

# **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF MUDON TOWNSHIP**

Thazin Mon<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

This research explores the historical development and transformation of Mudon Township, now known as Mudon, focusing on its geographical, cultural, and administrative evolution. The historical trajectory of Zayar Township reveals a dynamic interplay between local traditions and external influences. Originally part of the Mottama Thirty-Two Towns, Zayar's significance as a trade and administrative center was marred by repeated warfare, including conflicts with Ayutthaya and Myanmar rulers. The impact of the First Anglo-Myanmar War (1824-1826) led to significant demographic shifts, with British annexation introducing new administrative practices and infrastructure. The construction of the Mawlamyine-Kyaikkhami road in 1833 and subsequent migration from various regions revitalized the township. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Zayar, rebranded as Mudon, emerged as a key administrative and agricultural hub, benefiting from both Mon migration and infrastructural improvements. The transformation from Zayar to Mudon reflects broader trends of adaptation and resilience in response to external pressures and internal changes. This aim of this research is to investigate the historical development and transformation of Mudon Township. By examining the historical and socio-political factors that have influenced Mudon Township, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of the region's resilience and adaptability amidst external pressures and internal shifts. Additionally, it offers insights into broader historical trends impacting southeastern Myanmar.

**Keywords:** Mudon, Zayar, Socio-economic, Township administration Mottama Thirty-Two Towns

## **Introduction**

Mudon Township, formerly known as Zayar Township, situated in the fertile plains of southeastern Myanmar, Mudon Township has been a significant site of historical and cultural evolution. The township's history, marked by ancient Mon settlements and the impacts of colonial rule, reveals a complex narrative of change and continuity. Originally a key trade and administrative center within the Mottama Thirty-Two Towns, Zayar Township's development has been shaped by both external conflicts and internal transformations. Notable upheavals include the First Anglo-Myanmar War and the subsequent British annexation, which resulted in considerable demographic shifts and administrative restructuring. The paper is organized as follows: the first section provides a detailed historical context of Zayar Township; the second explores its administrative evolution and the impacts of colonial rule; and the third analyzes the socio-economic changes leading to the modern-day Mudon Township.

## **Research Aim**

This research aims to investigate the historical development and transformation of Mudon Township, focusing on the effects of colonial rule, migration, and the socio-economic structure and demographic evolution of Mudon Township, formerly known as Zayar Township.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of History, University of Yangon

## Research Method

Utilizing a comprehensive approach that includes historical analysis, geographical surveys, and socio-economic data evaluation. Primary sources include historical records, Zayar Township surveys, and archival materials from both colonial and pre-colonial periods. Secondary sources consist of historical accounts, academic literature on Mon history, and regional studies. Additionally, the research utilizes cartographic evidence to trace shifts in administrative boundaries and infrastructural development. This comprehensive methodology seeks to elucidate how historical and socio-political factors have shaped the township's development and population dynamics over time.

## Historical Context

Mudon Township, formerly known as Zayar Township, is located in a region characterized by a diverse topography that includes the prominent Limestone Mountains. Historically, it was one of the thirty-two townships listed in the *Sittan* of Mottama, bearing the name Zayar. The township is also home to three ancient towns that add to its rich historical significance. The majority of the population in Zayar Township is of Mon ethnicity, with many villages where the Mon language is still widely spoken. Geographically, Zayar Township spans from Mawlamyine to Kalunbaw Pagoda in the east, and from Mawlamyine to Kin Chaung in the northwest. To the south, it extends from Wakharu Town to Kamaparin Stream, and to the southwest, it reaches from Wakharu Town to Bikalyin Stream. In the northeast, the township's boundaries extend from Winyaw Town to Taikkalar Hill. This comprehensive description of Zayar Township is outlined in the Zayar Township Survey.<sup>1</sup>

There are three old towns included in Zayar Township, notably, Binhlaing Town (Kawkhapon Village), Zayar Town (Kamarwet Town) and Lebin Town (Kwanton Ward). At the heart of Zayar, Pyinsalanago (Kamarwet) is situated. The term *Pyinsalanago* means “Pyinsa” five persons, “Sala” moving, “Nago” town. Regarding Binhlaing Old Town, the old town was built with laterite stones, was around seven feet high. The entrance road of Sasana Waiponelarma Monastery is the entrance to the old town. Of Binhlaing Old Town, there is Binhlaing lake in the east, Binhlaing stream in the north and it is 3 miles away from the west.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding Zayar Town (Kamarwet Town), the circled moat of the old town has length of around 1 mile each, 100 feet width and the depth are 5 to 6 feet in the east and 2 and half feet in the north and west. In the southern part of the moat, there were bushes and shrubs, and a bazaar is on the moat and town wall at the entrance to the town wall. The renovated Zayar pagoda is situated 200 feet away on the south-east corner of east moat inside the town.<sup>3</sup> The name Zayar

