frank Owen)<sup>1</sup>, Defeat into Victory (William Slim)<sup>2</sup>, Stilwell (D. D. Rooney)<sup>3</sup>, Battle for Burma (E. D. Smith)<sup>4</sup>, History of the Second World War (Barrie Pitt)<sup>5</sup>, Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation (Robert H. Taylor.)<sup>6</sup> and Myanmar language such as Myanmar during the War Time (Thainpan Maung Wa) and Myanmar at War told by the Newspapers (Ludu U Hla), Sittaung Valley Campaign (Shwe U Daung) related to the military campaigns in Myanmar. However, these books and articles had described the military campaigns of Myanmar in general perspectives. They did not represent specific trends of the Mandalay campaign. That is why this paper aims to discuss

\*Professor, History Department, Yangon University  
email: [thinthinaye.dr5@gmail.com](mailto:thinthinaye.dr5@gmail.com)

Military Competition between the Allied Forces and Japan in Mandalay and the situation of Mandalay during the World War II.

## Discussion

### I. Historical Roots

World War II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind. It was waged on land, on sea, and in the air over several diverse theaters of operation for approximately six years. World War II was fought in three areas: Europe, Africa, and Asia. The Germans and Italians invaded Europe and Africa, and the Japanese invaded Asia. They formed an alliance called the Axis powers. At first, other countries in Europe followed a policy of appeasement. But finally, in 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France responded by declaring war on the Axis powers. Later, in 1941, the United States of America joined them. Then the Soviet Union and China joined as well. All together, they were called the Allied powers.

In Axis powers, Japan emerged as a major world power after the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. In 1938, Japan invaded Southeast Asian countries with the slogan of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japan had their eyes on China and Manchuria; Myanmar was not in their attention, but when Burma (Myanmar) Road was opened they came to realize the strategic importance of Myanmar in their war against China. The Japanese knew it would serve them well if they cut overland access to China from Myanmar via the famed Burma (Myanmar) Road. Along this road a steady stream of military aid was being transported from Yangon, over the mountains of the 'Hump' and into Nationalist China, but if this supply route was closed, the Japanese could deprive Chiang Kai Shek's Kuomintang (Nationalist Chinese) armies of their lifeblood, permitting the Japanese to conquer all China.

The Chinese began construction of the new road after the occupation of the seacoast of China by the Japanese. The United States and the British sent their supplies of military assistance through the Burma (Myanmar) Road since 1939, and 31 percent of military help given in June, 1940 was sent through this road, which was the second largest amount of military aid to China.<sup>7</sup> And so the Burma (Myanmar)-China road was strategically important both for the Chinese resistance and Japan.

Japan sent secret agents into Myanmar to gather information about the Burma (Myanmar) Road, and when Dr. Ba Maw was Prime Minister Japan offered him large amount of money if he could prevent the use of that road by the western Allies. <sup>8</sup> It seemed that Japan realized the strategic importance of that road even before it was built, and when, the naval officer Kokubu, arrived in Myanmar in 1939 he contacted Thakin Ba Sein, the prominent Myanmar politician, and personally visited the Burma (Myanmar) Road.<sup>9</sup> The Japanese stood a good chance of winning the Sino-Japanese War, for the Allied Powers were pinned down in the European theatre of war, and there was also a need to close the Burma (Myanmar)-China Road. The Chinese moved their seat of government to

Chungking and continued their war of resistance, for Japan had seized many coastal towns of China. And from the Japanese military perspective, Myanmar had become a strategic asset, for Chungking could be attacked through the Burma (Myanmar) Road.

