

## **FINDING ON HISTORICAL RECORDS FROM THE PHOTOS OF YADANA (B.O.C WORKERS JOURNAL) 1956-1962\***

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### **Abstract**

This paper attempt to examine the conditions of oilfield workers and the effort of BOC Company from 1956 to 1962 based on the Journal of BOC oilfield workers at that time. The purpose of this paper is to know the conditions of oil wells, the types of exploration areas, the production of oil and gas, the nature of oilfields workers worked in BOC control. In order to do this research, an examination is focused on primary sources especially on Yadana Oilfield Worker's Journal from 1956-1962, and personal interviews with local workers in *Yenangyaung* and *Chauk*. Depending on the finding of sources, I am going to expose especially in the conditions of oilfield workers, the joint venture of BOC and Myanmar Government.

**Keywords:** explorations, workers activities

### **Introduction**

After the British annexation, a group of British capitalists established the Burmah Oil Company (BOC) in 1886. It gradually flourished and came to play a leading role in oil extracting, refining and exporting industry of Myanmar throughout colonial period. Though it suffered serious losses during the Japanese occupation period, its owners were able to rehabilitate the company with the help of reentering British government in postwar era. After independence, BOC became a Joint Venture Enterprise that run by British capitalists and Myanmar Government. In this period, some evidences show that BOC tried to implement flexible policies towards its employees under changing circumstances. Such evidences could be found in Yadana Journals that published by the company.

Yadana<sup>2</sup> is the house journal of the BOC in Burma. It is published monthly, in Burma and English and distributed free to employees. The first publishing is 1950 by expressing in the journal of April 1960. But I can find that the publishing in 1956 Yadana Journal. In this Journal, editor is U San Win in the start publication in 1950 and together with acting editor U Aung Gyi in February 1957. Later, U Aung Gyi worked out as an editor the ending the publication in 1962.

Yadana printed in Burma by the Rangoon Gazette Ltd, 379, Bo Aung Kyaw Street, Rangoon. Printers Registration No. 0246 for the publishers the Burmah Oil Company (Burma Trading) Limited, 604, Merchant Street, Rangoon Burma. Publishers' registration No.R.231 already applied for under section 4(1) of printers and publishers Registration Act 1959. According to the publication Law in 1959 Act 4 (1), it was published and pledged under 8 rules in according to the constitution of Burma.<sup>3</sup> The size of this journal is 12 inches wide and 18 inches in length.

### **Materials and Methods**

The data require for this paper is mainly collected from the Yadana Oilfield Workers Journal from 1956-1962 and interviews with local oilfield workers. This paper is essentially based on comparing the data mention method and the method of exposing the local document of Yadana

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<sup>2</sup> See Photo - I "Photos of Yadana Journals"

<sup>3</sup> See Photo- II "Publication Law"

\* Best Paper Award Winning Paper in History (2020)

Oilfield Workers Journal as the primary sources are mainly used. I believed that my findings and research work will be of significant value for oil industry after independence Myanmar studies.

### Findings

The study of this paper shows that the social status of oilfield workers especially the development of the oilfield workers and the finding of oil and gas in new oilfield areas are distinguishable in character. Regarding with this materials, it is also found that we can be assess using of modern technique in new oilfields, the establishment of new oil refinery, the system of Government and BOC Company after independence, the publication of oilfield workers journals for BOC staffs, the type of writing in journals. It is also learnt about the important of historical records in oil industry.

### Discussion

#### Developments and Explorations

In the news of Oil-Gas shows reports 1962 April May, there have been some indications of the oil and Gas in the first test well be drilling in the new area on the western flank of the *Yenangyaung* field known as block 3N. It reached a depth of 4,605 feet on April and will be drilled to about 4900 feet. This was mentioned in the report on exploration and fields activities by Mr. S.E Churchfield, Acting Exploration Manager, to the Board of the BOC (1954) Ltd at its meeting on April 27 1962. Concerning with Oil Research, The Burmah Oil Company (1954) Ltd, in which the Government of Burma is the major shareholder, has publicly announced that in the next 3 year it will annually spend K 250 to K 300 lakhs in an intensified search for new oil sources in Burma.<sup>1</sup>

#### Exploration Activities

In Owndwe well no.7, as production tests given no indication of the presence of oil or gas, the well has been abandoned. The Seismic Work Party has now returned from the *Yondaung* area to *Tharrawaddy*.

