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**Housing the Rangoon Poor:
Indians, Burmese, and Town Planning
in Colonial Burma**

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Abstract

In Rangoon/Yangon, the ex-capital city of Burma/Myanmar, there still remain many old buildings today. Those buildings were constructed in the British colonial period, especially from the 1900s to the 1930s, and formed Rangoon's built environment as something modern. In focusing on the period before and after the inauguration of the Rangoon Development Trust in 1921, this paper describes how the colonial administrative authorities perceived urban problems and how their policy and practice affected urban society. It also suggests the possibility that competition for habitation among the lower strata of Rangoon society was a cause of the serious urban riot in 1930.

Keywords: Burma/Myanmar, urban history, town-planning, colonialism, immigration

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0. Introduction¹

Today, in walking through downtown Rangoon, we can still see many old brick buildings. This landscape was formed in the colonial period, more precisely by the 1920s. This paper investigates how this colonial urban landscape emerged in Rangoon during the period from the 1850s to the 1920s. Through this period, the aspiration of the colonial authorities to create a modern urban space through town planning had been at work. However, the trajectory of the city was decided not only by the colonial town-planning policy; there was also perpetual interaction between the colonial aspiration and social dynamics. Rather, it can be said that, following rapid population growth, the colonial authorities had to accommodate changes in their planned direction of development. Because previous studies have already clarified the early stage of the city formation in the late nineteenth century (Pearn 1939, Maxim 1992), here more attention will be paid to the early twentieth century.

Besides the physical transformation of the city, this paper also focuses on the ethnic/racial relationship between the Burmese and Indians in the lower strata of Rangoon society. Doing so leads to reconsideration of the serious racial riot in Rangoon in May 1930 from the perspective of urban history.² The 1930 riot was epoch-making both in the political and socioeconomic history of modern Burma. First, immediately after this bloody upheaval, a group of young and radical Burmese nationalists organized Do Bama Asi Ayon (Thakhin Party), which was to lead the anti-colonial movements and produce national leaders after independence. Second, the unprecedented riot symbolized the collapse of the plural society, namely the division of labour along racial lines which emerged in the Irrawaddy Delta in the late nineteenth century. Michael Adas argued that, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, competition for employment between Burmese and Indians had intensified and finally the Great Depression triggered

¹ This paper is based on my M.A. thesis submitted to the University of Tokyo in 2006. Preliminary versions of this paper were read at the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Tampa, Florida, USA, on 8 April 2014 (under the title of “Accommodating Urban Growth to Development: Modernist Planning in Colonial Rangoon, Burma”) and at the workshop organized by the Department of History, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, on 21 July 2011.

² The riot had its direct origin in a strike by Indian (mostly Telugu) dock labourers who sought a wage increase during the depression. Shipping companies started employing Burmese labourers instead of Indians. However, after the companies acceded to the demands of the Indian labourers, the Indians returned to work. Then, both Burmese and Indian labourers worked together on the same docks, which was a quite new situation. A quarrel between Burmese and Indian labourers at the docks triggered frantic violence that quickly spread across the whole city. At least a hundred people died in the following few days, most of whom were Indians. The official report on this riot by an enquiry committee is attached as an appendix in Andrew 1933 (pp. 279-292).

large-scale violence both in urban and rural areas in 1930 (Adas 1974).³ While Adas dealt with the whole delta region including Rangoon, his research priority was on rural agrarian society. The present paper pays more attention to permanent Burmese residents in Rangoon and their relationship with temporary Indian labourers and tries to shed light on the internal structure of the urban society, a facet to which Adas did not direct his attention.

In examining these two questions, this paper describes the peculiar historical course of Rangoon's experience of modernity.

1. Creation of the Modern City: The Birth of Colonial Rangoon

Geographically, Rangoon is located where the spur running out from the southern foothills of the Pegu Yomas sinks into a flat delta, a margin between the Irrawaddy Delta and the Sittang Delta. So, the city is hilly only in the northern part where the iconic Buddhist structure, Shwe Dagon Pagoda, stands. The other three sides of the city are surrounded by waterfront lowlands. Small rivers and creeks join in the south of this city and flow into the sea 40 km away (Spate et al. 1942: 57-58).

Rangoon emerged as a major commercial port in the region in the late eighteenth century under the Konbaung Dynasty. One century later, in 1852, as a result of the war, the British acquired the southern part of the Burmese kingdom and annexed it to British India as a province. Rangoon was declared the provincial capital, but at that time, there were only fragile buildings such as wooden or bamboo huts in Rangoon. Subsequently, British colonial authorities tried to reconstruct Rangoon as a modern space which was demonstrative of British superiority and importance. The first Chief Commissioner of the newly acquired territory, Arthur Purves Phayre, adopted a scheme to develop the city (Map 1). The scheme provided for an area of some 500 acres and set the Sule Pagoda at the centre of a city, which was designed with wide streets arranged in a geometric grid as well as provisions for sewage disposal, which were both considered effective for the prevention of crime, fire and disease. The plan of Rangoon represented an ideal of a modern city with functionality to maintain order.⁴

Moreover, shortly after his arrival, Phayre issued a proclamation that all the land of the town and the adjoining suburbs was government property (Lloyd 1911: 31). That is,

³ According to him, the division of labour emerged in the late nineteenth century, but in the 1910s and 1920s, Burmese agriculturalists from the delta hinterland flowed into the urban Rangoon labour market which has previously been dominated by Indians, and this exacerbated racial antagonism in the 1930s.

