Notice

The analysis attached is the final draft of an article by Jacques P Leider which appears on Pages 204 - 255 of a collection of essays "Nation Building in Myanmar" published by Myanmar Egress and the Myanmar Peace Center, with the support of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

The publication date is given as June 2013, but distribution has been delayed and the attached version is dated 28 January 2014.

The article as printed uses no bold type to highlight points. It is titled "Rohingya: the name, the movement and the quest for identity".

The publication is available only through private distribution and is not on sale in Myanmar.

Network Myanmar has been given a scanned copy of the article as finally published, but the attached final draft is easier to read and contains only one third the number of megabytes.

Network Myanmar
25 June 2014

Rohingya
The name. The movement. The quest for identity.

For quite a long time during the nineteenth and twentieth century, ethnicity was defined by cultural and racial criteria supported by the underlying assumption that cultural characteristics were markers of a fixed identity. People could thus be divided and subdivided into essentialized ethnic categories. It is this "culturalist" and racial understanding of ethnic identity, read back into history and widely spread in Myanmar, that has led to the formulation of the so-called list of 135 ethnic groups, a list that reflects political choices based on ethnic, cultural and historical criteria. These groups are hierarchized and co-exist in a multi-layered context that is determined by historical precursors, socio-economic environments and changing political conditions. Some are arguably more dominant and prominent than others. In Myanmar the constitutionally defined ethnic categories are often said to derive from the colonial state. But one may as well trace the concept of such categories back to various lists of 101 peoples found in precolonial Myanmar, Rakhine and Mon texts.[1] While ethnicity is a rigid concept that dominates political and social relations in Myanmar, contemporary scholarship would not support the inflexibility of such categories, because it rejects the "reification of ethnic distinctions" and the "obscuring" of processes of ethnic change.[2] Anthropological research tells us that ethnic identity is not intrinsically given and fixed, but subject to change as much as society as a whole is nowhere fitting a once-for-all model. Identities undergo transformation, as people migrate and adapt to new places, to socio-economic change and to cultural challenges. The close observation and analysis of such changes is precisely one of the objects of social studies in general and historians, in particular, have been interested in identities that fade and new collective identities that take shape. Collective self-awareness and cultural markers form the visible and vocal parts of novel identities, but it is the creation of new political borders (or state-building) and the emergence of divisive political projects that appear, at hindsight, as the key determinant factors. When the formation of identities is analyzed, the deeply political nature of this process cannot escape our attention. Identity, in the view of modern scholars, is not merely a naturally given, but it is very much written into a collective, open-ended historical experience, both construed and fluid. This does not mean though that newly emergent identities will automatically take hold, go socially and legally uncontested and obtain recognition. The issue can be highly controversial. When social scientists focus, for example, on the building of a collective national identity in the State of Singapore, a relatively new country, or the issue of recognition of the Palestinians as a nation, they face such highly complex, historically individualized and eventually contested contexts.

---

[1] A compilation of such lists is provided by U Tin, *Myanmar Min Okchokpon Sadan,* chapter 188.

[2] Keyes, "Peoples of Asia", 1164.

In a country such as the Union of Myanmar, ethnic identity is a fixed concept that defines the identity of the State and it is not seen as something that can be either questioned, changed or re-invented. In the current political situation, the ethnic order is validated by negotiations that reach out for a political compromise between the government and various ethnic groups. One may thus conclude that an ethnic order is seen as a part of the answer to a situation of disunity and inequality.

The problem-ladden co-existence of Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine State demonstrates that the ethnic order can also be part of the difficulties. Since the early 1950s, one part of the Muslims in the North of Rakhine State have claimed to be a culturally distinct and separate ethnic group, identifying itself by the name "Rohingya". Rohingyas conflate the history of all Muslims in Rakhine's past with their own condition in Myanmar today and they hold the belief that "Rohingyas" have existed in Rakhine for many generations. The recognition of this claim has been unsuccessful, because it did not get legal acceptance by the State and has been hotly contested by the Buddhist majority which denies this identity. The violent confrontations between Buddhists and Muslims that took place in 2012 and 2013, have worsened a problematic issue that has not been dealt with appropriately by neighboring governments during several decades. Among the manifold political and social challenges that Myanmar faces since it started its political reform process in 2011, the nature of the claims of the "Rohingyas" makes it into one of the most thorny challenges for the Myanmar authorities.

Some observers consider that the viewpoints are so irreconcilably opposed that there is no solution at hand. They have a point. Antipathy, rejection, dissatisfaction with the political and economic conditions, deep-seated but often diffuse frustrations have been building up on both sides and over such a long time that political remedies are not easily at hand. Extremists have put oil into the xenophobic fire and ongoing acts of violence have further entrenched and reinforced the communal divisions. The general public sentiment outside of the country has been in favor of the Muslims due to the huge numbers of victims affected and the aggressively vocal anti-Muslim stance of many Rakhine. The events of 2012 and the streams of fleeing and displaced people have in fact made a bad situation in Rakhine infinitely worse. Nobody can rejoice about the situation as it is today. Rakhine's much talked about economic development that depends on the mobilisation of all of its human resources is seriously hampered, because the two communities have only learned to look at each other in most uncompromising ways.

The international media and outside observers have portrayed the Rakhine communal conflict merely in terms of violations of human rights, so-called Rakhine racism and xenophobia, Muslim victimhood and dysfunctional state organs. At least for some experts, the solution to the problem looks surprisingly easy. They consider that by giving full citizenship rights and ensuring greater state protection, the issue would be resolved. True, these are important elements of the debate, but given the historical and cultural background of the dissensions, such recommendations, often given in the absence of calls for communal dialogue and putting the burden on the shoulders of the

government alone, lack a deeper sensitivity to a situation that has been a festering wound for over half a century.

This paper tries to untangle some of the elements that sustain the debate on Rohingya identity. A key element of contention is the name "Rohingya" which the paper will address in its first part. Viewing Rohingya identity not as a fixed category, but as a recent process that is still in the move, the paper will look at the political conditions under which the Rohingya movement materialized and gave birth to the claims of a separate ethnic identity. From their modern origins in the 1950s, the Rohingyas are best defined as a political and militant movement as its foremost aim was the creation of an autonomous Muslim zone. A brief chronological outline of Rohingya organisations that have emerged since the early 1950s and that flourished mostly outside the country, illustrates this description.

Regarding the legitimacy of the claim to such a distinct Rohingya identity, lengthy and at times acrimonious debates have been held in small circles of Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims over more than thirty years, well before the recent events on the ground attracted the attention of the international community. To know the arguments raised in these debates is a pre-requirement to a critical appreciation of the conflict.

But the global media and international human rights reports have only focused on the humanitarian situation of displaced people, human rights violations, and the legal status of the Rohingya. Due to the greater number of Muslim victims, the origin of the violence has been generally attributed to widely spread Rakhine xenophobia. Discussions on Rohingya identity and the historical background have been altogether eschewed. The international shows of solidarity with Muslim misery have had nothing to do with the discourse of the Rohingya about themselves that has been inadvertently acknowledged as true in the sense of political rightfulness. It may even have seemed unfair to question the historical claims mostly made by the exiled Rohingya leaders, given the portrayal of the awful living conditions of the refugees and internally displaced people in the media. The one-sidedness of the representation of the issue has hampered the prospects of a wider conversation about the core issue of Rohingya identity and community formation and increased the level of intolerance. Someone who publicly questions the term "Rohingya" as eventually not being the ethno-religious category that Rohingyas claim it to be, may be suspected to act in collusion with Rakhine chauvinists. But the point to be made is not about denying or rejecting. It is about trying to understand what those who claim the label "Rohingya" mean by the use of the term and why the Buddhist Rakhine have vehemently contested its use. Moreover it needs to be seen how, from a historical point of view, the "Rohingya" category has been construed by Muslims in northern Rakhine to legitimize their claims to be recognized as a culturally distinct Muslim community with a project of political autonomy.

Another noteworthy aspect of the two-colored way in which the communal issue has been represented relates to the agency attributed to the two communities. While the international media have rhetorically encased the Muslims in a status of overall victimhood, devoid of any agency, the

Buddhist Rakhine have been portrayed as perpetrators, solely enjoying a position to rule the action and devastating their neighbors. The corollary of this black and white division has been a denial of communication with the Buddhists on behalf of those who wanted to show their solidarity with the Muslims. As humanitarian caretakers and advocacy movements have exclusively lend a voice to the Rohingyas, the Rakhine Buddhists were not only discredited by the anti-Muslim acts of vengeance and aggression initiated by extremists in 2012 and 2013, but showed themselves incompetent to articulate their points of view, their discontent and their long held griefs, which, by the way, do not only pertain to the Rohingya issue.

