



ports the struggles of the Karens and is trying to achieve democratization through a non-violent policy and is confronting the military government. When Myanmar was still part of India, 5 British missionaries came and introduced Christianity to the Karens. The British appointed Karens as lower government officials to run the whole

country of Burma. The Burmese Buddhists felt a strong dislike for the Karens, caus- 10 ing conflicts which still continue today. The Karen tribe was very strong at one time, but the new regime, with military and economic support from China, put many Karens in refugee camps near the Thai border.

By the way, have you ever read Michio Takeyama's novel, "The Harp of Burma"? It is set in Burma, during the final stages of World War II. In the novel, the Japanese 15 army flees Burma leaving corpses of Japanese soldiers out in the open. Upon watching the Buddhist priests of Burma burying those corpses, one young Japanese soldier decided to remain in the country to become a priest and mourn for his fellow soldiers who died in the war. As in the novel, there were hundreds of Japanese soldiers who remained in Burma, Vietnam, Indonesia and other Asian countries after the end of 20 World War II. For example, there was one ex-medical orderly from Niigata Prefecture who remained in Burma as a military volunteer for the Karen Army. He recalls, "Toward the end of the war, we had really bad losses. We escaped from the prison camp of the British Army. A comrade was shot to death and I fled into a Karen village. The Gurkha soldiers of the British Army came several times looking 25 for me, but the villagers hid me. I stayed and married a girl from this village and have two sons and a daughter. Eventually, I became involved in the independence movement of the Karen tribe."

The path to democracy for Myanmar will continue long into the 21st century.