

The Crescent in Arakan

"The Crescent in Arakan" is a view of an Israeli expert Moshe Yegar of Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Muslim Settlement in Arakan

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The Arakan District, extending some 350 miles along the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal is cut off from Burma by a range of near impassable mountains which were an obstacle against permanent Muslim conquest but permitted occasional roads and contacts between Bengal and Burma. The northern part of Arakan, today called the "Mayu District," was the point of contact with East Bengal. These geographical facts explain the separate historical development of that area-both generally and in terms of its Muslim population until it was conquered by the Burmese Kingdom at the close of the eighteenth century.

In addition, from the very beginning of Muslim commercial shipping activity in the Bay of Bengal, the Muslim trading ships reached the ports of Arakan just as they did the ports of Burma proper. And as in Burma so, too, in Arakan is there a long tradition of old Indian settlement.

Bengal became Muslim in 1203, but this was the extreme eastern limit of Islamic overland expansion (although the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago were Islamized much later by missionaries and merchants who came by sea). In northern Arakan close overland ties were formed with East Bengal. The resulting cultural and political Muslim influence was of great significance in the history of Arakan.¹ Actually, Arakan served to a large extent as a bridgehead for Muslim penetration to other parts of Burma, although the Muslims never attained the same degree of importance elsewhere as they did in Arakan.

The influence of Bengal on Arakan was negligible up to 1430. This independent kingdom turned westward, toward Bengal, as a result of the growing power of the Burmese Court of Ava. In 1404, the King of Arakan, Naramekhla (1404-1434), was forced to flee the Burmese to Gaur, capital of the Bengal Sultanate, which 86 years earlier had already become independent of the Mogul Emperor in Delhi. Ahmad Shah, Sultan of Gaur, welcomed the refugee, Naramekhla remained at the court of Gaur, where he served as an officer in Ahmad Shah's army and fought in his wars. In 1430, Ahmad Shah's successor, Nadir Shah, granted Naramekhla's request and gave him an army betrayed under the command of a general named Veli Khan, in order to regain his throne. This general betrayed him, but sometime after that Naramekhla succeeded in reconquering Arakan with the help of a second army supplied by Nadir Shah. Upon his return, Naramekhla founded a new city, Mrohaung (also called Mrauk-U), which remained the capital until 1785 when Arakan was conquered by Burma. Naramekhla's Muslim soldiers, who came with him from Bengal, settled in a village near Mrohaung and built the Sandi Khan Mosque, which still exists today. Muslim influence in Arakan, then may be said to date from 1430, the year of Naramekhla's return. As a result of the close land and sea ties between the two

countries which continued to exist for a long time thereafter, the Muslims played a decisive role in the history of the Arakan Kingdom.²

Narameikhla ceded certain territory to the Sultan of Bengal and recognized his sovereignty. As proof of his vassalage and despite being Buddhist, he and his heirs took Muslim titles In addition to the Arakanese titles. He also introduced Nadir Shah's system of coins bearing the Kalima as used in Bengal since the Muslim conquest of 1203. Later on he struck his own coins which had the name of the king in Burmese letters on one side and his Muslim title in Persian on the other.³ Arakan was thus subject to Bengal until 1531.⁴ Her kings received their Muslim titles from Bengal Sultans. Nine vassal kings received Muslim titles.⁵ Even after becoming independent of the Bengal Sultans, the Arakan kings continued the custom of using the Muslim title in addition to the Burmese or Pali title. This was because they not only wished to be thought of as sultans in their own right, in imitation of the Moguls, but also because there were Muslims in ever-larger numbers among their subjects.⁶ Court ceremonies and administrative methods followed the customs of the Gaur and Delhi sultanates. There were eunuchs, harems, slaves and hangmen; and many expressions in use at court were Mogul Muslims also held eminent posts despite the fact that the kingdom remained Buddhist.⁷

The Arakan Kingdom was closely connected with the Muslim territories to the west in other ways as well. After the death of Narameikhla, Arakan started expanding northward and there were regular Arakan forays and raids on Bengal.⁸ Early in the seventeenth century the Portuguese reached the shores of Bengal and Arakan. At that time too, the raiding Arakanese ships reached the source of the Ganges. They came into contact with the Portuguese and permitted them to establish bases for their operations and also granted them commercial concession. In return, the Portuguese helped to defend the Arakan boundaries. In 1576 Akbar the Great, Emperor of Delhi, was efficiently ruling Bengal so that Arakan was now facing the Mogul Empire itself and not only Bengal. The Portuguese knowledge of firearms and artillery was more advanced than that of the Moguls, and Arakan profited much there by.⁹ Joint Arakan Portuguese raids on Bengal continued until the end of the eighteenth century and ceased entirely with the strengthening of the British naval force in the Bay of Bengal.

The capture and enslavement of prisoners was one of the most lucrative types of plunder. Half the prisoners taken by the Portuguese and all the artisans among them were given to the king; the rest were sold on the market or forced to settle in the villages near Mrohaung. A considerable number of these captives were Muslims.¹⁰ In addition to the Muslim prisoners and slaves brought to Arakan from Bengal and even from North India, many more came to serve as mercenaries in the Arakanese army, usually as the king's bodyguard.

The main source of information on that period is the Portuguese traveler, the Augustine monk Sebastian Manrique, who was in Arakan from 1629 to 1637. Using not only his own memories but also ancient Arakanese sources placed at his disposal. Manrique in his book describes the arrival of Muslim prisoners, and Muslim army units at the king's court; he mentions important Muslims who were holding key positions in the kingdom and comments on the foreign trade colonies mostly Muslims which existed in Arakan. The prisoners were brought from Bengal in Portuguese and Arakanese ships, some of whose sailors were themselves Muslims – a fact that did not trouble them in their profession, not even the fact that enslaving a Muslim stand in contrast with the Muslim Law, the Shari'a. Manrique gives a detailed description of such a Muslim prisoners convoy which he accompanied. He even tried-without success to convert the

Muslims to Christianity.¹¹ Some of these captive slaves were settled in special areas guarded by Muslim soldiers.

