

Colonial Knowledge Transmitted in British Burma: An Analysis of Civic Textbook Prescribed in National School*

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Abstract

Since the GCBA, the leading nationalist association at that time being, laid its political goal to practice autonomy in British Burma by the will of the Burmese, civic education, initiated in the colonial Burma as a part of modern education, became a subject of national schools to fulfill this goal. The civic textbook has been composed with the purpose that in order to practice the autonomy in British Burma by the will of the Burmese, people should study civic education, by choosing the right people as their representative and, fulfilling duties and getting the rights of citizenship. This study examines the role of civic education conveyed modern administrative knowledge to students and populace. For this purpose, textual analysis of the civic textbook prescribed in national school has been made. In doing so, this study argues that the civic textbook prescribed in national school transmitted the colonial knowledge to the populace, which meant that people who lived in British Burma have the right of freedom and the right of equality, and the duties such as to protect the country, to obey the law, to pay the tax and to do social activities.

Key Words: Home Rule, Civic Education, National School, Rights of Citizenship, Obligations of Citizenship.

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1 Introduction

It is well known that Burmese nationalist movement occurred till to late 1930s was led by the two nationalist associations; the Young Men's Buddhist Association (1906-1920) (YMBA) and the General Council of Burmese Associations (1920-1930) (GCBA). Though the YMBA had attempted for the development of Burmese Buddhist's moral and socioeconomic conditions without having any political goals (Myo Oo 2012), it interested in political affairs of British Burma especially in administration and change its name itself to the GCBA to begin a political campaign finally (Cady 1958, 209). The political goal of GCBA was to practice "Home Rule" and it had taken up activities after the First World War (1914-1918) in British Burma (Mya Han 1999, 35). Home rule means an administrative system which governed the state, city, town and village with the will of the Burmese and the GCBA aimed to practice autonomy by the will of Burmese in British Burma under the colonial rule (Nemoto 1996, 40). The movement based on the GCBA's goal reflected in the civic textbook prescribed in national school, as explicated in the text.

In Burma studies, political history is one of the most popular academia. At the risk of stating the obvious, most of the researches on the Burmese political history during the colonial period perform the Burmese nationalist movement against the British colonial administration.¹⁾

Though it is known widely that GCBA's political goal was "Home Rule," the existing researches in this sense that what knowledge was

¹⁾ For examples Ba Maung (1975), Ba Thaug (1967), Dabama Asiayon Thamine (1976: 1978), Hobbs (1947), Khin Yi (1988), Maung Maung (1989), Moscotti (1974), Naw Angelene (2001), Ni Ni Myint (1985), Sarkisyanz (1965), Solomon (1969) and so on.

transmitted to the students and populace of British Burma to practice autonomy through the powerful tools of enforcement such as school education and mass media, fail to shed light on it. On the other hand, it is a fact that GCBA, the leading Burmese nationalist association between 1920 and 1930s, made efforts to practice “Home Rule.”

According to Keith Crawford, school textbooks are crucial organs transmitting ideologies and a reflection of knowledge considered important by a powerful group (Crawford 2003, 5). The national school, a kind of vernacular school, was one of the main educational centers for the indigenous populace of British Burma. Along with the campaign of nationalism, national education had emerged in British Burma after the First Student Strike, (1920). In other words, most of the schools in British Burma were vernacular schools (Aye Lei Lei Kyi & Ozaki, 2009, 76), and they gave birth some national leaders for example General Aung Sun, who is considered as “the father of Burmese independence” (Kyaw Nyein, 1998, 45). Hence it is necessitated to realize what the civic textbook prescribed in national school conveyed the Burmese students including the leaders of Burmese nationalist movement.

In order to understand what civic education was transmitted to the populace to practice home rule, it is useful to analyze the civic textbook prescribed in national school during the colonial period, as well, the diversity of phenomena associated with it. This study will focus on the role of civic education prescribed in national school and conveyed the colonial knowledge to Burmese populace. It does not mean that the national school was a relay-station which transmitted the colonial knowledge. By colonial knowledge, I meant that people who lived in

British Burma have the right of freedom and the right of equality, and the duties such as to protect the country, to obey the law, to pay the tax and to do social activities.

