

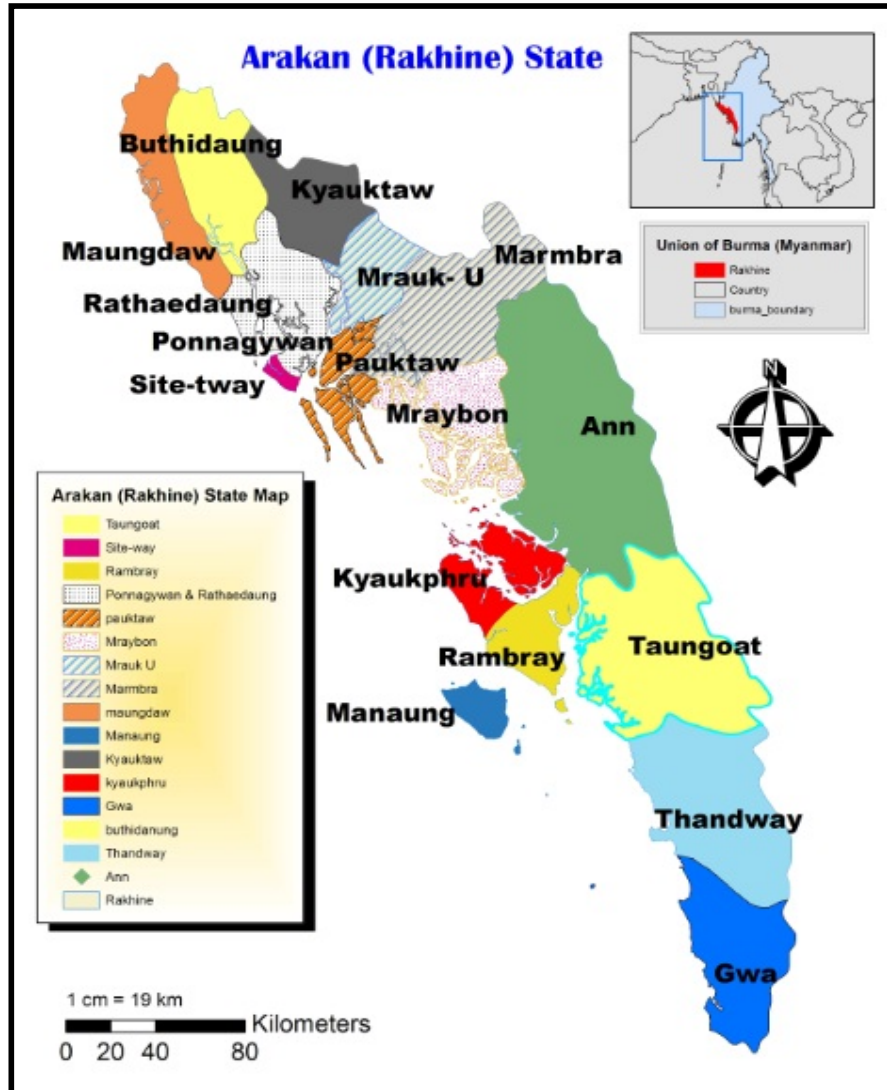
MUSLIM IDENTITY AND DEMOGRAPHY IN THE ARAKAN STATE OF BURMA

By
Dr. Habib Siddiqui, U.S.A.

1. Introduction

Burma (or today's Myanmar) is a country of many nations - many races, ethnicities and religions. It is not a country either of or for any particular group - be they are the majority Bamar (Burman), the minority Shan, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Rohingya, Rakhine, Mon, Karen, Chinese, Indians, or whatever. And yet, time and again, this time-honored realization is either forgotten or deliberately ignored.

Racism runs deep and acts like the Krazy glue holding members of each of these discernible groups together in their own domain, while it acts like a double-edged knife cutting through the fabric of the Burmese society, justifying hostility against disparate groups that have nothing in common either in language or in religion. And no group is treated as inhumanly as the Rohingya people of Burma, who live in the northwestern Arakan (Rakhine) state, bordering Bangladesh. The Burmese military government has denied them their citizenship rights, and through its atrocities and harassment have forced millions of the Rohingya to live either as stateless people in its own soil or as unwanted refugees elsewhere. To this sad account, add the daily hatred, racism and bigotry practiced by the Rakhine Maghs - the majority ethnic group living in Arakan. Their ultranationalist leaders and scholars have essentially become the ugly arm of the hated regime to justify the latter's draconian measures to uproot the Rohingya from their ancestral land.



Khin Maung Saw's article "Islamization of Burma through Chittagonian Bengalis as Rohingya Refugees" is one such revisionist attempt by a deranged chauvinist Magh to rewrite the history of the Muslims of Arakan.¹ Racism and bigotry are written all over the article. In this post-9/11 era of hatemongering and Islamophobia, it is not difficult to understand his evil mindset that steered him to concoct such an absurd idea that the Rohingya Muslims are working towards Islamization of Myanmar (Burma). Forget about the fact that Burma

is a military-ruled country with no democracy, how could a mere 2 to 3 million people impose the dictates of their faith on a nation of 50 million, especially when they are denied all basic rights — of movement, assembly, marriage, education, jobs, etc.? One has to be either mentally unstable or very high in mind-altering drugs to hallucinate such a ludicrous idea!

As already recognized by scores of international organizations and human rights groups, including the US government and the UN, the legitimate rights of the Rohingyas of Arakan state of Burma towards equal rights and citizenship in their ancestral home cannot be throttled by hateful propaganda of anyone, and surely not by the paid agents of the rogue regime that have not given up on their divide-and-conquer policy to weaken genuine democratic aspirations of the people of Burma. And what better tactic than to stoke the fear of Islamization of the country by a persecuted minority that has already been brutalized and marginalized! Denied every right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these unfortunate Rohingya people, pushed to settle for an uncertain life of either statelessness or refugees, inside or outside Burma, must now defend their honor and dignity against hateful and bigotry-ridden campaigns by their fellow countrymen – the racist Rakhine/Maghs of Arakan!

Racism and bigotry cannot come any worse than what thus far has been showcased by these evil children of Arakanese (and by default, Burmese) racism! It is sad to see that K.M. Saw who has been living in Germany has not learned anything from its past history of xenophobia. He had the choice to either reject or espouse the failed model of Nazi fascism that has had wrecked so much havoc and brought so much pain, shame and unbearable misery to its people. Instead of siding with the persecuted Rohingyas, he chose the hated monsters of the Nazi era as his model. One can only feel repulsed by such an evil choice.

Thus, it is not surprising to discover the unmistakable similarities of K.M. Saw's fascist onslaught against the persecuted Rohingyas with those of the Jews of Nazi-era Germany. Like his other pseudo-historian peers - Aye Kyaw and Aye Chan (two unabashed fascists, by any account), his pattern of onslaught against the Rohingya people is borrowed from the hateful works of convicted war criminals like Julius Streicher of the Nazi era.² One only has to change the terms 'Jew' to Chittagonian Bengali/Muslim or Rohingya, 'Judenstaat' to Islamization, and 'Germany' to Burma (Myanmar) to see the obvious similarity of their hate campaign.

These demented and paranoid Theravada Buddhists of Arakan, often masquerading as intellectual voices of their community, are no democrats and surely not liberals. They are, in fact, closet fascists. If allowed to come to power or sway policy decisions, they will, in all likelihood, borrow the pages from the hated (German) SS manual and repeat the heinous crimes of their fellow coreligionists in Cambodia. It is no accident that K.M. Saw's mentor Aye Kyaw wrote the infamous 1982 Burma Citizenship Law that provided the blueprint for denying citizenship rights of the Rohingya people — the other dominant ethnic group of Arakan. It was done with a calculated precision to not only rob the properties of the Rohingya but also to uproot them en masse from the soil of Arakan, their ancestral home. It's an utterly devious and devilish conspiracy.

Surely, these Buddhists of Arakan give a bad name to their religion and the non-violent founder of their faith. Their malicious words and acts of unfathomable bigotry, racism, aggression against and oppression of the Rohingya people show that they are misfits to the civilized world, especially in the 21st century when people have learned to live amicably burying their age-old prejudice. Indubitably, multi-culture, integration and pluralism — a reality in most parts of our world today — are alien concepts to them, and as such, are an anathema to everything that they stand for or crave for their fractured country along the ethnic line.

The only way this country of many nations can survive and evolve into a civilized state is not through the brutal and savage arms of injustice, denial, xenophobia, abuse and oppression of the minorities but a federal democratic framework that genuinely protects all ensuring their human rights and equality without any discrimination. This means, the Rohingyas of Arakan should have the same rights as enjoyed by a Rakhine; the Karens have the same rights as enjoyed by a Bamar, and so on and so forth for all the races, tribes, ethnicities, and groups.

As much as the spiteful non-Muslim promoters of 'Islamization of Europe' and 'Islamization of America' have failed to bring about mass-scale onslaught against minority Muslims living in the West, and, instead, have unearthed their own unfathomable bigotry and racism, and the often-ignored but dirty little secret about the criminality of the homegrown terrorists and white hate-groups, the fascists of Arakan and Burma are doomed to failure with their fear-tactic of using boogeyman of 'Islamization of Burma.' Their disinformation campaign has also unearthed their true hideous selves.

2. Analysis : The Land and the Indigenous People of Arakan

To incite violence and bigotry against the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan, Khin Maung Saw does not waste any time. He starts with a picture of a Muslim congregational prayer on the front page, followed by a photo of some soldiers (or possibly guerillas) sitting on the ground. The connotation is quite obvious. However, such fear-mongering tactics will not succeed and would only lay bare the hideous character of their accusers, as it did in Norway. After all, of all the various communities that call Arakan their home, it is the Rakhine Maghs of Burma that have continued to practice violence; they want a 'free' Arakan away from the no less monstrous military brutes of Burma, while still purporting to retain its racist, non-democratic and fascist character that does not allow integration and multi-culture.

In his prologue Saw mentions the story of an 'ungrateful' camel that had dislodged its master from the tent. He does not duck the connotation by stating that the Rohingyas of Burma are like that camel in the story that are trying to dislodge the 'owner' of the tent. By 'owner', he obviously means his own race - the Rakhine Magh.