The Arakan king of that period, Thirithudamma (1622-1638) had a Muslim counsellor or doctor. Manrique describes him as follows: "A false prophet of the Maumentan faith, who in promising to render him [the king] invisible and invincible, undertook that he should obtain the vast empires of Delhi, Pegu, and Siam, besides many other similar inanities... [the Muslim doctor] having twice visited the hateful Mausoleum... was held to be a saint by these Barbarians."¹²

Manrique witnessed the king's crowning ceremony in which Muslim units also filled an important function. The parade was opened by the Muslim cavalry unit of Rajputres from India led by its commander the lasoursil (cavalry leader). With him marched the eunuch sword bearers. "This man, who was of Maumetan race and sect, was dressed in green velvet ornamented with plaques of silver upon a superb white horse from Arabia... This Agarene commander led six hundred horsemen in those squadrons: the first composed of Mogors, who, confident of future bliss in the paradise of their false prophet, were clothed in silks of various textures, but all green in colour. They carried gilded bows decked out with green, slung on the left shoulder. On the left side they also had slung from their cross-belts, handsome quivers, while curved scimitars, plated with silver, hung from their belts. All the horses in the Agarene squadron were clothed in green silks of various kinds"¹³ The representatives of the Muslim units as well those of other religions such as the Portuguese officers or the Christian Japanese mercenaries in the king's service, were not allowed to enter the pagoda for the crowning ceremony itself.¹⁴

Some years later, in 1600, the Mogul prince Shah Shuja fled to Arakan. This important event brought a new wave of Muslim immigrants to the kingdom and also caused political changes. The episode has been described by many historians. Its exact details are not known and the several versions differ. Not all historians mention their sources.¹⁵ As early as 1639, Shah Shuja the second son of the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan, was designated deputy of the king of Bengal. In 1657 the Emperor fell gravely ill and it was rumored that he had died. The struggle for succession between the sons began immediately. Aurangzeb won, dethroned his father in 1658 and declared himself emperor. Shah Shuja continued his fight but was finally defeated in 1660. Since he did not succeed in establishing his rule in Bengal, he fled, together with his family and bodyguard (the number of his followers varies in each version), from Dacca to Chittagong. Sandathudama, king of Arakan (1652-1687) granted him permission to continue to Mrohaung on condition that his followers surrender their weapons. He appeared there on August 26, 1660, was welcomed by the king and given a dwelling near the town.¹⁶ There are two sources of the period describing the events in Arakan that followed. One is the French Physicist Bernier who was in India during 1658-1667 and wrote about the Shah Shuja episode from hearsay. He himself mentions that he heard various versions and does not know which is the true one. According to Bernier, Shah Shuja asked for temporary asylum in Arakan and a passage to Moka when the favourable season arrived; it being his wish to proceed thence to Macca, and afterward take up his residence in Turkey or Persia. The [Arakanese] King's answer was in the affirmative, and expressed in the kindest termsMonth after month passed; the favourable season arrived, but no mention was made of [the promised] vessels to convey them to Moka, although Sultan Shujah required them on other terms than the payment of the hire; for he yet wanted not roupies of gold and silver, or gems. He had indeed too great a plenty of them; his great wealth being probably the cause of, or at least very much contributing to, his

ruin.....the king turned a deaf ear to his entreaties...and made a formal demand of one of his daughters in marriage. Sultan Sujah's refusal to accede to this request exasperated him to such a degree that the Prince's situation became quite desperate. What then ought he to do? To remain inactive was only quietly to await destruction. The season for departure was passing away; it was therefore necessary to come to a decision of some kind.... there are many Mahometans mixed with the people [of Arakan].... Sultan Sujah secretly gained over these Mahometans, whom he joined with two or three hundred of his own people, the remnant of those who followed him from Bangal; and with this force resolved to surprise the house of the king, put his family to the sword, and make himself sovereign of the country. This bold attempt... had...a certain feasibility to it, as I was informed by several Mahometans, Portuguese, and Hollanders who were then on the spot. But the day before the blow was to be struck, a discovery was made of the design, ..the prince endeavoured to escape into Pagu... He was pursued and overtaken, with-in twenty four hours after his flight; he defended himself ... but at length, overpowered by the increasing host of his assailants, he was compelled to give up the unequal combat... No much particulars, on which much dependence may be placed, are known of Sultan SujahI have heard three or four totally different accounts of the fate of the Prince..... But whatever doubts may be entertained of the fate of Sultan Sujah there are none as to the catastrophe which befell his family. When brought back, men, women, and children were all thrown into prison, and treated with the utmost harshness. Sometime after, however, they were set at liberty, and used more kindly; the king then married the eldest Princess... While these events were happening, some servants of Sultan Banque joined the Mahometans, of whom I have spoked, in a plot similar to the last. The indiscreet zeal of one of the conspirators... led to the discovery of the design on the day on which it was to be executed. In regard to this affair, too, I have heard a thousand different tales; and the only fact I can relate with confidence is, that the king felt so exasperated against the family of Sujah as to give orders for its total extermination. Even the Princess whom he had himself espoused, and who, it is said, was advanced in pregnancy, was sacrificed according to his brutal mandate. Sultan Banque and his brogher were decapitated with greuesome-looking axes, quite blunt, and the female members of this ill fated family were closely confined in their apartment, and left to die of hunger.¹⁶