This article, which discusses the relation of GCBA's political goal and Burmese education in British Burma, will draw upon the analysis of the civic text book prescribed in national schools. This article both in terms of its form and content is predicated on the assumption that another characteristic of Burmese nationalism, which put its goal to practice autonomy under the British colonial administration system, remained understudied subject.

For this purpose, the civic textbook, "*Pyi-thu Niti*" (Directive of Citizen), prescribed in the national school will be conducted a textual analysis in this article. It is worth raising the point that there are ways in which the civic textbook prescribed in the national school transmitted the colonial knowledge in order to practice home rule in British Burma. It will, firstly, be examined the concept of citizenship in the sense of the colonial ideology in this article. Secondly, how to rationalize the states and governments of British Empire in this text will be examined. Finally, how it explained the way in which the citizens have to participate in an election to practice autonomous government in British Burma will be analysis. In doing so, this study argues that the civic textbook prescribed in the national school transmitted the colonial knowledge to the populace, which meant that people who lived in British Burma have the right of freedom and the right of equality, and the duty to protect the country.

This study consists of six sections. The first section provides a brief introduction of the study. A short historical background, the reason why

civic education was practiced in the colonial Burma is narrated in the next section. The third section figure out the content of the civic textbook prescribed in the Burmese vernacular school. The fourth section describes how the text has explained the foundation of the colonial governments in the British Empire. The fifth section discusses how this text has educated the citizen the way in which people could practice autonomous governments in British Burma, taking obligations such as paying tax and participating in the local elections. The final section serves as a summary and conclusion of the study, where the limitation and the result of this study are identified.

2 Home Rule: Where British Imperial Ideology and GCBA's Political Goal Met

This section deals with a brief account of the reason why civic education was practiced in British Burma.

In order to search the way in which how to spread the imperial ideology in British colonies, the Imperial Idea Committee was established in Britain in 1916 (*RIIC* 1917, 9; Aye Kyaw 1970, 15). The primary aim of the imperial committee was to transmit the imperial ideology to the colonial citizens. In short, by British Imperial Ideology meant that all citizens of British Empire should unite not to collapse the empire even though they are diverse in religion and the nation (Aye Kyaw 1970, 16), because developments of the colonized states were connected with the development of the British Empire (*RIIC* 1917, 10; Aye Kyaw 1970, 16). The British government had wanted the citizen of British Burma to obey this idea and recognized that the education plays a critical role spreading this idea in British Burma (*RIIC* 1917, 9; Aye

Kyaw 1970, 17). The obligations of the Imperial Idea Committee associated with education were to investigate that there is something difficulty in teaching imperial idea in the schools, to establish a team for the purpose of Boy Scout activities, and to support schools to deepen the relationship between the public and the schools (Aye Kyaw 1970, 18). With the initiative of modern education such as geography, history and the civic education was introduced in British Burma (*RIIC* 1917, 14, 44; Aye Kyaw 1970, 23). To transmit the British Imperial Ideology, the British Imperial Ideology Committee of British Burma wanted the Education Department to teach the history of Great Britain and Burma based on the Imperial Ideology (*RIIC* 1917, 17,43; Aye Kyaw 1970, 22).

Nationalists, student leaders and GCBA members, on the other hand, founded nation schools throughout Burma proper immediate after of the First Student Strike (Aye Kyaw 1970, 146). The purpose of nationalist in that time being was to practice autonomy called home rule in British Burma. The background of this purpose was based on the proposal of American President Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) including the right that to form self-administration in the respective colonies (Ba Khine 1966, 34). The right of self-administration became the political goal of nationalist in British Burma as follows. On 27 August 1917, Mr. Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879-1924), Secretary of State for India, declared that the British government would gradually initiate self-administration in India and it had intended to grant autonomy in the future (*Griffiths* 1952, 300). In this declaration, three terms were written such as to found an autonomous government progressively improving the power of local people in India, to report the result of a meeting held between the Secretary and Lord Chelmsford (1868-1933), Governor General of India, and to give a chance to the representation of people to discuss before governor submitting the plan on administrative reformation of India to British parliament (Lay Maung 1973,

124). As YMBA leaders had known about this declaration, some representatives were sent to India in order to meet Mr. Montagu and got a promise that the British government would consider to promote the status of administration in British Burma (Maung Maung 1959, 13). However, Mr. Reginald Henry Craddock (1864-1937), Lieutenant governor of British Burma refused the right of autonomy of British Burma and drew a plan called “Craddock Schedule”. Due to dissatisfy with this plan, in May 1920, YMBA sent a group of representative to London to make a demand that to practice the Diarchy Administration in British Burma which had granted in India (Cady 1960, 209). Because of the admission of the British government, this administration was introduced in British Burma on 1 January 1921 (Maung Maung 1959, 19).