⁴ On the early stage of the development of the city, I owe much to Pearn 1939 and Maxim 1992.

all property rights before annexation were denied. This move made it feasible to carry out the project of constructing a new modern city. The government sold land lots, and with the money so realized, the city was “laid out with roads after the jungle had been cut down and swamps reclaimed, thus rendering the place habitable” (Lloyd 1911: 29). Thus, by the 1860s, the framework of the central part of the city was completed. Colonial Rangoon as modern space had just emerged.

Thereafter, Rangoon grew as the administrative and commercial centre of the new British colony. By 1885, the whole territory of the Burmese kingdom was colonized and incorporated into British India and constituted Burma Province. At the same time, the British developed the rice industry in the delta region and transformed it into the biggest granary in the British Empire. During this course, the importance of Rangoon was further enhanced not only as the major shipping port for rice but also as the headquarters of the provincial bureaucracy.

However, the population growth of the city far exceeded the expectations of the original planners. The scheme adopted by Phayre supposed that population of the city would be 36,000 (Pearn 1939: 187). However, mainly because of the huge influx of Indian migrant workers, the actual population of Rangoon increased to 98,745 by 1872 and continued to increase rapidly thereafter (Figure 1). Following this rapid population growth, the street grid layout was expanded eastward and westward from the city centre. However, Rangoon’s ability to accommodate population could not keep pace with the unlimited influx of immigrants. Moreover, as salable government properties gradually declined in number, it became difficult to secure funds for city development. The project of expanding the modern space, mainly reclamation of marshy lands, stagnated in the 1870s (Lloyd 1911: 32). Because of these factors, various urban problems appeared as early as the beginning of the 1870s.

2. Overcrowding Problems: Cooly Barracks and “Slums”

Because of the quick expansion of the colonial economy, Rangoon grew to be a multi-racial metropolis. The apex of the society was exclusively occupied by a small number of top European officials and European capitalists. The upper-middle class was made up of many races with comparable strength and assumed a cosmopolitan atmosphere. In the lower strata of Rangoon society, numerically the most important mass, two different types of populations could be observed.

On one hand, there was a vast quantity of male immigrants from the eastern coast of the Indian subcontinent, including Telugus, Tamils, Hindustanis, and Bengalis (or Chittagonians). Most of these Indians came to work in Rangoon, for example as manual labourers in rice mills and on wharfs. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the

increase in Indians was remarkable. They accounted for 78 percent of the entire population growth of Rangoon during the period from 1872 to 1901 (Figure 2). Indians became the majority, constituting almost half of the whole population after 1891. The Indian population in this city was so visible as to give visitors the impression that Rangoon was more an Indian city than a Burmese city.⁵ These Indian labourers were sojourners rather than settlers. The fluidity of this class was one of the most prominent features of Rangoon.

On the other hand, there were permanent inhabitants who put down roots in the city. The core of this group was Burmese. The proportion of Burmese in Rangoon decreased through the last quarter of the nineteenth century but remained around 30 percent in the first decades of the twentieth century. The sex ratio of the Burmese was well balanced compared with other race categories used in the census, and it can be inferred that many of Burmese lived a family life in the ever-expanding urban environment. Their occupations were diverse: merchants, clerks, craftsmen, manual labourers and so on. While many Burmese women earned money through various occupations such as peddling, in the male labour market the presence of the Burmese was much smaller than that of Indians.⁶

These two different types of populations caused corresponding overcrowding problems. First, there was super-overcrowding in cooly barracks, lodging houses and tenement houses. These were “pucca” brick buildings to accommodate Indian immigrant workers.⁷ Indian workers were packed into small rooms without ventilation or light. The density of those rooms was high to the extent that “there was scarcely space enough to pass through without treading on some person” as early as 1871.⁸ Municipal regulations that prescribed a minimum floor-space per occupant and so on were ineffective (Pearn 1939: 257-259). By the late 1920s, the situation had not improved but conversely had worsened. In the Report on the Public Health of Rangoon in 1927, members of the enquiry committee described the highly insanitary conditions in cooly barracks as follows.

“In one room where we counted over 50 coolies, the number allowed by regulation was 9. The conditions are indescribable. Every inch of floor

⁵ For instance, see Kelly 1905 (p. 6).

⁶ In 1931 male Burmese earners numbered 30,213 and constituted only 15 percent of the total male earners, while Indians constituted 70 percent of the total (Census 1931: Provincial Table VI, Pt. II). On the problem of female workers being statistically less visible, see Satish Kumar 2006.

⁷ “Pucca” is a word which originated from Indian languages. It means “substantial, solid, as a building” (Wilson 1855: 390).

⁸ The Civil Surgeon’s Report, Rangoon, appended to *RSABB for 1871* (p.15).

space is occupied by a sleeping human being, and others are to be found on shelves and bunks along the walls. The only apertures in the way of doors and windows are shut. Our visit was paid in the cold weather when conditions were bad enough. What they must be like in the hot weather is beyond comprehension. The exhalations from overcrowded, sweating humanity lying actually on top of one another, and breathing the same foul atmosphere over and over again, must be sufficient to turn the strongest stomach” (Burma 1927: 32).⁹

Not only the proximity but also the mobility of the inmates of these accommodations enhanced the danger that, once infectious disease occurred, it would spread rapidly and become an epidemic. Starting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, British administrators perceived these buildings as being “the foci of the epidemic”.¹⁰

These cooly barracks were concentrated mainly in the central part of the city and partly in the riverside industrial zone where immigrant labourers’ workplaces were located (Map 2). The central part of Rangoon, which consisted of Taroktan, North-west Town, South-west Town, North-east Town, Kungyan, and South-east Town, showed very high population density because of these cooly barracks (Figure 7). This was the area which Phayre’s planning scheme originally covered and where reclamation and the layout of grid streets were completed by the 1860s. It was not until reclamation was completed that pucca buildings could be constructed. Because the reclamation project beyond this area stagnated in the 1870s, only these six quarters made up the modern urban space of Rangoon until the 1910s, so these quarters were called the pucca area. However, among these six quarters, Taroktan had a very different character because the quarter was inhabited mainly by Chinese, while the other five quarters were mostly inhabited by Indian people (Figure 8).¹¹ So, in this paper hereinafter, “the central part of the city” refers to the five quarters excluding Taroktan.