The second source of the period is the archives (Daghrigister) of the Dutch East India Company in Batavia.¹⁷ The Company's representative and director of the Dutch trading post who was in Mrohaung at the time reported the events to Batavia. He too was not an eyewitness but wrote according to rumors heard in the city. He describes the warm Welcome given to Shah Shuja by the Arakan king and his promise to supply the refugees with ships so take them to Mecca. Eight months passed and the promise had not been kept. According to the Dutch representative the reason for this was that "King Sanda Thudama asked Shah Shuja for a daughter in marriage... Shah Shuja proudly refused to submit to what he regarded as a grave dishonour, and as a result friendly relations ceased between him and the King."¹⁸ This incident was preceded by an event not mentioned in any source other than the Daghregister. The report tells of an additional group of Muslims who came to Arakan to join Shah Shuja. The ensuing clash between them and some Arakanese ended with the execution of the Muslim group. "And he was only dissuaded by his mother and some of the grandees from visiting Shah Shuja with the same treatment."¹⁹ In his letter the Dutch East India Company representative states that Shah Shuja's followers were murdered on February 7, 1661, because the prince "intended to escape from the King's palace and conquer the kingdom of Arakan for himself". During these events all foreigners and all Muslim trading vessel, were sent away from India so that they would not know what was

happening. The Dutchman also gives two versions of Shah Shuja's death": One, that he was killed during the first battle; the second, that he escaped, was later captured and stoned to death by his pursuers.²⁰ The Daghregister of 1664 reports that, following upon the second plot of Shah Shuja's sons in 1663, two years after the first plot, -the sons of Shah Shuja and everyone found wearing a beard in the Moorish fashion had been beheaded."²¹ On the other hand an Arakanese source of that period tells that Shah Shuja was only too happy to give his daughter to the king of Arakan in gratitude for the asylum granted, however when he saw that he had lost the Mogul throne, he decided to conquer Arakan and make himself king with the help of his own soldiers, the Muslim soldiers in the king's army and the local Muslim population. The plot was uncovered; he fled to the hills, was captured and executed.²² The historian Sir Arthur P. Phayre thinks that the Arakanese Chronicles conceal their king's ugly behaviour, and emphasize the prince's abortive experiment to capture the palace by neglecting to mention the preceding provocation of not providing the promised ships, the king's request to have one of Shah Shuja's daughter's in marriage and his wish to molest the prince's richest.²³ Phayre quotes no source for this 'opinion, which is apparently only his personal point of view, but a decidedly acceptable one.

Those of Shah Shuja's soldiers who escaped the massacre were later admitted into the king's bodyguard as a special archers unit called Kamans or Kamanci (from the Persian : bow, kaman. bowman Kamaci.) Immediately after Shah Shuja came to Arakan, Aurangzeb demanded of the Arakan king that he deliver the fleeing prince and his family into his hands. Aurangzeb had been quite prepared himself to murder his own brother but became angry when the Arakan king dared to harm a member of the Royal Mogul Family. He decided to use this as an excuse to put an end to the Portuguese Arakanese pirate raids on the East Bengal coast. In 1665 to 1666 a large Mogul force attacked the Portuguese and Arakanese, demolished their settlements in Sandwip, destroyed their navies and conquered Chittagong and Ramu. During their retreat to Mrohaung, Arakanese army units were also attacked by the local Muslim population, descendants of the Muslim slaves who had been settled on the land.²⁴

This defeat spelled the end of the power of the kingdom of Arakan. The death of Sandathudama in 1684, marked the beginning of a period of anarchy and riots in the kingdom during which the Muslim Kaman units played a decisive role as makers and displacers of kings. These units were being continually reinforced by fresh Afghan mercenaries from North India. From 1666 until 1710 the political rule of Arakan was completely in their hands. Ten kings were crowned and dethroned and usually murdered- by them during that period- In 1710 king Sandawizaya (1710-1731) succeeded in gaining the upper hand over them, and most of the Kamans were exiled to Rarmee,. Their descendants live in Rarmee and in a few villages near Akyab and still bear the same name to this very day. Their language is Arakanese and their customs are similar to Arakan customs in everything except religion Islam ²⁵ the census of 1913 registered a total of 2686 Kamans.²⁶

In 1785 the Burmese conquered Arakan and annexed it to Burma. There was also a Muslim unit, "Myedu" in the Burmese standing army posted to Sandoway. Their descendants, few in number, live there still, and can not be distinguished from their Burmese and Arakanese neighbours, but by their religion and religious habits.²⁷ All these events in Arakan caused certain population movements eastward. Among these there were also Muslims who came to serve the Burmese Ava Kings.²⁸

It is not possible today to differentiate among the various Muslim groups or between them and the Buddhist Arakanese, among whom they live. The Arakanese Muslims are Sunnites despite the preponderance of some Shitte traditions among them.²⁹ Under their influence many Muslim customs spread to the Buddhists, such as for example a veil for the women similar to the purdah³⁰. Today the Arakanese Muslims call themselves Rohingya or Roewengyah³¹. This name is used more by the Muslims of North Arakan (Mayu region) where most of the Muslims- approximately 300000- are concentrated ³², than by those living near Akyab.

Writers and poets appeared amongst the Arakanese Muslims, especially during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries and there were even some Muslim court poets at the courts of the Arakanese kings.³³ These poets and writers wrote in Persian and Arabic or in the mixed language, Rohingya, which they developed among themselves and which was a mixture of Bengali, Urdu, and Arakanese. This language is not as widespread today as it was in the past and is has been largely replaced by Burmese and Arakanese. These artists also developed the art of calligraphy. Some manuscipes have been preserved but have not yet been scientifically examined. Miniature painting in Mogul style also flourished in Arakan during this period. The Muslims who came to Arakan brought with them Arab, Indian, and especially Bengalese music and musical instruments. Persian songs are sung by Arakanese Muslims to this day.³⁴

That is how the Rohingas preserved their own heritage from the impact of the Buddhist environments not only as far as their religion is concerned but also in some aspects of their culture.