With the purpose of practicing self-administration in British Burma by the will of Burmese, civic education was prescribed in national school that considered conveying the civic education of the populace. The primary aim, why this textbook was composed, can be seen in the preface written by editor U Lu Pe Win that in order to initiate autonomous or self-governance, the main and hottest demand by the nationalists at that time, civic textbook was created to educate modern administrative knowledge to the populace which they needed (Ba Aye 1934, a). Furthermore, it is clear that this book was intended to share the knowledge not only for the students but also for lay men. For this purpose it has been written in Burmese (Ba Aye 1934, 3). It was also an attempt of nationalists and intellectuals that they were trying to educate modern administrative knowledge that different from traditional administrative systems to their citizens. In this way, civic education, based on the British imperial ideology, was prescribed in national school.

3 Pyi-ye Pyi-ya: Civic Education for Burmese Citizen

The civic textbook taught in most of the national school was *Pyi-ye Pyi-ya* composed by U Ba Aye (1877-1948), a former town officer, and how the civic text book conveyed the knowledge will be discussed in the following sections.

In this section, to roughly guess how it is composed, the content will briefly be introduced. The preface and chapter one is legitimatization of British Burma as a part of the British Empire, chapter two is about the British government and chapter three is about India government, central government. Chapter four is about British Burma government, chapter five is the legislative council, chapter six is state administration, chapter seven is defense, chapter eight is laws and courts, chapter nine and chapter ten are on the development of the state, chapter eleven is tax, chapter twelve is an account of local government (city and town), chapter 13 is an account of local government (village), chapter 14 is the rights of citizens and chapter 15 is the duty of citizens. To clarify the goals what this textbook wanted to convey, chapters are listed up below.

<Table 1> Content of the Civic Textbook

Chapter	Title	Subject
Chapter 1	British Burma in the British Empire	Present situation and in need of civic education
Chapter 2	British government	Rationality of British government and its established by election
Chapter 3	India government	Formation of the Indian government
Chapter 4	British Burma government	Formation of the British Burma government
Chapter 5	Legislative council	Legal rationality of British Burma
Chapter 6	State administration	Administrative rationality
Chapter 7	Defense	Maintaining security by the colonial government
Chapter 8	Courts and law	Colonial administration based on law
Chapter 9	The development of the state (1)	Social development by government
Chapter 10	The development of the state (2)	Economic development by government
Chapter 11	Tax	Modern state and the need for tax

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Chapter 12	Local administration (city and town)	The establishment of autonomous government through election
Chapter 13	Local administration (village)	The establishment of autonomous government by election
Chapter 14	The rights of citizens	Rights of citizens
Chapter 15	The duty of citizens	Duties of citizens

Before proceeding the main text, it should be discussed here that why the civic education considered important by the author. Preface and chapter one are introductory chapters and the author shows his consideration of the importance of civic education as a modern administrative knowledge in these chapters. Continuously he explains the present situation of British colonial Burma such as freedom and rights of colonial citizens as follow. Rakhine and Tanithari, coastal regions of Burmese kingdom, in 1826, as a result of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), lower Burma in 1853, as the result of the Second Anglo-Burmese War(1852), were occupied by the British East India Company. In 1858 these regions had been transferred to the Queen's government and the whole regions had become a British colony since then (Ba Aye 1934, 6). Finally, by the defeat of the Burmese kings in the Third Anglo-Burmese (1885), Burmese kingdom and its associated hills were put under the British colonial administration and incorporated into British India by the administrative reason (Ba Aye 1934, 7). Though Burma was put under British colonial administration, Burmese have rights such as religious freedom, equal in law and the right of employment. The author laid stress that to use the rights and duties of citizens that one should have studied civic education (Ba Aye 1934, 7).

4 Rationalization of Colonial Governments

After explaining the necessity of civic education, U Ba Aye, the author, moves to the rationalization of the governments under the British Empire that they are elected

and formed by democratic elections. In other word, how the civic textbook has explained the formation and rationalization of colonial governments will be analyzed in this section.

