THE PROBLEM OF MUSLIM NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MYANMAR

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Muslim World Issues)

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This study examines the identity of Muslim communities in Myanmar (Burma) based on their ancient origins and settlements in Myanmar and their struggle to maintain their national identity under successive governments. The results of this study confirm that Muslim communities in Myanmar, namely Burman Muslims (including Pathi, Myedu and Zerbadee), Rakhine Muslims (including Rohingya and Kaman), Panthay Muslims (Chinese) and Pashu Muslims (Malay) have historically evolved and are stable communities, like other ethnic groups of Myanmar, and that they are by right Myanmar nationals. This study shows that Muslim communities at Burma’s independence automatically had Burmese citizenship, the same status as all other citizens of Burma, and that they were among the 144 national races of Burma until 1982. However, they gradually lost their status, rights and privileges after the military coup led by General Ne Win, in 1962. It is the main finding of the present research that the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law created by General Ne Win did not only deliberately target the Rohingyas in Rakhine State to make them “Stateless” and refugees, but also degraded most of the Muslims and other minorities throughout the country to become second class or third class citizens without any justification. This study also found that the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law is contrary to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, human rights and international norms.
خلاصة البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة عن هوية المجتمعات المسلمة في ميانمار (بوما) بناءً على أساس أصولهم الثقافية، والمستوطنات في ميانمار، وتناضلهم من أجل الحفاظ على هويتهم الوطنية في ظل الحكومات المتعاقبة. وتنتهي هذه الدراسة تؤكد أن المجتمعات المسلمة في ميانمار، وهي البورميون المسلمين (كما في ذلك بالي، وميدو، وزيربادي)، ومسلمي راهين (كما في ذلك روهينجا وكمان)، وبانناي المسلمين (الصينيين) وباشا المسلمين (الملايو) قد تطورت تاريخياً وهي مجتمعات مستقرة، كبيبة العرقية الأخرى في ميانمار، وأظهرهم من مواطنين ميانمار بصورة قانونية. هذه الدراسة تبين أن المواطنين المسلمين حصلوا على الجنسية البورمية تلقائياً مثل جميع المواطنين الآخرين من بورما، وكانوا من بين 184 عرقاً وثنانياً من بورما حتى عام 1982. ومع ذلك، فإنهم قد فقدوا وضعهم وحقوقهم وامتيازاتهم بعد الانقلاب العسكري بقيادة الجنرال بي، في عام 1962. وأهداف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو إثبات أن قانون مواطنة بورما لعام 1982 الذي أنشأ الجنرال بي، لا يمكنه أن يستهدف الروهنجا في ولاية راهين ليصبحوا "البدو ولاحين فقط، ولكن أيضاً استهدف إقصاء حالة معظم المسلمين والأقلية الأخرى في جميع أنحاء البلاد لكي يصبحوا مواطنين من المدرجة الثانية أو الثالثة دون أي مبرر. ووجدت هذه الدراسة أيضاً أن قانون مواطن بورما لعام 1982 يتعارض مع المبادئ الأساسية لينابغ الأمم المتحدة لحقوق الإنسان، وكذلك يتعارض مع الأعراف الدولية.
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Myint Thein (a) Abdus Salaam

Signature ....................................................  Date ..................................................
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THE PROBLEM OF MUSLIM NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MYANMAR

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Signature Date
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All praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, who created man and blessed him with knowledge and wisdom, and sent down the Revelation to His Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) that keep us on the straight path.

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Myint Thein (a) Abdus Salaam
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFPFL</td>
<td>Anti-Fascist Peoples’ Freedom League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMMYO</td>
<td>All Myanmar Myanmar Muslim Youth (Religious) Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARIF</td>
<td>Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARNO</td>
<td>Arakan Rohingya National Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMC</td>
<td>Burman Muslim Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMO</td>
<td>Burman Muslim Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMS</td>
<td>Burma Moslem Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSPP</td>
<td>Burma Socialist Programme Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHP</td>
<td>Democratic Human Rights Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DKBA</td>
<td>Democratic Karen Buddhist Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPL</td>
<td>Free People League of Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCBA</td>
<td>General Council of Burmese Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCBMA</td>
<td>General Council of Burma Moslem Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRAC</td>
<td>Islamic Religious Affairs Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBRs</td>
<td>Journal of Burma Research Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>KNLA</td>
<td>Karen National Liberation Army</td>
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<td>KNU</td>
<td>Karen National Union</td>
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<td>ME</td>
<td>Myanmar Era</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMNAO</td>
<td>Myanmar Muslim National Affairs Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDPHR</td>
<td>National Democratic Party for Human Rights</td>
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<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League for Democracy</td>
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<td>National Peace and Democracy Party</td>
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<td>Organization of Islamic Conference</td>
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<td>RSO</td>
<td>Rohingya Solidarity Organization</td>
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<td>State Law and Order Restoration Council</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>USDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMBA</td>
<td>Young Men’s Buddhist Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Men’s Christian Association</td>
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THE SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION USED
(FROM MYANMAR LANGUAGE TO ENGLISH)