This chapter described the beginnings of Muslim settlements in the Delta and the Valley of the Irrawaddi and Arakan. While it is worthy of note that Muslims fulfilled official tasks in the royal courts, in the administration, in the army, and in various economic activities, it should be emphasized that members of other minority communities, too fulfilled such tasks in Burma and in other neighbouring countries. It was not an unusual phenomenon in south-east Asia until the colonial European powers moved into that area. Many Hindus, for instance severed as astrologers for the kings, European or Japanese mercenaries fought in south-east Asia armies, especially with the artillery units. In Thailand some Europeans reached top administrative posts. In that respect the places some Muslims occupied in Burma prior to the advent of the British fitted into the accepted pattern.

The Muslims of Arakan

One of the many revolts with which Burma was afflicted shortly after achieving independence – by national minorities, Communists and army units – was a Muslim insurrection, known as the Majahids Revolt in the state of Arakan.

The insurrection affected only the northern part of Arakan: the districts of Maungdaw, Butidaung and part of the district of Rathedaung. All these lie on the Bangladesh frontier and are populated mainly by Muslims. Relations between Buddhists and Muslims in this area had grown hostile under British rule, for the same economic and social reasons to which we referred above with regard to the whole of Burma, and the tension led to an explosion upon the evacuation of the British troops before the advancing Japanese forces. Gangs of Buddhist Arakanis in the southern part of the province, where Buddhist constitute a majority, raided Muslim villages and slaughtered part of the population. The Muslims fled to the north, where they make up a majority, and 22,000 of the refugees even crossed the frontier into Bangladesh (then India). The

stories of atrocities told by refugees reaching Maungdaw aroused the wrath of the local Muslims, who vented it on the Buddhist minority in their midst. Soon the Buddhists were streaming in droves from the north as the Muslims were streaming from the south, and Arakan stood divided into two distinct territories, a Muslim and a Buddhist one. ³⁵

Under the Japanese occupation, which lasted in Arakan from the end of 1942 until the beginning of 1945, the bulk of the province's Muslims were pro-British. In order to bolster this loyalty the British proclaimed that they would make North Arakan a 'Muslim national area',³⁶ and when they reconquered the area early in 1945 local Muslims (Rohinga) who had collaborated with the British were appointed to most of the official posts. The Muslim population of this part of Arakan grew considerable during the last years of the war and in the period immediately following it due to immigration from Chittagong in the wake of the British, and to thousands of refugees from South Arakan who had crossed into India in 1942 and now returned to North Arakan.

After Burmese Independence a number of local Muslim officers and officials were dismissed and replaced by Buddhist Arakanis. These attempted to rehabilitate some of the abandoned Arakani villages; some of the villagers who had deserted them because of the communal riots were brought back, and Muslims who had taken over lands held by Buddhists were driven off. These deeds, and failure to fulfill the British pledge to make the district a Muslim national area, progressively led to non-cooperation and sabotage on the part of the Muslim population. The Buddhist villagers restored to their lands by the authorities were boycotted, denied drinking water and food supplies and molested in many other ways, in an attempt to drive them back to the south. Muslim marauders roamed the countryside in bands equipped with arms left by the warring armies, and clashed with Buddhists. Some began to nurture hopes of seceding from Burma and setting up an independent Muslim state between the Kaladan and Mayu rivers, or joining Pakistan.³⁷ These ideas were first voiced openly in May 1946, when a number of Muslim Arakanis appealed to Mohd. Ali Jinnah to incorporate their territory in the Pakistan of the future. Two months later a North Arakan Muslim League, which also stood for annexation to Pakistan was established in Akyab. The main adherents of the scheme were Muslims of Chittagong origin, the native Rohinga being less inclined to it.³⁸ Jinnah, for his part, assured General Aung San that he did not support it, and relative calm reigned among the Muslims of Arakan for a while even after the proclamation of Pakistan's independence in August 1947; but in April 1948, following the restoration of further Buddhists to lands they had abandoned, unrest spread as mullahs began to preach jihad against the Arakani unbelievers and within a short time a large number of mujahids had gathered at the locality of Taung Bazaar. An armed police boat sent to disperse them was fired on and some of the policemen were killed. Those were the first casualties of the Majahids Revolt.³⁹

The insurrection spread like wildfire, the government being too busy with the other revolts that had broken out in various parts of Burma to spare any manpower for putting it down. In fact, at first the Mujahids cooperated with another group of rebels, in South Arakan, and reached with them an agreement to partition the province into two separate states after the AFPPL government had been driven out.⁴⁰

The revolt did not get any support from Burma's Muslims. Moderate leaders attempted to influence the rebels to desist, while trying to convince the government in Rangoon that the revolt was the doing of a handful of ringleaders and that the bulk of the Muslims of Arakan had been caught up in it against their will. Some Rohinga leaders even vainly approached U Nu for arms to fight the revolt in 1948, and again in 1950 and 1951, accusing the government that by failing

to put down the revolt it had forced many Rohingya to give succour to the rebels under coercion. Other Muslim leaders warned the rebels that their deeds would ultimately bring down on their heads cruel repression by the government forces. As rebel casualties mounted some even failing to get a Muslim burial this pressure by the moderates grew more intense.⁴¹