Fact is, however, opposed to this make-belief fictional story put forth by the chauvinist Rakhine: the Rohingyas are neither the guests of Arakan nor are they trying to dislodge anyone. Far from the false Rakhine propaganda of being the outsiders who had settled in Arakan during the British rule of Arakan — a persistent theme in the propaganda materials of Aye Kyaw, Aye Chan, Khin Maung Saw and other ultra-chauvinist racists of Arakan — the existence of the Rohingya in the soil of Arakan predates the Magh influx to the territory from Tibet and other parts of Burma.

As credible research work by unbiased historians and researchers have amply shown, these Rohingyas, derogatorily called the Kalas (by the racist Maghs of Arakan), are the descendants of the indigenous people of Arakan – the true *Bhumiputras (adlbashls)* -- of the land.³ For instance, the distinguished historian (late) Professor Abdul Karim wrote, "*In fact the forefathers of Rohingyas had entered into Arakan from time immemorial.*"⁴

After all, as noted by many area historians the ancestors of Rakhines did not enter the territory until the 10th century CE. Historian D.G.E. Hall writes, "*Burmese do not seem to have settled in Arakan until possibly as late as the tenth century A.D. Hence earlier dynasties are thought to have been Indian, ruling over a population similar to that of Bengal.*"⁵

M.S. Collis who did extensive research work on Arakan's history, including studying its coinage and old manuscripts, similarly concluded that "*that Wesali was an easterly Hindu kingdom of Bengal, following the Mahayanist form of Buddhism and that both government and people were Indian as the Mongolian influx had not yet occurred.*"⁶

[Note: Wesali, or more correctly spelled as Vaishali, was an earlier capital of Arakan, established in late 8th century.]

Separated to the north by the high hills and deep forests of the Chin State and to the east by the almost insurmountable Arakan Yoma mountain range which divides the Arakan coastal area from the rest of Burma, the region came to be known as the land of the 'Kala Mukh' (Land of the 'Black Faces'), inhabited by these dark brown-colored Indians who had much in common with the people (today's Bangladeshis, or more particularly Chittagonians) living on the north-western side of the Naaf River, along the adjoining coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal.⁷ The resemblance was not limited to physical features like skin color, shape of head and nose alone, but also in shared culture and beliefs. They thrived on rice cultivation on the fertile

planes and the abundant supply of fish in the nearby rivers, streams and the Bay of Bengal. The one-mile wide Naaf River was no barrier to sustain family and cultural ties between these sea-faring people living on either side of the river. Arakan's northern part Mayu, as noted by Dr. Moshe Yegar, can be seen as 'an almost direct continuation of eastern Bengal' [Bangladesh].⁸

The Arakan Mountain range also served as a barrier inhibiting Burmese invasions, and allowing Arakan to develop as a separate political entity. As already noted and concurred by all historians the influx of the Sino-Tibetans (with Mongoloid features) in Arakan, resembling today's Rakhine stock, did not happen until after the collapse of the Vaishali kingdom in the 10th century CE.⁹

What happened to the region in the centuries before and after this invasion? As evidenced by numerous archeological finds, it is obvious that the Hindu colonists, fuelled by their need for trade and commerce, gold and silver, first colonized the region in the early 1st century CE. According to Dr. Emil Forchhammer, a Swiss Professor of Pali at Rangoon College, and Superintendent of the newly founded Archaeological Survey (1881): *"The earliest dawn of the history of Arakan reveals the base of the hills, which divide the lowest courses of the Kaladan and Lemro rivers, inhabited by sojourners from India... Their subjects are divided into the four castes of the older Hindu communities..."*¹⁰

By the 3rd century (CE), the coastal region of Kala Mukh (Arakan) had been settled with the colonists dominating and coexisting warily with the indigenous people. In the sites of major habitation Sanskrit became the written language of the ruling class, and the religious beliefs were those prevalent at that time in south-Asia (or Indian sub-continent).¹¹ The Hindu kings that ruled the coastal territories of Chittagong also ruled the crescent of Arakan. Presumably, the indigenous people of Arakan, much like their brothers and sisters living to the north-west of the Naaf River in (today's) Chittagong, practiced some loose form of Hinduism.

The second phase of Indianization of Arakan occurred between the 4th and the 6th century CE, by which time the colonists had established their kingdom, and named their capital Vaishali. As a port city, Vaishali was in contact with Samatat (the planes of lower Bangladesh) and other parts of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Historically, these early rulers came to be known as the Chandras and controlled the territories as far north as Chittagong.¹²

The Anand Chandra Inscription, which contains 65 verses (71 and a half lines) and now sited at the Shitthaung pagoda, provides some information about these early rulers. Interestingly, neither the name of the kingdom or the two premier cities — Dhanyavati and Vaishali — is mentioned. This 11-foot high monolith, unique in entire Burma, has three of its four faces inscribed in a Nagari script, which is closely allied to those of Bengali and north-eastern India. As noted rightly by Noel Singer had it not been for Professor E.H. Johnston of Balliol College, Oxford, who translated the Sanskrit script and the Indian epigraphists before him, the contents of the Inscription which remained inaccessible for well over a thousand years would never have been known.¹³

The script on the panel on the east face is believed by Johnston to be the oldest. According to Pamela Gutman it was similar to the type of script used in Bengal (Bangladesh) during the early 6th century CE. As to the panel on the north face, Johnston mentioned that several smaller inscriptions in Bengali characters had been added in the 10th century. Gutman however felt that the principal text in this section is of the mid-11th century CE. The panel on the west face, which is reasonably preserved, is believed by Gutman to be of the earlier part of the 8th century. This priceless document not only lists the personalities of each monarch but also some of the major events of every reign.¹⁴

So who is this Ananda Chandra? In verse 64, it clearly says that he was a descendant of the Saiva-Andhra monarchs [presumably of Banga or Bangladesh] whose kingdom was located between the Godavari and Krishna Rivers of Bengal, and close to the Bay of Bengal. The founder of this new dynasty was Vajra Sakti who reigned circa 649-665 CE. His successor was Sri Dharma Vijaya, who reigned from circa 665-701. As noted by Singer, and much in contrast to Rakhine claims, Dharma Vijaya was not a Theravada Buddhist, but probably a

Mahayanist. The next in line was Narendra Vijaya who reigned from circa 701 to 704 CE. The next to rule was Sri Dharma Chandra, who reigned from 704 to 720 CE. He was the father of Ananda Chandra who was a munificent patron of Mahayana Buddhism and Hindu institutions.¹⁵

As can be clearly seen from the above brief review, the rulers that ruled Arakan, in centuries before the Sino-Tibetan invasion, were of Indian descent, as were the people (the so-called Kalas) who lived there. They had much in common with Banga, or today's Bangladesh.

So what happened to those indigenous people after the invasion of Arakan in 957 CE by the Sino-Tibetan race? We have absolutely no historic evidence to suggest that they were exterminated. It is not difficult to understand that while the kingdom had changed hands, a majority of those indigenous people (the 'Kalas') continued on with their lives as usual, paying taxes (e.g., in grains) to their new rulers, as they had done before to the previous rulers. Some perhaps changed their faith to Buddhism, while many retained their ancestral religion. Theravada Buddhism, imported mostly from Sri Lanka, took centuries to take its root in Arakan, gradually replacing the Mahayanist Buddhism of the latter Vaishali rulers.

It is also important to note that many of the Sinhalese Buddhists, who later came as monks and settlers to Arakan, were the descendants of Bengali Buddhists who had fled the country as a result of internecine wars that took place between the forces of Hinduism and Buddhism in nearby Bengal in the centuries before Islam came to the region. As Buddhism was almost wiped out in Bengal by the Hindu rulers and the Brahmin clergy, it found a safe haven in Sri Lanka where it flourished. And who would have thought that centuries later those Sinhalese Buddhists (with a remarkable facial similarity with the people of Bengal), the progenies of fleeing Buddhists from Bengal, would one day become the harbinger of the new faith - Theravada Buddhism — in Arakan and rest of Burma?

While the previous Vaishali rulers looked westward, the newer Sino-Tibetan rulers looked eastward, thus allowing mixing of its race with the Burman people of today's Myanmar proper.¹⁶ Eventually Arakan became subservient to the Burman rulers of Pegu until 1287 CE. Over the centuries, thus, two communities emerged – one the indigenous with Indian (Bengali/Arakanese) features (the forefathers of today's Rohingya Hindus and Muslims) and the other, the new-comers with Mongoloid features (the forefathers of today's Rakhine Buddhists). It is not difficult to also conclude that in those days of porous borders across land and sea there were migration of other races and religions to this region. Buddhist monks, e.g., came from Sri Lanka bringing in their Theravada Buddhism, as did others, slowly changing the culture of the people living there.¹⁷

It is simply regrettable to notice how today's ultra-chauvinistic Rakhine and Burman intelligentsia with tunnel-vision refuses to widen their knowledge of the 'other' people, Hindus and Muslims, who share the same territory. Anything Indian/Bengali/Chittagonian is usually looked down and frowned upon. It is pure racism at its worst.

3. The Muslim Factor in Arakan

Just as it happened throughout the coastal territories from the Arabian Peninsula to the Barbary Coast and the shores of Gibraltar and Iberian Peninsula (and beyond) via Alexandria, Tripoli and Tunis to the west, and to the shores of Mozambique (originally Musa-bin-Baik) via Zanzibar and Mombasa to the south, and to the lower Gangetic Delta (Bangladesh) and beyond (to the Strait of Malacca) via the Malabar Coast of India to the east, the maritime trade route in the India Ocean in those days (pre-dating European colonization) used to be controlled by the Arab/Persian Muslims.¹⁸ As they traded they also created pockets of settlements, and interacting with and marrying into the local populace, which slowly changed the local customs and culture.¹⁹

After the rapid expansion of Islam in the 7th century, according to Dr. Moshe Yegar, "*Colonies of Muslims, both Arab and Persian, spread all along the sea trade routes... As early as the middle of the 8th century, a sizable Muslim concentration could be found in along the southern coast of China, in the commercial ports of southern India, and Southeast Asia.... Merchants brought silk, spices, perfumes, lumber, porcelain, silver and gold articles, precious jewels, jewelry, and so forth from these countries, and some of the trade made its*

*way to Europe.”*²⁰ *“Because sailing ships were dependent on monsoon winds and seasons, it was essential for Arabs and other Muslim traders,”* writes Yegar, *“to set up domiciles in ports that were located in the heart of local communities. Muslim settlements spread rapidly in Asian port cities as Muslim merchants became vital to the economy of the local communities.”*²¹