<sup>1</sup> Mr. B.O. Binns, *Burma Gazetteer, Amherst District*, Volume A, Rangoon, Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Union of Burma, 1962, p. 19 (Hereafter cited as Binns, *Burma Gazetteer, Amherst District*)

<sup>2</sup> Ma Ngwe Su, “မုဒုံမြို့နယ်၏ လူမှုစီးပွားရေးအပေါ် ပဏာမလေ့လာချက် (၁၉၆၂-၁၉၇၄)” (“A Study on the Socio-Economic History of Mudon Township (1962-1974)”), M.Res, Department of History, Mawlamyine University, 2002, p. 4 (Hereafter cited as Su, “Socio-Economic”)

<sup>3</sup> Ma Ohmar Khin, “မုဒုံမြို့နယ်သမိုင်း (၁၉၀၁-၁၉၂၇)” (“History of Mudon Township (1901-1927)”), (Ph.D), Department of History, Yangon University, p. 23 (Hereafter cited as Ohmar, “History of Mudon Township”)

was named after an old rich man named Zina, who was named (Zayar<sup>1</sup>).<sup>2</sup> Later, the place was called Zayar Town, which was also called “Pyinsalanago”, “Don Ze” in Myanmar.<sup>3</sup>

### Administrative Evolution

Administration region by King Thirimarthawtayarzar (Thiridamar Thawka) of the Thaton Dynasty, there were the duke Thugadinmin of Mupon (Mawlamyine), the duke (Banyathanbwi) of Zayar, Thameinpyathapop of Wakharu, the duke Bawgarin of Lamaing and the duke Hanlar of Ye.<sup>4</sup> Zayar Old Town, it is concluded that those were located at Theingon Village, a village of today Kamarwet Town, 9 miles away from Mudon Town.<sup>5</sup> Zayar Town, similar to Thaton was also affected and damaged by warfare.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Lebin Town (Kwanton Ward), according to Mon literature, the term “Laevin” or “Lavin” has three different meanings (1) “Lebin Sura” in Mon means those who produces and sells alcohol or drunkards, (2) “Lebin Weinzin” means gamblers, (3) “Lebin Lawdayin” means the musicians or dancers. Those people, in nature, lived in group by establishing their wards or villages.<sup>7</sup> Progression over time, Lebin Village grew and expanded and reached a level of town in Thaton Era. Lebin Town had the town wall two furlongs in length and width) on all four sides of the town and there was a moat outside the town wall. Inside the town, roads, streets and housing blocks were built orderly. The ward inside the town was called in Mon language “Kwanton” (Royal Town) as per the name “Kwanton”<sup>8</sup>, there were different levels of duke (Myosa), second in command of Military unit (Sit Kal), officer presenting to and relay king’s order (Nar Khan), Clerical staff (Myosa-yae) and Head of town (Myo-Thugyi) in place.<sup>9</sup> Kwanton Ward was one of three parts under administration of Mudon Town’s head. Kwanton in Mon language means; “Kwan” village and “ton” town. Therefore, Kwanton means the village inside the town.<sup>10</sup> The old town was surrounded by town wall and moat with the duke or town’s head who administered that town.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the Myanmar spelling of Zayar Town, historians use the letter “Ya Kaut” while in Ayo Gu stone inscription of U Shwe Aye, it used the letter “Ya Pa Let”

<sup>2</sup> မုဒုံမြို့နယ်သမိုင်း (The History of Mudon Township), Township Law and Order Restoration Council, Mudon Town, pp. 1-2 (Hereafter cited as *The History of Mudon Township*)

<sup>3</sup> ကျိုက်ဇယ်စေတီတော်သမိုင်းအကျဉ်း (A Brief History of Kyaikze Pagoda), Myanmar Era 1369, p. 21 (Hereafter cited as *Kyaikze Pagoda*)

<sup>4</sup> Mg Kyi Sein (Ramanya), ဘုန်းသစ်နှိုးပါနှင့် အတိတ်ပစ္စုပ္ပန် ရုပ်ပုံလွှာစာစုများ (Awake Bhone Thit and Past and Present Pictorial Journals), 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Mawlamyine, Swe Moe Press, 2017, p. 151 (Hereafter cited as Sein, *Past and Present*)

<sup>5</sup> Su, “Socio-Economic”, p. 2

<sup>6</sup> ကမာဝက်မြို့၊ ဒေသဆိုင်ရာအချက်အလက်များ (Regional Specifics of Kamarwet Township), Mudon Township General Administration Department, Mawlamyine District, Mon State, 2019, p. 2 (Hereafter cited as *Regional Specifics of Kamarwet Township*)