The government itself tried to negotiate with the rebels, sending to Arakan in July 1946 a special mission charged with hearing out their complaints. The rebels told it that unlike the more recently arrived migrants from Chittagong, with whom they shared the same language and racial and cultural characteristics as well as the religion of Islam, the Rohingya had been settled in Burma for centuries; yet extremist Arakani Buddhist propaganda had represented them as Pakistani Muslims. Muslims were not accepted in the army; Muslim officials, police and village headmen had been dismissed by the Arakan Government, which treated the Muslims unjustly, discriminating against them, slighting their notables, extorting money and bribes from them and imprisoning them arbitrarily; Muslim refugees had not been returned to the villages from which they had been driven in 1942 (except in the districts of Maungdaw and Bulidaung; thousands of Rohingya still confined to refugee camps in India and Pakistan whither they had fled during the war, were unable to go back to their homes, and those who had returned were being described as illegal immigrants from Pakistan; the lands and the property of all these refugees had been taken away. The Mujahids claimed that they had taken up arms only when all their protests and appeals had gone unheard: they demanded that all these evils be righted, and that they might live as beloved citizens of Burma, under the rule of law and not under the dominion of wanton tyranny.⁴²

The two sides did not come to terms. The rebels fought tough battles with army and police units stationed in the areas, holding several of them in a virtual state of siege for long periods. By June 1949 the government controlled only the port of Akyab, while the Mujahids held all of North Arakan and other rebel movements the rest of the province. Short of regular troops, the government formed a Territorial Arakani Force that harassed the Muslims most cruelly, the Mujahids retaliating with similar cruelty against the Buddhist population.

Relations between Rangoon and Karachi grew tense as the Pakistani press wrote about Burmese repression against the Muslims of Arakan and the Rangoon press retaliating with vivid descriptions of how Muslim zealots in Pakistan were persecuting Buddhists and seeking to force them to change their faith. Old rumours that the Mujahids were obtaining arms and funds from Pakistan were spread again. While these reports were officially denied both in Karachi and in Rangoon, the Mujahids unquestionably did frequently cross the frontier—which could not be guarded effectively in order to hide away their loot or to escape pursuing government troops. While the Mujahids did not get government assistance in Pakistan, there is no doubt that there were Pakistanis who considered them patriots and religious champions and gave them aid and succour as such.⁴³

Every year from 1951 to 1954 was marked by a big government offensive against the Mujahids and though each drive had to come to an end with the onset of the monsoon and the jungle terrain made military operations in any season a most difficult proposition, the Mujahids gradually lost their hold on the area.⁴⁴ A further offensive in November 1954, 'Operation Monsoon', dislodged the rebels from their main strongholds, some of their chiefs meeting their death in battle. Thereafter they were no longer a military threat: their forces gradually broke up into small bands engaged in looting and terrorizing Muslims and Buddhists alike, particularly in the more outlying and less accessible districts.

After the discontinuation of organized military operations, some of the Mujahids switched to smuggling rice, bought at low prices or seized without payment from Arakani villagers, to Pakistan, where it brought in high profits due to the rice shortage. The Rangoon government also charged the Mujahids with encouraging the illegal migration of thousands of people from Chittagong in overpopulated East Pakistan into Arakan, where amid the unrest and in difficult terrain they melted into the local population, cultivating waste lands and growing rice. The Rohingya leaders rejected the charge, claiming not only that it was untrue but that it had been invented for prevent Rohingya refugees from returning home from Pakistan to Arakan by pretending that they were actually natives of Chittagong trying to penetrate illegally into Burma. Any Pakistanis that had arrived had been handed over to the authorities, they argued.⁴⁵ It is a fact that Arakani Muslims were deported from Burma along with illegal immigrants from Pakistan.⁴⁶

Early in 1957 the Pakistani Embassy in Rangoon announced that Kassern, the Mujahids leader, had been killed, Later it transpired that he had only been arrested in Chittagong on a charge of illegal infiltration into Pakistan. The Rangoon government hoped that for the sake of good neighbourly relations the Pakistanis would hand Kassern over to it notwithstanding the lack of an extradition agreement between the two countries but this hope proved vain, and during a debate on the issue in Burma's legislature several deputies complained that the Karachi government had failed to hand over the rebel leader despite the friendly relations between the two countries. After his release from prison Kassern remained in Chittagong, where he operated a hotel.⁴⁷ His forces dispersed, but after setting up a camp for their families on the Pakistani side of the border, they continued their acts of sabotage, contraband and looting until 4 July 1961, when 290 men from Chittagong from the southern part of the Maungdaw district surrendered to Brigadier Aung Gyi, the then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Burmese Army. They felt that there was no longer any point to the revolt, particularly in view of the agreement for border control that had been signed earlier that year by Burma and Pakistan and that made passage across the frontier difficult. Both Burma and Pakistan were anxious that relations between them should not break down over the Mujahid issue. The creation of the Mayu Frontier Administration Area (see below) and the intensification of military activity in the region also helped to put an earlier end to the revolt. The remaining Mujahid forces – a few hundred men in all- surrendered to Aung Gyi in eastern Butidaung on 15 November of the same year. The men who had surrendered were given cash and Qur'ans and settled in a special area in Maungdaw district, in close proximity to a Burmese Army camp.⁴⁸

The principal political effect of the revolt was to make the Muslim population of Arakan autonomy conscious. Even the moderates among them opposed the programme of the Arakani Party, which called for making Arakan a state within the Union of Burma. The large majority of the Rohingya in Maungdaw and Butidaung demanded that the region be made autonomous and subject directly to the central government in Rangoon, eliminating all Buddhist Arakani officials and influences; or at least that a special region be created which, though not autonomous, would still be subject directly to the central government.⁴⁹