The Japanese became an active participant in the Second World War by bombing Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941. Following successful campaigns in Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and Singapore, two Japanese divisions launched attacks across the Thai border and captured the Tananthayi airfields in Myanmar's southern provinces in early February 1942.<sup>10</sup> One town after another fell into their hands and they captured Yangon on 8 March 1942. After the Japanese forces occupied Mawlamyine and Yangon, they marched to occupy Mandalay in Upper Myanmar. The Japanese estimated that the strength of the British all over Myanmar at that time was 37 regiments, 13 companies of artillery, and about 40,000 soldiers, who were mainly stationed at Yangon, Mandalay, three districts in Mawlamyine, and Shan State.<sup>11</sup> Just before the Japanese occupied Yangon, the British government shifted their headquarters from Yangon to Pyin Oo Lwin in Upper Myanmar. Pyin Oo Lwin was hill station for the British Government. The Lieutenant-Governor and the heads of departments usually spent their summer at Pyin Oo Lwin. It is situated near in Mandalay. If the Japanese could occupy Mandalay, Pyin Oo Lwin would instantly fall into the hand of Japan; they could control the Northern Shan States. Allied forces would evacuate from Myanmar soil. If Allied forces could maintain the Mandalay, Japanese forces could not be advanced to northern Shan States. If this were the case, military situation of Allied forces would have changed. That was why it was important to hold Mandalay for Allied forces and Japanese forces.

### II. Allied Forces and Japan in Mandalay

As mentioned in introduction, the British occupied Mandalay in the end of 1885. The palace was re-named Fort Dufferin<sup>12</sup>, with the palace was used for housing British and Indian troops. On 1 January 1886, the British issued a proclamation that upper Myanmar had been incorporated into the British Empire. By this proclamation, upper Myanmar became a British colonial outpost under the control of the Governor-General of British India. At that time the general situation of Mandalay can be learnt from the diary of Ivan Pavlovich Minayev (1840-90), a Russian scholar who was in Mandalay from 21 January to 16 February 1886.<sup>13</sup> He recorded that the British soldiers were boisterous, that all the guards were British, and that they were always overindulging themselves. He also mentioned that the British soldiers and sepoys were roaring drunk and tortured and killed the citizens that they refuse to make payment after taking whatever they want in the bazzars, that they molested Myanmar girls, and that they could kill a Myanmar without a reason if they could pay thirty Kyats in compensation.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the life of a Myanmar native at the time was worth only thirty Kyats. How the Myanmar had endured torment and abuse at the hands of the British after the British occupation of

Mandalay and upper Myanmar can be learnt from Minayev's records.

The princes and his followers attacked the British troops at Mandalay in early January 1886. Their plan was not only to capture Mandalay but also to make a widespread revolt against British. But these anti-imperialist wars were not organized into a unified movement regarding the extent of the whole Myanmar. In 1900s, Myanmar political leaders formed the YMBA, the GCBA and performed important public activities to promote the national cause. The people opposed the colonial British by public rallies, demonstrations and strikes. In the 1930s, Thakhins (ocif) and student leaders were more determined by the fact that they must fight the British for their independence. Myanmar nationalists plotted with the Japanese in the late 1930s to take Myanmar from the British Empire and bring the nation within the Japanese Empire.

Accordingly, Japan took the side of the Myanmar nationalist movement as they could not strike a deal with the British, thus supporting the anti-British campaign of the Myanmar Thakin movement. Therefore on 1 October 1939, Myanmar patriots formed a national united corps by the name of Bamar Htwetyak Gaing (ArmUxGuf&yf\*dkPf).<sup>15</sup> On 25 December 1939, Mandalay District Dohbama Asiayone was set up. Dobama Asiayone organized underground revolutionary branches. Myanmar patriotic youths took aid for independence from the Japanese. Therefore the pick of the Myanmar young comrades were sent in four batches secretly to Japan for military training. The thirty comrades formed the BIA (Burma Independence Army) with Myanmar Nationals in Bangkok on 26 December 1941.<sup>16</sup> The BIA advanced into Myanmar with the Japanese Army and forced the withdrawal of the British in 1942.<sup>17</sup>