Another overcrowding problem was seen in suburban areas where mainly Burmese resided. This problem is observed in two geographical areas. One area was the quarters

⁹ RSABB 1873: 45. This problem was discussed frequently in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. See Burma 1927: 67-87; Rao 1930: 82-109; RCLI 1931 Part I: 6-7; Andrew 1933: 166-181.

¹⁰ On this cooly-barracks problem and the perception of British administrators, see Osada 2011.

¹¹ Because the statistics in Figure 8 are based on religion, it is difficult to ascertain how many Chinese resided in Taroktan. Some Chinese answered that their religion was Animist, but many other Chinese answered they were Buddhists. According to the language statistics in 1891, in Taroktan the number of people whose mother tongue was Chinese was 4,204, and Burmese speakers numbered 5,802 (Census 1891). For a detailed account on Chinatown in colonial Rangoon, see Osada 2014.

neighbouring the pucca area. In these quarters, the street grid pattern was laid out without reclamation or a drainage system. The other area was some relatively remote settlements lacking not only reclamation but also even the layout of streets.

The areas with a street grid pattern but without reclamation were Lanmadaw, the riverside area in North Kemmendine, and a part of Theinbyu (Map 2). During the 1850s and 1860s, as the population increase exceeded the original plan, the street grid pattern was extended to Lanmadaw, a western quarter adjoining the pucca area. Here, while roads were built, nothing was done in the way of raising the level of the land (Pearn 1939: 206). Though North Kemmendine was far from the central part of the city, in the 1850s the same street grid pattern was transplanted to the riverside industrial area in the western part of North Kemmendine (Burma 1917a: 62). This area was exceptional among riverside industrial areas because “inland of the mills are few tenement houses and a considerable settlement of family dwellings of the poorer classes, chiefly Burmans” (*ibid.*). It is not certain when the roads were laid out in Theinbyu, but it was probably in the 1880s when the population of the circle rapidly increased (Figure 7).¹² By 1917, the western part of Theinbyu was considered to be the most conspicuous instance of “several areas of which the layout has been settled and in which the houses are fairly regularly built but which are in urgent need of reclamation and equipment” (Burma 1917a: 91). In these areas, overcrowding on the non-reclaimed marshy lowlands caused insanitary conditions. In fact, in 1893, these quarters experienced much higher mortality than the central part of the city (RAB 1893: 30).

The settlements lacking both street grid pattern and reclamation were formed on suburban lands where the colonial authorities made no engineering changes (Map 3). These settlements might have been overlooked as villages outside the city proper at the beginning, but by the middle of the 1910s as the population of Rangoon increased and spread into suburban areas, these settlements came to be perceived by the British administrators as “slums”, among which the most notorious area was Obo in Upper Pazundaung. These “slums” were described as insanitary crowded settlements of single family dwellings (Burma 1917a: 12-13, 62-65, 91). On this point, the slums were similar to Lanmadaw and North Kemmendine, but a more striking feature of the “slums” was their lack of order and regularity. In 1917, Gavin Scott, the President of the Municipal Committee of Rangoon, wrote in his “Note of Town-planning” as follows.

“There are in the first place several slums to be cleared away, using slum in the accurate sense of an area overcrowded with irregularly disposed

¹² According to Pearn, the author of *A History of Rangoon*, by the 1870s one or two roads had been constructed in Theinbyu (Pearn 1939: 206).

buildings and not laid out in streets” (Burma 1917a: 91).

These areas were the furthest places from modernity. The most important mission of town planning was to eliminate these disorderly spots and to expand the modern space where the land was reclaimed and equipped with a drainage system and properly laid out streets.

The direction of expansion of Rangoon was decided to an extent by its physical geography and politics. The most comfortable area for residence in Rangoon was the northern hilly inland, but a cantonment existed there where the military population was housed. The cantonment was completely separate from the planning and municipal administration of Rangoon from the beginning of the British rule (Maxim 1992: 63). The neighbouring hilly suburban lots were occupied exclusively by a small number of rich Europeans. So, the residential area for the lower classes sprawled northeastward and northwestward into suburban areas along marshy waterfront lowlands. Following the population sprawl into the suburbs, the colonial authorities tried to expand the modern space. Reclaiming marshy lowlands was the most important and basic process to create modern space, but since the 1870s, the reclamation project had slowed because of financial deficiency and went into insolvency in the 1910s (Burma 1917a: 39-41).¹³ Then, the colonial authorities gradually came to problematize those suburban areas where family dwellings mainly of the Burmese poorer classes assembled on marshy lowlands.

Thus, there were two types of overcrowding problems in Rangoon by the middle of the 1910s, that is, super-overcrowding of coolie barracks for single Indian labourers in the central part of the city and filthy assemblages of family dwellings for Burmese lower classes in suburban areas. In the British administrators’ perception, the origin of the problems was the stagnation of the reclamation program. This understanding was most clearly expressed by Morgan Webb when he moved the Rangoon Development Trust Bill in the legislative council on 21 August 1919, as follows:

“The housing question in Rangoon is primarily a question of reclamation to provide suitable areas for the accommodation of its growing population. The increasing congestion of population and the alarming increase of rents, which have recently caused so much agitation, are due to the fact that reclamation for the past few years has been limited by lack of funds” (BG 1919: pt. III, p. 192).