From 1960 until 1962 Rohingya and Arakani Muslim organizations conducted feverish activities on the subject of the status of Arakan, and particularly of the Maungdaw and Butidaung districts. This was a direct reaction to U Nu's proclamation, on the eve of the general elections of April 1960, that should his party emerge victorious he would confer statehood on Arakan on a par

with the other states of the Union of Burma. When upon winning the election, U Nu appointed a committee of inquiry to look into all the aspects of the Arakan question, the Rohingya Jamiatul Ulema presented the committee with a long and reasoned memorandum setting out the views of the Muslims of North Arakan. It stated that the area's Muslims were a separate racial group which constituted an absolute majority, and demanded the creation of an autonomous region to be subject directly to the government in Rangoon. A separate administration would also help to raise the exceedingly low standard of living of the people, almost all of whom depended for their subsistence on primitive agriculture; it would raise the standard of education, and prevent abuses of the local population by Buddhist Arakanis. The region should have a Regional Assembly and enjoy local autonomy; as a compromise move, the writers of the memorandum felt, It might become part of a State of Arakan, but then in staffing the region's administration and in everything connected with the region's problems the executive of the state would have to be guided by the regional assembly. So would the administration appointed by the state for the region. The region would be eligible for direct allocations from the central government, and get special attention with regard to cultural, economic and educational questions concerning it.⁵⁰ Muslim deputies from Maungdaw and Butidaung in Burma's legislature also demanded from the government and the inquiry committee that their constituencies be excluded from the projected State of Arakani while they had no objections to the creation of such a state, they did not want it to take in Maungdaw, Butidaung or the part of Rathedaung where Muslims constituted a majority. Those districts should become a separate unit to ensure the separate existence of the Rohingya; forcing all of Arakan into the framework of a single state might well bring about renewed bloodshed, they feared.⁵¹

The position of the Muslims in Akyab and in other parts of Arakan where they did not constitute a majority was a more complex one, resulting at times in tension between them and the Rohingya organizations, some felt it was no use opposing U Nu's scheme of a single state of Arakan, including the predominantly Muslim districts, and therefore gave it their backing, fearing that detaching the Muslim districts from the state would prejudice the position of the Muslims residing in other parts of it. They did, of course, want guarantees for the Muslims, for which purpose they demanded that Muslims be co-opted to the committee working out the framework of the future state.⁵² A memorandum submitted by the Muslims of Arakan to the inquiry committee stressed that the Muslims would support state status for the territory only if the Buddhist Arakanis endorsed their claims and embodied in the constitution of the future state religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and educational guarantees for the Muslims. Non-Muslims and Muslims should alternate in the position of head of the state; whenever the head of the state was a Muslim the speaker of the state assembly should be a non-Muslim but his deputy should be a Muslim, and vice-versa; a similar arrangement should govern the membership of civil service appointment commissions and other such bodies: no less than one third of the ministers should be Muslims; and no law affecting Muslims should be passed unless it secured the support of a majority of the Muslim members of the state assembly. In making appointments to administrative positions in the Muslim districts the head of the state should heed the advice of Muslim state ministers; and the number of Muslims holding posts in the civil service, on public bodies and in local government should be proportional to the percentage of Muslims among the local population. There should be competition among Muslims for posts allocated to Muslims under the above system. The government should devote special attention to meeting the Muslims educational and economic needs. No pupil should be compelled to attend instruction in a religion not his own; the adherents of every faith should be

provided with facilities for instruction in their religion in any educational institution; in adherents of any faith should be free to set up educational institutions of their own, and such institutions should benefit from government recognition; the Muslims should have full freedom to foster their particular language and their culture and to propagate their faith. A special official in charge of Muslim affairs should be appointed within the state administration, his function being to investigate complaints and to report on them to the head of the state. Finally, any part of Arakan, and especially its northern districts, should reverse for a period of ten years the right to be detached from the state and come under the direct control of the central government in Rangoon.⁵³

On 1 May 1961 the government created the Mayu Frontier Administration Area covering the districts of Maungdaw, Butidaung and the western part of Rathedaung. It was a military administration, not autonomous rule, but as it did not involve subordination to the Arakan authorities the arrangement won the consent of the Rohingya leaders, particularly since the new military administration quickly succeeded in repressing the last vestiges of the revolt and in restoring order and security to the area. When early in 1962, the government drafted a bill for Arakan statehood; the Mayu area was not included in the territory of the projected state.⁵⁴ After the coup of March, 1962 the new regime cancelled the plan to grant statehood to Arakan, but the Mayu area remained under its separate military administration.

The problem of illegal infiltration of Muslims to Arakan continued to occupy the Burmese government. In 1975 about 3,500 Muslims were evicted across the Naaf river. Bangladesh protested and representatives of both governments met in order to discuss the issues, but little progress was made in the talks.

In April 1978 the Burmese government slated a big scale operation to trace such illegal infiltrators. As a result, tens of thousands of Muslim refugees fled to Bangladesh from alleged Burmese army harassment. Many who were thus evicted claimed that they were Rohingya and Burmese citizens and that the Burmese government had launched a de-Muslimization campaign against their community. According to sources in Dacca the number of those refugees totalled more than 130,000.

The Burmese government denied the accusations and claimed that the people involved were foreigners who entered Burma illegally from Bangladesh and fled across the border when Burmese immigration authorities began systematic checks of resident status papers in Butidaung and Maungdaw. It was also claimed that such large-scale illegal immigration into Burma began during the 1971 East Pakistan war which led to the creation of Bangladesh. It was also reported that during the second half of April 1978 there were some armed attacks by Muslims on Burmese customs and police outposts in Arakan. Although it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of the conflicting reports, yet it seems that one can assume that among the tens of thousands of evicted Muslims there were also Burmese citizens, of Rohingya origin. Some of them produced their national registration cards to back claims to Burmese nationality.

This mass exodus also brought about interference by the Saudi Arabian government that Burma should stop the eviction of Muslims.

