

Chapter 3

ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS AND ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION

Myanmar's constituent units—the subnational administrative units (i.e. state/region, district and township)—served as the basis for public administration and electoral units since independence. They thus had important implications for governance, the provision of public services and political representation. As such, imagining a future Myanmar and designing institutions that can facilitate inclusion and equality require an examination of how these units came to be and their ethnic landscape.

Historically, parts of present-day Myanmar had been ruled by Arakanese-speaking kings in the west (e.g. the Mrauk-U Kingdom), Bamar-speaking kings in the central dry zone (e.g. the Pagan Kingdom) and Mon-speaking kings in the south (e.g. the Hanthawaddy Kingdom). The eastern plateau was ruled by *saophas*—a royal title for hereditary rulers—and princes speaking various languages including Shan. In contrast to these parts of Myanmar, early state formation did not emerge in the mountainous areas of the country where the local chiefs ruled.²⁴

Prior to independence, British Burma consisted of 39 districts, grouped into 7 divisions, and the Federated Shan States. The divisions were Arakan, Irrawaddy, Magwe, Mandalay, Pegu, Sagaing and Tenasserim (Tinker 1959). Parts of some divisions were the so-called Frontier Areas—parts of the Magwe and Sagaing divisions along with Shan and Karenni states. These areas were annexed after 'Burma proper'²⁵ had been incorporated under British rule, and they were ruled indirectly per the hill tribes regulations (to be discussed later). When Myanmar became an independent nation in 1948, the country was restructured into states and divisions. While the country was reconstituted in this way, the current subnational administrative units, particularly the district boundaries,

²⁴ Scholars consider the mountainous areas of Myanmar to be part of Zomia, or the highlands of Southeast Asia. For more information about Zomia, see Scott (2009).

²⁵ Areas directly administered by the British Administration were collectively referred to as 'Burma proper' or Ministerial Burma. It comprised Tenasserim, Arakan, Pegu and Irrawaddy divisions.

largely mirror the colonial district boundaries, which have remained relatively stable.

States in Myanmar were created in two waves. The first wave was when Burma became independent from Britain, and the Constitution of the Union of Burma, drafted and adopted in 1947, entered into force. This Constitution established Myanmar's first three states: Kachin State, Karenni State and Shan State. The creation of these states was the culmination of discussions and political compromises in the Panglong Agreement (1947), the Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry (1947) and the Constituent Assembly (1947). These administrative units were not mere divisions but rather states, in recognition of their autonomous status—i.e. 'autonomy in internal administration', per the Panglong Agreement. The 1947 Constitution also created the Special Division of the Chins and guaranteed a Karen State, though Karen State's boundaries were not demarcated until 1951. The residual territories—areas in the colonial districts that were not reconstituted as the newly created states—remained part of the divisions.

The second wave was when the 1974 Constitution of the Union of Burma, drafted by the socialist regime led by General Ne Win, entered into force. This Constitution reconstituted the Special Division of the Chins as Chin State and reconstituted a few districts as Mon State and Rakhine State. As a result, there were seven states and seven divisions at the time. The 2008 Constitution renamed the seven divisions as regions and reconstituted the southern part of the Mandalay Region as the Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory. Thus, Myanmar consisted of 15 tier-1 administrative units at the time of the 2021 coup.

It is uncertain to what extent the previous territorial organization has remained in place since the coup. In April 2022 the State Administration Council (SAC) announced the creation of 46 new districts across the country (MITV 2022).²⁶ At the same time, the FDC, released by the CRPH soon after the coup and adopted by the People's Assembly in January 2022, provides a series of principles as well as a road map for the establishment of democratic post-coup institutions. The FDC identifies states as constituent subnational units and indicates that states are the 'original owners of the sovereignty' (CRPH 2021); however, it does not specify the nature of the states at this stage (International IDEA 2022: 13). While the nature of territorial organization in the new constitutional framework may change, for the purposes of the current report and all existing statistics, the pre-coup administrative structure is assumed in the analysis presented. Table 3.1 presents the estimated population size of each state/region as indicated in the three most recent censuses and the corresponding population growth estimates. (Factors contributing to state-/region-level population growth are beyond the scope of this report.)

²⁶ On 30 April 2022 the SAC's Ministry of Home Affairs announced a new district in the Tanintharyi Region; 2 each in the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon and Rakhine states, and the Sagaing, Bago, Magway, and Ayeyarwady regions; 4 in the Mandalay Region; 9 in Shan State; and 10 in the Yangon Region. This change effectively increased the number of districts in Myanmar from 75 to 121.

The remainder of this section is organized according to the chronological order of state creation in Myanmar. Each subsection provides an overview of how the state was created and its present-day ethnic diversity as well as how the titular group is distributed within and beyond the state boundary.

Table 3.1. Population by state/region

	1973 Census	1983 Census	2014 Census	Percentage growth (1973–2014)
Kachin State	737,939	904,794	1,689,441	128.9
Chin State	323,295	368,949	478,801	48.1
Kayah State	126,574	168,429	286,627	126.5
Kayin State	858,429	1,055,359	1,574,079	83.4
Mon State	1,314,224	1,680,157	2,054,393	56.3
Rakhine State	1,712,838	2,045,559	3,188,807	86.2
Shan State	3,179,546	3,716,841	5,824,432	83.2
Ayeyarwady Region	4,156,673	4,994,061	6,184,829	48.8
Bago Region	3,179,604	3,799,791	4,867,373	53.1
Mandalay Region (and Nay Pyi Taw)	3,668,493	4,577,762	7,325,966	99.7
Magway Region	2,634,757	3,243,166	3,917,055	48.7
Sagaing Region	3,119,054	3,862,172	5,325,347	70.7
Tanintharyi Region	719,917	917,247	1,408,401	95.6
Yangon Region	3,190,359	3,973,626	7,360,703	130.7

Note: The 2014 Census included both an enumerated and an estimated population. The present-day Nay Pyi Taw was part of the Mandalay Division in the previous censuses; the area was carved out of the Mandalay Region in the 2008 Constitution. The population of Nay Pyi Taw in the 2014 Census was 1,160,242.

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973, 1983 and 2014 Censuses; table compiled by the authors. Calculations are our own.

KACHIN STATE

Kachin State, the northernmost administrative unit in Myanmar, shares a border with China and India. The northern half of the state is mountainous, while the southern half generally consists of plains. The territories covered by the state, particularly the northern half, remained at arm's length from the Konbaung kings for much of its pre-colonial history and was a site of persistent resistance against the encroaching colonial authority.

Historical evolution of Kachin State administrative units

Kachin State, which was established in the 1947 Constitution, consists of territories previously known as the Myitkyina and Bhamo districts in British Burma, along with parts of the Upper Chindwin District (specifically, the eastern parts of Hukawng Valley or Tanai Township today). The Myitkyina District



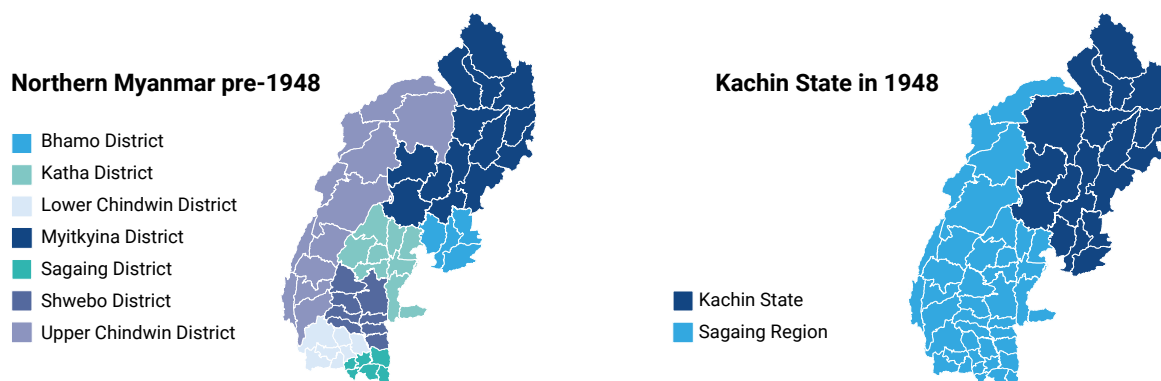
included the vast majority of the territories in the state, including the Kachin Hills and the Hukawng Valley, while the Bhamo District covered the southern tip of the state, including Shwegu Township.

After the third Anglo-Burmese War (1885), which resulted in the abdication of King Thibaw and the end of Konbaung dynasty (1752–1885), the British occupation of Bhamo began in December of 1885. Soon after the British arrival, the Kachin resistance against British rule became a regular phenomenon particularly in the Kachin Hills area of the Myitkyina District. The resistance finally calmed down in 1895 with the introduction of the Kachin Hill Tribes Regulation, which allowed the tribal chiefs in the north of the Mali Hka-Nmai Hka confluence to rule without British interference (Government of Burma 1947).

According to the colonial records, the Bamar, Kachin and Shan coexisted especially in the Bhamo District—though it was noted that the Kachin population was undercounted.²⁷ While the Kachin constituted the majority in the Myitkyina District and the largest group in the Bhamo District, the Shan population was substantial in both districts. Such ethnic heterogeneity had implications for how Kachin State was established.

Although the Kachin chiefs agreed, at the 1947 Panglong Conference, to the establishment of a separate Kachin State, which would be part of the Union of Burma, the non-Kachin population of the Bhamo District appeared hesitant to become part of the soon-to-be Kachin State (Government of Burma 1947). During the negotiations in the Constituent Assembly in 1947, the Kachin leaders agreed to forgo the right to the secession of Kachin State in exchange for the inclusion of the Bhamo District in the state (Smith 1991). In contrast, Karenni State and Shan State both retained the right to secession from the Union of Burma, per the 1947 Constitution.

