

The Distortion of British Colonial and Diplomatic Archives in Ronan Lee's recently published Book "Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide" - I B Tauris 2021

A Memorandum by Derek Tonkin (British Diplomatic Service retired) - Revised on 31 August 2021

[Note: This critique relates exclusively to the historical presentation in Chapter 2 on "British Colonial Rule and Rohingya Identity" of [Ronan Lee's book "Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide"](#). My observations in no sense seek to diminish the terrible catastrophe which has been inflicted by the Tatmadaw on the Rohingya people. They have been subject to appalling discrimination and victimisation. Whether they have suffered genocide is perhaps for the International Court of Justice to decide in the case brought by Zambia, but the Rohingya have suffered ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity for which the perpetrators much be held responsible. The author presents Rohingya testimony with compassion, sensitivity and acute political insight. Nonetheless there is a fundamental fault-line running through the ideological narrative of their history and identity which the author accepts uncritically and which is it important to expose and resolve if there is ever to be reconciliation between Buddhist and Muslim ethnic groups in Rakhine State and elsewhere in Myanmar.]

Ronan Lee notes in Chapter 2 of his book that the research findings of the surgeon, botanist and gazetteer Francis Buchanan "form the cornerstone of Rohingya assertions about the group's history in Myanmar". The author's presentation however inclines me to place even less importance than I did previously on what Buchanan wrote about "Rooinga", either in [his 1799 article published in Asiatic Researches](#) or in another document on [geographical records extracted from the complete journal of his visit to Amarapura in 1795](#).¹ Ronan Lee refers to this latter document as though it were the complete journal; it is in fact an edited and modestly revised series of extracts from the journal concerning geographical materials. Its opening sentence reads: "In this you will find extracted from my Journal all the matter relating to Geographical subjects."

Buchanan provides next to no detail about the sources of his information on "Rooinga", either in his published Article or even less in his unpublished Geographical Extracts (and assuredly in no other of his voluminous writings). The only reference to "Rooinga" given in his Geographical Extracts and partly reproduced photographically by the author is that of two Brahmin priests and

¹ The document probably dates from the early 19th Century. The full journal was written up at Lakshmpur 1796-98 (where he was stationed) from manuscript notes taken during the mission to Ava, but the two copies known to exist, in the Home Office in London and in the Office of the EIC Surveyor-General in Calcutta, have long since been lost. Fortunately Buchanan published several separate articles on philological, ethnological and historical aspects of his visit based on the materials in his full journal, as well as Mss EUR C12 and C13 which survive in as yet unpublished form.

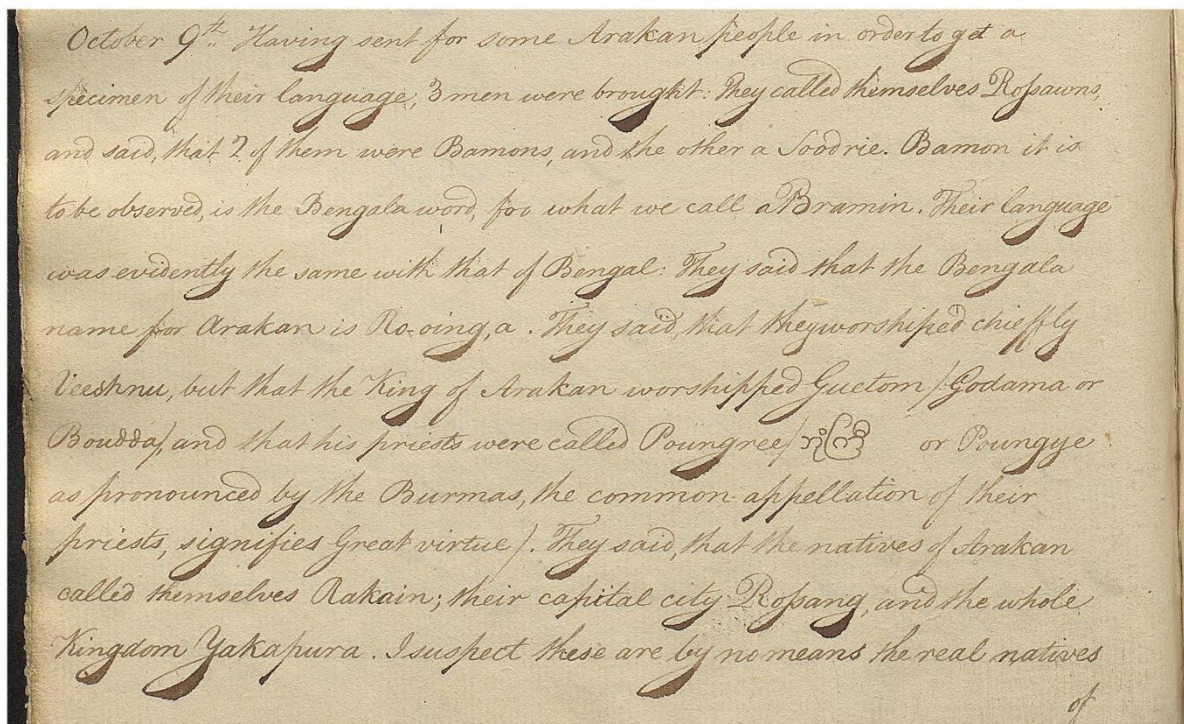
a Hindu attendant who told Buchanan “that the Bengala [Bengali/Bangla] word for Arakan is Rooinga”. A transcript of what appears from page 172 as Figure 3 of Ronan Lee’s book reads:

“October 9th. Having sent for some Arakan people in order to get a specimen of their language, 3 men were brought. They called themselves Rossawns and said that 2 of them were Bamons and the other a Soodrie. Bamon it is to be observed is the Bengala word for what we call a Bramin. Their language was evidently the same with that of Bengal. They said that the Bengala name for Arakan is Rooinga. They said that they worshiped chiefly Veeshnu, but that the King of Arakan worshipped Guetom/Godama or Boudda and that his priests were called Poungee, [Burmese word]², Pongye as pronounced by the Burmas, the common appellation of their priests [.....]

The text in Figure 3 ends abruptly; see photo-extract below. We might well ask why Ronan Lee did not include the last few lines which read:

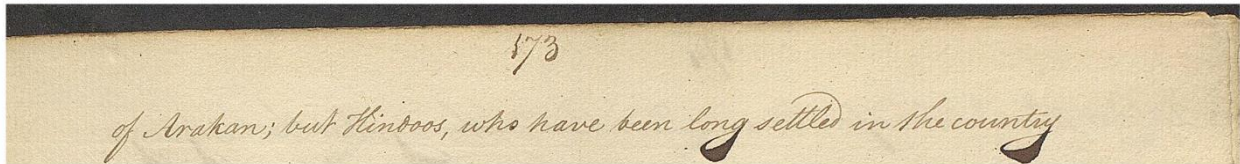
[appellation of their priests] signifies Great virtue. They said, that the natives of Arakan called themselves Rakain, their capital city Rossang and their whole Kingdom Yakapura. I suspect that these are by no means the real natives of Arakan; but Hindoos long settled in the country.”³

Here is a copy of the original manuscript:



² Appears to be ဘုရား

³ I sense a note of mild irritation in Buchanan’s report about his Hindu interlocutors. See also Footnote 6; and also Page 237 of the 1799 Article about the same interlocutors: “They called themselves Rossawn, and, for some reason I do not know, wanted to persuade me that theirs was the common language of Arakan”>



The reason for the abrupt ending is clear. The “real natives of Arakan” Buchanan explains on Page 176 of his Geographical Extracts are the Rakhine, while Muslims and Hindus are “strangers”. This isolated reference to “Rooinga” exists in the Geographical Extracts solely as the Bengali name for Arakan. Nowhere is there any reference to “Rooinga” as the name for the Muslim inhabitants or their language. That comes only in the 1799 Article, but even in the Article the context is not linguistic or anthropological so much as geographical. To this extent the Geographical Extracts are most uninformative as the Bengali name for Arakan, in its various forms, was well known. It would however indeed seem that Buchanan derived his knowledge of the Bengali dialect spoken by Arakan Muslims not from those who spoke the language, but from Brahmin priests in Amarapura. Precisely which language is not made clear, but on Page 172 of the Geographical Extracts Buchanan observes that “their language was evidently the same as that of Bengal”. Buchanan acknowledges on Page 140 that Brahmin priests generally “retain a knowledge of the Bengala”. The complete Journal might have thrown some light on this conundrum, but no copy exists.

In general, the Geographical Extracts are consistent with the 1799 Article. A relevant extract from Page 176 reads:

“Had a proper native of Arakan with me. His language indeed is very near to the Burma, and he has exactly the same names for the neighbouring nations. He says, that they call themselves Yakain; their capital city Dhaganwade; Ramree, Yambiwade (perhaps [Burmese word]) ; Cheduba, Magawade; and Thandua, Duarawade. To distinguish themselves from the strangers they call themselves Yakain Zeet. ⁴

The strangers of whom a vast number of Musselmans and Hindoos from Bengal have settled in Arakan; probably adopting their own phrase of Kula adami or black man, as the native of Hindoostan are more swarthy than the inhabitants of these countries. Great numbers of both kinds of Yakain have, since the conquest, been dispersed through the Empire; and it was people of the Kula kind, that had hitherto always been brought to me instead of Yakain Zeet. ⁵ By the Burmas they are called Mrammgye or great Burmas, as being the people from whom they have derived their origin. Their religion is exactly the same as that of the Burmas.

⁴ Zeet or ဝေ့ - genuine, proper, real [also the word for ‘war’]

⁵ See Footnote 4. Buchanan would seem to be mildly irked that Kula informants are so readily available.

Had a proper native or Arakan with me. His language is very near indeed to the Burma; and he has exactly the same names for the neighbouring nations. He says, that they call themselves Yakain; their capital city, Dhagnawade; Ramree, Yumbiawade (perhaps ရာဇဂုဏ်?) Cheduba Mogawade; and Thandua; Duarawade. To distinguish themselves from the strangers, they call themselves Yakain Teet. The strangers of whom a vast number of Muplemans and Hindoos from Bengal have settled in Arakan, they call Yakain kula; probably adopting their own phrase of kula adami or black man, as the natives of Hindoostan are more swarthy than the inhabitants of these countries. Great numbers of both kinds of Yakain have, since the conquest, been dispersed through
the

477
the Empire; and it was people of the Kula kind, that hitherto had always been brought to me, in place of Yakain Teet. By the Burmas they are called Myammagye or great Burmas, as being the people, from whom they have derived their origin. Their religion is exactly the same with that of the Burmas.