¹³ From 1905 to 1911, revitalization of the reclamation program was attempted by establishing a fund based on loan money from the municipality, but it became insolvent by 1914.

3. Rangoon Development Trust

In the middle of the 1910s, the government of Burma appointed three committees to discuss how to develop Rangoon and to solve existing social problems in the city.¹⁴ In these committees, the previous laws of the United Kingdom and India were reviewed to establish a powerful town-planning institution for Rangoon. Finally, the Rangoon Development Trust Bill was moved in the legislative council in 1919 and enacted in the next year. Then, the Rangoon Development Trust (hereafter RDT) was launched on 1 February 1921.

The basic lines of the town planning policy of RDT had already been decided through discussion in committees in the 1910s. They responded differently to the two overcrowding problems. On one hand, it was proposed that the serious overcrowding of coolie barracks in the central part of the city would be left untouched for a while. The Suburban Development Committee in 1914 claimed that:

“The industrial working classes, mill and factory hands, at present live in immediate proximity to the mills, factories and godowns where their work lies. We do not consider that any attempt to displace this population and force it into the suburbs is practicable or in the present stage of economic development in India desirable. Whilst recognizing that the tenement house or the coolie barrack (in which this class is for the most part housed) lends itself to overcrowding and has many drawbacks from the point of view of sanitation, we are of opinion that in Rangoon at any rate the tenement must for some years to come be regarded as a necessary evil” (Burma 1917a: 19).

The committee also showed reluctance concerning the construction of model tenements for the working class at public expense like the *chawls* in Bombay and suggested that barracks should be built at private expense (*ibid*: 52).

On the other hand, priority was given to revitalization of the reclamation project and slum clearance in suburban areas as suggested in the aforementioned statements of Gavin Scott and Morgan Web. To carry out these tasks, RDT had ample financial resources derived from the rent from government estates and supplemented by municipal contributions and special taxation on every male passenger leaving Rangoon

¹⁴ The three committees were the Suburban Development Committee, Rangoon, in 1914, the Departmental Committee on Town Planning, Burma, in 1916, and the Rangoon Development Committee in 1917. The reports of the former two committees were jointly published as Burma 1917a, and the report of the last committee was published as Burma 1917b.

by sea-going vessel, etc.¹⁵

Another policy of RDT was to prepare proper new housing sites in the inner part of North Kemmendine circle (Map 2). By 1917, British administrators found that some of the old Burmese residents in the town were being displaced by the influx of immigrants and considered it advisable to provide new housing sites for such displaced people.¹⁶ Indeed, in areas where Burmese were once dominant like Lanmadaw, North Kemmendine and Theinbyu, the percentage of the “Buddhist” population decreased from 1891 to 1911 (Figure 8).

However, in practice the government and RDT did not perform in the direction of protecting those displaced people, rather they purposely accelerated such displacement especially from Lanmadaw by setting high rents (RAB 1922: 18; 1923: 16). The land of Lanmadaw was government estate, and almost all poor inhabitants were squatters. Squatters had little right on the land and were liable to eviction by summary process (Lloyd 1911: 45). However, the previous administration had maintained the status quo in Lanmadaw by issuing leases to previous occupants at privileged lease rates having no relation to the extremely large capital expenditure on the reclamation and development of that quarter. In RDT’s analysis, this was the reason why the previous administration failed. They could not allow “primitive village conditions near the centre of the city” to persist anymore (RRDT 1920-21: 6-7).

4. Town Planning and the Urban Society

Before the inauguration of RDT, the leading Burmese newspaper *Thuriya* reported in a positive tone that a new town-planning institution was forthcoming. Their expectation reflected the dissatisfaction of Burmese inhabitants with the existing situation. An editorial titled “Condition of the Rangoon Town” on 22 January 1920 complained about difficulties in urban life for poor city dwellers like clerks, coolies and peddlers. Those difficulties were, for example, high rents and lack of housing which inevitably caused overcrowding and insanitary conditions. The article ascribed the responsibility for these

¹⁵ On the financial basis of RDT, see Section 60, 68 and 69 of the Rangoon Development Trust Act, 1920 (Burma 1934: 634, 636).

¹⁶ “Rangoon is already in a large measure an Indian town, the original Burmese inhabitants having been largely displaced. [...] The Burman likes family life, and we think that the process of displacement in these as yet Burmese areas will continue and that it will be necessary for the displaced population to look for fresh residences in the inner suburbs” (Burma 1917a: 19). “If small dwellings for the poorer classes be provided in the south-west, north-west and north-east of Rangoon on Government land, the Burmese population displaced from the centre of the town will, we think, migrate thither” (*ibid*: 20).

difficulties to the failure of the municipal administration and expected the new institution would improve the situation (Thuriya 22/1/1920). Another editorial titled “Rangoon Development Trust” on 26 January 1921 just before the inauguration of RDT criticized the fact that many poor inhabitants were displaced by maladministration and expected that some compensation would be paid under the new institution (Thuriya 26/1/1921).