<sup>7</sup> မွန်ပြည်နယ်ဖြစ်စဉ်မှတ်တမ်း (၁၉၈၁) (Chronicle of Mon State (1981)), General Administration Department, Mudon Township, Type Writing Copy, p. 17 (Hereafter cited as *Chronicle of Mon State (1981)*)

<sup>8</sup> မုဒုံမြို့နှစ် (၁၀၀) ပြည့် အထိမ်းအမှတ်စာစောင် (The Journal Marked the Centenary Year of Mudon Town), Mudon General Administration Department, 1901-2001, p. 3 (Hereafter cited as *Mudon Centenary Journal*)

<sup>9</sup> Tin Naing Toe, မြန်မာပြည်တစ်လွှဲလမ်းညွှန် (A Guide Across Myanmar), Yangon, Mizzima Publishing, 2013, p. 349 (Hereafter cited as Naing, *Myanmar*)

<sup>10</sup> Su, “Socio-Economic”, p. 3

<sup>11</sup> bid, p. 2

Although had wide town walls and moat as the town dweller increased and expanded residential area, the old town wall and moat faded and disappeared among populous quarters. The place of Kwanton school at Kwanton ward, Myoma (2) ward, Mudon, is a central part with Royal hill and palaces and Kawhaparauk, Kawthabyu Buddha image (Nyaungbin Yat Buddha Image), the vicinity of primary school is inside the town wall. There were two doors on the east and west of town wall and the door in the west reached from today Kokkodan ruined temple to new temple, Lawkamarazein Buddha image. The moat was situated along the town wall and there was rubble of town wall discovered in some properties at Kwanton.<sup>1</sup>

The place of moat and its stream near Kwanton Monastery was previously accessible from Shin Saw Pu Road to Donkani Rice mill by boat. Now in the west of Kwanton Monastery, there is a creek leading to Kwin Villages since.<sup>2</sup> In the silt-up creek near today Kawlebin pagoda, a mouse catcher<sup>3</sup>, found seventy coins<sup>4</sup> of Pyu Era. Moreover, in the vicinity of such a place, there were some old wooden boards, old ropes and anchors subsided in the soil discovered. Therefore, it can be concluded that it was an old commercial port town having commercial relationship not only with Mottama thirty-two Towns but with other Mon Towns such as Hanthawaddy, Dagon, Thanlyin, Dalla and Sriksetra Pyu Town.<sup>5</sup> Those coins were assumed as Pyu coins because there was a symbol of Srivatsa on those coins.<sup>6</sup>

The King Anawrahta of Bagan Dynasty established the first nation of Myanmar, covering Takaung and Ngasaungchan in the north town, Thalinkyae in the south, Missagiri Mountain (Chin Mountain Range) in the west and Thanlwin River in the east. Thalinkyae means the cape Salang at northern edge of Malay peninsula, and therefore, the regions of Mon people such as Bago, Mottama, Mawlamyine, Ye, Dawei, Myeik were fallen under the reign of Myanmar King. Mottama Town, then, was a big town with thirty-two Satellite Towns and twelve Zars<sup>7, 8</sup>. After Bagan Dynasty, in AD 1281, at the time of King Wareru, Mottama became the royal capital and Mon Towns and Villages of Ramanya region went to be flourishing again.<sup>9</sup> In Ramanya region, lower part of Myanmar, monarchy was prevalent in Hanthawaddy (Bago) while, in parallel, in the upper Myanmar, similar monarchy prevalent in Innwa, Taungoo, Nyaungyan and Konbaung.<sup>10</sup> In AD 1287, the era of Hanthawaddy, the King Magadu of Wareru Dynasty was inaugurated with the title of “Binnya Waru” and reigned all parts of Ramanya regions and founded Sriyadanapuya Town.<sup>11</sup> The King Magadu, composed Mon Dhamathat Kyan (code of

<sup>1</sup> (a) *The History of Mudon Township*, p. 3

(b) Interviewee with U Ngwe Hlaing (Old Member of Commune), a Resident of Kwanton Neighborhood, Mudon Township (6 February 2023)

<sup>2</sup> (a) Ohmar, “History of Mudon Township”, p. 3

(b) Interviewee with U Kyaw Soe Moe, one of the Local People in Kwanton, Myoma (2) Ward, Mudon Town (4 March 2023)

<sup>3</sup> In 1978, the name of mouse catcher who lived in Kawthabin was U Tun Oo