The name "Rohingya"

One of the facts that has puzzled both the public and many experts is that the name "Rohingya" can be found nowhere in historical sources - with the single exception of a late eighteenth century text. Today the term is commonly used in the media to refer to either all or the majority of the Muslim communities in Rakhine State. The Myanmar authorities and the Buddhist Rakhine have both come under fire for rejecting the term "Rohingya" and sticking to the long established name "Bengali". As the forefathers of the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Rakhine have migrated from Bengal to Rakhine, their descendants and the Muslims as a whole have in fact been rather uncontroversially referred to as "Bengalis" until the early 1990s. During the colonial period, most migrants came from Chittagong Division, so they were also called "Chittagonians". This traditional naming is now contested. To call the Muslims in North Rakhine "Bengalis" is not only totally rejected by those who claim a Rohingya identity, because it connects them implicitly to their historically non-Myanmar origins, but it is seen internationally as a discriminatory statement. Naming is thus not only an integral part of a debate on a contested identity, but it also has leverage with regard to the representation of their legal status. To not use the term "Rohingya" has become tantamount to a lack of political correctness coming close to denying them basic rights.[3]

While it is true that the term "Rohingya" has become more popular since the 1990s, there has been no broad understanding about its meaning and its use with regard to other terms to refer to the Muslims in Rakhine. One obvious reason for this confusion is the relatively incoherent historical discourse on the Rohingya movement itself as we will see below. Another reason is the absence of primary research on the Rakhine Muslims that can be credibly referred to. At the moment, the increasing use of the term does not look like a recognition of Rohingya ethnic claims, but rather like a matter of political accommodation. Most writers use the word "Rohingya" as a term of convention for a persecuted Muslim population even though the word lacks the basic characteristic of a conventional name, i.e. general recognition and agreed meaning. Many hesitate and combine it with other terms to give it greater precision and some do still link the term "Rohingya" mainly to groups

---

[3] The name of the well known Bengali Sunni Mosque near Yangon's Sule Pagoda recalls us that Indian migrants from Bengal have not only settled in Rakhine, but also in many other places in Myanmar. Half of the Indian immigrants to Burma during the colonial period were from Bengal. As far as this author knows, the term "Bengali" is not used in a derogatory way outside of Rakhine and there have been no claims by other originally Bengali migrants to be called "Rohingya" as they would have claimed a cultural or ethnic connection with Muslims in Rakhine State.

of Muslim insurgents. With the Rohingya movement in constant flow since the 1950s, the construction of a Rohingya identity has remained fluid, but the relative success of its name has ensured its growing acceptability internationally. This is, as it will be shown, a new and quite recent shift.

Klaus Fleischmann wrote the first extensive study on the Muslim refugee crisis of 1977-78.[4] In the historical part, he quotes Ba Tha, the modern father of Rohingya ideology, but never uses himself the term "Rohingya" throughout his book to refer to the Muslims of Rakhine.[5] His explanation of the "racial, religious and social tensions" between the "Arakanese-Buddhist and Muslim-Bengali population groups" that led to the dramatic events of 1977-78 is based on a broad historical review. It stresses the impact of illegal immigration from East Pakistan after independence to explain the crisis. Fleischmann does not say anything on the Rohingya movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He uses the term "Rohingya" only four times throughout his book, three times in quoting other authors and a single time as an implicit reference to the insurgents of the Rohingya Patriotic Front.[6] Alan C. Lindquist's report on the 1978-79 UNHCR operations in Bangladesh refers to the refugees as "Bengali Muslims (called Rohingyas)". Similar to Fleischmann, Lindquist linked the mass exodus to recent illegal migrations, particularly from Bangladesh after 1971.

> *"The roots of this mass exodus can evidently be traced to increased immigration from Bangladesh in recent years into this isolated area somewhat tenuously controlled by the central government of the Union of Burma, and to the apparent growth of a movement for the autonomy or independence of the Arakan among both the Buddhists and the Muslims of the area."[7]*

At the time of the second exodus of a quarter million people in the early 1990s, a shift towards a greater use of the term "Rohingya" took place. A certain ambiguity on the meaning has always prevailed as the parallel use of combined terms suggests. An Amnesty International report of 1992, for example, speaks of the

> *"Muslims from the Rakhine State, sometimes referred to as Rohingyas…distinct linguistically from the Buddhist Burman majority of Myanmar"* **and explains that** *"those who use the term Rohingya to refer to themselves claim that they*

---

[4] Fleischmann, *Arakan – Konfliktregion zwischen Birma und Bangladesh*, 121.

[5] Ba Tha or M.A. Tahir is best known by his articles in the *Guardian (Monthly Magazine)* where he looked at historical traces of Muslim presence in Rakhine State and compiled the cultural elements that lay claim to a regional Muslim identity figuring under the name "Roewenhnyas". "Roewenhnyas" is a spelling that has not been followed after Ba Tha. As Ba Tha wrote in 1959 and 1960, one may eventually argue that he summarised ideas that had been circulating and gained acceptance throughout the 1950s.

[6] Fleischmann, *Arakan – Konfliktregion zwischen Birma und Bangladesh*, 165. Fleischmann (158) explains that the Rohingya Patriotic Front had been founded in 1964-5 by Mohammad Zaffir and Mustafi to fight for an independent Rakhine State.

[7] Lindquist, *Report on the 1978-79 Bangladesh refugee relief operation*. Lindquist was a UNHCR officer.

> *were the descendants of Arab and Persian traders who have lived in the area for centuries."*[8]

A *Human Rights Watch* report of 1993 uses in parallel the expressions "Burmese refugees from Arakan" and "Rohingya Muslims".[9] In his famous book *Burma in Revolt - Opium and Insurgency since 1948,* Bertil Lintner describes the Muslims of Rakhine as "another hybrid race which much later was to become known as the Rohingyas", accepting that the presence of Muslims long predated the adoption of the name "Rohingyas". Lintner reproduces on the other hand a standard Rohingya reading of Rakhine history.[10] Such full-fledged renderings of Rohingya ideas that pass discreetly over the recent Bengali roots of northern Rakhine Muslims, have been rare. In a paper distributed in 1995 among the embassies in Yangon, Peter Nicolaus, a UNHCR officer presented what he calls "A Brief Account on the History of the Muslim Population in Arakan". It offers a useful summary of post-1942 events, but the pre-colonial historical account reproduces an exclusive Rohingya version of Muslim history in Rakhine of which the author was probably not fully aware. Martin Smith mentioned in 1995 that the term "Rohingya" had become "increasingly popular in recent years". He put the term between quotation marks like many other authors after him reflecting a fair degree of hesitation on how to use the name.[11] He was probably the first Western author who took note of the

> *"split between those who have traditionally described themselves as "Arakanese Muslims" as a religious group within the Arakanese peoples – and those Muslim nationalists, largely concentrated in the north, who prefer to call themselves 'Rohingyas'".*[12]

It becomes obvious that the term "Rohingya" has also spread more widely in recent times because it was their community, and unlike in 2013, not the Muslims in Rakhine in general, that endured forced labour and ill-treatment.

Qualified authors such as Lewa and Selth have left no ambiguity as to the ethnic roots of the Rohingyas. In a report presented at the *Canadian Friends of Burma Public Conference* in 2002, Chris Lewa stated that "the Rohingya Muslims are ethnically and religiously related to the Chittagonians of southern Bangladesh".[13] In his authoritative paper on Myanmar's Muslims published in 2003,

---

[8] Amnesty International, *Report May 1992*, "Human rights violations against Muslims in the Rakhine (Arakan) State. Based on 100 interviews with Burmese Muslim refugees from the Rakhine (Arakan) State" Note that other Muslims in Burma also make the claim to be descendants of Arabs and Persians.

[9] Asia Watch (HRW), *Bangladesh: abuse of Burmese refugees from Arakan*, Vol. 5, No. 17, 9 October 1993.

[10] Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt Opium* 65.

[11] See for example Tin Maung Maung Than: "Calling themselves "Rohingya", many of these families migrated from Bangladehs over the last 150 years and claimed to have been persecuted and often fled *en masse* into Bangladesh to be repatriated repeatedly," Tin Maung Maung Than, "Human Security Challenges in Myanmar," 190-1.

[12] Martin Smith, "The Muslim "Rohingyas" of Burma".

[13] Chris Lewa, "The refugee situation on the western borders of Burma". It is worthwhile to note that Lewa who has invested over a decade in doing advocacy for Rohingya refugees, acknowledges, unlike many other

Andrew Selth uses the term "Rohingya" as a conventional term to refer to the "largest Muslim community in Burma today". He does not discuss the name as such, but offers a clear and straightforward historical definition:

> *"These are Bengali Muslims who live in Arakan State… most Rohingyas arrived with the British colonialists in the 19th and 20th centuries".*[14]

Other academic authors who similarly use the term "Rohingya," use it now conventionally for the Muslims in Rakhine in general and do not share in the controversy that surrounds its use. While they escape thus an unresolved complexity and conveniently match a new political correctness, they do not establish *per se* the term's acceptability as an ethnic term. Just a few examples may be quoted here. Christina Fink, an anthropologist, acknowledges in a balanced way in her work both the denial of citizenship for "most Rohingya" and the "Buddhist Rakhine population's fears of a Muslim takeover".[15] But she does not use the term "Rohingya" as an ethnic identifier when she writes about "small armed groups of Muslims generally known as Rohingya".[16] Benedict Rogers has relentlessly criticised the Myanmar military regime which he accuses of targetting the Rohingya for "extra persecution". But he fairly acknowledges the existence of a "serious debate as to whether the Rohingya represent one of Burma's historic ethnic nationalities" and correctly defines the Rohingya as "Muslims of Bengali ethnic origin".[17] In *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, a volume edited by Mikael Gravers in 2007, we find the following sentence in the introduction "The Muslim Rohingya in Arakan State are not recognized as an ethnic group by the SPDC and but rather *(sic)* are labelled as 'illegal immigrants'."[18] A statement like this may be a legitimate criticism of the military regime with regard to its ethnic politics, but at the same time, due to its relatively neutral tone, it shies away from hinting at the controversial nature of the underlying issues of ethnic recognition and illegal immigration – the last one being a fact that pre-1990 authors had no problem to openly acknowledge as we have seen above. In a way that is both sensitive and balanced, David Steinberg presents the "people that call themselves Rohingya" as an "unrecognized cultural minority" that has emerged in a space with "traditionally undefined frontiers" and "heavily Muslim and culturally related populations".[19] More recently, Egreteau and Jagan have used the term throughout their book to refer to the majority Muslims from Rakhine after duly explaining that the term "Rohingya" is the name under which "the local Muslim populations had been known since the 1950s".[20] In the latest reports of the *International Crisis Group* like in many other articles in

---

Western pro-Rohingya activists, that "the Rakhine Buddhists are also a neglected ethnic group in Burma".

