NOTE ON NAMES

In 1989, the then military regime of State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) changed the English name Burma to Burmese name Myanmar which was recognised by the United Nations. However many ethnic communities and supporters of democracy inside Myanmar considered the name change as an unconstitutional act, not acceptable to them. They continued to call their country as Burma. Many western countries, such as the United States, Great Britain etc preferred to call the country as Burma signifying their solidarity to the movement for democracy in Myanmar and rejection of the legitimacy of the military junta. The name of the country was thus politicised. Still both the terms Myanmar and Burma continued to be used to denote the name of the country.

In this thesis, I use Myanmar instead of Burma to denote the country as a common usage and for convenience. However in quotes from other sources and in mentioning name of organisations or associations I also use Burma to mention the country.

The junta also changed the name of many cities, divisions, rivers etc. For example Rangoon became Yangon, the Irrawaddy River became the Ayeyawaddy, Pagan changed to Bagan, Pegu to Bago, Sandoway to Thandwe and so on. The changes are sometimes confusing to outsiders being interested in Myanmar and I take it for granted to use both the older names and the new names of the places and rivers to mention the same.

During the British colonial period, the terms ‘Burman’ and ‘Burmese’ were used interchangeably. In this study a distinction in made between these two terms. The term ‘Burman’ is used to denote a particular ethnic group while ‘Burmese’ is used to identify the national language of the country. In this study the term ‘Myanmarese’ is used to mean all the inhabitants of Myanmar regardless of ethnicity.