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Burma, renamed as Union of Myanmar in 1989 and Republic of the Union of Myanmar in 2008, is a multi-ethnic country in Southeast Asia in a strategic position with the Indian Sub-continent in the west, China in the north and east and Indochina peninsula nations in the southeast. Ethnic Burmans or Bamars form the majority of Myanmar’s total population and they comprise the vast majority of strongly centralized Myanmar government and army. Although the country has no official state religion, the government continued to show preference for Theravada Buddhism through official propaganda and state support because it is professed by the majority of country’s population.1 Previously an independent kingdom, Burma was annexed by the British Empire into the colony of India in 1886. The Japanese invaded and occupied the country during the Second World War but it was returned to British control and finally it regained her independence in 1948.

This study tries to examine and discuss the origins and development of Muslim communities in Myanmar, their struggle for independence and contributions to nation building with a Union spirit, their struggle to preserve their national identity under successive governments, the change of the attitude of Burmese Buddhist political

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1 Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008), Chapter I: Basic Principles of the Union, Section 3, (Yangon: Printing and Publishing Enterprise, Ministry of Information, 2010), 3. “Burma” is the official name of the country under the 1947 constitution. “Myanmar” means “nation of the swift and strong people.” The spelling of capital city’s name “Rangoon” was also changed to “Yangon” in 1989 by the military junta.

2 Ibid., Chapter VIII: Citizen, Fundamental Rights and Duties of the Citizens, Section 361, 149.
leaders towards Muslim communities in Myanmar in the post-independence periods, the key sources of social tension between some Burmese Buddhist extremists and the Muslim minority, the burdensome and dangerous effect of the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law on Muslim communities, the Rohingya issue and refugee problem, and the possible solution for the problem of Muslim national identity in Myanmar.

1.2. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Islam has flourished in Myanmar for centuries since the 8th century AD and throughout the history of Myanmar, Muslims have had very cordial and amicable relationships with their brothers and sisters of other faiths. The indigenous Muslims were regarded as ethnic national races and were given responsible posts by Burmese monarchs and Rakhine kings in the state services. The term “Pathi” was officially used for the Burmese Muslims during the reign of Burmese kings.

During the British rule, the term “Zerbadee” was used for the Burmese Muslims, both the descendants of Burmese Muslims from the days of Burmese kings and the progeny of mixed marriages between Muslims Indians and Burmese since the period of British conquest, in the population census taken in Burma in 1891, which was the first census to include the whole of Burma. However, the Burmese Muslims were not fond of the term “Zerbadee” and by their struggle, in 1941; the government

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5 Moshe Yegar, The Muslims of Burma: A Study of a Minority Group, (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1972), 33. It was a thesis submitted to Hebrew University, Jerusalem, for his master degree in 1960s and it was published in 1972.
announced its decision by the Notification No.1112, dated August 9, 1941, to grant the Muslims’ request and replaced the term “Zerbadee” by “Burman Muslim.”6 “Burman” refers to the ethnic group and “Burmese” refers to all citizens of Burma as well as the name of the language spoken by Burmans.