[14] This definition is the exact opposite of what Rohingya ideology wants to make us believe. Andrew Selth, *Burma's Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorised?* 7.

[15] Fink, *Living Silence* , 127.

[16] Fink, *Living Silence* , 47. There are probably more examples to be found to illustrate how much Rohingya is appears as an undetermined floating category.

[17] Rogers, *Than Shwe* . 104.

[18] Gravers (ed.), *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, x.

[19] Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar What everyone needs to know,* 22.

[20] Egreteau/Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma,* 132.

the printed press or written for the social media, the expression "Rohingya Muslims" alternates with "Muslim Rohingyas" where it is generally understood that the expressions refer to Muslims who suffer persecution in Rakhine. But a clear definition of the term is generally omitted. Michael Charney, one the very few historians to mention the Rohingyas, identifies them as "Muslim Arakanese". Occasionally used by Rohingya writers, this expression introduces an alternate, but significantly different semantic dimension.[21] Given the name-recognition that the term enjoys at present, "Rohingya" may eventually establish itself as an exonymized term of reference for a Muslim subgroup in Myanmar. At present, as an ethnic-cum-religious denomination, "Rohingya" remains a "soft" name. The term is highly polarizing in Myanmar and its use is part of the problem, i.e. the controversial Rohingya identity; moreover there is no international consensus on its use, no legal recognition and no anthropological or sociological scholarship giving credit to the term. Today, it has still to take hold in those countries where the Muslims from Rakhine State are said to have fled by tens and hundreds of thousand in the 1970s. Traditionally they have been called "Burmese Muslims" by Saudi Arabian and Pakistani journalists.[22] The recent international media reports have dictated a new political correctness that will not necessarily change these linguistic habits. For anyone who wants to sense the dazzling complexity of naming and reflect on a complex history of migrations may turn to a comparative reading of Wikipedia's articles on "Pakistanis in Burma" and "Burmese people in Pakistan".

From a lingustic point of view, the name "Rohingya" is derived from the Indianized form of Rakhine, i.e. Rakhanga. Following Dr Thibaut d'Hubert, "the rules of historical linguistics of the Indo-aryan languages allow to easily explain the phonological derivation 'Rakhanga' > 'Rohingya'. The passage from [kh] to [h] is the rule in the passage from Sanskrit to Prakrit, which allows us to derive Rohingya from Rakhanga: Rakhanga > *Rahanga > (short "a" becomes "o" in bengali) *Rohangga > (introduction of [y]# to indicate the gemination which induces an alternative pronounciation " –gya" and influences the vowel [a] which becomes [i]) thence "Rohingya".[23] While the scientific demonstration may look a bit awkward to the lay reader, it accounts in fact for the change of each letter and sound. In association with the paradigm "Rakhanga>Rohingya", one should refer as well to the name "Roshanga", "widely spread since the beginning of Bengali literature in the Chittagong region, i.e. since the early 17th century till the end of the 18th c."[24] In sum, the word "Rohingya" does not refer to, or mean anything else, but "Rakhine" in the local Muslim language.

---

[21] Charney, *History of Modern Burma*, 184.

[22] See Rabia and Syed in the references section.

[23] Thibaut D'Hubert is assistant professor for Bangla language and Bengal Studies in the South Asian Languages and Civilizations department of the University of Chicago and the foremost expert on the seventeenth and eighteenth century Bengali literature written in Arakan. (Written communication to the author, 3 August 2012).

[24] Thibaut d'Hubert further explains regarding the name "Roshang" or "Roshanga": "The [s] is phonologically associated with aspirated [kh] (as in Braj and other Hindustani dialects) and becomes [h] in North-east Bengali dialects and Assamese. S-kh-h are thus situated along the same phonetic paradigm within Indo-aryan languages." (Written communication to the author, 3 August 2012).

The name Rakkhanga (or Rakhanga) itself is a sanskritized form of Rakhine. In Rakhine, we find the name of the country as Arrakhadesa in the Anandacandra pillar inscription of the 11th century. Rakhine [Rakhuiṅ] in the Burmese script is found for the first time in an inscription of the 14th century AD (Mahathi Crocodile Rock inscription A. 156) in associated terms such as "Rakhine min", Rakhine ruler, and "Rakhine naing-ngan", referring to the area under the king's sway.[25] In Sri Lankan sources on Arakan, the term "Rakkhangapura" is found.[26] The terms Rakkhanga and Rakhine have been the object of inconclusive etymological speculations. The name has often been associated with the term 'raksha', a demon of Hindu mythology. There have also been various interpretations of the name "Rohingya" that postulate either Arab or Rakhine or mixed etymologies. They cater to ideological needs and do not stand up to scrutiny.[27]

The word "Rohingya" (under the form "Rooinga") appears a single time in a precolonial English text. This is Dr Francis Hamilton-Buchanan's article intitled "A comparative vocabulary of some of the languages spoken in the Burma Empire" published in *Asiatick Researches or Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia* in 1799. As the use of the term is unique, one needs to pay close attention to its meaning. Among three dialects spoken in the "Burma empire but evidently derived from the language of the Hindu nation", Hamilton mentions one "spoken by the Mohammedans, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arakan" and another spoken by the Hindus of Arakan.[28] These statements were based on evidence gathered at Amarapura while Hamilton was a member of the mission of Captain Michael Symes to the court of King Badon (Bodawphaya) during the months of February to October 1795. Hamilton was a brilliant young medical doctor who has left a highly important and precious scientific work of collecting, like an early ethnographer, cultural and political testimonials from many provinces in India where the English ruled in the early nineteenth century. We owe him also a number of geographical papers related to Myanmar. For our purpose it is useful to note that he knew the region of Chittagong very well whose exploration he pioneered and he published papers on the border region with the Myanmar

---

[25] At an earlier period of Myanmar history, we find the term "Rakhine" in Pagan inscriptions where it refers to people but not to a kingdom or a country. For a full review of these references, see Frasch, "Coastal Peripheries during the Pagan Period;" 93-106. One should note that in many instances where we find the name in historical sources, it should not be understood as denoting the vast extent of the Mrauk U kingdom in general or what we understand as Rakhine State today, but simply as the territory covered by the plains of the Kaladan and Lemro valleys.

[26] Regarding pre-colonial relations between Sri Lanka and Rakhine, see Leider, "Forging Buddhist Credentials as a Tool of Legitimacy and Ethnic Identity, 409-459.

[27] See the Wikipedia article on "Rohingya people" for a presentation of such etymologies (last accessed on 12 October 2013). The explanation provided in the *Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State,* 2013, 54 is the latest attempts to suggest a composite origin. Khin Maung Saw, 1993, has dealt with several explanations. He provides an interesting historical note on the eventual role of the Communist Party guerrilla in the choice of the name "Rohingya" to identify the separatist cause of the Mujahedin.

[28] Hamilton, "A Comparative Vocabulary…," 223.

kingdom.[29] He is the first Western author who made observations on the differences between Myanmar and Rakhine phonology. In a word, he was probably one of the most, if not the most qualified person to have knowledge on Rakhine-related issues in his time. What we learn from Hamilton is, on the one hand, that there was a Muslim community in Rakhine at the moment of the conquest in 1784 and, on the other hand, that both Muslims and Hindus were among those hundreds or thousands of Rakhine who had been deported and resettled in Upper Myanmar. These Muslims spoke an Indian language of their own in which they called themselves "Rooinga," to state the place where they came from. In the absence of any other evidence, an interpretation of the word as being more than a plain reference to the geographic origin of the Muslims is debatable. Buchanan, who, a few years later, travelled widely in the area between the Naf River and Chittagong, never mentions a separate Muslim community bearing that name.[30] As many Muslims from Rakhine had also fled the kingdom around the time that Hamilton visited the area (a point generally stressed by Rohingya writers and which can be readily admitted), there is a least a great likelihood that Hamilton could have heard the name.[31] When there is hardly any evidence and the context so little understood, interpretation becomes a matter of speculation rather than reasoning. But again, there is absolutely no doubt about the existence of urban and rural Muslim communities who were living inside the kingdom that became part of Myanmar in 1785.[32] Rather than looking for "Rohingya" origins in an unknowable distant past, it seems advisable to look at the evidence we have. The existence of Muslim settlements in Rakhine goes first of all back to the tens of thousands of Bengalis deported by Rakhine fleets from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries and resettled in the Kaladan valley, communities about whose existence both Dutch sources in the seventeenth and English sources of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provide information.[33] A literate Muslim community also existed in Mrauk U. More knowledge about the relations that existed in the late eighteenth century between the educated Muslim classes of Mrauk U and Chittagong have emerged recently from manuscript studies. The end of the eighteenth century was an important phase in the development of Orientalist studies with philological work being

---

[29] Schendel *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798)*. Hamilton, "An account of the frontier between part of Bengal and kingdom of Ava," Hamilton, "An account of the frontier between Ava and part of Bengal adjacent to the Karnaphuli river," Hamilton, "An account of the frontier between the southern part of Bengal and the kingdom of Ava."

[30] Schendel, *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798)*.

[31] Abdul Mabud Khan says that the people from the district of Chittagong "even today use the term 'Rohāngyā' to mean …. the Arakanese Muslims, " *The Maghs A Buddhist Community in Bangladesh*, 44.