Figure 3.1. Evolution of Kachin State's administrative boundaries before and after 1948



Source: Information retrieved from the Census of India 1931, Volume XI: Burma and the Constitution of Burma 1948; maps drawn by the authors.

²⁷ The Report of the Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry indicates that census enumeration was never completed in the Kachin Hills due to physical difficulties.

Ethnic landscape

There is a significant township-level variation in terms of ethnic diversity in Kachin State. Generally speaking, the state's northern townships, which constituted the Kachin Hills in the Frontier Area in British Burma, are relatively homogeneous (see Figure 3.2). In contrast, the southern and western townships are significantly more diverse and are home to large Bamar and Shan populations.

The largest ethnic groups in Kachin State are the Kachin²⁸ (40 per cent of the state's population), the Bamar (33 per cent) and the Shan (23 per cent). Kachin State is home to 13 per cent of the total Shan population in the country, making it the second-largest concentration of Shan in Myanmar (the largest concentration being in Shan State). As we discuss below, while the Kachin population is spread throughout the state, the Bamar and Shan populations are concentrated in the southern and western parts of the state.

Kachin population

The Kachin are geographically concentrated in their home state. In fact, 73 per cent of the ethnic group resides in Kachin State; the remaining quarter can be found in northern Shan State (17 per cent), the Mandalay Region (7 per cent) and the Yangon Region (0.9 per cent). Within Kachin State, the Kachin are concentrated in the central and northern parts of the state, specifically the present-day Myitkyina and Puta-O districts. The Kachin population also constitutes a supermajority in these districts.

At the township level, the Kachin population is the largest group in 13 out of 18 townships in Kachin State (see Figure 3.2). Not surprisingly, the Puta-O District, the northernmost district in Myanmar, covering the Kachin Hills, is overwhelmingly populated by Kachin: they represent more than 90 per cent of the population in all five of the district's townships (including 99 per cent in Khaunglanhpu Township).

Table 3.2. Kachin State's ethnic distribution

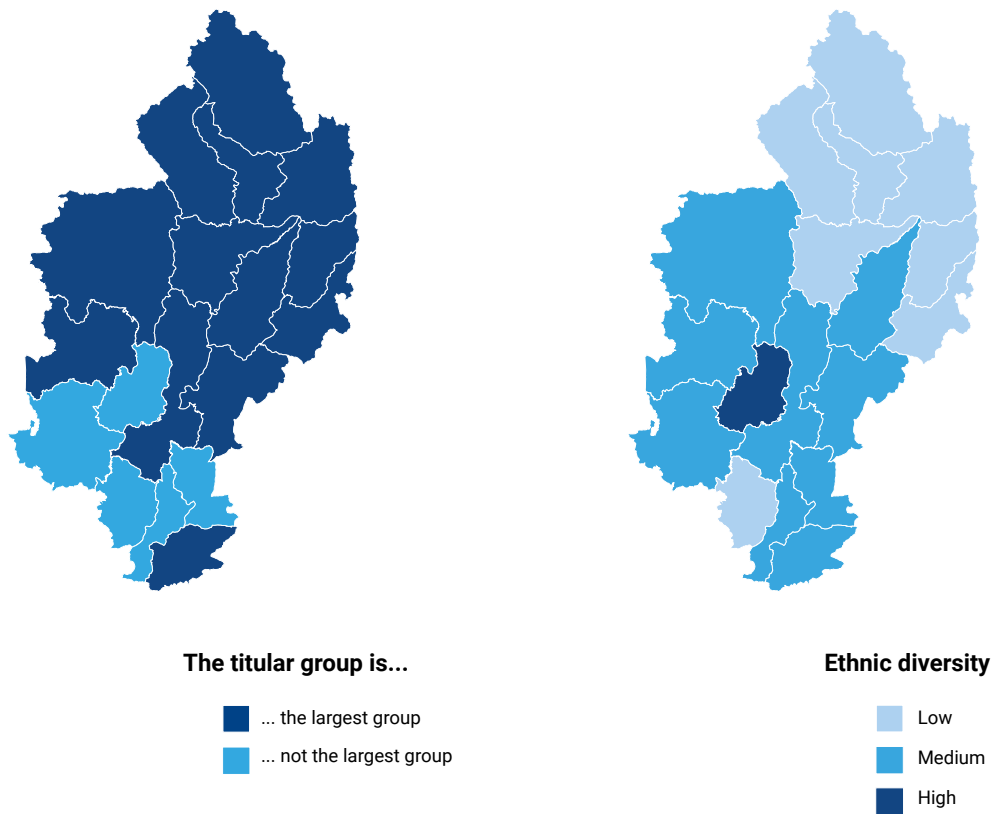
	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Kachin	39.6	38.1	39.1
Bamar	32.6	29.3	24.2
Chin	0.2	0.7	0.8
Kayin/Karen	0.3	0.3	0.3
Rakhine/Arakan	0.4	0.2	0.1
Shan	22.6	24.2	26.6
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>95.7</i>	<i>92.8</i>	<i>91.1</i>

Note: The remaining portion of the state population includes other *taingyintha*, people of mixed ethnicity and non-*taingyintha* (e.g. Indians, Chinese).

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

²⁸ The category 'Kachin' in the GAD Township Reports from Kachin State is presumed to include all Kachin subgroups, as none are listed separately. Note that the category 'Lisu' appears separately from 'Kachin' in the reports covering Shan State. For information on the Kachin-Lisu relationship, see Fishbein (2019) and Pelletier (2021).

Figure 3.2. Kachin State's largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level



Note; Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high', to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data retrieved from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps drawn by the authors.

Summary

- The Kachin, the largest ethnic group in the state, are spread throughout Kachin State and constitute the largest ethnic group in 13 out of 18 townships.
- The Shan are mostly concentrated in the townships bordering the Sagaing Region—forming a distinct demographic area spanning Kachin State and the Sagaing Region.
- The Shan and Bamar coexist in the southern part of Kachin State, which borders Shan North.

KAYAH STATE

Kayah State covers the northern end of the Karen Hills, bordered by Shan State in the north and by Karen State and the Bago Region in the west and south. It is bordered by Thailand in the east. The state's rugged geography meant it was out of reach from the surrounding kingdoms for most of its pre-colonial history, although it experienced attempts for control by the Bamar, Shan and Siamese kingdoms.

Historical evolution of Kayah State administrative units

Historically, the Western Karenni States consisted of four Karenni states (Bawlakhe, Kyebogyi, Namekan, and Naungpale), while the Eastern Karenni State was Kantarawadi—with a large extension into the Federated Shan States and Siam. The distinction between Western and Eastern Karenni was made based on their position relative to the Salween River, which flows through the present-day Kayah State.

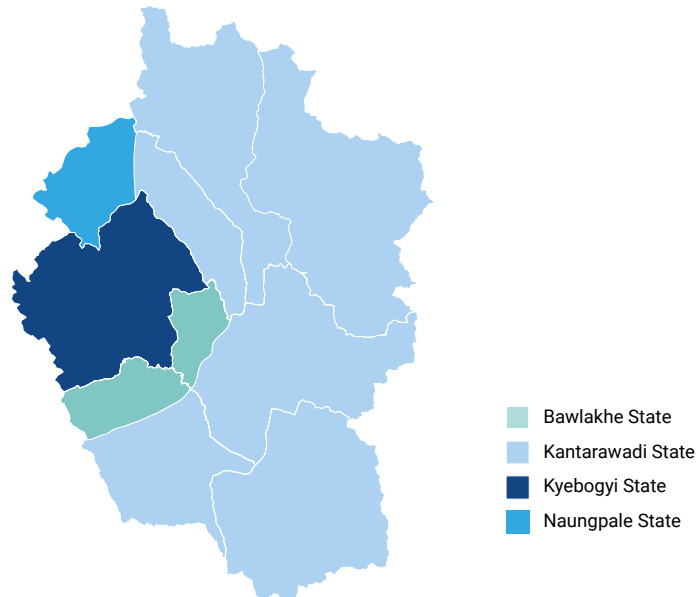
As threats from the Konbaung kings to curb the autonomy of the Karenni states grew, Karenni rulers started to reach out to the British authorities for protection. In 1875 the British India Government signed a treaty with King Mindon that recognized the independence of all the Karenni states (Renard 1987). 'Disturbances', as the author of the Gazetteer puts it, in part of Kantarawadi State in 1888 and a claim of territorial rights from Siam prompted the organization of the Anglo-Siamese Boundary Commission of 1892–1893, during which the four Western Karenni States were incorporated as a protectorate into British Burma. While Kantarawadi State was made to pay a fine, it is unclear what its status was. In 1922 the Karenni states were brought under the Federated Shan States to be administered by a single British administrator.

In summary, for most of colonial history, the Karenni states were not incorporated as part of British Burma but were rather a tributary state paying for protection; this arrangement differs from that experienced by the remaining territories in present-day Myanmar. At the same time, the colonial government maintained a military and administrative presence throughout the territory.

After the Panglong conferences and independence, a new Karenni State was created based on the preceding protectorate borders. A 1951 constitutional amendment renamed the state Kayah State.



Figure 3.3. Kayah State prior to 1948



Note: The indicated boundaries are approximate. The borders of four of the Karenni states are estimated based on the 1931 Imperial Gazetteer of India.

Source: Information retrieved from The Imperial Gazetteer of India, volume 26: Atlas and Maule (1993) based on an original idea from Linn Atlas; maps are drawn by the authors.

Ethnic landscape

Kayah State is the smallest among Myanmar's 14 states and regions in terms of population and territorial size. The biggest ethnic groups in Kayah State are the Karenni²⁹ (61 per cent of the state's population), the Bamar (15 per cent) and the Shan (14 per cent). The Karenni, the state's titular and largest group, are heavily concentrated in the northern half of the state, the Loikaw District. The Bamar population in the state is also concentrated in the Loikaw District. In the southern half of the state, the Bawlakhe District, which borders Kayin State, there is a sizable Karen population.³⁰

Kayah/Karenni population

The Karenni population is highly concentrated in their home state. About 90 per cent of the total Karenni population in Myanmar reside in the state; this means that only about 10 per cent of the Karenni are spread out in other parts of Myanmar. Among the 10 per cent of the Karenni who live outside of Kayah State, a significant number live only a few kilometres away to the north—in Shan State's Pekon Township. There, they account for 76 per cent of the township's population. Inside Kayah State, the Karenni constitute the largest ethnic group in all but two townships.

