

## Existence of Muslim Community in Burma (Myanmar)

### Early Muslim contacts with Arakan (Rakhine State)

The Arakan (Rakhine state) extending some 350 miles along the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal, is cut off from Burma (Myanmar) by a range of mountains which were against Muslim conquest.

Arabs are the earliest people to travel to east by sea. Through the Arabs Islam spread across Thailand, Malaya and Indonesia. There are records that these Arabs reached Arakan coast too. It is a known fact that within a hundred years of the death of Prophet Muhammed (570-632), Islam had swept over the middle block of Eur-Asia. By 1202 A.D., in the east, Islam had reached the banks of the Brahmaputra river in Bengal. But some Persian Arab merchants and sailors had already visited India and the far East some 300 years earlier. From an anonymous Arabic work of 871 A.D. We know that two Arab travelers visited the Andaman islands in the Bay of Bengal south of Burma.<sup>1</sup> In 851 A.D., a Persian merchant called Suleiman wrote an account of his own travels in India and China giving the earliest Arabic description of China and the coast lands of India. The *Kitab al-Buldan* (880 A.D) of Yaqub the *Muraj al-Dhahab* *Muraj al-Dhahab al-Jawar* (943 A.D) of Ali al-Masudi, "the Herodotus of the Arabs," the *Hudud al-'Alam*, (482 A.D) a geographical work by an anonymous author and the account "on China, Turks and the India" 1120 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Further in the context R.B. Smart and many other historians say: about 788 A.D when Maha Taing Candra ascended the throne of Vesali founded a new city on the site of old Ramawaddy and died after a reign of 22 years. In his region several ships were wrecked on Ramree Island and the crews said to have been Mohammedans were sent to Arakan proper and settled in villages (Arthur Phayre calls Akyab and Kyaukpadaung district as Arakan proper. The study of

<sup>1</sup> Col. Ba Shin, "Coming of Islam to Burma, down to 1700 A.D." lecture before Asian History congress (unpublished, New Delhi, 1961). Colonel Ba Shin is a noted historian in Burma and a Muslim. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as "Ba Shin coming of Islam to Burma")

<sup>2</sup> Edited by Prof. Manosky of Landon University in Gibb Memorial series of the Royal Asiatic society. 1937. pp. 242 - 3

Inscriptions of that period says the natives of that time were Indo-Ariyans or a people similar to that Bengal. These natives got the religion Islam from these ship wrecked Arabs.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers remarks, Muslim influence on the Arakanese society was not an out come of some sudden occurrences. It was the result of an age long intercourse between Arakan and Muslim countries that dates back to the period of Arab contact with Arakan. Arakan came in to contact with Muslim as early as <sup>9th</sup> century. Arakanese chronicles give references to the Muslim settlement in Arakan during the reign of Moha Taing candra 788-810 A.D.<sup>2</sup>

Father Farnao Guerreiro, in the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century observed. The moors --- would always be garibos, that is very submissive with no other desire but to live under his (King of Arakan's) protection<sup>3</sup> Niccolo Mannuci, a Venetian traveler says Shah shujah during his stay in Arakan found many dwellers, Maghul and pathans. Muslims from lower Bengal contributed much to the ever kingdom. The Arakanese call Muslims Kalah.<sup>4</sup> But Muslim introduce themselves as "Rohingya" to others. Martinsmith a specialist on Burmese history observes too: Muslim settled in Arakan since 9<sup>th</sup> century Name of Places, rivers and towns, such as Ramree, Akyab, Kaladan, Naf and Kalaparzan were connected with Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

For about eight centuries they (the Arabs) monopolize the trade between east and west. It is from eight century and it continued down to the coming of Europeans in the first quarter of sixteen century<sup>6</sup>. The sea ports of Burma such a Kyaukphyu, Bassein, Syriam, Martaban, Mergui etc, are rife with the legendary accounts of early shiprecks in their neighborhoods. The Mons and Burmese chronicles of much later date and some of the pgoda Thamaings (histories) of lower Burma. The name Buddar Mokaan is Muslim in

<sup>1</sup> R.B. Smart; Burma Gazetteer. Akyab District vol. A. (Hereafter this work will be referred to as R.B. Smart, Burma Gazetteer. Akyab District.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Kaungo, History of Chittagong vol, chapter XI, Section III (He are after this work will be referred to as a Dr. Kanungo. History of chittagong)

<sup>3</sup> Guerreiro Farnao. The Relations (Jahangir and Jessuits) fragmenting Trans. By C.H. payne (He Kala a Burmese word meaning a foreinyer, literally one who comes crossing the sea.

<sup>5</sup> Martin smith: Burmas Muslims Border Land, sold down the river, c.s quarterly 14 (4)' p.68

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Kanungo: History of Chittagong Vol 1 4111

origin. Badar Maqam, the house of Badar. Sir Richard Temple, identifies badar with *pirbadar* of chittagong 'who was better known as Badarrudin Aulia and connects him with the Muslim spirit of the Flood, Alkhidhr of early Arab tradition "They are universal shrines accepted by the Buddhists, Hindus Muhammadans, natives of India and Burma and the Chinese alike'. Although the date of this saint are assigned to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>1</sup> The tradition of these places seems to go back to a much earlier date. As for the dargahs (The door to the house) at Sandoway, Bassein, Syriam etc, it is generally believed that they belong to Muslim saints other than Badaruddin Aulia. But the who rever them hardly know their history except that they are the tombs of the Muslim saints of days gone by.<sup>2</sup>