These secret groups entered Myanmar and met with underground contacts in advance. They made plans on how the Japanese army and BIA would fight the British. They provided basic military training with small arms for Myanmar youths in Mandalay. Bo Moe Nyo and Bo Zeya secretly came to Mandalay and gave military training to the members of Upper Myanmar. Bo Kyaw Khaung @ Ko Thein Maung and Bo Khin Maung Lay @ Khin Maung Lay, Thakhin Tin Mya, Bo Thein Tan and Thakhin Tin Hla who were from Mandalay and Sagaing attended that training. A similar military training was provided for second time at a secret station at Masoeyein Monastery, Mandalay by Bo Moe Nyo. Those who underwent the training were Bo Kyaw Khaung, Bo Thein Tan, Ko Kyaw Nyein, Taing Chit U Thein Pe, Thakhin Thein Pe (Myint), Thakhin Maung Maung Lay, Thakhin Maung Maung KaLay(Malata), Thakhin Aye Maung Gyi, Thakhin Tha Khin, Thakhin Chit Hlaing, Thakhin San Hla Baw, Thakhin Tin Shwe, Bo Thein Tan and Ko Htun Shein (Bo Htein Win).<sup>18</sup> With a view to blockading the retreat of the British, they gave instructions to destroy roads, railroads and bridges in advance. They destroyed the roads and cut off the communication between British and Chinese army and harassed them. They watched the activities of the Allied forces and gave information to the Japanese army stationed in Phyu

Township.<sup>19</sup> So, it can be found that the Japanese forces easily attacked Mandalay.

When the Japanese bombed Yangon, the people ran away from lower Myanmar to Mandalay. The British administrative officials also left lower Myanmar to Mandalay in upper Myanmar. Mandalay was crowded. The Japanese heavily bombed Mandalay by air. In Mandalay the first Japanese bombs fell at 1:30 pm on 19 February 1942 on Mandalay Club<sup>20</sup> in Fort Dufferin; 25 Japanese war planes dropped about over 50 bombs claiming<sup>21</sup>. In this way the Japanese started military operation. The people of Mandalay, being unfamiliar with bombing, went out and watched the planes. The townsfolk were of the opinion that the bombers would bombard only the Palace and not the town. There were even some people, who applauded the planes by clapping. Some people however, being afraid of further bombardment, moved to Sagaing Hills and Mingwun ravines, and villages in the vicinity. Some townsfolk were not afraid as they had no experience, and even thought that it was still a good time for business. And accordingly they proceeded with their business.<sup>22</sup>

The second wave of Japanese bombardment, with about 80 war planes, came at 9 am on 3 April, 1942, dropping explosives on such residential areas as Chinatown, the central railway station and on the Golden Palace. Moreover, the Japanese planes not only dropped firebombs, but also flew low machine-gunners the city.<sup>23</sup> There were very few people who took cover. At that time, war refugees from lower regions of Myanmar were disposing some of their unwanted luggage at the busy markets and at the side of the roads. It was a very crowded time for residents of Mandalay.<sup>24</sup>

This second bombing wave was fiercer. The city's Chinatown, along 80th street between 26th and 42nd streets, was the main target of the second bombardment. It was the place of settlement of Chinese since the monarchical periods. There were Chinese troops stationed in the Yunnan Chinese Temple between 31st and 32nd streets.<sup>25</sup> People numbering 2000 to 3000 were killed and nearly 3000 people were wounded. It was the greatest damage and casualty due to bombardment throughout the war. <sup>26</sup> Two thirds of the town was damaged. On 6 April 1942, Governor Sir Dorman Smith and his wife paid a visit to Mandalay and inspected the bombed sights. It was expressed in the diary of Lady Dorman Smith as follows.

The scenes all over the town are very miserable more than what one can express. There were ashes in every street. It is hard to see a civilian. If compared to this town, the damage of Yangon is very little.<sup>27</sup> Prior to the coming of the Japanese army, the British army burnt down some civilian quarters.<sup>28</sup> Mandalay was nearly reduced to ashes.

The third Japanese bombardment was launched at 11:30 am on 8 April 1942;<sup>29</sup> the Japanese advance was so swift that the 300 mile long road to Lashio was seized in ten days.<sup>30</sup> Chang-Kai-Sheik's Chinese troops withdrew to Kathar before the Japanese bombing in Mandalay and raided Sagaing on their way of retreat. When the retreating British forces were

gathering in the Sagaing Railway station on 27 April 1942, the Japanese war planes bombed the town, and even the sampans and small boats plying in the river were subjected to aerial attack. The Allied troops had to bear the brunt of the Japanese attack and suffered many casualties; they had already left for India and abroad.<sup>31</sup> The Allied troops left Mandalay on 29 April 1942. <sup>32</sup> The Japanese 18th Division reached the area south of Myit-nge river on 30 April 1942,<sup>33</sup> and there were fierce battles erupted between the Allied forces and Japanese troops in Kyaukse, south of Mandalay. The Myit-nge Bridge was dynamited;<sup>34</sup> the Allies tanks beat a hasty retreat crossing the Ava Bridge (Sagaing Bridge) and on the early morning of 30 April 1942 the British Army's engineering corp, Sappers and Miners, blew up Ava Bridge's span number 7 and 8, bringing them down into the Ayeyarwady River.<sup>35</sup>