[32] It is relevant to distinguish between Islamic cultural influence and Muslims who were settled in Rakhine. We have no hard evidence of contacts or settlers before the 15th century. Islamic cultural influence on the Rakhine court came first from the sultanate of Bengal in the 15th century, as shown by the minting of coins. During Mrauk U's golden age in the 17th century, Chittagong was an economic pillar of the kingdom and Muslims formed a large part of the king's subjects and Muslim traders competed with Portuguese and Dutch traders. When Bengal fell into the hands of the Mughals in 1567, soldiers who had fought against the Mughals apparently took service at the court of Rakhine. For an updated overview on the role of Muslims in the Mrauk U kingdom, see d'Hubert and Leider, "Traders and Poets at the Mrauk-U court - On commerce and cultural links in seventeenth century Arakan".

[33] Van Galen, "Arakan and Bengal"; Leider, ""An Account of Arakan".

undertaken on Sanskrit sources, often on the basis of Persian translations. But the Brahmanist tradition was not the only focus of interest of the British orientalists. Calcutta and Bengal being at the heart of the raging passion for the foundational texts of Asian civilizations, it is not surprising that near-by Rakhine also drew attention as it belonged to the Buddhist culture. Current research on the Persian and Rakhine manuscripts of John McGregor Murray in London (British Library) and Berlin (Staatsbibliothek) shows that Rakhine Buddhist texts were translated into Persian and systematic enquiries were made on Rakhine Buddhist practice, beliefs and tradition already since the 1780s. Some of this information had been accessible to Captain Michael Symes before his famous mission to Amarapura in 1795. Beyond the peculiar insight into the cultural brokership of both local Muslim teachers and Buddhist monks (probably from the vicinity of Chittagong) who translated these works, the manuscripts also throw light on the intellectual networks of Muslims that testify to a shared Muslim culture and identity that spanned the north-east coast of the Bay of Bengal until the colonial period.[34]

Thomas Campbell Robertson, a magistrate from Chittagong, was one of the first English to initiate himself to the Rakhine language and he started to collect Rakhine manuscripts since 1825. But this was a rare occurrence. Other evidence of the East India Company's expansion eastwards suggests that the British interacted with the population through local Muslim translators in the early colonial times and obtained historical information on the country through local Muslims.[35] A Protestant missionary from Ternate, J.C. Fink, who tried to "missionize" among the Buddhist Rakhine both in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and in Akyab (Sittway) between 1821 and 1838, has left a description of Rakhine Muslims:

> *"They were not Mughs converted to the Mahomedan faith, but bona fide Musulmans whose ancestors had been imported into the province from Bengal. They are supposed to have been brought away as slaves during the time when Arracan was an independent kingdom … Many of the Mugh Mussulmans still retain the language and habits of their forefathers; many have to all intents and purposes identified themselves with the natives of the soil; but all have adopted the style of dress and some of the habits of the country. They even keep long hair which is worn intertwined in the folds of the gambong or head-dress and coiled round the head. The only difference in outward appearance between them and*

---

[34] Some Rohingya ideologists postulate that the Myanmar conquest of Rakhine hailed the "definite end of the Rohingya cultural and language, since they could not maintain their social structure as minority in the diaspora." Others pretend that half of the population of Chittagong originally came from Rakhine.

[35] Charles Paton's *Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan*, published in 1828, is based on a local chronicle that Robertson obtained in early 1824 from a monk. It was translated by a "Bengalee interpreter" before it was expanded and published by Paton, as Robertson explains in his memories written thirty years later (ROBERTSON, "*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*", 33).

the Mughs is their long and solemn beards which, being a badge of discipleship, can on no account be dispensed with."[36]

This testimonial that can be complemented by a few others, shows that Muslims in Rakhine at the time of Myanmar rule (1784-1826) were overall considered as descendants of Bengali slaves who had largely assimilated to local Rakhine society while keeping their own religious tradition.[37] The general impression is that in these days there was no significant social or cultural difference between Muslims living north or south of the Naf River, i.e. in the Chittagong District and in the territory of the old kingdom.

Some of King Bodawphaya's political measures taken after the conquest of Rakhine hint at the long established presence of dignitaries and officials hailing from Bengal at the court of the Rakhine kings. The king's general interest for Rakhine is not a minor historical detail. It is well known that the dethroned king Thamada and the royal household of Rakhine were deported together with high ranking monks. The Rakhine *punnas* (court brahmins and ceremonial specialists who came all from Bengal) were collectively deported to Amarapura and became a new elite at the Konbaung court. [38] The king appointed Abhisha Husseini, the head of the Rakhine Muslims as head of all the Muslims of Myanmar.[39]

After the British occupation of Rakhine in 1825 and the Yandabo treaty of 1826, many, if not most, people from Rakhine who had taken refuge in the district of Chittagong returned to Rakhine.[40] Beside those who returned, there were also new settlers who came from the Chittagong district. They were attracted by the commercialization of rice cultivation in Rakhine and the development of the port of Akyab by the British. Reverend Comstock, an American Baptist missionary who stayed in Rakhine from 1834 to 1844, writes:

---

[36] Robinson, *Among the Mughs or Memorials of the Rev.J. C. Fink ,Missionary in Arracan*, 79-80.

[37] William Foley, a British officer, confirms the acculturation of the Muslims in his description:"They are now so assimilated to the rest of the population in dress, language, and feature, that it is difficult to conceive a distinction ever existed. As if ashamed of their Muhammedan descent, individuals of this class have generally two names, one that they derive from birth and the other such as is common to the natives of Arracan, and by which they are desirous of being known." FOLEY,"Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree…, 200-1. Rev. Comstock was less assertive regarding the acculturation : "The Mussulmans are supposed to be the descendants of Bengalee slaves, imported when the kings of Ava [*read: "Arakan", JL*] held Chittagong and Tippera. They have retained for the most part the language and customs of their forefathers; but have partially adopted the dress of the country." (Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 228.

[38] Leider, "Specialists for ritual, magic and devotion - The court Brahmins (*punna*) of the Konbaung kings (1752-1885)" , 159-202.

[39] Royal order of 17 November 1807, in Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma* (Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1983-90), vol.6.

[40] When thousands of people fled Rakhine in the late eighteenth century under the pressure of Myanmar troops who brutally requisitioned Rakhine rice stocks for King Bodawphaya's naval expeditions against Siam, there were also Muslims. They were easily integrated into the local society of the Chittagong district. There is no reason not to assume that many of them returned to Rakhine as well though we unfortunately know nothing in detail.

> *"Within a few years past, many Bengalee Mussulmans have immigrated to Arakan, to get higher wages and better living, than they could procure in Chittagong".[41]*

Under the British administration between 1826 and 1937, there were no limits to Bengali migration to Rakhine as temporary workers and permanent settlers advanced the agricultural exploitation of the land. Little is known of the social life of the newly immigrating Muslim community in the northern part of Rakhine. They were undoubtedly united by their religious practice, their local dialect and shared social customs. The Rohingyas have insisted that the Bengali migrants to Rakhine before the Second World War were in fact only temporary residents. This argument has been critically raised with regard to the interpretation of British statistics.[42] But the ease at which even temporary workers could move within the region confirms just in another way the existence of a regional Muslim identity sustained by a shared cultural idiom and a network of exchanges within the political economy of growing settlements in northern Rakhine. One task for future research will be to explore the markers of this regional identity and its development in the pre-war period.

The demographic development of the Muslim population in Rakhine before the last quarter of the 19th century is poorly known. Regarding the percentage of Muslims in the total population, the figures at hand are contradictory. Rohingya writers have made ample use of the estimations found in Charles Paton's 1828 *Historical Sketch.* Based on the estimation of a total number of the population of 100,000 in 1824-25, Paton states that one third of Rakhine's population were Muslims whom he calls "Mussulman Sirdars". In fact, no census had been taken at that early period and Paton reproduced only the information that Thomas Campbell Robertson had gleaned. But Robertson never had an administrative function in Rakhine after the occupation.[43] In 1830, the total population was already estimated at about 174,000.[44] Though Reverend Comstock declares, as we have seen above, that many Bengali Muslims moved to Rakhine after the British occupation, he estimates the total of local Muslims only at 10 percent, while the newly immigrant Bengali Muslims at that time accounted for a mere 2 percent. But it should be recognized that these indications are also not very reliable, because we find a total of 250,000 at one place and an estimated total of 300,000 at another

---

[41] Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 228. The numbers he provides for the population are the following: "The population of Arakan at the present time (1842) is estimated at about 250.000. Of these, about 167.000 are Mugs, 40.000 are Burmese, 20.000 are Mussulmans, 10.000 are Kyens, 5000 are Bengalese, 3000 are Toungmroos, 2000 are Kemees, 1250 are Karens, and the remainder are of various races, in smaller numbers" (p. 224). On p. 255, the total population is estimated at 300,000.

[42] See for example Abu Aaneen: "Especially the immigrants in Arakan were mostly seasonal laborers." (Aaneen, *Towards Understanding….*, 101). He also thinks that the immigrants were mostly urban settlers. The Baxter Report of 1941 gives some indications on the flow of temporary workers, but states: "No information on which any reliance can be placed seems to exist regarding the number of Chittagonians who come to Akyab every year to reap the paddy crop." (p.50)

[43] It seems that he had collected this information before the invasion in 1825. After he had accompanied the invading troops on their march to Mrauk U, he was part of the English delegation negotiating with the Myanmar and he quit his function apparently out of disgust after finishing his mission at Yandabo.