While to some extent Buchanan was simply recording what Rakhine interlocutors had told him, the text makes it clear that Buchanan accepted their division of the Arakan population into “real, proper or genuine” Rakhine, on the one hand, and “stranger” Muslims and Hindus on the other; and while Buchanan might not disagree with Ronan Lee’s narrative that “Buchanan did not distinguish between the legitimacy [presumably claim to be Arakaners] of Arakan’s Buddhist and Muslim population - for him they were equally settled communities”, Buchanan would maintain that the Rakhine were mostly “natives” and Muslim and Hindoos mostly “settlers”. Buchanan would accept though that some non-Buddhists, but only a minority, were as indigenous as the majority of their Rakhine neighbours, if not more so.

We should recall that in his 1799 article we are told that “the Mahommedans settled in Arakan call the country Rovingaw” while Rooinga means “natives of Arakan” and that they (and Hindus in Arakan) are called “Kulaw Yakain” or Stranger Arakan. ⁶ In his Geographical Extracts Buchanan records on page 156 that he met “a Mussleman from Arakan, who was an officer there before the conquest” but they only discussed the course of the Arakan River. This is the only reference throughout the document to a specific meeting with any Arakan Muslim. Ronan Lee speculates that the Chittagong servants who accompanied the Mission nonetheless may also have informed Buchanan of “his [Buchanan’s] understanding and description of Rooinga as a discrete language”. There is however no actual evidence of this in the Geographical Extracts. The most Buchanan records (on Page 137) is that, with regard to “Akobats” (or Cussays, Kathees, Bangas) met, “our Chittagong people understood some of their language”. He is not talking about Arakan Muslims, but about the speakers of the third Hindustani dialect noted in his 1799 Article.

Ronan Lee says in his book (page 36) that Buchanan “met with numerous people from Arakan and developed a detailed knowledge of the land and its people”. This is, with respect, just speculation. Buchanan never visited Arakan. It has puzzled me that in his 1799 article Buchanan did not give the sources of his information about Rooinga, which he did for Rossawn and Banga. It is almost as though he had by 1799 accepted that information given in Amarapura by his Hindu informants might not be wholly reliable, which is perhaps why he did not bother to ask his colleague Gilchrist to compare the Rooinga vocabulary with Hindustani as Gilchrist did with Rossawn (Bengal Hindi) and Banga (Manipuri). ⁷

Ronan Lee is not wholly correct when he states on Page 36 of his book that: “Buchanan’s many manuscripts, reports and letters are available in the EIC’s [East India Company’s] archives held at the British Library”. Buchanan wrote prolifically, and his manuscripts may be found in several libraries in England and Scotland, while his published works incorporating many of the sketch-maps to which reference is made in the Geographical Extracts, include 14 important articles under the name of Francis Hamilton or Francis Buchanan-Hamilton as he aspired on retirement to the chieftaincy of the Hamilton clan. These were published in The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal 1820-24 and in The Edinburgh Journal of Science 1824-26 and are available online at the Biodiversity Heritage Library.

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/216858> (Page 32 +)

⁶ In 1798 Buchanan also noted: "Various parts of the Hills in this neighbourhood are inhabited by Mugs from Rossawn, Rohhawn, Roang, Reng or Rung, for by all these names is Arakan called by the Bengalese." **Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798)** - William van Schendel 1992

⁷ Page 238 of the 1799 Article: “Mr Gilchrist has been so good as to examine particularly these two dialects [Rossawn and Banga, but not Rooinga] and to mark thus (*) those which come nearest the Hindustanee on the Ganges; and thus (†) those not so evidently in connection with the same, but which shew resemblance by analogy.”

and

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/53897> (Pages 262 +)

are of particular interest, especially the latter which notes “Roang” as the name for Arakan used by Buddhist Rakhine (“Muggs”) living in Calcutta.

In the British Library, the collection of Buchanan manuscripts are classified as “Private Papers” [with an ‘Mss’ or ‘Manuscript’ reference] catalogued quite separately from the official records of the EIC. [The record of Private Papers held by the British Library in its Asian and African Studies Section](#) makes this abundantly clear. The EIC held very few official papers on Burma until the events leading up to the incorporation of Arakan in the Bengal Presidency in 1826. An important document in EIC archives was the Secret Report by Charles Paton on Arakan made to the Secret and Political Department of the EIC [in 1826 and available both on “Scribd” and the Network Myanmar website](#). This Report is mentioned by Ronan Lee on Page 45 of his book, but he seems unaware that the full report is available and gives instead the reference to an edited and declassified version of this [report published in Asiatic Researches in 1828](#), but lacking among other materials 111 items of information about Muslim, Rakhine and Burman community leaders in a selection of Arakan villages.