The news of Dedaye Well No.1, the equipment from Kyaiklat has now been moved to *Dedaye*, some 20 miles to the east, and the well was spudded in on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The whole operation of de-rigging at *Kyaiklat*, moving and rigging up at *Dedaye* took four weeks.<sup>2</sup>

#### Dedaye Test Well

This picture giving a general view of the Company's test well near *Kyauksayit* Village close to *Dedaye* Township in the Irrawaddy Delta, will give the layman an idea of the complex operations that go into the drilling of the test well. The location being in the open paddy fields, the whole test area has to be raised 3 feet to prevent inundation. A roadway has to be opened from the river bank to enable the 30 ton Scammel Oilfield truck to convey heavy equipment to the drilling site. Nissen huts constructed in advance hold the hundred and one items of oilfield equipment that are needed during the drilling.

Lengths of drilling pipe totaling more than 2 miles are stacked precisely round the rig, with the ones to be used immediately stacked upright against the rig. In the background are the mud tanks, without whose scientifically mixed contents no drilling can take place. The mobile crane comes in very handy when unloading drilling pipes and heavy created equipment from the holds

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<sup>1</sup> Yadana, April, May, 1962, Vol. XII, No.1 "Explorations Efforts News 1957 to 1961"

<sup>2</sup> Yadana, March 1959, Vol. VIII, No.12

of barges at the landing point. In spite of difficulties which face every organization drilling in unproved areas, the well is now working steadily and 30 April has reached a depth of 7143 feet.<sup>1</sup>

### **Yedwet Test, the first job for powerful new outfit**

There are three photos, the first picture taken during last month's special demonstration in the U.K. of the new drilling outfit for Burma, shows Mr. G.F Wilson, Mr. W. Wade, Mr. T.J.F. Armstrong, and Mr.R.J. Wilson of the BOC., London, with (extreme left) Mr. L.S. Dawson, Managing Director of OWECO, and his company chief engineer, Mr. Ian Scott. Also in the photograph is Mr. E. Drummond, BOC resident inspecting engineer at OWECO's works.

Another one is the pipe walk of the new outfit is fabricated in box sections on skids for speedy installation and dismantling. Note storage capacity for small gear in compartment under walkway. The third is the mud system for the new deep drilling outfit, showing storage and mixing tanks at the rear of the derrick floor.<sup>2</sup>

### **Spudding- In Yedwet Deep Test**

Yedwet Spudding in – Mr. H.C.G. Brown, Manager, Chauk is seen at the control of the Company –owned National 80 B deep drilling outfit soon after he had spudded – in the deep test at Yedwet at his side is Mr. H. Ah Hain , driller-in charge at Yedwet, and in the background , Mr. G.W.O'Leary, a shift driller.<sup>3</sup>

### **Seismic Prospecting**

Picture of three were taken in the field when the recorder and his shooting gang were at their jobs in the paddy fields south of *Taikkyi* along the railway line. The fourth picture was taken at the *Thoneze* camp of the Seismograph Survey Ltd.'s (S.S.L) party. On the opposite page is depicted a cross section produced after preparation by the two machines in the camp. The S.S.L party, after completing operations in the *Tharrawaddy* area have moved to *Kyundaw* on the Irrawaddy.<sup>4</sup>

Shooter and gang-the shooter (with wristlet watch) and some of his gang are seen grouped behind the detonating box. These men see to it that all geophones are linked up with the recording machines.

The camera catches the result as the dynamite at the bottom of the shot hole is exploded sending a shock wave in all directions through the earth. Note the bamboo posts at which geophone are buried to catch the reflecting echoes. An average of 18 shot holes are exploded daily, and each is from 80 to 100 feet deep.

The recorder-when the shot hole is exploded the recorder is enclosed in his darkened portable tent with the flaps all down, attending to the seismic instruments that record the time of the arrival of the reflected shock at each sensitive geophone. In a few minutes he comes out and the camera catches him studying the record obtained from the instruments.

Variable area reproducer- this is one of the two machines which make up the office instrument that "play back" the records obtains from the seismic equipment and portrays them as a section.

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<sup>1</sup> Yadana, May 1959, Vol. IX, No.2

<sup>2</sup> Yadana, September 1959, Vol. IX, No.6

<sup>3</sup> Yadana, February & March 1961, Vol. X, No.11 & 12

<sup>4</sup> Yadana, May 1959, Vol. IX, No.2

### Pegu Division Gravimetric Survey

A party from the Geoprosco Ltd., London, on behalf of the BOC (1954) Ltd., will be conducting by the gravimetric method to direct underground rock structures below the alluvium in Pegu division. The member of the party led by Mr. M.T ague, and the equipment that they will use, have arrived and preliminary discussions held with Mr. S.E. Churchfield, acting Chief Geologist of (1954) Ltd.

