

**A SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY OF RAKHINE DIVISION IN  
THE COLONIAL PERIOD (1826-1914)**

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## ABSTRACT

Rakhine region is located at the junction of three strategic regions, South Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia. In addition to its strategic location, India, source of ancient culture, is to its north and west, and the Bay of Bengal, where the early sea route trade had originated, is to its south, and these connections gave rise to the ancient urbanized settlement in this region. Such a geographical unique position led to the evolution and development of states in the Rakhine Division. In Rakhine, the natural boundaries of mountains, Rakhine-Yoma, and Bay of Bengal, protected a compact area suited to dry and wet rice cultivation factors which led to urban settlement (ancient capitals) and centralized organization, while both sea and land routes made direct contact with India. Ancient Rakhine capital's geographical unique position on the Bay of Bengal, with both land and sea routes to the east and west, resulted in the development of political and cultural traits which later emerged in other centers in Southeast Asia and constituted as Southeast Asian maritime kingdom. Towards the end of the Mrauk-U dynasty (1430-1784) however, the Rakhine Kingdom saw the decline in hegemony. This state of instability was ended when Myanmar troops from Amarapura (Bodawpaya reign) came and occupied it after the 45 day long battle. This occupation lasted 40 years from 1784 to 1824. In 1824 when Myanmar kingdom lost in the First Anglo-Myanmar War (1824-1826), the Rakhine region was handed over to the British as provided in the Yandabo Treaty. The annexation of Rakhine and Taninthayi by the war was an important military factor for them. At that time the East India Company had acquired Penang in 1786,

Malacca in 1795 and Singapore in 1819. The annexation of Rakhine and Taninthayi again made it the continued territory along the coastline of the Bay of Bengal was to strengthen their position in war. After that the British made great profit from the trade in Taninthayi and Rakhine and recovered the war expenditure incurred. British colonial administration was introduced into Rakhine Division. And then the British adopted capitalist economic policy for exploitation and monopoly on the traditional economy.

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