During the struggle for the independence of Burma, the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) convention in January 1946 in Rangoon (Yangon), led by the national leader Bogyoke Aung San, affirmed the Burmese Muslims’ loyalty to the country like all others and applauded the stand of the Burman Muslim Congress (BMC), “Burmese Muslims are Burmans.” The AFPFL convention offered to give national minority rights to the Burmese Muslims if demanded according to the proposal no.6.7 According to the section 10 of the Constitution of the Union of Burma (1947), there was one class of citizenship only throughout the Union. According to the subsections (i), (ii) and (iii) of the section 11 of the Constitution, Myanmar Muslims both the descendants of Burmese Muslims, from the days of Burmese kings, and the progeny of mixed marriages, between Muslim Indians and Burmese, since the period of British conquest were already the citizens of the Union.8

On December 29, 1955, at Rangoon City Town Hall during the meeting with the representatives of the Burman Muslim Congress to dissolve the Congress, U Nu, the Prime Minister and the leader of the AFPFL affirmed and guaranteed that Burmese Muslims are Burmans and that if they wish to continue their political careers after dissolving the Congress they should join the AFPFL as Burmese nationals or

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8 *Constitution of the Union of Burma,* (Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationary, 1948), Section 11.
they should join the Islamic Religious Affairs Council if they want to carry out religious activities.\(^9\)

According to the Instruction Book “How to fill up the form” for the 1973 Population Census issued by the Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs, the Government of the Union of Burma, on December 9, 1972, there were 144 national races in Burma including Rakhine-Chittagong, Burmese Muslim, Rakhine-Kaman, Myedu, other Burmese-Indians (except Chittagong, Hindustani, Tamil, Talagu, Dainet, other Indians and Pakistanis), and Burmese-Chinese (including Panthay).\(^10\)

Moreover, the government newspapers quoted the Immigration and Manpower Department that there were 143 principal ethnic races\(^11\) including the above-mentioned 6 ethnic races which professed Islam as their faith. Therefore, these Muslims gave their votes for the new Constitution of the People Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma (1974) as the ethnic races and citizens of Burma. However, under the dictatorship of General Ne Win, his Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) excluded the names of these ethnic races who professed Islamic faith, except Rakhine-Kaman by proclaiming the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law and recognized only 135 ethnic groups.\(^12\)

Thus, we can observe that the Burmese military and political leaders changed their attitude towards Muslim minority ignoring the historical facts and laws. The concept of the decision of Burmese Muslim Congress in 1946 “Burmese Muslims are Burmans,” and the affirmation and guarantee for their identities given by the AFPFL

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\(^9\) The Hanthawaddy Daily Newspaper, 30 December, 1955. “The Prime Minister U Nu’s Speech.” See Appendix VII.

\(^10\) Pone-san Phyae-suet-yan Hnyun-kyar-chet [The Instruction How to Fill up the Forms], (Rangoon: Immigration and Manpower Department, Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs, 9 December, 1972), 45. See Appendix IX.

\(^11\) “There are 143 National Races in the Union, Already Prepared to Take Population Census,” Botahtaung Newspaper, 23 February, 1973, 11. See Appendix X.

and the Constitutions of Myanmar 1947 and 1974 no longer seem to be working. Therefore, close attention is required to make known and recognize that the above-mentioned Muslim communities in Myanmar are not only the citizens of Myanmar by birth, but are also national ethnic groups of Myanmar.

We can also observe that misunderstandings and mutual distrust arose between the majority Burmese and ethnic minorities during the colonial period due to the divide-and-rule policy and after regaining independence, some ethnic minority groups took up arms against the Burmese dominated central government claiming that they gradually lost their rights while they could maintain their national identities.\textsuperscript{13} The Burman Muslim Congress contributed their best services to unite the Mainland (Majority Burmese) and the Frontier Areas (Ethnic minority groups) and to sign Panglong Agreement in 1947 to form the Union of Burma. However, as for the Muslim communities in Myanmar, although they struggled hand-to-hand with their Burmese Buddhist brothers and sacrificed their minority rights in order to give priority to the independence movement, after regaining independence, they not only lost their citizen’s rights gradually but also were unjustly rejected even their community identity. Nowadays, the legal status of the vast majority of Muslims in Myanmar is described as “suspicious” by the immigration officials who refuse to issue the Citizenship Scrutinizing Cards to them, claiming that they are not qualified, as the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law requires. Rohingyas in Rakhine (Arakan) State have been commonly referred to as “stateless” because they were generally not eligible even for National Registration Cards\textsuperscript{14} and some of them are treated as refugees in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