Members of organization for Burma Independence in Mandalay went to Myit-nge and greeted the Japanese. The Japanese 18th Division crossed the Myit-nge River and occupied Mandalay at 6:20 pm on 1 May 1942. <sup>36</sup> When the Japanese entered in Mandalay through Amarapura, young girls greeted and welcomed them with Eugenia twigs (symbols of victory) and water pots. The people of Mandalay greeted and welcomed the Japanese army and BIA. Flags of BIA (bearing three colors and a peacock) were hoisted at the residence of Governor, Central Office and at a lamppost in Zegyo.<sup>37</sup> Regarding this point, Myanmar people greeted and welcomed the Japanese only because they gave help in the struggle for independence. With the help of Myanmar patriotic youths, Japanese forces could occupy Mandalay.

After seizing Canton on 26 April 1942, the 55th Japanese Division also arrived near Mandalay on 4 May 1942.<sup>38</sup> The Allied forces retreated to the northern region of Myanmar, and the following were the reasons that expedited the Allied forces withdrawal: The Allied forces (1) could build a road to India (2) could destroy the strategic oil fields while retreating and (3) could afford time to wait for troop reinforcements from Yunnan province of China.<sup>39</sup> In sum, the retreat cost 13,000 Allied casualties, 4,000 suffered by the Japanese, nearly 50,000 corresponding civilian deaths and more than 500,000 displaced Myanmar.<sup>40</sup> As Mandalay fell and Chungking government in China was isolated from the rest of the world,<sup>41</sup> the Chinese government lost fuel supplies from Upper Myanmar, and also the war supplies from Allies.<sup>42</sup>

Although Mandalay fell under Japanese Occupation, the city was often attacked by Allied bombers; the bombing raids were quite precise as the targets were supplied by British intelligence. On 2 July 1942, the two British bombers, dubbed the Buffaloes Brothers, flew low from north to south over the city and for the first time dropped bombs over the areas along the central railway station.<sup>43</sup> And in the morning at 9 on 12 September 1942, six British bombers flew over from north to south and bombed the city resulting in about ten dead and 20 injured; <sup>44</sup> again at 9:30 am on Tuesday 29 September 1942, thirteen British bombers bombed such places as the areas near old tram car terminal, Myet-parryat quarter and China town

quarter.<sup>45</sup> On 7 October 1942, the city was again under attack by British bombers;<sup>46</sup> at 10:30 am on 20 November 1942 British bombers flew high and dropped bombs all over the city over the places of Mingalar market, Yan Myo Lone, Padey- thar tan, Ta-yoke-tan, Myo-haung and Martyrs, Mausoleum.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Myit-nge bridge were bombed on 1 January 1943;<sup>48</sup> the central railway station and nearby areas were again attacked on 4 January 1942 by ten British bombers and it was twelve bombing on the city.

The Japanese supply depot, housed in American Baptist Mission School (ABM) between 38th and 39th Streets, and 82nd and 83rd Streets, was totally destroyed by the bombardment of 12 British fighters on 5 January 1943, and on the same day Kelley Church, depots near Nyunt Paung market were also destroyed.<sup>49</sup> Myit-nge Bridge was repeatedly attacked and destroyed on 4 January 1943 and on 10 January 1943 by Allied bombing,<sup>50</sup> and Japanese anti-aircraft shooting brought down two Allied airplanes. Moreover, the following were the Allied bombardment in Mandalay during the Second World War:<sup>51</sup>

26 January 1943	the Central Railway Station
6 February 1943	Kywe-Chan- Kone near Shwe Ge-Bwar village and Yin-pyan village
12 February 1943	Myit-nge town
18 February 1943	Sagaing town
26 February 1943	Mandalay town
7 March 1943	Kelly Church, central

railway station, Buddha Thar-tha-na Nuggaha (BTN), aged homes, and Gujariti Shrine.