[44] Seppings, "Arakan a hundred years ago…," 54.

place of the article. Moreover the detailed distribution of figures for ethnic-cum-religious groups provided with the first number amounts only to 208,250! Any kind of interpretation can be advanced from such vague numbers. More reliable data on the population can be found in the population census of 1869. It indicates the total of the population of Rakhine as 447,957 of which 24,637 were classified as "Mahomedans" which are a mere 5% of the total. The majority of the Muslims lived in the Akyab District where they formed 10% of the total population. This is surprising with regard to the earlier estimations, but the data tie well with the swelling and better documented migration during the following decades.

The importance of Bengali Muslim migration to Rakhine in the three decades that precede the First World War is reflected in the census tables of the *Akyab Gazetteer*.[45] In 1912, the predominantly Bengali-speaking Muslims formed over 30% of the population. Among a total population of 529,943 in Akyab district, 181,509 were said to be Bengali speakers while 178,647 were categorized among various Muslim denominations. It is worth recalling that the statistics also show very high immigration from Upper Burma during the same period of time. While the immigrant Burmese melted with the majority of Buddhist Rakhine over time, the local Muslims seem to have been largely absorbed by the newly immigrant Chittagonian Bengalis.[46]

From a regional to a local Muslim identity

Contemporary Rohingya writers claim that a local Rakhine Muslim identity to be called "Rohingya" has existed for centuries, because they argue for the recognition of distinct ethnic credentials. But at the same time, they point to the great diversity of ethnic origins and social backgrounds of Muslims during the pre-modern period which makes the hypothesis of a single identity rather unlikely.[47] As we have seen above, the Muslims of Bengali origins who lived in the country before the British colonisation had adapted to the Rakhine cultural environment, were integrated into the society and did not articulate a separate ethnic or communal status besides using their own language and practicing their religion. Statements found in the *Report on Indian Immigration* (Baxter report of 1940) echo descriptions of the 19th century that has been cited above:

> *"Arakanese Mohamedans returned an Indian vernacular as their mother tongue since although they used Burmese in writing, among themselves they commonly speak the language of their ancestors".[48]*

---

[45] *Burma Gazetteer Akyab District including Town and Village Census Tables, 9*

[46] Yegar takes the alternate view that "these Bengal Muslims integrated into the local Rohingya community by means of intermarriages between the Chittagong and the local Rohingyas, or even Buddhists…" Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession …*, 27. But given the fact that, as Yegar writes, "as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, there were twice as many Indian Muslim immigrants than local Muslims" (*Between Integration and Secession …*, 28), it is fair to conclude that the local Muslims were absorbed by the immigrants.

[47] When Rohingya authors talk about their origins, they generally acknowledge this diversity. The classic Rohingya definition of their origins reads: "The Rohingyas trace their origin to Arabs, Moors, Turks, Persians, Moghuls, Pathans and Bengalees".

[48] *Report on Indiam Immigration, 5.*

Rohingya authors also want to make us accept that retrospectively all Muslims in Rakhine should be referred to as Rohingyas though this term is so exceedingly rare in the written sources. At the same time, they keep shut on the massive immigration of Chittagonian Bengalis that was the one event that fundamentally transformed the profile of the Muslim population in northern Rakhine during the late 19th and early 20th century. A detailed reading of Rohingya publications shows that the Rohingya identity is nothing less than the articulate naming of a distinctive, but hitherto ignored Muslim narrative that embeds virtually every Muslim living or having formerly lived in Rakhine into a distinct group. This ideology does not invent a historical tradition as such, but recycles for its own needs the history of Arakan as it was referred to by British colonial writers. Based on the eclectic record of references to the presence of a Muslim elite in the kingdom of Mrauk U, Rohingya authors stress what they see as the profoundly Islamic character of the Buddhist kingdom, making it resemble in their eyes to a sultanate. The Rohingya ideology validates the historical role of Muslims as much as it essentializes a Muslim identity with Rakhine markers. Pending a detailed analysis of this hybridized history, one may note that Rohingya interpretations tend to vastly exaggerate the facts, as when we read that Rohingyas were once a majority population in the kingdom or "Rohingyas were the kingmakers of Arakan for more than 350 years".[49]

Against this background of claims of a Muslim community in Northern Rakhine to gain recognition as an ethnic group within the nomenclature of Myanmar ethnicities, the questions that historians face relate to the constraints that conditioned the articulation of this new identity. The observable fact is that members of the educated Muslim class in Maungdaw and Buthidaung started to claim a separate "Rohingya" identity as they engaged in their fight for political autonomy after the Second World War. This recognizable political struggle was shouldered by an ideological process that may have been in the making since the late thirties and came to full fruition in the late fifties.[50] What may be conceptualized as Rohingya ideology is a literary construction based on a partial and eclectic reading of Arakanese history. The building of a communal identity referred to as "Rohingya" is a different issue, being a social process that has hitherto not been studied by anthropologists.

There is an absolute need to distinguish the political, social and ideological processes for analytical purposes. These processes, which have constantly interfered with each other during the last decades, are perceptibly still in the making. They do not harmonize even at the most superficial level, because there is neither a clearly identifiable Rohingya identity nor a streamlined Rohingya discourse about themselves. But the contradictions and disjunctions have had no impact on the international discourse *on* the Rohingyas, because of its narrow focus, and may thus not be obvious but to the social scientist. As this paper may eventually show, the ideological claims for a historical Rohingya identity will not necessarily match the conclusions that have to be drawn from a review

---

[49] http://arakanmuslim.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/is-muslim-population-rohingya-in-arakan.html (accessed on 20 October 2013).

[50] This is a tentative suggestion that needs to be tested. It is based on the appearance of the term "Rohingya" in 1936 for a local teachers' association and the dates of Ba Tha's writings that offer a full fledged Rohingya interpretation of Muslim history in Rakhine.

of the use of the name "Rohingya" or from observations that could be made on the ground by anthropologists on who the Muslim Rohingyas "are". It is for that reason and also due to the lack of sufficient scholarly research that Rohingyas should first be seen as a political movement that includes the organizations that identify with the struggle for the recognition of a Rohingya ethnicity and/or the creation of a separate political status of Muslims in Northern Rakhine. It is in this broad sense that the term "Rohingya movement" has been used above.[51]

With this conceptual clarification in mind, the historian faces a two-pronged investigation. The issue of the emergence of a communal identity takes him to reflect on the history of an imagined community that the Rohingyas claim in a certain way to be. Such a history cannot be equated to the patchwork history of Muslims that Rohingya ideology postulates. The second direction takes him to reformulate the above question on political conditions in a more precise way: What are the material reasons that have created an urge to express a separate local identity?[52]

One may firmly assume that without the demographic revolution provoked by the large scale Bengali immigration to Northern Rakhine over several decades, this development would not have taken place. Moshe Yegar summarizes the impact of the Chittagonian immigration like this:

> *"The influx of these immigrants (Hindus as well as Muslims) created a new minority which, from many standpoints, was larger, more highly developed, and certainly more alien, and despised than previous groups."[53]*

As a new group formed, it may have recycled collective local memories to forge a novel identity. But this development would probably not have taken place without outer pressure that pushed for social and political cohesion at an elite level. In April 1937, the administrative separation of Burma from British India started to change the political and social conditions in which the immigrants were living and may have created for the first time an urge to define collectively their separate identity. The creation of an association of Muslim teachers called *Jamiyat Rohingya Ulema*, in 1936, was in a way a forerunner of the effective separation a year later. The extremely violent Buddhist-Muslim clashes of 1942, to which we will turn below, created wounds that never healed and cemented the division between the Buddhist and Muslim communities in northern Rakhine. The Buddhist Rakhine were largely eradicated from the north of Akyab Division. Robert Mole writes in

---

[51] About the general problem of doing research on the Rohingya movement, see Moshe Yegar's introduction to his study of 2002: "There is almost no documentation for the Rohinga that originates with the movement itself, making it much more difficult to know and understand the situation of this minority," Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession* … x.

[52] One may more generally recall a common insight of historians and anthropologists who agree that itemized categories of ethnic identity as essentialized during the colonial period likely did not exist or form in the minds of the people in the same way as during the modern period.

[53] Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 28.

his memories that "the entire population of this area was now Muslim. They were Chittagonian by race and spoke a type of Bengali. Only a very few could speak Arakanese…"[54]

The violence must have reinforced the belief among the northern Rakhine Muslims that they had to take the fate in their own hands, militarily and politically.

With the birth of the independent States of Pakistan and Burma, the culturally, linguistically and socially interrelated Muslims of the Chittagong and Akyab divisions were definitely put apart by an international frontier which a British diplomat speaking in 1949 called "in fact quite artificial".[55] The Pakistan-Burma border created a situation in which a Muslim community of partially old but mainly new stock had to try to find and define its place. The border and a hostile environment created the fertile ground for the emergence of political activism that found its lasting expression in what we may call the Rohingya movement.[56] One may say that the Rohingya movement emerged from a historical moment of separation (the creation of an international border) coupled to a need of political redefinition (the struggle for political autonomy). Alexander Horstmann and Reed L. Wadley summarize this phenomenon as a prominent observation of the anthropology of borders noting that "the very notion of the state border or boundary has historically been a driver of ethnogenesis – the production and invention of ethnic groups and minorities".[57]

The political redefinition entailed a move towards self-isolation. Since the 1950s, Rohingya writers have strenuously minimized and largely denied the Bengali roots of their origins, insisting on the cultural differences between Muslims in the Chittagong District and themselves. This is surprising. During the British colonial times Muslims of South-east Bengal and Rakhine lived within a single political constituency with no borders. Rakhine Muslims who would remember that their forefathers had been deported to Rakhine, had eventually fled and later returned, were not under any pressure to define themselves in contradistinction to the Buddhist Rakhine majority to earn legitimacy as subjects of the colonial state. Nor did a Chittagonian Muslim newly, but permanently settling in Maungdaw or Buthidaung have any need to redefine himself "ethnically" or "culturally" within a diverse colonial society

The radical choice of ideologically cutting off the Chittagonian connections has to be understood in the political context of the after-war where the Muslims in Northern Rakhine lost the options of becoming either a part of Pakistan or creating a separate Muslim state. To integrate themselves into the Union of Burma without abandoning their project of political autonomy, they had to "play by

---

[54] Mole, *Temple Bells*, 191.