The formation of the government of Great Britain, India and British Burma are explained as rational governments that they are formed by democratic election through chapter two to four.

In chapter two the legitimacy of the British government has been explained that the government was led by cabinet composed by the members of ruling party and they were elected in 1931 electoral by 77% of the British citizens who had the right to vote, narrating the configuration of the British government, the election system and its representatives (Ba Aye 1934, 9-10). On the formation of the cabinet is also explained that it has composed of leaders chosen by Queen and the Parliament consisted of two congresses: the aristocratic senate and house of representative elected by citizens (Ba Aye 1934, 8). Moreover the author shows the legitimacy of the British government again by adding the rights of opposition parties. Regarding the legislative power, one of the three pillars in the sovereignty of British governance, U Ba Aye also describes the lawmaking process that laws proposition, law reformation and budget proposition are approved by the parliament by representatives through a voting system. On the legal rationality of the parliament, the author laid stress that though Queen is existing, Britain is not a feudal state, but a constitutional monarchy state based on the constitution (Ba Aye 1934, 12). In addition, introducing the British administrative system as a tradition of Great Britain, the author is evaluating the democracy of the British that because the government operated the administration with the responsibility of the British people who elected them (Ba Aye 1934, 12-13).

Chapter three describes the formation of the Indian government in details: population, area, configurations of the government, the parliament, election,

administration and budget. On the formation of the government, the hierarchy of India government is explained that the governor general, lieutenant governor general who governed the 10 British India countries, commissioners governed the five areas, and Maharajas, lords, governed 600 areas (Ba Aye 1934, 14).

In chapter four, explaining his opinion on the relationship of the British administrative system and the formation of British Burma government, the author narrates the configuration of governing bodies, the trends of law, justice and administration of colonial Burma. In other words, this chapter conveys the administrative knowledge on British Empire such as the configuration, nature and governance of the administrative bodies and real politics of British Burma.

Through chapter five to eight are on the legitimacy of governance of British Burma government. As the purpose of this section is to analysis how this textbook conveying the legitimacy of British Burma government, chapter five, the election of British Burma government, will be widely discussed here. To know the formation of this government, however, other chapters will also be introduced briefly. Chapter six is on justice and seven is budget especially in the use of tax and criminal case. Chapter eight was about a lawsuit and the author encouraged that the people should understand the law to protect own interest, here.

The author highlights brief history how it has gradually been transformed from 1897 to 1934 and the role of the Legislative Council, the governing body of British Burma, in chapter five (Ba Aye 1934, 31-32). British Burma was governed by Commissioner till to 1897, by Lieutenant Governor and legislative council was found after 1897. Legislative council was consist of nine members in 1897 and increased to 14 in 1909, 28 in 1920. Not only members chosen by lieutenant governor but also members elected by people were appointed in this assembly since 1923, according to the author (Ba Aye 1934, 32). Regarding the administration of British Burma, firstly,

administrative hierarchy has been narrated to district level: the commissioner, the highest administrator, ruled 40 districts; district governor managed general administration, tax collection, and justice in respective districts with approval of the commissioner; and other officials followed the instruction of the respective department (Ba Aye 1934, 44). After this, the textbook continues to the functions of under district level officers that town officers and ward or village officers positioned under the town officers, are operating administration with the guidance of respective supervisors. Finally, ten houses administration, the most basic unit and put under village level administration, headed by a patriarch, is narrated in this chapter (Ba Aye 1934, 44-45). Regarding the role of the village head, the author describes that district officer appointed the person who elected by the villagers and recommended by regional officer, and he can handle the village consulting with four village committee members (Ba Aye 1934, 45-46). In this way, the author explains that the hierarchy of administrative bodies in British Burma had been arranged by democratic ways.

After explaining the administrative hierarchy, the rights of the representative of the legislative council member introduce in the same chapter. They are the rights to ask official, the right to discuss with other members in parliament, the right to propose legislation and voting right on legislation. The author has evaluated the administrative systems that give rights to members, pointing out the rights of members. In addition, the author has suggested that the people should have knowledge which can choose the members who prioritize people's interest than his own interest, as legislation, budget and tax have been proposed in parliament and resolved by the vote of members though they are decided by lieutenant governor finally. U Ba Aye also encourages the people to participate in elections in order to practice the administration by their will, showing the relationship of administration and elections. In brief, the author has repeatedly encouraged the people to survive in modern society,

having civic knowledge of their interests, through chapter five to eight.