<sup>4</sup> U San Win, *ဦးစံဝင်း၏လက်ရွေးစင်စာတမ်းများ (Selected Monograph of U San Win)*, Department of Historical Research and National Library, Yangon, Aung Kyaw Moe Colour Press, 2020, p. 106 (Hereafter cited as Win, *Monograph*)

<sup>5</sup> (a) *Chronicle of Mon State (1981)*, p. 19

(b) Su, “Socio-Economic”, pp. 2-3

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Robinson and L.A. Shaw, *The Coins and Banknotes of Burma*, England, Lancashire and Cheshire Numismatic Society, 1980, P. 9 (Hereafter cited as Robinson and Shaw, *The Coins and Banknotes of Burma*)

<sup>7</sup> Zar means Suburban Area (village)

<sup>8</sup> Sein, *Past and Present*, p. 152

<sup>9</sup> U Myint, *မုဒုံမြို့နယ် ရှေးဟောင်းသမိုင်းဝင် ကန်ကြီးစေတီတော် (Mudon Township, Historical Kangyi Pagoda)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Yangon, Thihabahu Press, 2015, p. 59 (Hereafter cited as Myint, *Kangyi Pagoda*)

<sup>10</sup> Win, *Monograph*, p. 78

<sup>11</sup> Mottama was once called Sriyadanapura

law), re-established Mottama Town with thirty-two Satellite Towns and twelve Zars.<sup>1</sup> The eight successive Mon King of Wareru Dynasty, Binnya U, moved royal seat from Mottama Town to Hanthawaddy (Bago Town). At the time of Binnya U, Mottama thirty-two Towns were renovated.<sup>2</sup>

Lebin had commercial relation not only with Mottama thirty-two Towns but with Hanthawaddy (Bago), Thanlyin, Dagon, Dalla, Sriksetra (Pyay).<sup>3</sup> At that time of Binnya U, so as to make Ramanya region more orderly, the administration of “Mandala”<sup>4</sup> in which thirty-two Towns as satellite towns was initiated and then there were three Mon of three Mandala including “Kuthima” “Kuthinagaya” (Pathein) thirty-two Mandala towns,<sup>5</sup> Hanthawaddy (Bago) thirty-two Mandala towns,<sup>6</sup> Mottama thirty-two Mandala towns<sup>7</sup>. Mottama Mon was called Mon Da, Hanthawaddy Mon was called Mon Daing and Pathein Mon was called Mon Nya.<sup>8</sup>

In Ariyarwontha Treatise, it is described three Mon- Mon Daing, Mon Da, Mon Nya. There is a discourse of ninety-nine Mon Towns. In three Mon regions, there were ninety-nine Mon towns, out of which, there were thirty-two Towns including Mottama, thirty-three towns including Hanthawaddy and thirty-three towns including Pathein, in total of ninety-nine towns.<sup>9</sup> Each Mandala had their respective ruling kings and therefore, there are in total of ninety-nine kings including three kings of each Mandala and of ninety-nine towns. Such Mandala administration system was also practiced in other Monarchy in South East Asia under Asia-India cultural influence.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, Mottama duke administered Mawlamyine, Zayar, Wakharu, Ye, Lamaing, Bilu Kyun Towns. In 1563, Myanmar - Thai war and warfare, Mottama thirty-two Towns, notably Tungwun, Mottama, Mawlamyine, Bilu Kyun, Lebin, Zayar, Wakharu, Lamaing, Ye, Lakonebyee, Hlaing Bwe, Htar Kai, Thazine, Paung, Myawaddy, Zweya, Kyeik, Gyaing, Kawt Bain, Attaran, Zami, Taung Poet, Winyaw and Kon Towns were affected, became battleground and the local economy, social lives and peacefulness went down. As a result, residential area and inhabitants there became disappeared. According to revenue inquest at the time of Bodawpaya, Lebin Town, on account of all-round deterioration, was not included on the list of Mottama thirty-two Towns and instead it was described in the name of Zayar Town.<sup>11</sup>

Around half of Mon people inhabited in Mottama thirty-two Towns area moved to neighboring country. At the time of Bodawpaya (Badon Min), in collecting data for *Sittan*, it

<sup>1</sup> တိုင်းရင်းသားရက်စဉ်သမိုင်း (မွန်) (*Ethnic Historical Records (Mon)*), Ministry of Culture, Department of Historical Research, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Yangon, Shwe Minthar Press, 2013, p. 7 (Hereafter cited as *Ethnic Historical Records*)