The local inhabitants of Arakan, as noted in the British Burma Gazetteer (1957), had interactions with the so-called Mohammedans – the ‘Moor Arab Muslims’ (merchants/traders), dating at least to the time of Mahataing Sandya (8th century CE).²² As to the Muslim settlements in Arakan, the renowned scholars of the early 20th century, Professor Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visarad wrote in 1935: *“The Muslim influence in Roshang [Mrohang: the capital of Arakan during the Mrauk-U kingdom] and modern Chittagram [Chittagong] has been noticeable from ancient times. The Arab traders established trade link with the East Indies in the eighth and ninth century AD. During this time Chittagong, the lone seaport of East India, became the resting place and colony of the Arabs. We know from the accounts of the ancient Arab travelers and geologists including Sulaiman (living in 851 AD), Abu Jaidul Hasan (contemporary of Sulaiman), Ibnu Khuradba (died 912 AD), Al-Masudi (died 956 AD), Ibnu Howkal (wrote his travelogue in 976 AD), Al-Idrisi (born last half of 11th century) that the Arab traders became active in the area between Arakan and the eastern bank of the Meghna River [in today’s Bangladesh]. We can also learn about this from the Roshang national history: when Roshang King, Maha Taing Chandra (788 – 810 AD) was ruling in the 9th century, some ship wrecked Muslim traders were washed ashore on ‘Ronbee’ or ‘Ramree’ Island. When they were taken to the Arakanese king, the king ordered them to live in the village (countryside) in his country.”*²³ Other historians also recognized the fact that Islam and its influence developed in Arakan in the 9th and 10th century AD.”²⁴ [Explanatory notes within the parentheses [] are mine. It is worth noting that in the dialect prevalent in Chittagong and Arakan the vocal sounds ‘Ha’ and ‘Sha’ are interchangeable. Thus the words Roshang and Rohang are interchangeable. – H.S.]

R.B. Smart writes in the British Burma Gazetteer as follows: *“The local histories relate that in the ninth century several ships were wrecked on Ramree Island and the Mussalman crews sent to Arakan and placed in villages there. They differ but little from the Arakanese except in their religion and in the social customs which their religion directs, in the writing they use Burmese, but amongst themselves employ colloquially the language of their ancestors.”*²⁵

As noted by renowned historian Professor Abdul Karim, *“The important point to be noticed about these shipwrecked Muslims is that they have stuck to their religion, i.e. Islam and Islamic social customs. Though they used Burmese language and also adopted other local customs, they have retained the language of their ancestors (probably with mixture of local words) in dealing among themselves. Another point to be noted is that the Arab shipwrecked Muslims have retained their religion, language and social customs for more than a thousand years.”*²⁶

These shipwrecked Arab Muslims became the nucleus of the Muslim population of Arakan; later other Muslims from Arabia, Persia and other countries entered into Arakan.

Dr. Yegar says, *“Beginning with their arrival in the Bay of Bengal, the earliest Muslim merchant ships also called at the ports of Arakan and Burma proper... Muslim influence in Arakan was of great cultural and political importance. In effect, Arakan was the beachhead for Muslim penetration into other parts of Burma even if it never achieved the same degree of importance it did in Arakan. As a result of close land and sea contacts maintained between the two countries, Muslims played a key role in the history of the Kingdom of Arakan.”*²⁷

It is no accident that Akyab (today’s Sittwe, the capital of Arakan state of Burma, situated on the south-eastern bank of the Naaf River) is a Farsi name, as are so many other towns and villages named, and how over the centuries most of these local inhabitants along the coastal towns and villages, tired of a corrupt form of their ancestral region, would convert to Islam.²⁸ And this happened centuries before Muslim rulers governed some of those territories.

Professor Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visarad wrote: *“The Arabic influence increased to such a large extent in Chittagong during mid-10th century AD that a small Muslim kingdom was established in this region, and the ruler of the kingdom was called ‘Sultan’. Possibly the area from the east bank of the Meghna River to the Naaf was under this ‘Sultan’. We can know about the presence of this ‘Sultan’ in the Roshang [Mrohang, the capital Arakan during the Mrauk-U dynasty] national history. In 953 AD Roshang King, Sulataing Chandra (951- 957 AD) crossed his border into Bangla (Bengal) and defeated the ‘Thuratan’ (Arakanese corrupt form of Sultan), and as a symbol of victory setup a stone victory pillar at a place called ‘Chaikta-gong’ and returned home at the request of the courtiers and friends. This Chaik-ta-gong was the last border of his victory, since according to Roshang national history – ‘Chaik-ta-gong’ means ‘war should not be raised’. Many surmise that the modern name of Chittagong district originated from Chaik-ta-gong.”*

If the story of Arakanese king -- mentioned in its Chronicles -- moving into Chittagong can be believed, in southern Bangladesh, especially in Chittagong, not only was there a Muslim community present but also a Muslim Sultanate ruling there in the 10th century. It may explain why Dr. Than Tun, the former Rector of Mandalay University and Professor of History at the Rangoon University, believed that the kings mentioned in the Inscription might have been Rohingyas, who lived in the eastern part of the Naaf River. He writes, “In the Kyaukza or stone inscription of 1442, it was written that some Muslim kings of Arakan were the friends of king of Ava.”²⁹

In their masterpiece, **Arakan Rajshavay Bangla Shahitya**, Professor Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visarad continued, *“In this way the religion of Islam spread and the Muslim influence slowly extended from the eastern bank of the Meghna to Roshang Kingdom in the 8th and 9th centuries. From the travelogues of the Egyptian traveler to India, Ibn Batuta (14th century AD) and from the accounts of the Portuguese pirates in the 16th century, the influence of the ‘Moors’ or Arabs was waxing till then. So it is evident that long before the Muslim race was established in Bengal in the 13th century, Islam reached to this remote region of Bengal. A conclusion may easily be drawn that after the establishment in Bengal, Islam further spread in the region. That is why Bengali literature was for the first time cultivated among the Muslim of the region. Since the 15th century onwards the Muslims of this region began to engage themselves in the study of Bengali, that is, began to write books in Bengali, of which we have lots of proofs.”*³⁰

The Muslim saints, the Sufis, who came in hundreds to the shores of Bay of Bengal had a fabulous influence in proselytizing the local inhabitants to Islam.³¹ The Arakanese chronicle gives reference to the traveling of Sufis in that country at the time of the king Anawarhta (1044-1077 CE) during Pagan period.³² Even, a Russian merchant, Athanasius Nitikin, who traveled in the East (1470), mentions regarding activities of some Muslim Sufis of Pegu. The Merchant pictured Pegu as "no inconsiderable port, inhabited by Indian dervishes. The products derived from thence are manik, akhut, kypuk, which are sold by the dervishes." As noted by Dr. Mohammed Ali Chowdhury, these dervishes were Muslims, and probably of Arab descent, and that at that time some Muslims (from nearby Muslim India) had settled in those places.³³

As it happened throughout history, wherever Muslims went and settled, they were able to proselytize the local people. The simplicity of their faith, views about salvation, egalitarian characteristics and ease of practice, and their ethos — morals, values, dealings, manners and customs — had a profound effect on the local population to gravitate them to the faith of these strangers, the newcomers, away from the degenerative form of their own religion that they had endured. These migrant Muslims married into the local populace and parented children.

In his book, *The Essential History of Burma*, historian U Kyi writes, *“The superior morality of those devout Muslims attracted large number of people towards Islam who embraced it en masse.”*³⁴

This essential piece of history of the Muslims of the coastal regions of today's Bangladesh and Arakan state of Burma is simply ignored by chauvinist elements within the Rakhine and Burmese community. They cannot imagine Islam amongst the ordinary masses without rulers being of the same faith. They also forget that Islam from its very inception has been a simple practical religion, away from the curses of racism, supremacist concepts and caste system that so overwhelmingly dominated the then Buddhist and Hindu

culture. While the temples, statues, mandirs and pagodas were built with gold and precious ornaments, and monks and priests held the demigod status enjoying the benefits of the vast material resources that were endowed to them for their upkeep, ordinary people went hungry and poor, and were forced to lead a life of begging and eternal servitude. It is no accident of history either that vast majority of people in places like Malaysia, southern Philippines and Indonesia, where no Muslim army went, would one day become Muslims and abandon their ancestral religions.³⁵

The restoration of the deposed king Naramekhla (Mong Saw Mwan) to the throne of Arakan by the Muslim Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah of Bengal, thus ushering in the Mrauk-U dynasty (1430-1784 CE), is a turning point in the history of Arakan. From this time onward, many of its rulers, indebted to the Muslim Sultan adopted Muslim names (and may even have converted to Islam), a practice that would continue for the next two centuries, until 1638 CE.³⁶ It is worth noting here that when Naramekhla was dethroned in 1404 CE by the Burman forces, he chose to flee to Muslim Bengal instead of either the Buddhist-ruled Tripura or the Hindu-ruled territories of India.

When the king Naramekhla reached the capital, he was widely acclaimed by his people. He was aided by two contingents of 50,000 Muslim soldiers (first under General Wali Khan and later under Sandi Khan) many of whom later settled in Arakan. They became his advisers and ministers making sure that the territory was not lost again to the Burmans.

The first thing Naramekhla did after regaining his throne was to transfer the capital from Launggyet to Mrohaung, which in the hands of Bengali poets and people became Roshang (Rohang).³⁷ Those Muslims established the Sandi Khan Mosque in Mrohaung. Their descendants, as noted by the Bengali poets of the 17th century, held high positions during the Mrauk-U dynasty. During the successive centuries the Muslim population in Arakan grew in large numbers as a result of inter-marriage, immigration and conversion. [In my travels around the Diaspora communities, I have come across many of the descendants of those soldiers who came and settled in Arakan during Naramekhla's time. As Anthony Irwin had noted some 70 years ago, these Muslims look quite different than average Bangladeshis; many of them have distinct Arab and Persian touch about them; many even have Mongoloid touch.]