Thus, Mandalay suffered bombings since the time of Japanese occupation to the time of their withdrawal.

### III. Recapture of Mandalay

After retreated from Myanmar, Allied planners began preparations for their next campaign, drawing on the lessons they had learned from the 1942 disaster. The Allied South East Asia Command had begun making plans to reconquer Myanmar as early as June 1944. Three main options were proposed. One option was to reoccupy Northern Myanmar only, to allow the Ledo Road to be completed, thus linking India and China by land. This was rejected, as it could use only a fraction of the available forces and fulfilled only an out-of-date strategic aim. A second option was to capture Yangon, the capital and main seaport, by a seaborne invasion. This was also impractical, as it would require landing craft and other resources which would not be available until the end of the War in Europe. A third option adopted was for an offensive into Central Myanmar by the British 14th Army under Lieutenant General William Slim, to reconquer Myanmar from the north. The operation was intended to capture Mandalay in Central Myanmar. It was called Operation Capital.<sup>52</sup>

During the Japanese conquest of Myanmar in 1942, majority of Myanmar people had actively aided the Japanese Army. After Japan occupied the Myanmar in 1942, the Japanese allowed Myanmar peoples to form the Asian Youth

Organization with a view of using Myanmar youths to win battles in South East Asia. Many young persons were planted in this organization. The Japanese General Tojo declared on 28 January 1943 that Myanmar would be given independence within a year.<sup>53</sup> On 1 August 1943 Japan declared the country's independence.<sup>54</sup> But Myanmar assumed that the independence was a sham.<sup>55</sup> So, Myanmar nationalist leaders formed Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO)<sup>56</sup> to revolt against the Japanese in August 1944. They tried to contact the Allies. The political leaders of the organization sent selected persons to India. National leaders of Myanmar divided the anti-fascist forces into ten military Commands to fight off the Japanese. Mandalay became the headquarters of Upper Myanmar Command. Upper Myanmar Zone led by Bohmu Ba Htoo.

While the preparations for the fascist resistance were organized secretly, the Allied Headquarters did not recognize the AFO Headquarters politically but contacted only for military proposes. However Bogyoke Aung San and AFO had already decided that the fascist resistance would be launched based on the strength of the army as well as on the help and support of the people whether the assistance was given by the Allies or not. AFO also decided to revolt against the Japanese fascists on a countrywide scale not later than the last week of March 1945.<sup>57</sup>

In 1944, the Japanese situation had sustained several defeats in the mountainous frontier regions of Myanmar. In particular, at the Battle of Imphal and Battle of Kohima, the Japanese Fifteenth Army had suffered disastrous losses, mainly resulting from disease and starvation. The heavy Japanese defeat prompted them to make sweeping changes among their commanders and senior staff officers in Myanmar. On 1 September 1944, Lieutenant General Hyotaro Kimura was appointed commander of Myanmar Area Army, succeeding Lieutenant General Masakazu Kawabe whose health had broken down. At this stage of the war, the Japanese were in retreat on most fronts and were concentrating their resources for the defense of the homeland. Kimura had formerly been Vice Minister for War, and had held other posts with responsibility for mobilising Japanese industry for the war effort. It was hoped that he could use the rice fields, factories and oil wells of Myanmar to make the Japanese forces there logistically self-sufficient.<sup>58</sup> Japanese losses in Myanmar and India in 1944 had been catastrophic.