\textsuperscript{13} Union Spirit, (Yangon: News and Periodicals Enterprise, Ministry of Information, 2000), 74-82, 120.  
\textsuperscript{14} International Religious Freedom Report 2010 - Burma, U.S. Department of State.
Since then, there were numerous misunderstandings on Islam and Myanmar Muslim communities by non-Muslims. The new generation of Burmese Buddhists - both laymen and educated persons - unwittingly think that the Myanmar Muslims are “Kalas” which means aliens or “undesirable Indians” who are not their countrymen. Some immigration officials, without knowing the true history of Muslims in Myanmar, even claim that there was neither Islam nor Muslims among the ethnic races of Myanmar and accuse Muslims in Myanmar of trying to create new races solely on religious grounds. Many Muslims have to admit that they are of mixed-blood so that their races are noted as Indian-Bamar, Pakistan-Bamar, Bangladesh-Bamar on their identity cards. Even after making such a statement, most Muslims do not receive their citizenship scrutinizing cards. Moreover, Muslim graduates of the universities who have no citizenship scrutinizing cards in hand cannot receive their degrees/certificates. Therefore, they face difficulties in progressing to further studies and employments, as well as being able to apply for passports to travel abroad.

Even though there is no written directive, that bars Muslims from job opportunities and promotion in the government services, in practice that is what happens.

Moreover, there have been anti-Muslim movements and riots and many Muslims have lost their lives and property. Mosques and madrasahs (religious schools) were destroyed, copies of the Holy Qur’an were burnt or insulted, many people who defended themselves are in prison because of frequent anti-Muslim riots in many cities such as Hin-tha-da, Taung-gyi, Yangon, Mandalay, Maw-la-myaine, Bago (Pegu), Pye (Prome), Kyauk-pyu, Sit-twe (Akyab), Toung-oo, Kyauk-se and

Chauk etc. Some mosques and madrasahs were allowed to be rebuilt or reopen in other places after the riots, but not allowed to reopen in some places (e.g., Toung-oo and Chauk).

Certain townships in Rakhine State such as Gwa and Taung-kote were declared as “Muslim-free Zones” by some extremists in 1983 and Muslims no longer are permitted to live in those townships. Man-aung Island (Cheduba) was noted as a Muslim-free Zone too. In Rakhine State, it is very difficult for Muslims to travel, to do business and to study without an identity card. The government said that it is for security reason, but Muslims feel that it is a form of ethnic cleansing.

In discussing the problem of Muslim identity in Myanmar, there are some inescapable questions because General Ne Win, the dictator and the real author of the Burma Citizenship Law of 1982, which creates three classes of citizen and denies citizenship to many Muslims, openly declared that only pure blood should be called nationals of Burma. Since then Muslim communities in Myanmar are being accused that they are mix-blooded people, migrants only and Kalas (aliens or undesirable Indians who do not belong to Myanmar) and they have no separate state, and no race can be formed based on the religion. Therefore, they are neither part of the national ethnic groups of Myanmar nor even eligible to be citizens. Some Burmese leaders blindly or unwittingly followed General Ne Win’s words and identified themselves as

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17 This kind of news is never mentioned in the primary sources and not allowed to mention officially in the secondary sources by the authorities inside Myanmar too. However, the military junta published a book in two volumes “Sasana Yaung-war Htun-se-boh” [The Glory of Religion to be Enlightened] in 1998, after widespread Buddhist monks’ attack on mosques in 1997, to show its encouragement to other religions. Buddhists also claimed that the monks who attacked the mosques were not the real Buddhist monks and it was a political diversion only.


19 Priestley, 18.

pure race while condemning the inter-breeding as impure race.\footnote{The Working People’s Daily, 22 February, 1991.} This research discusses and analyses:

1. Did Muslim communities in Myanmar such as Burman Muslims, Pathi, Myedu, Rakhine Muslims, Rohingya, Kaman, Pashu, and Panthay emerge during the colonial period as aliens, or emerge as national races of Burma prior to the colonial period? Had they established their races solely based on religious grounds as accused by some ultra-nationalists?

2. Did the Islamic civilization flourish in Mrauk-U period (15\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries AD) in Rakhine? Are the Rohingya migrant Bengalis of the British period as accused today, and what are the roots of the Rohingya issue?

3. What are the consequences of the resolution of the Burman Muslim Congress (BMC) in 1946, “Burmese Muslims are Burmans,” in order to support the efforts of Bogyoke Aung San, Father of the nation, for the total independence? How did the Myanmar Muslim Communities struggle to maintain their national identities after the independence?