[55] Peter Murray, Foreign Office, to R.W.D. Fowler, Commowealth Relations Office, 26 January 1949, NA F 1323/1015/79.

[56] I use the expression "Rohingya movement" to refer to all types of militant, charitable or cultural organizations as well as individuals that have promoted, supported and furthered the idea of a separate Rohingya identity. At the current moment, the front of those who explicitly support the Rohingya claims is obviously much broader. It stretches from the governments of Near and Middle East countries over lobby associations to tiny advocacy groups. INGOs play a more ambiguous role in this regard.

[57] Horstmann and Wadley, "Introduction: Centering the Margin in Southeast Asia", , 1.

the rules" of the Union that required them to gain recognition of a separate ethnic status as a vital condition to call for statehood. The two processes, the redefinition of communal identity as a historically local identity and the militant struggle for autonomy, went hand in hand and they cannot be separated. The yet poorly known history of communal tensions that preceded the Second World War suggests that the Chittagonian immigrants had created large-scale resentment among the local population which resulted in an explosion of violence in 1942. After the war, the Muslim elite in Maungdaw wanted to affirm its political ambitions while shedding its image of being foreigners and intruders. As the use of the name "Rohingya" shows, this rebranding was only successful very recently and outside of the country. Inside the country, it was only modestly successful in the early 1960s with the creation of the short-lived Mayu Frontier District by General Ne Win. How does this story in brief read in some more detail?

The Rohingya movement

Since the 1920s communal tensions were rife between the Buddhists and the newly immigrated Chittagonian Muslims in Rakhine. It is unclear how widely the resentment against the Bengali immigrants was spread among the population in general, as it is mostly the educated Rakhine upper class that displayed the strongest nationalist anti-Muslim feelings.[58] We have indeed only scarce documentation about these early tensions. Major Enriquez who visited Rakhine in 1921, says that the Rakhines were "apprehensive about the steady invasion of their country by hordes of Chittagonians," and notes:

> *"In the north-east portion of Akyab in the Buthidaung sub-division, the population now consists chiefly of permanent Chittagonian settlers. Large numbers of Chittagonians also spread over the country temporarily for the ploughing and reaping seasons. The Arakanese now tend to concentrate in the Sub-division of Kyauktaw. Some people think they must necessarily be submerged in time. Others believe that they will hold their own."[59]*

James Baxter's *Report on Indian Immigration*, printed in 1941, shows that a fifth of the population of Rakhine were of Indian origins, almost all coming from Chittagong or elsewhere in Bengal, while in Akyab District alone, they counted over one third. As though 80% of this population had been born in Rakhine, which testifies to the settled character of their immigration, Baxter noted that "Chittagonian penetration in Arakan is steadily continuing and is resented not only by the Arakanese proper but also by the settled Chittagonians". His report foresaw that unchecked

---

[58] In the *Rakhine Mahayazawindawgyi* (the so-called "Wimala Chronicle") edited in 1927 by U Tha Htun Aung in Mrauk U, there is a paragraph relating the warning of Hsara Mra Wa about the intentions of Muslim missionaries who had arrived at the court of King Minba (1531-1548?). It has been quoted by Rakhine authors, but it seems discordant with other sources and could be an anachronim. But as a late insertion, it would make sense as the reflection of a historicised anti-Muslim sentiment.

[59] Enriquez, *A Burmese Wonderland,* 159.

immigration "contained the seed of future communal troubles", but government restrictions were reported to be enacted later.[60]

The communal tensions did indeed explode two years later during 1942, when following the Japanese invasion, thousands of Indians fled from Lower Burma back to India, provoking systematic land-grabbing and massacres with several thousand dead on both sides. This outbreak of violence was the result of social tensions that had not been dealt with by the authorities. They were apparently ignited by nationalist propaganda of the Burma Independence Army calling for the expulsion of the Indians who were considered to be the instruments of British colonial power.[61] For two years, Rakhine became a battleground, with a Muslim-dominated north that supported the British and a Rakhine dominated zone in the south controlled by the Japanese. Confrontations between Muslim armed groups and the Rakhine took place during this period. These memories of the suffering have lingered over the decades on both sides of the divide, and after the war, territorial dispossessions in the north were not undone. It is well known that it took years for the central Burmese State to regain effective control over Rakhine, where several armed groups entrenched themselves to fight the post-war governement.

It was in the immediate aftermath of the war that the "threat" of independence powerfully reinforced the need for the Muslims to decide to either opt for a Muslim/Pakistan identity or a Myanmar/Rakhine connection. This was not a question for the Muslims who were already integrated in Rakhine's society, but it was an issue for the recent migrant community in northern Rakhine. From among the great number of those who in Maungdaw and Buthidaung favored either to support Pakistan or to secede from Burma to gain their own state, came the Mujahid rebels, who took up arms even before Burma's independence on the 4th January 1948.[62] Hopes put on alleged British promises for independence were vain. Overtures made by Northern Rakhine militants to Ali Jinnah in April 1947 were turned down in July and the secession option was a dead end as Ali Jinnah and Aung San agreed that the international border at the Naf River was not going to be negotiated. This put further pressure on the Mujahids to follow a viable course of action. From that moment on, the Mujahids fought for political self-determination and the creation of an exclusive Muslim zone in Northern Rakhine.[63] Choosing the name "Rohingya", they identified themselves with the history and geography of the country where they lived, inspiring a sense of Muslim

---

[60] *Report on Indian Immigration* by James Baxter, 12 October 1940, p. 49, 51.

[61] It is regrettable that contemporary observers who have been fast to blame Rakhine Buddhist xenophobia and the Myanmar government's security failures in 2012, fail to take into consideration the high percentage of new migrants that had created already a huge problem for the coexistence of two culturally distinct communities in the late colonial period. Disregarding the complex heritage of the past and its impact on the present, they have shifted the issue to its sole legal aspects in a contemporary context. Any comparison of the intensity of immigration in Western or other countries at the present moment with the varying levels where immigration is still compatible with social harmony would be sufficient to illustrate the case of northern Rakhine back in the 1930s.

[62] For a detailed account of the situation during and after the Second World War including the Mujahid rebellion, see Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession*, 23-48.

[63] About the Mujahid rebellion, see Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession* and Aye Chan, Western Border.

cohesion and giving their struggle a collective appeal.[64] Their rebellion was a military challenge for the central Government until 1954; but the Mujahids hang on to their weapons until 1961 though they had lost popular support. The creation of the Mayu Frontier District in 1960, directly administered by the army, was the result of a political compromise for which the Rohingya movement was deeply grateful to General Ne Win.[65] During the parliamentarian period of the 1950s, the name "Rohingya" was used by them to demonstrate a distinct Rakhine identity of the Muslims of Chittagonian origins in northern Rakhine. The fact that their language was used for radio broadcasting and that there was a Rohingya student association in Yangon have been quoted lately as further evidence of the effective use of the name.[66] The term is also found in speeches by military leaders at the ceremony of surrender of the Mujahids, so it has been argued that the Rohingyas also had obtained official government recognition. This was undoubtedly an intimate conviction among the Rohingya leadership. In a letter written on 3 May 1963, the president of the United Rohingya Organisation of Mayu District requested G. H. Luce to "record their History embodying it in the History of Burma" as "their racial status [had] been recognised by the Government".

But the relatively few references do not illustrate how much, but rather how little the term spread nationally. Most descriptions of the Muslims in northern Rakhine after the war strongly emphasise the profile of their recent Bengali origins. A news report in *The Scotsman* of 18 May 1949 describes them like this:

> *"The great majority of Arakan Moslems are said to be really Pakistanis from Chittagong, even if they have been settled here for a generation. Of the 130,000 Moslems here, 80,000 are still Pakistani citizens."[67]*

Such citations should not be taken as comments on the feelings or on the political leanings of all the Muslims in Rakhine and they should not be overly generalized. But they throw light on the existence of a dominant local Muslim community that attracted attention because it was perceived by the Buddhist majority as being still foreign to the land where it lived. The important point to keep in mind is that there was a diversity of Muslim communities and identities in Rakhine (like in Myanmar) after the war where the recent (mostly Indian) generations of Muslims were divided on

---

[64] The Mujahids are credited to have been the first to have used the term "Rohingya".

[65] "General Ne Win the Head of the Care-taker Government and now Chairman of the Revolutionary Council was pleased to fulfil the repeated demand of the Rohingyas on 1st June 1960 by creating a District consisting of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and a part of Rathedaung Township in the shape of Mayu Frontier District and placed it under the Frontier Administration. This single act of service to the Rohingyas by General Ne Win is uppermost in the mind of every Rohingya and will be remembered for generations." Extract from a letter of the President of the United Rohingya Organisation of Mayu District to Gordon H. Luce, 3 May 1963. National Libray of Australia (NLA) MSS Collection, Papers of Gordon Luce MS6574. Copy of the letter kindly provided by Pamela Gutman, 7 November 2013.

