



MYANMAR: THEN AND NOW

Before Burma's Borders

For centuries, the region that is present-day Myanmar was inhabited by ethnically and linguistically distinct groups that occupied various territories from the low-lying plains of the Ayarwaddy to the Shan, Kachin, and Arakanese mountains.

Large swaths of the region was ruled by dynastic kingdoms such as the Pagan Empire (1044-1297), Ava Dynasty (1364-1555), the Hanthawaddy Mon Kingdom (1287-1539), and the Konbaung Dynasty (1752-1885).

While the influence of these kingdoms oscillated, many societies throughout the region maintained autonomy of culture, language, and governance.



1885-1948: The Colonial Roots of Burma's Borders

Through the Anglo-Burman wars in the early 19th century to the annexation of Burma into the British empire in 1885, British rule influenced the construction of the contemporary Myanmar nation-state. Burma's borders were largely drawn by the British, who separated the country into Ministerial and Frontier regions.

Ministerial Burma, comprising most of the central part of the territory predominantly consisted of ethnically Bamar (Burmese) people. The Frontier Areas consisted mostly of ethnic minorities, who retained some traditional rights of self-governance while still being colonized.

1948: 7 States, 7 Regions, A Diverse Country

1948

After independence, the new nation of Burma retained the divisions between ethnic Burmese and ethnic minorities. The country was divided into territories known as Regions and States that remain today.

The 7 Regions are predominantly ethnically Burmese, and 7 States are inhabited predominantly by ethnic minorities including the Chin, Shan, Karen, Karenni, Mon, Kachin, Rakhine and many others within and outside of these identities.

Burma's Military State and Decades of Armed Conflict

1962

Shortly after independence, the Burmese military took power over the parliamentary government in 1962. For over 60 years, this military has waged a series of armed conflicts with minority groups in the ethnic States.