The contain legendary accounts of Kual: shipwrecked sailors, traders and soliders.<sup>3</sup> These accounts, however, cannot be regarded as authentic historical evidence. But the existence of curious buildings, called *Buddar Moka*n and dargah which not the coast of Burma from Akyab to Mergui seems to lend support to those living legends which, it may be suggested, are the reminiscence of the early Muslim contacts with lower Burma. Further Muslim fakirs and Dervishes used to visit Arakane coast, one of widely known facts of this is the existence of shrine Badr Makam, Scattered along the coastline of Arakan. Muslim saints and sailors happened to land of the coast of Arakan as early as fourteen century.<sup>4</sup>

Arakanese chronicles give reference to the travel of Muslim mystics in that country in pagan period. The chronical referring to an accident during king Anrawratha's Rule (1044-1077 A.D) states when he (an attendant of the king) entered the forest, he found a man possessed of mystic wisdom dead with the marks of vidence upon him.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Kaungo said the event proved that not only Muslim merchants but also saints and Dervishes used frequently this port of coast of the Bay as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1</sup> Dr-Kanungo: History of Chittagong.

<sup>2</sup> Ba shin, Coming of Islam to Burma down to 1700 A.D.

<sup>3</sup> The Glass palace chronicle, English translation by U Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce 1923, PP. 75-8

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: chapter XI sect . 3

<sup>5</sup> Tin and luce: op cit p.75

The early Portuguese visitors saw the port of chittagong (then under Arakanese rule) crowded with Arab sails, Duarte – de- Barbosa, Pyrard de laval and many other European voyagers noticed Arab merchants, staying in chittagong on trade purposes.<sup>1</sup> Chittagong and the port of Arakan have had close comercial connections.

D.G.E. Hall points out, in the eastern sea they (the Portuguese) excelled the Moors (Arabs) in both fighting and navigating their ships, and the ship themselves were in every respect, supervisor to those of Arabs, which were built for sailing on by under favourable monsoon conditions.<sup>2</sup> So in early 17<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese got control of the coast of Bengal Arakan.

Harvey remarks after 10<sup>th</sup> century the country was professedly Buddhist, not withstanding the spread of Mohammednism, which by 13<sup>th</sup> century had dotted the coast from Assam to Malaya, with the curious Mosques known as Badr Makan\*. Doubtless it is Maharmmedan influence which led the women to being more scheduled in Arakan than in Burma.<sup>3</sup>

Masheyeagar, an Israeli Researcher states that, in addition from the very beginning of Muslim commercial activities in Bay of Bengal, the Muslim trade ships reached the ports of Arakan, just as they did the ports of Burma proper, and in Burma in Arakan too, there is a long tradition of old Indian settlement. Bengal became Muslim in 1203, In northern Arakan close overland ties were founded with east Bengal. The resulting cultural and political Muslim influence was of great significance in the history of Arakan\*. Actually bridgehead for Muslim penetration to other parts of Burma, although the Muslim never attained the same degree of importance elsewhere as they did in Arakan.<sup>4</sup> Islam took root in Arakan since 8<sup>th</sup> century and from there spread in to Burma proper.<sup>5</sup>

Further an eminent Myanmar historian once a member of Myanmar History commission, late Dr. Than Tun says, because of north

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kanungo, History of Chittagong vol. 1 p.113

<sup>2</sup> Hall, op: cit p. 239

<sup>3</sup> G.E. Harvey outline of Burmese History (1947). P90

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Yegar, The Muslim of Burma, Muslim settlement the Arakan P.21

<sup>5</sup> Sasana Yonwa Tunzephoo, government publication 1997 p.63

\* APPendice (1)

\* APPendice (2)

Arakan's close overland ties with Bengal. Islam penetrated into this side of border many centuries ago. Some Muslim chieftains and warlords perhaps shifted into Arakan at the aftermath of their political struggle, so as they could settle down there. And perhaps the present day Rohingyas in May Yu are their descendants who claimed to be on that region at least for ten centuries. He further remarks in 14<sup>th</sup> century chindwin valley inscriptions, there were names of Muslim chiefs and Muslim kings who were in very good relationship with Ava King. Dr. Than Tun based his opinion on the book "The phases of pre-pagan of Burma" by G.H. Luce, once a history professor of Rangoon university.<sup>1</sup>

More noteworthy is the narration of Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, a prominent Burmese historian. His narration is an answer to those who tend to deny Rohingyas's deeply rooted ancestry in Arakan. He states the religion of Islam started from Arabia since 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. These Arabs reached to the eastern countries not only for trades but also for the propagation of their religion. Because of their preaching, Islam took root in eastern countries including Arakan. Next the Portuguese marchants plundered the villages along the Bengal coast and brought captives from there and sold them in Arakan. These captives included many persons of high birth and good reputation and intellect in Arabian, Rakhine, Arabs and his household bought them for their household works most of them were employed in Agricultural works by the Rakhine Kings.<sup>2</sup>

Arabs led the trade with eastern world from the beginning of early Christian era up to 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> These Arabs had in Java, Sumatra, Malacca, Myanmar and Arakan.<sup>4</sup> But also founded their political dynasties, as the case in East Bengal. These Arab colonies in Mrauk-U were found even at the time of Shahshuja and king sanda Thudama crisis in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So Mosheyegar remarks during this (Shuja) crisis all foreigners and Muslim trading vessels were sent away, so that they would not know what was

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Than Tun, Mrauk Rakhine, an article in Kalia Magazine Aug. 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, Myanmar Portuguese Relation, An article in university silver Jubilee Magazine.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Kanungo, The History of Chittagong vol I (1979), p-121

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

happening (in Mrauk-U, the capital of Arakan) Referring to Augustine priest, Sebastian Mrique who was in Arakan from 1624 to 1637, Moshe yegar says, he saw there were Muslim captives, Muslim army units, Muslim trade colonies, and Muslims holding Key positions in the the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

In Bengal Islam had advanced to the banks of the Brahmaputra by 1202 A.D. during the reign of Muhammad of Ghur. Later, while the Delhi Sultanate was disintegrating, the Sultanate of East Bengal, independent of Delhi, was established in 1336 A.D. by Fakhr-ud-din Mubarak Shah. Nine years later the Sultanate of the entire province of Bengal was founded by Haji Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah in 1345. All these changes in Bengal, however, did not have any direct effect on the neighbouring Buddhist kingdom of Arakan.