Field work will commerce as soon as necessary security arrangements are made by the Army. The main camp will be based at *Syriam*, and the survey will cover some 2,000 square miles over areas for which an Exploring License has been sanctioned by Government.

If the indications revealed by this preliminary survey are encouraging, more detailed work by the Seismic method will follow in order to define the contours of underground structures and thus enable the most favorable location for a well to be selected.<sup>1</sup>

### Surveys of New Test wells



Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

### Marine Survey for *Syriam-Dunneedaw* Submarine Pipeline

Arrangements are being made by the BOC (BT) Ltd, who are responsible for the storage, marketing and distribution of petroleum products, with Messrs. Foremost Land & Marine Ltd., U.K. specialist in the submarine pipe-laying work, to carry out a marine survey for the pose of constructing a submarine pipeline across the *Pegu* River to carry refined petroleum products from *Syriam* Refinery to *Dunneedaw* Installation.<sup>2</sup>

### Visiting of Mining Minister to refinery and oilfield

The Hon'ble U Chit Thaung, MSc, Minister for Mines, together with U Sein Myint, secretary of Mines and U Maung Sein, P.A. to the Minister, visited *Syriam* on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1958. They were welcome Mr.C. Maxwell-Lefroy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the BOC (1954) Ltd, accompanied the party.<sup>3</sup>

The Hon'ble U Chit Thaung, M.Sc., Minister for Mines, together with U Sein Myint, secretary of Mines and Mr. R.C. Leach, Adviser to the Ministry, were guests of the BOC (1954) Ltd on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30 the December when they visited *Chauk*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yadana, April 1959 Vol. IX, No.1

<sup>2</sup> Yadana, June 1959 Vol. IX, No.3

<sup>3</sup>Yadana, January 1959 Vol. VIII, No.10, "Visits to *Syriam* Refinery"

<sup>4</sup>Yadana, February 1959 Vol. VIII, No.11) Visits Chauk Oil Field

## Burma Goes to Britain

The picture shows two *Chinthes* (lion) proudly guarding the house of Mr. W.E. Eadie, Chairman of the Burmah Oil Company Ltd at Tunbridge Wes, Kent, England. The *Chinthes* were presented to Mr. Eadie by Mr. C. Marxwell-Lefroy and were made by U Nyo, an old Company employee, at *Chauk*. Heraldic artists at *Dunneedaw* added the finishing touches.

U Nyo certainly made a thorough job of them. When boxed for shipment to England each *Chinthes* was found to weigh about 600lbs. One of the *Chinthes* suffered minor damage on setting foot in England. An inquisitive Customs Officers, finding no mention of *Chinthes* in the British Customs Tariff, attempted to lift him (or her) out of his (or her) box by the tail to see what he (or she) looked like. The other 599 lbs. odd objected to this indignity and the customs officer was left with the tail in his hands. Reunion was hurriedly established and both *Chinthes* have now, as you can see, settled down happily in their new environment.<sup>1</sup>

## BOC Marketing Facilities

The BOC (1954) Ltd. and the BOC (BT) Ltd donated K. 15,000 to the control Relief Committee, for the relief and welfare of victims of the recent unprecedented flood in the lower Burma. The donation was made by *Tharay Sithu* U Ba Htay, Chairman and Mr. J.D. Dewhurst, General Manager to the Hon'ble U Raschit, Minister of Mines, who is Vice-President of the Committee on 21th September.<sup>2</sup>

The BOC (BT) Ltd announces that as from 1<sup>st</sup> May 1960, the price of Motor Spirit will be reduced by 5 Pyas per gallon throughout Burma. This is the second time that the price of this major petroleum product has been reduced this year, the first being on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1960.<sup>3</sup>

The Burmese version of Burma Oil was screened before appreciative audiences on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 1959 at the officers' Mess and at the northern Shan States Club at *Lashio*. Mr. J.B Jacobs, Company's Branch Superintendent at *Lashio*, arranged for the film to be obtained from Mandalay. The Burmese version was screened at the Boy Scouts camp.<sup>4</sup>

## Marketing & Trading Photos



Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

<sup>1</sup>Yadana, March 1959 Vol. VIII, No.12 (See Photo –III)