The author may be unaware of the archive of works published contemporaneously by Buchanan while in service recording his travels in Bengal and beyond. In none of these articles is there any hint of a reference to “Roonga”. Instead, Buchanan’s isolated references in two works in one published article and one unpublished document are treated as some Holy Grail and accorded a status akin to the Tablets of Moses. In his 1799 article Buchanan contrasts “the Mohammedans [who] have been long settled in Arakan” with “the proper natives of Arakan [who] call themselves Yakain”. They are in the view of most scholars mostly descendants of Muslim and Hindu communities captured often together in Bengal by the Portuguese in alliance with the Mrauk-U Kingdom of Arakan during the 16th and 17th Centuries and sold on to the Arakanese and even colonial buyers like the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The Muslims may have developed a quaint patois interlarded with Arabic, Portuguese, Arakanese and Bengali barely understood by the Bengali-speaking migrants to Arakan during British rule.⁸ At the same time, there would be indigenous inhabitants of Arakan converted to Islam even before the arrival of the Rakhine Burmese.

⁸ See my 2019 analysis at: [Migration from Bengal to Arakan during British Rule 1826–1948 \(toaep.org\)](#)

Unsupported Claims of Uninterrupted Indigeneity for the Entire Rohingya Community

The indigeneity, or indigenous origins, of today's Rohingya are in my view most complex. There are traces back over 200 years to the Rooinga of Buchanan. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on some of the complications and issues involved.

Set against the massive archive of British colonial and immediate post-independence diplomatic records, the presentation of quasi-indigenous and British-era migrant communities in Chapter 2 "British Colonial Rule and Rohingya Identity" is largely a work of fiction. The only quotation the author uses from these records is an inaccurate and misleading summary in the Main Report by a colonial official in [the 1872 Census of Arakan](#), which leads the author to conclude that: "All of Arakan's Muslims were identified in the 1872 Census as indigenous.....". This conclusion has no justification. While the extract quoted indeed notes that: "There are some 64,000 of them [Muslims] in Arakan, differing from the Arakanese but little except in their religion⁹ and social customs which their religion directs", the detailed analysis of Arakan Division in Appendix 1 is more precise and authoritative. It records: "There are between 24,000 and 25,000 Mahomedans in the country who differ from the others in little besides their religion"¹⁰ while observing with respect to the remaining 30-31,000 that: "The natives of India are immigrants and call for no remark". Appendix 1 records the total number of Muslims enumerated at 64,315 of whom it is clear that only 24-25,000 were quasi-indigenous while the rest (30-31,000) were migrants: a ratio of roughly 4 descendants of indigenous Muslim communities [Rooinga, Kaman, Myedu] to every 6 migrants or descendants of migrants from India during British rule. It requires no great level of academic insight to guess how the official who prepared the Main Report went wrong, in a moment of carelessness, in drafting his summary analysis. It is also significant that, even before Chittagonian migration to Arakan took off in earnest and at least a decade before Britain took complete control over Burma in 1886, migrant Chittagonians and their descendants under British rule already exceeded the number of descendants of all indigenous Muslim ethnicities in Arakan.¹¹

Generally, Chapter 2 of Ronan Lee's book exhibits all the characteristics of denialism. The author ignores the extensive data and records of the important and detailed 1921 and 1931 Census Reports in which a team of anthropologists under Leslie Taylor of the Indian Educational Service, appointed as Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations, reviewed and analysed

⁹ My underlining, for sake of comparison

¹⁰ Ditto

¹¹ The 1881 Census records a Muslim population of 106,308 in Arakan, up from 64,315 in 1872. The increase is mostly due to immigration from the Chittagong region. Contemporary Gazetteers, Land Settlement (Taxation) Reports and Annual Administration Reports enable the nature and extent of quasi-indigenous settlement compared with Chittagonian immigration to be cross-checked with the Census returns.

both “Indo-Burman” quasi-indigenous Muslim communities in Arakan and the much greater migration of Indian communities classified as “Indian”. While Buchanan met Hindu and possibly Muslim informants in Amarapura, Leslie Taylor and his team were anthropologists specially appointed to analyse the racial composition of Burma. Their presentation on indigenous and migrant Muslim communities in Arakan carried out on the ground over weeks if not months is infinitely more authoritative than Buchanan, while in no way contradicting what Buchanan had written about the “Kulaw Yakhain” now described as “Yakaing-kala” in Burmese and “Arakan-Mahomedan” in English. Yet Ronan Lee totally ignores the 1921 and 1931 Censuses. Could this be because these Censuses record the Yakaing-kala as only one of four indigenous Muslim minorities In Arakan, numerically far exceeded by the majority of Bengali (and other) migrants during British rule, mostly from the Chittagong region? This would have unwelcome implications for ideologues and their acolytes with respect to the ancestry of today’s “Rohingya” community.