This Buddhist kingdom of Arakan previously looked east towards Pagan as her suzerain till the latter's fall in 1287 A.D. But at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the force of circumstances made her turn west towards the Muslim State of Bengal. In 1364 A.D., a new and formidable kingdom arose in Burma with its capital at Ava. The kingdom of Ava attacked Arakan in 1404 A.D., and the youthful Burmese general, *Man: Rai kyo Cwa* (Minyekyawswa), the son of King *Anocaurattha* (Anoratha, i.e. King Mingaung, ft. 1401-22), ousted Naramittha (Narameikhla) of Arakan.<sup>2</sup> This attack of Ava on Arakan paved the way for the Muslim domination of Arakan for a century (1430-1531).

*Naramittha* fled to Bengal and took asylum at the Court of the Sultan of Guara.<sup>3</sup> He remained there in exile till 1430 A.D. when he was reinstated as King of Arakan with the military assistance of the Sultan.<sup>4</sup> The king founded the new capital of Mroka U (Myauk-u). With him came his

<sup>1</sup> Moshe Yegar. *The Muslim of Burma* 1972 p.21

<sup>2</sup> His other name is *Man: co mwan* (Min Saw Mun).

<sup>3</sup> "Ahmad Shah, the Guara Sultan" in M. Siddiq Khan's *Muslim Intercourse with Burma*, p.248 (contained in a journal published in Hyderabad, Deccan). According to *An Advance History of India* by R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudury and K. Datta, the Sultan on the throne of Bengal at that time was Ghiyas-ud-din (ft. 1393-1410)

<sup>4</sup> Siddiq Khan (ibid. p.249) and M.S. Collis ("Arakan's place in Civilization of the Bay" in the *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. XV, Pt. I, p.40) both give the name of that Sultan as Nasir-ud-din Shah while *An advance History of India* states that the Sultan ruling Bengal then was Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah (ft. 1414-31 A.D.)

Muslim followers and soldiers who settled down in and near the new capital. They built the Sandi Khan mosque<sup>\*</sup> which services to this day at the village of *Kawa-lon* (Kawalaung).

With the return of *Naramittha* began the Muslim domination of Arakan. According to the New Chronicle of Arakan (*Rakhuin Rajawan Sac*) for the military assistance to regain the throne of Arakan. *Naramittha* had to surrender the twelve towns of *Bhanga* (Bengal) over which Arakan previously claimed suzerainty, to the Sultan of Bengal and also had to agree to be feudatory to Bengal. Arakan thus remained to be a subject state of Bengal for a century (1430-1530 A.D); and during this period it became a common practice for the Sultans of Bengal to confer Muslim titles on the kings of Arakan. The New Chronicle of Arakan mentions nine kings who received such titles from the Sultan of Bengal. These kings and their Muslim titles are:

1. Min Khari 1434-59 (*Ali Khan*), 2. Basawpyu 1459-82 (*Kalima Shah*), 3. Dawlya 1582-92 (*Ma Kul Shah*) 4. Basawnyo 1429-94 (*Muhammad Shah*) 5. Yunaung 1494 (*Nuri Shah*) 6. Salingathu 1494-1501 (*Sheik Abdulla Shah*) 7. Minyaza 1501-23 (*Ilias Shah*) 8. Minsaw-o 1525 (*Jalal Shah*) 9. Thatasa<sup>1</sup> 1525-31 (*Ali Shah*).

Some coins or medallions<sup>\*</sup> bearing the *kalimah* (the Islamic confession of faith) in Arabic have also been discovered in Arakan. According to Mr.G.E Harvey these coins were also issued by these feudatory kings who got them struck for them first in Bengal and later struck their own in Arakan.

This practice of taking Muslim titles in addition to their own Pali or Burmese ones was continued even after *Sajata* (1526-31), the last king, to acknowledge the suzerainty of Bengal sultanate, when Arakan openly revolted against Bengal Sultanate under the leadership of Minbin (1531-53)<sup>2</sup> *Man Ban Sankhya* also called *Man: Pakri:* whose Pali title is *Siri Suriya Canda Mahadhammaraja*. He occupied Chittagong and ravaged the country up to Decca. Minbin, however, assumed the Muslim title of *Jokpohsya* (Zabauk

<sup>1(a)</sup> See Arakan coins in the British Museum, Cat No. 82-5-8-27 and No. 1921-10-14-150, which bear the title of Ali Shah in Arabic script. (b) *Coming of Islam.*

<sup>2</sup> New Chronicle of Arakan, p.82

\* Appendix (3)

\* Appendix (4)

Shah)<sup>1</sup>; one of his successors, Man: Phalon: (Minpalaung 1571-93) is also known by his Muslim title, *Syokindrasya*<sup>2</sup> *Sikandar Shah*, of the coin inscription.<sup>3</sup> The coin of *Man: Rajakri* (Min Yazagyi), 1593-1612) has his Muslim title Cholimasya in Burmese letters on the obverse and the title Husain Shah in Arabic on the reverse.<sup>4</sup> The Muslim title of his successor, Man: Khamon: (Minkhamaung, 1612-22) is Usyonsya, in Burmese letters, and Husain Shah, in Arabic, as shown on his coins. King Sirisuddhammaraja (Thirithudamma, 1622-38) is also known by the Muslim title of Salim Shah II.<sup>5</sup>