Upper Myanmar Zone led by Bohmu Ba Htoo had started the fascist resistance on 8 March 1945 because the Allied forces arrived at the north of Mandalay and Meikhtila on 5 March 1945. At that time, fascist resistance did not start in lower Myanmar yet because it had not reached the decided time. Therefore Bohmu Ba Htoo issued a declaration which stated that "Dr. Ba Maw and BNA were the Japanese puppets. They neglected the atrocities of the Japanese committed upon Myanmar people. That was why their leadership disbelieved and the Japanese were revolted with the help of the people." Actually it was also a deception by Bohmu Ba Htoo to avoid the destruction of Bogyoke Aung San's arrangements.<sup>59</sup>

Lieutenant-General Sir William Slim, Commander of

the Allied 14th division, hailed in his radio broadcast, Bohmu Ba Htoo's contribution to the resistance movement.<sup>60</sup> On that day at 8:45 pm, he executed his Japanese military adviser Takashi and marched to Aung Pinle Lake with his two sections of troops led by Tauk Htun and Ohn Maung. When Bohmu Ba Htoo's soldiers reached Baw-di-gon quarter they engaged a group of about 60 Japanese soldiers in a brief skirmish on the south side of Yeni-myaung. They retreated to an area near Ywar-ngan village, Kyauk-se, for they could not fight against the superior strength of the Japanese. The next day at dawn after Bohmu Ba Htoo's starting of the resistance movement, the British forces started marching along the east bank of Ayeyarwady seizing Madaya, 21 miles from Mandalay.<sup>61</sup>

The Allied forces reached at the foot of Mandalay Hill on 7 Mar 1945. With Meikhtila already captured by the Allies, Mandalay would wither without adequate supplies, but Slim wanted a victory at this historically important city. Major General Seiei Yamamoto, the defending general at Mandalay, had determined to hold Mandalay at all costs, and with Mandalay Hill and Fort Dufferin they had a strongly fortified position. Mandalay Hill, with a monastery at its summit and tunnel systems below it, is a long whale-shaped feature, 500 feet high running north-south for a mile from the north-east corner of the city. Fort Dufferin is a square enclosure with sides 2,500 yards long. Surrounding this enclosure are walls some 30 feet high and 4 feet thick built of red brick. The wall is backed and supported by an earth embankment. Outside the brick wall is an open area some 30 yards wide to a moat filled with water 40 yards across. The main city lies south and west of the Fort and stretches to the dockyards on the Irrawaddy River some 2 miles due west.

On 9 March the Allied Forces arrived at the villages around Mandalay and attacked the city. By the time the 1st Battalion reached Mandalay on 10 March, two-thirds of Mandalay Hill had been captured and the ground to the east and north, up to the walls of the Fort, had been taken. To the south, the area was devastated by bombing and artillery fire, but contained many well concealed strong-points which were tenaciously held. The area outside and to the west of the Fort, where the buildings were of stouter construction, also remained in enemy hands. While the Japanese strongly resisted any attempt to rush the Fort from any point, he was particularly determined to keep the attackers away from the moat on the west and south and it was here that he fought most fanatically. He had artillery including 150 mm guns in support of his troops and was well supplied with mortars, anti-tank weapons and automatics of all kinds.

On 11 March 1945, Allied Forces occupied Mandalay Hill.<sup>62</sup> On 12 March 1945, Pyin Oo Lwin fell into the Allies forces<sup>63</sup>. For a week the Japanese defended the town stubbornly and the 1st Battalion had its first and bloody experience of street fighting. On 12 March the 1st Battalion moved up and took over the positions occupied by 1/15th Punjab Regiment, opposite the west wall of the Fort. For this operation the 1st Battalion came under command of 98th Brigade temporarily commanded by Colonel Dykes (the 1st

Battalion's Commanding Officer) while Major CR Budgeon assumed command of the Battalion. The area for which the Battalion assumed responsibility was laid out in a series of square blocks in which many of the buildings were still standing. The blocks were separated by roads. The enemy held a series of these blocks nearest the Fort wall and moat and also others providing depth to a strong defensive position which was also supported from the walls of the Fort itself. 64

Numerous attempts to storm the Fort from the north and east sides of the Fort, where ground was occupied up to the moat, were unsuccessful. Attempts to break down the walls by using artillery at point-blank range similarly failed to have an impact. The 1st Battalion was involved in vigorous patrolling in the Zeggyo bazaar area to the west, but this was strongly contested by the enemy. It was at this time that the Japanese High Command reversed the decision to hold Mandalay at all costs.<sup>65</sup> The garrison was ordered to thin out gradually with the emphasis of keeping their escape route open; hence the determined resistance our troops met at every effort to get closer to the south-west corner of the Fort.