²⁹ The category 'Kayah' in the GAD Township Reports from Kayah State is presumed to include all Kayah subgroups, as none are listed separately. Note that the category 'Kayan' appears separately from 'Kayah' in the reports covering Shan State.

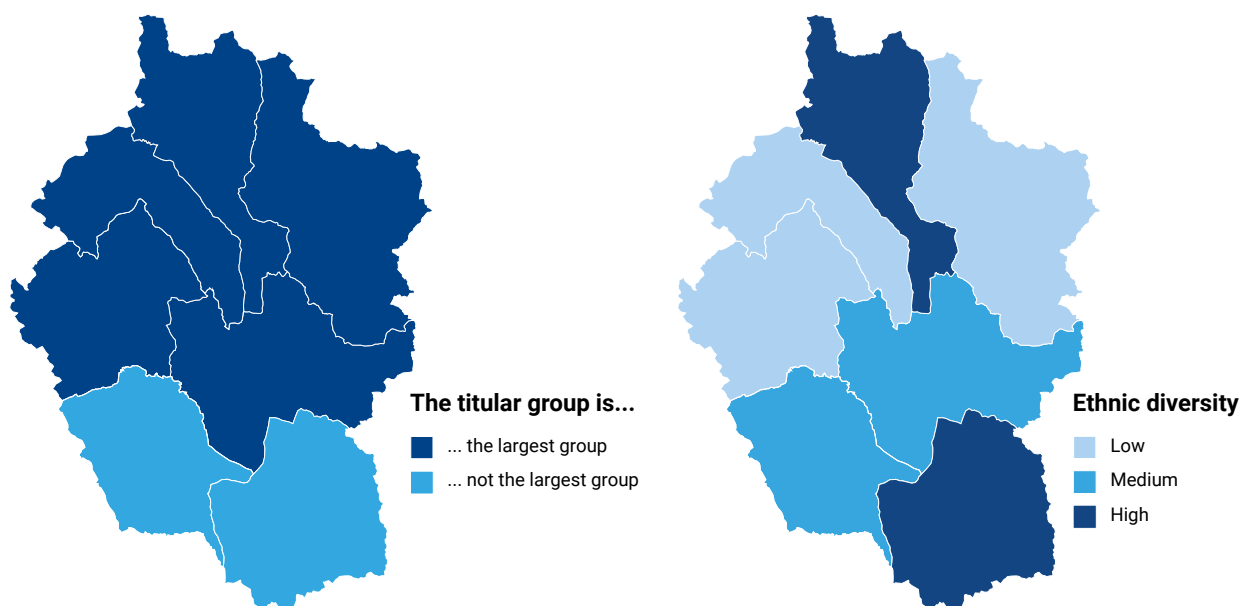
³⁰ While the Karen are not one of the three largest ethnic groups in Kayah State, they are concentrated in Hpasawng Township, where they constitute over half of the township's population.

Table 3.3. Kayah State's ethnic distribution

	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Kayah/Karenni	61.3	55.9	57.4
Bamar	14.8	17.5	13.9
Kayin/Karen	7.8	6.4	5.9
Mon	0.1	0.4	0.4
Shan	14.3	16.6	18.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>98.3</i>	<i>96.8</i>	<i>96.1</i>

Note: The remaining portion of the state population includes other *taingyintha*, people of mixed ethnicity and non-*taingyintha* (e.g. Indians, Chinese).

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Census and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Figure 3.4. Kayah State's largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level

Note: Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high', to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data retrieved from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps are drawn by the authors.

Summary

- Ethnic Kayah are mostly concentrated in the Loikaw District, with more than 86 per cent of the total Kayah population living in the district, and in Pekon Township (Shan South).
- The Bawlakhe District is the most diverse, with the Karen and Kayah, and Shan representing a majority in one of the district's three townships.



SHAN STATE

The largest administrative unit in the country by area, Shan State is both the most politically fragmented and the most ethnically diverse area in Myanmar. Geographically, the state covers most of the Shan Plateau, with Kachin Hills in the northwest, the Burmese-majority central plains in the west and Kayah State in the southwest. Shan State also shares borders with China, Laos and Thailand.

Shan State is commonly divided into three regional units for statistical and administrative purposes: Shan North, Shan East and Shan South, with Lashio, Kengtung and Taunggyi as the main urban hubs, respectively. Geographically, the highest ethnic diversity is found in Shan East, while Shan South is the least diverse of the three regional units.

Shan State is also home to five of Myanmar's six self-administered zones (SAZs) established by the 2008 Constitution, namely the Danu SAZ, the Kokang SAZ, the Palaung SAZ, the Pa-O SAZ and the Wa SAD.³¹ These areas comprise 15 out of 55 townships in Shan State.

Historical evolution of Shan State administrative units

The majority of the Shan population trace their roots to the waves of Tai migration sweeping throughout the territory since the sixth century (Aung Tun 2009). Since then, many politically fragmented kingdoms, mostly led by chief-kings known as *saophas*, have existed. These kingdoms frequently interacted with the different kingdoms located in the plains of the Irrawaddy River—either violently through wars or cooperatively through the payment of tribute.

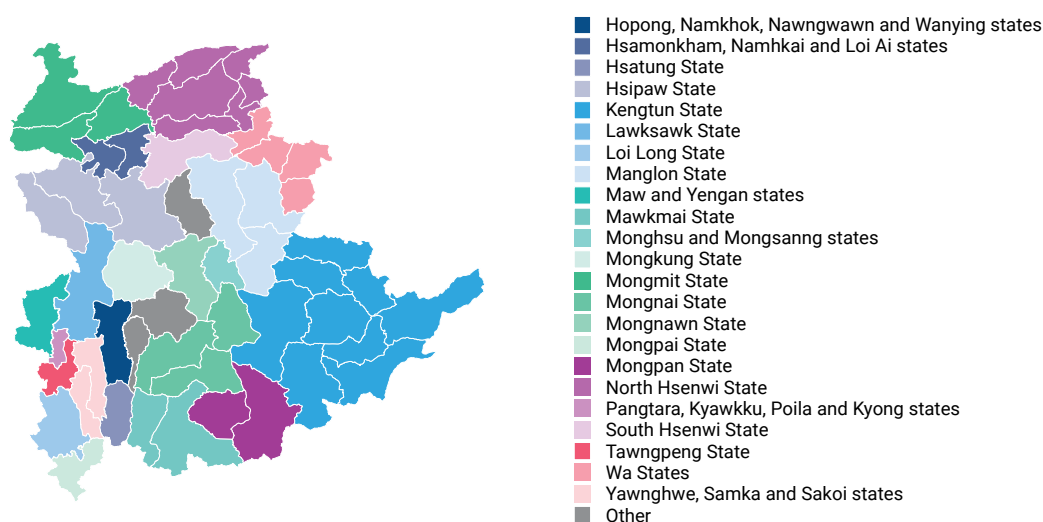
The Shan states formally came under British colonial rule in 1885, although violent resistance throughout the territory characterized the following decade (Aung-Thwin 1985). With the incorporation of Burma into British India, the colonial authorities indirectly administered the many Shan states through the *saophas*. In 1922 the British administrators formed the Federated Shan States in order to centralize their colonial authority over the fragmented states. This led to a fundamental change in the relationship between the colonial government and the *saophas*. Before the formation of the Federated Shan States, some *saophas* enjoyed relatively high levels of autonomy over internal matters, depending on the relationship with colonial bureaucrats; after the arrangement was made, however, the new act collected 50 per cent of their revenues for the central budget and placed all the common departments, from public works to education, under the authority of the Governor of Burma (Tzang Yawnghwe 1987: 76–77).

Following the Panglong negotiations (1946–1947) and the Constituent Assembly (1947)—during which it acquired a right to secession after 10 years

³¹ There are a total of six SAZs in the country. One of the SAZ—the Wa SAD—is composed of two districts and thus referred to as a self-administered division (SAD). They are designed to allow an ethnic group with a substantial population in a given state/region administrative autonomy, though the extent of administrative autonomy in practice is up to debate.

in the Union of Burma— Shan State became one of the four states established in the 1947 Constitution. After a decade of the union experiment, calls for secession and armed rebellion began brewing in Shan State. Since then, Shan State has been a site of civil war in Myanmar.

Figure 3.5. Shan State prior to 1948—approximate boundaries and location of the Shan states



Source: Information retrieved from The Imperial Gazetteer of India, volume 26: Atlas and Maule (1993) based on an original idea from Linn Atlas; maps are drawn by the authors.

Ethnic landscape

As noted already, Shan East is the most ethnically diverse area of Shan State, while Shan South is comparatively more homogeneous. Nonetheless, as Figure 3.6 shows, the diversity of Shan State is evident at the township level, with significant variations among the townships.

Shan is the titular group and is by far the largest ethnic group in the state, accounting for approximately 30 per cent of the population. The second- and third-largest groups are the Pa-O (13 per cent) and the Bamar (12 per cent). Other groups such as the Danu, Innthar, Ta'ang, Kachin, Kayah, Kokang, Wa, and many more are scattered throughout the state.

Shan population

The Shan population is spread out across northern and eastern Myanmar, but they are primarily concentrated in Shan State, which is home to approximately 66 per cent of the total Shan population in the country. The Shan are the largest group in 33 out of the 55 townships of Shan State (see Figure 3.6).