These later kings of Arakan, who were Buddhists and who were no longer subject, directly or indirectly, to the Sultanate of Bengal, assumed Muslim titles, not because these were imposed on them by the Sultan of Bengal, but because they wanted to style themselves as Sultans. Besides, as Minbin claimed, the subjects of their realm now included not only Arkanese Buddhists but also "the Kula: of Monkway (Moghul?), Pathan, the Sak, the Mrum, Hindut (the Hindus) and the Musalman (the Muslims).<sup>6</sup> Taking Muslim titles by these kings, in fact, was a mere aping of the Grand Moghul's title.

The influence of Islam on Arakan was profound. The kings styled themselves Sultans and their kingdom, a Sultanate. Their court was shaped on Guar and Delhi. From eye-witness account of the kingdom by Fray Sebastien Manrique we know that the preceptor of king Thirithudamma was a Muslim, who had been on Hajj pilgrimage twice. He was very influential at the Court and the Arakanaese regarded him as a saint.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(a) See Phayre PII, No. 24, 25, 26. British Museum Cat. No. 82-5-8-24,25-26. Prof. Saleh-al ali of Baghdad University reads the Arabic inscription as Jalsakaba.(b) *Coming of Islam*.

<sup>2</sup> New Chronicle of Arakan, p.82

<sup>3</sup> Coins of British Museum, Cat. No. 1921-10-14-147, NO.82-5-8-29 and No.1920-6-4-8; and Phayre P1, II, No.30.(b) *Coming of Islam*.

<sup>4</sup> On the coin of *Man: Khamon:* (Minkhamaung 1612-22 A.D), the title Husain Shah in Arabic has its counterpart in Burmese script as Usyonsya on the other side. I am, therefore, inclined to interpret this title Cholimasya as Salim Shah although it does not agree with the Muslim title on the reverse. Compare Phayre Plate I, Nos. 1 and 2 with Nos. 3 and 4 of the same plate.

<sup>5</sup> See p. XXII of the introduction to Vol. I of Travels of Fray Sibastien Manrique. "King Thirithudamma (1622-38) ... had the alternative title of Salim Shah II (Xalamixa, Xadramana). King Minyazagyi (1593-1612) having been Salim Shah I, though Manrique styles Thirithudamma's father Xalamixa-clearly a mistake, as his father Minkhamaung (1612-22) was styled Husain Shah."

<sup>6</sup> New Chronicle of Arakan, P.82

<sup>7</sup> *Travels of Fray Sibastien Manrique* Vol. I, p.351



This impact of Muslim culture on Arakan is an impetus to the development and progress of the Arakanese kingdom in the succeeding decades. There had been improvements in the administration as well as in the armed forces. At a time when Bengal was in a state of chaos after the invasion of Guar by the Mughul Emperor Humayun himself (although the Emperor was ultimately driven out by Sher Shah), Minbin was able to conduct his expedition right into Bengal, capture Chittagong and reoccupy the 12 towns of Bhanga. His revolt against the Sultanate of Bengal was a success and the territories he had occupied remained under the Arakanese rule until 1666 A.D. when they changed hands again, this time to the Moghul Empire.

Arakan's power was felt much more in the sea; and its sea power became a challenge to the Portuguese shipping which had, by this time, predominated the Indian seas after ousting the traditional sea power of the Arabs and the Persians. Sea-going crafts maintained by Arakan were manned by competent seamen of Chittagong, and Caeasor Frederick, writing in 1564, said that their fleet had as many as two hundred galleys. For years their ships carried on piratical expeditions in Bengal, sometimes even up to the mouth of the Ganges looting and capturing slaves for sale.

They could even hamper the Portuguese shipping. Min Yazagyi employed Portuguese mercenaries in his various expeditions. The Portuguese settled in Chittagong; they also had a base at Sandwip islands. They were the freebooters, independent of Goa. They joined hands with the Arakanese in their ravaging expeditions to Bengal. Sometimes they grew so powerful, as in the case of Philip De Brito at Syriam, that they could even defy the king and became formidable enemies of the kingdom. In 1615 A.D., they attacked the capital city of Mrok-u (Myauk-u) but were repulsed by Minkhamaung who enlisted the aid of Dutch ships. As a result of this the Portuguese were replaced by the Dutch in Arakan's trade. But the slave-trade went on as before. The Dutch needed slaves for their plantations in the East Indies, and were dependent on Arakan for their procurement. These were procured for them by

the Arakanese from Bengal by sending annual expeditions thither. The slaves thus procured and transacted included Hindus as well as Muslims.

Moreover, these increasing contacts of Arakan with Bengal, friendly or hostile, brought in a number of Muslims not only from that area, but also from Northern India. Some of them were captives of war or captured slaves and others, adventurous warriors who sought service under the Arakanese kings as mercenaries. Fray Sibastien Manrique mentioned the presence of a contingent of Muslim solders from Northern India in the Coronation of king Thirithudamma.

Arakan, in fact, had now become the bridge-head for the diffusion of Islam into the countries to its south and east. In as much as the slave trade with the Dutch had helped in the increase of Muslim population in the Dutch East Indies where Islam had already taken a firm hold, Arakan's expeditions of Lower Burma (1599 A.D.), had been, in a way, instrumental in spreading the faith to that part of the country.