In addition to criticism against the maladministration of the municipality, rather severer criticism was directed at Indian immigrant labourers. An editorial titled “Rangoon Town and the Indian Coolies” on 6 April 1920 described the densely overcrowded and insanitary conditions of cooly barracks in the central part of the city and complained that behaviors of Indian coolies were annoying and dangerous to good citizens in the neighbourhood. For example, “in general Indian coolies do not wear clothes properly on their body and it is far from the law of *hirīottappa* (shame and fear of sin)” and “Indian coolies tend to make noise and be unruly until the midnight” and “one of the reasons why infectious disease came out is that those Indian coolies were living, eating and drinking in insanitary conditions and that their jostling one another in each room is contrary to sanitation”. In conclusion, the article proposed that, in order to remove the danger to Rangoon, the government and RDT should make a plan to construct tenements in remote quarters of the city and to make Indian coolies live in them. It was claimed that the development of Rangoon could not be promoted until those Indian immigrant workers were removed from the city centre (Thuriya 6/4/1920).¹⁷

However, the newspaper editors became disappointed after RDT started to work because it was poor Burmese residents, not Indian labourers, who were displaced from the city. The article titled “The Poorer Classes in Rangoon” introduced petitions from old inhabitants in the area which the government denoted as “slum”. Petitioners complained that they were forcefully evicted from the original places where their grandfathers had cleared the jungle and that they were relocated to more remote and marshier lands. This was because the new housing sites which RDT had prepared in the inner part of North Kemmendine circle were too expensive for these poor people (Thuriya 17/5/1922).¹⁸

¹⁷ Similar criticism against Indian labourers appeared also in the article “Madrassi Cooly & Labour in Burma” on 8 April 1920 (Thuriya 8/4/1920). Criticism against Indian labourers concerning infectious disease was probably influenced by the perception of the authorities, which could be seen in sanitary reports, etc. On the perceptions of British sanitary administrators, see Osada 2011.

¹⁸ For criticism against the high rent policy, see also editorials in Thuriya 12/10/1922; 10/11/1922.

RDT accelerated displacement of poor residents who were mainly Burmese directly by slum clearance and indirectly by a high rent policy in Lanmadaw and newly developed areas. Those who were evicted from their original places had to move to a slum where RDT had not undertaken clearance yet, and when the slum was cleared away, they had to move again to another slum. In 1927 the enquiry committee on the public health of Rangoon criticized the fact that RDT created new insanitary *bastis* (villages) (Burma 1927: 48). In response to this, J. E. Houldey, Chairman of RDT, explained that many of people in those *bastis* had been removed from slums cleared by RDT (*ibid*: 112). The policy of RDT was obvious in his statement that “This is a purely temporary arrangement for housing displaced population. In a short time all these people will be moved” (*ibid*: 111). A chain of displacements was structured in the 1920s.

At the same time, Lanmadaw was transformed into modern space in the 1920s. Many tenement houses were constructed on land where reclamation was completed (*ibid*: 36, 85). One European medical practitioner explained the increase of tuberculosis cases among Burmese and Chino-Burmese clerks in recollecting the old days as follows.

“We attribute this dreadful scourge to the modern type of ‘pucca’ building with its narrow stairs and small rooms and smaller windows – but big rents necessitating overcrowding. The insanitary wooden house built on piles, as we knew it in our Lanmadaw of twenty to twenty-five years ago, with slush and filth underneath, was, apparently, better suited to the Burmese constitution than the modern ‘pucca’ tenement house” (*ibid*: 74).

Though this was merely an observance by a foreigner, it is not difficult to imagine the city as the modern space became a more and more difficult place for the old, poor Burmese residents to live. Moreover, rent in Lanmadaw rose prohibitively high. Notwithstanding enactment of the Rangoon Rent Act which prescribed rent control in the city, the area being developed by RDT was exempted from control. As a result, the outflow of poor inhabitants was accelerated. Their wooden houses were replaced by tenement houses, which tended to increase the presence of Indian labourers in the neighbourhood. In Burmese perceptions, the urban space had been appropriated by Indian labourers in conspiracy with landlords, capitalists and colonial authorities.

5. Conclusion and Remaining Questions

Thus, as the modern urban space was expanded, poor Burmese families were driven out from their original places to more peripheral areas in the suburbs. At present, because of deficiency of data, it is impossible to explore a causal relationship between the displacement of poor town dwellers in the 1920s and the occurrence of the racial riot

in May 1930. However, the process by which the 1930 riot took place was by itself suggestive of such a relationship. At the beginning of the riot, a quarrel between Burmese and Indian labourers on a dock triggered a sequence of violent events mainly in the central part of the city where numerically superior Indian labourers attacked a minority Burmese population. Police protected the Burmese and took them by bus or with escorts to their suburban residences where, after their return, rumours spread quickly that an Indian mob had assaulted Burmese women or insulted pagodas. Then, a large resentful mass of Burmese flowed into the central area, which resulted in heavy casualties, most of whom were Indians (Andrew 1933: 284-292).

Although previous studies emphasized the competition for employment between Burmese and Indians that gradually intensified in the 1910s and 1920s, the account of the riot shows that such competition had been negligible until 1930 because employing Burmese as dock labour was a quite new phenomenon at that time. Rather than a small number of Burmese workers in the city center, the mass of Burmese residents in suburbs seems to have played a more important role in the riot. If so, competition for habitation or residences in the context of Rangoon urban society should be investigated as a structural cause of the riot.