<sup>2</sup> Sein, Past and Present, pp. 152-153

<sup>3</sup> *Chronicle of Mon State (1981)*, p. 18

<sup>4</sup> Mandala means Regions, Provinces or States

<sup>5</sup> Appendix I

<sup>6</sup> Appendix II

<sup>7</sup> Appendix III

<sup>8</sup> Marmaka (Researcher), မွန်တို့၏နေရာမည (*The Indigenous Place of Mon Ramanya*), 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Yangon, Tet Lan Publishing House, 1997, p. 7 (Hereafter cited as Marmaka, *The Indigenous Place of Mon Ramanya*)

<sup>9</sup> တိုင်းရင်းသားမွန်လူမျိုးများအကြောင်း၊ သမိုင်းကောက်နုတ်ချက်၊ ဆောင်းပါး၊ စာတမ်းပေါင်းချုပ် (*About Mon Ethnic Group, the Historical Extract, Article, Collection of Treatises*), Ethnic Affair Committee of Mon State Parliament, p. 523 (Hereafter cited as *About Mon Ethnic Group*)

<sup>10</sup> Win, Monograph, p. 87

<sup>11</sup> Sein, Past and Present, p. 156

describes both inhabited towns and villages and uninhabited towns and villages. According to Mottama thirty-two Towns Survey, in eastern part of Mottama, Kawt Bain and Kon Towns were inhabited towns while Zweya Town, Kyeik Town, Taung Poet Town, Myawaddy Town, Paung Town, Thazine Town, Htar Kai Town, Hlaing Bwe Town were uninhabited. In the southern part, Mawlamyine, Attaran Town, Winyaw Town, Wakharu Town, Lamaing Town, Ye Town, Bilu Kyun Town were inhabited whereas Kon and Zami Towns were uninhabited. In the northern part, Lakonebyee Town, Myaing Town, Binhlaing Town, Yinnyeik Town, Kawt Town, Tungwun Town, Eiphyit Town, Eiwae Town, Taikkalar were uninhabited while Yinohn Town and Tungtami Town were inhabited. Therefore, Lebin Town was uninhabited ruined town, which was not on the list of Mottama thirty-two Towns in the *Sittan* at Bodawpaya period.<sup>1</sup>

### Colonial Impact and Transformation

In AD 1826, in the First Anglo - Myanmar War at the time of Sagaing Min (Bagyidaw), the British Annexed Yangon, Thanlyin, Bago, Mottama, Ye, Dawei, Myeik regions. Taking advantage of such circumstance, Thai invaded and captured 16000 people from southern part of Mottama and brought them to Yahine and Chaingmai. As a result, the southern region of Mottama such as Mawlamyine, Lebin, Bilu Kyun, Zayar, Wakharu, Lamaing and Ye Towns became ruined and abandoned for years.<sup>2</sup>

After First Anglo - Myanmar War with Yandabo Treaty in 1826, British government tried to control the township in Thaninthayi region to be stable and peaceful. In place of Myanmar traditional administrative system, the hierarchical administrative system with divisional Commissioner (Wunshintawmingyi), District Administrator (Deputy Commissioner), Gazette Officer of Sub-divisional Rank, Myo Paing, Circle Head Man, Village Head was initiated. Then, Mawlamyine was the seat of Divisional Commissioner and District Administrator Offices. Then, in Kyaikkhami District, eight townships such as Mawlamyine, Bilu Kyun Township, Zayar Township, Attaran Township, Wakharu Township, Ye Township, Haungthayaw Township, Kyainseikgyi Township were included.<sup>3</sup>

The dwellers in Lebin and Zayar Towns had to leave their houses and flee due to conflicts during 1774 - 1826. The worst years were 1774, 1814 and 1826. After the First Anglo - Myanmar War of 1827, the town population increased with people from Yangon, Thanlyin, Dalla, Twantay and Bilu Kyun migrated to Kwanton area while people from Attaran, Kyaikmaraw migrated to Kyaung Thit area. Following that people from Attaran, Kyaikmaraw, northern Mottama Area such as Sit Taung, Taikkalar, Donwun, Got, Yinnyeik and Ayeyawady Delta region migrated into the town along with the migrating of some Indian and Chinese people. Thereby, Zayar Town and its vicinity became flourished.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (a)Win, *Monograph*, p. 89

(b)U Pyinyar, *မုတ္တမရာဇဝင်ပေါင်းချုပ်နှင့် မုတ္တမစစ်တမ်းဟောင်းကျမ်း (Mottama Yarzawin Paung Chote and Old Mottama Sittan)*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Thaton, Thuwanawaddy Pitakas Press, 1289, pp. 28-29 (Hereafter cited as Pyinyar, *Mottama Yarzawin Paung Chote*)