Ronan Lee misrepresents the 1941 Report by Financial Secretary James Baxter which is exclusively concerned with British-era Indian immigration. He ignores in particular **Chapter VII of the Report** which is devoted solely to Arakan, which analyses British-era Indian migration into Arakan Division and which details migrant ethnicities in the Division. He claims that the Report “clearly identified the indigenous nature of Arakan’s Muslims”. It does no such thing. **The Report is by a Commission of Inquiry** established “to examine the question of Indian immigration into Burma” during British rule. The author alleges that: “The report made numerous references to ‘indigenous Mahomedans in the Arakan Division’ ”. The fact is that, apart from the reference quoted by Ronan Lee from Page 4 of the Report, the only other reference in the entire 192-page Report to quasi-indigenous Muslims in Arakan is taken from Page 7 where James Baxter noted in passing that the minority of “indigenous Mahomedans in the Arakan Division numbered 25,955 at the 1921 Census”; a number which rose to 56,963 in the 1931 Census, including Kaman (2,670) and Myedu (2,681).¹² The Baxter Report assesses the number of British-era majority Chittagonian migrants to Northern Arakan and their descendants alone at 186,327, not counting many hundreds of migrants from further afield.

Ronan Lee avoids all reference to actual numbers of indigenous and non-indigenous Arakan Muslims contained in the various British reports and censuses, the only possible point of departure for any serious analysis as there are no other statistics. British data show a ratio by the 1931 Decennial Census of only one descendant of the original natives/ early quasi-indigenous settlers (“Indo-Burmans”) in Arakan to every four British-era migrants and their descendants (“Indians”).

¹² Attached at Annex are extracts from the 1921 and 1931 Censuses, including the 1931 Table of “Indo-Burman Races” and “Indian Races” whose descendants in Rakhine State today comprise the Rohingya community.

In an attempt to show an alleged all-embracing continuity of indigeneity in the Arakan Muslim community, Ronan Lee states: “Contemporary Rohingya leaders have contended that the bulk of these settlers [British-era migrants] were descendants of Arakan natives that fled the Burmese conquest, and so indigenous,” a theme which he repeats on other pages, quoting other sources. Nowhere does Ronan Lee say whether he agrees with this remarkable interpretation. He simply leaves the reader to assume that he does. The era of mass migration from Bengal in fact started only a century after the Burmese invasion of 1785 in the wake of the Third Anglo-Burmese War of 1886, and while I am quite prepared to accept that some migrants may well have a record in their family history of an ancestor of at least four generations previously who had once lived in Arakan, I do not see how this could possibly make the majority of such migrants “indigenous”. Indeed, it is preposterous to pretend, as prominent Rohingya Abu Tahay is quoted as saying on page 142 of the book that: “These people return [a century later] to their old homes they had fled in 1784”. For other people in Myanmar, especially, Rakhine Buddhists, this interpretation would seem to confirm their worst nightmare: the fear of being swamped by Muslim migrants claiming a right to settle as an indigenous community. The author seems unaware of the likely impact of his repetition of such statements. They are manifestly untrue and only increase tensions between the Buddhist and Muslim communities. This narrative is in any case totally unacceptable to Burmese Buddhists throughout the country.

The Council of Scholars of North Arakan went so far **in a petition dated 25 October 1948 to Prime Minister U Nu** as to attempt to de-Indianise the Muslim population of Arakan entirely: “We are dejected to mention that in this country we have wrongly been taken as part of the race generally known as Chittagonians. We humbly submit that we are not. We have a history of our own distinct from that of Chittagonians. We have a culture of our own. Historically we are a race by ourselves”. This is effectively a denial of their origins, despite the voluminous and irrefutable evidence of Chittagonian migration into Arakan contained in over 120 years of British-era archives. It is only another step to argue that most of the more than 30 million inhabitants of Chittagong Division in present-day Bangladesh could claim indigenous rights in Arakan because in the past one of their ancestors may have been resident there.

Cherry-picking facts is another sure indication of denialism. The author notes that British Sub-Commissioner Charles Paton estimated Arakan’s population at around 100,000 in 1826, with “Mugs [Rakhine Buddhists] six-tenths, Muslims three-tenths, Burmese one-tenth,” and that: “This figure is close to the proportion of Muslims estimated to be living in Rakhine State when the 2014 Census was undertaken, almost 200 years later”. So, allegedly, nothing has changed. But Paton’s estimate was little more than guesswork, recorded in a single sentence. It has little authority since it completely ignores the many other ethnicities living in Arakan at the time.

Annual censuses in the form of capitation taxes and household registration started **soon after the British arrival in Arakan** and have continued uninterrupted ever since, except during the period of the Second World War. By the Census of 1842, by which time most Muslims and Buddhists who had fled to Chittagong in 1785 had returned home, **the Rev Comstock, an American missionary**, quoting the 1842 Census, noted that: “The population of Arakan at the present time (1842) is estimated at about 250,000 ¹³. Of these, about 167,000 are Mugs, 40,000 are Burmese, 20,000 are Mussulmans, 10,000 are Kyens, 5,000 are Bengalese ¹⁴, 3,000 are Toungmaroos, 2,000 are Kemees, 1,259 are Karens and the remainder are of various races, in smaller numbers.” He later breaks down these numbers into districts. This indicates a Buddhist population in 1842 in Arakan of 207,000 against 25,000 Muslims or a ratio not of 7:3 (Paton 1826), but of 8:1 (1842 Census). Subsequent annual and decennial censuses record the gradual reduction of this 8:1 ratio to 2:1 by 2014 as the proportion of the Muslim population grew as a result of immigration and, though to a lesser extent, of natural increase.

