



The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma (Ohio RIS Southeast Asia Series)

Maitrii Aung-Thwin

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In late 1930, on a secluded mountain overlooking the rural paddy fields of British Burma, a peasant leader named Saya San crowned himself King and inaugurated a series of uprisings that would later erupt into one of the largest anti-colonial rebellions in Southeast Asian history. Considered an imposter by the British, a hero by nationalists, and a prophet-king by area-studies specialists, Saya San came to embody traditional Southeast Asia's encounter with European colonialism in his attempt to resurrect the lost throne of Burma.

The Return of the Galon King analyzes the legal origins of the Saya San story and reconsiders the facts upon which the basic narrative and interpretations of the rebellion are based. Aung-Thwin reveals how counter-insurgency law produced and criminalized Burmese culture, contributing to the way peasant resistance was recorded in the archives and understood by Southeast Asian scholars.

This interdisciplinary study reveals how colonial anthropologists, lawyers, and scholar-administrators produced interpretations of Burmese culture that influenced contemporary notions of Southeast Asian resistance and protest. It provides a fascinating case study of how history is treated by the law, how history emerges in legal decisions, and how the authority of the past is used to validate legal findings.

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