The tragic episode of the flight of Prince ShahShuja to Arakan in 1660 A.D. is one of the most important events in the history of Burma's contacts with Islam. The episode, which was the outcome of the war of succession for the Moghul throne during the last days of Emperor Shah Jahan, is well known to the historians of the Moghul Period. In his "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan" (Journal of the Burma Research Society Vol., XXVI, pt. I), Prof. D.G.E. Hall, basing on Dutch sources, gave an account of it at full length. Shah Shuja, the second son of the Great Moghul, Shah Jahan, gave up his attempt for the Moghul throne after his defeat at the hands of Aurungzib's general, Mir Jumla, and fled to Arakan with his family and five hundred followers. King *Candasudhamma* (Sandathudamma, 1652-1684) at first, gave him a cordial welcome; he even promised to provide ships to convey them to Mecca as requested. But the friendship did not last long. Mir Jumla, who followed up the chase, was demanding for the surrender of the prince and his family and there was a general fear of Moghul invasion of Arakan. The Arakanese king on the other hand appeared to have a capricious eye on the rich

treasures brought by the refugee prince. The last straw of the friendly relations broke when the king asked for one of the daughters of Shuja in marriage. This request was haughtily refused; and to get out of this intolerable situation Shuja and his followers made a desperate attempt to escape. It is alleged that they made a futile attempt to oust the king and seize the throne in collaboration with the resident Muslims. In 1661 the king's troops attacked Shuja's residence and the prince and his sons, it is rumored, fled to the hills only to be captured later. The prince was executed and the sons, sent to prison. They were, however, released later. In 1663, a desperate attempt was made to rescue the sons; but this also was a failure and as a result a large number of Muslims and Bengalis at the capital were massacred.

There is a brief reference to the episode of Shuja in the New Chronicle of Arakan (*Rakhuin Rajavan sac*). Here is referred to as a son of the *Pacha* king (i.e. the Great Moghul) and his name is given as *Nharonci*\* He came and took refuge in Arakan in 1023 *sakkaraj* (1661 A.D.) He revolted against king Sandathudamma, but was defeated by the king's forces and he fled to the upper reaches of the *Kacchapanaadi* (Kaladan) river. His two sons and the trusted followers who were left behind were executed. The rest were treated to water of allegiance and employed as Royal Archers. They are known as *Kamam San*.<sup>1</sup> In 1025 *sakkaraj* (1663 A.D.) the Mon Kwap (Moghul) followers of Nharonci rose in rebellion again and succeeded in burning down the golden spire of the Royal Palace. In this rebellion *Manosiha* the governor of *Mork-u* died.<sup>2</sup>

The repercussion of the tragedy of Shuja soon followed. The new governor of Bengal, Shayista Khan, first took measures to clear the Arakanese from Chittagong, Ramu and East Bengal. After building and equipping a new fleet, he seized the Sandwip islands. In 1666 A.D., he attacked Dianga by land and sea and fouted the Arakanese fleet. The Portuguese who had been sitting

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\* This name is closer to Aurungzib than to Shah Shuja. The names of the two brothers appear to have been confused here. But another Arakan Chronicle by Saya Nga Min calls the prince Saksuja.

<sup>1</sup> Kamam, a word of Persian origin meaning a bow.

<sup>2</sup> The New Chronicle of Arakan. Pp. 241-2

on the fence, now changed sides. Dianga surrendered. The whole of Chittagong district up to the Naff river was annexed to the Moghul Empire. With this the glory of Arakan kingdom came to an end. It declined rapidly after 1666 A.D. Internal disorder ensued with the death of King Sandathudhamma in 1684 A.D. The Kamam San the Royal Archers of the Guard', became very powerful and they began to play the role of "King Makers." This "Royal Archers of the Guard" was first organized with the followers of prince Shuja, who survived the revolt. But later they were reinforced, from time to time, by fresh soldiers and adventurers from India. They set up kings, deposed them and created new ones as they liked. These Kamam San dominated Arakan from 1684 to 1710.

The advance of Aurungzib's army to East Bengal chasing Shah Shuja to Arakan, the revolt of Shahshuja and his followers against Candasudhamma and the ruthless massacre that followed, and the campaigns of Shayista Khan driving the Arakanese out of East Bengal, all these were the forces that made the Muslims migrate further to the east and the south to Kyaukphyu and Sandoway districts and to Central Burma. Some of them were captured by the Burmese kings of Ava during their Arakanese campaigns and taken as prisoners-of-war and settled in central Burma; and the more adventurous ones found their way to Central Burma and served the kings of Ava. The account of the land-movement of Islam to the Irrawaddy plains of central Burma should be treated separately so that it may be considered together with the arrival of Islam in Lower Burma via the sea.

The first group to leave its mark upon the culture of Arakan were the Arabs who carried out trade and commerce turned the Indian Ocean an Arab lake with their continued contact with the Far East while settlement down permanently in the coastal areas. Rohang, the old name of Arakan, was a very familiar region for the Arab seafarers even during the pre-Islamic days. The descendants of the mixed marriages between the local people and the Arabs founded the original nucleus of the Rohingyas in Arakan.

Shah Barid Khan, a courtier and a court poet in his book, "Mohammad Hanifa O-khaira Pari" written between 1517 and 1550 narrated

that. "Sayed Mohammad Hanifa, one of the sons of Hazarat Ali, the 4<sup>th</sup>. Caliph Islam reached the coast of Arakan en route to China after losing a battle at Karballah (Kufa) in 680 AD. When he first reached Arabsha Para, a place north of present Maungdaw town in north Arakan, with his followed a fleet junks (sailing ships then used by Arabs) they were confronted with the cannibals under a queen named Khaira Pari or Kayapuri. A bloody battle was brike out between them and it was won by Mohammad Hanifa.