Outside of Shan State, large concentrations of Shan (those who identify as Shanni) can also be found in Kachin State (13 per cent of the total Shan population) and in the Sagaing Region (11 per cent).³² Within Kachin State,

³² Much of the Shan population in Kachin State and the Sagaing Region identify as Shanni. See, for example, Tun (2019).

the Shan population is concentrated in the southwestern parts, bordering the Sagaing Region. In the Mohnyin District, they account for nearly a third (30 per cent) of the district's total population. Within the Sagaing Region, the Shan population is concentrated in the townships bordering Kachin State. Homalin Township, in the Sagaing Region, is home to the largest concentration of Shan in Myanmar—larger than the populations even in the townships in Shan State; about 7 per cent of the total Shan population reside in Homalin Township alone, and the Shan also constitute about 80 per cent of the township's population there. Similarly, the Shan make up a sizable proportion of the township population in the adjacent townships, Banmauk (70 per cent) and Hkamti (20 per cent).

Self-administered zones

Five ethnic groups residing in Shan State (Pa-O, Danu, Ta'ang, Wa and Kokang) have been granted SAZs, according to the 2008 Constitution. In this section, we elaborate on the township-level concentration of the Pa-O, Danu and Ta'ang. A similar elaboration for the Wa and Kokang is not included in this section because the GAD data for four of six townships constituting the Wa SAD are missing,³³ and the Kokang population data in the Kokang SAZ could not be determined, as they are lumped together with 'others' in Laukkaing Township.

Pa-O population

The Pa-O are the second-largest group in Shan State and are largely concentrated in Shan South, which is home to 82 per cent of the total Pa-O population in Myanmar. The remaining 18 per cent of the Pa-O mostly live outside of Shan State, in Kayin and Mon states. Within Shan State, they are the largest ethnic group in six townships.³⁴ The Pa-O SAZ was established from just three of these townships—Hopong, Hsihseng and Pinlaung.

Surprisingly, there are more Pa-O living outside the SAZ than inside it. The SAZ is home to just 37 per cent of the Pa-O, while the other townships in Shan South are home to 43 per cent of them—mostly concentrated around Loilen and Taunggyi townships (~30 per cent). Nonetheless, the Pa-O represent 70 per cent of the population of the Pa-O SAZ. Outside of the SAZ, the Pa-O constitute a sizable proportion of the population in townships adjacent to it, including the majority of the population in Mawkaing Township.

Danu population

The Danu are the third-largest non-Bamar group in Shan State and are largely concentrated in Shan South, in the townships bordering the Mandalay Region. Less than 1 per cent of the Danu population live outside Shan State.

³³ Those townships are Mongmao and Pangwaun (Hopang District) and Namphan and Pangsang (Matman District). According to existing policy briefs, the United Wa State Party (and its armed wing, the United Wa State Army, which by various accounts is the largest ethnic armed organization in Myanmar) maintains strong political, economic and military control over most of the areas in the Wa SAD. For more information about the Wa SAD, see Lintner (2019).

³⁴ Those townships are Hopong, Hsihseng and Pinlaung (Pa-O SAZ); Loilen and Mawkaing (Loilen District, Shan South); and Taunggyi, Shan State's capital.

The largest concentration of Danu is located in the Danu SAZ: 46 per cent of the Danu live in one of the SAZ's two townships—Pindaya and Ywangan. A sizable proportion of the Danu live in the townships adjacent to the SAZ, in either Shan South or Shan North: 37 per cent of the Danu live in Shan South, and 16 per cent live in Shan North. In Shan South, the largest concentration of Danu is located in Kalaw and Lawksawk townships (Taunggyi and Langkho districts, respectively), while in Shan North, the Danu people mostly live around Nawngkhio Township (Kyaukme District).

The Danu are the largest group in the Danu SAZ, where they represent close to 80 per cent of the population. The Danu also represent the largest population in Kalaw and Nawngkhio townships.

Palaung/Ta'ang population

Nearly all the Ta'ang in Myanmar (99 per cent) live in Shan State. They also represent a large majority in the Palaung SAZ. However, there are more Ta'ang living outside their SAZ than inside it. While 22 per cent of the Ta'ang population live in the SAZ, 77 per cent of them live in other areas of Shan State—especially in Kutkai, Kyaukme, Lashio and Tangyan townships. Nonetheless, while they are a large group in those townships, they are not the largest one. In Kutkai Township, for example, the Ta'ang represent 25 per cent of the population, but the Mone Wong constitute 29 per cent (and the Kachin, 24 per cent).

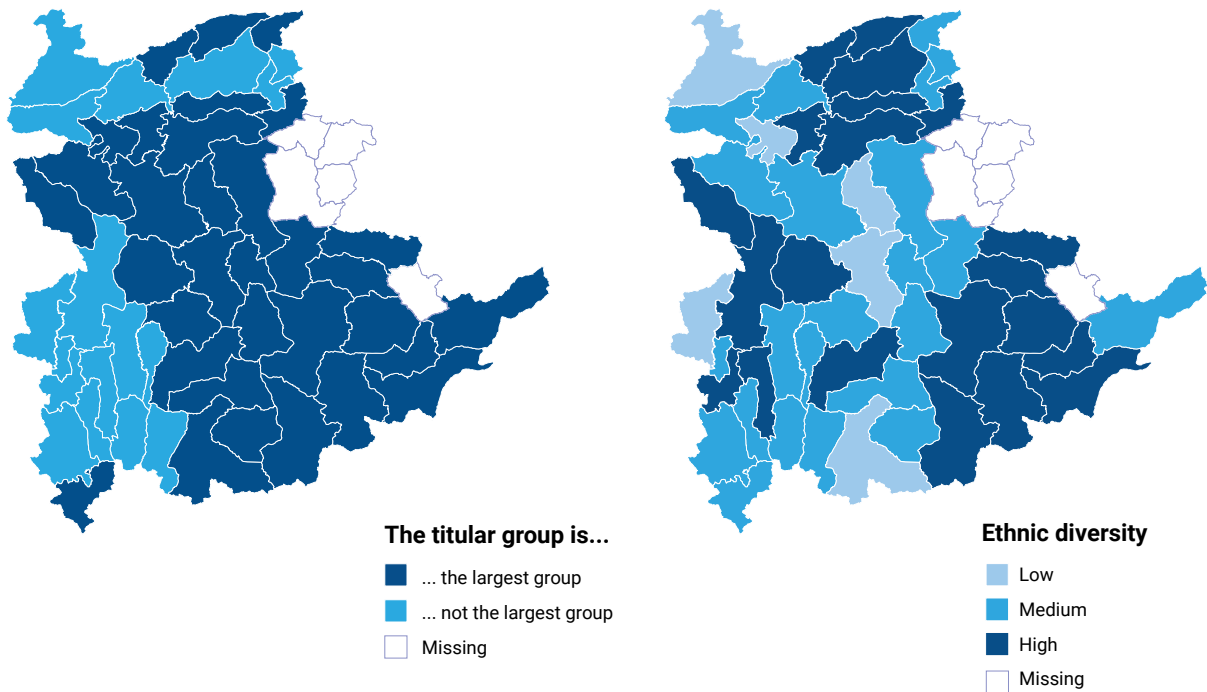
Table 3.4. Shan State's ethnic distribution

	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Shan	30.1	76.4	77.0
Akha	2.0		
Bamar	12.2	11.1	9.5
Danu	5.7		
Innthar	2.7		
Kachin	2.6	3.8	5.3
Kayah/Karenni	0.2	1.2	1.3
Kayan	1.7		
Kokang	3.6		
Lahu	5.0		
Mone Wong	1.5		
Pa-O	13.4		
Palaung/Ta'ang	8.2		
Taung Yoe	1.0		
Wa	2.1		
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>92.0</i>	<i>92.5</i>	<i>93.1</i>

Note: The decrease in the proportion of the Shan population between the 1983 Census and the 2019 GAD Township Reports was primarily due to the disaggregation of subgroups from the Shan. The remaining portion of the state population includes other *taingyintha*, people of mixed ethnicity and non-*taingyintha* (e.g. Indians, Chinese).

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Figure 3.6. Shan State's largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level



Note: Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high' to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data retrieved from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps are drawn by the authors.

Summary

- Shan State is the most diverse of Myanmar's subnational administrative units.
- The largest concentration of Shan is in Shan State's heartland—eastern Shan South and southern Shan North.
- While only 2 per cent of the Bamar live in Shan State, they represent a majority in the Mongmit District.
- 17 per cent of the Kachin population live in Shan State, mostly concentrated in Shan North's Lashio and Muse districts.
- Groups that have been granted an SAZ are mostly—but not solely—concentrated in their SAZ.

KAYIN STATE

Kayin State is located in the eastern part of Myanmar. It shares a long border with Thailand—with its famous Myawaddy border crossing—while in the west it shares a border with the Bago Region and Mon State. In the south of Kayin State lies the Tanintharyi Region. In the north, Kayin State shares a boundary with Nay Pyi Taw, Kayah State and Shan State. Internationally, Kayin State and its titular group, the Karen, are known for an uprising that started as early as independence. The conflict between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Myanmar military has been called the ‘longest civil war’ (South 2011).

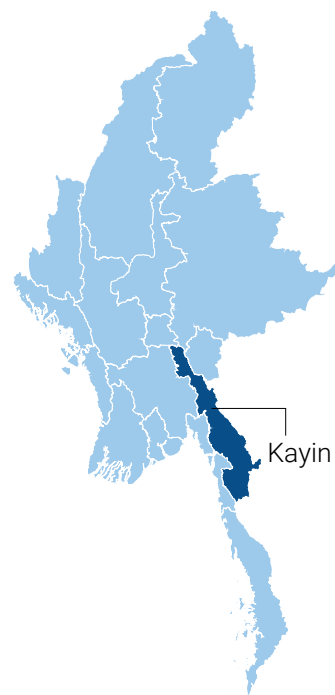
The overall geography of Kayin State is hilly, especially in the northern part as well as at the border with Thailand. Those areas can be difficult to access except through certain passes—Myawaddy being one of them.