On the 17 March the Commanding Officer was told that the 1st Battalion was to take part in the main attack on the Fort on 24 March which would be preceded by a major air and artillery bombardment. The 4th Battalion was to take over the holding position of the 1st Battalion to allow preparation for the attack. On the night of 17 March a strong force of Japanese attempted a break-out in the east, but this was held by the 2nd Battalion the Worcestershire Regiment. On 18 March 1945, fierce battles ensued between the Allied forces and Japanese, and the Allied forces unsuccessfully tried to capture the Mandalay Palace three times.<sup>66</sup> The next day on 19 March Allied forces tried to cross the moat around the Palace, but in vain owing to the moat weeds. Concentrations of artillery and mortar fire were put down during the night. Early the next morning the 4th Battalion took over the positions occupied by the 1st Battalion, but at 11.30 hours a party of civilians emerged from the one of the breaches in the walls and confirmed that the Japanese had evacuated the Fort during the night. On 20 March 1945, the British Mitchell bombers blew up a 15 feet hole in the north wall of the Palace that led to the occupation of the Mandalay Palace.<sup>67</sup> To capture the city, the final assault took nine days.<sup>68</sup> As the casualties mounted, British Generals drew up a commando raid through the sewers to penetrate the fortress defenses, but the plan would not be executed as the Japanese unexpectedly surrendered. On 20 March, the Allied Forces reoccupied Mandalay. The fall of Mandalay precipitated the change of sides by the Burma National Army, and open rebellion against the Japanese by other underground movements belonging to the Anti-Fascist Organization. As Mandalay fell to Allied forces, they crossed the Ayeyarwady River to the South of the town and so began the destruction of the Japanese in Myanmar.

### Conclusion

By studying the Mandalay campaign, it can be found that three Allied Powers and Japan involved in this campaign. The Allied forces and Japanese both wanted to control Mandalay. To

Britain and China, Mandalay provided an important supply line. To the United States, Mandalay was the key to keep China fighting in order to tie down the countless number of Japanese soldiers in China so that they could not be re-deployed in the South Pacific. The objectives were to clear Japanese forces from northern Myanmar, reopen the Burma Road supply route to China and tie down Japanese forces to prevent their transfer to the Pacific theatre. To Japan, Mandalay was the centre of the Myanmar. With the Japanese holding central Myanmar, China was cut off from the West-and Western supplies. If Mandalay falls to Allied forces, Japan would retreat from Myanmar. So Mandalay was important for defend. Nevertheless with the fall of Mandalay to British in 1945, the Japanese communications to the front in the north of Myanmar were cut and the Allied road link between India and China was therefore finally secured, though far too late to affect the course of the war in China.



Source : [www.japaneseconquestofburma.com](http://www.japaneseconquestofburma.com)

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[11] Mr Onotoru , Japanese Military Regime in Burma. Yangon, Kumara Press, 1975, p.6 (Hereafter cited as Onotoru, Military Regime)

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[13] Dr Than Tun, "Chronology of Mandalay", The Mandalay Arts and Science University Annual Magazine, 1969-1970, pp-258 - 286.

[14] ဝက်မစွတ်ဝန်ထောက်၏နေ့စဉ်မှတ်တမ်း ၁၈၈၆-၁၈၈၈ ( Wetmasut Wundauk's diary 1886-1888 ), edited by Than Tun and Ohn Kyi, Vol.I, Yangon, Department of Universities' Historical Research Center, 2005, p.19 ( Hereafter cited as Wetmasut diary)

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[17] The BIA , reorganized as the Burma Defense Army on 27 July 1942 joined the Anti - Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) in August 1944 .

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[19] Thirty Comrades, pp-97-99

[20] Dr.Tin Maung Kyi, My Father's War Diary, Mandalay, ( unpublished ), 2005, p.7 (b) The Mandalay club was a relaxation and social club for British bureaucrats. It was opened in the Mandalay Golden Palace which was renamed Fort Dufferin. Fort Dufferin was the name to honour India Governor-General

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[37] Told by the Newspapers, p-149

[38] See Appendix Map

[39] Victory of Myanmar, p- 59

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