<sup>2</sup> Sein, *Past and Present*, p. 159

<sup>3</sup> Sein, *Past and Present*, p. 168

<sup>4</sup> *Chronicle of Mon State* (1981), p. 19

When British government re-demarcated the boundary of townships, Naungkhari Village, Kawya Village, Kawkhani Village and southern nine Villages were included into Zayar Township which made Zayar region a township with 40 miles length from south to north. In 1833, British government built 55 miles long Mawlamyine - Kyaikkhami road which eased, despite no motor vehicle then, the travelers on carts and on foot.<sup>1</sup> As population increased, the residential ward of Lebin Town expanded. The ward expanded to the northern edge of town was called in Mon language as “*Mote ngin*” (edge of town), which was then changed into Mudon<sup>2</sup> with an ease in transportation and administration, and the growth of population there, in 1843, Mudon was destined to be the seat of Township Administrator Office.<sup>3</sup>

In 1872, around 30,000 Mon people from Thanlyin, Twantay, Dalla led by Thanlyin Myowun Naing Sat with the title of Thameinparu, Twantay Mayor U Htawlay and other Mon elders such as Thanlyin lighthouse officer Kin Wun Phoe Maungngan and U Phoe Saw migrated into Mawlamyine area with over 500 boats. Out of them, Kin Wun Phoe Maungngan and his group established the villages such as Kamaroak, Wegali, Kamarcheik, Pyinmagon, Balauk-nyaungwaing, Kawparan, Katonpaw, Kin Chaung, Kamarthin, Kamarpate along the fertile region of costal and other riverine area of Zayar Region (today Mudon Township). Later, agrarian villages appeared in the southern and northern coastal regions in Mudon Township and the area was populous again.<sup>4</sup>

Zayar Town is situated in the Mon State and three Mon (Mondaing, Monda, Monnya) inhabited there, all local names and terms are in Mon language.<sup>5</sup> With the migration of thousand people, previously uninhabited town became populous again. New places and new villages emerged and Kwanton Village (Lebin Town) was promoted to be Mudon Administrative Unit (Circle). Afterwards, several wards such as Mintan Ward, Sarshin Ward, Botel Ward, Laysu Ward, Donkani Ward, Lanmagyi Ward sprang up leading to conjunction of Kyaikkhami - Mawlamyine Road and Mudon - Chaungngakhaw Road.<sup>6</sup>

Previously Zayar Township was started as the village and it was at the edge of the town, Mon language, it was called “*Mote Ngin*” derived from the term “*Mu Tein*”. “*Mu*” means the edge and “*Tein*” means the town. Therefore, the term “*Mutein*” means the edge of the town which over time changed, in Mon sound, “*Mutein*” to “*Mudon*”.<sup>7</sup> They were Mawlamyine’s head Kaylusu, Wakharu Town’s head Nga Sonpar, Zayar Town’s head Nga Baw, Bin Hliang Town’s Head Nga Pa Sat<sup>8</sup> while Lebin Village was included in Zayar Township, as described in *Sittan* of town’s head Nga Baw. Later, Zayar Township of jurisdiction became Mudon and the place of Zayar Town became Kamarwet Town.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ohmar, “History of Mudon Township”, p. 161

<sup>2</sup> *Mudon Centenary Journal*, p. 5

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

<sup>4</sup> (a) Interviewee with U Kyi Sein (Retired), the Secretary of People Council, Mawlamyine, Mon State (31 January 2023)

(b) Sein, *Past and Present*, p. 160

<sup>5</sup> *The History of Mudon Township*, p. 3

<sup>6</sup> Ohmar, “History of Mudon Township”, pp. 30-31

<sup>7</sup> Su, “Socio-Economic”, p. 2

<sup>8</sup> မုဒုံမြို့နယ်စာတမ်း (Mudon Township Magazine), No. (1), Mudon Township Magazine Publishing Committee, Yangon, Fugiko Press, 2012, p. 34 (Hereafter cited as *Mudon Township Magazine*)

<sup>9</sup> Naing, *Myanmar*, p. 349

Then, the nephew of Min Maung Ngan<sup>1</sup>, Lighthouse officer Kin Wun, U Shwe Aye was appointed as a town administrator (*Myooke*). The name of the township, Zayar, was continued. It is known that for the purpose of revenue collection, it was classified as different circle such as Kawkhani circle, Pa-Auk circle, Kin Chaung circle, Mudon circle, Kun Hla circle.<sup>2</sup> In 1901, British government, in order to make administration and transportation functions to be more effective, changed Zayar Township of Kyaikkhami District (today Mawlamyine District) to be Mudon Township, changed Attaran Township to be Kyaikmaraw Township, changed Bilu Kyun Township to be Chaungzon Township, changed Wakharu Township to be Kyaikkhami Township.<sup>3</sup> In 1932, Kwanton, Kamarwet, Kalawthawt, Tagondaing and Pa-Auk five villages were included in Kyaikkhami jurisdiction area.<sup>4</sup>