British Diplomatic Archives in the Immediate Post-Independence Period Ignored

There is finally the absence of any reference by the author to British diplomatic archives during the first decade of independence after 1948 when the descendants of quasi-indigenous Arakan Muslims in Central Arakan - assuredly the Rooinga/Kulaw Yakain of Buchanan - let it be known that **they wished henceforth to be called “Rwangya”**, to distinguish them from the very much larger community of Chittagonians who had migrated during British rule to Northern Arakan, notably into the area around Maungdaw and Buthidaung. This was at a time when **the Chittagonians also made it clear that they wished to be known as Arakan Muslims or Burmese Muslims**.

It was not until the early 1960s that the process of coalescing all Arakan Muslims, whatever their varied origins, under the “Rohingya” label took off and gained momentum, under the guidance and influence of a determined group of ideologues for whom historical fact was less important than aiming forlornly to achieve, by banding them together, the security and protection of the Arakan Muslim community against the discrimination and victimisation which they suffered in post-Independence Burma.

Most independent scholars see the Rohingya identity as a political construction initiated in the early 1960s when the rich historical kaleidoscopic heritage of quasi-indigenous and British-era Muslim migrant ethnicities, described in detail in the 1921 and 1931 British Burma Census

¹³ The 1872 decennial census gives the total population in Arakan as 246,766.

¹⁴ Page 228: “Within the past few years, many Bengalee Mussulmans have immigrated to Arakan, to get higher wages and better living, than they could procure in Chittagong: these constitute the five thousand Bengalees mentioned in enumerating the population of the province.”

Reports, coalesced into the monolithic, juggernaut Rohingya community as it is today internationally recognised. The new ethnicity is now a reality, but it did not exist prior to 1960; there is no historical evidence of the existence of any such homogenous community.

I have great sympathy with the ambitions of the Rohingya community in Rakhine State to be accepted and to qualify as a *taingyintha* or national race. But the 1982 Citizenship Law is discriminatory and capriciously enforced and is frankly not a worthy aspiration for the Rohingya. I have long thought that they should concentrate their efforts on securing the recognition and restoration of their citizenship rights guaranteed under the 1948 Acts, not on the hopeless task of seeking to secure the recognition by their fellow citizens that they too have an unbroken indigeneity stretching back many centuries. The majority of Rohingya qualified by statutory right as Burmese citizens either as quasi-indigenous descendants of the early settlers (**Article 4(1) of the 1948 Union Citizenship Act**) or by reason of the fact that they are third generation born in Myanmar (**Article 4(2) of the Act**). In both cases citizenship was *de jure* by birth and granted automatically. It is inalienable. It was only requests for naturalisation or options for nationality, affecting only small numbers of Arakan Muslims, that required any formal application under the 1948 Acts, and then only for full citizenship. The Rohingya should concentrate on what is theirs by right, not on seeking to conform unconvincingly to an unacceptably racist and outdated concept of citizenship.

Annexes

The reports, censuses and other documents to which I make reference in this memorandum may also be found by scrolling up and down <http://www.networkmyanmar.org/Arakania.html> .

I include in this Annex transcribed extracts from the 1921 and 1931 British Censuses of Burma relating to indigenous Muslim ethnicities in Arakan as well as the 1931 list of “Indo-Burman” and “Indian” ethnicities, many of which are Muslim and have descendants in today’s Rakhine State. Buchanan’s “Rooinga” are designated “Yakaing-kala” (in Burmese - Kulaw Yakain in Buchanan)) and “Arakan Muslims/Mohamedans” (in English).

Transcribed Extracts from the 1921 British Census of Burma - Report Part 1

140. Appointment of Mr. Taylor - *On account of the special desire of Government to obtain an improved linguistic and ethnological record Mr. L. F. Taylor, B.A., I.E.S., who had collated the reports received in the Preliminary Stage of the Linguistic Survey and prepared the grammars and gramophone records mentioned in Article 136 above, was appointed Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations to assist me.*

159. Arakan-Mahomedans - *The Arakan-Mahomedans are practically confined to the Akyab District [present-day Sittwe, Mrauk-U and Maungdaw Districts combined] and are properly the descendants of Arakanese women who have married Chittagonian Mahomedans. It is said that the descendants of a Chittagonian who has permanently settled in Akyab District always refuse to be called Chittagonians and desire to be called Arakan-Mahomedans; but as permanent settlement seems to imply marriage to an Arakanese woman this is quite in accordance with the description given. Although so closely connected to Chittagonians racially the Arakan-Mahomedans do not associate with them at all; they consequently marry almost solely among themselves and have become recognised locally as a distinct race. The Arakanese Buddhists in Akyab asked the Deputy Commissioner there not to let the Arakan-Mahomedans be included under Arakanese in the census. The instruction issued to enumerators with reference to Arakan-Mahomedans was that this race-name (in Burmese Yakaing-kala) should be recorded for those Mahomedans who were domiciled in Burma and had adopted a certain mode of dress which is neither Arakanese nor Indian and who call themselves and are generally called by others Yakaing-kala.*¹⁵

¹⁵ Yakaing-kala recorded in British Censuses is indeed identical to Buchanan’s “Kulaw Yakain” by which the Rooinga were known.