4. Are there violations of human rights and international norms in Myanmar including the suppressing of the national identity of Muslims in Myanmar? Does pure race exist in the world today and does the 1982 Burma Citizenship Law deliberately target the Rohingyas to become “statelessness” and degrade most of the Muslims and other minorities to second-class citizens?
1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The National identity and rights of citizen seem to have become an important issue (in socio-politics) in Myanmar, after regaining independence in 1948 generally and specially after the military coup, led by General Ne Win, in 1962. The challenge for the citizens of Myanmar today is to redress the lack of democracy. Many seem to remember the 1988 uprisings, a cry of the oppressed against the dictatorship of General Ne Win and his Nazi-like Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), some recall the military coup in 1962 because all the minority ethnic groups and minority religious groups lost their rights gradually after that coup. The majority of Burmans also suffered very badly, economically and educationally. However, we seem to forget the forced dissolution of the Burman Muslim Congress by the AFPFL in 1956.

At the time of the establishment of the AFPFL, by the advice of its leader Bogyoke Aung San,22 the Burman Muslim Congress (BMC) was founded by the Burmese Muslim nationalities and the existing Burmese Muslim Organizations in December 1945, in Pyinmana. Sayagy U Razak,23 an influential leader in the Burmese national movement and in the AFPFL, was elected as the President of the Congress.24 It established branches, and became powerful throughout the country and joined the AFPFL as an ethnic group.25

During the struggle for the independence of Burma, the AFPFL convention in

22 The term Bogyoke in Myanmar means Major General. However, people in Myanmar called Aung San Bogyoke until now to show their respect and love to him not only as a military leader but also as the father of the nation. There are many places in Myanmar to commemorate him such as Bogyoke Street, Bogyoke Garden, Bogyoke Market etc.
23 Sayo in Myanmar means Teacher or Master and Gyi means big or great. Therefore, Sayagy means Great Teacher or Great Master. People in Myanmar used this term for some leaders with due respect for their good leadership with wisdom. The term U (for a man) or Daw (for a woman) is used in the beginning of a Burmese name of a person. Although U Razak was a Muslim, he was called Sayagy because of his exemplary leadership with patriotic spirit, wisdom and sacrifices for the country.
24 Sayo U Than Pe (Pyinmana), Bamar Muslim Pyat-tha-nar [The Issue of Burman Muslim], (Rangoon: World Peace Press, 1946), 45-57.
January 1946 in Rangoon (Yangon), led by the national leader Bogoyoke Aung San, affirmed the Burmese Muslims’ loyalty to the country like all others and applauded the stand of the Burman Muslim Congress, “Burmese Muslims are Burmans.” The AFPFL convention offered to give national minority rights to Burmese Muslims, if demanded according to the proposal no.6.26

National Elections for a Constituent Assembly were held in April 1947. The AFPFL, led by Bogoyoke Aung San, won the majority of seats. However, on July 19, nine persons, including Bogoyoke Aung San and Sayagi U Razak, were assassinated during their ministerial meeting by a group of armed men. Out of the nine martyrs of the country, Sayagi U Razak and Ko Htwe (Bodyguard of Sayagi U Razak) were Muslims. U Nu became the Head of the AFPFL as well as the Executive Council. The Union of Burma became an independent nation on January 4, 1948, and U Nu became the first Prime Minister of the country.27

Many foreigners, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, think that Rohingyas are the only Muslim group in Myanmar and therefore, the terms Rohingya and Bamar Muslim (Burman Muslim) are the same. As a result, sometimes they make wrong or incomplete statements and decisions for the cause of Myanmar Muslim communities thinking that solving the Rohingyas’ problems is solving the problems of Myanmar Muslim communities as a whole for the political, economic, educational, social aspects etc. The issue of Rohingyas is very sensitive in Myanmar. Rohingyas are just one group of Myanmar Muslim communities, who live in the northernmost part of Rakhine (Arakan) State, and now some of them live in different parts of Myanmar and outside Myanmar.

27 U Pe Kin, Ko twe Pinlon [Pinlon, An Inside Story], (Yangon: Ministry of Information, 6th edn., 1990), 90.
This study deals with the struggle of Myanmar Muslim communities for their identities and rights in the different political situations and the impact of the resolution of Burman Muslim Congress (BMC) in 1946 “Burmese Muslims are Burmans” on Myanmar Muslim society which provoked the idea that clashed among the members of the old BMC itself, and later, between the old BMC and the new BMC. And this study also concentrates the issues which emerged from this clash of ideas.