[66] National Democratic Party for Development, *Submission of Monograph to Union Hluttaw.*

[67] The article was printed on the same day in *The Hindustan Standard.* It is quoted by Aye Chan, "Burma's Western Border", 6.

the political choices following their cultural and religious affiliation. Migrant Indian communities in Myanmar and Southeast Asia may have faced similar challenges, but the case in Northern Rakhine was unique due to the closeness of Bengal, the strong religious and cultural affinities with East Pakistan, and the impact of the idea of Pakistan as an exclusive Muslim state. While the Muslims were also prominent elsewhere (notably in Yangon), it was only in Rakhine that a political project emerged to fight for an exclusive and ethnically-defined recognition. Not all the Muslims have shared the "Rohingya" project centered in Maungdaw.[68] Given the lack of textual sources on these times and that it is a long-isolated area, it is very difficult to document the diversity. It is noteworthy, though, that Urdu became a while a more present language of education than Bengali in northern Rakhine. As the conditions of the rise of Urdu as a medium have not yet been investigated, the study of local Islamic teaching institutions is one more of many pending research topics.

The novelty of the political choice of the Rohingyas sixty years ago becomes clearer when we highlight it against the background of the historical diversity of Muslim identities in Rakhine. There existed different Muslim communities, such as those in MraukU, on Yanbye Island (the well known "Kaman") and Thandwe (the "Myedu"), that have much older historical roots in Rakhine than those in Maungdaw and Buthidaung. But many Muslims (even in the North) did not subscribe to the ideological stance of a separate ethnicity, as they looked upon themselves only as Muslims in Rakhine or "Kala" or Indian[69]. These Rakhine Muslims did not feel an urge to redefine themselves ethnically within the society they were born into. More than anything else, it is the claim to be a separate ethnic group coupled with denial of their geographic origins that landed the Rohingyas in a decade-long conflict with the Buddhist Rakhine, who have deeply resented what they see as a fake identity. Khin Maung Saw, a Rakhine writer who has gone to some lengths to show that the term "Rohingya" is unknown in standard works, points out that the name spread only since the early 1950s.[70] One document he refers to is an article of Abdul Gaffar in *The Guardian Daily* of 20 August 1951, entitled "The Sudeten Muslims". The title is of quintessential ambivalence. The use of the term "Rohingya" in the article positions the Muslims in the post-war context of Arakan/Rakhine - that had not yet itself reached a national recognition as an ethnic state within the Union. On the other hand, the term "Sudeten Muslims" reflects a latent irredentism that put the Muslims in a different, pre-War cultural orbit where they had been part of a wider Muslim Chittagonian community in what was still a politically undivided region. At that time, the name "Rohingya" itself was not at all a widely spread name, as it was merely a politically inspired choice coming from a fraction of the Muslims. It is not found in the most representative statement of claims issued by Rakhine Muslims at the time, the "The Charter of the Constitutional Demands of the Arakani

---

[68] Abdul Mabud Khan notes that "some Muslims of Arakan want to designate themselves as 'Rohāngyā' claiming a separate identity from the Buddhists who call themselves as Rakhaings" in *The Maghs*, 43-4.

[69] The use of the word "Kala" has become highly sensitive as it can be used in a derogatory way. In the past, it has simply designated Indians or foreigners from the West. One has to beware of superficial interpretations.

[70] Khin Maung Saw, "Islamization of Burma…" 2011.

Muslims" published in June 1951 by the All-Arakan Muslim Conference held in Alethangyaw.[71] The relatively marginal success of the name "Rohingya" in the 1950s should not distract us from its potent symbolism. The Rohingya claim for regional political autonomy in northern Rakhine had an undeniable appeal. The greatest success of this campaign was, after the surrender of the Mujahid, the creation of the all-Muslim "Mayu Frontier District" that comprised Buthidaung, Maungdaw and a part of Rathedaung. It was ruled from 1961 to 1964 by the Burmese army directly from Rangoon and was administratively separate from the rest of Rakhine. After its suppression, Muslim Rohingya militancy revived, but it could neither muster the necessary strength to position itself as a threat to the authoritarian regime nor gain sufficient legitimacy to become a shareholder within in the country's ethnic opposition front.

The Rohingya movement has seen the story of innumerable inner conflicts and divisions as a brief chronological overview of its organizations shows. The *Rohingya Independent Force* (RIF), created in 1963 (1964?) united in 1969 with the *Rohingya Independent Army* (RIA) which in 1974[72] became the *Rohingya Patriotic Front* (RPF)[73], all led in succession by the same leader, Jafar Habib (or B.A. Jafar). In 1982, a new militant organisation, the *Rohingya Solidarity Organisation* (RSO) was founded by Dr Mohammad Yunus in Bangladesh. While according to Andrew Selth, the RSO was first created to represent the interests of the refugees, it became a militant movement that fought for the "creation of an autonomous Arakan state uniting the Rohingyas of Burma and Bangladesh"[74]. The RSO is the Rohingya organisation that had reportedly the strongest connections to Islamist movements, but it never posed a threat to the security forces in Myanmar. Following its cooperation with the fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami party and training of its members in Afghanistan in the 1990s, it was repressed by the Bangladeshi authorities in 2001 and broke into three factions.[75] In 1995, the *Rohingya National Alliance* (also referred to as *Rohingya Solidarity Alliance*) was formed and meant to unite RSO and the *Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front* (ARIF), under Nurul Islam, an organisation that had broken away from RSO in 1986 (or 1987?). The *Alliance* was succeeded in 1999 by the foundation of the *Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (*ARNO*)* with the aim to unite the Rohingya movement. Its military arm, the *Rohingya National Army*, had no military impact. The unity of the various Rohingya associations gained some strength after 2005 when Harn Yawnghwe of the Euro-Burma Office in Brussels advocated for the Rohingya. In May 2011, a convention of senior Rohingya leaders founded the *Arakan Rohingya Union* under the patronage of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Under the leadership of Wakar Uddin, head of the *Burmese*

---

[71] The Saudi Arabian journalist Syed Neaz Ahmad, "Bangladesh: Stateless at home and no refuge in Saudi Arabia," 30 March 2010, writes: "It is noteworthy that in the charter these people are mentioned as the Muslims of Arakan and not Rohingyas".

[72] Other sources say either 1973 or 1975.

[73] Nicolaus ("A Brief Account…") states that that this organisation was created in 1964.

[74] Selth, *Burma's Muslims*, 18.

[75] http://www.irrawaddy.org/rohingya/experts-reject-claims-of-rohingya-mujahideen-insurgency.html (accessed on 15 October 2013.

Rohingya Association of North America, the new organisation has tried to establish itself as a new lobby for Rohingya interests.[76]

A detailed study of these militant organizations is needed, because it is quite difficult at present to understand the links between the militant organisations and the Muslim population in Rakhine, in particular during the crises in the 1970s and 1990s. It is fair to say that the Rohingya movement, while it has gone through divisions and internal disputes, does not have a streamlined political agenda. This may also account for the fact that it never got much recognition or support from Muslim states or the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. While some militants may still dream of the creation of an independent Muslim state or local political autonomy, the recognition of claims to citizenship has become the foremost political goal since 1982. The Muslim population at large may, as Andrew Selth writes,

> *"simply want freedom of worship, guarantees against religious persecution and the same political and economic rights for Muslims as other communities in Burma".*[77]

The overview of Rohingya militant groups outside the country does not give a full overview of political organizations or political engagement of the Rohingyas. Middle-class Rohingyas inside Myanmar are generally keen to emphasise that they have participated in all the elections since independence and want to be seen as law-abiding citizens faithful to their country. Their moderate discourse is in striking contrast with the aggressive stance of certain Rohingya militants outside the country.

It has been repeatedly stated in this paper that despite the recent popularity of the term "Rohingya", there is in fact no single, commonly agreed description of who the term denotes or what identity exactly the people refer to when they use it. A comparison of books written by Rohingya writers themselves reveals a constant search for Rohingya identity rather than a clear articulation of what it is. When we compare Abu Aaneen's book *Towards Understanding Arakan History* (2002) with M.A. Tahir *aka* Ba Tha's *A Short History of Rohingyas and Kamans of Burma* (1963), we find that the definitions of Rohingya identity and historical claims are similar, but not identical. Both struggle to anchor a particular Muslim ethnic identity in Rakhine's past. It is irrelevant and it would be arrogant to discredit these claims by playing them against each other. The differences rather reflect the fluidity of the "Rohingya" identity itself. The reason that there is no underlying consensus among Rohingya writers to define their identity is that they have tried to reconfigure information from the past for their present needs. But by projecting their present sense of identity back into history, they have had to adjust a Rohingya-centred narrative to changing political requirements. While for example the use of "Myanmar" *vs* "Burmese" has been a huge issue for

---

[76] Information in this paragraph comes from different sources, but draws particularly on Selth, *Burma's Muslims*, 2003.

[77] Selth, *Burma's Muslims*, 2003, 14-15.

many opponents to the military regime, many though not all Rohingyas seem to have pragmatically and apparently uncontroversially switched from "Burmese Rohingyas" to "Myanmar Rohingyas".

At a superficial level, the Rohingya identity is uncontroversial, obvious and easy to defend, but, at second sight, it is just as easy to contest because it is diffuse and historically opaque. By narrowing the debate on the Rohingyas to the legal and humanitarian aspects, editorialists around the world have taken an easy approach towards a complicate issue. This narrow approach is not admissible in the national context of Myanmar where issues like ethnicity, history and cultural identity are key ingredients of legitimacy.