By the way, during the 1920s, the principle of RDT activities was not housing itself but supplying housing sites through revitalization of reclamation. The task of building accommodations for labourers was largely entrusted to the private sector. It was not until the late 1920s that public housing came to the fore. In 1931, the government of Burma introduced the Rangoon Labour Housing Bill to the Provincial Legislative Council. This bill was to authorize RDT to maintain funds for the provision of housing accommodation by levying an additional tax on every male passenger leaving Rangoon. However, in the Council the bill was withdrawn when it faced objection and then was circulated for opinion. Who should take on the burden became controversial. To arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, the local government decided to hold a conference of parties concerned. However, the conference concluded that the particular housing problem of Rangoon could hardly be examined and solved without reference to the larger problem of Indian immigration into the province, and in the end, no concrete suggestion was proposed (Burma 1933: 1-22). As this clearly shows, the housing problem was closely connected to the immigration problem in Burma. The non-regulated labour supply from India was the premise of the general economic policy of the colony, so it was quite difficult for the local government to tackle the overcrowding problem in the city fundamentally. Starting in the 1930s, the rise of Burmese nationalism also strengthened Burmese criticism against the colonial

immigration policy. However, exploring these developments in the 1930s will require further study.

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Figure 1. Population Increase in Rangoon Town, 1872–1941

	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Total Population	98,745	134,176	180,324	234,881	293,316	341,962	400,415	500,800
Male	62,374	91,504	124,767	165,545	208,111	236,689	271,063	326,432
Female	36,371	42,672	55,557	69,336	85,205	105,273	129,352	174,368
SR	171	214	225	239	244	225	210	187

Note: SR means Sex Ratio, that is the ratio of males to 100 females. Source: [Census 1872–1941]

Figure 2. Rangoon Population divided by Race, 1872–1931

	1872	%	1881	%	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%	1921	%	1931	%
Burmese (a)	66,337	67	66,676	50	73,288	41	81,680	35	90,793	31	106,242	31	127,540	32
Indian (b)	24,879	25	57,536	43	90,037	50	131,431	56	169,719	58	189,334	55	212,929	53
Indo-Burman (c)	–	–	–	–	442	0	464	0	3,699	1	8,691	3	12,560	3
Chinese (d)	3,181	3	3,752	3	8,053	4	11,018	5	16,055	5	23,819	7	30,626	8
European	2,419	2	3,366	3	4,284	2	4,238	2	6,068	2	3,947	1	4,426	1
Eurasian (e)	1,438	1	2,706	2	3,711	2	4,674	2	5,831	2	8,343	2	9,977	2
Others	491	0	416	0	509	0	1,376	1	1,151	0	1,586	0	2,357	1
Total	98,745	100	134,176	100	180,324	100	234,881	100	293,316	100	341,962	100	400,415	100

Source: [Census 1872–1931]

Figure 3. Rangoon Population divided by Birth Place, 1881–1931

	1881	%	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%	1921	%	1931	%
Rangoon (a)	48,856	36	60,727	34	75,129	32	91,446	31	110,315	32	140,657	35
Lower Burma (excluding Rgn) (b)	10,911	8	13,634	8	17,066	7	20,261	7	33,666	10	43,771	11
Upper Burma (c)	13,631	10	14,194	8	13,148	6	10,700	4	11,105	3	12,001	3
India (excluding Burma) (d)	54,025	40	83,052	46	117,713	50	153,478	52	167,537	49	181,707	45
China (e)	3,250	2	4,915	3	7,939	3	11,759	4	14,175	4	16,865	4
Others	3,503	3	3,802	2	3,886	2	5,672	2	5,164	2	5,414	1
Total	134,176	100	180,324	100	234,881	100	293,316	100	341,962	100	400,415	100

Source: [Census 1881–1931]

Figure 4. Estimation of Racial Composition of Rangoon-born Population, 1881–1931

	1881	%	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%	1921	%	1931	%
Burmese [=Fig2(a)–Fig3(b)–Fig3(c)]	42,467	86	45,478	77	51,466	70	59,832	67	61,471	56	71,768	52
Indian [=Fig2(b)–Fig3(d) × 0.988]	4,159	8	7,982	13	15,131	21	18,083	20	24,206	22	32,949	24
Indo-Burman [=Fig2(c)]	–	–	442	1	464	1	3,699	4	8,691	8	12,560	9
Chinese [=Fig2(d)–Fig3(e)]	502	1	2,661	4	3,079	4	4,296	5	9,644	9	13,761	10
Eurasian [=Fig2(e)–Fig3(d) × 0.012]	2,058	4	2,714	5	3,261	4	3,989	4	6,333	6	7,797	6
Total	49,186	100	59,277	100	73,401	100	89,899	100	110,345	100	138,835	100

Note: Calculated by Figure 2 and 3 on some suppositions like “All Burmese are born within Burma,” “All people born in Burma other than Rangoon are Burmese”, “1.2% of people born in India are Eurasian” etc. As a result, Total is approximate to the number of Figure 3(a). But probably the number for Burmese is underestimated, and the numbers for the others are overestimated, because there should be some non-Burmese who were born in Burma outside Rangoon.

Figure 5. Sex Ratio in Rangoon by Race, 1881–1931

	1881			1891			1901			1911			1921			1931		
	Male	Female	SR	Male	Female	SR	Male	Female	SR	Male	Female	SR	Male	Female	SR	Male	Female	SR
Burmese	35,877	30,799	116	39,123	34,165	115	42,310	39,370	107	46,026	44,767	103	53,963	52,279	103	63,947	63,593	101
Indian	47,593	9,943	479	73,784	16,253	454	107,500	23,931	449	139,278	30,441	458	154,537	34,797	444	171,714	41,215	417
Indo-Burman	–	–	–	225	217	104	254	210	121	1,648	2,051	80	4,289	4,402	97	6,125	6,435	95
Chinese	3,480	272	1,279	6,175	1,878	329	8,872	2,146	413	12,941	3,114	416	15,928	7,891	202	19,919	10,707	186
European	2,865	501	572	3,128	1,156	271	3,110	1,128	276	4,501	1,567	287	2,941	1,006	292	2,895	1,531	189
Eurasian	1,533	1,173	131	2,014	1,697	119	2,545	2,129	120	3,152	2,679	118	4,155	4,188	99	5,071	4,906	103
Others	264	152	174	318	191	166	954	422	226	565	586	96	876	710	123	1,392	965	144
Total	91,504	42,672	214	124,767	55,557	225	165,545	69,336	239	208,111	85,205	244	236,689	105,273	225	271,063	129,352	210