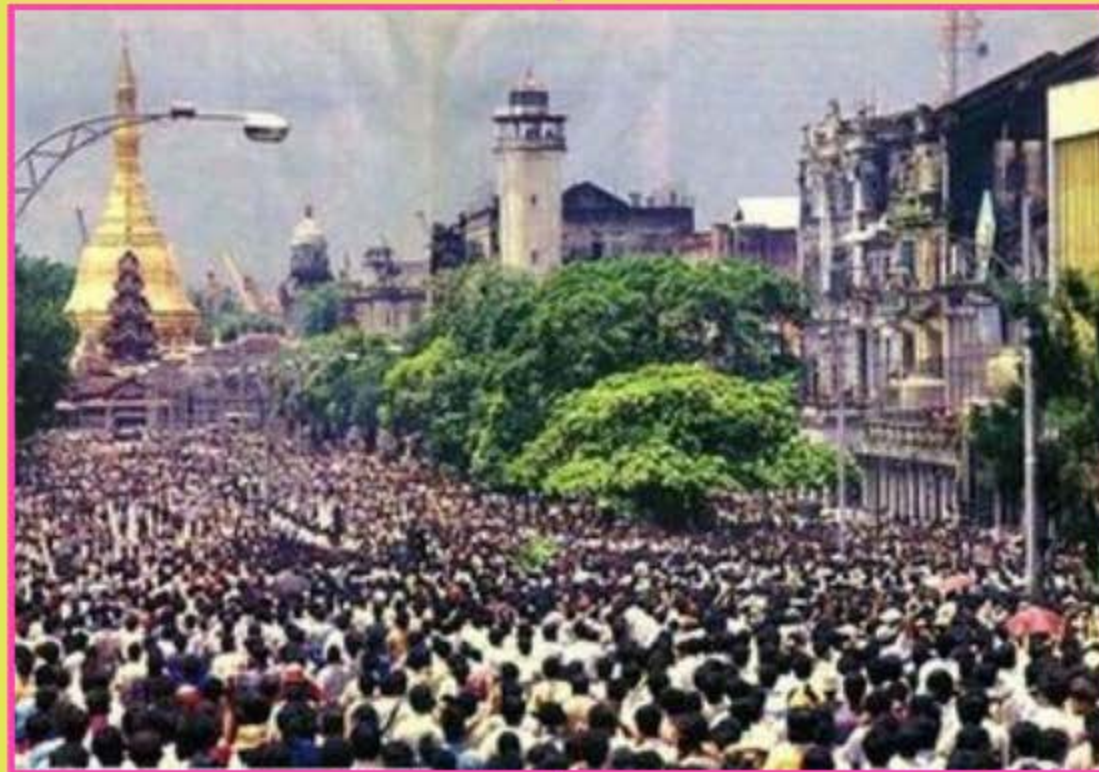
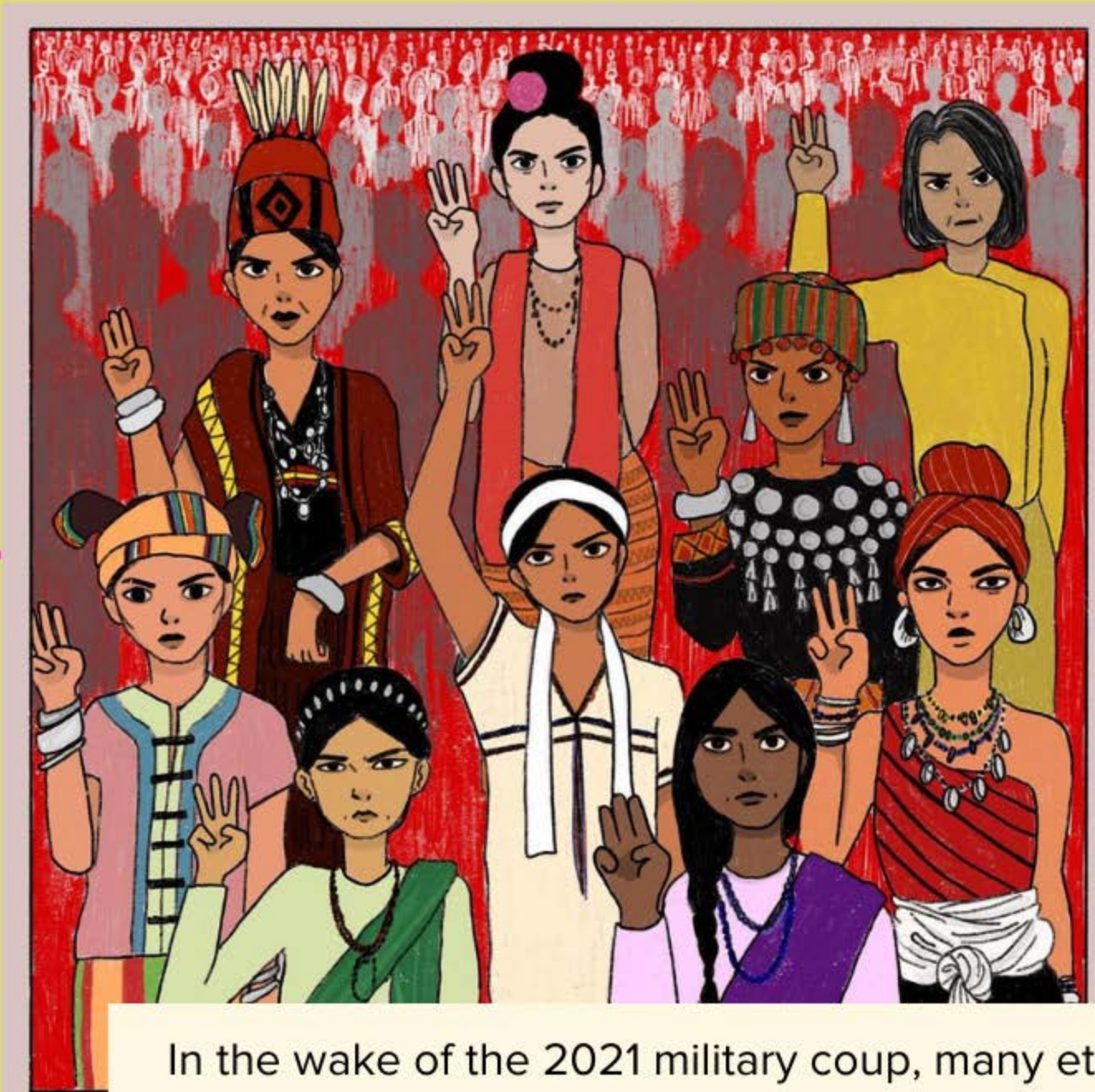


Photo: Wikipedia

1989

The military officially changed the name of the country to Myanmar, shortly following a brutal crackdown on a student-led pro-democracy movement called the 8/8/88 movement.

2021 - Present: Towards Sovereignty in Myanmar



Art: Eh Soe Dwe

In the wake of the 2021 military coup, many ethnic groups are calling for Federal Democracy: a model of governance in which ethnic minorities have equal representation in the government and sovereignty over their ancestral lands.