Previously Mon state was formed with two districts; Thaton District and Mawlamyine District, covering ten townships. In Thaton District; Kyaikto, Bilin, Thaton and Paung Townships were included while in Mawlamyine District; Mawlamyine, Chaungzon, Kyaikmaraw, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Ye Townships and Lamaing and Khawzar sub-townships of Ye were included.<sup>5</sup> In April 2022, today Mon State was formed with four districts; which were Kyaikto, Thaton, Mawlamyine and Ye Districts. Kyaikto District covers Kyaikto and Bilin Townships while Thaton District covers Thaton and Paung Townships. In Mawlamyine District, Mawlamyine, Chaungzon, Mudon, Kyaikmaraw, Thanbyuzayat Townships are included and in Ye District, Ye Township is included.<sup>6</sup> Mudon Township covers two towns; Mudon Town and Kamarwet Town. In 2014, Kamarwet Village of Mudon Township was promoted to be Kamarwet Town under notification by Ministry of Union Office, Ministry of Home Affairs.<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusion

The historical evolution of Zayar Township, now present-day Mudon, reflects key developments in Mon history, including the rise and fall of Mon kingdoms, the impact of wars, and transformations during British colonialism. Strategically located and agriculturally fertile, the area has long been a hub for trade and settlement. Zayar Township, part of the Mottama Thirty-Two Towns, was devastated by wars with Ayutthaya, Burmese rulers like King Anawrahta and King Bodawpaya, leading to population declines and abandonment.

Following the First Anglo-Myanmar War in 1826, British annexation brought stability and infrastructure improvements, such as the construction of the Mawlamyine-Kyaikkhami road in 1833, reviving the township. Migration from other regions, including from India and China, boosted the population and economy. By 1843, Mudon became an administrative and agricultural hub, attracting Mon settlers from the south and evolving into a prosperous region.

<sup>1</sup> Min Maung Ngan is a Grandson (Lighthouse Officer) of Banyadala, the last dynasty of Hanthawaddy Dynasty

<sup>2</sup> Sein, *Past and Present*, p. 161

<sup>3</sup> (a) *Mudon Centenary Journal*, p. 7

(b) Ayo Gu stone inscription of U Shwe Aye, Khaung Thit Ward

<sup>4</sup> Naing, *Myanmar*, p. 350

<sup>5</sup> *Regional Situational Report*, 2010, P. 2

<sup>6</sup> Notification No. (329/2022) dated (30.4.2022) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mawlamyine District, Mon State obtained from the General Administration Department

<sup>7</sup> *Regional Specifics of Kamarwet Township*, p. 3

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## APPENDIX I

### PATHEIN THIRTY-TWO TOWNS<sup>1</sup>

1. Atithinsar Nargar (Pathein Town)
2. Kyaiktung Hlantar (Myannaung Town)
3. Kyaiktaung (Kanaung Town)
4. Kyaiktaung (Hinthada Town)
5. Tunandabal (Kwingauk Town)
6. Angpu (Okpho Town)
7. Durae Town
8. Kyaiktaung Taman Tapura (Zalun Town)
9. KyaikThalonpondownphyu (Danubyu Town)
10. Kyaik Thimuthaw (Thamyinkone Town)
11. Kyaikzayaetaung (Myaungmya Town)
12. Kyaikpawon (Seikgyi Town)
13. Kyaikkhcan (Kheibaung)
14. Kyaik Palaung taung (Mae laung)
15. Kyaik Kpi (Pathein Subarban place)
16. Kyaiksaw (Takaunghpaya)
17. Kyaikbamaw (Pantawyaekyi)
18. Kyaikmawdhaw (Kyonpyaw)
19. Kyaik Hkmepuur (Htaunglon)
20. KyaikhkaanTala (Ahthoke town)
21. Kyaikhkaantaungtone (Htanbu Magyikone)
22. Kyaikhkraantaw Kyaephyu (Zeehpyukwin)
23. Kyaiktalanthantawor (Kyaukchaunggyi)
24. Kyaikawhaan (Taikthikwin)
25. Zalellkyaiktagaw (Zanerarkyun)
26. Kyaik Htuuparrone Kautphyu (Hlaytan Town)
27. Kyaiktaungkaw (Lemyethna)
28. Kyaiktaungpyuptaw
29. Kyaiktamon Kyonetone (Kyonetone Kandy Town)
30. Kyaikkranhaynan (Kaynan Town)