The number of Arakan-Mahomedans tabulated in 1921 was nearly 24,000. The numbers tabulated at previous census as Mahomedan Arakanese have been as in Marginal Table 8. Such differences of numbers as are shown here indicate enumeration of the Arakan-Mahomedans at previous censuses under other descriptions; in the census table of 1901 it is impossible to identify them. Probably they have been entered as Sheikh or possibly under Other Mahomedan Tribes in all three earlier censuses mentioned in the table. The defect of females is possibly due to some women who marry Indian Mahomedans describing themselves as of the same race as their husbands.

Transcribed Extracts from the 1931 British Census of Burma - Report Part 1

16.....During the last decade [in Arakan] the Indians increased from 201,387 to 210,990, i.e., by 9,603 or just under 5 per cent, while Indo-Burman races increased from 24,856 to 49,745, i.e., by 24,889 or by 100 per cent. The Deputy Commissioner Akyab says this is due to the fact that at the last census some Arakan Mahomedans returned themselves as Indians; and he considers the 1931 figures to be correct in view of the fact that Indians and Indo-Burmans were more minutely questioned about their race in 1931. If the figures for Indians and Indo-Burman races are combined the increase is 34,492 or about 15 per cent.....

141.....In paragraph 16 of Chapter 1 it is pointed out that many Arakan Mahomedans in the Akyab district returned themselves as Indians at the 1921 census. The number may be roughly estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000, in which case the increase in the Indian population would be in the neighbourhood of 17 per cent.

143.....The Indo-Burman races include the Zerbadis, the Arakan Mahomedans, the Arakan Kamans and the Myedus. The number of persons belonging to these races has increased by 56,904 or 45 per cent. It is pointed out in paragraph 141 that in 1921 a number of Arakan Mahomedans in the Akyab district - estimated at between 10,000 and 15,000 - returned themselves as Indians. The increase is therefore reduced to between 30 and 35 per cent. The Arakan Mahomedans are mostly found in the Akyab district; the only other districts containing an appreciable number are Kyaukpyu (1,597) and Sandoway (1,658). They are properly the descendants of Arakanese women who have married Chittagonian Muslims. In Burma they are called ရှိုင်ကုလား (Yakaing·kala). They are recognised locally as a distinct race and they are known differently from the Arakanese and Chittagonians. The number recorded in 1931 was

51,615, which is more than double the number in 1921, namely 23,775. The reason for the large increase has been explained above.

The Arakan Kamans have increased from 2,180 to 2,686 and are practically confined to the Akyab and Kyaukpyu districts. According to paragraph 160 of the 1921 Census Report "they are descendants of the followers of Shah Shuja, son of Aurungzebe, who fled to Arakan in 1660 A.D. after the failure of his attempt to seize the Moghul throne. After the death of Shah Shuja they were formed into a royal bodyguard of archers, and hence received their name. Their features are Indian, but their language, dress and manners are Arakanese".

The Myedus are descendants of Indian Muslims who came over to Burma from northern India in the time of Alaungpaya (see paragraph 158 of the 1921 Census Report). They have increased from 4,991 to 5,160 since 1921 and are practically confined to the Shwebo district.

The Zerbadis have increased from 94,316 in 1921 to 122,705 in 1931, i.e. by 28,389 or 30 per cent. In 1891, 1901 and 1911, the tribal designations were recorded in the enumeration schedules for Muslims and not the race, as at the 1921 and 1931 censuses. The figures for Zerbadis for the 1911 and previous censuses are therefore not reliable. According to the 1921 Census Report Zerbadi was a newish word in 1891, at which census only 24 Zerbadis were recorded; in 1901 the number recorded was 20,423 and this was raised to 59,729 in 1911. The word Zerbadi is applied to the offspring of marriages between Indian Muslims and Burmese women. Objection has often been raised against the use of the word Zerbadi, but no satisfactory substitute has been suggested. The majority of the Zerbadis are Muslims and the Zerbadi Muslims prefer to be known as Burma Moslems. The term Burma Moslem is not, however, a satisfactory substitute for Zerbadi since some of the Zerbadis are Buddhists or Christians.

The following extract reproduces Page 245 from Part 2 of the 1931 British Burma Census. Group S includes the 4 "Indo-Burman races" and Group X the 38 "Indian Races", 15 of which include Muslims. Those mostly resident in Rakhine State today were of British-era migrant Chittagonian and Bengali [from outside the Chittagong Region] descent, but Muslims from other communities also settled there in small numbers.

PTO

Census of British Burma 1931 Part 2

245

IMPERIAL TABLE XVII—Race. PART I.—Provincial Totals of Races by Religion—concl'd.