Historical evolution of Kayin State administrative units

Territories in present-day Kayin State were, at different points, under the influence of the state’s Bamar, Siamese and Shan neighbours (Rogers 1910). Given the challenging geography, however, this corner of Myanmar was largely autonomous before British rule. This area came under British rule in two waves. First, after the end of the first Anglo-Burmese War in 1826, the southern end (now the Kawkaireik and Kya-in districts) was ceded to the British East India Company, while the rest was annexed in 1852.

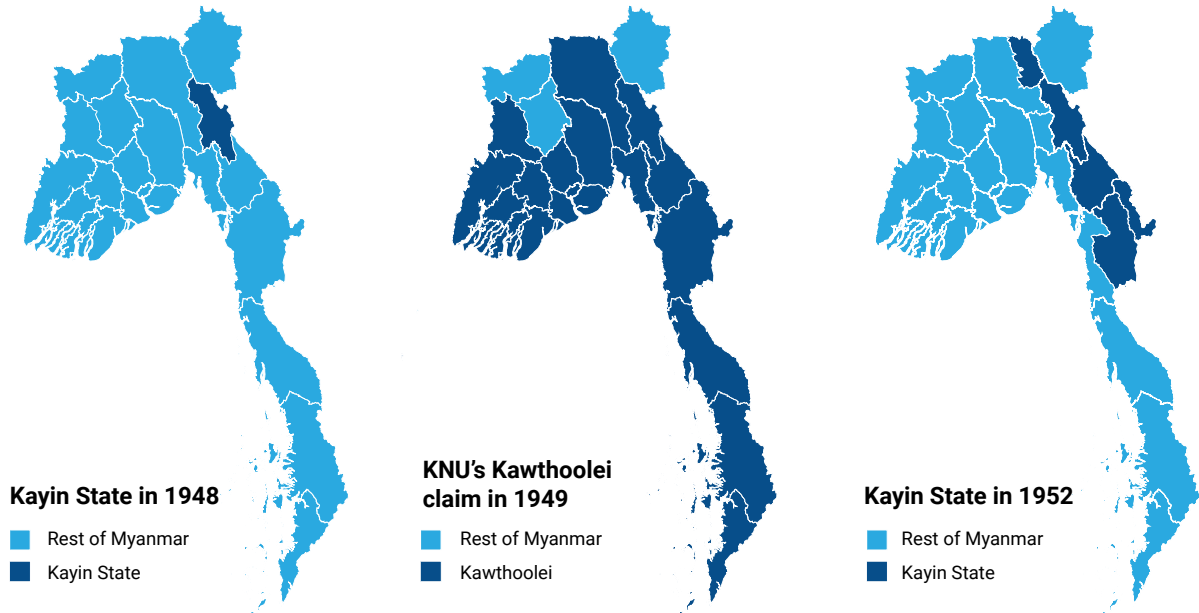
Kayin State was originally established in 1952 as Karen State (Thawngmung 2012). Prior to that, the 1947 Constitution stated that ‘the territory hitherto known as the Salween District shall form a constituent unit of the Union of Burma and be hereafter known as “The Karen State”’ (Constituent Assembly of Burma 1947). And the inclusion of adjacent territories was left to further discussions in the parliament. However, the Salween District alone was much smaller than the Karen State the Karen had hoped for.

Pursuant to parliamentary acts in 1951 (No. 62) and 1952 (No.14), Karen State was created with parts of four districts in British Burma’s Tenasserim Division: the northeastern corner of the Taungoo District, the Salween District, the eastern half of the Thaton District and the eastern half of the Amherst District (Constituent Assembly of Burma 1947: 32). While the newly established Karen State extended beyond the Salween District the discontent on the part of the Karen leadership had already materialized into an open revolution between 1947 and 1952. The idea of a Kawthoolei³⁵ as envisioned by the Karen leadership included not only the Karen in the nearby Tenasserim Division but also the ‘key delta Karen’ (Fong 2008) population in the Irrawaddy Division. Interestingly, after the 1962 coup, Ne Win’s government renamed Karen State Kawthoolei in 1964—an obvious attempt to appease the Karen in rebellion. The name reverted back to Karen State in 1974.



³⁵ Thawngmung (2012) defines Kawthoolei as ‘the Karen name for the state that the KNU has attempted to establish since the late 1940s’.

Figure 3.7. Kayin State's administrative boundaries in 1948 and 1952 contrasted with the KNU's Kawthoolei claims



Notes: The borders represented here are the colonial-era district boundaries. The Kawthoolei map represents the political area claimed by 'maximalists' factions within the Karen leadership, but it has never materialized.

Source: Information retrieved from the Census of India 1931, Volume XI: Burma, Cady (1958) and the Constitution of Myanmar 2008; maps are drawn by the authors.

Ethnic landscape

Kayin State is one of the most diverse states in the country. After Mon and Shan states, it has the highest ELF score. The largest ethnic groups in Kayin State are the Karen (63 per cent), the Bamar (14 per cent) and the Mon (11 per cent). The remaining population are primarily Pa-O and Shan.

Clear differences exist in the ethnic distribution in the northern and southern parts of the state. The northern parts (Hpa-An and Hpapun and districts) are more homogeneous than the southern parts (Kawkareik and Myawaddy districts), which are home to large Bamar and Mon populations.

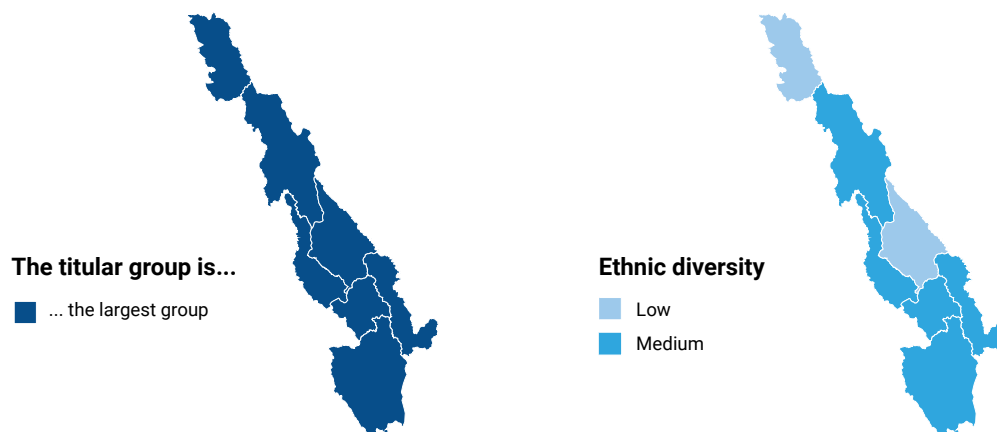
Karen population

The Karen are the second-largest ethnic group in Myanmar and are spread out over southern and southeastern states/regions. At the state/region level, the largest concentrations of Karen are in the Ayeyarwady Region (41 per cent of the total Karen population), Kayin State (30 per cent), Mon State (9 per cent), the Yangon Region (8 per cent) and the Bago Region (7 per cent). Indeed, there are more Karen in the Ayeyarwady Region than in Kayin State.

Within Kayin State, the Karen account for more than half of the township population in all but one township. They are also the largest group in all townships in Kayin State. Outside of Kayin State, the Karen are mostly concentrated around Kyaukkyi and Kyauktaga townships (eastern Bago

Region) and Einme, Pantanaw and Wakema townships (Ayeyarwady Region), where they are also the largest group. These areas in the Bago and Ayeyarwady regions are also the territories that the Karen leaders, in the 1940s, argued should be included in Karen State.

Figure 3.8. Kayin State's largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level



Note: Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high', to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data retrieved from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps are drawn by the authors.

Table 3.5. Kayin State's ethnic distribution

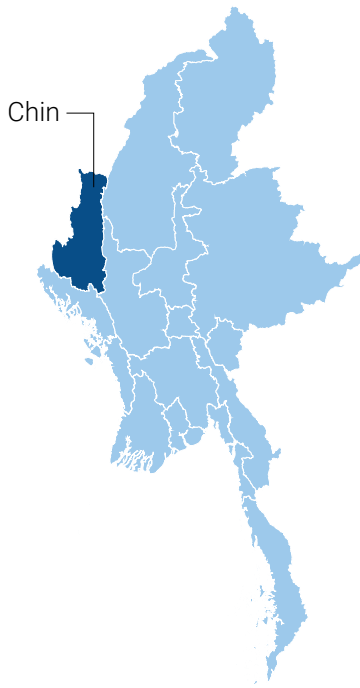
	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Karen	62.8	57.1	65.8
Bamar	13.6	14.1	10.5
Karenni	0.01	1.4	0.1
Mon	11.2	17.7	14.1
Pa-O	4.8		
Shan	2.9	3.0	4.1
<i>Subtotal</i>	95.3	93.3	94.6

Note: The remaining portion of the state's population includes other *taingyintha*, people of mixed ethnicity and non-*taingyintha* (e.g. Indians, Chinese).

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Summary

- 30 per cent of the Karen live in Kayin State, while 70 per cent live elsewhere.
- 20 per cent of the Karen live in the Hpa-An and Hpapun districts—areas also home to 7 per cent of the Pa-O.
- The Bamar, Mon and Shan mostly live in the southern districts of Kayin State.



CHIN STATE

Located in the west of the country and sharing a long border with India's states of Mizoram and Manipur, Chin State is an extremely hilly area. The state is difficult to access from most parts of the country, rendering communication and economic exchanges challenging. Chin State is also one of the least developed areas in Myanmar.

Historical evolution of Chin State administrative units

The Chin Hills were controlled by the British Army only 10 years after the third Anglo-Burmese War. The challenging terrain and local resistance against the new rulers led the colonial government to enact the 1886 Chin Hills Act, which established that the territories would be indirectly ruled through tribal chiefs, separate from the rest of British Burma. This measure was insufficient to quell resistance, leading to major events of repression throughout the last decade of the 19th century; the British Government, however, was able to disarm most of the tribes by 1900.