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<sup>1</sup> Kyi Mya Lwin, မြန်မာ့ဝေလွန်အိမ် (Introduction of Mon Lives and Customs), 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Mawlamyine, Ramanya Publishing Press, 1976, pp. 24-25 (Hereafter cited as Kyi, *Introduction of Mon Lives and Customs*)

31. Kyaikhkaram (Hpayar Hla)
32. Kyaikto (Maekarae Town)

## APPENDIX II

### HANTHAWADDY THIRTY-TWO TOWNS<sup>1</sup>

1. Kyaukmaw Town (Bago)
2. Ann Town (Rakhine)
3. Donzarik Town
4. Kyieku Town (Bago, Kyauksayit Town)
5. Sittaung Town
6. Din Mae Town
7. Zaithabon Town
8. Atar Town
9. Mawlone Town
10. Lakonebyee Town
11. Arhkarain Town
12. Maaui Town
13. Ramanagor Town
14. Rammawatty Town (Rakhine, Rambre Town)
15. Hmawbi Town (Yangon)
16. Hlaing Town (Yangon)
17. Paunglin Town (Bago, Paunglin Village)
18. Htantawgyi Town (Bago)
19. Titut Town (Bago, Titut Village)
20. Zayhta Town
21. Zaungtu Town (Bago, Zaungtu Village)
22. Barai (Ingapu) Town (Ayayarwady, Barai Village)
23. Yenwet Town (Yangon)
24. Tonkhan Town
25. Mayyincanar Town
26. Tannarpaung Town
27. Minyehla Town (Minyehla Village)
28. Koliya Town (Bago)
29. Byter Town
30. Winpyaing Town
31. Yoonzalin Town
32. Hanthawaddy (Zinekanaing)Town (Bago)

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<sup>1</sup> Kyi, *Introduction of Mon Lives and Customs*, pp. 23-24

**APPENDIX III**  
**MOTTAMA THIRTY-TWO TOWNS<sup>1</sup>**

1. Kon Town
2. Zayar Town (Kamarwet Town in Mudon Township)
3. Bin Hlaing Town (Bin Hlaing Village in Mudon Township)
4. Win Yaw Town (Win Yaw Village, Kyaikmaraw Township)
5. Mawlamyine Town
6. Wakharu Town (Wakharu Village Thanbyuzayat Township)
7. Lakonebyee Town (Weapaban Village, Mottama Township)
8. Kyaing Town (Kyaing Village, Kawkareik Township)
9. Kawt Town (Kawt Village, Kyaikto Village)
10. Bilu Kyun Town (Taungzon Village, Chaungzon Township)
11. Ye Town
12. Attaran Town (Attaran Village, Kyaikmaraw Township)
13. Myaing Town (Myaing Village, Kawkareik Township)
14. Tungwun Town (Tungwun Village, Thaton Township)
15. Kyeik Town (Kyeik Village, Kyaikto Township)
16. Tungtami Town (Tungtami Village, Kyaikmaraw Township)
17. Eiphyit Town (Eiphyit Village, Hpa-An Township)
18. Zami Town (Zami Village, Ye Township)
19. Taung Poet Town (Taung Poet Village, Ye Township)
20. Taikkalar Town (Taikkalar Village, Thaton Township)
21. Daye Town (Daye Village, Bilu Kyun Town)
22. Thazain Town (Kawkareik Township, Thazain Village)
23. Zweya Town (Kawkareik Township, Zweya Village)
24. Htar Kyaing Town (Htar Kyaing Village)
25. Yin Nyein Town (Thaton Township, Yin Nyein Village)
26. Eiwae Town (Hpa-An Township, Eiwae Village)
27. Hlaing Bwe Town (Hpa-An Township, Hlaing Bwe Town)
28. Yin Ohn Town
29. Kawt BainTown (Kyaikmaraw Township, Kawt Bain Town)
30. Lamaing Town (Ye Township, Lamaing Town)
31. Myawaddy Town
32. Paung Town

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<sup>1</sup> U Aye Kyaw, မုတ္တမ (၃၂) မြို့စစ်တမ်း၊ တက္ကသိုလ်ပညာပဒေသာစာစောင် (Mottama Thirty-Two Towns Inquest, Tagatho Pyinya Padathar Journal), Volume 5, Section 1, Without Town and Press Name, 1970, pp. 242-243 (Hereafter cited as Aye Kyaw, Mottama Thirty-Two Towns)

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### Interviewee

U Kyaw Soe Moe, one of the local people in Kwanton, Myoma (2) ward, Mudon Town (4 March 2023)

U Kyi Sein, (Retired), the Secretary of People Council, Mon State, Mawlamyine Town (31 January 2023)

U Ngwe Hlaing (Old Member of Commune), a resident of Kwanton neighborhood, Mudon Township (6 February 2023)