As a vassal state of the Muslim Sultanate to the west, Arakan adopted the superior Muslim culture from the west in its courts, and minted coins with Arabic inscription of the Muslim article of faith (*kalima*). In this way, Arakan remained subordinate to Bengal until 1531. Interestingly, however, as noted above, its kings continued using Muslim titles even after they were liberated from dependency on the sultans of Bengal. As to the reason behind this practice, Dr. Yegar writes, "[T]hey were influenced by the fact that *many of their subjects had become Muslims. Indeed, many Muslims served in prestigious positions in the royal administration despite its being Buddhist.*"³⁸ In *Rakhine Maha Razwin* (Great History of Arakan), Tha Thun Aung describes mass conversion of many Arakanese to Islam in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Because of her geographical proximity with the south-eastern parts of Bengal, Arakan developed both political and cultural ties with its neighbor to the north-west. Major Muslim settlements developed along the rivers of Lemru, Mingen, Kaladan, Mayu and Naaf. Its courts and royalties patronized Bengali literature. Some of the best known classical Bengali poets (Alaol, Dawlat Qazi and Mardan) came from Arakan.³⁹ Its capital city essentially became the breeding ground for Bengali literature in the 17th century.⁴⁰ This Mrauk-U period also came to be known as the 'Golden Age' in the history of Arakan.

It is also worth mentioning here that as a result of rather lax administrative control of Chittagong by the Mughal and Afghan rulers, and the intermittent rebellion by the Sultans of Bengal against the central government in Delhi, the territory was lost to Arakan between 1580 and 1666 CE.⁴¹ So the ties between Chittagong and Arakan were no less striking than those visible today in places like Texas and California with Mexico.

In their masterpiece work "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Shahitya*," Abdul Karim Shahitya Visarad and Dr. Enamul Haq wrote, "*The way Bangali flourished in the court of the 17th century Arakan, nothing of that sort is*

*found in its [Bengal's] own soil. It is surprising that during the exile of Bengali language in Arakan, it was greatly appreciated by the Muslim courtiers of the Arakanese kings and the Muslim poets of East Bengal, especially those of the [greater] Chittagong Division.”*⁴²

These scholars further wrote, “*The study of Bengali literature that the Muslim initiated reached perfection under the aegis of the courtiers of the Roshang kings. It is needless to say that the Kings’ Court of Roshang got filled up with Muslim influence long before this. From the beginning of the 15th century AD the Kings’ Court of Roshang by luck was compelled to heartily receive the Muslim influence...*

.... [T]he powerful intrusion of the Muslim influence that penetrated into the Kings’ Court of Roshang in the fifteenth century AD grew all the more in the following centuries. This influence gradually grew so strong that it reached the highest point in the seventeenth century. The Bengali literature in this century shows the full picture of the Muslim influence in the King’s Court of Roshang.”

How can this piece of history about flourishing Bengali literature and the presence of Muslim courtiers and subjects in Arakan be ignored by any objective analyst?

Nor should one forget that when the Mughal Prince Shah Shuja, the Governor of Bengal (1639-59), chose to take asylum in 1660 CE instead of submitting to the authority of Aurangzeb — the new Mughal Emperor, he chose Arakan, which already had many high ranking Muslims serving the king of Arakan. He was accompanied by his family members and retainues, which included hundreds of bodyguards. Upon arrival, however, the Mughal Prince was betrayed by the Arakanese king Sanda Sudamma. While there are competing accounts as to what had ultimately happened to the fate of the Prince, including one account that suggests that Shah Shuja and his family members were treacherously murdered (and another that suggests that he was able to flee to Manipur with some of his retainues), there is little doubt that many of his guards who were attacked savagely by the Maghs of Arakan fled to the nearby jungle.⁴³ Some of the surviving guards were later made royal archers and bodyguards serving the Arakanese king.⁴⁴ Their descendants, known as the Kamans or Kamanchis (bowman), are to be found settled mostly in Rambree Island.⁴⁵ Some of the followers of Shah Shuja escaped the persecution of Maghs and crossed to Burma. The king of Ava settled them in Ramethin, Shwebo, Maydu and Meiktila. Their descendants can be found today in these places.⁴⁶

There was yet another kind of interaction between the Kingdom of Arakan with its eastern neighbor Bengal, beginning in the 17th century, when gaining strength, the kings of Arakan would allow the plunder of Bengal, and Bengali captives – tens of thousands – would be brought to work as slaves in Arakan.⁴⁷ When the Portuguese moved to the Bay of Bengal, they were allowed to set up their military posts in Arakan. In return, the Portuguese aided the Rakhine Maghs in their piracy in Bengal, terrorizing its people and harassing the Mughal forces.⁴⁸ The joint Magh-Portuguese marauding expeditions into Bengal continued well after they were routed out of Chittagong in 1666 by Shaista Khan, the Mughal Viceroy (Subedar) of Bengal and his son General Bujurg Umid Khan. Taking captives, most of whom were Muslims, forcing them into slavery was an important part of those raids.⁴⁹

Friar Manrique, a Portuguese priest who visited Bengal and Arakan and who spent six years in the Augustinian Church at Dianga (Deang, near Chittagong town), was himself a witness to such Magh-Portuguese piratical raids. He wrote, “They usually made there general attacks three or four times in the year, irrespective of minor raids which went on most of the year, so that during the five years I spent in the kingdom of Arracan, some **eighteen thousand** people came to the ports of Dianga and Angarcale.”⁵⁰

As can be seen from Manrique’s account, the number of those captives was not small, and was in excess of 3,000 per year, and continued for well over a century of piracy. This is further evidenced by the fact that when the Chittagong fort fell into the hands of the Mughals, 10,000 Bengali (both Muslim and Hindu) captives got liberty and they went to their homes. While the Portuguese pirates sold their captives and/or forcibly baptized them into Christianity, the Magh pirates forced theirs into slave labors in the paddy fields along the Kaladan River (the river was named after these Kalas). So these captives also helped in increasing the

Muslim population of Arakan.⁵¹ The descendants of these captives mostly reside now in Kyauktaw and Mrohaung Townships of Arakan.⁵²

According to historian Professor Abdul Karim, *“In the 17th century the Muslims thronged the capital Mrohaung and they were present in the miniature courts of ministers and other great Muslim officers of the kingdom. An idea of their presence is available in the writings of Muslim poets like Alaol who wrote that people from various countries and belonging to various groups came to Arakan to be under the care of Arakanese king. The Portuguese Padre Fray Sebastien Manrique visited Arakan and stayed for some time; he was also present in the coronation ceremony of the Arakanese king held on 23 January 1635. He gives a description of the coronation procession and says that of the several contingents of army that took part in the coronation, one contingent wholly comprised of Muslim soldiers, led by a Muslim officer called Lashkar Wazir. The leader rode on Iraqi horse, and the contingent comprised of six hundred soldiers. In other contingent, led by Arakanese commanders also there were Muslim soldiers. This evidence of Sebastien Manrique combined with the fact that there were several Muslim ministers in Arakan gives a good picture of the presence of the Muslim in Arakan in the 17th century. The influence of the Muslim officers over the king of Arakan is also evident from the episodes mentioned by Sebastien Manrique.”*⁵³

The Muslims of Arakan, therefore, are an amalgam of new migrants - Shaikhs, Syeds, Qazis, Mollahs, Alims, Fakirs, Arabs, Rumis (Turks), Moghuls, Pathans — from various parts of the Muslim world that settled during and before the Mrauk-U dynasty, including the captives (the so-called Kolas) brought in from various parts of Bengal and India, and the indigenous Muslims (the children of Bhumiputras who had converted to Islam over the centuries). They created the genesis of what we call the Rohingya Muslims. To put it succinctly: the Rohingya Muslims are the descendants of the indigenous 'Kalas' that either converted or mixed with the Muslim settlers/travelers/Sufis (including Arab/Persian merchants, traders) to the region, the non-returning soldiers who came to restore Naramekhla to the throne of Arakan, the unwilling captives and others that called Arakan their ancestral home. Hence, the Rohingya Muslims are not an ethnic group, which developed from one tribal group affiliation or single racial stock, but are an ethnic group that developed from different stocks of people.

As already demonstrated, the conversion of these indigenous people to Islam has been no different than what has happened throughout history in the last 14 centuries along the coastal regions from Mozambique to Malacca. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the Rohingyas of Arakan while having some similarities in matters of physical features, and borrowing religious, linguistic and cultural heritage with their neighbors to the west would develop their own distinct identity, albeit a hybrid or mosaic one. They are neither Chittagonians nor are they Bengalis [Bangladeshis].

The Rohingya Muslims - the 'Musulman Arakanese' - as Anthony Irwin noted, 'are quite unlike any other product of India or Burma that I have seen.'⁵⁴ Similarly, Moshe Yeager noted, "There is very little common - except common religion - between the Rohingyas of Arakan and the Indian Muslims of Rangoon or Burmese Muslims..."⁵⁵

While their ancestral territory would later be colonized by the Tibeto-Burman Buddhists (i.e., the ancestors of today's Rakhines) whose cultural ties have been towards the east, it is the strength of their group character that the Rohingyas of Arakan were able to retain their linguistic and genealogical ties to the soil. After all, the Rakhines are genetically, culturally and linguistically closer to the Burmans (of Burma). On the other hand, as Dr. Yegar noted *'the Rohingyas preserved their own heritage from the impact of the Buddhist environment, not only as far as their religion is concerned, but also in ... their culture.'*⁵⁶

As the children of the indigenous people of Arakan, the Rohingyas have as much right, if not more, as the Rakhine Buddhists, to identify themselves with the name that they prefer to describe them. If the late-coming Tibeto-Burman admixture has no problem in calling itself the Rakhaing of Arakan, no outsider (and surely not its abuser) has any right to either define the Rohingya maliciously or deny the same privilege in self-identifying itself.

To call these indigenous people of Arakan -- who identify themselves as the Rohingyas in Burma — “unwanted guests” is like calling the Native Americans unwanted refugees who had settled in America after the Europeans. As much as no massacre of yesteryears and ghettoization of the Native Americans today in designated American Indian Reservation camps can obliterate their genuine right, place, history and identity, no propaganda and government or non-government sponsored pogroms can erase the rightful identity of the Rohingya people of Burma. They are the children of the soil of Arakan.

4. The Demography Controversy

Khin Maung Saw provides a highly distorted rendition of the 1784 invasion of Arakan and tries to justify the brutal occupation by the racist and bigot Burman King Bodaw Paya by saying that it was all about reformation of the Buddhist Monk's order. To him, all those who fled were only 50,000. And obviously, to him, these were Rakhines (and no Rohingyas). Likewise, the Rohingya factor starts with British control of Arakan, esp. as he puts it, after 1886, as if they simply did not exist before the British colonization. He writes, "Arakan was very under-populated at that time. Therefore, the British brought tens of thousands of Chittagonian Bengali Muslims into Arakan. The Arakanese (Rakhaings) have to bear the burdens of these aliens until today. These aliens tried and are still trying to Islamize Arakan (if not the whole of Burma) by all means."