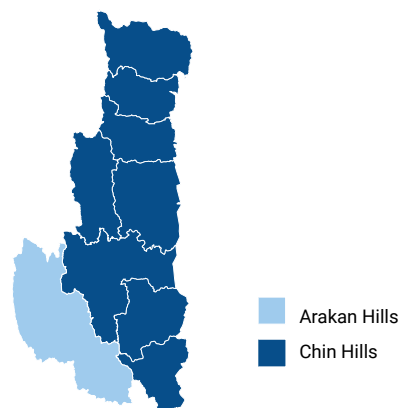
The Chin leaders were present at the Panglong conferences but notably did not ask for a state. At independence, the Chin Hills and the Arakan Hill Tracts (present-day Paletwa District) were combined as the Special Division of the Chins. Present-day Chin State was established only in 1974.

Ethnic landscape

Chin State is populated nearly exclusively by the Chin, with the Chin constituting almost 96 per cent of the state's population.³⁶ This homogeneity is primarily a function of the fact that Chin State was formed exclusively based on the Chin Hills of British Burma's Frontier Areas. There is also a significant Rakhine presence in Paletwa Township, which is a southern township bordering Rakhine State. This township is more easily accessible from Rakhine State than from the upper hills of Chin State. A Rakhine presence in this part of Chin State is to be expected, as what is southern Chin State today was the Arakan Hills District during the colonial period. Nevertheless, the Chin still constitute a solid majority in Paletwa Township.

³⁶ The category 'Chin' in the GAD Township Reports is presumed to include all Chin subgroups, as none are listed separately.

Figure 3.9. Special Division of the Chins prior to 1948



Source: Information retrieved from Census of India 1931, Volume XI: Burma and contemporary administrative boundaries; maps are drawn by the authors.

Chin population

The Chin are relatively dispersed throughout western and central Myanmar. In fact, Chin State is home to just half of the total Chin population in the country. At the state/region level, there are four major concentrations of Chin: Chin State (50 per cent of the total Chin population), the Sagaing Region (22 per cent), the Magway Region (11 per cent) and Rakhine State (11 per cent). In Kale and Tamu townships, in the Sagaing Region, and Sidoktaya Township, in the Magway Region—the townships bordering Chin State—the Chin constitute about half of the township population. Despite large concentrations of Chin, these territories were not included in Chin State.

Table 3.6. Chin State's ethnic distribution

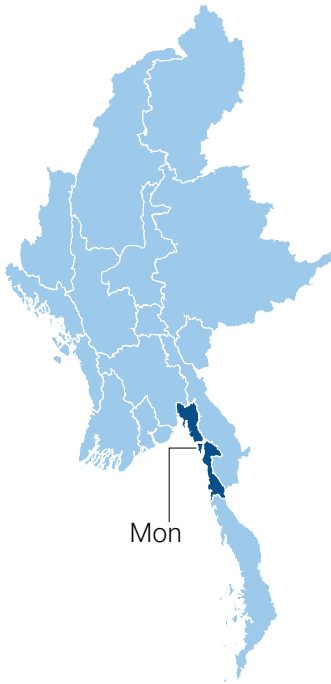
	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Chin	95.7	94.6	93.8
Bamar	0.8	0.8	1.0
Rakhine	3.4	4.4	4.8
<i>Subtotal</i>	99.9	99.8	99.6

Note: The remaining portion of the state's population includes other *taingyintha*, people of mixed ethnicity and non-*taingyintha* (e.g. Indians, Chinese).

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Summary

- The Chin represent an overwhelming majority of the state's population, but only half of the Chin population live in Chin State.
- Most of the Rakhine living in Chin State are located in Paletwa Township, where they represent 17 per cent of the township's population.



MON STATE

Situated along the Gulf of Martaban's coastline, Mon State is home to the Mon people (also recorded as the Talaing people in colonial documents). While the area had been the centre of historical Mon-speaking kingdoms, present-day Mon State was established under the 1974 Constitution.

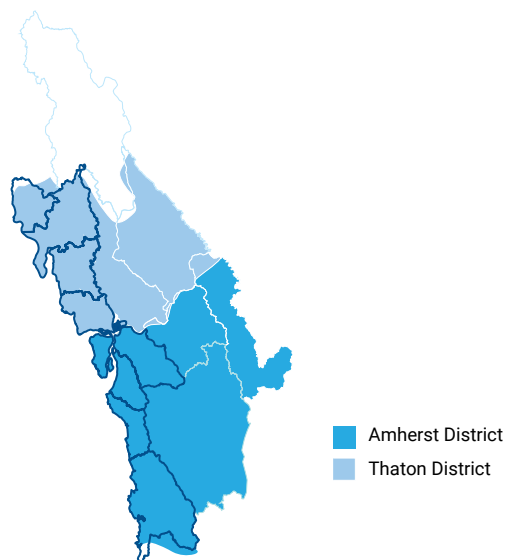
Historical evolution of Mon State administrative units

The state's present-day territories were the most contentious area between historical kingdoms in the area. Several kingdoms that emerged in the territories were later attacked and annexed by the kingdoms based in the dry zone of central Myanmar (also known as Upper Burma). The earliest conquest dates back to 1010, during the height of the Pagan Kingdom. After the fall of the Pagan in the 13th century, the Mon-speaking Hanthawaddy Kingdom, which was based at Pegu and generally covered most of what is now southern Myanmar (also known as Lower Burma), including the Bago and Yangon regions, emerged as a Siamese vassal state.³⁷ Later, it became independent, until the mid-15th century, when it was annexed by the Toungoo dynasty (South 2003). The majority of mythologies integral to the Mon identity also appeared during the Hanthawaddy period (Aung-Thwin 2005).

Different parts of the current state came under British colonial rule at different points. The southern part (now the Mawlamyine District) was colonized after the first Anglo-Burmese War (1826): the Konbaung ruler ceded the territories to the British East India Company according to the Treaty of Yandabo. The northern part (now the Thaton District) was colonized after the end of the second Anglo-Burmese War (1852). These territories were then administered as part of the Amherst and Thaton districts, respectively. Under a 1952 parliamentary act, the non-coastal townships of the Amherst and Thaton districts became part of the newly established Karen State. The western coastal townships (along with the non-coastal Kyaukse Township) became Tenasserim Division No. 1, which in 1974 was reconstituted as Mon State.

³⁷ For more information about the relationship between the dry-zone kingdoms of Upper Burma, which were Bamar-speaking, and the coastal kingdoms of Lower Burma, which were Mon-speaking, see Aung-Thwin (2005).

Figure 3.10. Mon State's borders in 1974 relative to colonial districts



Source: Information retrieved from Census of India 1931, Volume XI: Burma and contemporary administrative boundaries; maps are drawn by the authors.

Ethnic landscape

Mon State is a diverse state, with the second-highest ethnic fractionalization score in Myanmar (0.51). It is home to three major groups: the Mon (39 per cent of the state's population), the Bamar (36 per cent) and the Karen (14 per cent). Given the historical background discussed above, the coexistence of these ethnic groups in present-day Mon State is not surprising. Generally speaking, the Bamar population is spread throughout Mon State, while the Mon population is more concentrated in the southern part; and the Karen population, primarily in the northern part.

Mon population

The Mon population is geographically concentrated in the coastal area of southeastern Myanmar: approximately 77 per cent reside in Mon State and 17 per cent in Kayin State. The Mon are the largest ethnic group in 5 of 10 townships in Mon State—Chaungzon, Kyaikmaraw, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, and Ye.

While the Mon-speaking kingdoms were historically based in Pegu, the Mon population in the Bago and Yangon regions today is rather sparse—estimated to be just 0.16 per cent and 0.36 per cent of the region's population, respectively. Scholars of Myanmar offer two different explanations for this significant decrease in the Mon's population size in these regions. According to Thant Myint-U, after the Konbaung conquest of Lower Burma, there was a linguistic homogenization campaign against Mon speakers. As a result, the Mon population likely either (a) migrated to Tenneserim, where they are concentrated today in Myanmar, or to Siam; or (b) adopted the Bamar language, dress and hairstyles, and names; in essence, they became Bamar (Myint-U 2001: 85). According to Ashley South, the dramatic change in

population did not happen until well after the British annexation, when a large population of Bamar from Upper Burma moved into Lower Burma, overtaking local Mon communities (South 2003: 21).

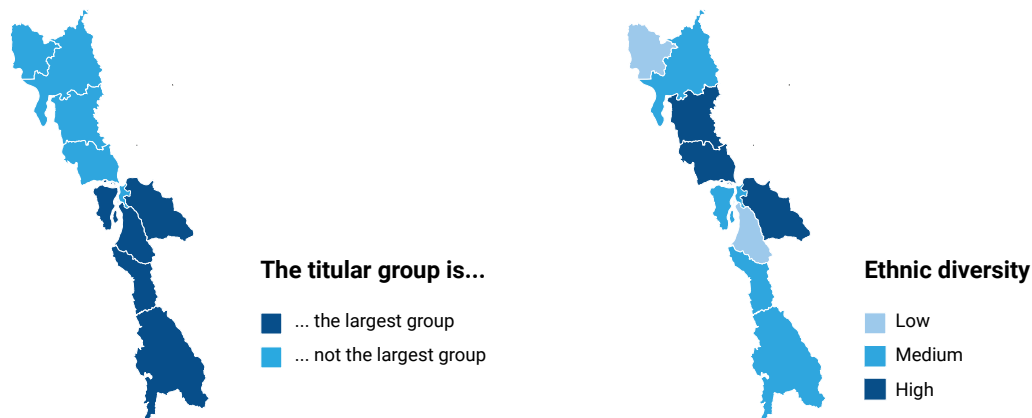
Table 3.7. Mon State's ethnic distribution

	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Mon	38.7	38.2	38.7
Bamar	36.4	37.2	36.6
Kayin/Karen	14.2	15.7	15.3
Pa-O	3.1		
Shan	0.2	0.6	1.1
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>92.6</i>	<i>91.7</i>	<i>91.7</i>

Note: The remaining portion of the state's population includes other *taingyintha*, people of mixed ethnicity and non-*taingyintha* (e.g. Indians, Chinese).