In this paper we have dealt with the use of the name "Rohingya", suggested an understanding of the historical conditions of a Muslim identity formation process and introduced the Rohingyas as a movement that had initially and primarily political goals. While insisting on the complexity of an issue that is, in social and human terms, an existential issue of cohabitation, little attention has been paid to the contestation of the Rohingya identity by Buddhist Rakhine. The way that Buddhist Rakhine authors have responded to the controversial claims of the Rohingyas can hardly be shortened to a few lines. Put simply, though, one could summarize their viewpoint by saying that Muslims should be Muslims, but not pretend to be Rohingyas which they see as a false identity. Their historical demonstrations and refutations of errors in Rohingya writings are strongly indebted to their own Buddhist understanding of history that defines Rakhine as Buddha's own land. An understanding of Rakhine national, historical and cultural discourses is important for anyone who wants to seriously invest him- or herself in an understanding of the communal issues, because many aspects of the Rohingya discourse, such as the obsession with history or its anti-Burmese stance, can only be appreciated and understood against the background of Rakhine cultural practices.[78]

Bibliography

Amnesty International. *Report May 1992.* AI Index number: ASA 16/16/92.

Asia Watch (HRW). *Bangladesh: abuse of Burmese refugees from Arakan*, Vol. 5, No. 17, 9 October 1993.

Abu Aaneen. "Towards Understanding Arakan History (A Study on the issue of ethnicity in Arakan, Myanmar)". Yangon, 2002. Unpublished manuscript.

Aye Chan. "Burma's Western Border as Reported by the Diplomatic Correspondence (1947-1975)." *The Kanda Journal of Global and Area Studies* 2 (2011).

Aye Chan. "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)." *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* Vol. 3, No. 2, Autumn 2005.

Baxter, James. *Report on Indian Immigration.* Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationery. 1941.

Burma Gazetteer Akyab District including Town and Village Census Tables. Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent - Govt. Printing. vol. B, 1912.

Charney, Michael W. *A History of Modern Burma.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

---

[78] For an understanding of Rakhine particularism, see De Mersan, "L'expression du particularisme arakanais dans la Birmanie contemporaine

Comstock, Rev. G.S. "Notes on Arakan." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* I, 3 (1847), 219-258.

D'Hubert, Thibaut und Jacques P. Leider. "Traders and Poets at the Mrauk-U court - On commerce and cultural links in seventeenth century Arakan". In *Pelagic Passageways : The Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism,* edited by Rila Mukherjee. Delhi: Primus Books, 2011.

Enriquez, C. M. *A Burmese Wonderland A Tale of Travel in Lower and Upper Burma*. Calcutta/Simla: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1922.

Foley, William."Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country, and Brief Account of the Customs, etc. of its Inhabitants". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 4 (1835).

Hamilton, Francis. "A comparative vocabulary of some of the languages spoken in the Burma Empire." *Asiatick Researches*, V, 1798, pp. 219-40. (4th ed. 1807).

Hamilton, Francis. "An account of the frontier between part of Bengal and kingdom of Ava," *The Edinburgh Journal of Science*, Vol. II, November – April, 1825, n°III, p. 48-59.

Hamilton, Francis. "An account of the frontier between Ava and part of Bengal adjacent to the Karnaphuli river," *The Edinburgh Journal of Science*, Vol. III, 1825, April to October, n°V, p. 32-44.

Hamilton, Francis. "An account of the frontier between the southern part of Bengal and the kingdom of Ava." *The Edinburgh Journal of Science*, Vol. III, 1825, April-October, n°VI, p. 201-212; Vol. IV, 1826, November – April, n°VII, p. 22-37.

Egreteau, Renaud/ Jagan, Larry. *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma Understanding the Foreign Relations of the Burmese Praetorian State.* Singapore: NUS, 2013.

Fink, Christina. *Living Silence Burma under Military Rule.* Bangkok/Dhaka/London: White Lotus/University Press Ltd/Zed Books, 2001.

Fleischmann, Klaus. *Arakan – Konfliktregion zwischen Birma und Bangladesh Vorgeschichte und Folgen des Flüchtlingsstroms von 1978.* Hamburg: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, 1981.

Frasch, Tilman. "Coastal Peripheries during the Pagan Period." In *The Maritime Frontier of Burma,* edited by Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider, Amsterdam/Leiden: KNAW/KITLV, 2002, 93-106.

Gravers, Mikael, ed. *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma.* Copenhagen: NIAS, 2007.

Horstmann Alexander, Reed L. Wadley. "Introduction: Centering the Margin in Southeast Asia". In *Centering the Margin Agency and Narrative in Southeast Asian Borderlands* edited by Alexander Horstmann and Reed L. Wadley. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009.

Khan, Abdul Mabud. *The Maghs A Buddhist Community in Bangladesh.* Dhaka, The University Press Ltd: 1999.

Khin Maung Saw. "Islamization of Burma Through Chittagonian Bengalis as 'Rohingya Refugee'". 2011. Unpublished paper.

Keyes, Charles. "Presidential Address: 'The Peoples of Asia' Science and Politics in the Classification of Ethnic Groups in Thailand, China and Vietnam." *The Journal of Asian Studies,* vol. 61, no.4 (2002), 1163-1203.

Leider, Jacques 1999. ' "An Account of Arakan written at Islaamabad (Chittagong) in June 1777 by Major R.E. Roberts" Présentation et commentaire.' *Aséanie* 3: 125-149.

Leider, Jacques. "Forging Buddhist Credentials as a Tool of Legitimacy and Ethnic Identity: A study of Arakan's Subjection in Nineteenth Century Burma." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51, 3 (2008): 409-459.

Leider, Jacques P. 2006. "Specialists for ritual, magic and devotion - The court Brahmins (*punna*) of the Konbaung kings (1752-1885)" *Journal of Burma Studies* 10 : 159-202*.*

Lewa, Chris. "The refugee situation on the western borders of Burma." Paper presented at the Canadian Friends of Burma Public Conference, Ottawa, 9 October 2002.

Lindquist, Alan C. *Report on the 1978-79 Bangladesh refugee relief operation*. 1979. (http://www.kaladanpress.org/report/35-rohingya/203-report-on-the-1978-79-bangladesh-refugee-relief-operation, last accessed on 22 November 2013).

Lintner, Bertil. *Burma in Revolt Opium and Insurgency since 1948.* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994.

De Mersan, Alexandra. "L'expression du particularisme arakanais dans la Birmanie contemporaine." *Moussons* 8 (2005), 117-141.

Mole, Robert. *The Temple Bells are Calling A Personal Record of the last years of British Rule in Burma.* Bishop Auckland: Pentland Books, 2001.

Nicolaus, Peter. "A Brief Account on the History of the Muslim Population in Arakan." Yangon, 1995. Unpublished paper.

Paton, Charles. "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan." *Asiatick Researches* 16 (1828): 353-381.

Rabia Ali. "Government has not done enough for us since our arrival in Pakistan". *The Express Tribune*, 3 August 2012. (http://tribune.com.pk/story/416694/govt-has-not-done-enough-for-us-since-our-arrival-in-pakistan/ last accessed 24 November 2013).

Robertson, Thomas Campbell. "*Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*". London: Richard Bentley 1853.

Robinson, Robert. *Among the Mughs or Memorials of the Rev.J. C. Fink ,Missionary in Arracan*. Calcutta, The Light Press, 1871.

Rogers, Benedict. *Than Shwe Unmasking Burma's Tyrant.* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010.

Samad, Abdus. "Is Muslim population (Rohingya) in Arakan a relatively recent development?" http://arakanmuslim.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/is-muslim-population-rohingya-in-arakan.html (last accessed on 20 October 2013).

Selth, Andrew. *Burma's Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorised?* Canberra: Australian National University, (Strategic and Defence Studies Centre), 2003.

Seppings, E.H.L. "Arakan a hundred years ago and fifty years later." *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15 (1925): 53-72.

Schendel, Willem van (ed.). *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798)*. Dhaka: Signum Press, 1992

Smith, Martin. *"The Muslim "Rohingyas" of Burma".* Paper delivered at Conference of Burma Centrum Nederland, 11 December 1995. Unpublished.

Steinberg, David. *Burma/Myanmar What everyone needs to know.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Syed Neaz Ahmad. "Bangladesh: Stateless at home and no refuge in Saudi Arabia" Plus News Pakistan, 30 March 2010. http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=4bb2e1815 (accessed on 28.10.2013)

Tahir Mohammad A. *aka* Ba Tha. *A Short History of Rohingyas and Kamans of Burma.* Myitkyina: United Rohingya National League of Myitkyina, 1963.

Tin Maung Maung Than. "Human Security Challenges in Myanmar". In *Myanmar: State, Society and Ethnicity*, edited by N. Ganesan and Kyaw Yin Hlaing. (Singapore: ISEAS/ Hiroshima, Japan: HPI, 2007), 172-218.

Tha Htun Aung. *Rakhine Mahayazawan-daw-kyi.* Sittway. 1927.

Than Tun. *The Royal Orders of Burma.* Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1983-90.

U Tin. *Myanmar Min Okchokpon Sadan.* Yangon: Ministry of Culture, 1963.

Van Galen, Stephan. Arakan and Bengal The Rise and Decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma) from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century AD. Leiden. Ph. D. Leiden University. 2008

Yegar, Moshe. *The Muslims in Burma.* Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1972.

Yegar, Moshe. "The Muslims of Burma." In *The Crescent in the East – Islam in Asia Major* edited by Ralph Israeli (London: Curzon Press, 1982), 102-139.

Yegar, Moshe. *Between Integration and Secession. The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar.* Lanham/Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002.