<sup>2</sup>Yadana, September 1961 Vol. XI, No.6 , BOC Donates K.15, 000 for flood Victims

<sup>3</sup>Yadana, April 1960 Vol. X, No.2, May Day Present

<sup>4</sup>Yadana, April 1959 Vol. IX, No.1“Burma Oil (Burmah Yenan) Picture in Myanmar Language” See Photos

## The News of Burma Oil Picture



Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

## BOC Participation in Magwe Inter: College Science Exhibition

The BOC (1954) Ltd, on invitation, took part in exhibition sponsored by the Science Association of Magwe Intermediate College from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> December. U Hla Saung, Deputy Commissioner, Magwe, formally opened the exhibition, and U Ba Si, Principle of the College, in a speech said that the object of holding the exhibition was to draw the attention of the general public to the importance of Science and also to enhance the interest of the younger generation in science.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. J.F. Strain, a Director of the Burmah Oil Company Ltd., led a four man negotiating team of experts who arrived in Karachi on 18 February to discuss and finalize with the Government of Pakistan the final aspects and other teams and conditions for the setting up of the proposed oil refinery in Pakistan. Other members of the team were representatives of the other consortium companies\_ Shell, Stanvac and Caltex.<sup>2</sup>

In the first picture Company's oil barge No. 82 together with the launch "Mon" is coming alongside to bunker the Royal Yacht "Britannia: as she lies in the Rangoon river, on 17 the February, awaiting the arrival of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, to convey him to Singapore. A water tender is already alongside the Royal Yacht.

In the second picture the bunkering crew are hoisting the 4" fuel pipeline on to the decks of the Britannia- note the tarpaulin placed to prevent damage to the paint. The Britannia took 145 tons of fuel.

The Third picture shows BOC aviation crews refilling the BOAC Comet 4 that carried the Duke of Edinburgh from Karachi to *Mingalardon* on 18<sup>th</sup> February.

Station Superintendent of BOC Aviation depot at *Mingalardon* is seen at far left, in the fourth picture, standing by with members of BOAC's engineering staff to ensure that the refueling is carried out without a hitch. The aircraft took more than 5,000 gallons of fuel.<sup>3</sup>

## Technological Training

Steady advance has been made in the training of Burma Nationals. There were also 106 apprentices received instruction at the *Chauk*. Institute of Technology, and high percentage of success was obtained by apprentices who sat for the General Certificate of Education examination

<sup>1</sup> Yadana, January 1961, Vol. X, No.10

<sup>2</sup> Yadana, March 1959 Vol. VIII, No.11 "BOC Director leads experts in Negotiations"

<sup>3</sup> Yadana, March 1959 Vol. VIII, No.12 "BOC Serves Royalty"



of the University of London, held in Rangoon. In 1959, 26 Burma Nationals received instruction in the U.K. at Company's expense while three were trained in India. Relations with labour remained reasonably satisfactory on the whole.

To advance in technique, Mr. G.E.T. Croft, Engineer-in charge (Plant and Transport) of the BOC (1954) Ltd, *Chauk* left on 2<sup>nd</sup> November by air for the U.K. for an intensive for month training course in order to enable him to gain a wider experience particularly on the connection with modern practices used in manufacturing engines and machines and the latest methods and organizations in the servicing and maintenance of engines, vehicles and equipment.<sup>1</sup>

London office comes news that Dr. Tin Hlaing of the BOC medical staff in Burma , has obtained his Diploma in ophthalmology (D. O. Lon.) from the examining board in the U.K. this award is given jointly by the Royal College of Surgeons in England to doctors who pass the two part examination arranged by the institute of Ophthalmology in London.<sup>2</sup>

### Technological Training



Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

### Sport Day at Syriam

In the first picture U Tun Myat , the Starter is just about to start the 100 yards sprint, the first event on the programme." Slower than a snail" is the motto of these two competitors in the slow circle Race, but to ensure that they keep moving and kept to their allotted tracks the judges watch them closely in the second picture. Saw Reginald Hlaing (Rangoon) who won all the jump events is seen in the third picture easily clearing the bar in the high jumps.