Mohammad Hanifa subjugated the queen who along with all her followers embraced Islam. He then marriage her and passed the rest of their life in great devotion to Allah. They became famous as saints. They were buried on two of the peaks of Mayu Range (Hills) easily accessible both from Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships. These two ancient tombs are traditionally known as Hanifar Tonqie (shrine) and Kayapuri Tonqie."<sup>1</sup>

Further, There is another legend, it is said a king called Amir Hamza in Ganlaugi area, another portion of pruma River, was reputed for his legend did not say, that he ruled or conquered wethali. Next the shrine of saint, Bubagyi, at Awbary village, Akyab Land many others along the coast including the famous Badr Mukan, bear conclusive evidence of early Muslim settlement in Arakan.

D.G.E. Hall once a professor of department of History in Rangoon university says, in the reign of Anawratha, pagan asserted its authorily over Arakan. but after 1287 this lapsed, although Naramikhla established Morhong (Dynasty) in 1433. There were from time to time Burmese and Mon interferences. Arakan contacts with Mohammedan India were probably closer than those with Burma. ---- Moha mmedanism spread to Arakan but failed to make much impression on its Buddhism. Mrohang had its sandhi Khan Mosque an its King assumed Mohammeden titles but the predominance of Buddhism was never shaken.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Roots, Fruits And Dreams Of All The Muslims In Myanmar.

<sup>2</sup> D.G.E Hall; Burma pp 57 - 58

Maurice collis and sanshwebu rightly says, Arakan being adjacent to Mahammedan Bangal, it might had a considerable Muslim population even before Mrauk-U dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

Here, I wanted to mention the term "kala" and the term "magh" MosheYegar mentioned in his M.A. Thesis 'the Muslims of Burma' that the term Kala, Kla, Kula is the Burmese term given to natives of the Indian Subcontinent: but in time has come to embrace all foreigners from the west (Col. Henry Yule A.C Burnell, Hobson – Jobson, new ed., edited by willian crooke (London: John Murray, 1903 p.495) the Burmese also use the term kala to designate Christians; to differentiate between them and the Muslim who are also called Kala, the christians were given the name "Phritgies or "feringies", a term brought to Burma by Muslim from India (Bishop Bigande An outline of the history of the catholic Burmese Mission: From the years 1720 to 1887 Rangoon Hantha waddy press. 1887. p.3). The Burmans call their native Muslims "Pathikula" and their Hindus "Hindukula" (Yule and Burnell, op, cit, p.664).

From here, it would seem stem such names as Kaladan, Kalagon, Kalaywa, etc given to Muslim villages established in the period of the Burmese Kings. European were generally spoken of as "Kala-phyu" (white Indian) After the British conquest "Kala" came to be a nickname of disgrace that time the Burmese stopped differentiating between the various kinds of "Kala" and tended to include the Burmese Muslims as well in what had become a generic term; this was most distasteful to the Burmese Muslim since they do not look upon themselves as a foreigners (Desai. A pageant of Burmese History, p.298. U Po Chai, Ancient History of Burmese Moslems (Rangoon, n.d), pp-13-14.<sup>2</sup>

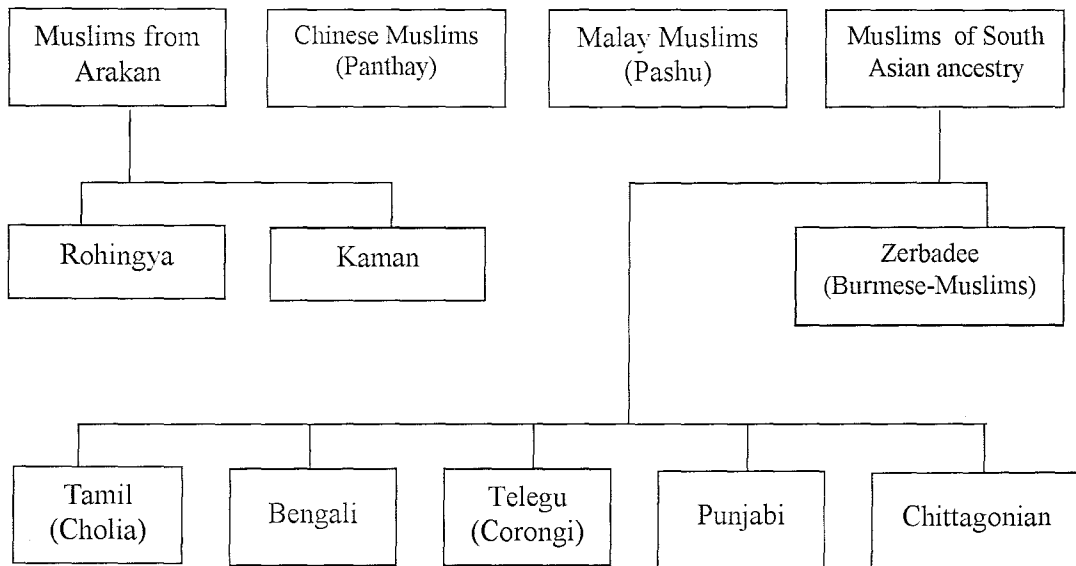
B.R pearn a Historian mentioned in his Article King-Bering that the term "Magh" seems to have been used to describe an Arakanese resident in Chittagong. Mr. A.K. chanda. principal Chittagong college, has kindly supplied the following information "The word is undoubtedly of Bengali origin, but the

<sup>1</sup> M.Collis: Arakan place in the civilisation of the Bay of Bengal. 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication No. 21 p - 488

