

Empire and the Making of Personal Status

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Traces of the Colonial in Contemporary Practices. Personal Status Laws and their Repercussions among Religious Minorities in Myanmar

In this presentation I will look at the repercussions of personal status legislation from British India in contemporary Myanmar. Until today, there is special legislation in place for Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and other groups such as the Jains. Many of these groups have settled in Myanmar in the 19th century when Yangon (Rangoon) was part of Lower Burma and Lower Burma part of British India. Why was this special legislation necessary and what are its repercussions today? How does the legislation contribute to how religious communities experience their daily life in Yangon and in what ways does it alienate them from the workings of an increasingly ethno-nationalist Buddhist state?