Obviously, such a narrative belies history, esp. the multi-cultural reality of Arakan during the Mrauk-U dynasty, preceding Bodaw Paya's invasion. As we have noted elsewhere, during the 40-year Burmese tyrannical rule (1784-1824) of Arakan, tens of thousands of Arakanese of all faiths were massacred.⁵⁷ The conquering Burmese forces demolished mosques, temples and shrines and stole the treasures of Arakan (including the Mahamuni statue). They conscripted and enslaved many, some of whom died out of fatigue and hunger while the living ones were settled at other parts of Burma.⁵⁸ Some 20,000 inhabitants were taken as prisoners to Ava. By 1798, Bodaw's repeated demand for forced slave labor (e.g., to build pagodas) and conscript service and the atrocity of his forces plus the rapacity of his local representatives had forced two-thirds of the inhabitants — Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist alike — to take refuge in Chittagong (Bengal).⁵⁹ As noted by Farooque Ahmed, a researcher at the JNU, just the number of Muslim refugees to Bengal might have been 200,000.⁶⁰ What is worse: during the next four decades of Burman colonization of Arakan, everything that was materially and culturally Islamic was meticulously razed to the ground.

According to G.E. Harvey, "*Arakan had never been populous, and now it became a desert; the towns were deserted and overgrown with jungle, and there was nothing more to be seen but 'utter destruction ... morass, pestilence and death.'*"⁶¹ Khin Maung Saw's attempt to whitewash the blood-soaked history of his idol, Bodaw Paya, is simply ludicrous, if not criminal and evil. He may like to re-read the historical account of this Buddhist monster, and learn why the Arakanese enthusiastically collaborated with the East India Company to get rid of the Burmans.

As we have noted earlier, the number of Muslims who lived in Mrohaung, the capital, during Mrauk-U kingdom was rather large, probably half the population. It is not difficult to surmise that the Muslim population could have grown to well over 200,000 in 1784 before the Burman invasion of Arakan, just from the Muslim soldiers alone that had settled there after restoring Naramaikhla to the throne in 1430.⁶²

It is well known from demographic studies within Bangladesh that most of those fleeing refugees – mostly Muslim (and some Hindu) Rohingyas and Rakhine Buddhists — never returned, even when the British allowed such immigration after it had captured Arakan after the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26. They assimilated within Bengal, esp. Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tract Districts. For example, the 'Rohai', comprising nearly half the population in southern Chittagong, trace their origin to Arakan, and as citizens of Bangladesh, have no desire to return to Arakan after more than two centuries.⁶³ Similarly many Rakhine Buddhists are now citizens of Bangladesh. If the descendants of Arakan who had fled to Chittagong during Bodaw Paya's invasion of the territory can become citizens of Bangladesh, K.M. Saw's claim that the Rohingyas in Arakan are the aliens and that they don't deserve Burmese citizenship show his utterly repugnant chauvinistic attitude that is at odds with scores of international laws governing basic human rights.

We have also seen throughout history that a persecuted people, no matter how horrible the living condition is even under the worst of the circumstances minus annihilation, don't want to leave their ancestral homes. Many would prefer to endure their sufferings than opt out into a life of refugee. Thus, it is conceivable that in spite of the Burman savagery, many Arakanese Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists continued to live inside Arakan, and many would move to and fro through the porous borders as they felt either secure or insecure.

We are, therefore, not surprised to read Francis Buchanan's eye-witness account who was a surgeon in 1795 to the British Embassy in Ava, the Burmese capital. He wrote about three dialects spoken: "The first is that spoken by the Mohammedans [Muslims], who have long settled in Arakan and who call themselves **Roangya** [Rohingya] or native of Arakan." ⁶⁴ In stark contrast to the propaganda of the Buddhist racists in today's Burma, Buchanan clearly identifies the Rohingya people as the natives of Arakan. [K.M. Saw, e.g., tries to mischievously downplay this with his silly explanations, which are so ludicrous that one can clearly see that he was running out of his tricks.]⁶⁵ How could the Rohingya be a product of the British colonization when Britain did not even move into the territory until 1824-6, nearly a quarter century after Buchanan's account ?

To account for Muslim factor in Arakan, Saw shoots onto his own foot by quoting R.B. Smart, the deputy assistant commissioner of Akyab: "*Since 1879, immigration has taken place on a much larger scale, and the descendants of the slaves are resident for the most part in the Kyauktaw and Myohaung [Mrohaung] townships. Maungdaw Township has been overrun by Chittagonian immigrants. Butheedaung is not far behind and new arrivals will be found in almost every part of the district.*"

Who are these 'slaves' that Smart talks about, if they are not the ancestors of today's Rohingyas ? So, surely, before 1886, there were already those Kalas in the territory. How did they originate? Did they originate during the British rule, starting at 1824? Surely, not! Can anyone deny the fact that they were a legacy of the Magh-Portuguese piracy, so evident during much of the 17th and the 18th centuries, when at least 3,000 Bengalis were taken as captives per year, many of whom were forced to work as slaves in Arakan? According to Arthur Phayre, based on the Travelogue of Friar Manrique, the slave population accounted for 15% of the total population of Arakan.

It is not difficult to also understand that under the new political reality of Arakan with the East India Company (EIC) in power, some of the descendants of the Arakanese refugees that had settled in the nearby EIC-controlled Bengal would be allured to settle back in their ancestral land, and that they would prefer to settle in places like Maungdaw and Buthidaung, which are closest to Teknaf, the southern tip of Chittagong in Bengal. That way, if things did not work out for them they could return to Chittagong with much ease.

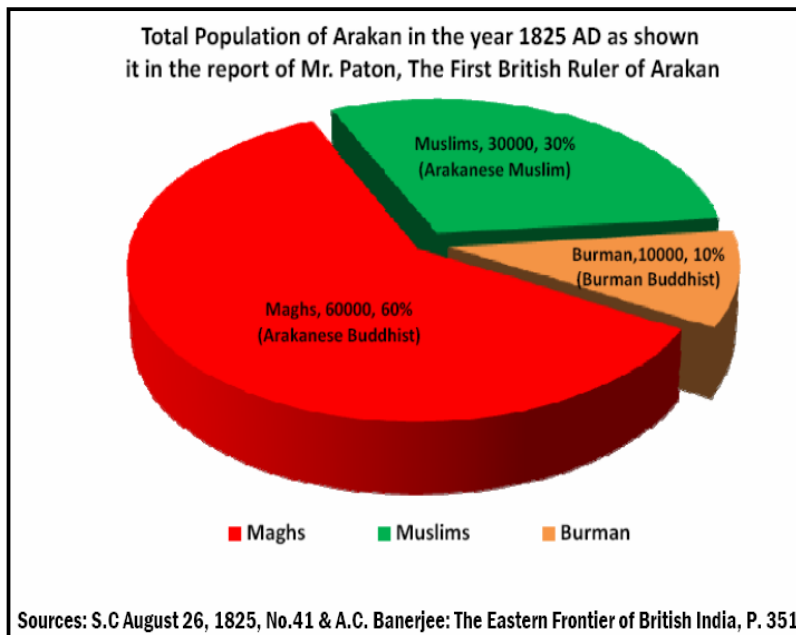
The new colonizers depended on taxation and land-revenue; and rice export was an important trade in those days. However, with only 740 square miles of the fertile land cultivable in 1871, rice export was accounting for 105,894 Pounds Sterling (less than 10% of the total sea-borne trade of Arakan, amounting to 1.35 million Pounds Sterling). More cultivable land in Arakan meant more land revenue and more income for the British government.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the population in Arakan grew to 173,000 in 1831, 248,000 in 1839, 461,136 in 1871 and 762,102 in 1901.⁶⁶ For the total population in Arakan to grow to those numbers it would have required yearly annual growth rates of 11.59%, 7.24%, 3.46%, and 2.74% within the first 5, 13, 45 and 75 years, respectively, since 1826. Since the first two growth rates (until 1839) cannot be explained away from natural growth, one must look at huge influx or migration from outside to Arakan as the key contributor to understand the phenomena.

K.M. Saw shares the table below about the demography in Akyab (the first 4 columns).⁶⁷

Races	1871	1901	1911	1871- %	1901-%	1911-%
Mahomedan	58255	154887	178647	21.05	32.16	33.71
Burmese	4632	35751	92185	1.67	7.42	17.40
Arakanese	171612	230649	209432	62.02	47.89	39.52
Shan	334	80	59	0.12	0.02	0.01
Hill Tribes	38577	35489	34020	13.94	7.37	6.42
Others	606	1355	1146	0.22	0.28	0.22
TOTAL	276691	481666	529943	100	100	100

The above table from Burma Gazetteer, Akyab District (p. 86), clearly shows that there were at least 58,000 Rohingyas, who had identified themselves as Muslims, back in 1871, challenging, thus, Saw's disingenuous claim that they were a product of the late 19th century British immigration policy for rice cultivation, and railway construction, etc. The Muslim population in the Akyab district should not come as a surprise given the fact that soon after the annexation of Arakan by the East India Company (EIC) in 1826, Mr. Paton, the British official who was the Controller of the Civil Affairs in Arakan, prepared an official report in which he mentioned that the total population of Arakan did not exceed 100,000 of which 60,000 were Maghs (Arakanese Buddhists) and 30,000 (Rohingya) Muslims.⁶⁸ Here again, in contrast to Saw's devious claims, there were already 30,000 Rohingyas living inside Arakan back in 1826. They could not have been planted by the EIC.



As the other three columns in the table above show from my calculation, the Muslim population within the district, which was 21% in 1871, became 33.7% in 1911, i.e., after 40 years. During the same period, Burmese population had jumped from 1.67% to 17.4%. Is this growth reasonable for both these population groups? What could also explain the negative growth rates amongst the Arakanese and Hilly people between 1901 and 1911?

A comparison of the population data in 1871 for the Akyab District vis-à-vis the Arakan Division shows that nearly 60% of the Division's population lived inside the Akyab District, which had transformed itself from a fishing village in 1826 to a fast-growing town. As noted by the Imperial Gazetteer of India, nearly half the Muslim population of the province lived within the Akyab District, their total number could have been well over 100,000 (or at least 97,092) in 1871, thereby constituting nearly a quarter of the total population of 461,136 (per Britannica).⁶⁹ The Muslim proportion in 1901 and 1911 census data is close to Mr. Paton's report, albeit nearly three-quarter of a century later!