Reference:

1. D. G. EHall, A History of South Bast Asia (London: Mscmilian, 1958). p.328.
2. R. C. Majumdar, Handu Colonies in the FarEast (Calcutta; General Printers and Publishers 1944).pp. 202.205-206.
3. M S.Coitis and San Shwe Bu. "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay" JBRS, XV. no. 1 (1925), 39-43; Harvey, History of Burma, pp. 138-139; Siddiq Khan. op. cit. .XI (April, 1937), 248-249; Hall, op, c/f, pp. 329-330: Ba Shin, "Coming of Islam to Burma."
4. Hali, op. Cit., p. 330: Ba Shin. op. cit; Harvey, op. cit., p. 140; Siddiq Khan, op. cit., p. 250.
5. (1) Min Khari (143-1459), At! Khan. (2) Basawpyu (1459-1482), Kalamasya (Kalima Shah): (3) Dawlya (1482-1493). Mokhusya (Mahammad Shah): (4) Basawnyo (1493-1494), MahamosvH (Muhammad Shah); (5) Yanaung (1494), Norisya (Nun Shah): (6) Saiinqathu (1494-1501). Sakkokdofasya (Sheik Abdulia Shah); (7) Minyaza (1501-1523), ilisya (ilias Shah): (8) Minsaw-o (1525), Jaiasya (Jntal Shah): (9) Thatasa (1525-1531). iisya (Ali Shah) (Ba. Shin. op. cif.).
6. The independent Arakan rulers who still used Muslim titles were Minbin (1531-1553), Zabauk Shah; Minapalaung (1571-1593), Sikander Shah: Minyazapyi (1593-1612). Selim Shah: Thirithudama (1822-1638), Selim Shah II(SirArthurP. Phayre, History of Burma.... British India (London; Tnbner, 1833), pp. 77-78, 173; Ba Shin, op. cit.; Siddiq Khan, op. cit.pp. 348-249; Collis and San Shwe Bu op. cit.; p 43; Harvey, op, cit.,. 140; Hall. op cit., p. 330; Sebastian Manrique. Travels of Fray. ...,1629 -1643, Vol. 1. Arakan (Oxford: Halduyt Society, 1927). p. xxii).
7. Ba Shin, op.cit.; Siddiq Khan, op.cit.,, p. 250: Collis and San Shws Bu. op cit.; p. 42; U Myo Min op. cit. pp. 73-74.
8. Majumdar. The Delhi Sultanate, pp. 203, 211-212.
9. Collis and San Shwe Bu, op. cit.; p. 42; Maurice Collis, The land of Great Image (New York: New Directions Paperbook, 1958). p. 52.
- 10.Siddiq Khan, op. cit.; p. 251; Harvey, op.cit., pp. 143-144; Whereas the Muslim slaves retained their religion, the captive Hindus hastened to assimilate among the Buddhists of Arakan (Ba Tha [Buthidaung], "Slave Raids in Bengal or Heins in Arakan." Guardian Monthlv [Rangoon] VII [Oct., 1960], 25-27).
11. A conversation which Manrique had with one of the captives, and which he later recorded from memory, contained a good many Arabic and Persian words and expressions: quistabo. Kitab (book); nimosa, Namaz (Prayer); Nassaran, Nosrani (Christian); Hegaram (the descendants of Hagar); masjid (mosque); xabar, sbabasb (Persian) excelient); Ale cherime ah merban, Aliah korim, Ailah mihrban (God is pitifui, God is merciful) (Manrique.op. cit., pp. 101-102).
12. Ibid., pp. 351-352. The "hateful Mausoleum". Where Muhammad is buried is at Medina.
13. tbid., P. 373: see also U myo Min. op. cit., p. 47.
14. Manrique. op. cit., p. 388; see also Harvey, op. cit., p. 145.

15. The story of Shah Shuja appears, sometime in different versions, in the following sources: Ba Shin, op. cit., Rahman, "Burma Muslim". H. P. Spearman, British Burma gazetter Rangoon, 1880-, 1. 293-294; Hall. History of South East Asia. pp. 338-341; Desai A Pageant of Burmese History, pp. 61-63; Harvey, op. cit pp. 146-148; Siddiq Khan. op. cit., pp. 253-254; Phayre. opm178; Ba Tha (Buthidaung). "Shah Shuja in Arakan". Gardian Monthly (Rangoon). VII (Sept., 1959). 26-28; J.C. Powell price. A History of India (London: Thomas Nelson. 195. p. 342; Sr George Dunbar, A History of India from the Earliest times to Nineteen Thirty Nine (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1939). pp. 259-260; S. W. Cooks, A Short History of Burma (London: Macmillan. 1910). pp. 203-204. Hall, History of South East Asia, pp. 338-339.
16. Francois Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668, trans Archibald Constable ed Vincent A. Smith (2nd ed Oxford : Oxford University Press. 1916). pp. 109-115.
17. The British historian D. G.E. Hall worked on a portion of the material in these archives and published the results in "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan, part 11, Shah Shuja and the Dutch Withdrawal in 1665". Burma Research Society Fiftieth Anniversary Publications no. 2 (Rangoon. 1990).
18. Ibid. pp. 88-89.
19. Ibid.. p. 90.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
22. G.E. Harvey. "The Fate of Shah Shuja. 1661". JBPS, XII (Aug., 1922). 107-112
23. Phayre, History of Burma, p. 178.
24. Siddiq Khan, op. cit., p. 254; Harvey, History of Burma, p. 147; Powell price, op. cit., p. 342; Dunbar. op. cit., pp. 259-260.
25. Hall, History of South East Asia. p. 341; Harvey, History of Burma, p. 148; Cooks. A Short History of Burma, pp. 203-204; Desai., A Pageant of Burmese History, pp. 62-63; Ba Tha, "Shah Shuja in Arakan". pp. 26-28. "Long residence in this enervating climate and the example set them by the people among whom they have resided for generations have had the effect of rendering these people almost as indolent and extravagant as the Arakanese themselves. They have got out of the habit of doing hard manual labour that they are now absolutely dependent on Chittagonian coolies to help them over the most arduous of their agricultural operation. Ploughing, reaping and earth work" (Smart, Akyab District Gazetteer, pp. 66-87). Sir opinions were shared by British administrative personnel in other parts of Burma as I Comments to this effect are to be found in many Gazetteer and other official documents.
26. Burma, census of India, 1931, Vol. XI, Burma. Part 1. Report, Compiled by J. J. Bennison (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1933). p. 230
27. W. B. Tydd. Sandoway District Gazetteer. Vol. A (Rangoon. 1912). p. 19
28. Ba Shin op. Cit.
29. See. for instance, Rahman, "Burma Muslims", pp. 1-3