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Figure 3.11. Mon State's largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level



Note: Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high', to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data retrieved from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps are drawn by the authors.

Summary

- Mon State's southern district is home to most of the Mon in the state, where they represent a large majority.
- Mon State's northern district is diverse, with Bamar, Karen and Mon populations, each representing sizable groups.

RAKHINE STATE

Rakhine State is the westernmost administrative area of Myanmar, spanning the coast of the Bay of Bengal. It shares a border with Bangladesh's Chittagong District, separated only by the Naf River. It also shares a border with Chin State and the Magway, Bago and Ayeyarwady regions. The Rakhine Yoma mountains separate the state from the rest of Myanmar, limiting the area's accessibility.

Northern Rakhine—the area from Sittwe, which is the state's current capital city, to the Bangladesh border, and home to the Rohingya people—has experienced unrest since Burma became independent. Since the BSPP era, which effectively began after the coup in 1962, discriminatory policies and exclusion against the Rohingya people have intensified, depriving them of their Myanmar citizenship. Since 2012 the people in that area have experienced further hardship: a significant portion of the Rohingya population live in camps scattered throughout the state, and travel to and from the three northernmost townships of Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung has been severely limited.

Historical evolution of Rakhine State administrative units

Given its relative geographic isolation, pre-colonial kingdoms established in the area of present-day Rakhine State were largely autonomous from the kingdoms in central Myanmar. The last independent kingdom in the area before the invasion of the Konbaung kings was the Kingdom of Mrauk-U (1429–1785) (Myint-U 2001: 13–14).

The Mrauk-U Kingdom's independence came to an end in 1784, when Bodawpaya, then the Konbaung king, took advantage of an internal political crisis to invade and annex the kingdom. During the invasion and afterward, many locals fled to Chittagong. In 1824 the British took control of the former kingdom's territories. The Konbaung Kingdom formally ceded these territories to the British East India Company following the Treaty of Yandabo, signed at the end of the first Anglo-Burmese War, in 1826. Under British rule, these territories were divided into three districts—Akyab, Kyaukpyu and Sandoway.

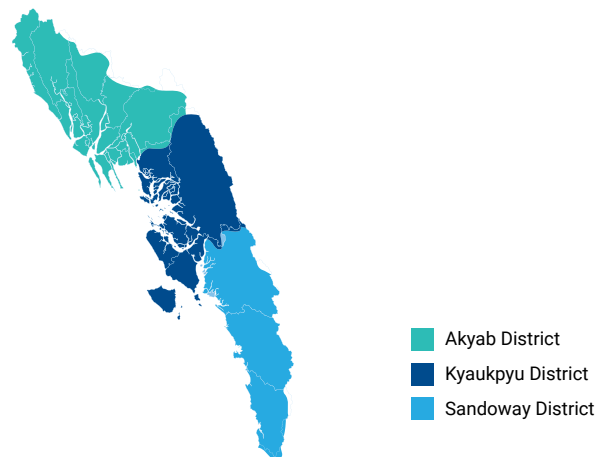
In 1865 a new district named the Northern Arakan District (also referred to as the Arakan Hills District) was created from the hilly northern regions of the Akyab District (Spearman 1880: 7). This change was made in order to better establish British rule in the places where colonial officials found it impossible to administer. The new district was mainly ruled in cooperation with local chiefs.

When British rule came to an end, the Arakan Division of British Burma was effectively split into two divisions, per the 1947 Constitution. The Arakan Hill Tracts (the present-day Paletwa District) became part of the Special Division of the Chins. The remaining districts—Akyab, Kyaukpyu and Sandoway—were reconstituted as the Arakan Division; this was later established as Rakhine State in the 1974 Constitution. Of note, for a short period of time (1961–1964), a special division was created for the areas north of the Kaladan River (roughly the present-day Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships)—the Mayu Frontier District, which is the area with the highest concentration of Rohingya people in present-day Myanmar.



Rakhine State's present-day district borders largely follow the colonial district borders. The Akyab District has been divided into the Maungdaw, Mrauk-U and Sittwe districts. The Kyaukpyu District has been divided into the Ann and Kyaukpyu districts. The Sandoway District (now known as the Thandwe District) maintained its colonial boundaries.

Figure 3.12. Rakhine State prior to 1948



Source: Information retrieved from Census of India 1931, Volume XI: Burma and contemporary administrative boundaries; maps are drawn by the authors.

Ethnic landscape

Rakhine State is the second most homogeneous state in Myanmar. Rakhine State also stands out from other states in one important aspect: in most of Myanmar's states, the total population of recognized groups (*taingyintha*) makes up more than 90 per cent of the population. In Rakhine State, however, the *taingyintha* population accounts for only roughly 74 per cent. This is because Rakhine State is home to two main ethnic groups—the Rakhine/Arakan, who account for nearly 70 per cent of the state's population, and the Rohingya people,³⁸ who account for about 26 per cent of the state's population.³⁹ The latter make up a large majority in the state's northern townships, while the former are the dominant population elsewhere in the state. There is a significant Chin presence in central Rakhine State—Ann, Minbya and Myebon townships (accounting for 29 per cent, 14 per cent and 13 per cent of the township population, respectively), as well as in townships bordering Chin State and the Magway Region. The presence of other ethnic groups in Rakhine State is generally negligible.

³⁸ The latter appear in the GAD Township Reports as a type of 'foreign' ethnicity labelled as 'Bangladeshi'. Foreigners are usually designated in relation to the country with which their descent is (thought to be) associated. See [footnote 19](#) for a discussion of Rohingya population estimates.

³⁹ It is generally assumed that there is a sizable Bamar population in southern Rakhine State, which borders the Bago and Ayeyarwady regions. This assumption is consistent with the colonial records (i.e. the 1931 Census), which estimated the proportion of the Bamar population in the northern townships (formerly the Akyab District) at 0.4 per cent; in the central townships (formerly the Kyaukpyu District) at 0.47 per cent; and in the southern townships (formerly the Sandoway District) at 56.11 per cent. However, post-colonial records, including the 1973 and 1983 Census reports and the 2019 GAD Township Reports, indicate a rather sparse Bamar population in southern Rakhine State. Explaining this shift in the proportion of the Bamar population requires additional research.

Table 3.8. Rakhine State's ethnic distribution

	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Rakhine	69.6	67.8	67.2
Bamar	0.4	0.7	0.9
Chin	3.8	3.2	3.2
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>73.8</i>	<i>71.7</i>	<i>71.3</i>
Foreign	25.9	27.8	27.8

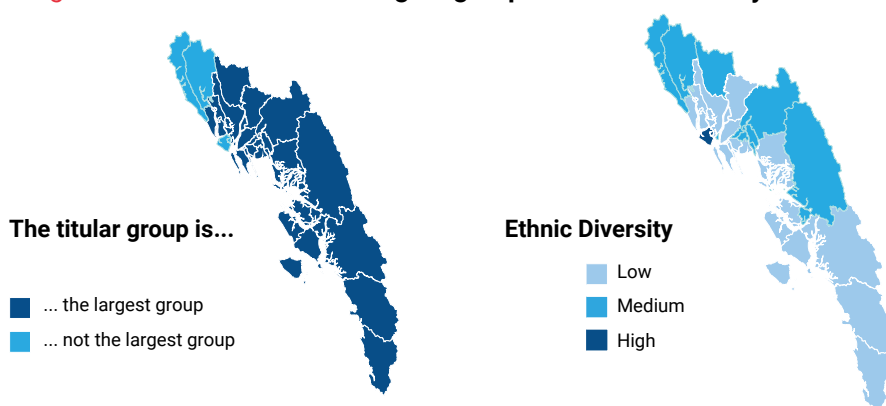
Note: Other *taingyintha* account for less than 1 per cent of Rakhine State's population.

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Arakan/Rakhine population

The Rakhine are one of the most geographically concentrated ethnic groups in Myanmar, with 92 per cent of the group's population residing in their home state. The remaining Rakhine population is scattered in the Ayeyarwady and Yangon regions.

In Rakhine State, with the notable exception of Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Rathedaung and Sittwe, the state's capital, the Rakhine population represents an overwhelming majority in all townships. In Munang and Ponnagyun townships, for example, they account for more than 98 per cent of the population.

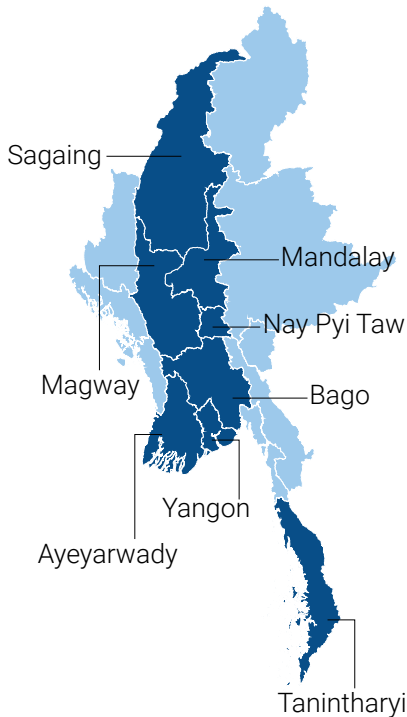
Figure 3.13. Rakhine State's largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level

Note: Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high', to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data retrieved from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps are drawn by the authors.

Summary

- Rakhine State's northern townships—Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Rathedaung—are home to a sizable Rohingya population, who make up a majority of the population.
- The central and southern townships are mostly inhabited by the Rakhine people, though a sizable Chin population lives in Ann, Minbya and Myebon townships.