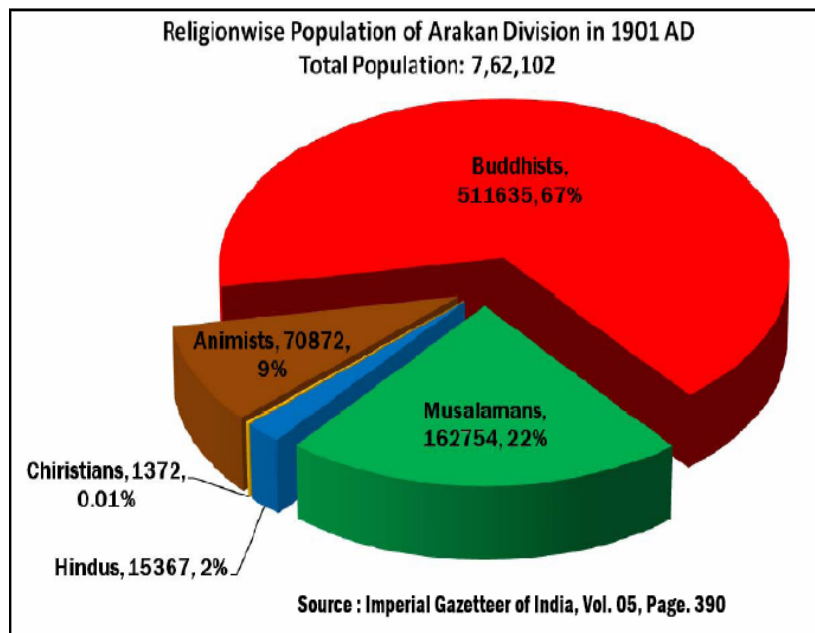
Assuming 62% share of the total population, the Rakhine population inside Arakan could have been at least 286,010 in 1871. It would have taken the Muslim (Rohingya) and Buddhist (Rakhine) population to grow

annually by 2.64% and 3.53%, respectively, to reach those figures of 1871. Are these annual growth rates feasible?

It must, however, be pointed out that owing partly to cultural norms of being celibate and/or marrying late, the fertility rate (~ 1%) amongst Buddhists has always been lower than Muslims and Hindus. The figure of 3.53% for the Rakhine Buddhist population is simply untenable by any measure, and could not have been possible **without** external factors like immigration from outside the territory. On the other hand, as we shall see below, the annual growth rate of 2.64% (between 1826 and 1871) amongst the Rohingya Muslims is not unrealistic at all. Even in this age of family planning (21st century), the yearly population growth rate amongst Muslims is about 2%, and figures as high as 3% are not too uncommon.

The Imperial Gazetteer of India provides a distribution of people by religion living inside the Arakan Division (see below). The percentage of Muslims and (total) Buddhists (e.g., Arakanese and Burman) are 67.13 and 21.35, respectively. It would have taken the Muslim (Rohingya) population to grow annually by 2.28% to get to the 1901 figure of 162,754; and as we shall see later, this growth rate is realistic. On the other hand, the annual growth rate amongst Arakanese (Rakhine) Buddhists had to be 2.8% (even when the Burman Buddhists are excluded from the total Buddhist count in Arakan), which is rather unrealistic.

Amongst the racist elements within the Rakhine and Burmese Buddhist communities, much fuss has been made about the so-called influx of Muslim peasants from Chittagong. Given the EIC's prime desire to increase its coffer, it is natural that it encouraged migration to Arakan of the descendants of the former refugees who had settled in Chittagong. Jacques Leider's research does point out that "The major interest of the *East India Company* in Arakan lay in the extension of rice cultivation in the Kaladan and Lemro Valleys. This plan succeeded because the scores of Bengal Muslim



labourers who had been imported from Chittagong in the middle of the nineteenth century, Akyab, the new capital, had indeed become a major port of export of rice for Europe." One can notice that Leider mentions scores, and not thousands, of these laborers from Bengal. Such a small influx obviously did not alter the size of Muslim proportion. It is also possible that these seasonal migrant workers returned to Muslim-majority Bengal.

The sudden rise in population within the first few years of British occupation strongly suggests that there were more such 'immigrants' from within the Arakanese Buddhist population than any other community. For instance, there were extra 73,000 individuals in Arakan just within the first five years of British occupation, suggesting very strongly that they were recent immigrants from outside, notably from Bengal. Within the next eight years, another 75,000 individuals had added to the list of which probably 60,000 had moved from other places (the remainder being natural growth). As the law and order condition inside Arakan improved, especially after the second and third Anglo-Burmese wars, many other descendants of former refugees moved into Arakan.

RELIGIONWISE TOTAL POPULATION OF AKYAB DISTRICT IN 1872, 1901, 1911 AND 1922 A.D.

SL No.	Names of Religions	Total Population in 1872	Percentage in 1872	Total Population in 1901	Percentage in 1901	Total Population in 1911	Percentage in 1911	Total Population in 1922	Percentage in 1922
1.	Buddhists	1,76,578	63.83 %	2,80,649	58.25 %	3,01,617	56.92 %	3,15,086	54.67%
2.	Mahomedan	58,255	21.05 %	1,54,432	32.02 %	1,78,647	33.71 %	2,08,958	36.25%
3.	Animists	38,577	13.94 %	31,700	6.58 %	34,020	6.42%	36,351	6.3%
4.	Hindus	2,655	0.96 %	14,455	3.00 %	14,454	2.73	15,495	2.68%
5.	Christians	606	0.22 %	720	0.15 %	1,146	0.22	576	0.10%
	TOTAL	2,76,671	100%	4,81,666	100 %	5,29,943	100 %	5,76,430	100%

Source : Imperial Gazetteer of India , Volume. 5, Page. 193 & Akyab Dist. Gazetteer Vol. A, P.83
Akyab District Gazetteer, Vol. A, P.82 & Vol. B, Part III of P.2, PP.39-67

As can be seen from the table above ⁷⁰ the annual growth rate of 7.8% between 1871 and 1911, esp. 10% between 1901 and 1911, amongst the Burmese population cannot be explained through natural process of procreation, and must have been influenced by external factors like migration to Arakan. The positive economic environment in Akyab must have contributed to such an influx of the Burmese people moving into the district. One can also notice that many Arakanese Buddhists had moved away to other places between 1901 and 1911. Thus, it is no accident that their percentage fell to 39.52% of the population in 1911 from being 47.9% in 1901. Could they have migrated to Chittagong Division? Since the 10% increase within the Burmese community seems unreasonable, is it possible that many of the Rakhines had identified them as Burmese and not as Arakanese Buddhists ? Whatever may be the real answer, suffice it to say that the huge gain within the Burmese population (56,434) and loss (21,217) within the Rakhine population in 1901-1911 cannot be explained away without considerations or possibilities of such external factors. So is the case with the Hilly and Shan peoples of Arakan.

Races	1871	1901	1911	1871- %	1901- %	1911- %	% Growth Rate 1871- 1901)	% Growth Rate 1901- 1911)	% Growth Rate 1871- 1911)
Mahomedan	58255	154887	178647	21.05	32.16	33.71	3.313	1.437	2.841
Burmese	4632	35751	92185	1.67	7.42	17.4	7.049	9.935	7.764
Arakanese	171612	230649	209432	62.02	47.89	39.52	0.99	-0.96	0.499
Shan	334	80	59	0.12	0.02	0.01	-4.652	-2.999	-4.241
Hill Tribes	38577	35489	34020	13.94	7.37	6.42	-0.278	-0.422	-0.314
Others	606	1355	1146	0.22	0.28	0.22	2.719	-1.661	1.606
Total	276691	481666	529943	100	100	100	1.865	0.96	1.638

Interestingly, while Khin Maung Saw cries foul about the declining Arakanese (Rakhine) and Hilly population -- becoming only 45.94% (=39.52+6.42) of the total population in Akyab in 1911, he pretends to suffer from selective amnesia about why there was the loss of 21,217 individuals amongst the Rakhines between 1901 and 1911. His silence about the loss of Hilly people whose numbers had steadily declined by 4557 from 1871 to 1911 (and 1469 between 1901 and 1911) is equally puzzling. Only a half-educated intellectual fraud could ignore such obvious signs!

In the same period (1901-11) the Rohingya Muslim population in Akyab had only increased its share from 32% to 33.7%, which can be explained by 1.4% annual growth rate within the community (and same is the case between 1911 and 1922).⁷¹ And this rate is only half the yearly growth rate common amongst Muslim population, and may suggest that some of the residents of the district could have even moved elsewhere (including to the Chittagong Division).

Population by religion	1871	1901	1911	1922	1871- %	1901- %	1911- %	1922- %	% Growth Rate 1871- 1922)
Muslim	58255	154432	178647	208958	21.06	32.04	33.71	36.25	2.54
Buddhist	176578	280649	301617	315086	63.82	58.23	56.92	54.66	1.14
Animist	38577	31700	34020	36351	13.94	6.58	6.42	6.31	-0.12
Hindu	2655	14455	14454	15495	0.96	3.00	2.73	2.69	3.52
Christian	606	720	1146	576	0.22	0.15	0.22	0.10	-0.10
Total	276,671	481,956	529,884	576,466	100	100	100	100	1.45

As already hinted, amongst many third world countries with a sizable Muslim population the yearly growth rate of 3% or higher is not uncommon. Consider the case of Pakistan (erstwhile West Pakistan prior to 16 December 1971) whose population grew 5-fold from a mere 34 million in 1951, shortly after the partition of India, to 170 million in 2010 (i.e. in six decades). Between 1951 and 1972, when it ceded Bangladesh, the yearly growth rate was 3.2%. Thanks to the family planning program, this rate has significantly come down to 2.5% in the period between 1972 and 2010.

For our purpose here, we need not go all the way westward to Pakistan, but can compare the growth rate of Muslims inside Arakan to that in nearby Bangladesh. As can be seen from the above below, Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) had a 2.8% yearly growth rate between 1951 and 1972. Thanks again to the family planning program, this rate has significantly come down to 1.7% in the period between 1972 and 2010.