<sup>2</sup> Moshe Yegar. The Muslim of Burma.

exact significance of the word and its ultimate derivation are not clear. The standard Bengal; dictionary published by the Bangiyu shalitya parishad (the more or less authoritative Bengali academy) states that the word is of unknown derivation. Another very well known dictionary would derive the word from the common Burmese title Maung which is found frequently before the name of Burmese gentle men. I do not consider that a very satisfactory derivation. The word is applied in Bengali to Arakanese and to certain Buddhist of chittagong. The expression Magev muluk means a country where there is no established law which is governed whimsically, I consider that the most satisfactory derivation is the one which connects it with ancient kingdom of Magadha, there is a tradition of a branch of the Magadha raj family having migrated to chittagong when Hindus became ascendant in that ancient nursery of Buddhism. It is not unlikely that the Royal family of Arakan was somehow descended from that Behar family. The derivation would probably be Magadhi (the adjective from the proper name)- magahi-magai-magi-magor magh. There is a great deal of fluctuation in Eastern Bengal in the articulation of aspirated stops, and mag or magh' are used in Bengali at the will of the speaker or writer. The word now means a Arakanese or a Buddhist of chittagong, especially used, it appears, of the Buddhists who come from the subdivision of Cox's Bazaar which is next to Arakan. The new English dictionary states that the words Mag, Mogen, Mogue, appear as name of Arakan and the people in 15-16 the centuries.

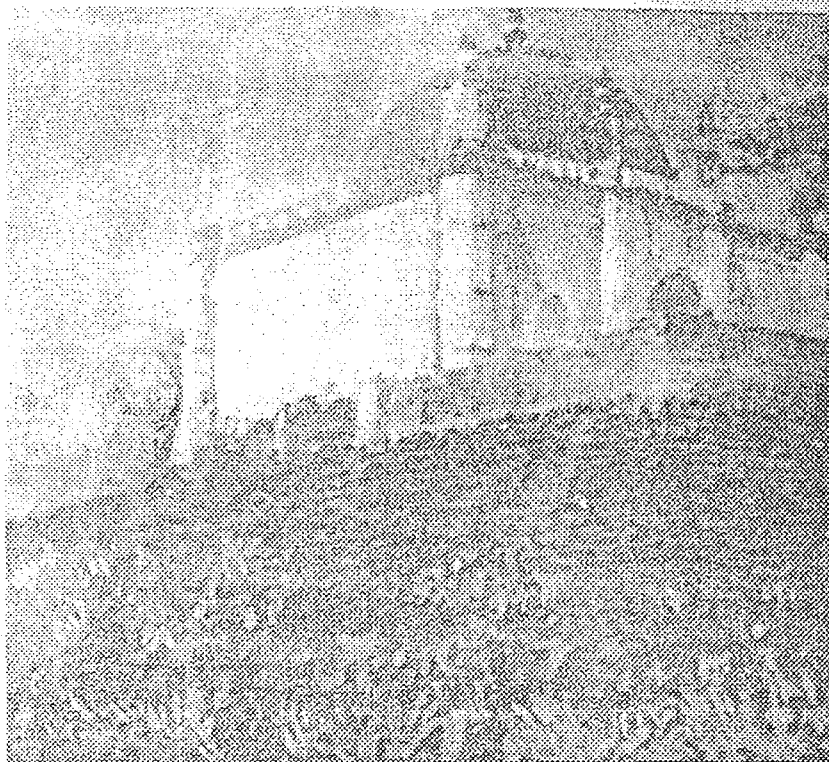
In conclusion I wanted to mention a figure of the major muslim communities of Burma.<sup>1</sup>



**The major Muslim communities of Burma**

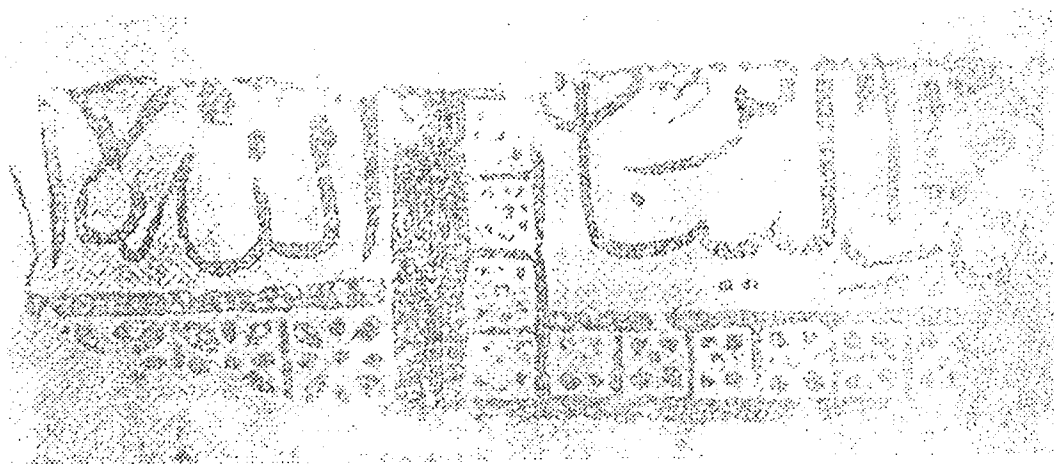
<sup>1</sup> Voices of Islam in southeast Asia a contemporary sourcebook. Compiled and edited by Greg fealy and Virginia Hooker.





Historic Budder Mukam built on the southern side of Akyab Island in 1750 in memory of the eminent saint Allama Shah Budduruddin well known as Budder Aulia who visited the area in 1340 A.D.