After the dissolution of the old BMC by the pressure of the AFPFL on September 30, 1956, many members of the old BMC, who wished to continue their political careers, joined the AFPFL. However, on October 1, 1956, the new Burman Muslim Congress was formed by those who did not accept the dissolution of the old Congress and later changed its name to the “All Burma PathiNational Congress.” It renewed the old claim that the Myanmar Muslim community be granted the status of a recognized national minority by the term “Pathi,” similar to the Kachin, the Karen and the Chin.28

This difference of ideas regarding the identity of the Myanmar Muslim community, “Burmese Muslims are Burmans which means to merge with the Burmese majority” and “Burmese Muslims are a national minority group of Myanmar,” still continues among the Myanmar Muslim communities and organizations up till now, and it was one of the important items to be discussed among the Myanmar Muslim-based political parties before and after the Multi-Party Democracy General Election period (May, 1990). Moreover, some elements among Myanmar Muslims, without proper knowledge of the history of Myanmar Muslims and with no political foresight, claim that they are neither Burmans nor Myanmar Muslims but they are Kalas (Indians), and that Myanmar is not their country.

28 Report of the General Secretary of the new BMC to the general assembly to discuss the Burman Muslim affairs and the issues of Burmese politics, in Mandalay, Upper Myanmar, in March, 1960.
Some Myanmar Muslims, nowadays, are blaming the old BMC and its President Sayagyi U Razak for the resolution “Burmese Muslims are Burmans,” because they think that the current problems of the Myanmar Muslim communities are the consequences of that resolution. In fact, they have very poor knowledge of history and politics, and some of them are not even interested in politics. Although there were differences of opinions on the identity of Myanmar Muslims, this resolution was also working well for that period because, after the emergence of the 1947 Constitution of Burma and her Independence in 1948, there were Muslim Ministers, Members of Parliament and high-ranking officers in government services and in the military. Moreover, Myanmar Muslims participated as full citizens of Burma to vote for the emergence of the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Republic Union of Burma. It was only after the Burma Citizenship Law of 1982 proclaimed by the dictatorship of General Ne Win and his so-called Socialist Government; that Myanmar Muslim communities faced the different kinds of problems in many aspects socially, economically and politically, including their identity problem. Today, the Myanmar Muslim refugees’ problem extends, not only to border countries like Bangladesh and Thailand, but also to Saudi Arabia as well as to ASEAN countries, as refugees and boats-people in the beginning of 2009.29 Therefore, this study is important not only to Myanmar society but also to the world communities including ASEAN, the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

General Ne Win had ruled Myanmar since 1962 after a successful military coup by the Revolutionary Council and then it formed the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) to govern the nation in his socialist

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APPENDIX IX

This document also gives us the evidence that the socialist government led by General Ne Win has already confirmed that there are 144 national races in Burma, including 6 Myanmar Muslim communities namely:

(1) Rakhine-Chittagong,
(2) Burmese Muslim,
(3) Rakhine-Kaman,
(4) Myedu,
(5) other Burmese-Indians (except Chittagong, Hindustani, Tamil, Talagu, Dainet, other Indians and Pakistanis) and
(6) Burmese-Chinese (including Panthay).
It is noteworthy that
Yunan, Canton, Fukan and other Chinese, and
Chittagong, Hindustani, Tamil, Talagu, Dainet, other Indians and Pakistanis are separately mentioned as foreigners.
APPENDIX X

“There are 143 National Races in the Union”
“It has been already prepared to take the Population Census”
BOTAHTAUNG DAILY, 23 FEBRUARY 1973

This evidence shows that the Immigration and Manpower Department has already confirmed that there are 143 national races in Burma in 1973, including Myanmar Muslim communities namely: (1) Rakhine-Chittagong, (2) Burmese Muslim, (3) Rakhine-Kaman, (4) Myedu, (5) other Burmese-Indians (except Chittagong, Hindustani, Tamil, Talagu, Dainet, other Indians and Pakistanis) and (6) Burmese-Chinese (including Panthay). The government newspapers also described this fact officially.

Courtesy: The late U Tun Yee, General Secretary of Kaman National League for Democracy