REGIONS

Regions constitute half of Myanmar's tier-1 subnational administrative units. In total, 207 townships (out of 330) are located in the central plains, mostly around the Irrawaddy River. While the central regions form the dry zone, the southern regions comprise the humid, rice-producing Ayeyarwady Region and the Bago and Yangon regions (the Yangon Region was carved out from Bago in 1964) as well as the remote coastline of the Tanintharyi Region.

Historical evolution of Myanmar's regions

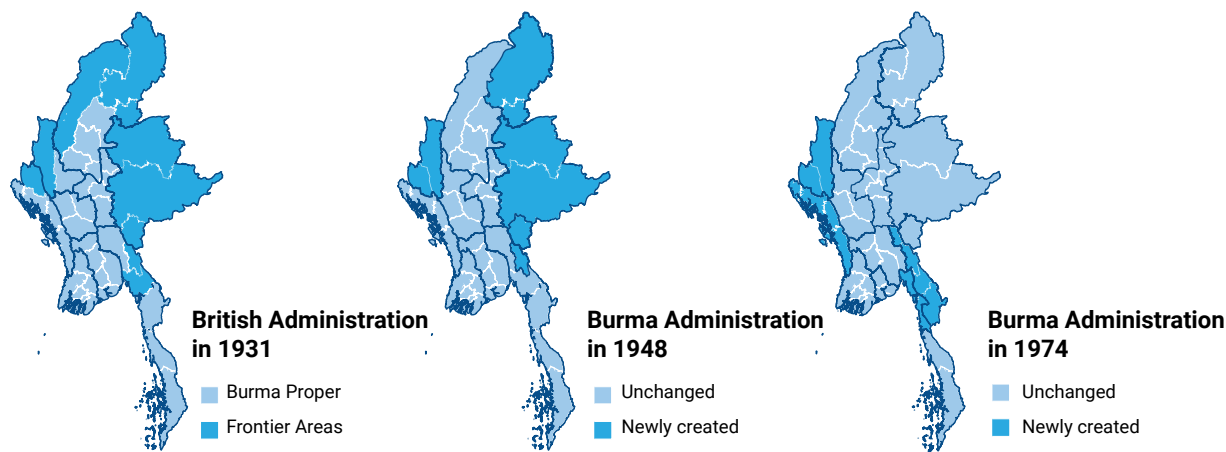
Myanmar's regions are generally associated with the Bamar population. These administrative units include areas ruled by successive kingdoms that emerged in the dry zone (e.g. Pagan, Toungoo, Konbaung). However, they also include areas beyond the kings' reach but that were left out of the states created in post-independence Burma (e.g. the Naga Hills).

Prior to the arrival of the British, different kingdoms mostly ruled over the country's central plains. From the Pyu city of Sri Ksetra to the Toungoo Kingdom (16th–18th centuries), the present-day regions have been the cradle of many kingdoms. The Irrawaddy River and the fertile lands in the surrounding plains allowed for the constitution of kingdoms that would dominate most of the area.

Territories ruled by the last Konbaung king were gradually incorporated into British Burma. First, the British took hold of the coastal areas (roughly present-day Mon State, Rakhine State and the Tanintharyi Region). At the conclusion of the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824–1826), the British Army installed settlements in those areas. The present-day Ayeyarwady, Bago and Yangon regions were occupied following the second Anglo-Burmese War (1852–1853). Then, following the third and final Anglo-Burmese War (1885), the cradle of these historical kingdoms (roughly the present-day Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing regions) were incorporated into British Burma.

While the British directly administered much of the new territories under their control, they instituted indirect rule in the Frontier Areas. The former were referred to as Ministerial Burma (or Burma Proper) and the latter as the Frontier Areas. The first panel in Figure 3.14 shows the areas that constituted Ministerial Burma and those that formed the Frontier Areas.

Figure 3.14. Changes in administrative boundaries in 1931, 1948 and 1974



Note: The blue lines denote the first tier of Myanmar's territorial units (divisions in 1931 and states and divisions/regions since 1947). The white lines denote the districts in all three panels.

Source: Information from Callahan (2005) and Constitution of Burma 1948, 1974; maps are drawn by the authors.

Ethnic landscape

Regions are homogeneously Bamar. In fact, the Bamar account for well over 80 per cent of the local population in all regions except Ayeyarwady. Among the regions, the Magway and Mandalay regions are the most homogeneous, with the Bamar making up 97 and 96 per cent of their population, respectively. Such a high concentration of Bamar is to be expected, as both regions are the cradle of famous Bamar-speaking kingdoms.

There are, however, pockets where ethnic minorities are concentrated in the regions, particularly in the townships bordering the states—the Karen in the Ayeyarwady Delta and the eastern Bago Region, the Naga and the Shan in the northern Sagaing Region, and the Chin mostly in the southern Sagaing Region and western Magway. Though the proportion of ethnic minorities at the regional level is fairly small, various minority groups are the largest group in several townships.

Bamar population

The Bamar, the ethnic majority and the politically dominant ethnic group in Myanmar, account for about 70 per cent of the country's population (since the 1973 Census, the Bamar have consistently accounted for 68–69 per cent of the country's population). This massive population is geographically concentrated in central to lower Myanmar, with 94 per cent of the total Bamar population living in the regions (and Nay Pyi Taw). At the township level, the Bamar are the majority in all but 15 townships across the regions (see Figure 3.15). They make up more than 99 per cent of the population in 57 out of the 202 townships in the regions.

Only 6 per cent of the Bamar live outside the regions and Nay Pyi Taw. The largest concentrations of Bamar are in Kachin, Mon and Shan states. Given the overall size of the Bamar population, however, the Bamar's presence in some states is not negligible.

Naga population

The Naga population in Myanmar is heavily concentrated in the northern tip of the Sagaing Region, nestled between Kachin State and India's Nagaland. Within the Sagaing Region, the Naga make up a substantial population in four townships—Lahe (99 per cent of the township's population), Nanyun (97 per cent), Layshi (87 per cent) and Hkamti (46 per cent). In 2010 the first three townships were established as self-administered zones. Small communities of Naga also live in Tanai Township, in Kachin State, and Homalin Township, in the Sagaing Region.

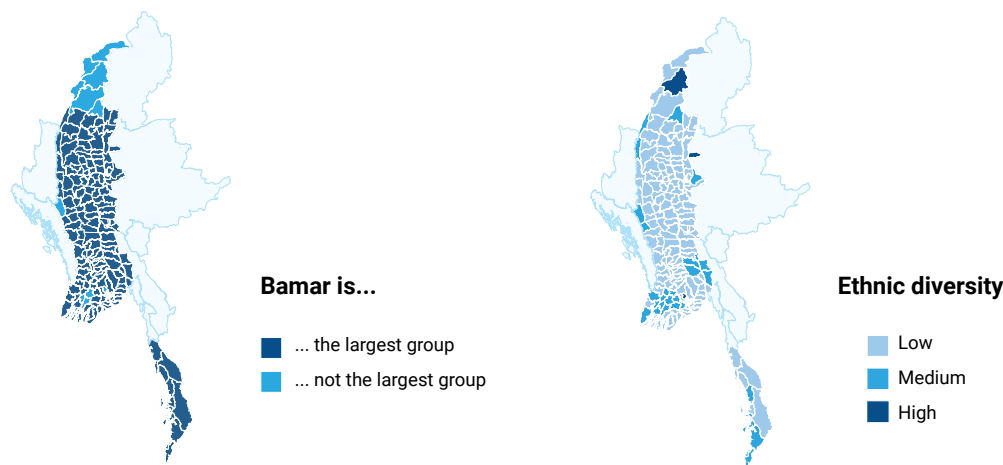
Table 3.9. Regions' ethnic distribution

	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Ayeyarwady Region			
Bamar	76.7	75.8	76.4
Karen	21.5	20.4	19.6
<i>Subtotal</i>	98.2	96.2	96
Bago Region			
Bamar	89.9	88.9	88.7
Karen	4.6	4.8	5.0
Shan	0.9	1.2	1.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	95.4	94.9	94.7
Magway Region			
Bamar	97.1	96.7	96.4
Chin	2.6	2.4	2.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	99.7	99.1	98.9
Mandalay Region			
Bamar	95.8	95.2	95.5
Shan	1.0	1.1	1.2
Kachin	0.9	0.5	0.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	97.7	96.8	97.0
Sagaing Region			
Bamar	87.5	90.1	89.1
Chin	4.0	4.8	5.5
Naga	2.6		
Shan	4.8	4.0	4.4
<i>Subtotal</i>	98.9	98.9	99.0

Table 3.9. Regions' ethnic distribution (cont.)

	2019 GAD Township Reports (%)	1983 Census (%)	1973 Census (%)
Tanintharyi Region			
Bamar	86.5	83.5	83.5
Karen	7.5	6.5	6.8
Mon	1.8	2.6	2.3
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>95.8</i>	<i>92.6</i>	<i>92.6</i>
Yangon Region			
Bamar	89.0	83.6	81.7
Karen	3.9	4.8	2.8
Rakhine	1.3	1.2	1.4
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>94.2</i>	<i>89.6</i>	<i>85.9</i>

Source: Data retrieved from the 1973 and 1983 Censuses and the 2019 GAD Township Reports; table compiled by the authors.

Figure 3.15. Regions' largest group and ethnic diversity at the township level

Note: Ethnic diversity is calculated using the ELF index (see p. 19), where 'low' corresponds to values between 0 and 0.33; 'medium', to values between 0.33 and 0.66; and 'high', to values between 0.66 and 1.

Source: Data from the 2019 GAD Township Reports; maps are drawn by the authors.

Summary

- The Bamar are spread throughout the regions, where they represent the majority of the population. They are also the predominant population in Myanmar's largest cities, such as Bago, Mandalay, Patheingyi and Yangon.
- Non-Bamar populations in the regions tend to live in townships bordering their home state or in the Yangon Region.
- Either the Chin, Karen, Naga or Shan constitute the largest group in 15 out of the 205 townships in the regions.