30. Ibid.

31. The meaning of the term is "the dear ones" or "the compassionate ones." and there are those who believe that it is a mutilation of the words, two boung ga kyar, "tiger from the ancient village" which means "brave" and is the name given to the Muslim soldiers who settled in Arakan (Ba Tha (Buthidaung). "Rowengyees in Arakan." Guardian Monthly (Rangoon) Voll. (May 1960), 31-36).

32. Ba Shin, op. cit, in accordance with the official Bulletin of the Directorate of the Front Area Administration, 1961.

33. Ibid, in the second half of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth, poets and writers appeared, too, among the Burman Muslims. One of these, named UNa wrote books in the Burmese language dealing with Islam (Ba Shin op. cit).

34. Ba Tha (Buthidaung). "Rowengya Fine Arts", Guardian Monthly (Rangoon), Voll (Feb, 1961), 20-22; Rahman, op. cit.

35. A. Irwin, Burmese outpost, London, 1945, p. 23; Sultan Mahmud, 'Muslim in Arakan', Nation, 12 April 1959; Abdul Gaffar, 'Frontier Administration', Guardian, 13 April 1960.

36. While the present writer has found no written evidence suggesting what the wording of such a British undertaking might have been, all the Muslim Arakanis queried about this subject affirmed that it had been given.

37. Tinker, p. 34; Abdul Gaffar, Guardian, 13 April 1960; Asmi: 'The State of Arakan', Guardia (monthly), vol. 1 No. 10, August 1954, p. 29.

38. Abdul Gaffar at a press conference on 8 April 1960 (mimeograph)

39. Abdul Gaffar, ibid., V. Thompson, and R. Adloff, Minority problems in South-East Asia, Stanford 1955, pp. 154-5.

40. Abdul Gaffar ibid

41. Editorials in the Burma Star, Rangoon: 'Political leadership in Arakan', 23 August 1954, and "Controversy in the Columns", 9 September 1954.

42. General Secretary for Jamiatul Ulema, North Arakan, Memorandum for the Arakan Enquiry Commission, August 1960 (?), Abdul gaffar, ibid. Cf. an editorial in the Guardian of 13 April 1960, In Defence of Maungdaw Muslims', which also deplores the lot of the Muslims oppressed by the Mujahids.

43. Thompson and Adloff, pp. 155-6; Tinker, p. 357; Ba Chan, 'Report on Arakan', Guardian (monthly), vol. 1, No. 10, November 1963, pp. 35-6.

44. Nation, 16 April 1953, estimated the Mujahid forces in January 1952 at 2,000 men: by the beginning of 1953 they were estimated at 300 only (tinker, p. 54). The personnel of the Mujahid forces, as of other rebel forces in Burma at the time, fluctuated widely: villagers would join and after a time surrender or drop out, to be replaced by others.

45. New Republic (Burmese), 25 September 1961. A letter in New Light of Burma (Burmese) of 10 August 1961 reported that the immigration authorities put at 10,000 the number of Pakistanis

who had destroyed their Pakistan papers, obtained Burmese identity documents and vanished into the population of Arakan.

46. In one case the Supreme Court Canceled a deportation order, ruling that the persons against whom it had been directed had been born and raised in Burma and were therefore citizens although they spoke no Burmese and their customs were different, and declaring that Burma was a country where there were many such minorities. Guardian, 27 October 1960.

47. Editorial in Burma Star, 23 August 1954; New Times of Burma, 24 March 1955; Nation, 5 November 1957. The present writer was told about Kaseem by an English trader residing in Rangoon who often visited Dacca and knew Kassern personally. Cf. A story in the Dacca morning Star of 23 June 1957 praising Kassern, reproduced in Burrnan, 1957. It was said that Kassern walked about freely, was very popular and considered a national hero.

48. Guardian, 13 and 16 November 1961; Burman, 13 November 1961; Guardian, 29 June and 6 and 9 July 1961; Tha Htu, 'The Mayu Frontier Administration Area', Guardian (monthly), February 1962.

49. Thompson and Adloff, p.157; Tinker, p. 30; Ba Chan, p. 35; Sultan Mahmud, ibid. Hla Maung, 'Political leadership in Arakan -Burma Star, 10 September 1954.

50. General Secretary for jamiatul Ulema, North Arakan, Memorandum for the Arakan Enquiry Commission.

51. Nation, 28 January 1961; New Republic, 17 May 1961: Abdul Gaffar at press conference of 8 April 1960; Sultan Ahmed, 'Arakan Slatehood', Memorandum to the Commission, Guardian 28 June 1960.

52. Nation, 28 November 1961.

53. Nation ,27 October 1960.

54. Vanguard, 8 January 1962; Guardian, 6 February 1962; The Htu, loc. cit.