Chapter nine to twelve are on the administration of British Burma. The author introduces what departments are operating in the administration of British Burma in this part. Though it is divided into two chapters, chapter nine is on the account of the department of development run by the government and chapter ten is its continual. Chapter eleven is about tax collection and its use. These chapters describe how the government has been functioning in its citizens' development.

Chapter nine, the role of the national development department, is on the education of British Burma. In this part, he author explains the importance of education for the development of the state as follows. The British government, in accordance with the obligation of good government, has been trying the development of the state for its citizens. Education is recognized as an important sector for the state development that as if intellectual increase in British Burma, the state will be developed in every sector including economic, crime will be less, and administration will be smooth (Ba Aye 1934, 76). After that, analyzing former traditional monastery education, U Ba Aye has described the role of modern education being conducted in colonial Burma.

Chapter ten is written on health, breeding and agriculture as the elements supporting the state development. Regarding the health, there are two parts; treatment and protection. The author explains health care as a duty of the government as follows (Ba Aye 1934, 91). If citizen are healthy, they can do the job and it will lead their rich life and the state will also have tax, thus, health care is a duty of the state. Listing name of hospitals, it has been explained that the government has been building some hospitals for this purpose. In this regard, the author claimed that although health department was only interested in treatment before, protection is also carrying out currently. In addition, ongoing projects initiated by government, for example injection the people to prevent from infectious diseases, are also introduced

(Ba Aye 1934, 95-96).

The later part of this section is about animal's health care, agriculture and cooperative. Firstly, the role of government in the health care of animals is described. As British Burma is an agricultural state and cows and buffalos have been being used in farming, the government is paying attention on the health of agricultural animals, and established a branch under the department of Forestry veterinary surgeons and nurses are treating and prevention of disease (Ba Aye 1934, 99).

Regarding public transportation, the author adds his opinion in this chapter as follow. Transportation is the life of the people, land and waterways are necessary for both transportation and trade, and train and ship are not only for its owner's interest but also for the interests of all citizens (Ba Aye 1934, 111). Here, the author again encourages the citizens to be dutiful the tax, for the reason of the government is building bridges, roads, railroads with the public's tax. At the end of this chapter, the author repeatedly laid his stress that the government is carrying the improvement of citizen's living standard such as education and transportation, human and animal health, and security (Ba Aye 1934, 112).

Chapter 11 is about tax collection and its use. In this chapter, the author explains that the tax is necessary for the government because the tax become budget and used in administration such as education, health defense and administration (Ba Aye 1934, 113). In other words, the author has been claimed that taxes were used by the government instead of people.

5 The Way to Practice Autonomous in British Burma

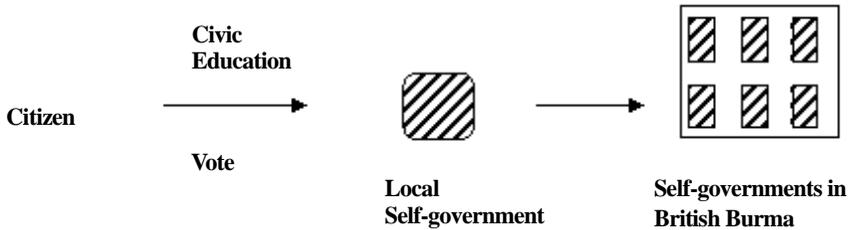
In this part, through chapter twelve to fifteen, this text conveys the knowledge that the citizens have right and obligation and they can practice local administration with

their will.

Chapter twelve and 13 are about municipal administration. Chapter twelve is on city and town administration and chapter 13 directly related to the regional administration. Narrating the British administration system, the author has been explained the relation of local administration and people's daily life. Here, the author encourages the citizens to cooperate with local administration for their own interest. Firstly, regard on actual local administration, he explains that the British administration system is a system which the representatives can participate in the administration especially education, health, welfare and transportation which directly related to citizen's daily life (Ba Aye 1934, 128). After explaining the administration of British Burma, the author adds some more knowledge on the self-governing administration and suggests that the citizens should study civic education to be able to participate in the respective local administration (Ba Aye 1934, 128).