Appendice 0) Historic Budder Mukam built on the southern side of Akyab Island in 1750 in memory of the eminent Saint Allama Shah Budduruddin well known as Budder Aulia, who visited the area in 1340 A.D.



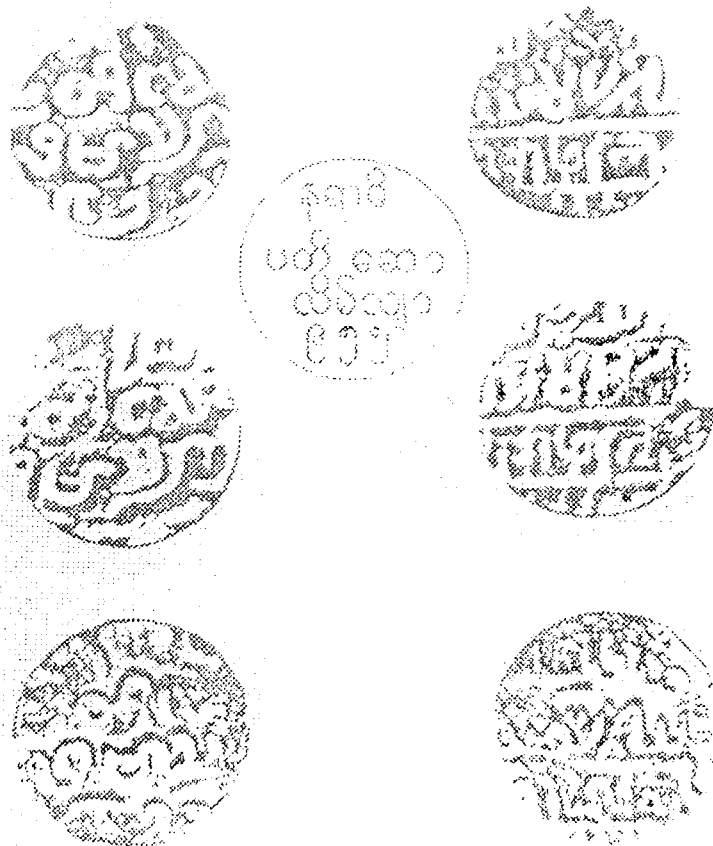
Appendice (2)

A stone inscription with Arabic script found in the compound of Theingyi Taung Pagoda and preserved in Mrauk-U Museum.



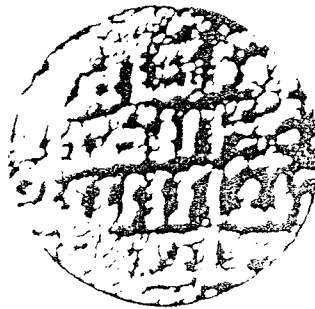
Appendice (3)

Sandhi Khan Mosque built in 1433 A. D. at Mintayabyin, Mrauk-U by Muslim army who came to help enthrone Naramaikhla (The founder of Mrauk-U dynasty).



Appendix (4) - Illustration No. 29 in Arakan's "Coins" in the time of Naradipadi Salim Shah 955 A.E. (Arakanese Era)

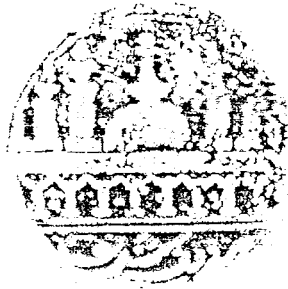
Source : 4 San Tha Aung's "Rakhine coins"



Appendix (4) Illustration No. 23 in "Arakan's Coins". Coins in Persian scripts (perhaps of early Mrauk-U Period).

source: U Ban Tha Aung's "Rakhine coins"

1.



2.



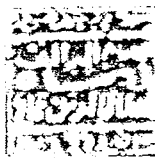
3.



4.



5.



6.



## APPendice (4)

2.1. - Coins in Arakan's "Coins" with Arabic script.

Explanation of the Coins above:

Coin No. 1 - Indicates the Prophet's Mosque of Madina, Saudi Arabia.

Coin No. 2 - In the square of the center it is the verse of declaration of Muslim faith i.e. the Kalimah.

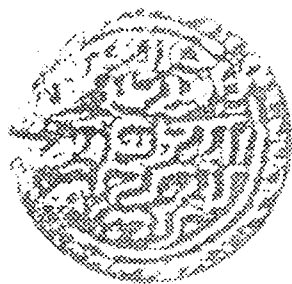
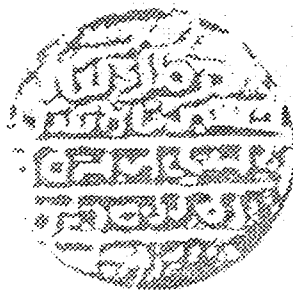
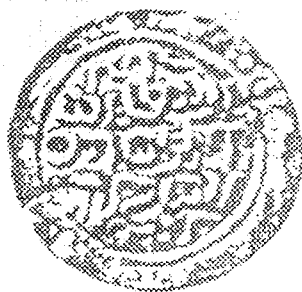
Coin No. 3 - The writer is unable to sketch the meaning of the script.

Coin No. 4 - First line indicates one king Din Muhammad of Rohang (Rahami). Second and third lines are something in the praise of the king.

Coin No. 5 - Something like prayer or a verse in praise of the king.

Coin No. 6 - In the Square at the center it is the Muslim's Kalimah.

Note: There is no explanation about these coins in U San Tha Aung's "Rakhine Coins".



#### Appendice (4)

in Arakan's "Coins" in the time of Sinphyushin Waraddama  
Raza Hussein Shah. These Coins also are in Persian script.

Source : 4 San Tha Aung's "Rakhine coins"

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