

**A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF
URBAN GROWTH IN THATON DISTRICT**

PhD DISSERTATION

THA ZIN KHAINÉ

**DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF YANGON
MYANMAR**

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ABSTRACT

Thaton District is situated in the northern part of Mon State and consists of four townships and four major towns: Kyaikhto, Bilin, Thaton and Paung. It is one of the densely populated areas in Myanmar because it has a favourable climate, soils and landform configuration. It is a coastal region of fertile alluvial plains and is located between the mouths of Sittaung and Thanlwin rivers. Ancient Mon Culture and lateritic civilization flourished in this area for many years. Thaton District lies on the main route of highways and border trade (Yangon - Mawlamyine - Dawei - Myeik) and (Yangon - Hpa-an - Myawaddy) which are the principal axes in the southern part of Myanmar. The Yangon - Mawlamyine - Dawei railroad also passes through Thaton District. Better transportation and economic development have resulted in population increase, which is the main reason for urban growth. The urban settlement pattern of Thaton District is the outcome of the process of urban growth during the colonial period. Physical geographic factors and transportation routes basically controlled the shapes and patterns of the four major towns in Thaton District. The current urban growth process is mainly the consequences of government planning policies. The desire of local residents and the development of transport routes are among the other partial causes. At present, the urban growth patterns expanded mostly along transportation routes, sprawling outwards beyond the town limits, instead of filling in the spaces within the town boundaries. Uncontrolled urban growth have resulted in the encroachment of urban areas into agricultural land and rural areas and some of the historical sites have gradually disappeared through informal settlement extension and road construction. Other problems such as insufficiency of drinking water and electricity, weakness in the solid waste disposal system are common within the study area. Systematic urban planning should be laid out and implemented accordingly, as urban growth implies the increase in consumption of land, water, energy, and other resources as well as of pollutants and wastes. Using Google Earth technology within a period of 40 years from 1973 to 2013, the spatial growth of urban settlement patterns in Thaton District is observed by digitizing and analyzing. Questionnaire surveys and random sampling methods are used to examine the socio-economic conditions and the improvement of living standards in urban residents. The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index, is also used to identify human development situations.

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