Note: SR = Sex Ratio

Source: [Census 1881–1931]

Figure 6. Sub-categories of Indians in Rangoon

	1881			1931		
	Population	%	SR	Population	%	SR
Bengali	7,444	13	1,099	13,067	6	452
Chittagonian	-	-	-	16,991	8	4,336
Hindustani	12,176	21	411	32,731	15	838
Tamil	18,730	33	381	38,450	18	155
Telugu	18,450	32	559	68,591	32	512
Oriya	89	0	271	8,034	4	1,457
Others	647	1	189	35,065	16	330
Total Indian	57,536	100	479	212,929	100	417

Note: SR = Sex Ratio

Source: [Census 1881, 1931]

Figure 7. Population Density by Circles (person / acre)

Circle	1881		1891		1901		1911		Area in acre
	Total	per acre							
North Kemmendine	9,666	4	12,842	6	15,052	7	20,963	9	2,248
South Kemmendine	13,740	8	15,422	9	21,945	13	30,006	18	1,645
Lanmadaw	8,815	77	10,625	93	13,742	121	17,083	150	114
Taroktan	6,994	73	12,923	135	17,004	177	18,964	198	96
North-west Town	22,446	146	13,893	172	18,089	223	19,716	243	81
South-west Town			6,792	93	9,834	135	10,717	147	73
North-east Town	9,624	35	6,030	147	7,857	192	9,982	243	41
Kungyan			8,056	103	7,916	101	8,936	115	78
South-east Town			8,677	56	13,090	84	12,627	81	155
Botataung	18,552	24	24,705	32	26,228	34	35,696	46	781
Yegyaw			7,442	10	14,281	19	26,173	34	34,808
Theinbyu	9,833	3	16,286	4	23,119	6	28,253	8	3,682
Tamwe	1,071	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Okkalabah	6,953	2	7,489	2	10,470	2	27,216	6	4,368
Dala									

[Census (Report) 1881: 91] [Census 1891-1901: Provincial Tables] [Burma 1911: 100]

Figure 8. Population of Circles divided by Religion

Lanmadaw

	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%
Buddhist	8,861	83	10,103	74	10,842	63
Animist	1	0	208	2	267	2
Hindu	1,193	11	2,243	16	4,677	27
Mahomedan	384	4	824	6	913	5
Christian	186	2	348	3	384	2
Others	0	0	16	0	0	0
Total	10,625	100	13,742	100	17,083	100

Taroktan

	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%
Buddhist	9,898	77	8,169	48	9,815	52
Animist	3	0	4,574	27	3,906	21
Hindu	1,758	14	2,912	17	3,895	21
Mahomedan	1,086	8	1,089	6	1,083	6
Christian	174	1	229	1	225	1
Others	4	0	31	0	40	0
Total	12,923	100	17,004	100	18,964	100

North Kemmendine

	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%
Buddhist	8,726	68	8,869	59	11,610	55
Animist	87	1	269	2	251	1
Hindu	3,219	25	4,394	29	6,075	29
Mahomedan	512	4	999	7	1,928	9
Christian	294	2	479	3	1,088	5
Others	4	0	42	0	11	0
Total	12,842	100	15,052	100	20,963	100

Pucca Area without Taroktan

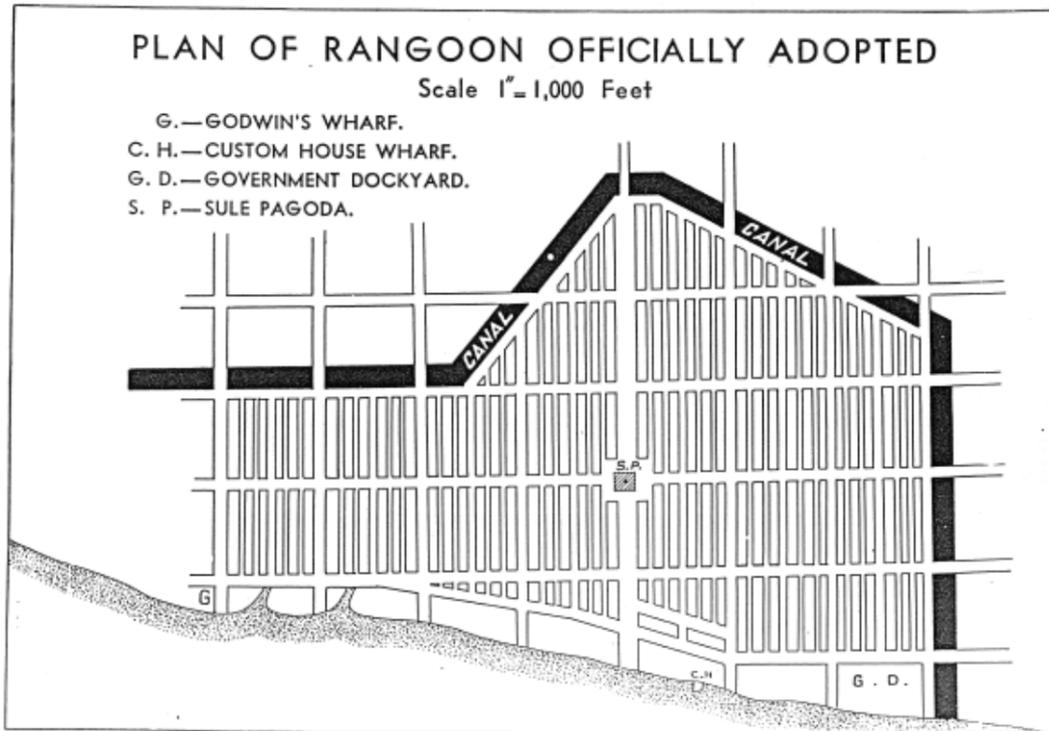
	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%
Buddhist	7291	17	6044	11	5798	9
Animist	107	0	1150	2	814	1
Hindu	15589	36	22755	40	25127	41
Mahomedan	14714	34	19905	35	22825	37
Christian	5514	13	6406	11	6385	10
Others	233	1	526	1	1029	2
Total	43448	100	56786	100	61978	100