Race-group and Race.		Religion.	Males.	Females.	Race-group and Race.		Religion.	Males.	Females.		
R2	Cantonese ...	Total ...	24,303	9,687	X16	Jat ...	...	273	11	
		Animist ...	12,110	4,153			X17	Kachi	539	193
		Confucian ...	6,204	2,568			X18	Kaka (Moplah) ...	Total ...	9,039	402
		Buddhist ...	5,530	2,749					Muslim ...	8,949	392
		Christian ...	282	143					Others ...	90	10
Others ...	177	74	X19	Kanarese ...	...	151	89			
R3	Fukienese ...	Total ...	33,057	16,981	X20	Kashmiri ...	...	38	6	
		Animist ...	15,670	6,856	X21	Khoja ...	...	208	159	
		Buddhist ...	12,261	7,369	X22	Konkani ...	...	75	...	
		Confucian ...	4,783	2,567	X23	Kumaoni ...	...	2,010	319	
		Christian ...	304	174	X24	Mahratta ...	...	437	162	
Others ...	39	15	X25	Maimon ...	Total ...	3,097	758				
R4	Other and un-specified Chinese.	Total ...	29,001	12,874	X26	Malabari ...	Muslim ...	3,097	747		
		Animist ...	18,243	7,359			Others ...	...	11	
		Buddhist ...	9,047	4,839			Total ...	2,645	560		
		Confucian ...	1,174	460			Hindu ...	1,931	445		
		Muslim ...	227	94			Muslim ...	542	29		
Christian ...	291	122	Christian ...	137	69						
Others ...	19	...	Others ...	35	17						
S	Indo-Burman Races.	...	90,307	91,859	X27	Marwari ...	...	1,480	823	
S1	Arakan-Mahomedan	Total ...	26,153	25,462	X28	Moghul ...	...	348	239	
		Muslim ...	26,150	25,462	X29	Nursapuri ...	Total ...	3,361	1,688		
S2	Zerbadi ...	Total ...	60,413	62,292	X30	Oriya ...	Muslim ...	2,865	1,419		
		Muslim ...	57,415	59,736			Christian ...	438	231		
		Buddhist ...	2,637	2,180			Others ...	58	38		
		Christian ...	220	135			Total ...	58,905	3,680		
		Others ...	141	241			Hindu ...	50,016	3,110		
S3	Arakan-Kaman ...	Total ...	1,296	1,390	Muslim ...	910	231				
		Muslim ...	1,287	1,383	Buddhist ...	1,427	157				
S4	Myedu ...	Total ...	2,445	2,715	Christian ...	501	173				
		Muslim ...	2,240	2,441	Others ...	51	9				
X	Indian Races	Total ...	733,911	283,914	X31	Parsi ...	...	307	191	
		...	...	...	X32	Pathan ...	Total ...	3,501	971
		...	...	...			Muslim ...	3,439	937
		X1	Assamese ...	Total ...	891	435	Others ...	62	34		
		X2	Baluchi ...	Total ...	53	11	X33	Punjabi ...	Total ...	21,345	7,445
Muslim ...	48,682			16,529	Hindu ...	7,269			2,673		
X3	Bengali ...	Muslim ...	28,781	10,750	Muslim ...	5,366	1,634				
		Hindu ...	18,160	5,360	Sikh ...	7,792	2,969				
		Buddhist ...	1,491	309	Arya and Brahma. ...	73	83				
		Christian ...	228	90	Others ...	343	84				
		Others ...	22	20	X34	Rajput ...	...	416	67	
X4	Bhotia ...	Hindu ...	1	...	X35	Sindhu ...	...	270	56	
X5	Bihari ...	...	508	31	X36	Sowati ...	Total ...	3,937	2,195	
X6	Borah ...	Muslim ...	112	48			Muslim ...	3,783	2,170		
X7	Chittagonian ...	Total ...	163,912	88,240	Others ...	154	25				
		Muslim ...	157,155	86,749	X37	Tamil ...	Total ...	93,435	56,453		
		Hindu ...	4,891	873			Hindu ...	78,155	45,304		
		Buddhist ...	1,826	617			Christian ...	12,082	9,705		
		Others ...	40	1			Muslim ...	1,504	748		
...	...	...	Buddhist ...	1,584			658		
X8	Chulia ...	Total ...	23,269	8,723	Others ...	130	38				
		Muslim ...	23,108	8,656	X38	Telegu ...	Total ...	123,940	35,819		
Others ...	161	67	Hindu ...	118,696			33,883				
X9	Deccani ...	...	817	373			Christian ...	3,184	1,285	
		...	146	10			Muslim ...	1,086	373		
X10	Dogra ...	...	961	263			Buddhist ...	881	263	
X11	Garhwali ...	...	651	150	Others ...	93	15			
X12	Goanese ...	...	4,622	1,847	Y	European, etc. ...	Total ...	17,769	13,082	
X13	Gujarati ...	...	26,689	12,843			European and allied Races, including Armenians.	7,885	3,766	
X14	Gurkha ...	Total ...	26,689	12,843			Anglo-Indians ...	9,884	9,316		
		Hindu ...	25,745	12,447			Z	Other Races	1,836	1,203
		Buddhist ...	655	282					Arab ...	61	18
		Others ...	289	114					Egyptian ...	9	...
X15	Hindustani ...	Total ...	132,842	42,125					Goa-Portuguese ...	40	16
		Hindu ...	103,591	32,445					Japanese ...	448	187
		Muslim ...	27,328	9,020					Jew ...	643	618
		Buddhist ...	1,273	383					Mauritian ...	3	4
		Christian ...	460	227	Negro ...	5			...		
Others ...	190	50	Persian ...	370	327						
...	...	...	Philippino ...	67	11				
...	...	...	Singhalese ...	179	21				
...	...	...	Turk ...	11	1				