Chapter 13 is about regional administration. In this chapter, the role of municipal boards is described to operate the local administration in town, ward and village. The author informs the functions of running administrative boards that local authority such as district councils, municipal board, board of education and hospital committee carried out the operations in accordance with the rules and regulations for the benefits of local residents. On the other hand, the author also points out the present condition of municipal board that most of the boards have got trouble in handling as too many people wished to participate in the administration. In short, the author encourages the people to participate in elections for the reason of their life is related to administrative bodies.

<Figure 1> Initiating Self-governance in British Burma



Chapter 14 and 15 are obligations and rights of citizens. Informing the rights and duties of the citizens, the author has been encouraging the citizens to use their rights effectively and to fulfill their duties and obligations.

Chapter 14 is about the rights of the citizen. Here U Ba Aye, the author discuss here how to use right legally (Ba Aye 1934, 172). According to the author there are two rights; the right of freedom and the right of equality. The rights of freedom mean every citizen has the right of freedom such as freedom of believing, the freedom of living, freedom of employment, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the right of equality is that every citizen have equal right in administration, education, health care, own property and before the law.

Chapter 15 is about the duties of the people. Firstly the author reports the citizens to raise their living status by filling their duties, in this chapter (Ba Aye 1934, 181). The duties written here are to love the country, to resist internal and external enemies uniting all citizens, to obey the law, to pay taxes, to participate in election of municipal government, to have civic knowledge and to save money.

In this chapter, the author explains why the citizen should obey the duties as follow. As the country is more important than one's life of a citizen, everyone should love the country more than their life (Ba Aye 1934, 183). Thus they should defense the country from internal and external enemies for the citizens live safely and securely

(Ba Aye 1934, 183-184). The third one is to obey the law, the fourth is to pay the tax, the fifth one is to participate in municipal administration, the sixth is to study needing civic knowledge and the seven is do their own jobs and to save the money (Ba Aye 1934, 185).

Addition to these duties, the duty raised by the author is to do social activities uniting each other for their society. For the social welfare, the author suggests the citizen to establish social institutions such as teams of mothers and child care, gyms, libraries, Boy Scout, free schools, religious teams and the teams which led good direction of youth's morality.

In turn, the author points out the obligation of the state especially on education and health care. The state's obligation raised by the author here was social welfare such as health of children, education, moral education of youth, insurance of the labors, support to old person and sick person.

6 Conclusion

From the discussion so far, this study has made a textual analysis of the civic textbook prescribed in the national schools. Due to the GCBA, the leading nationalist organization at that time being, put its political goal practicing self-governance in British Burma, the civic textbook was composed to educate modern administrative knowledge not only to the students in the national school but also to the citizen. It aimed that the citizen can practice the administration with their will by choosing the right people as their representative and fulfilling their duties and getting their right as a citizen of British Burma, by studying civic education.

To sum up, in the form of modern administrative knowledge, civic education was transmitted the colonial knowledge to the students and populace that the citizens of

British Burma had the right of freedom and the right of equality, and the duties such as to protect the country, to obey the law, to pay the tax and to do social activities. Though the civic textbook transmitted the colonial knowledge describing the social contract made between the colonial government of British Burma and the citizen, there is no direct reflection of British Imperial Ideology that the citizens of British colonies should unite not to collapse the Empire though they are diverse in religion and nation. However, to practice autonomous with their well, Burmese citizens had a duty to protect the British Burma, a part of the British Empire. In addition, the rationalization of colonial governments of the British Empire and the legitimization of British administrative systems is explained in the civic textbook in order to make possibility to practice Home Rule in British Burma targeted by the GCBA.

It, however, had limitations in the Home Rule and nationalist movements occurred later by DoBama Asiayone, We, Burmese Association, in the 1930s and Anti-Fascist People Freedom League in pre-independence period, turned their aim to the independence of Burma.

Due to this study devoted on the civic textbook prescribed in the national school, it is difficult to portray all phenomena of the colonial knowledge transmitted in British Burma. In order to avoid one-sided over simplification, future studies in the field will be necessitated. However, it is the fact that this article has tried to pave the way for the study of transmitting colonial knowledge in British Burma by the will of Burmese citizens so far as possible.

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