Theinbyu

	1891	%	1901	%	1911	%
Buddhist	8,579	60	11,494	44	12,118	35
Animist	3	0	146	1	354	1
Hindu	3,811	27	9,624	37	13,998	40
Mahomedan	1,294	9	3,328	13	5,255	15
Christian	544	4	1,506	6	3,020	9
Others	50	0	75	0	63	0
Total	14,281	100	26,173	100	34,808	100

[Census 1891-1911]

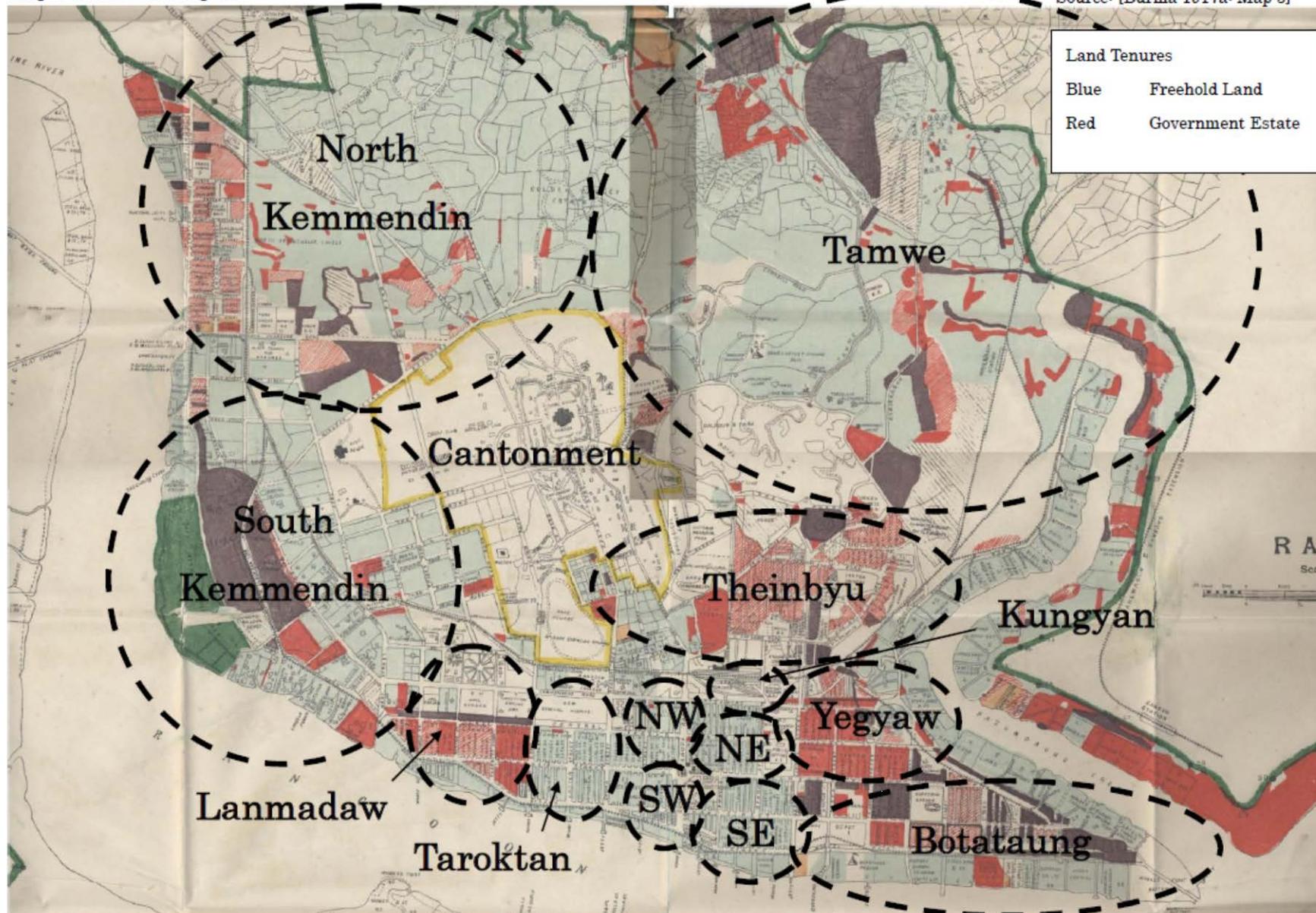
Map 1 Plan of Rangoon Officially Adopted in 1853



出典) [Pearn 1939: Plan no. 4]

Map 2 Circlces in Rangoon

Source: [Burma 1917a: Map 3]



Map 3 "Slums" in the middle of the 1910s

Source: [Burma 1917a: Map 3]