	1951	1961	1972	1981	1998	2010	% Growth Rate 1951- 1972)	% Growth Rate 1972- 2010)	% Growth Rate 1951- 2010)
Bangladesh	42	50.84	75			142.3	2.800	1.700	2.090
Pakistan	34	43	66	87	132	170	3.209	2.521	2.765

From the above analysis, it is quite obvious that the growth rate among the Muslims in Arakan, including Akyab, (2.5%) between 1871 and 1922 is at par with the trends seen in Bangladesh (2.8%). Thus, all the fuss about massive migration of Muslims from Chittagong or Bangladesh to Arakan during the British rule is not only wrong and baseless it is racist to the core.

Even if we are to assume the conservative estimate of 2.8% growth rate amongst Rohingya Muslims since 1826, it is not difficult to estimate that their number could have grown to at least 313,716 in Arakan by 1911. The Rohingya population in Akyab District, per Saw's table, would have then comprised only 57% of their total population inside Arakan.⁷²

So far from the utterly false claims of racist elements within the Rakhine community, the likes of Khin Maung Saw, Aye Kyaw and Aye Chan, the growth within the Rohingya Muslim community of Arakan was an organic one - a natural one, which had nothing to do with so-called influx or migration from British Bengal or Chittagong. On the other hand, much of the early increase in Rakhine and Burmese population to Akyab District and Arakan Division do clearly show that it was due to external factors like migration.

As every student of historiography knows the borders in those days were much porous, thus facilitating population movement. It is, similarly, not far-fetched to suggest that the many of those lost from Arakan

census account of 1911, could well have migrated to places like Chittagong Hill Tract and Cox's Bazar (southern Chittagong) in today's Bangladesh.

5. Conclusion

In the above analysis of British-era demography of Arakan, in contradistinction to K. M. Saw's bloated and unsubstantiated claims that while "Arakan was a *colonie d'exploitation* to the British, but to the Chittagonian Bengalis, Arakan became a *colonie de peuplement*" what one actually notices is a clear racist campaign by a half-educated Burmese/Arakanese Buddhist extremist who has no knowledge of demography. Unfortunately, Saw is not alone and there are many within his ethnic community that thrives on selling poison pills of racism and bigotry against the Rohingyas of Burma.

As we have noticed, the so-called influx to Arakan was caused by the Rakhines and not Rohingyas (or so-called Chittagonians from Bangladesh). The Rakhines of Arakan should be thankful that the Burmese government has not applied its highly racist and bigotry-ridden litmus test towards citizenship against them, many of whose ancestors had moved into the territory of Arakan from Bengal during the British rule. Their accusation against the Rohingyas of Arakan — who are the true Bhumi Putras (the indigenous children of the soil) — is like that of a criminal who accuses its victims.

Regrettably, xenophobia, sponsored by the Burmese government and aided by Rakhaing ultra-nationalists, has caused forced exodus of 1.5 million Rohingya Muslims to seek refuge outside Burma, internal displacement of at least a million, and death of another 50,000. Rohingyas are denied each and every right guaranteed under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Extra-judicial killing and summary executions, humiliating movement restriction, denial of education, job and healthcare, rape of women, arrest and torture, forced labor, forced relocation, confiscation of moveable and immoveable properties, religious sacrileges, etc., are regular occurrences in Arakan, making the Rohingya people an endangered people of our time who require special protection under international laws.

As regional specialists like the distinguished historian - Professor David Ludden of the New York University (and previously with the Ivy League school - U Penn), have repeatedly shown through the massive scholarly works that bear their names - rather than having one singular origin, South Asia and South-East Asia have always included many peoples and cultures which had different points of origin and departures and followed distinctive historical trajectories. What is promoted by ultra-nationalist, narrow-minded revisionists, pseudo-historians as the single tree of their culture, rooted in their racial and religious myths, is actually more like a vast forest of many cultures filled with countless trees of various sizes, shades, ages, colors and types, constantly cross-breeding to fertilize one another. The profusion of cultures blurs the boundaries of the forest. The so-called cultural boundaries of our time are more like an artifact of modern national cultures than an accurate reflection of pre-modern conditions.

Will the revisionist historians and charlatan scholars of Burma reflect upon this fact and amend their ways to make a more inclusive world in our time ?

It is high time that the government of Burma repeal its utterly criminal, morally indefensible, repugnant and inhuman Citizenship Law that has denied the right of citizenship and belonging to the millions of Rohingyas of Arakan, who are the true children of the soil. ##

✂ Link of above article : [Muslim Identity and Demography in the Arakan state of Burma \(Myanmar\)](#)

[Dr Siddiqui's book - **The Forgotten Rohingya: Their Struggle for Human Rights In Burma** - is available from Amazon.com]

=====

End Notes:

- ¹ <http://burmanationalnews.org/burma/images/Documents/kmsislamizationofburma201109.pdf>; see also Aye Chan's xenophobic work: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64388.pdf> on the same theme.
- ² See Dr. Abid Bahar's refutation of Aye Chan's xenophobic works 'The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) state of Burma (Myanmar) and 'Influx Viruses,' in 'Problems of Democratic Development In Burma and the Rohingya People,' ed. Dr. Habib Siddiqui and Dr. Abid Bahar, Arakan Rohingya Association Japan (JARO), 2007.
- ³ See, this author's well-researched article: Rohingya – the Forgotten People, http://www.rohingya.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=143&Itemid=70 and the short comments: http://www.rohingya.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235&Itemid=70; http://www.rohingya.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=142&Itemid=70
- ⁴ Abdul Karim, 'The Rohingyas: A Short Account of their History and Culture,' Arakan Historical Society, Bangladesh (2000).
- ⁵ D.G.E. Hall, *The rise and fall of the Kingdom of Mrohaung In Arakan.*
- ⁶ M.S. Collis, *Arakan's Place In the Civilization of the Bay: A Study of Coinage and Foreign Relations*, Burma Research Society, 50th Anniversary Publication No. 2, 1960, pp. 1485-1504. <http://merhrom.wordpress.com/2009/03/04/arakan%C2%92s-place-in-the-civilization-of-the-bay/>
- ⁷ Noel F. Singer, 'Valshall and the Indianization of Arakan,' A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi (2008), p. 2.
- ⁸ Moshe Yegar, '*Between Integration and secession: the Muslim communities of southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and western Burma/.Myanmar*,' Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, USA (2002), p. 23.
- ⁹ See the excellent article – *Coming of the Muslims to Arakan* – by Professor Abdul Karim, http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=298:coming-of-the-muslims-to-arakan&catid=36:rohingya&Itemid=36 ; see also: http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=872%3Aa-short-history-of-rohingya-and-kamas-of-burma&catid=60%3Aarakan&Itemid=36; M. A. Tahir Ba Tha, "*A SHORT HISTORY OF ROHINGYAS AND KAMANS OF BURMA*," originally written in Burmese under the title "The Rohingyas and Kamans," (1963) and tr. A.F.K. Jilani, ed. Mohd. Ashraf Alam (1998).
- ¹⁰ Singer, op. cit., p. 5.
- ¹¹ Singer, op. cit., p. 4.
- ¹² Singer, op. cit., pp. 5-8; see also Collis (1925).
- ¹³ Ibid., pp-39-40.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 39-55.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 55-57, 83.
- ¹⁶ According to Wilhelm Klein, author of a few books on Burma, "All of a sudden, Arakan changed. The invading tribes made the country face east, away from India. As Burma began to flex its muscles, the profound changes born at Pagan started to transform Arakan," *Burmese Outpost*.
- ¹⁷ A.F.K. Jilani, *A Cultural History of Rohingya*, (2001), p. 13.
- ¹⁸ <http://karnafuli.angelfire.com/articles/ArakanandRohingyas.pdf>. In his work, '*Between Integration and secession: the Muslim communities of southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and western Burma/.Myanmar*,' Dr. Moshe Yegar writes that the sea lanes 'from Egypt and Persia to India on the one hand, from India to southeast Asia on the other, were in Arab hands.' p. 1.
- ¹⁹ <http://karnafuli.angelfire.com/articles/ArakanandRohingyas.pdf>.

-
- 20 Moshe Yegar, '*Between Integration and secession: the Muslim communities of southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and western Burma/.Myanmar*,' p. 2.
- 21 Ibid., p. 3.
- 22 Ibid., p. 1.
- 23 See also the British Burma Gazetteer (1879).
- 24 Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad, "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Sahitya* (tr. Bengali Literature In the Court of Arakan) 1600-1700," Gurudas Chattaopadhyay and Sons, 203/1/1 Cornwallis Street, Kalikata, India.
- 25 British Burma Gazetteers. Vol. A, 1917, District Akyab. p. 90.
- 26 Abdul Karim, op. cit.,
http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=298:coming-of-the-muslims-to-arakan&catid=36:rohingya&Itemid=36
- 27 Moshe Yegar, op. cit., p. 23; see also Abdul Karim, op. cit.
- 28 See, Dr. Abid Bahar's article on linguistic similarities from his book: **Burma's Missing Dots - the Emerging Face of Genocide**, Ch. 4;
http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1721:mystery-behind-the-chakma-and-the-rohingyas-linguistic-similarities&catid=35:rohingya&Itemid=29
- 29 See the citations in A.F.K. Jilani's 'A Cultural History of Rohingya,' (2001), p. 37. M. A. Tahir Ba Tha, "*A SHORT HISTORY OF ROHINGYAS AND KAMANS OF BURMA*," originally written in Burmese under the title "The Rohingyas and Kamans," (1963) and tr. A.F.K. Jilani, ed. Mohd. Ashraf Alam (1998).
- 30 Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad, "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Sahitya* (tr. Bengali Literature In the Court of Arakan) 1600-1700," Gurudas Chattaopadhyay and Sons, 203/1/1 Cornwallis Street, Kalikata (1935); printed at Atindra Nath Chowdhury, Kalikata, India.
- 31 Moshe Yegar discusses the contribution of the Sufis, the Muslim missionaries, in converting indigenous people to Islam in his book '*Between Integration and secession: the Muslim communities of southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and western Burma/.Myanmar*,' p. 7.
- 32 The Arakanese chronicle, referring to an incident during king Anwartha's time (1044-1077), states: "When he (attendant of the king) entered the forests he found a fakir, possessed of mystic wisdom." It also mentions that Muslims resided in Pagan and Popa in those days. Anwartha's son Saw Lu was breast fed by a Muslim lady who was mother of Rahman Khan, who later ruled Pegu. See A.F.K. Jilani's "A Cultural History of Rohingya," (2001), pp. 39-43.
- 33 See the references in <http://karnafuli.angelfire.com/articles/ArakanandRohingyas.pdf>; Dr. Mohammed Ali Chowdhury, "*The advent of Islam in Arakan and the Rohingya*," Seminar paper at the Arakan Historical Society, Chittagong Zila Parishad Hall, Chittagong, December 31, 1995 (cosponsored with Chittagong University, Chittagong, Bangladesh).
- 34 U Kyi, op. cit., p. 160.
- 35 Moshe Yegar, op. cit., p. 7.
- 36 Dr. Yunous, in his book - **A history of Arakan** -- surmises that Naramekhla could have genuinely become a Muslim.
- 37 Abdul Karim, op. cit.
- 38 Yegar, op. cit., p. 23.
- 39 http://www.albalagh.net/current_affairs/0090.shtml
- 40 Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haq and Abdul Karim Shahitya Visharad, "*Arakan Rajsabhay Bangala Sahitya* (tr. Bengali Literature in the Court of Arakan) 1600-1700," Gurudas Chattaopadhyay and Sons, 203/1/1 Cornwallis Street, Kalikata, India.
- 41 Dr. Mohammed Ali Chowdhury, op. cit.