The final of the pillow fight which provided the spectators with a lot of fun and excitement, is seen in progress in the fourth picture. Kyaw Nyein ('54 Sym) on the right won the fight. In the center of the fifth picture is the winner of the candle Race Mr. M. Kenny (D'daw), with Miss Snow Tun Maung on her right and Miss E. Aaron of the Rangoon Office who came in second and third respectively. All present at the Sports meet greatly enjoyed the witty remarks of U Nyan, the announcer, seen in the six picture, who kept judges, officials and competitors on their toes. In the last picture Mrs. K. Maxwell Lefroy, mother of Chairman ( 1954) , presents the Individual Championship Cup to Mg Hla Yi ('54 Sum), while Mr. C.P. Gill, organizer and Referee, look on.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yadana, October & November 1961, Vol. XI, No.7&8

<sup>2</sup> Yadana, March 1959 Vol. VIII, No.12

<sup>3</sup> Yadana , February 1959, Vol. VIII, No.11

Mrs.H.J. M. Lindsay, in the fifth picture, present to prize to Maung Nyunt Maung of Engineering for winning the high jump. Maung Nyunt Maung was the individual Champion for the day. In the six picture young daughters of employees enjoy themselves in the “Musical Chairs’ for midget schoolgirls Members of Production Department are seen in the seventh picture, having with all their might in the Tug-O’ War against Medical department. In the last picture in the finalist Maung Htwe (right) of production and Pauk Kyaw of Medical go to it with gusto I n the pillow Fight. Pauk Kyaw was eventually knocked into the tank of water below.

### Pictures of Oilfield Sports Syriam and Chauk



Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

### Retired News

Everybody in the oil Industry in Burma will receive with sadness the news that Mr. C. Maxwell- Lefroy, General Manager of the BOC (BT) Ltd 1954-59 and Chairman of the Board of Directors, the BOC (1954) Ltd 1954-59 retired in June after 30 years’ service with the Company in the East, mainly in Burma.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. M. Fenelon, Electrical Engineer, Chauk, retired from the service of the Company on 3.12 1960. He join began the BOC in 1925 as an apprentice electrical engineer at Yenanchaung and in 1930 was promoted to junior engineer. The total services are 35 years.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yadana , February 1960, Vol. IX, No.2

<sup>2</sup> Yadana ,January 1961, Vol. X, No.10





Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

## Conclusion

As reading this Journals, may have known that the different types of governmental officials, the number of the working activities, the important of oil expansion and effort of exploration areas, effects of publication of the journals for workers might have been great. However, due to the news-sections carried by these ancient newspapers, people of today can know the literary, social and political situations of those days. It is found that the news were written in social developing for workers but hardly was not found in especially. But since they could convey the intended meaning of the news, people of today could know the social life of that time by reading them. Although the journals were formerly published once a month, they were later published for one time in two month.

Therefore, it can be said that publication of Journal readers on the nation-wide scale was still small at that time. This was due probably to the ignorance of the Myanmar's of those days, the small circulation for workers due to difficult access and the small number of literate people. Limited use of paper must be considered as another season. Moreover, depending on imported paper for printing newspaper did not permit a large number of newspapers to be published in Myanmar at that time. So, this Yadana Journal is very important for a country so the respective government understand that it should have to control.

In short, it can be assumed that the photos of Yadana Journals express the changing policy of BOC in its operational system and became lenient towards its employees. Under such circumstances, BOC employees got more socio-economic betterments in their workplace and dwelling conditions. Furthermore, these conditions turn over a new leaf on BOC Company and the Oilfield workers in ambivalent.

## Acknowledgement

I am very beholden to my mentor Sayagyis and Sayamagyis for their effective supervision and encouragement. Thanks are due to Dr.Thida Myint (Professor Head,) University of Magway for giving permission to do research. I also thanks my parents and honorable persons for their moral and kind support. In addition, I would like to express an appreciation and very respect to Dr. Kyaw Swe Oo, (Professor, Kengtung University) for sharing knowledge and his experience.

Photo - I



Photo - II

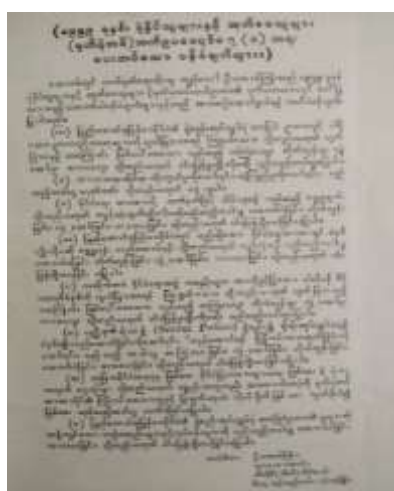


Photo -III



Source: Htar Thet Thet Oo Collections

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