-
- 42 http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1905:the-cultural-affinity-of-rohingyas-with-bengal&catid=16:rohingya-article&Itemid=27
- 43 Niccolai Manucci, *Storia do Mogro* (History of Mughal India), 1653-1708.
- 44 Between 1690 and 1710 these Kamans or Kamanchis became the virtual rulers or king makers in Arakan, before they were subdued by Arakanese Magh Maha Dhabado who ascended the throne under the title of Sanda Wizaya in 1710. He deported them to the Rambree Island and other places inside Arakan. Thousands of Muslims fled to other parts of Burma, including taking refuge in Ava (Burma).
- 45 See this author's article: **Imagine this - you are a Rohingya, or What is happening in Burma?** http://www.albalagh.net/current_affairs/0090.shtml for a description of various Muslim groups in Arakan.
- 46 M. A. Tahir Ba Tha, *"A SHORT HISTORY OF ROHINGYAS AND KAMANS OF BURMA,"* originally written in Burmese under the title *"The Rohingyas and Kamans,"* (1963) and tr. A.F.K. Jilani, ed. Mohd. Ashraf Alam (1998).
- 47 See the link:
http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=866:towards-understanding-arakan-history-part-ii&catid=60:arakan&Itemid=36
- 48 The Arakan pirates, both Magh and feringhi, used to come by the water-route and plunder Bengal.... Mohammedans underwent such oppression, as they had not to suffer in Europe. As they continually practiced raids for a long time, Bengal daily became more and more desolate and less and less able to resist them. Not a house was left inhabited on their side of the rivers lying on their track from Chittagong to Dacca. The district of Bakla [Backergunge and part of Dacca], which formerly abounded in houses and cultivated fields and yield a large revenue as duty on betel-nuts, was swept so clean with their broom of plunder and abduction that none was left to tenant any house or kindle a light in that region. When Shayista Khan asked the feringhi deserters, what salary the Magh king had assigned to them, they replied, 'Our salary was the Mughal Empire. We considered the whole of Bengal as our fief. We had not to bother revenue surveyors and ourselves about court clerks but levied our rent all the year round without difficulty. We have kept the papers of the division of the booty for the last forty years.' See this author's article *Rohingya: the Forgotten People* - for citation sources: http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=707:rohingya-the-forgotten-people&catid=35:rohingya&Itemid=29
- 49 http://www.banglapedia.org/httpdocs/HT/B_0650.HTM
- 50 Abdul Karim, op. cit.; Shihab-ud-din Talish, the famous 17th century historian gives a horrible picture as to how the Magh and Portuguese pirates carried away people from Bengal, oppressed them and sold them as slaves. He says: *"As these (piratical) raids continued for along time, Bengal became day by day more desolated. Not a house was left inhabited on either side of the river lying on the pirates' track from Chatgaon (Chittagong) to Dacca. The prosperous district of Bakla (Bakergung) was swept clean with the broom of plunder and kidnapping, so that none was left to occupy any house or kindle a light in that region... The Arakan pirates both Magh and Feringi (Portuguese) used constantly to plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands passed thin strips of cane through the holes, and threw the men huddled together under the decks of their ships. Every morning they flung down some uncooked rice to the captives from above as people fling grain to fowl. They sold their captives to the Dutch, English, and French merchant at the ports of the Deccan. Sometimes they bought their captives to Tamluk and Balasore for sale at high prices..... Only the Feringis sold their prisoners but the Maghs employed all whom they carry off in agriculture and other occupations, or as domestic servants and concubines."*
- 51 Yegar, op. cit., pp. 23-24.
- 52 A.F.K. Jilani, op. Cit., pp. 42-43.
- 53 Abdul Karim, op. cit.,
http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=298:coming-of-the-muslims-to-arakan&catid=36:rohingya&Itemid=36
- 54 Anthony Irwin, *Burmese Outpost*, Collins, London (1945), p. 22.

- 55 Moshe Yegar, *The Muslims of Burma: A study of minority groups*, Weesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz (1972), p. 111.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 57 Dr. Habib Siddiqui, *The Forgotten Rohingyas: Their Struggle for Human Rights In Burma*, Amazon.com. As to the Burmese invasion of Arakan in 1784, the following eye-witness report by Francis Buchanan provides a vivid picture of the atrocities committed by the Burmese invaders: “*Puran says that, in one day soon after the conquest of Arakan the Burmans put 40,000 men to Death: that wherever they found a pretty Woman, they took her after killing the husband; and the young Girls they took without any consideration of their parents, and thus deprived these poor people of the property, by which in Eastern India the aged most commonly support their infirmities. Puran seems to be terribly afraid, that the Government of Bengal will be forced to give up to the Burmans all the refugees from Arakan.*” (*Francis Buchanan In Southeast Bengal (1798): His Journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhall and Comilla*. Dhaka University Press, Dhaka, 1992: 82)
- 58 A.F.K. Jilani, *A Cultural History of Rohingyas*, op. cit., pp. 68-73.
- 59 G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, London (1925), pp. 267-8; see also: M.S. Collis, *Arakan's Place in Civilization of the Bay*, *Journal of Burma Research (JBRS)*, 50th Anniversary Publications No. 2, Rangoon (1960), p. 499; Muhammad Ishaque, ed. *Bangladesh District Gazetteers, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Dacca* (1971), p. 33. According to a report of the East India Company, some 35,000 refugees entered Chittagong in the British Bengal from Arakan in 1799 alone (*Asiatic Annual Register 1799*: 61; Michael Charney, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1999).
- 60 Dr. Habib Siddiqui, *The Forgotten Rohingyas: Their Struggle for Human Rights In Burma*, Amazon.com; *Rohingya: The Forgotten People*, http://www.rohingya.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=143&Itemid=74 ; According to Farooque Ahmed, a former senior researcher at the JNU, India, by 1798 two-thirds of the inhabitants of Arakan had left Arakan for Bengal. The number of those Muslims who fled was 200,000.
- 61 G.E. Harvey, *Outline of Burmese History*, op. cit., pp. 154-5.
- 62 Many of the indigenous people had become Muslims before Naramekhla was restored to the throne. Supposing that only 5000 of the Muslim soldiers that came with Generals Wali Khan and Sandi Khan had settled in Arakan, this number alone under normal kind of conditions could grow to 169,331, 240,369 and 341,092 at an annual population growth rate of 1%, 1.1% and 1.2%, respectively, in 1784.
- 63 M. A. Chowdhury, op. cit.
- 64 Francis Buchanan, *The Languages of Burma*, *Asiatic Researches (Calcutta)*, vol. 5, 1801.
- 65 K.M. Saw claims that during the British census, the British officials did not record anyone as Rohingyas. They recorded Arakanese (Rohingya) Muslims and Hindus according to their religious persuasion. Such a categorization cannot be a criterion by which one can deny their ethnic identity. Here in the USA, e.g., Muslim Americans are often not recorded per their national origin. For example, in census, one may be categorized as an Asian American, or at the most south Asian (if one is from former British India).
K.M. Saw also says that Buchanan had encountered those Rohingyas in Amarapura and not in Arakan. How could they have ended up there if they did not exist in Burma? Like many Arakanese, these natives of Arakan were brought by the forces of Bodow Paya. His use of the term ‘slave of the slaves’ show his racist character that approves of enslavement of other people, including the piracy of Magh marauders in Bengal.
- 66 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 2 (p. 305) by William Harrison De Puy, http://books.google.com/books?id=jRKAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA305&lpq=PA305&dq=population+of+Arakan+in+1871&source=bl&ots=U7r2p40NUF&sig=KrdLceigMXyXetb4BndnaA-Zv3w&hl=en&ei=nMuZTuCOFOW50QGjoJmHaw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&sqi=2&ved=0CDoQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=population%20of%20Arakan%20in%201871&f=false
- 67 Note that the data in the Table that K.M. Saw copied don't add up to the total shown in the last row. For our analysis, however, we shall analyze the ethnic/religious data more closely.

⁶⁸ In his work **'The Eastern Frontier of British India,'** Calcutta (1st edition 1943, last edition 1964), p. 351, A. C. Benerjee also says that that there was one Muslim for every two Arakanese Buddhists.

⁶⁹ Note that at annual population growth rate of 2.8% amongst Muslim population, it could have grown to 103,947 by 1871.

⁷⁰ The first few columns of the table (although the sums don't add up) are from K.M. Saw's table in his article, already cited above, which is the basis of this analysis.

⁷¹ While the population figures in the Imperial Gazeteer are slightly different than those provided by K.M. Saw, it does show that Muslim population in the Akyab district grew by only 1.4% between 1911 and 1922. During the same period, the Buddhist population grew by only 0.4%. Between 1871 and 1922, while the Muslim population grew by 2.5%, the Buddhist population grew by 1.1%. As noted earlier, the % of Arakanese Buddhist population declined mostly because of migration away from the District to other parts of Burma and British Bengal. It is also interesting to note that while the overall population of the Akyab District grew annually by 1.45% between 1871 and 1922, the Hindu population grew by 3.5% signifying that there was possible migration from elsewhere to Akyab, esp. between 1871 and 1901.

⁷² If, on the other hand, the more conservative 2.5% annual growth rate is assumed, the total Muslim population in Arakan could have been 321,079 in 1922, in which case, the Muslim population in the Akyab District would have comprised 65% of the total Divisional Muslim population. ##